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RESOURCING THE POSTMODERN PASTOR: AN EXAMINATION OF YOUNG
PASTORS' ATTITUDES AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DENOMINATIONAL
PUBLISHERS

By

Bonnie J. Perry

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

School of Graduate and Continuing Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

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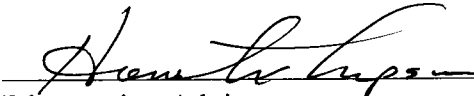
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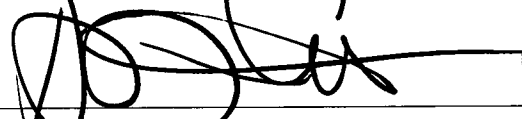
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No project of this scope is a solo endeavor. The following dissertation is the culmination of the investment and cooperation of many persons. I have had the immeasurable privilege of spending a career working alongside a great team of gifted people who are committed to the effort of resourcing pastors, leaders, and laypersons in the Church of the Nazarene; I thank God for that opportunity. And, I thank my colleagues over the years for their partnership.

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I can do all this through Him who gives me strength. Phil. 4:13

DEDICATION

To Rex, who believed in me.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the influence of postmodernity on the changing attitudes of young pastors regarding spirituality and discipleship in their adult congregants. The purpose of this study was to educate and equip Christian publishers to resource young pastors who are ministering in a postmodern culture. The study focused on Church of the Nazarene pastors 35 years old or younger in the calendar year 2012, exploring their attitudes toward Christian faith, spirituality, and discipleship. At certain junctures in the study, the young pastors' attitudes were compared to those of pastors who were 36 years or older in order to determine what differences existed in the two demographics. The research pointed to a subtle but unmistakable paradigm shift in thinking on the part of 35-or-younger pastors in matters pertaining to worldview, authority, salvation, Scripture, the Church and the world, spiritual practices, and faith formation in the local context. By examining the young pastors' priorities, attitudes, and preferences, the researcher gleaned information that will help denominational publishers develop resources to better equip pastors to foster spiritual growth in their congregations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernity is a term that is neither easily understood nor easily defined in the present cultural context of the United States. The shift from the modern to the postmodern era began in the middle of the 20th century, according to O’Gorman (2001). Rather than a monolithic term or movement, Johnson (2001) described postmodernity as a collective label for shifts in values and attitudes, contending that the change is significant enough to be termed a paradigm shift. Further, Johnson termed postmodernity a “phenomenon that is complex and sprawling and notoriously difficult to define” (p. 309).

According to McKnight (2010), postmodernity is not a theory; it is a condition that influences contemporary culture. Despite the confusion regarding exactly what postmodernism is, scholars agree that it influences spirituality and organized religion. Kitchens (2003) described postmodernity as “waves of cultural change now crashing in on congregations throughout America” (p. xi). Wells (2008b) portrayed postmodernity as evangelical Christianity’s new dance partner.

The influence of postmodernity on Christianity comes in part from the movement away from metanarratives, according to McKnight (2010), a shift that typifies postmodern thought. These metanarratives are overarching or grand narratives providing meanings that shape cultures; they include concepts embedded in modern thought such as religion, nationalism, and science. The postmodern condition is one where people lack

the faith in science and religion they once had, agreed Kitchens; instead, they look more to experience to provide meaning for their lives. The movement away from metanarratives and the elevation of experience as a valid way to view the world has led to some interesting changes in the way Christian faith is understood and articulated. The manifestation of postmodern thought is evident on Facebook, where one student defined her spirituality by citing a Bible verse from Jeremiah, a quote from Max Lucado, a popular film, and Dr. Seuss, according to McKnight. He identified this propensity to assemble a spiritual worldview from a variety of sources as a *bricolage*, which is a French term describing the putting together of something from materials at hand. Wuthnow (1998) affirmed that “growing numbers of Americans piece together their faith like a patchwork quilt. Spirituality has become a vastly complex quest in which each person seeks . . . his or her own way” (p. 2).

Bellah, Madson, Sullivan, and Swidler (2008) agreed that contemporary religion in America is private and diverse. They recount the story of one young nurse, Sheila Larson, who described her faith as “Sheilaism.” “I believe in God,” she wrote, “I can’t remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way . . . Just my own little voice” (p. 221). The rise of “Sheilaism” illustrates the trend toward individualized, private compilations of one’s spirituality, which is consistent with postmodernity.

As a result of the movement toward postmodernity, traditional forms of Christian practice, including Bible study, church attendance, and prayer, have declined among Americans between the ages of 18-29 (Clayton, 2010). Consequently, postmodern spirituality is typified by theological incoherence, asserted McKnight (2010), adding that

postmodern thinkers do not object to theological contradictions within their faith. Clayton wrote, “You don’t have to be a specialist [in theology] to know that things have changed” (p. 7).

In the midst of this cultural shift, pastors serve in an environment where, according to Kitchens (2003), leaders are grappling to understand the implications of the migration from modernity to postmodernity. Wells (2008b) wrote that in the cultural shift toward postmodernism, the idea of *being a disciple* has changed as spirituality of all kinds is embraced in public life.

Moreover, in the last decade, globalization has expanded the parameters of the postmodern discussion, especially as it pertains to Christian discipleship, according to Wells (2008a). Electronic communication has created a world where words and ideas are no longer bound by time and space (O’Gorman, 2001). This unfettered exchange of ideas has re-infused dialog, mystery, and unboundedness into discussions of Christian faith, all the while creating a longing for authenticity. “The postmodern era is characterized as a search for more intimate and authentic relationships” according to O’Gorman (p. 356).

In response to a postmodern consciousness, pastors have altered their vocabularies when talking about ministry and leadership (Johnson 2001). For example, rather than using terms such as *Christian education*, leaders might say *spiritual formation*, which appeals to the softer sensibilities of postmodernism.

A Wesleyan perspective of spirituality, with its emphasis on relationships born out of consistent love for God, others, and creation is compatible with postmodernism, according to Jankowski (2003). The Church of the Nazarene was born as a Wesleyan-Holiness denomination in 1908, an outgrowth of the Wesleyan revival in 18th-century

England. Nazarene Publishing House (NPH), located in Kansas City, Missouri was founded only four years later, in 1912. For most of its history, NPH has enjoyed a fruitful ministry to pastors and ministry leaders. The current conversations related to spirituality are certainly pertinent to the ministry and work of NPH, which seeks to continue being relevant to pastors ministering in the postmodern context.

As a business celebrating its 100th birthday in 2012, NPH has endured good times and bad. Some of the company's most challenging days have occurred in the last decade when traditional publishing has been revolutionized by the digital age. The current challenges facing NPH exist for multiple reasons. NPH, which employs approximately 175 persons, depends on three strategic business units to generate revenue: Beacon Hill Books, Lillenas Music, and WordAction curriculum. The advent of the digital age has upended traditional business practices in each of the industries these business units represent—books, music and Christian education (Nazarene Publishing House, n.d.). According to the Fowler & Trachtenberg (2010), Amazon reported in July 2010 its year-to-date eBook sales exceeded hardcover sales, an unprecedented shift. Since its launch in 2001, Apple's iTunes has redefined the way the music industry publishes songs. Easy access to information via the Internet and the onset of Print-on-Demand technology has empowered churches everywhere to write and publish their own curriculum. Add to this mix the expectations of a whole new generation of postmodern consumers that information should be free and an enthusiasm for sharing intellectual property (e.g., "I'll just borrow your CD and burn it rather than buying my own") and the result is trouble for music and book publishers around the globe (Berman, 2011).

To complicate the issue further, loyalty to large institutional organizations such as denominations is a concept not embraced by the emerging generation, according to Kitchens (2003). Leaders of denominations, he explained, are “working hard to reassert ‘brand loyalty’ in a time when the average church member feels very little loyalty to any particular church tradition” (p. 22). Brafman and Beckstrom (2006) wrote, “Traditionally, the bigger the company or institution, the more power it could wield . . . decentralization has changed everything As counterintuitive as this sounds, it can be better to be small” (p. 201). Postmoderns, according to Kitchens, have a desire to belong to a community, not to an organization.

The result of this perfect storm of a flagging economy, a digital revolution, and a changing church in a newly postmodern culture is that sales NPH once considered routine now must be earned the hard way. Pastors can choose from a plethora of other options to resource their congregants. NPH is an organization under pressure; in order to survive, it must capture the business and loyalty of a new generation of pastors who will provide a sound customer base for the future.

Statement of the Problem

Simply put, the purpose of this study is to educate and equip Christian publishers, such as Nazarene Publishing House, to resource young pastors who are ministering in a postmodern culture. Based on the assumption that pastors care about spiritual growth, this study explored the attitudes and practices of pastors 35 years old or younger in the calendar year 2012 pertaining to Christian beliefs, spirituality, and congregational faith formation; the goal was to discover what kinds of resources these young pastors desire to promote spiritual growth among congregants. By examining the pastors’ priorities,

attitudes, and preferences, the researcher gleaned information that will help denominational publishers (specifically Nazarene Publishing House) better equip pastors to foster spiritual growth in their congregations.

NPH is one of many denominational publishers experiencing a significant decline in sales of curriculum and books in recent years. For NPH, this downward trend began in 2000 and has accelerated during the years 2005-2010. Undoubtedly there are many reasons for this decline, but a primary one may be that most congregational leaders opt for what they feel is best instead of what is denominational when they choose resources for use in their congregations (Bibby, 1998).

The movement away from denominational resources is especially evident in young pastors. Through consistent feedback, NPH and other denominational publishers have learned that young, postmodern pastors are not embracing traditional curriculum products for use in their churches. Denominational publishers desire to meet the needs of this new generation of pastors and to help them promote spiritual growth in their congregants. According to the Protestant Christian Publishers Association (PCPA), key questions for PCPA publishing houses are the following: “What are the key new strategies and programs that local churches are using today to disciple their members . . . and what resources are they looking for to support these programs?” (J. Allison, personal communication, November, 22, 2011)

By examining the ministry priorities of young pastors and exploring their attitudes toward Christian beliefs, spirituality and faith formation, NPH and other denominational publishers will be better equipped to develop resources that will be relevant in a postmodern context. This equipping is important because, according to McKnight (2010),

pastors grapple with the implications of bricolage spirituality in their congregations on a daily basis:

Now let me meddle: *most of the 20somethings in your church or in your community, and plenty of the 30, 40 and 50somethings (and some leftover 60something wannabe or former hippies, are in the process of a bricolage Christian faith* [emphasis in original]. This is the way things are today . . . it is as predictable as postmodernity's presence (p. 223)

McKnight (2010) went on to ask a question that gets at the crux of the purpose of this study: How do you pastor the *bricoleur* (p. 223)? An even more important question for denomination publishers is this: *How do you resource the bricoleur pastor?*

Background

A review of the literature revealed that pastors have a deep desire to be effective in ministry but sometimes struggle with what effectiveness looks like in their everyday workplace. For three years, Parrott (2003) conducted in-depth assessments of 47 pastors regarding leadership competencies and issues pertaining to core identity. The pastors demonstrated a desire for a deep spirituality and a commitment to live authentically in Christ. The pastors also expressed a desire to be successful in ministry, making a difference in their faith communities and in their cultures. According to Parrott, a tension existed between maintaining a deep spirituality and achieving ministry effectiveness; the pastors tended to exchange personal authenticity for the chance to be effective in ministry. Authenticity is a prerequisite for ministry effectiveness in pastors, contended Parrott, especially in a postmodern context.

One Generation Y (born in 1980 or after) pastoral intern described her effort to maintain authenticity in the ministry:

Ministry students . . . must recognize the perennially changing environment in order to develop stable and healthy ministerial identities. If I were to correlate my self-perception to the condescending remarks made about my nose piercing, I would not be able to develop my identity as a spiritual leader; I would be relegated to the role of rebel. (Pershey, 2005, p. 63)

Leading with authenticity requires many pastors to make significant changes in their churches or those churches may suffer a slow death, according to Shumaker (2009). Navigating change can be challenging, because many pastors tend to build identity and ministry philosophy around knowledge and competencies, according to Quinn (1996). “Making a deep change involves abandoning both [knowledge and competencies],” he contended, “This is usually a terrifying choice In today’s world of constant change, however, we need to do it more frequently than we have in the past” (p. 116).

More than 20 years ago, Krass (1987) agreed that moving from the modern to the postmodern era would require pastors to reexamine their images of clergy and congregations. Lyons-Purdue (2009) agreed that considering context is important to any worldview that claims to be postmodern. The result of these shifting paradigms is a great deal of diversity within discussions of faith. Smith (n.d.) coined the term *Moral Therapeutic Deism* to describe the vague set of beliefs held by many young adults. He quoted one girl who described her faith this way:

Morals play a large part in religion; morals are good if they’re healthy for society. Like Christianity, which is all I know, the values you get from like the Ten

Commandments. I think every religion is important in its own respect. You know, if you're Muslim, then Islam is the way for you. If you're Jewish, well, that's great too. If you're Christian, well, good for you. It's just whatever makes you feel good about you. (para. 5)

The girl could represent the paradox of what McKnight (2010), described as “the ironic faith of emergent Christians” (p. 213). Postmodern Christians may believe in Jesus Christ, adhere to Christian beliefs, and desire to follow Jesus while also believing various things that may contradict traditional Christian orthodoxy. Yet, these contradictions do not impact the apparent spirituality of postmodern believers.

This bricolage spirituality is a significant departure from traditional classical forms of spirituality, according to McKnight (2010), who identified four features common to the spirituality of postmodern Christians. The first is a new way of embracing spiritual disciplines, integrating spiritual practices from various Christian traditions. A second feature of postmodern spirituality is ecumenicalism, combining practices from many streams of the Church, including Catholic and Eastern Orthodox. The third commonality is the tendency to be interreligious; McKnight believed some postmodern Christians may practice spirituality outside the bounds of traditional orthodoxy. The fourth trait typical of postmodern spirituality is a commitment to justice.

The expansive postmodern view of spirituality brings opportunities and challenges to pastors when it comes to discipleship and Christian education, maintained Johnson (2001):

Within postmodernism, we find a preference for experiential, participatory, and action-reflection modes of education over transmissive ones, an emphasis on the

subjectivity of learners rather than the objectivity of the material being taught, and a disease with institutionalized and organized aspects of religion. (p. 310)

Johnson (2001) further asserted that historically there have been various dichotomies in the church regarding theories of Christian education that have tended to divide liberal, moderate, and conservative constituencies. Depending on one's school of thought, the primary role of curriculum could be to transmit biblical content, to nurture the spiritual experience of learners, to engage learners in a justice ministry, to emphasize God's sovereignty, to emphasize personal repentance, to stress social change, or to lead to personal salvation. Johnson suggested that the postmodern understanding of Christian education as spiritual formation may provide a promising paradigm for bridging these historic divisions.

As recently as 30 years ago, some believed that pastors did not regard spiritual formation of congregants as a ministry priority. "The idea that clergy and lay experts should guide people in . . . this spiritual domain is obviously not considered a central task of the Church, and very few seminarians think it important to give instruction or training in this area," wrote McKenzie (1982, p. 19). Galindo (2001) called this gulf between academic theology and spiritual formation as an educational practice "disastrous" (p. 311). Additionally, he asserted that the epistemological framework of most Christian educators is built on a rationalistic materialism and objectivism, which led to a dichotomy of the secular and the sacred. According to Galindo, developmental psychologist Carl Jung believed that this artificial distinction between the secular and sacred was the "basic reason for the plight of modern persons" (p. 312). Palmer (1983)

agreed that an artificial dichotomy between the secular and sacred resulted in a diminished spirituality.

The implications of the educational dichotomy for congregational life and traditional institutions like the Sunday school were significant, believed Westerhoff (1980), who likened the movement away from modern thought to the “end of an age”:

We appear to be emerging from the reign of the secular; the return of the sacred is a key event in our time. As always, the issue is how we respond . . . to integrate the eschatological and historical so that there is no disjunction between our passion for social justice and personal fulfillment; to be open to secular thought and reason so that a return to the sacred does not mean a return to an inner world of religious experience; to integrate piety and politics in a healthy intrinsic religion of involvement . . . I fear the Sunday school will have difficulty addressing these commitments; its history is antithetical to such concerns. (p. 640).

Westerhoff (1980) was not alone in his concerns for the future of Sunday school as an institution. For well over a century, traditional Sunday school served as a primary vehicle for discipleship and spiritual growth. Born in 1837 in Massachusetts when the study of religion was no longer permitted in public schools, the Sunday school thrived well into the 20th century (Cully, 1977). But by mid-century, a faint warning bell was being sounded by some. In a statistical report of religious bodies published by the National Council of Churches in 1953, the Council indicated that though church membership grew at a rate of 8.3% in the years 1950-51, Sunday school attendance grew at a rate of only 6.2 % (Spaulding, 1953). By the late 1970s, Cully acknowledged that the

institution of Sunday school was facing possible future demise if leaders were not flexible and willing to embrace inevitable cultural change. In 1980, Westerhoff articulated his concern:

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, I do not see a place of significance for the Sunday school in the future. It is too bound to the past to meet the needs of a new age. I do not believe I am being melodramatic when I say that we are entering a new period in history. (p. 641)

Where Sunday school is concerned, the Church of the Nazarene has experienced the downward trending so many observers predicted years ago. Church of the Nazarene Sunday school attendance in 1951 was 499,000 persons, according to the National Council of Churches (Spaulding, 1953). The Church of the Nazarene was one of only four protestant denominations that reported a Sunday school attendance exceeding church membership, which was reported to be 236,000 at that time. By 1980 in the Church of the Nazarene, Sunday school attendance was 419,000 compared to a North American church membership of 491,000. In 2000, Sunday school attendance was 375,000 while North American church membership was 639,000. In 2011, Sunday school attendance was 287,000 while North American church membership was 649,000. (Church of the Nazarene, 2011)

As Sunday school attendance declined during the decade between 2000-2010, Nazarene Publishing House (NPH) experienced a precipitous decline in adult curriculum sales (-25%), at a rate of more than double the decline in Nazarene Sunday school attendance (-8%) during the same period (Nazarene Publishing House, 2012). This decline takes on added significance when one considers that combined sales of

curriculum and books currently and historically represent more than 60% of NPH sales revenue. NPH is not alone. "There's no question that many of our members have lost ground in recent years," said Meyer (as cited in Hess, 2004), executive director of the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers' Association (PCPA). "Declining curriculum sales has been a hot topic at most of our meetings" (p. 1).

These denominational publishers are impacted largely because of changes occurring at the local church level. As the shift from modern to postmodern thought permeates culture, the daily work of ordinary congregations in Christian education and formation is being influenced, asserted Johnson (2001). In the midst of this cultural shift and the resulting decline scholars predicted in the traditional Sunday school, Nazarene Publishing House continues to seek new ways to be a viable partner with pastors and churches.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the ministry priorities of Church of the Nazarene pastors 35 years old and younger?
2. What are the attitudes of these pastors about Christian beliefs, spirituality, and congregational faith formation?
3. What types of resources do these pastors seek in order to foster spiritual growth in their adult congregants?
4. What are the implications for denominational publishers, such as Nazarene Publishing House?

Description of Terms

The following definitions provide specificity to the unique terms used in this study:

Church of the Nazarene: A Christian denomination in the Wesleyan-Arminian theological tradition. The Church of the Nazarene's historical roots reside in the Wesleyan Methodist revival and the 19th-century American holiness movement ("Church of the Nazarene website," n.d.).

Metanarrative: An all-encompassing grand story within which other stories exist. Examples could be science, nationalism, and major world religions (Walters, 2009).

Nazarene Publishing House. The denominational publishing house for the Church of the Nazarene, founded in 1912. NPH publishes curriculum, books, and music for the Church of the Nazarene and other Wesleyan denominations (Nazarene Publishing House website, n.d.)

Nazarene pastor. The population in this study is licensed or ordained ministers designated the role code PAS in the research office of the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene. The selection PAS indicates one is serving as lead pastor rather than serving in another role such as associate or youth pastor (Church of the Nazarene website, n.d.)

Postmodernism. According to Ayelsworth (2010), "That postmodernism is indefinable is a truism" (para.1). However, in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Ayelsworth went on to describe postmodernism as "a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices" that employ concepts to "destabilize other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity [univocal =

unambiguous, having one meaning only] of meaning.” (para. 1). According to Ayelsworth, “The term *postmodernism* first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, with the publication of *The Postmodern Condition* by Jean-François Lyotard” (para, 2) *Modernism/modernity*. According to Burke (2000), “a historical period in Western culture that has its origins in the Enlightenment at the end of the 18th century” (para. 2). The Enlightenment and modernity are characterized by three major features: (a) Intellectually, there was the power of reason over ignorance; (b) There was the power of order over disorder; and (c) There was the power of science over superstition (Burke).

Significance of the Study

Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1436. Nearly 500 years later, in 1912, Nazarene Publishing House printed its first book, using moveable lead letters not very much different than those used by Gutenberg. Today, if one owns a cell phone with internet connectivity, he or she has access to the Stanford Library, the Oxford Library, and the Library of Congress (Sweet, 2009). This is possible because Google is scanning more than 8 million books in the Stanford and Oxford collections, and because the Library of Congress is building a digital archive of more than one million books. For Sweet, the contrast is helpful:

I am starting to shy away from using the “postmodern” word, and frankly find the distinction between a Gutenberg World and a Google World more fertile for creative constructive thought than “modern” vs. “postmodern” language. First, there are so many people with pomo phobia out there . . . Second, the word “postmodern” has become a vacuum word where everyone who uses it . . . sucks different meaning out. Third, I am open to using any language that will help the

church stop imitating those beleaguered Japanese soldiers who were found in the mountains fighting the Second World War long after it ended. (p. 52)

The scope of this research does not include making a case for or against postmodernism. The significance of the study is to equip those Christian leaders who are, as Sweet (2009) described them, native Gutenbergs living as immigrants in a Google world.

Process to Accomplish

Because the goal of the research was to examine attitudes and preferences of pastors, a mixed methods approach was necessary to gather and analyze the pertinent information. The researcher worked with denominational leaders to send out a survey instrument to the population of 287 young pastors who met the criteria for the study and a random sample of 287 older pastors. Using the survey instrument, the researcher gathered and assessed quantitative data from Church of the Nazarene lead pastors in these two groups, younger and older. At various points in the questionnaire, there were open-ended questions with an invitation to respond more fully. Because an intent of this research was to measure attitudes and to understand better “the nuances and complexities of a particular phenomenon,” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 94) qualitative methods such as follow-up interviews were also employed. The questions were designed to gather information on the pastors’ views of their own pastoral roles, their Christian beliefs, the importance of spiritual growth in their congregations, the ways spiritual growth was currently being fostered, and the kinds of resources the pastors desired to use.

The primary participants in this study were the district licensed or ordained ministers in the USA and Canada regions of the Church of the Nazarene who were 35

years or younger during the calendar year 2012; a secondary group were 36 years or older during the calendar year 2012. The denominational database at the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene (GMC) provided the contact information for these pastors. The population of credentialed ministers used in this research was limited to those currently serving in the role of pastor as designated by the code PAS in the official documentation held by the research department at the GMC. The PAS designation indicates clergy serving in the role of lead pastor rather than associate pastor, youth pastor, chaplain, educator, etc. The research department at the GMC provided access to the contact data for these pastors.

The sample in this study was the group of pastors who completed the survey instrument. Purposive sampling was used as the researcher sent a survey to the entire universe of 287 Nazarene lead pastors who were 35 years old or younger during the 2012 calendar year; this group was referred to as Sample A. The survey was also sent to a random sample of 287 from the population of approximately 4,200 Nazarene lead pastors who were 36 years old or older during the 2012 calendar year in order to compare responses on salient questions; this group was referred to as Sample B. The conclusions were extrapolated from those pastors completing the survey. There was limited generalizability to those pastors 35 years or younger who are not lead pastors because they were not included in the study and to pastors more than 35 years old as of January 1, 2012 because the sample size was relatively small.

Though the pastors studied were 35 years old or younger in the calendar year 2012 and actively pastoring a congregation in the Church of the Nazarene, there were many other variables to be considered and examined. These included educational

background, church size, years of experience, gender, ethnicity, and longevity in the Nazarene denomination. Multivariate analysis was conducted in order to analyze the responses of pastors with respect to (a) church size, (c) gender, (d) educational background, etc.

In order to answer research question one, the opening portion of the survey was utilized to determine what the young Nazarene pastors viewed as their primary responsibilities and priorities. This step was necessary in order to give needed context to questions two and three and to validate the underlying research assumption that spiritual growth of congregants is important to pastors.

In order to answer research question two, the survey gathered data on the attitudes and opinions the pastors had about spiritual growth in their congregants, including recognizing it, measuring it, and fostering it.

In order to answer research question three, the survey gathered data on the preferences the pastors exhibited when selecting resources designed to foster spiritual growth and discipleship among their congregants.

Instrument

The data for the research came from a newly developed instrument, but contained adaptations from an existing instrument commissioned by the Protestant Christian Publishers Association, developed by LifeWay Research, Inc. and funded primarily by NPH. The LifeWay instrument was used interdenominationally and was designed to ascertain pastors' attitudes about discipleship and Christian education in local congregations. The LifeWay survey was not suitable for use as-is in this study for three reasons: a) The instrument contained questions pertaining to children and teens, which

was beyond the purview of this study; b) the instrument contained no material specific to young pastors; and c) the instrument did not fully explore the underlying premises that shape pastors' attitudes.

The survey also included adaptations from Blizzard's (1955) Role Preference Instrument, which is a seminal work. Blizzard's classic study identified six roles practiced by Protestant ministers and explored pastors' attitudes about how important these roles were, how much the pastors enjoyed them, and how much time they spent in each role. Blizzard's analysis was used in Southerland's (1993) study of ministerial priorities in Baptist pastors; the instrument used in this study was modeled after Blizzard and Southerland.

In order to assure clarity on the questionnaires, the researcher gathered a small group of pastors (4-6) to review and discuss the final survey instrument before its distribution. These pastors were 35-years-old-or-younger Nazarene pastors in the Kansas City area. Feedback from this pilot group was obtained in writing via email; verbally in phone conversations; and, when possible, in face-to-face meetings. The feedback was used to clarify and refine the content of the instrument. The research department at the Global Ministries Center of the Church of the Nazarene (GMC) aided in the development of initial survey questions and final revision of the survey tool. The quantitative portion of the study used five-point Likert scales with presumed equal intervals to gather data.

Process

The survey instrument was made available to the population online and distributed by the research department at the Global Ministry Center (GMC) along with a personal letter from the researcher. The research department maintains the contact

information for all pastors in the Church of the Nazarene; the survey results were collected confidentially through that department. Respondents were not required to give their names on the survey instrument; however, an opportunity was provided for them to supply contact information for potential follow up. After the data was collected, if respondents indicated a willingness to engage in a follow-up interview, select phone conversations ensued. These interviews were conducted by a third party and consisted of a predetermined list of questions, which were derived from the open-ended survey questions and content analysis of the qualitative portion of the survey data.

To assure representation, five interviewees were selected randomly from each of four church size categories: very small (less than 50 in average worship attendance), small (50-99), mid-size (100-249), and large (250+).

Analysis

Several analytical methods were useful for interpreting the data. Descriptive statistics were used to identify points of central tendency and amount of variability. Inferential statistics were used to examine probabilities and identify trends and differences between groups. Qualitative methods such as content analysis were useful in interpreting the open-ended portions of the survey and in the follow up interviews.

To accomplish the proposed research, written approval was necessary from the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene. Additionally, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Olivet Nazarene University.

The ethical risks to the participants were minimal, as participation was voluntary and the survey could be anonymous, if they so desired. If a participant agreed to a follow-up interview, it was necessary to collect name and contact information at that juncture of

the questionnaire. Providing names and contact information may have potentially skewed answers that respondents feared could be construed as negative or critical toward the Church of the Nazarene or the Nazarene Publishing House.

Summary

This study contributed to the body of literature on how young pastors view spiritual growth and discipleship in their congregations, what kinds of resources they are looking for, and how denominational publishers might respond. Existing research indicates that young pastors have a deep desire to be effective in ministry, but are met with challenges as they navigate a changing culture. Some research suggests that young pastors may feel a disconnect with older congregants because these pastors' views toward spirituality and Christian formation were formed in the cultural tension between modernity and postmodernity. With the postmodern context as a backdrop, the pastors were surveyed about attitudes and preferences with the goal of educating denominational publishers and better equipping them to produce resources for a new generation of leaders.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will review the existing research on ministry and the attitudes of pastors regarding Christian beliefs, spirituality, and congregational faith formation amid a shifting cultural milieu. According to Parrott (2003), pastors share a sincere desire to be effective in ministry and to make a difference in the lives of their parishioners, their communities, and the world. In Parrott's study of 47 pastors who were considered excellent by their peers, the greatest fear expressed was the fear of being irrelevant. Krass (1987) agreed that pastors are stuck in a dilemma regarding their roles and priorities as society moves beyond modernity into postmodernity, asserting that the church may need to reimagine the notions of clergy and congregations. "Many of us who serve as pastors of mainline local churches have long felt that something is amiss in the life of our congregations," wrote Kitchens (2003, p. 3). "Our best efforts at ministry seem to be about a half-beat behind some new pulse that is beginning to course through the culture." This cultural shift may be confusing to baby boomer pastors, according to Kitchens, but it is clearly evidenced in the lives and ministry styles of young pastors who "wonder why congregations and church boards don't 'get' that culture has changed" (p. 4). These young pastors are not afraid of change—instead they understand change as a part of the natural life cycle of the Church in a postmodern society.

The Church and Postmodernity

A Great Rummage Sale

Founding editor of the religion department at *Publisher's Weekly*, Phyllis Tickle (2008) described the monumental change happening in the lifecycle of the Church as *The Great Emergence*. A helpful way to contextualize these seismic shifts that are especially evident in churches throughout North America, according to Anglican Bishop Mark Dyer (2009) is to understand that approximately every 500 years the institutionalized Christianity goes through a mighty and shattering upheaval so that new growth and renewal can occur. In short, the Church has a giant “rummage sale.” Tickle, who likened this rummage sale to the church cleaning out its attic, agreed with Dyer that these upheavals are energetic but rarely benign, and that the result is two new forms of organized religion, where previously there had been only one.

Tickle identified the first of these historical shifts as the Great Transformation, or the beginning of the New Testament church. The second transition was the Great Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. The third enormous shift was the Great Schism, when Chalcedonian Christianity split into the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in the year 1054. At that time, contention was brewing over two major questions: a) whether Mary could be called “Mother of God” and b) how to understand the divine and human natures of Jesus. The fourth major shift in the life of the Church was the Great (Protestant) Reformation of 1517, when the Protestant movement broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, after Martin Luther ostensibly nailed his 95 Theses to the Wittenburg door. According to Tickle, the dates of the third and fourth events (1054 and 1517) are more a matter of convenience than a literal marker of time. Dates allow us “to

feel that we have some grip upon the thing, whether we do or not” she wrote (p. 20).

Tickle believed that just as the Great Schism and the Protestant Reformation were really movements in time rather than a single event, the Great Emergence has been slipping up on the Church (particularly in North America) for decades and its effects will be as profound as the great rummage sales preceding it.

Tickle (2008) and Dyer (2009) aren’t alone in their assessment. More than 30 years ago, Westerhoff (1980) portended that the evangelical world was “in the midst of a change period in history as significant as those in the first, fourth, 11th and 16th centuries. . . . We are facing a period of foundational change” (p. 641).

A Question of Authority

The central issue at stake in the Great Emergence, according to Tickle (2008), is a question of authority, which was also true in both the Great Schism and the Great Reformation:

Now, some five hundred years later [after the Protestant Reformation], even many of the most diehard Protestants among us have grown suspicious of “Scripture and Scripture only.” We question what the words mean—literally? Metaphorically? Actually? . . . We begin to refer to Luther’s principle of “sola scriptura, scriptura sola” as having been little more than the creation of a paper pope in place of a flesh and blood one. And even as we speak, the authority that has been in place for five hundred years withers away in our hands. “Where now is the authority?” circles overhead like a dark angel goading us toward disestablishment. Where indeed? (p. 47)

Gibbs and Bolger (2005) agreed that questions of authority have catapulted the church into a new era. Beginning with Roman emperor Constantine in AD 313, the church was a predominant force in Western societies, providing important stability as a social institution in a period we know as Christendom. Modernity arose around the time of the Renaissance and added epistemological certainty to the mix. However, by the late 19th century, scholar Friedrich Nietzsche began to lay the foundation of postmodern thought as he challenged the idea that there is any absolute truth or moral right (Watkins, 2010). Then, early in the 20th century, philosophers including Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida began to expand on Nietzsche's ideas. By mid-century, modernity began to give way to postmodernity. Subsequently, religion has begun to be understood "in terms of its social and psychological significance, discounting any claims to divine revelation and absolute truth . . . the church as an institution has lost its privileged position and increasingly occupies a place on the margins of society" (Gibbs & Bolger, p. 17).

More recently, McLaren (1999) framed the question of absolute truth as a conflict between the Western modern mindset and Biblical orthodoxy: "We must realize our quest for ultimate absolute objective truth is impossible, if not for the reasons postmodern philosophers raise, then for this reason: the ultimate truth is not an objective concept, not an objective principle, but rather a Person . . ." (p. 45).

Postmodernism is posing questions of authority that for most of its history Christianity was not constrained to answer, according to Lyons-Pardue (2009). These are questions such as "What makes the Bible true?" and "What makes this book more reliable than the Qur'an or the Vedas?" (p. 57). The question of whether one book can be

completely authoritative is intertwined with the postmodern assumption that truth, in large part, depends on one's particular context. "Postmodernism calls into question the pat answers to life's questions that end in 'because the Bible tells me so'" wrote Lyons-Pardue (p. 57). Wright (1991) agreed that interpretations of authority as they pertain to the Bible are changing, arguing that "scripture must be allowed to be itself in exercising its authority, and not be turned into something else which might fit better into what the church, or the world, might have thought its 'authority' should look like" (p. 31).

These implications of changing views of authority ripple into other facets of traditional Christian orthodoxy such as soteriology, according to McKnight (2010). He described the postmodern approach to truth as a "crisis about the certainty . . . or universal truthfulness of the need for redemption in Christ alone" (p. 214). For example, a postmodern Christian might believe redemption through Jesus Christ does not prevent God from redeeming in other ways. Because life offers no universal certainty we have less epistemological confidence; therefore, we are more suspicious of certaintist religion and more responsible for our own spirituality. McKnight described this act of creating a postmodern spirituality:

Like the person who makes a wall of impressed broken glass from random bottles found or decorates her wall with old records from her parent's record player.

What bricolage creates is an assemblage of things, often designed for other purposes or in other contexts, but which forms an organic, self-created whole. (p. 214)

Questions of Self-Identity and Theological Self-Identity

The central question of authority, which manifests itself in the posture of assuming responsibility for one's own spirituality rather than looking to an institution (such as the church) and also in an ambivalence toward the concept of universal truth, brings the discussion back to two questions Tickle (2008) identified as central to the Great Emergence. The first is, "what is the human-ness of the human?" The second is, "what is the relation of all religions to one another?" (p. 73).

Tickle (2008) believed the nature of the first question is the result of a generation of new thinkers, such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Joseph Campbell who challenged the existing modernist definitions of self-identity and captured the imagination of other scientists including biologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and psychologists. Their discussions grew in scope and gained momentum as these thinkers began to scrutinize and move away from the standing definitions of self. The resulting questions are highly personal and emotionally charged: "Who am I, there in the mirror?" . . . "how do I know?" . . . "Can I be held responsible for anything?" (Tickle, pp. 70-71).

Jankowski (2003) agreed that a modernist view led to a contemporary crisis of self because people were conditioned to disengage, that is, to view themselves from the position of an objective observer. In the context of modernity, a person's emotions should be held in check by rational thought, and faulty thinking was the basis for most problems. On the other hand, a postmodern view of self would regard a person's emotional experience as a way of knowing and understanding that was equal in importance to that of reason. As the field of cognitive science advanced, a postmodern narrative metaphor emerged, proposing that experiences are interpreted through biological structures and

then given meaning (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Thus, experiences, actions, thoughts, and perceptions are assimilated by the brain and structured into a narrative or story that a person uses to form a sense of self.

The narrative approach to interpreting and addressing questions about self and human-ness points to questions of cosmology (origins), according to O’Gorman (2001). Cosmology is the story people have that makes meaning of “who we are and all we are related to: rocks, water, plants, animals, and spirit” (p. 354). In pre-scientific times, imagination was our way of knowing. In modern times, imagination was replaced by reason and rationality. In postmodern epistemology, imagination and science are united in a larger narrative. Furthermore, when considering narratives, postmodern thinkers prefer that more than one be told, according to Gibbs and Bolger (2005). A single narrative to explain matters of faith, for instance, is selective and may be distorted. “It is not that postmodern people do not want truth per se, but whose truth A better way is to hear many stories and to discern accordingly, within the context of the community” (Gibbs & Bolger, p. 68).

Hearing many stories and discerning accordingly is tantamount to the second question identified by Tickle (2008) as the heart of the Great Emergence, which can be restated: “how can we live responsibly as devout and faithful adherents of one religion in a world of many religions?” (p. 73). Our minds have been saturated with knowledge of other cultures, lifestyles, and religions, asserted Wells (2008a), mostly because globalization has expanded humanity’s cognitive horizons. This exposure has raised questions of both self-identity and theological self-identity. As Western culture has become more diverse, society has become more tolerant and our awareness has expanded

regarding how others think, what they look like, and what they believe, Wells contended. This exposure helps explain why postmodern Christians may tend to be inclusivists (people can be saved without making a conscious decision about Jesus), universalists (everyone can be saved, even after death) or pluralists (God works in all religions), according to McKnight (2010).

In light of some of the paradigm shifts from modernity to postmodernity, a conversation about whether postmodern Christians could even be considered evangelical began in the 1990s, according to Gibbs and Bolger (2005). Evangelicalism was born in modernity—as cultural change impacted religion would postmodernity allow for a legitimate expression of evangelical theology? This discussion quickly became irrelevant, explained Gibbs and Bolger, mostly because postmodern thinkers weren't interested in unpacking it:

While the question of whether one is an evangelical is a nonissue for many emerging church leaders, whether one is a Protestant [or Catholic] is a nonissue as well. [A London pastor adds,] “To be honest, not very many in my church would have a clue what they are. ‘Becoming Christian’ is probably the answer that 50 percent would give you.” (p. 36)

Tickle (2012) was careful to make a distinction between the changes wrought by postmodernity and the emergent church movement so widely talked about today:

Religion -- not private faith, but religion -- is a sociological and cultural construct; it does not exist independent of the society in which it occurs. . . . The construct we're talking about is *emergence* Christianity. In the same way that Protestantism was a set of sensibilities, a conversation, whatever you want to call it, 500 years

ago, [and] it gave us Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians and Lutherans, so emergence Christianity is the larger construct. And it's giving us emergent Christians and emerging Christians and small-church Christians and neo-monastic Christians and hyphenated Christians and "fresh expressions" Christians . . . It's important that we understand we're talking about emergence Christianity, which is the thing that is part of or coming out of or resulting from and helping to form a larger sociological construct called the Great Emergence. (para 4)

McLaren (2007) agreed that labels are not the important thing, describing the "church emerging" as a growing organism, stretching beyond privileged modern Western Christianity. The challenge facing the church is clearly articulated in this observation made by Kenzo (2007): "Will evangelical faith break or stretch? Therein lies the question" (p. 119).

What Might the Postmodern Church Look Like?

The typical church today is a reflection of modernizing forces, according to McLaren (1999). Younger pastors and parishioners are being propelled beyond modernity into new ways of thinking and doing church, but within a construct that is still in a formational period:

Nearly all churches have so long lived a version of Christianity so enmeshed with modernity that whenever one tampers with their modernity, they react as if they had been "goosed," as if one were poking or pinching the most precious, intimate, personal, and essential dimensions of their faith" (McLaren, p. 36).

Benson (2007) agreed postmodernism is more akin to an attitude that is a reaction to modernity rather than a cleanly packaged set of beliefs. (Interestingly, early in the 20th

century French philosopher Foucault also described modernity as an “attitude,” asserting that prevailing thought had become deeply influenced by cultural and historical conditions.) The postmodern attitude adopts a more humble view of the power of reason than modernity supposed; the result is a postmodern conception of Christianity that is expressed in local congregations by an emphasis on faith and does not need to be legitimized by science as a metanarrative, according to Benson. “This does not mean, though, that one has no reasons for believing, but postmodern Christians recognize that these reasons cannot pass the test of ‘universal reason’” (p. 8). So, in a modern version of Christianity there is “evidence that demands a verdict”; in a postmodern version of Christianity there is no necessity to legitimize belief by scientific “proof” (p. 9).

Lyotard (1979) believed that “incredulity toward metanarratives,” which encompass too much territory to legitimate themselves, is a hallmark of postmodern thought. Benson (2007) wondered if Christianity was such a narrative, concluding that, though it is a “big” story, it may or may not be viewed as a “universal” story. Critics of postmodern thought may equate the word *story* to *fiction*, and yet stories can be true or false, Benson pointed out. “Postmodern Christians see Christianity as a narrative around which they orient their lives” (p. 9).

Though Hauerwas (2013) contended that “‘postmodernism’” merely names an interesting set of developments in the social order that is based on the presumption that God does not matter,” he agreed that even for postmoderns the Christian story requires response:

Postmodernists cannot help but think such a claim to be the grandest of grand narratives, but I cannot imagine Christians saying anything less. Not only saying

it, but also truthfully living and thinking that this is the way things are (2000, p. 43).

Walters (2009) acknowledged that though “we live in a world where there are numerous competing metanarratives we must realize while ‘creation, fall, and redemption are the story of the Bible, but they are also the story of the world in which we live’” (p.1).

Carson (1996) believed that the Bible tells a whole story, and that the metanarrative of Scripture helps provide a context for the Christian faith. Wright (1991) agreed that the biblical story is central to faith:

It is the story which confirms the fact that God had redeemed the world in Jesus Christ. It is the story which breaks open all other world-views and, by so doing, invites men and women, young and old, to see *this* story as *their* story [emphasis in original]. In other words, as we let the Bible be the Bible, God works through us-and it-to do what he intends to do in and for the church and the world. (p. 5)

Hollinger (2002) acknowledged that though postmodern thinkers seem to have an aversion to metanarratives, a Christian view “must affirm that there is a metanarrative in the Bible, and its story of creation, fall redemption, and eschaton is unparalleled in its ability both to make sense of reality and to ground our everyday morality” (p. 122).

Webber (2002) believed that a new generation of Christians grasps theology as an understanding of the world based on the biblical narrative and that they are calling on the church to contextualize the world primarily through the Christian story. What might this narrative-based, postmodern church look like? Though many depictions exist, certain commonalities seem to reoccur.

Four Shifts

Sweet (2000) proposed that postmodern ministry shares a great deal in common with the first century church, and reflects a more biblical vision of life than existed in modernity. He characterized the movement to postmodernity as one of the greatest transitions in history. The first shift Sweet noted is a movement from the rational to the experiential. By this, Sweet denoted that the world has migrated from: (a) an emphasis on things, through (b) an emphasis on knowledge, to (c) an emphasis on experience. “It is quite one thing to talk about God. It is quite another thing to experience God,” Sweet wrote (p. 31). The emphasis on experience is especially evident in worship that is designed to make congregants both feel and think. Stetzer (2003) agreed that postmodern Christians are seeking a spiritual experience, rather than simply a rational faith.

Additionally, postmodern Christians long for a spirituality that is authentic, humble, and honest. God cannot and should not be reduced to an object for consideration, Rollins (2006) pointed out, because “in faith God is experienced as the ultimate subject. God is not a theoretical problem to somehow resolve but rather a mystery to be participated in” (p. 22). And, participating in the Christian experience encompasses the whole of life, according to Scandrette (2007):

What may be unique about the church in its current emergence is a desire to be proficient and passionate in multiple dimensions—because we live with a sense that everything matters and that no part of human experience is outside the light cast by the hope of the Good News of God. (p.28)

The second shift Sweet (2000) enumerated was the movement from a representative faith to participatory one. In the modern context, leadership administered

guidance and generally made decisions for others. In a postmodern context, leadership empowers others to lead, and people are trusted to self-organize (McLagan & Nell, 1995). Flatter structures and an open-source approach to leadership and theology characterize emerging congregations, according to Scandrette (2007), along with greater personal and collective participation. Gibbs and Bolger (2005) asserted that this participation can manifest itself in practices such as more persons contributing to worship, providing opportunities for dialog within worship gatherings, promoting intergenerational connections, and even sharing responsibility for teaching or preaching. This is a painful transition for the modernist church, according to Morgenthaler (2007): “The rules of engagement have changed, and they have changed in favor of those who leave the addictive world of hierarchy to function relationally, intuitively, systemically and contextually. . . the clock is ticking”(p. 188).

The third shift Sweet (2000) named was the migration from a word-based to an image-driven culture. Modern theologians advanced an intellectual faith with reason and order at the center. Now, mystery and metaphor have replaced rationality as the center of spirituality. Postmodern Christians find a faith that is rooted in history very attractive, according to Stetzer (2003). Ancient practices and sacred symbols from ancient traditions represent the mystery of the transcendent and also the recovery of an experiential faith. The postmodern church has restored the centrality of the Eucharist as the central act of worship (Gibbs & Bolger, 2005), emphasizing an ethos of hospitality and inclusion as participants are invited to the Eucharistic table.

The final shift Sweet (2000) identified as central to the postmodern conversation is the shift from individual to individual-communal. The heart of postmodernity is the

experience of the individual-in-community. In a modern context, Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" was the rule of the day (Descartes, 1637/2009). The postmodern context hearkens back to the imagination of pre-modernity; the new mantra is reminiscent of the Xhosa people in southern Africa: "I am because we are" (Gardner, 1999, p. 117). In the postmodern view, the church is a people, not a place; it is a movement, not an institution, explained Gibbs and Bolger (2005). The understanding of church as a network of relationships, not a place where services are held, moves the paradigm from that of institution to kingdom family. The ensuing relationships are understood in terms shared mission and mutual accountability that in turn give rise to gatherings (Gibbs & Bolger). According to Stetzer (2003), "Community is a central value in all postmodern communities whether secular or sacred" (p. 150).

A Missional Community

A further distinction of the postmodern church is the end of the modernist divide between the secular and the sacred, according to Gibbs and Bolger (2005). For postmodern theologians, all of life is sacred and represents the interface between kingdom and culture. The concept of spaces without God, which might be described as secular spaces, is a modernist construct that creates artificial boundaries and discourages interaction with the broader culture. Thus, the postmodern church is incarnational in nature, practicing presence with others and the world (Stetzer, 2003). "A kingdomlike church follows God's mission into the world, because that is where God's mission is located," wrote Bolger (2007, p. 134).

Taking God's mission to the world does not look like traditional modernist evangelism. Indeed, the postmodern church may assume an ecumenical and even

interreligious posture, according to McKnight (2010). Besides borrowing practices and theology from Catholics or Quakers, postmoderns may appreciate spiritual dimensions from other faith traditions, such as Eastern religions. Gibbs and Bolger (2005) asserted that emerging congregations dislike language that subtly classifies people as insiders or outsiders, observing that evangelism takes the form of presence rather than proclamation. One pastor described his relationship with local Muslims as “low key, relational, and nonconfrontational” adding that “maybe over five or ten years the situation might change, as the grace of Christ speaks through my life” (p. 129).

The global vision of postmodern Christians is another hallmark of a changing church, according to Wells (2008b). “In no culture of the world are there privileged understandings of Scripture . . . The word of God does not belong to Westerners. . . . Modernity has taken an unmistakable toll on Western Christianity,” he wrote (p. 33). The global vision of postmodern Christians has helped propel a passion for social justice activism that is reflected in the local church setting, according to McKnight (2010). Scandrette (2007) agreed that emerging congregations have a revitalized interest in the “social dimensions of the gospel of Jesus, including community development, earth-keeping, global justice, and advocacy” (p. 29). Christians are compelled to embrace justice as they understand their lives are part of a bigger sphere of meaning and that simple choices may have global implications, according to Clawson (2009). He explained that living justly would require “developing awareness about the problems in the world; it means changing how we shop, how we dress and how we drive; it means starting to see our each and every action as an ethical choice” (Clawson, p. 14).

The postmodern Christian's passion for justice is born from a theological view of God's interaction with the world and the *Missio Dei*, which represents God's activity to engage and redeem the world (Gibbs & Bolger, 2005). The *Missio Dei* identifies God's purpose in the world, according to Webber (2002), which is to rescue, save, redeem, and restore the world: "The ramifications of the *Missio Dei* are manifold. We do not define God's mission. It defines us. There is no aspect of the Christian life, thought, and ministry that is not connected with God's mission to the world" (p. 241). Wright (2008) also framed the Gospel around an earthly redemption with an emphasis on the Kingdom of God that has come now and includes an invitation for believers to participate in the redemption and restoration of the earth. Justice is an integral part of this restoration and a responsibility of the Christ follower. This missional church, according to Guder (1998) is an instrument of God's desire to restore and heal creation. The process of effecting justice by setting the world right begins at our own doorstep, according to Kitchens (2003) by getting to know the homeless, promoting public reconciliation for the disenfranchised, taking care of the environment, battling consumerism, and a host of other choices.

Though as McKnight (2010) wrote, postmodernity is "hardly more than a wax nose and malleable for anyone who wants to define it" (p. 13), most scholars agree that it is a force reshaping modernist culture and 21st century congregations. Hauerwas (2000) supposed it is important to understand the postmodern phenomenon if one were to attempt to do Christian theology in the present age. For the pastor, the implications are profound.

The Pastor and Postmodernity

The implications of ministry in a postmodern context issue themselves in two ways, according to Kitchens (2003). For pastors doing traditional church, the decline in vitality of their congregations is apparent and deeply concerning; something seems amiss. For young pastors, the frustration is different, Kitchens explained, as they puzzle over why older members want to hold on to traditions that mean nothing to the 20-somethings in their midst. The challenge for young pastors developing a ministerial identity and philosophy can be daunting.

As a Gen Y pastor, Pershey (2005) identified categories of issues that are especially pertinent to young pastors ministering in a postmodern context, a primary one being popular culture. Rather than making a distinction between the secular and the sacred, Pershey suggested that popular culture should be considered as an extension of self. As a result, music, art, and literature become lenses for viewing faith formation. Today's congregants are denizens of a culture they may not even understand, agreed Robinson (2001). Consequently, pastors must be aware that culture shapes and motivates both them and their congregants. Johnston (2001) affirmed that for effective ministry, today's pastors should "demonstrate a scope of understanding and interact critically in the areas of sociology, psychology, current events, and pop culture" (p. 80).

Generational gaps and misunderstandings between young pastors and congregants may be heightened in this quickly changing cultural milieu, according to Pershey (2005), who described her nose piercing as the focus of unwanted attention from some older congregants. "I think [my nose piercing] is cute The meaning attributed to practices rooted in pop culture is subjective The generational tides turn, transforming one

generation's weighty rebellion into another generation's superficial trend" (p. 63).

Accordingly, the young pastor must continue learn how to translate pop culture texts and build bridges so that they can access their congregations, Pershey contended.

Building these bridges can be complicated by the fact younger pastors are part of a generation shaped by a media culture that has affirmed they are ok, according to McKnight (2009). Beginning with television programs such as Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood and Sesame Street these IGens, as McKnight calls them, were raised to embrace diversity, difference and the radical uniqueness of every person. The result is "40 years of education that has focused singularly on self-esteem as the entitlement of each and every person for nothing more than being alive," wrote McKnight (p. 22). This predisposition toward an "I am ok and so are you" worldview can create a disconnect with older believers who view the gospel message as beginning with humanity's sinfulness. Nydam (2006) agreed that the "gospel for today is the good news of relationships. It is not first of all about the God who forgives us but about the God who values us" (p. 329).

Jacobs (2008) affirmed that the Gen X or Y seminarian grew up in a society radically different from that of their parents, suggesting that technological, social and moral changes have created a generational disconnect for these young leaders. Unlike their elders, young aspiring pastors have never known a world without legalized abortion, cable TV, widespread divorce, gay rights, and Internet cafes. Consequently, the challenges young pastors face as they move into lead pastoral positions for the first time may be partially the responsibility of seminaries who are out of step with the 21st century culture. Clayton (2010) suggested young pastors are:

“likely to be assigned to a traditional church that has virtually no youth or younger families present, an average age of 60, and a major budget crisis on its hands. . . . The church members like the old hymns and liturgies; they don’t like tattoos, rock music or electronics So the young pastor . . . struggles to offer the traditional ministry that churches want. (p. 11)

Young clergy are the product of a culture at war, contended Jacobs (2008), faced with an onslaught of issues including substance abuse, pornography addiction, and divorce. “These [seminarians] know the lyrics to more Brittany Spears and Christina Aguilera songs than those of . . . Charles Wesley or Fannie Crosby . . .” (p. 138).

Willimon (2003) suggested that a new world is emerging for the church, reminding leaders that the challenges are an opportunity for growth. To embrace a postmodern approach to ministry, leaders will have to first “de-bug faith from the viruses of modernity,” wrote McLaren (2003, p.173). Bohannon (2009) agreed that radically different approaches to ministry would be necessary for leaders to teach and preach in a postmodern context. McLaren offered such strategies, including a more humble apologetic in regard to faith and truth, more space to experience life and faith without legalism, a listening posture that validates stories instead of forcing them into a propositional framework, and an increased appreciation of art, music, literature and drama. Nydam (2006) suggested a similar approach, calling for a “theological reframing of the nature of God as near more than far, as seeking relationship with us rather than seeking just punishment for our sins, as celebrating creation more than noticing its failures . . .” (p. 330).

More than 25 years ago, Krass (1987) suggested that leaders should challenge the individualism embedded in a modernist world view. He wrote. “. . . As a pastoral leader, I am one traveler on a pilgrimage speaking to and caring for other pilgrims” (p. 313). This shift from the modernist view of pastoral authority parallels the postmodern view of Christian discipleship, in which Wells (2008b) contended there are no “privileged understandings of Scripture, for the Word of God belongs to all people” (p. 32). Krass described his pastoral style this way:

Though I am identified by many in my congregation as a social-action minister, surely I have been called to a pastoral as well as a prophetic ministry. I endeavor to preach holistically and to develop a worship life, educational program and initiatives for action that respond to the whole gamut of human existence. My parishioners expect to see my name at the end of letters to the editor on U.S. foreign policy and local social needs, but they also expect me to pop in to visit them, whether they are sick or well. (p. 311)

Kitchens (2003) suggested that to become more compatible with postmodern sensibilities, clergy should distance themselves from the label “professional Christian” and their tacit status as congregational CEO. According to Yount (1996), the CEO model is badly out of balance with the biblical model for church life. The fundamental calling of the pastor, Yount believed, is to equip congregants for works of service, that is, to teach. This task can be a challenge when pastors are no longer regarded as authority figures in society or even in their own congregations, according to Clayton (2010). Instead, media is the primary authority for information in a postmodern age, and self-help books or blogs are more likely than the pastor to influence what one believes. To posture oneself as an

effective teacher or preacher for discipleship in a postmodern context, Cline (1999) noted these essential characteristics: the pastor should be credible and authentic; and the message should be biblical, experiential, relevant, simple, and practical.

McLaren (1999) agreed that a change is necessary when leaders consider doing church in a postmodern age:

Whenever we approach the church, we come as subjects in a predicament, not like an abstracted physicist listening to a lecture, but like a castaway on a desert island finding bottles on the beach with notes inside, notes about how to survive, how to be rescued. (p. 45)

Interestingly, in the midst of such cultural shifts, teaching about faith and planning for worship remain the top task priorities for both Oldline Protestant and Evangelical Protestant clergy, according to the American Congregations report of 2500 churches (Roozen, 2008). In the survey, 83% of Evangelical Protestant clergy reported that they spent a great deal or quite a bit of time teaching about the faith and 71% reported spending a great deal or quite a bit of time planning for worship. Of Oldline Protestant clergy, 74% reported spending a great deal or quite a bit of time teaching about the faith and 89% reported spending a great deal or quite a bit of time planning for worship.

Kitchens (2003) described the current era as one where pastors in almost every faith tradition are struggling to redefine their roles and to find creative ways to make faith formation relevant to their parishioners. One young pastor reported that the most difficult challenge for him in parish ministry was moving people beyond cultural idols into a new way of thinking and talking about faith without resorting to “cliches, advice or finger-

shaking” (Long, 2011, p. 30). Kitchens agreed that while new methods are necessary, pastors must continue to move forward using the tools they presently have at hand:

We serve congregations who have one foot in a Christendom era passing from the scene and one foot in the dawning postmodern, post-Christian, and post-denominational world We want to see clearly. . . . But we know that it may be some years before we will. The cultural context for our ministry is shifting so rapidly that we don’t have the luxury of waiting till we can see new forms of ministry clearly. We need to start moving while cultural cataracts still blur our vision. (p. 102)

Congregational Faith Formation and Postmodernity

Moving forward with the work of spiritual formation and discipleship is increasingly challenging as the effects of postmodernity manifest themselves in the everyday work, worship, and witness of ordinary congregations, according to Johnson (2001). Pastors’ attitudes toward spirituality and discipleship must accommodate the person in the pew who brings with them a whole new agenda and set of assumptions including antipathy toward organized religion, suspicion of institutions and changing views of authority. In response, pastors and leaders are changing the vocabularies they use to address ministry and leadership. For example, “Christian education” has become “spiritual formation” and “nurturing the Christian life” has become “nurturing the interior life” (p. 310). Using softer language such as formation vs. education appeals to the postmodern sensibilities, Johnson explained. Maddix (2009) noted that both language and practice should be changed in order for postmodern ministry to be successful: “Effective postmodern Christian education will require a renovation of current Christian educational

ministries to include new avenues of discipleship and Christian formation Old wineskins must be replaced with new wineskins” (p. 127). In the midst of such change, American interest in spiritual matters will thrive, according to Clayton (2010), who asserted that new associations and shared practices will resonate with a younger generation of people who are exploring what it means to be Christian in a postmodern world. “The discussion of religious themes,” he wrote, “will grow in intensity and urgency” (p. 8).

Bridging the congregational divide between modernity and postmodernity begins with rethinking the central task of Christian education, believed Johnson (2001). There has been a tension between those who emphasize Christian education as a promotion of orthodoxy (right believing, a matter of the head), orthopraxis (right living, a matter of the hands) and orthokardia (being the right kind of person, a matter of the heart). Proponents of each of these viewpoints register objections about the other camps: perhaps orthodoxy over-intellectualizes faith, perhaps orthopraxis emphasizes social justice to the detriment of love for God, or perhaps orthokardia depends too much on experience. Johnson (1989) proposed that the task of postmodern pastors, teachers, and leaders is to empower believers to “acquire *orthodoxy*, *orthopraxis*, and *orthokardia* as complex, interrelated, integrated dimensions of their fundamental character and self-identity as Christians (p. 314). She had defined spiritual formation previously as the dynamic, lifelong process of becoming and being Christian.

Christian education has historically played a role in spiritual formation, according to Prevost (2001), who asserted that spirituality can be understood as a universal attribute of human beings and the work of religious educational institutions has traditionally been

to shape persons holistically. With the advent of postmodernity, educational models have shifted from a focus on transmitting knowledge to a focus on experiential and inductive forms of teaching that engage students in their own contexts, explained Maddix (2009). The postmodern teacher operates as facilitator more than a knowledge disseminator. Johnson (2001) agreed that postmodern models emphasize action-reflection modes of learning over transmissive ones and focus on the learner's subjectivity rather than the objective material being taught. Maddix suggested that teaching in a postmodern context includes these characteristics:

- Learning communities (characterized by dialogue, critical analysis, questions, and cross perspectival conversation);
- Thinking context (exploration of difficult question and paradoxes, allowing struggle without tension);
- Safe environment (environment of tolerance, mutual respect, love, and acceptance);
- Transformation (focus on the unique characteristics of learners created in the likeness of God). (p. 128)

Cullinan (2001) believed that one source of intergenerational conflict in the church today is the tension between the desire of Generation X to learn to experience God for themselves and the critical attitudes of an older generation who is loyal to traditional methods of teaching and interpreting the Christian faith. One emerging congregation, Urban Village, named its primary adult education vehicle the School of Theology, and offered a year round curriculum including courses on topics such as medieval spirituality, theology and film, beginning Hebrew, consumerism in the church,

and spiritual formation in the outdoors (Gallagher & Newton, 2009). Additionally, there are special spiritual formation classes offered specifically for men and for women throughout the year. Members of Urban Village described their perceptions of spiritual growth as cultivating an authentic relationship with God that manifests itself in relational authenticity with others and oneself. Urban Village discussion group participants identified the means of spiritual growth in their congregations as authentic relationships, dialogue, and community. One woman described her desire for community as central to her motivation to grow spiritually: “There’s such a relief or comfort knowing that we’re all screwed up. But knowing that we are all human and that there is not one person that is better because they seem to have it all together” (Gallagher & Newton, p. 253).

The power of the faith community to form people spiritually was a matter of lively discussion by Christian educators as far back as the late 1980s, according to Dysktra (1987):

Faith is formed, developed, and owned in the context of communitiesThe beliefs, values, attitudes, stories, rituals, and moral practices of one’s faith community are the human forces most powerful in shaping a person’s spiritual journey.

There seems to be general consensus on this matter among religious educators at the present time. Within this consensus however, there also seems to be some uneasiness. . . . There are so many socializing and enculturating forces working in people’s lives in our contemporary, highly mobile and pluralistic culture that the formative power of faith communities, especially congregations,

seems rather weak in comparison. Furthermore, congregations are not always all that faithful. (p. 530)

More than 30 years later, the consensus of scholars is that community does indeed form people spiritually, and that this formation leads to positive outcomes. Wimberly (2003) described congregations as in the business of “wisdom formation,” teaching people to develop a life perspective that helps them to live with hope and faith, attain practical wisdom, and interface responsibly in the community (p. 14). To accomplish these goals, a congregation must adopt the posture that wisdom formation is a “God-given, communally-guided, and socially-transforming quality that is associated with our knowing, understand, appreciating, and acting on what it means to sojourn as a Christian” (p. 15). This growth cannot happen in isolation, stipulated Wimberly.

Most of the time, the real work of communal spiritual formation in emerging congregations is happening outside the church building itself, in small groups, according to Gibbs and Bolger (2005). These groups may meet on a regular schedule or be fluid in their organization. “Buildings and professionalism create a deformed spiritual formation. The church in a place contains and confines spirituality too much,” said Creech (as cited in Gibbs & Bolger, p. 99). Schwab (2006) agreed that congregational spiritual formation should be centered around daily mission, asserting that the institutional church in the current cultural context is generally excluded from participating in decisions that shape everyday life. The “vital need for the church today is to center on helping the members in their daily place—their daily mission fields,” he wrote (p. 35).

Implications for Theology

In this new cultural landscape with its changing views of Christian education and spiritual formation, what is to become of theology? asked Clayton (2010). A general interest in theology seems to be declining as church-goers seem more intent on learning about the beliefs of other religious traditions, exploring ethical issues in society, or taking up the task of spiritual formation. “Theology after Google” means engaging in open discourse about contemporary culture, religion, and philosophy without being committed in advance to landing where previous theologians have landed, according to Clayton (p. 9). The implication of this posture is that theology is now moving out of the academy and into local congregations, exploring the questions that all Christians ask and considering answers that ordinary people might give, no matter how tentative. “For the next two decades,” wrote Sweet (2012), “the primary missional challenge of the church will be to incarnate the gospel in a Google world.

Rees (2006) noted that during the adult Christian education movement a generation ago, Edge (1971) suggested that local churches should function as miniature theological seminaries. Edge believed churches would become mature communities by focusing on a core curriculum in five areas: Bible, theology, church history, missions, and ethics. Although this emphasis on educating laypersons was forward thinking in a time when theology was seen as a function of the professional pastor, Rees observed that the concept of a “curriculum” would not be appropriate in today’s context. Central to understanding the shift from a professional view of theology to an understanding of all people as theologians is the reclaiming of the priesthood of the believer, according to Rees. The vision of the entire Christian community as a priesthood implies that God is

known in many places and forms; it is the charge of the all the people to know God and seek what he is doing. Theology is now seen as a continuing conversation, Rees explained, in which everyone is engaged.

Clayton (2010) affirmed that theology in a postmodern context doesn't offer prepackaged answers, as it has in the past. He offered five observations about theology in context of local congregations:

- Theology is not something you consume, but something you produce. In the Age of Gutenberg, you read theology in a book or heard it in a sermon. Now, you practice theology when you respond to blogs, participate in worship, or talk about God in a pub with your friends.
- No institutions, and very few persons, function as authority for theology. In the early 1960s, the pastor was still a major authority. Not today.
- Theology is not centralized and localized. Likewise, the church is not localized in a single building. We find church wherever we find Jesus followers doing cool things.
- Theology does not divide the world between the sacred and the secular.
- The new Christian pastor hosts a conversation and does not act as an authority who dispenses settled truths, wide word, and the sole path to salvation. (p. 15)

Clayton (2010) further explained that though the notion of pastor as host is becoming more common, almost no one has considered what it might mean to understand theologians as hosts. Traditionally, a theologian was a keeper of the faith; today, he or she is a convener and participator in the discussion.

Congregations that are characterized by theologically informed members who “understand themselves as shaping meaning in a community of shared practice” could be described as learning congregations, according to Hawkins (1997, p. 141). Members of learning congregations consider themselves as co-creators of congregational life and believe that education occurs as they think, learn, grow and change together (Price, 2004). Brock (2001) affirmed that a “thinking” environment, where members use rational and intellectual skills to openly struggle with controversial issues of faith, is essential for the spiritual formation process:

While acknowledging that critical thinking skills can be taught in formal settings, a class or program [that] is not enough. Rather, the use of critical thinking skills must become a congregational mindset . . . the fabric of congregational life. (p. 374)

The Changing Sunday School

As modernity has melted into postmodernity and understandings of Christian education and spiritual formation have changed, institutions like traditional Sunday school have borne the impact. Decades ago, the institution of Sunday school was regarded as the teaching ministry of a congregation and the primary way a congregation reflected its identity as a teaching community, according to Strommen (1983). Sunday school was not “an auxiliary function, but rather the teaching church in action” (p. 341).

However, as early as the 1950s, some began to sound a faint warning that something might be amiss in the way churches were approaching Christian education, especially Sunday school. In 1953, Spaulding noted that though growth in Sunday school enrollment (6.2%) was keeping pace with the increase in the U.S. population (2.2%), it

was not keeping pace with the increase in church membership (8.3%). According to Landis (1951), there existed 229,000 Sunday schools in 1951, with a total enrollment of nearly 29 million students and approximately one teacher for every 10 students. For Protestant churches, Sunday school enrollment averaged 55% of church membership. Only four denominations with a membership of more than 100,000 reported a larger Sunday school enrollment than church attendance; these included Churches of God (Anderson and Cleveland, TN.), United Pentecostal, and the Church of the Nazarene.

In the late 1970s, Cully (1977) predicted that the decline of Sunday school was on the horizon, largely due to the onset of cultural change. “Sunday is no longer a day of rest . . . [Sunday is a day] for getting away from it all—and this includes the church,” she wrote (p. 82). The future effectiveness of Sunday school would depend on leaders who were flexible enough to “show concern for the Christian nurture of people according to their individual and family needs. . . . This requires imaginative planning and the willingness to inquire freely and curiously into the future” (p. 93).

By the early 1980s the trend was undeniable, according to Strommen (1983), who decried the decline in Sunday school enrollment that had come to characterize most mainline denominations. The statistical decline in the U.S. population for the years 1970-1975 for persons under 18 years old was 4.9%; the decline in Sunday school enrollment for that same time period averaged 10.1% for the eight largest Protestant denominations. In part, Strommen tied this decline to a marked shift in societal values, a change that Roozen and Hoge (1979) identified as beginning in the mid-1960s. This shift was especially apparent in young people and was typified by greater tolerance and freedom with respect to sexual mores, and also an emphasis on individualism and tolerance for

diversity. Strommen contended that to remain relevant in the future, the Sunday school would need to show “greater attention to what has been the genius [of the institution], communicating the faith to students [of all ages]” (p. 345).

Westerhoff (1980) affirmed the value of Sunday school as an institution while admitting that in certain circumstances even the most enduring institutions do die. His depiction of the context in which this might happen seems eerily prophetic: if enticing lay ministries were to emerge, if styles of worship were to change, if activities at times other than Sundays were to become more vital to family life, and if churches were to become smaller and more communal (pp. 639-640). Westerhoff identified two trends that he believed would contribute to the environment he described: (a) a renewed hunger for a spirituality formed in community, and (b) a renewed interest in worship as family-oriented, participatory and communal. Ultimately, Westerhoff contended that Christianity was facing a period of foundational change, when existing understandings of the church’s educational mission and the Sunday school were embedded in a historical period that was ending:

The issue is more than a matter of better education—schooling and instruction.

The issue is foundational; the questions are as profound: What are Christian faith, revelation, and vocation? How is faith understood as perception enhanced and enlivened? How is divine revelation understood as the experience of a living acting God made known? How is our vocation understood as life in the spirit; i.e., reflective action in persona, social, political and economic life? (p. 641)

As questions like these began to shape the conversation of a new generation of pastors and leaders, Hull (2009) confirmed that educational philosophies are driven by

the logic that curriculum is not neutral, and that every form of Christian education is informed by a world and a life view.

Resourcing the Postmodern Pastor

What kinds of resources do pastors want and need to do ministry in the midst of a changing cultural landscape? The shifting worldview of a postmodern generation has driven pastors to search for new ways of growing people spiritually, according to Flory and Miller (2004). In a study of four congregations from differing faith traditions, Gallagher and Newton (2009) developed the following baseline definition of spiritual growth: “Spiritual growth is a process that involves an expanding assessment and mastery of one’s religious narrative and attachment to one’s tradition, expressing itself through greater participation in corporate and private worship and institutional involvement” (p. 237). Gallagher and Newton found that in an emerging congregation, the consensus existed that spiritual growth centered around “relationships with God, family, and friends within the church and the broader community. Authenticity in each of these areas was both a means of spiritual growth and its end” (p. 258).

Flory and Miller agreed that the post-boomer generation has embraced an “expressive communalism” in which spiritual fulfillment and expression have been created in much different ways than in previous generations. Within these young Christians, Flory and Miller have described two groups: *cultural reappropriators* who are embracing liturgical traditions, and *cultural innovators* who are using digital technology to create a religious experience that uses all of their senses (p. 32). For the first group, spiritual formation may involve stained glass, icons, incense, and liturgical resources. One Episcopal priest described these young believers as saying, “We don’t want to be

entertained, we want to be challenged. We want to be called to sanctity. We want to learn how to pray” (p. 33). For the second group, innovating to create new traditions may include painting, prayer stations, or other interactive, experience-focused activities. Both cultural reappropriators and cultural innovators desire a connection to the past and seek intentionally small congregations, explained Flory and Miller.

Webber (2002) agreed that 20-something evangelicals (as opposed to two other older groups he identifies, traditional and pragmatic evangelicals) affirm the Christian story by embracing the past. He also believed that they gravitate toward small, intimate communities. Resourcing them will require an understanding that they think the old gospel story must be lived out. Black (1998) wrote that this generation is “looking for new ways to serve others. There is indeed apathy toward big programs, big ministries, big ideologies, and big solutions” (p. 49).

The younger evangelical is highly visual and has a facility with technology that has shaped their ways of knowing and learning, according to Webber (2002). Generations X and Y are inclined to view technology as a grace that allows them to create, suggested Foley (2005). Their emphasis on visual mediums gives them an affinity for communicating through stories and embracing the power of imagination. Because story communication is a centerpiece of this generation the church is free to tell stories, suggested Taylor (as cited in Webber, 2002). “There is no greater or more meaningful story than that of God’s involvement in history This is the good story postmoderns are waiting to hear” (p. 50). For postmoderns, these stories may be expressed in performing arts and also classical art, which is understood as a witness to the Kingdom of God and a way to participate in God’s redemptive work in the world.

Webber (2002) also described young postmodern Christians as being committed to intergenerational ministry and multicultural congregations. They desire to be around their parents, grandparents, or other older mentors, and they do not want to be separated into a group of their own. Highly relational, they seek out diverse and intergenerational communities in order to form relationships with persons of all ages. Where Christian education is concerned, they prefer intergenerational formation within community, where all the participants are seen as both learners and teachers. Instead of learning happening in a traditional Sunday school or classroom setting, it may happen in a coffee shop, bookstore, arts center, or home group. To promote spiritual formation in such settings it is necessary to move beyond fundamentalist theology (do's and don'ts) in order to provide opportunities for authentic dialogue about the symbols and practice of faith, according to Webber.

The implications of postmodern thought on resourcing pastors for evangelism and traditional missionary work are significant, according to McKnight (2009). Older models of evangelism that began by making a person aware of their own sinfulness should be replaced with a relational model that begins and ends with an emphasis on the love of God. The spiritual struggle of Gen Y, agreed Nydam (2006), is not guilt for sin but a pervading emptiness. "What gets through the personal membrane [of Gen Y] are the connections with others and society that have relational value" (p. 323). Foley (2005) suggested that for a postmodern generation, both evangelism and mission work "is not a one-way transfer of knowledge, culture, and salvation but a mutually enriching encounter at the personal, spiritual, and cultural levels" (p. 49).

In a survey of more than 2300 pastors representing 15 denominations, LifeWay Research (2012) explored how churches are encouraging spiritual formation by identifying practices and resources that pastors are using to disciple congregants. Respondents indicated that during the past two years they have changed their approach to discipleship in the following ways:

- Greater than 90% of pastors say they are increasing their emphasis on Biblical knowledge.
- Nearly all churches are placing more emphasis on moving participants to act.
- Approximately 75% of churches are using technology more
- More than 40% are encouraging church leaders to create their own studies/lessons more
- About half of churches are putting more emphasis on discipleship outside of planned church activities.
- Over 70% of churches are using published curriculum more
- Over 80% of churches are placing more emphasis on people serving in the local community.
- Over 90% of churches are placing more emphasis on building relationships with those outside of the church. (pp. 5-10)

Roehlkepartain and Benson (1996) reported findings that could support the continued importance of resourcing pastors in faith formation efforts. In a study of 11,000 adults from 561 congregations representing six denominations, they found that involvement in Christian education was a high predictor of levels of faith maturity. “In

other words, people with stronger faith are distinguished particularly from others by their connection to Christian education” (p. 26). Additional factors in congregational life that contribute to faith maturity include family religiousness, a warm congregational climate, a thinking climate, a caring climate, and spiritually uplifting worship. The content of Christian education was also deemed important; the study found the most effective programs “blend the participants’ life experiences with Bible study and theological inquiry” (p. 29). Four general themes emerged:

1. Content builds on a solid foundation of Bible study, reflection, and interpretation.
2. Participants are challenged to explore core theological concepts relating to who God is.
3. Biblical and theological reflection occurs within the context of life experience and issues.
4. Content seeks to expand participants’ worldview by addressing social issues and Christian responsibility. (p. 29)

The LifeWay Research (2012) survey reinforced the findings that Christian education still plays an important role in local congregations and is a vehicle for spiritual formation of adult congregants. Adult Sunday school was chosen by 52% of respondents as the *most important discipling ministry for adults*, followed by small groups at 25%. The majority of the most important discipling ministry events meet on Sunday morning and nearly all of those meet at church or in a home. As it pertains to resourcing congregations for discipleship, LifeWay Research reported the following:

- The majority of churches use printed material in their most important discipling ministry.
- Nearly 90% of pastors say their current discipleship resources are effective.
- The two most important outcomes hoped for from discipleship ministries are (1) to better understand Scripture and its meaning, and (2) to develop a greater faith in Christ.
- Approximately 75% of pastors say they prefer a topical approach for teaching adults
- More than 85% of pastors say that for teaching adults they prefer an approach that shows how each event and concept fits the whole story of the Bible.
- Approximately 50% of pastors say that they try to incorporate video or computer technology when teaching adults.
- Almost 70% of pastors say that classes and small groups are the primary network to mobilize their church.
- Nearly 75% of pastors say they have an action or service-oriented approach to spiritual development. (pp. 10-15)

As younger, postmodern evangelicals move into positions of leadership, will the attitudes and practices reflected in the responses of current and past studies remain consistent? Webber (2002) predicted that the leadership congregations will experience in the future will be very different than the traditional and pragmatic leadership of past generations. Traditional evangelical leadership was shaped in response to the

fundamentalist/modernist controversy that valued reason, according to Webber: “The traditional movement, its churches, publishing houses, mission boards, seminary and college education have been and are now shaped by an apologetic Christianity that is fueled by the desire to be right” (p. 240). The pragmatic movement was likewise shaped by modernity; the focus was market driven as evidenced by its emphasis on church growth strategies, programs, and religious consumerism. In contrast, the leadership of the future, shaped by younger evangelicals, will not be driven by a desire to meet people’s needs nor by a desire to be right. Instead, Webber described a new paradigm for ministry:

The leadership of the younger evangelical is not shaped by being right, nor is it driven by meeting needs. Instead, it arises out of (1) a missiological understanding of the church, (2) theological reflection, (3) spiritual formation, and (4) cultural awareness. . . . These four areas represent a *circle* of leadership, so there is not a correct point of entrance, nor a linear sequence of understandings through which a person must travel. Enter at any point and the entire arena explodes with connections and interrelationships that continue to expand in numerous directions, none of which come to closure. Consequently, the leadership from the younger evangelicals will be dynamic, organic, and continuously changing paths as it constantly responds to change and to the hope of the eschatological reign of God over all creation. (p. 240)

The implications of resourcing this new generation of pastors is a challenge shared by all denominational publishers, according to Anderson (as cited in Protestant Christian Publishers Association [PCPA], 1998), who contended that the most

fundamental question is one that has not been adequately asked: “What resources do you need and want to help you . . . ?” (p. 18).

The Implications for Denominational Publishers

The dawn of postmodern pastors and leaders has affected denominations in virtually every faith tradition, according to Kitchens (2003), who labeled the postmodern paradigm “postdenominational” (p. 22). One manifestation of this postdenominational trend is that brand loyalty has waned, and that pastors and leaders are likely to pay more attention to what is happening in their particular circles of interest than what is coming out of their denominational headquarters. “The average church member feels very little loyalty to a particular church tradition,” Kitchens wrote (p. 22).

The trend of waning loyalty to institutions has created problems for denominational publishers who exist to serve formerly loyal constituencies. In a study of 2200 Protestant congregations from 29 North American denominations conducted by the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association (PCPA), Anderson noted that the “fastest growing ‘denomination’ in the United States is independent churches” (PCPA, 1998, p. 2). Further, existing denominational churches are becoming increasingly independent-like, preferring to adopt names without a denominational label (e.g. New Beginnings Church rather than New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene). “Few denominations are losing present or potential members to a single competing denomination; the greater competition is from independent and independent-like churches,” wrote Anderson (as cited in PCPA, 1998). As a corollary, one in three denominational pastors or leaders said they are moving away from using traditional curricula published by their respective denominations (PCPA, 1998). Instead, they prefer

to use materials that minimize denominational distinctives or emphasize the non-sectarian teachings of the Bible.

In the midst of this cultural change, some churches are adapting and thriving and others are probably destined to die, observed Anderson (as cited in PCPA, 1998). The same is true for denominational publishing houses, he wrote. Some are the “beneficiaries of strong and growing denominations, [others] may be struggling for survival and effectiveness as part of denominations long past peak and quietly wondering about their own long-term viability. . . . The close-to-crashing [publishers] may be beyond human counsel” (p. 2).

Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association leadership (PCPA, 2012) confirmed that the last 30-plus years have been a turbulent time for denominational publishers as many denominations experienced declining enrollment and attendance. During this period, many PCPA members felt the adverse financial effects of declining loyalty and an erosion of trust in denominations. In a brief history of the PCPA, the organization described the challenge shared by its member publishers in recent years:

The volatility continued in the 1990s and in the early part of the new century.

Many if not most PCPA members experienced a decline in sales as their denominations continued to lose members, the denominational loyalty of churches continued to decline, competition increased, and Sunday School attendance (and sales of curriculum) declined. (para. 4)

Interestingly, in the 1998 PCPA study, although 94% of respondents said there was a need for denominational publishers to exist, 25% said they did not use denominational resources for reasons such as: other material worked better for them,

there was a lack of need for what is being published, and there was lack of awareness of products produced by their denominational publishers (Wiese, 1998, p. 9). Younger pastors and laity were more likely to express dissatisfaction with resources and to say that their congregational resourcing needs were not fully met. Likewise, younger laity was less likely to have strong denominational loyalty and did not want strong denominational orientation in materials. Laypersons were also more likely to be involved in para-church organizations and to be aware of a whole range of resource options. More than 85% of leaders surveyed said they try to use the best materials, no matter who published them, and 60% reported they use material from a wide variety of publishers. End-users of products (e.g., laypersons, teachers) were unlikely to have any direct contact with a denominational publisher, and were primarily influenced by bookstore offerings and non-denominational communications (Weise).

The attitudes toward Sunday school have apparently shifted in ensuing years, especially among younger pastors. In the 1998 PCPA survey of approximately 4100 pastors representing more than 2200 congregations, 90% of respondents reported their churches had some form of Sunday school, though only 61% of those reported purchasing Sunday school curriculum from their denominational publishing house. In a 2012 survey of 2300 churches also commissioned by the PCPA and conducted by LifeWay Research, only 39% of young pastors identified Sunday School as their most important discipling ministry for adults, although 80% of the total did so (LifeWay Research, 2012).

Nazarene Publishing House (n.d) has been no exception to the trend of changing attitudes about Sunday school. In North America, Nazarene Sunday school attendance

dropped 9% from 2000-2010; the decline in curriculum sales during that period was 25%. When coupled with the decline in sales of the other two product lines that make up NPH business—books and music—the results are ominous: in the last decade NPH sales have decreased from \$25 million to \$16 million and as of this writing and have not appeared to reach a plateau.

The crisis facing denominational publishers is not totally unexpected. In addition to curriculum and small group materials, most denominational houses publish theological and ministry books as well. As early as 1988, onlookers interested in cultural trends suggested that publishers of theological books would clearly face challenges in the future, according to Wheeler (1988):

There is a widespread tendency to take book publishing for granted . . . but recent publishing developments suggest that this assumption is no longer true. Changes in the structure and economics of book publishing have diminished the chances that the smaller markets formed by readers with specialized interests will be served. The mainline Protestant audience of academics, clergy and laity . . . make up one such market. Currently the market is served by an assortment of denominational publishers Various factors, however, make it no longer clear what publishers will be willing and able in the future to produce . . . for a mainline Protestant audience. (para 1).

One such significant challenge that has emerged for denominational publishers is the direct competition that has come from larger trade publishers, according to Cole (2006). Larger publishers that previously viewed religion as just a small niche market have determined to develop whole lines of products bearing religious imprints, such as

Time Warner Faith. Because these larger publishers have more capital, they can spend more money to attract big name religious authors, invest in marketing, and offer discounted products. With these limitations, acquiring shelf space can be challenging for smaller publishers, noted Cole. Additionally, big box stores such as WalMart and Costco require deep discounts and return privileges that many small publishers are not able to accommodate (C.H. Weathers, personal communication, July 12, 2012).

Christian publishing houses are facing challenges that are likely to increase as time goes on, contended Thornton (2008). These challenges include a digital revolution that is fundamentally changing the industry: “Just like the iPod radically changed the music industry [e-readers] will change the publishing world,” Thornton wrote (p. 2). Between the years 2008-2010, e-book sales increased from 9 million units to 112 million units and revenues grew from \$1.8 billion to \$3.4 billion, according to the BookStats (2011) comprehensive study of the publishing industry. During the same period, revenues and unit sales for print books decreased, suggesting the shifting preferences of consumers who were moving to platforms such as Kindle, Nook, and iPad. In January 2012, 29% of Americans owned at least one digital reading device (Books by the Numbers, 2012).

As a result of the explosion, publishing houses of all sizes are facing several key strategic issues, according to BookStats (2011). These concerns include managing the transition from higher-priced print books to lower-priced e-books, managing the production of multiple media formats, and developing content for new electronic delivery systems (BookStats). Nowhere do small publishers feel the effects of digital technology more than in their dealings with Amazon, especially when it comes to consumer expectations for low-price e-books, reported Henricks (2012):

In 1455, Johannes Gutenberg produced his famous “Bible” . . . launching what would become in subsequent centuries the modern publishing industry. In 1995, Jeff Bezos sold the first book through Amazon.com, launching what would produce in less than 20 years the end of the modern publishing industry.

Hyperbole? Perhaps not, when the earth-shaking influence of the e-commerce giant’s recent moves in publishing are taken into account . . . Bezos’ legacy may be as significant 500 years from now as Gutenberg’s is today. (p. 12)

Swirling around the e-book phenomenon is the evolving debate over digital rights management (DRM), according to Beisser (2012). “At the end of the day, should there be any difference between what you can do with an e-book and what you can do it its physical forebear?” Beisser asked (p. 16). Locking titles so that they cannot be pirated is an expensive and inconvenient process that small publishers may not be able to undertake, Beisser noted.

A final consequence of the digital revolution is that nearly every person or church has the capability on-site to create and print materials, according to Sweet (2012). “Think how omnipresent printing has become,” he wrote. “Just about every home has its own printing press hooked up to a laptop or desktop computer” (p. 5). The implications for denominational publishers are profound: “With technology at members’ fingertips, why do churches, especially large churches, need denominational publishers?” reflected NPH President Hardy Weathers. He continued:

Like most denominational publishers, NPH is facing a perfect storm. We are in a cultural tsunami as we make the shift from modernity to postmodernity.

Denominational loyalty is fading. Traditional curriculum with a scope and

sequence is no longer considered important or relevant in many church settings.

At the same time, the book industry has been upended to the point it's almost impossible for small publishers to make a profit. To survive and thrive, we must change. (C. H. Weathers, personal communication, September , 2012)

It was the purpose of this study to explore the attitudes of young pastors toward spirituality and discipleship in their congregations. An examination of the literature suggested that postmodernity is influencing the church of the future. If denominational publishers hope to remain relevant, it will be important that their leaders understand the implications of these shifting attitudes in order to resource a new generation of a pastors. To that end, this dissertation project was conceived.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to serve better an audience of young pastors who, depending on their preferences, may or may not comprise the future customer base of Nazarene Publishing House (NPH), it was necessary to explore a breadth of attitudes and preferences these pastors demonstrated in an array of areas. Consequently, this study considered pastors' outlooks on ministerial priorities, theology and doctrine, discipleship resources, sermon preparation, denominational loyalty, and buying habits. NPH produces and sells resources in all of these arenas in order to equip pastors for ministry. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus that the work of the pastor is "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12). Coming alongside young pastors in their work requires NPH to appreciate the nuances of thinking particular to them and adjust its strategy accordingly.

In an effort to understand the attitudes and preferences of a young demographic of pastors in the Church of the Nazarene, the researcher identified four key questions:

1. What are the ministry priorities of Church of the Nazarene pastors 35 years old or younger?
2. What are the attitudes of these pastors about spiritual growth in their congregations?

3. What types of resources do these pastors seek in order to foster spiritual growth in their congregants?
4. What are the implications for denominational publishers, such as Nazarene Publishing House?

Research Design

This applied research project involved addressing a problem that was significantly impacting the researcher's immediate working environment "with the goal of solving an ongoing problem in that environment" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 44). In that sense, this endeavor was akin to action research, with the problem being the accelerating decline in sales to young pastors experienced by NPH. The project used a mixed-methods design, which began by gathering quantitative data from Church of the Nazarene pastors in the form of a survey. According to Salkind (2009), survey research affords the best application of sampling and is helpful in examining the constructs of beliefs, attitudes, preferences and opinions. Additionally, self-administered surveys have the advantages of being easily distributed to a large population and allowing respondents to respond anonymously (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). Because the task of resourcing pastors as a denominational publisher requires a breadth of understanding about their views on a wide array of spiritual issues, the survey in this study was broad in scope.

With assistance from the research department at the Global Ministries Center of the Church of the Nazarene (GMC), the researcher designed a 135-item survey instrument as shown in Appendix A consisting of 131 Likert-type questions interspersed with 4 open-ended questions. According to Mitchell & Jolley (2012), there are distinct advantages to including both Likert-type and open-ended questions in a survey

instrument. Likert-type items are assumed by most psychologists to yield interval data and hold the potential of powerful statistical analysis. Open-ended questions help mitigate the risk of putting words in participants' mouths and also increase the opportunity to discover the beliefs behind responses to the fixed-alternative questions (300).

In order to answer research question one, the first portion of the survey used in this study was adapted from Blizzard's (1955) *Role Preference Instrument*, which is a seminal work. Blizzard's classic study identified six roles practiced by Protestant ministers and explored pastors' attitudes about how important these roles were, how much the pastors enjoyed them, and how much time they spent in each role. Blizzard's analysis was used in Southerland's (1993) study of ministerial priorities in Baptist pastors. With permission, the instrument used in this portion of the research was modeled after Blizzard and Southerland. Following the examination of role preferences were 11 Likert-type items intended to clarify further pastors' understandings of their ministerial priorities. This section comprised pages one and two of the survey instrument.

In order to answer research questions two and three (exploring pastors' attitudes and preferences regarding spirituality and discipleship), the second and largest portion of the survey used in this research was a combination of Likert-style items developed by the researcher with the aid of Research Services at the GMC and items adapted from an existing instrument developed by LifeWay Research, Inc. The items written by the researcher examined pastors' understandings of salvation, the Bible, and evangelism as each pertained to a philosophy of faith formation in congregations. Additional questions explored the sources of authority from which the pastors glean fodder for teaching. These

questions comprised pages 3-4 of the survey instrument. The LifeWay instrument included pages 5-7 of the survey, and explored the pastors' attitudes toward Sunday school and discipleship ministries, their desired outcomes for such ministries, and the format of the resources they currently were using. Modified with permission, the survey was originally commissioned by the Protestant Christian Publishers Association, and partially funded by the Nazarene Publishing House. In early 2012, the LifeWay instrument was used by participating Protestant denominations to explore pastors' attitudes concerning discipleship and Christian education in their congregations. The LifeWay survey was modified for use in this study for three reasons: (a) The instrument contained questions pertaining to children and teens, which were beyond the purview of the current study; (b) the instrument contained no material specific to young pastors; and (c) the instrument did not fully explore the underlying premises that shape pastors' attitudes.

In order to answer research question four, new survey questions were written by the researcher with the guidance of Research Services at the GMC. These questions constituted pages 7-8 of the survey and explored what features were most important to pastors when they chose faith formation resources for use in their congregations.

Before disseminating the survey, the researcher consulted a group of five pastors to review and discuss the final instrument. These pastors were Nazarene pastors, 35 years old or younger, in the Kansas City area. Feedback from this pilot group was obtained in writing via email, verbally in phone conversations, and, when possible, in face-to-face meetings. The feedback was used to clarify and refine the content of the instrument. The

research department at the Global Ministries Center of the Church of the Nazarene aided in the final revision of the survey instrument.

To bring added clarification to the project, the researcher employed qualitative methods in short follow-up interviews with select respondents that were conducted after the surveys were completed. Leedy & Ormrod (2010) asserted that qualitative research was advantageous when the purpose of a study was to measure attitudes and to better understand “the nuances and complexities of a particular phenomenon” (p. 94). The follow-up interviews were conducted in a structured interview format, where participants were asked a prescribed list of questions in a particular order. According to Mitchell and Jolley (2012), the structured interview minimizes the risk of interviewer bias and increases the reliability of responses. Robson (2011) agreed that when a student or researcher wishes to carry out a small-scale research project with limited time and resources, the structured interview can be a valuable tool.

Population

The primary participants in this study were the district-licensed or ordained ministers in the USA and Canada regions of the Church of the Nazarene who were 35 years old or younger during the calendar year 2012. A secondary group of participants were the district-licensed or ordained ministers in the USA and Canada regions of the Church of the Nazarene who were 36 years or older during the calendar year 2012. The focus of the study was the overarching worldview of the young pastor. However, to contextualize better the young demographic, the same survey was also sent to a randomly selected group of pastors who were in the 36-or-older demographic. The differences between the two groups on a few select questions were included in the research in order

to provide a more fully orbbed study. The denominational database at the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene (GMC) provided the contact information for both groups of pastors. The population of credentialed ministers used in this research was limited to those currently serving in the role of pastor as designated by the code PAS in the official documentation held by the research department at the GMC. The PAS designation indicates clergy serving in the role of lead pastor rather than associate pastor, youth pastor, chaplain, educator, etc.

The sample in this study was the group of pastors who completed the survey instrument. Purposive sampling was used, as the researcher sent a survey to the entire population of 287 Nazarene lead pastors who were 35 years old or younger during the 2012 calendar year (Sample A). Conclusions were extrapolated from the 135 pastors completing the survey, a response rate of 47%. In the secondary group of pastors who were 36 years old or older during the 2012 calendar year, random sampling was used to select 287 (Sample B) from a pool of approximately 4,200. The response rate for this group was 30%, or 88 pastors.

Of the 135 respondents in the 35-or-younger universe, 92 % or 124 were male and 8% or 11 were female. Approximately 30% of them reported having served as lead pastor for less than 2 years; 45% from 2-5 years; 21% from 6-10 years and 3% for more than 10 years. These pastors identified their employment in one of four ways: full-time, 78%; part-time, 3%; bi-vocational 16%; and volunteer, 3%. The majority, 34%, hold graduate degrees, while 39% earned bachelor's degrees, and 27% were unreported. Approximately 91% reported attending a Nazarene college or university at some point in their lives, and of that number, 81% reported earning a degree from that Nazarene institution. Based on

worship attendance, the most common church size for this group was less than 50 persons (40%) followed by 50-99 persons (39%). Only 15 % pastored churches of 100-249 persons and 6% pastored churches of more than 250.

Of the 88 respondents in the 36-or-older sample, 94% were male and 6% were female. None of them reported having served as lead pastor for less than 2 years; 13 % from 2-5 years; 17% from 6-10 years and 70% for more than 10 years. These pastors identified their employment in one of three ways: full-time, 74 %; part-time, 2%; and bi-vocational, 24%. The majority, 40%, hold graduate degrees, while 29% hold bachelor's degrees and 32% were unreported. Approximately 84% reported attending a Nazarene college or university at some point in their lives, and of this number 76% reported earning a degree from that Nazarene institution. Based on worship attendance, the most common church sizes for this group were less than 50 persons (33%) and 50-99 persons (34%). Only 22 % pastored churches of 100-249 persons and 12% pastored churches of more than 250 persons.

Data Collection

After obtaining the necessary permission from the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene, the survey was emailed to potential participants from Sample A and Sample B four separate times between November 20, 2012 and January 15, 2013. According to Salkind (2009), the opportunity to pursue responses is one of the benefits of electronic survey distribution: "Go back and get those who didn't respond the first time" (p. 199). The research department of the Global Ministries Center distributed the survey along with a cover letter from the researcher, which outlined the purpose of the study and disclosed any known risks. Opening the survey link was understood as implied consent to

participate in the research. As an incentive to participate, respondents were invited to choose a volume of the New Beacon Bible Commentary to receive as a gift. Instructions for receiving a commentary volume were posted at the end of the survey and did not tie the participant's identity to his or her survey responses. A separate email account was established to assure confidentiality was maintained. The survey data collection was closed January 23, 2013. The thank-you commentaries were mailed from Nazarene Publishing House the week of February 18, 2013.

Beginning the week of April 10, 2013 follow-up interviews consisting of five open-ended questions were conducted with a total of 20 pastors from Sample A (see Appendix B). These pastors were selected from groupings according to worship attendance. An independent interviewer talked by telephone with five pastors from each church-size group, very small (less than 50), small (50-99), medium (100-249) and large (250 +). These structured interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes each.

Analytical Methods

The researcher used several analytical methods to explore and interpret the data yielded by the study, including both parametric and non-parametric statistics. Descriptive research is designed to describe the "current state of some phenomenon," (Salkind, 2009, p. 193) and helps the researcher understand how events that are occurring in the present relate to other factors. For these reasons, descriptive statistics were implemented in this study. Chi-square and cross tabs were used to understand the complexion of the respondents regarding gender, ethnicity, education, church size, tenure, employment status, and worship styles. Descriptive statistics were also employed to identify

frequencies in responses to each of the four research questions regarding pastors' attitudes and preferences in matters of spirituality and discipleship in their congregations.

On select questions in the study, parametric statistics were used to determine if the young pastors differed from the older pastors in their views on germane issues, e.g. whether a generation gap existed between pastor and congregants and whether the pastor self-identified with the term "postmodern." For such questions, the researcher employed independent *t*-tests. According to Salkind (2009), the *t*-test for independent means is the commonly used inferential test to determine the significant differences between two independent groups.

Also important to this study was the examination of correlations between various variables, such as the pastors' satisfaction with spiritual condition of their congregations and the types of resources the pastors choose for discipleship. These correlations were especially important when looking at research question four, the implications for denominational publishers. Though correlation cannot prove causation, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) contend that finding a correlation in data is akin to finding a signpost that hints at the nature of a relationship.

Additionally, in the open-ended survey instrument questions and in the follow-up interviews, qualitative content analyses were used to discern patterns of thinking and bring clarity to the nature of respondents' perspectives. Qualitative research digs deep, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), and helps the researcher "construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multi-faceted situation" (p. 133).

Considering the scope and purpose of this project, the mixed-methods research design was helpful in providing a more robust way to understand the data collected in the

endeavor. According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2010), the mixed methods approach is useful because it helps answer questions that cannot be fully answered by qualitative or quantitative research alone. These questions include such things as: “Do participants view from interviews and standardized instruments diverge?” Or, “In what ways do qualitative interviews explain quantitative results of the study?” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, p. 12). In the case of the current study, the goal of the researcher was practical in nature — to understand young pastors’ preferences in order to help them help their congregants. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative paradigms to approach the research questions is advised when “pragmatism is the philosophical underpinning of the research” (Robson, 2011, p. 164)

Limitations

The researcher identified various possible limitations in this study. First, the results of the study have limited generalizability to other denominations because the population of the study was pastors from the Church of the Nazarene. Secondly, the pastors in both Sample A and Sample B were lead pastors, so the results have limited generalizability to persons serving in associate pastor or other roles. A third limitation is that Sample group B represented 30% of the group invited to participate but not 30% of the entire population of 36-years-or-older pastors in the Church of the Nazarene. Therefore, the results obtained in Sample B would have limited generalizability to all 36-years-or-older Nazarene pastors.

A fourth limitation could be that because the pastors were incentivized to participate by receiving the gift of a Bible commentary volume, their responses toward Nazarene Publishing House may have been more positive than they would have been

without this incentive. Additionally, the researcher's name was given in the cover letter that accompanied the email instrument. In the event that a pastor knew the researcher personally, this could have skewed responses or influenced participation.

Summary

In order to obtain as full a depiction as possible of the young pastor's mindset, the researcher followed the recommendation of Leedy and Ormrod (2011) to use both quantitative and qualitative elements. When studying human behavior, mixed-methods designs "provide a more complete picture of a particular phenomenon than either approach could do alone" (p. 97.) The portrait of these young pastors that emerges is a multi-faceted one, full of potential for further examination. Chapter IV will undertake that exploration.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The data gathered in this study created an impression of the attitudes of young pastors in the Church of the Nazarene regarding spirituality and discipleship in their congregations. The idea of an emerging postmodern spirituality is a frequent topic in dialogues about cultural change, as is demonstrated in the literature review. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring whether the implications of such a cultural shift may be changing the way pastors resource their adult congregants for faith formation. Specifically, the researcher hypothesized that young pastors may have strong preferences in the kinds of discipleship resources they want to use. The hope was that the research would yield information that could better equip leaders at denominational publishing houses (specifically Nazarene Publishing House) to meet the needs of the young-pastor demographic. To this end, four research questions were identified:

1. What are the ministry priorities of Church of the Nazarene pastors 35 years old or younger?
2. What are the attitudes of these pastors about Christian beliefs, spirituality, and congregational faith formation?
3. What types of resources do these pastors seek in order to foster spiritual growth in their adult congregants?

4. What are the implications for denominational publishers, such as Nazarene Publishing House?

Demographically, the 135 young pastors represented in the survey were not unlike those in the larger Church of the Nazarene denomination, as were the churches where they served. Nearly 90% of the young pastors held at least an undergraduate degree and reported attending at Nazarene college or university at some time in their lives. A little more than 75% reported being full-time employees of their churches, while 23% described themselves as part-time or bivocational. Sixty percent identified their congregations as being comprised of persons older than 45 years, as compared to 40% who described their congregations as younger than 45 years. Nearly 79% of the pastors were pastoring churches with fewer than 100 members.

There were, however, some differences between the 135 young pastor respondents and the 86 older pastor respondents, who were 36 years or older. As one might predict, the older pastors presided over slightly larger churches, though the majority of both groups served in the churches of less than 100 persons. Additionally, the younger pastors were somewhat more likely to have been educated in a Nazarene institution (90%) than the 36-or-over pastors (83%). As would be expected, the average tenure in a lead pastor position differs greatly; 75% of the younger pastors have served in a lead position five years or less compared to 13% of pastors 36 or older.

In summary, the young pastors (Sample A) in this study were predominantly White males and full-time pastors who had completed at least some education in a Nazarene college or university; most earned a degree there. They had been pastoring five years or less and described their congregation's worship style as a blend of traditional and

contemporary, although they had a higher frequency of liturgical style worship than the older pastors (14% and 8% respectively). They described their congregations as a mix of approximately 60% of persons older than 45 years and 40% younger than 45 years.

Table 1

Demographics of Study Participants in Comparison to all Nazarene Pastors

	35 and younger respondents (Universe A)	36 and older respondents (Sample B)	All Church of Nazarene pastors (USA/Canada)
Gender			
male	92	94	93
female	8	6	7
Predominant church culture			
White	95	97	79
Hispanic	2	0.5	10
Multicultural	3	1	2
Black	0	1	2
Other	0	0.5	6
Employment			
Full time	75	75	66
Bivocational/part time	22	25	34
Volunteer	3		
Church size			
less than 50	40	33	37
50-99	39	34	36
100-249	15	22	19
250 or more	6	11	7
Years as a lead pastor			
less than 2	30	0	unknown
2-5	45	13	
6-20	22	18	
more than 10	3	69	

All values reported as a percentage

The following findings help describe a demographic of young pastors who identify with some of the trends reported by sociologists as postmodern and yet hold a strongly traditional view of some aspects of Christian faith.

Findings

Ministry Priorities of Pastors 35 years old or younger

The first research question sought to identify the ministerial role priorities of the young pastor respondents. To do this, the researcher employed an adaptation of Blizzard's (1955) Role Preference Instrument, which was used in a seminal study that identified and prioritized on a six-point scale (1 = *least important*, 6 = *most important*) six roles practiced by Protestant ministers. These roles were defined by Blizzard as Pastoral Care (counseling, visitation, etc.); Worship Leader (planning worship, administering communion, etc.); Organizer (vision casting, goal setting, etc.); Administrator (managing the business of the church); Preacher (sermon preparation, proclamation); Teacher (Bible study, promoting spiritual growth). In the 35-or-younger pastor group (Sample A) Preacher and Teacher were the roles identified as most important in ministry, with a mean of 5.20 and 4.34 respectively, while Administrator scored lowest with a mean of 1.93. Organizer, Pastoral Care, and Worship Leader shared the middle spots with means of 3.66, 3.39, and 3.10 respectively. Clearly, these pastors made a strong distinction between the importance of delivering content via the pulpit or in teaching times and the day-to-day business of running the church (see Figure 1).

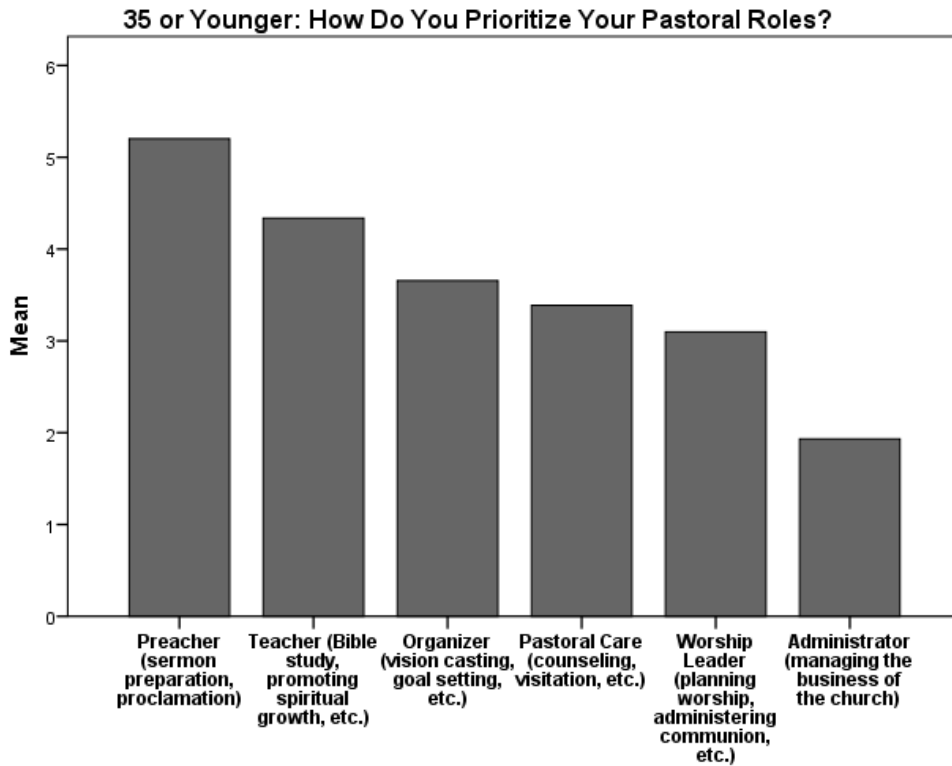


Figure 1. Young pastors' prioritization of pastoral roles, 1 = least important, 6 = most important.

Upon further examination of the frequencies of individual responses, 78.5% of pastors in Sample A reported that Preacher was their first or second ministerial role priority. Additionally, 53.3% of these pastors identified Teacher as their first or second ministerial role priority (see Figure 2). The young pastors appeared to be making a strong statement that the top priority of their ministries is the pastoral task of delivering the Word of God to congregants in preaching or teaching venues.

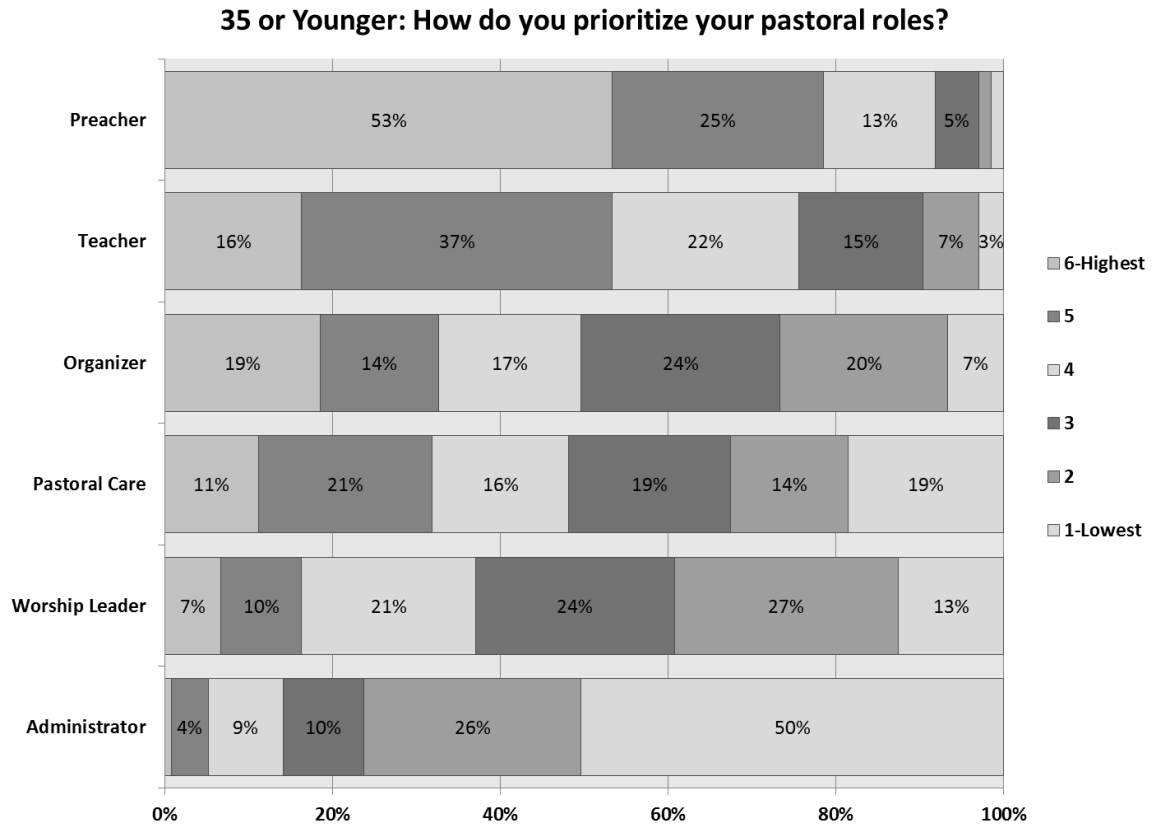


Figure 2. Young pastors' prioritization of pastoral roles, reported as a percentage.

The young pastors affirmed their commitment to preaching and teaching when asked to rate their goals for ministry using a Likert-type scale where 1 was *least important* and 10 was *most important*. The 35-or-younger pastors identified their top four goals as (a) leading people to Christ, (b) leading people in faith formation, (c) teaching people the Bible, and (d) preaching effective sermons. They also exhibited a strong commitment to social justice, spiritual disciplines, and helping people do life together. The pastors did not regard increasing attendance in small groups, growing the church numerically, or increasing tithes and offerings as important ministry priorities (see Table 2).

Table 2

<i>Young Pastors Goals and Priorities for Ministry</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Leading people to Christ	133	8.54	2.07
Leading people in faith formation	131	8.48	1.74
Teaching people the Bible	130	8.11	1.91
Preaching effective sermons	129	7.64***	2.12
Establishing a plan for discipleship	130	7.53	2.30
Motivating people to service, justice and compassion	130	7.32*	2.03
Motivating people to embrace spiritual disciplines	132	7.20	2.21
Helping people “do life” together	132	7.08	2.38
Increasing attendance in small groups	131	4.98	2.77
Increasing tithes and offerings	129	4.31*	2.80
Growing the church numerically	133	4.17**	2.85

Note: Likert-type scale, 1 = *least important*, 10 = *most important*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ statistically significant differences pastors ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

The young pastors’ commitment to *motivating people to service, justice, and compassion* exceeded that of the 36-or-older pastors at a significance level of $p = .05$, $t(215) = 1.9$. Other statistically significant differences between Sample A and Sample B groups included the young pastors’ lesser commitment to *growing the church numerically*, with a significance level of $p < .01$ level, $t(218) = -2.43$; *raising tithes and offerings*, with a significance level of $p < .05$ level, $t(212) = -1.92$; and *preaching effective sermons*, $p < .001$ level, $t(213) = 3.56$. *Motivating people to service, justice, and compassion* was the only response the younger pastors deemed more important than the older pastors at a statistically significant level (see Figure 3).

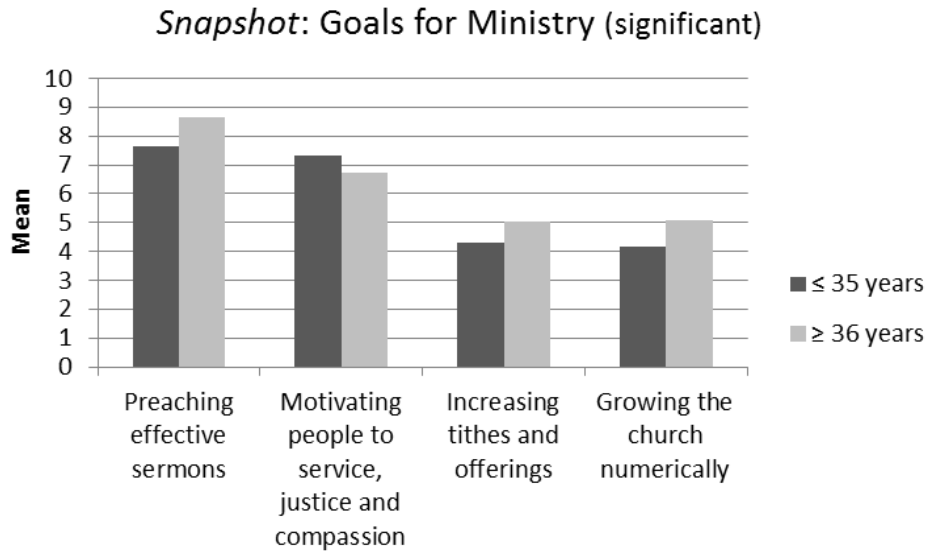


Figure 3. Younger pastors vs. older pastors statistically significant responses, 1 = least important, 10 = most important.

To contextualize further respondents' understandings of the role of pastor, they were asked to demonstrate their level of agreement with two questions designed to differentiate between (a) the more traditional model of pastor as CEO and (b) the more postmodern concept of pastor simply as a fellow pilgrim who explores matters of faith together with his or her congregants (see Figure 4). Of the young pastor respondents, 40% somewhat or strongly agreed that the pastor's role was spiritual CEO, while 57% somewhat or strongly disagreed (3% marked non-applicable). However, 94% of the young pastors resonated with the view of pastor as fellow pilgrim.

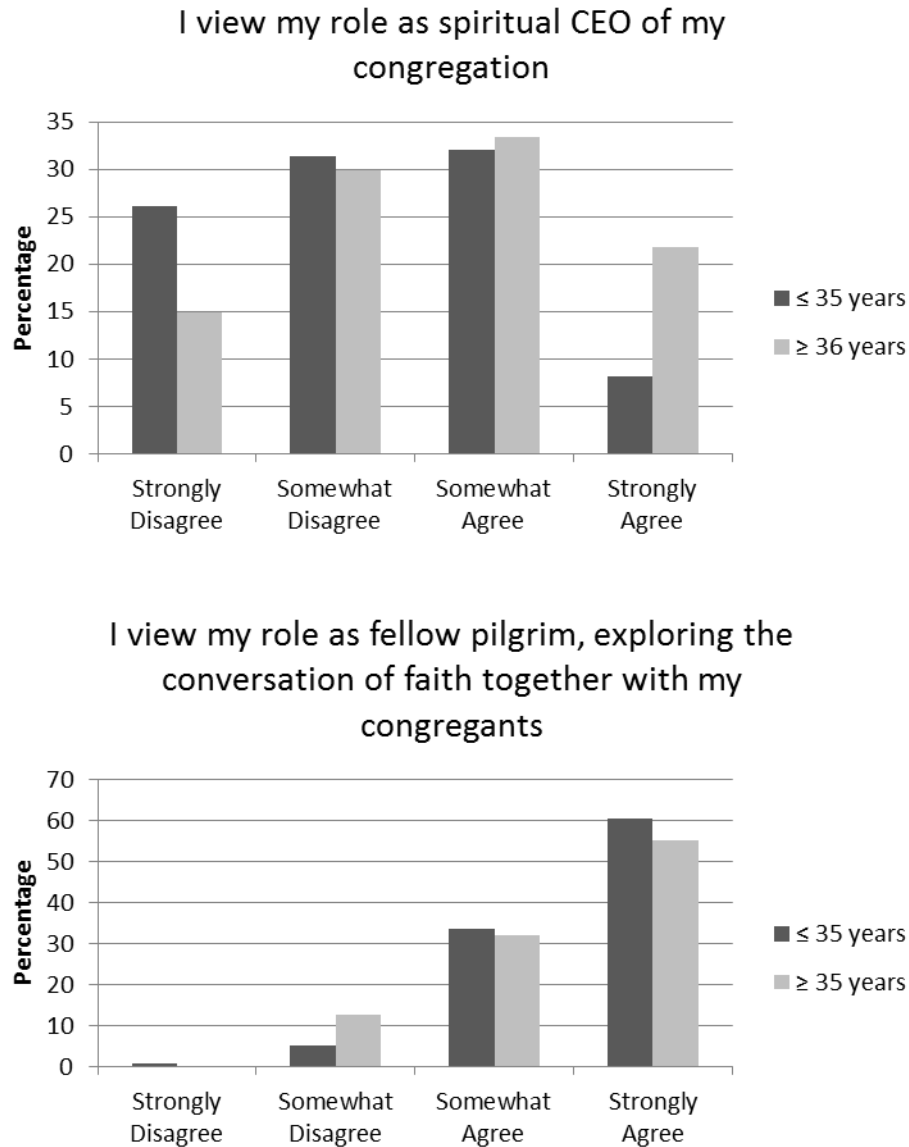


Figure 4. Young pastors vs. older pastors view of pastoral role, reported as a percentage

Although the 36-or-older pastor group seemed to share the younger pastors' views that the role of the pastor was fellow pilgrim, they did not report the same aversion to the idea of pastor as CEO (see Table 3.) For the two groups, the difference in response to the CEO question was statistically significant: $p < .01$ level, $t(220) = -2.46$.

Table 3

<i>Pastoral Role: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I view my role as spiritual CEO of my congregation.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.28**	1.02
	Age 36 or older	87	2.62**	0.99
I view my role as fellow pilgrim, exploring the conversation of faith	Age 35 or younger	135	3.54	0.63
	Age 36 or older	87	3.43	0.71

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*

** $p < .01$

Summary, research question one.

In summary, when considering research question one, the young pastors surveyed clearly identified their primary pastoral roles as preacher and teacher. However, within those roles they envisioned themselves functioning not as congregational CEOs, but as fellow pilgrims exploring the conversation of faith together with congregants. When asked to identify their goals for ministry, the pastors reiterated their commitment to leading people in faith formation and in preaching or teaching their congregants. They were more interested than the 36-or-older pastors in matters of social justice. They were less interested than the older pastors in growing the church numerically or raising tithes and offerings.

Young Pastors' Attitudes Regarding Christian Beliefs, Spirituality, and Congregational Faith Formation

In order to answer research question two and as a starting point in the examination of young pastors' attitudes toward spirituality and discipleship in their congregations, the

researcher thought it useful to determine if these pastors believed there was a difference in worldview between them and their adult congregants. A series of questions explored this possibility, as well as whether the pastors would self-identify as someone with a postmodern worldview. A Likert-type scale measured the responses; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

The 35-and-younger pastors identified with the statement “There is a generation gap between my congregants and me,” with 61% responding they *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree*. Similarly, 63% agreed that their congregants had a different worldview than they did and 53% affirmed their congregants did not share their understanding of discipleship and spiritual formation. More than 68% of the young pastor respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they would classify themselves as someone with a postmodern worldview (see Figure 5)

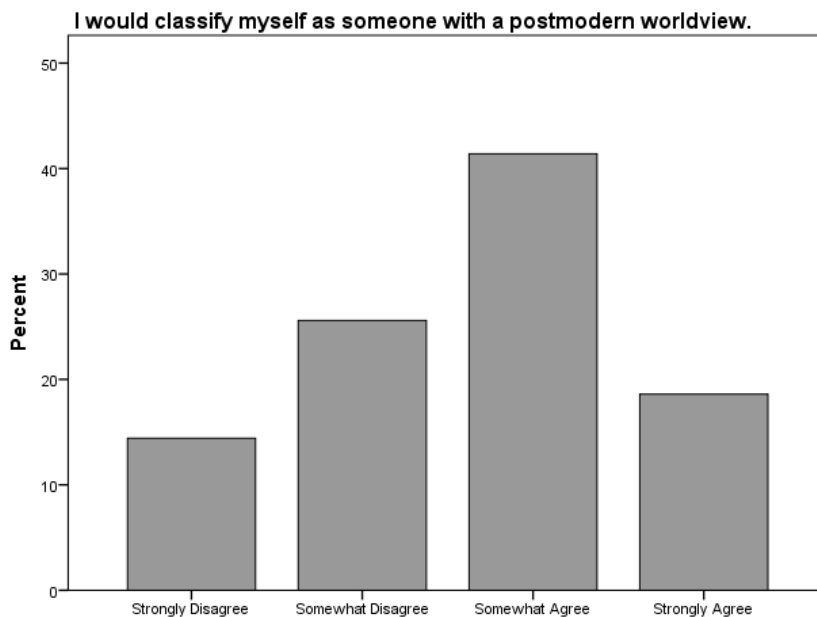


Figure 5. Young pastors’ self-identification as someone having a postmodern worldview. Reported as a percentage.

In the interest of determining whether this perceived generation gap was a sentiment shared by older pastors as well as the young demographic, the researcher compared responses from Sample A and Sample B for the same set of questions (see Table 4). A *t*-test was run to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the younger and older groups on each of the worldview questions. In three of four cases, the difference between the younger pastors' and older pastors' responses were statistically significant.

Table 4

Perceived Differences in Pastors' and Congregants' Worldviews: Age ≤ 35 v. ≥ 36 years

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I would classify myself as someone with a postmodern worldview.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.91***	1.0
	Age 36 or older	87	2.41***	1.0
There is a "generation gap" between my congregants and me.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.74***	1.0
	Age 36 or older	87	2.10***	0.9
My congregants have a different worldview than I do.	Age 35 or younger	133	2.74**	0.9
	Age 36 or older	85	2.39**	0.8
My congregation and I don't have the same understanding of discipleship and spiritual formation.	Age 35 or younger	134	2.60	0.9
	Age 36 or older	86	2.42	0.9

Note: Likert-type scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

When considering whether there was a generation gap between them and their congregants, the young pastors reported significantly higher scores than the older pastors: $p < .001$ level, $t(220) = 4.7$. Similarly, the young pastors resonated more strongly with the sentiment that their congregants' worldviews differed from their own: $p < .01$ level, $t(216) = 2.9$. There were no statistically significant differences in the levels of agreement

between Sample A and Sample B when considering whether pastor and congregation shared the same understanding of discipleship and spiritual formation. On the last question in the set, the young pastors were more willing to classify themselves as someone with a postmodern worldview: $p < .001$ level, $t(220) = 3.6$ (see Figure 6).

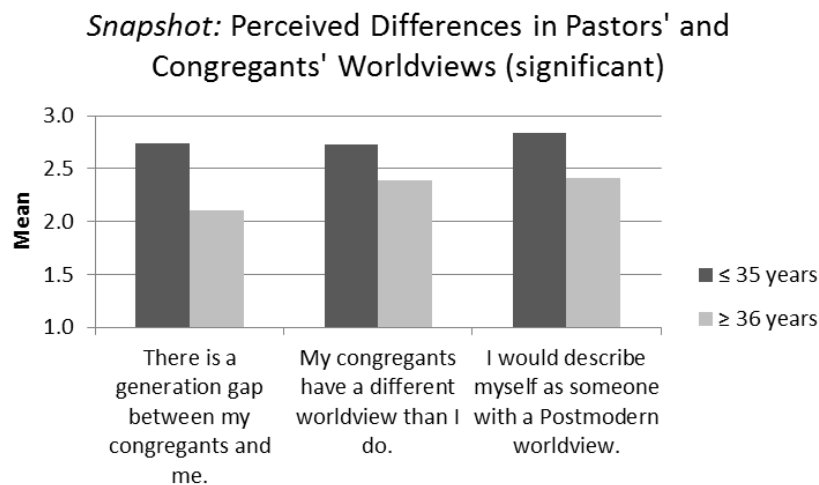


Figure 6. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' statistically significant responses on questions pertaining to worldview, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

Authority.

Although the young pastors resonated with the term *postmodern*, their responses seemed to fall in line with a more conservative approach to sources of authority, especially as that pertains to Scripture. When asked to describe how important various sources of authority were in the teaching of their congregations 98% of the young pastors responded that the *Bible* was “absolutely foundational” to worship and teaching, followed by the *Holy Spirit* (82% absolutely foundational), *historic creeds, doctrine and tradition* (25% absolutely foundational), *human reason* (13% absolutely foundational) and *personal experience* (12% absolutely foundational). None of the 35-or-younger pastors

considered the Bible less than a “very important” source of authority in their churches, earning the proportionally highest mean score on any question in this study with 3.98 out of 4.0. (see Figure 7).

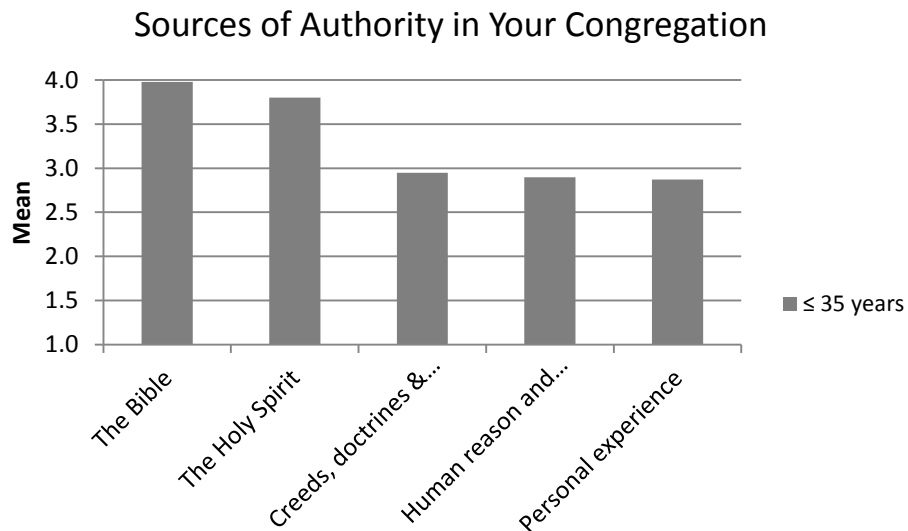


Figure 7. Young pastors’ view of sources of authority in their congregations, 1 = *little or no importance*, 4 = *absolutely foundational*

In order to understand on a more practical level what sources young pastors viewed as authoritative, the researcher asked them to indicate what sources they most often consult in sermon preparation; a 10-point Likert scale was used with responses ranging from *least common* to *most common*. Descriptive statistics revealed that the young pastors reported using *Scripture* ($M = 9.84$) and *their own personal reflection* ($M = 8.10$) most frequently in sermon preparation. They next depended upon *commentaries less than 20 years in print* ($M = 6.91$). There was a considerable drop between those top three choices and the next cluster of selections with means of between 5 and 6 as shown in Figure 8.

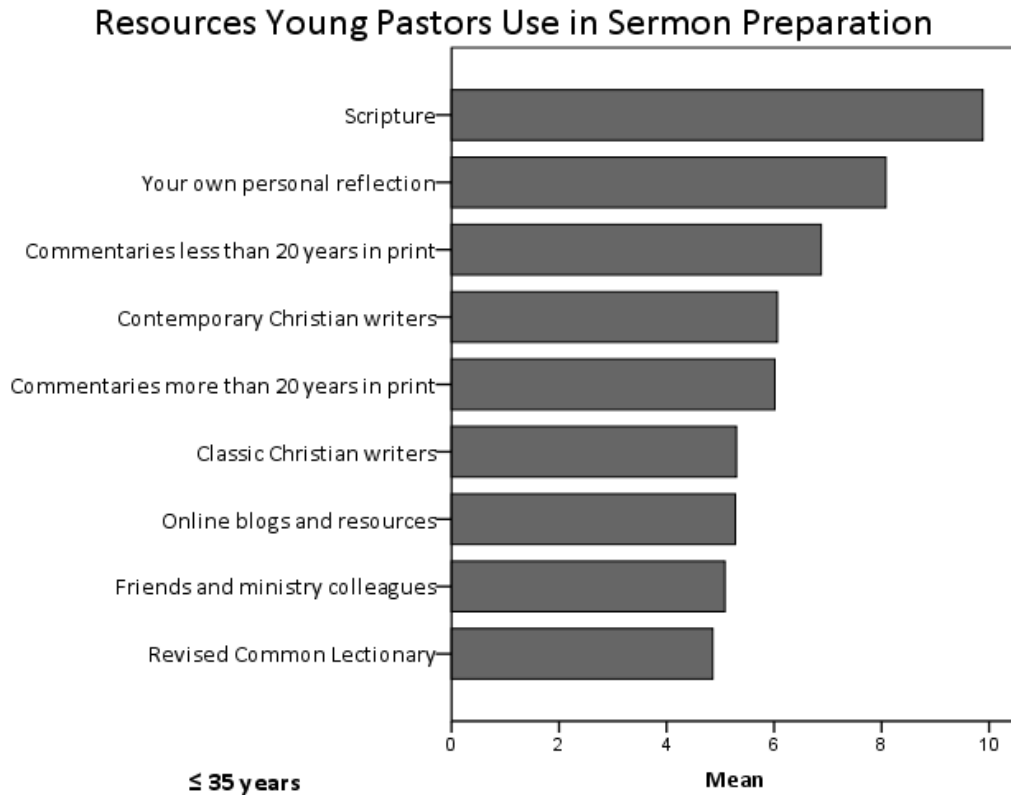


Figure 8. Resources young pastors use in sermon preparation, 1 = *least common*, 10 = *most common*.

When considering resources pastors use in sermon preparation, the 35-or-younger pastors and the 36-or-older pastors demonstrated significant differences on four items in the group. The young pastors more frequently used the *revised common lectionary*, $p < .001$ level, $t(218) = 3.2$; *online blogs/resources*, $p < .001$ level, $t(218) = 2.9$; and their *own personal reflection*, $p = .01$ level, $t(218) = 2.4$. The older pastors more frequently used *classic Christian writers*, $p < .05$ level, $t(216) = 1.9$ (see Figure 9).

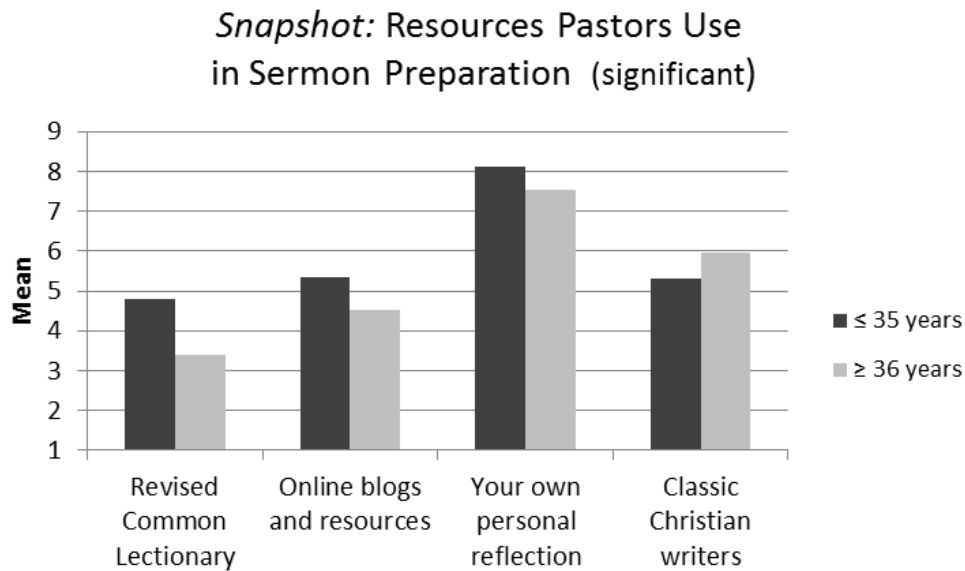


Figure 9. Young pastors vs. older pastors statistically significant responses on questions pertaining to resources used in sermon preparation, 1 = least common, 10 = most common.

In order to understand more fully who young pastors' might regard as figures of authority in shaping their parish ministries, respondents were then asked in an open-ended question to list the top thinkers, pastors, or teachers they gleaned insight from. The 35-or-younger pastors' responses are recorded in Table 5 and include only one Church of the Nazarene name, Dr. T. Scott Daniels, who is serving currently as the pastor of Pasadena Church of the Nazarene in California. The other name closely affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene is John Wesley, who is the founder of Methodism, which is the theological stream from which the Church of the Nazarene emerged. John Wesley, C.S. Lewis, and N.T. Wright earned the top three spots respectively on the 36-or-older pastors' responses.

Table 5

List the Top Thinkers/Pastors/Teachers you Glean From.

Top 10 responses	Pastors ≤ 35 years
John Wesley <i>founder Methodism</i>	26
NT Wright <i>Anglican bishop</i>	24
Andy Stanley <i>pastor, Northpoint Community Church</i>	14
Francis Chan <i>pastor, Cornerstone Community Church</i>	14
CS Lewis <i>Christian apologist</i>	11
Eugene Peterson <i>pastor, Christ our King Presbyterian Church</i>	10
William Willimon <i>bishop, United Methodist Church</i>	8
Walter Brueggeman <i>Old Testament theologian</i>	8
Scott Daniels <i>pastor, Pasadena Church of the Nazarene</i>	8
Rob Bell <i>founder, Mars Hill Bible Church</i>	7

Note. Reported as a percentage of young pastor respondents

Salvation.

Pertaining to matters of salvation, the pastors were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with a series of six statements. In responding to the statements, the young pastors affirmed the importance of a “personal relationship with Christ as the sole vehicle of salvation” (92%), but 40% of the

respondents indicated that they believed “although salvation is found in Christ that does not preclude God from redeeming in other ways.” Although 26% of the respondents were neutral, nearly half (47%) expressed agreement with the statement “Salvation is God among us.” A majority of Sample A respondents expressed some level of disagreement with the statements, “People can be saved without making a conscious decision about Jesus” (67%); “Everyone can be saved, even after death” (81%); and God works through all religions to save people, not just Christianity” (76%).

However, when compared to the 36-or-older pastor respondents, the younger pastors were more broadminded on questions of salvation. For example, 40% of the younger pastors agreed that although salvation is found in Christ, God may redeem in other ways; this compares to 23% of the older pastor group (see Figure 10).

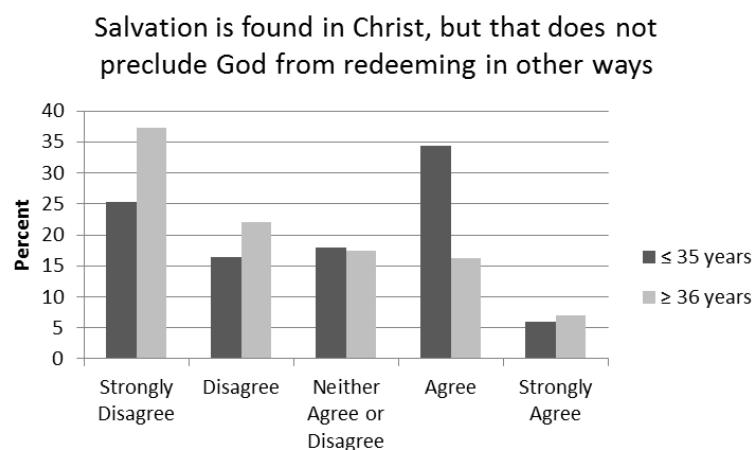


Figure 10. Young pastors’ vs. older pastors’ responses, reported as a percentage

On each statement in this section of the survey, the 35-or-younger pastor respondents exhibited a more generous posture than the 36-or-older group. With the exception of the statement, “God works through all religions to save people, not just Christianity,” the differences between the groups are statistically significant on every statement pertaining to salvation (see Table 6).

Table 6

Statements Pertaining to Salvation: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

	Age group category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Salvation is found by faith in a personal relationship with Christ alone.	Age 35 or younger	135	4.65**	.74
	Age 36 or older	85	4.88**	.32
Salvation is God among us.	Age 35 or younger	135	3.31***	1.3
	Age 36 or older	83	2.54***	1.2
Salvation is found in Christ, but that does not preclude God from redeeming in other ways.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.81**	1.3
	Age 36 or older	86	2.33**	1.3
People can be saved without making a conscious decision about Jesus.	Age 35 or younger	134	2.11***	1.0
	Age 36 or older	85	1.61***	.93
God works through all religions to save people, not just Christianity.	Age 35 or younger	135	1.81	1.0
	Age 36 or older	85	1.55	.97
Everyone can be saved, even after death.	Age 35 or younger	135	1.68***	.96
	Age 36 or older	85	1.18***	.61

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

The 35-or-younger pastors scored higher levels of agreement than did the older pastors with four of the six statements (see Figure 11) including:

- Salvation is found in Christ but that does not preclude God from redeeming in other ways, $p < .01$ level, $t(219) = 2.5$;
- Salvation is God among us, $p < .001$ level, $t(216) = 4.3$
- People can be saved without making a conscious decision about Jesus, $p < .001$ level, $t(217) = 3.6$
- Everyone can be saved, even after death $p < .001$ level, $t(218) = 4.3$.

The younger pastors scored lower levels of agreement with the statement, “Salvation is found by faith in a personal relationship with Christ alone,” $p < .01$ level, $t(218) = 2.7$.

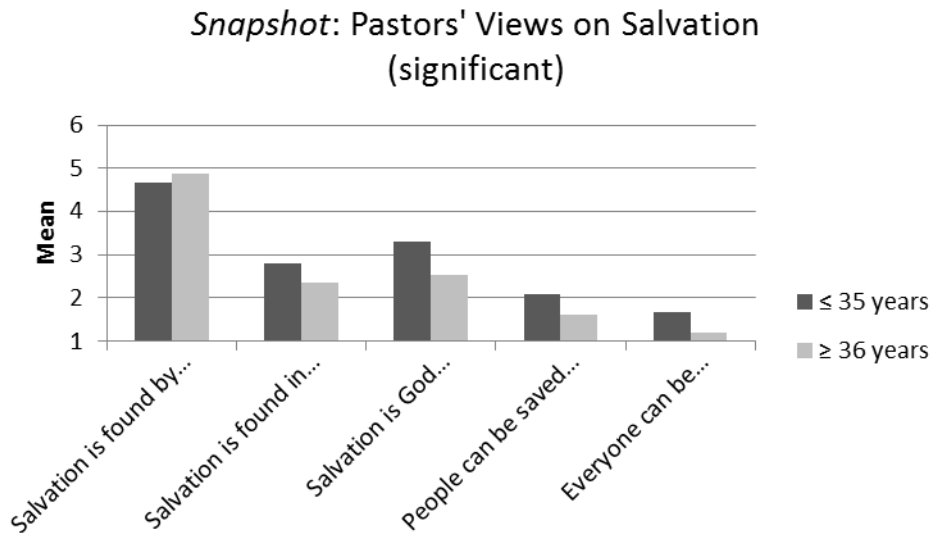


Figure 11. Young pastors’ vs. older pastors’ statistically significant responses on questions pertaining to salvation, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*

Scripture.

Overall, the young pastors demonstrated a high view of Scripture consistent with earlier questions in the survey designed to explore their understandings of authority.

Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with seven statements about the Bible on a Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and descriptive statistics were run on the results. The majority of young pastors expressed some level of disagreement with the notion that the Bible was fully inerrant, but they did embrace it as a document written by persons influenced by the Holy Spirit and as authoritative for living. The young pastors soundly rejected the notion that the Bible was simply good literature or merely one holy book among others (see Figure 12).

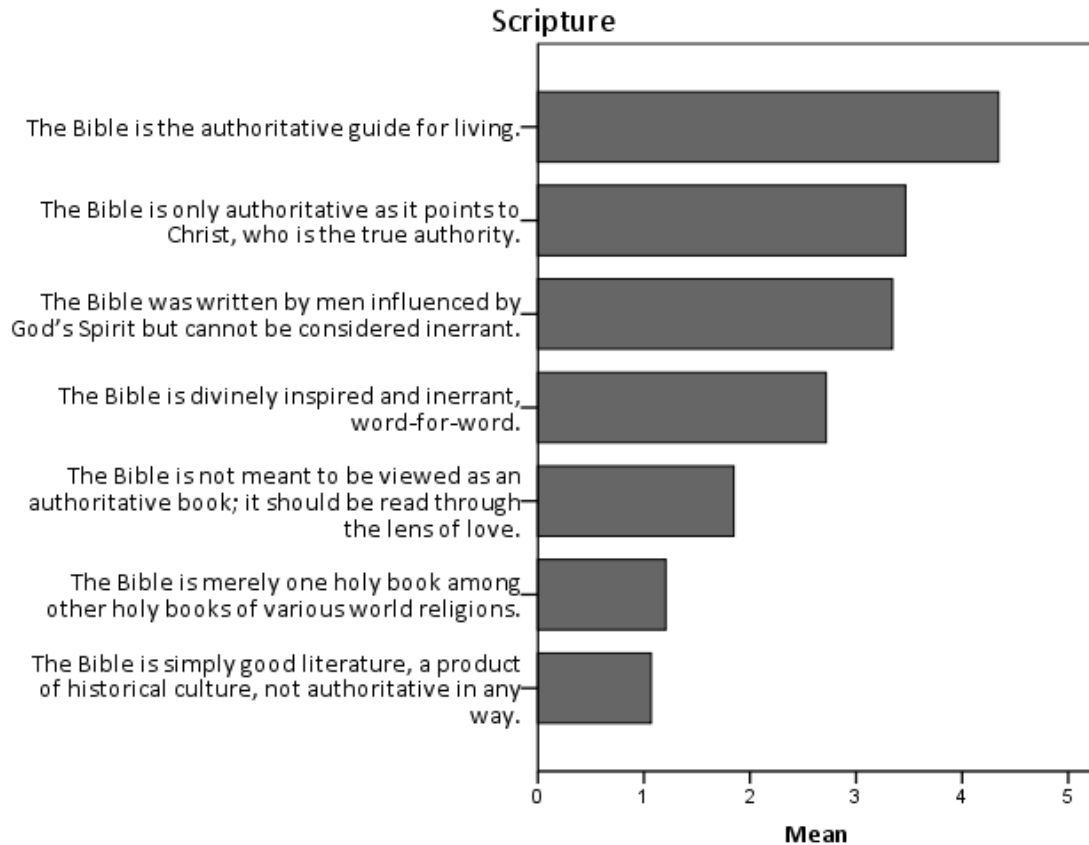


Figure 12. Young pastors' views on Scripture. 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*.

The researcher ran frequencies on the two inerrancy questions, and found that the younger and older pastor groups mirrored one another in opposite ways. While 54% percent of the older pastors agreed that the Bible is inerrant, 54% of the young pastors disagreed. Similarly, 55% of the young pastors agreed that Scripture is influenced by God's spirit but cannot be considered inerrant, while 53% of the older pastors disagreed (see Figure 13).

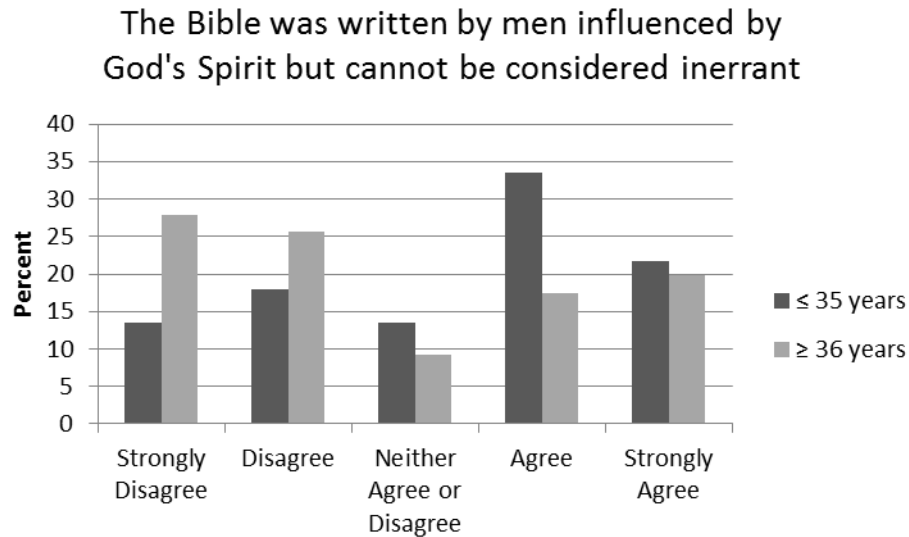
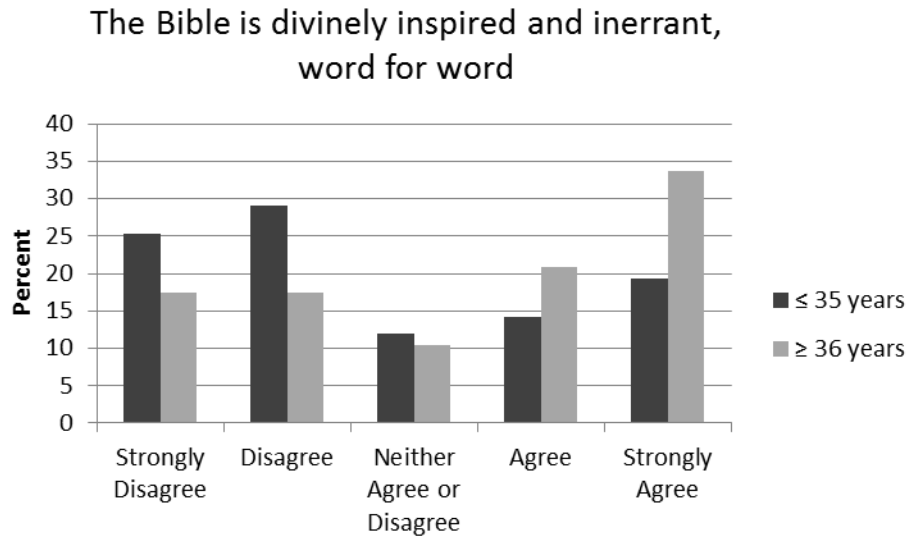


Figure 13. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' views on inerrancy, shown in percentages

Statistically, the young pastors' views were distinct from the older pastors in significant ways (see Table 7). As demonstrated by *t*-tests on each question in the group, the 36-or-older group of pastors gave higher marks to the following two statements: (a) *The Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant, word-for-word*, $p < .01$ level, $t(219) = 3.1$; and (b) *The Bible is the authoritative guide for living*, $p < .01$ level, $t(219) = 2.6$.

Conversely, the younger pastors responded more favorably to the notion that the Bible

was: (a) *Written by men influenced by God's spirit but cannot be considered inerrant*, $p < .01$ level, $t(219) = 2.9$; and (b) *Only authoritative as it points to Christ, who is the true authority*, $p < .01$ level, $t(214) = 2.7$.

Table 7

Statements Pertaining to the Bible: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

	Age group category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The Bible is the authoritative guide for living.	Age 35 or younger	135	4.33**	.77
	Age 36 or older	86	4.59**	.68
The Bible is only authoritative as it points to Christ, who is the true authority.	Age 35 or younger	133	3.47**	1.29
	Age 36 or older	83	2.94**	1.43
The Bible was written by men influenced by God's Spirit but cannot be considered inerrant.	Age 35 or younger	135	3.33**	1.35
	Age 36 or older	86	2.76**	1.52
The Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant, word-for-word.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.71**	1.47
	Age 36 or older	86	3.36**	1.53
The Bible is not meant to be viewed as an authoritative book; it should be read through the lens of love.	Age 35 or younger	135	1.85	.95
	Age 36 or older	84	1.71	.91
The Bible is merely one holy book among other holy books of various world religions.	Age 35 or younger	135	1.20	.45
	Age 36 or older	86	1.27	.71
The Bible is simply good literature, a product of historical culture, not authoritative in any way.	Age 35 or younger	134	1.07	.28
	Age 36 or older	86	1.06	.44

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*

** $p < .01$.

A snapshot of the differences in responses of the young pastors and the older pastors to statistically significant questions about the Bible is shown in Figure 14.

Snapshot: Pastors' Views of the Bible (significant)

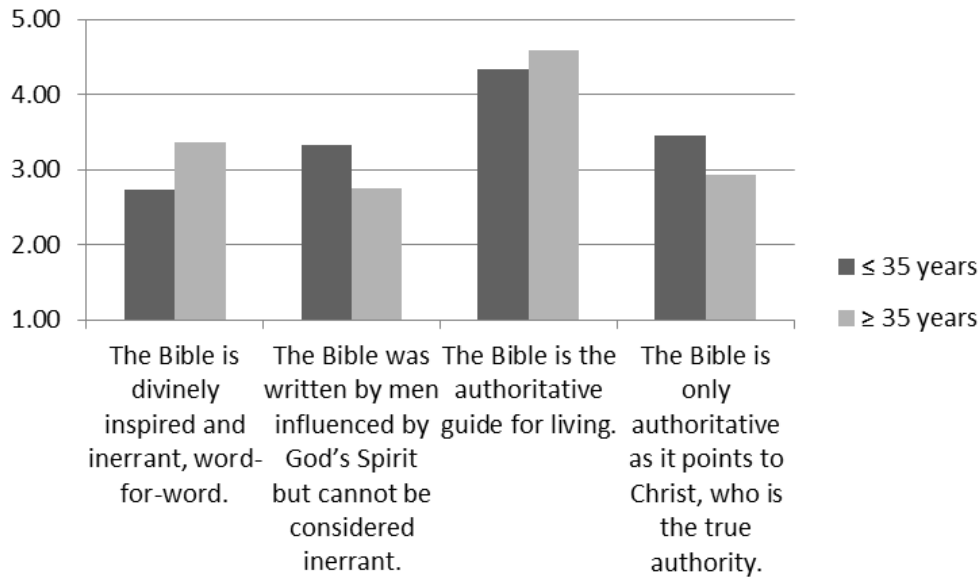


Figure 14. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' statistically significant responses to questions on the Bible, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*

The Church and the World.

To conclude the exploration of the young pastors' worldview regarding Christian faith and spirituality, the researcher asked a short series of questions pointing to the interface of church and culture. Frequencies revealed an interesting mix of responses (see Figure 15). More than three-fourths (78%) of the young pastors believed that *evangelism should emphasize presence over proclamation*. However, 90% said they believed *Heaven and Hell were literal destinations in the afterlife*. More than 80% believed in an *absolute truth*. Where culture is concerned, the majority of the pastors (58%) agreed that the *distinction between secular and sacred is an artificial boundary*. More than 90% believed that *God is inviting humanity to participate in the redemption and restoration of the earth*.

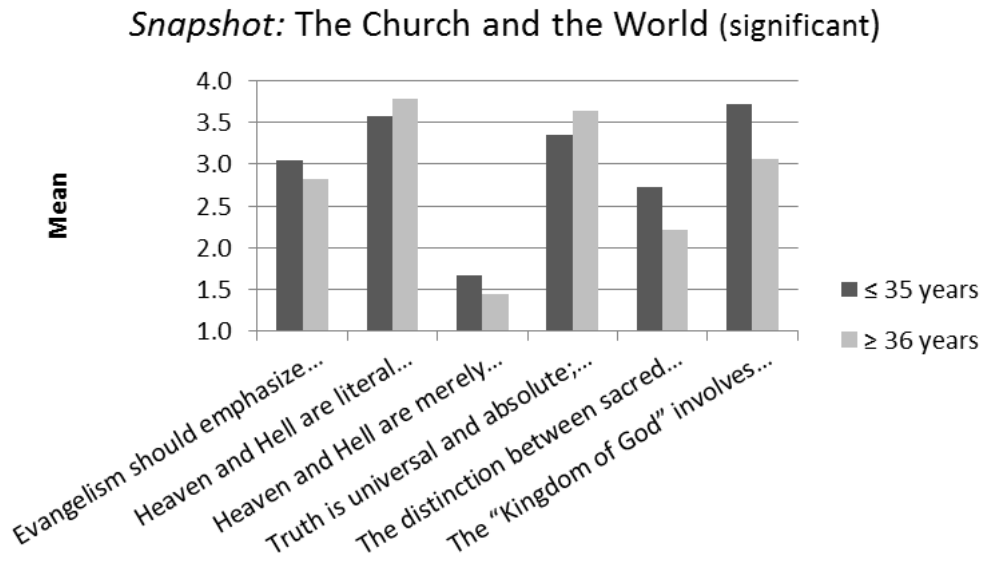


Figure 15. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' responses to questions about the church and the world; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

As was true in the questions dealing with Scripture and Salvation, there were significant differences in the responses of Sample A and Sample B on the questions pertaining to the Church and the world, as shown in Table 8. Young pastors indicated a higher level of agreement with the following statements:

- Evangelism should emphasize presence rather than proclamation, $p < .05$ level, $t(213) = 2.2$;
- Heaven and Hell are merely symbolic ways to talk about our relationship (or lack thereof) with God, $p = .05$ level, $t(216) = 1.9$;
- The distinction between sacred and secular is an artificial boundary, $p = .001$ level, $t(208) = 3.4$;
- The kingdom of God involves an invitation to participate in the restoration of the world, $p < .001$ level, $t(213) = 6.2$.

Conversely, the older pastors indicated a higher level of agreement with the statements that “Heaven and Hell are literal destinations in the afterlife,” $p < .05$ level, $t(214) = 2.3$; and that “Truth is absolute and universal,” $p < .01$ level, $t(210) = 2.6$.

Table 8

Statements Pertaining to the Church and the World: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

	Age group category	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The “Kingdom of God” involves an invitation to participate in the redemption and restoration of the earth.	Age 35 or younger	129	3.71***	.61
	Age 36 or older	86	3.06***	.91
Heaven and Hell are literal destinations in the afterlife.	Age 35 or younger	134	3.55*	.65
	Age 36 or older	82	3.77*	.59
Truth is universal and absolute; we can know for certain.	Age 35 or younger	132	3.34**	.84
	Age 36 or older	80	3.64**	.75
Evangelism should emphasize presence rather than proclamation.	Age 35 or younger	130	3.05*	.70
	Age 36 or older	85	2.82*	.85
The distinction between sacred and secular is an artificial boundary.	Age 35 or younger	128	2.73***	1.03
	Age 36 or older	82	2.22***	1.08
Heaven and Hell are merely symbolic ways to talk about our relationship (or lack thereof) with God.	Age 35 or younger	132	1.67*	.81
	Age 36 or older	86	1.45*	.79

Note. Likert-type responses, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Spiritual growth and spiritual practices.

After ascertaining some basics about the respondents’ views on Christian beliefs and spirituality, the researcher explored the young pastors’ attitudes on fostering spiritual growth in adult congregants. A 10-point Likert-type scale was used to answer the

question, “Which of the following practices do you consider the most important for your congregants to participate in so that they will grow spiritually?” The researcher ran descriptive statistics on the results from this group of questions; Figure 16 summarizes those results. The young pastors responded strongly that they believed *prayer* ($M = 9.33$, $SD = 1.22$) was the most important practice congregants should engage in to foster spiritual growth. Prayer was followed by a cluster of practices that shared a mean score of more than 8: (a) *reading the Bible in personal devotions* ($M = 8.71$, $SD = 2.00$); (b) *studying the Bible in a group* ($M = 8.54$, $SD = 1.66$); (c) *practicing spiritual disciplines* ($M = 8.43$, $SD = 1.89$); and (d) *participating in a small group* ($M = 8.32$, $SD = 1.81$). The pastors prioritized *serving the poor and needy* ($M = 7.97$, $SD = 2.01$) above *listening and responding to sermons in church* ($M = 7.64$, $SD = 2.05$) and *attending classes where teaching happens* ($M = 6.80$, $SD = 2.38$). Two statements received Mean scores of lower than 5: (a) *considering books/art/film through the lens of faith* ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 2.52$) and (b) *discussing issues of faith with others via social media* ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 2.32$).

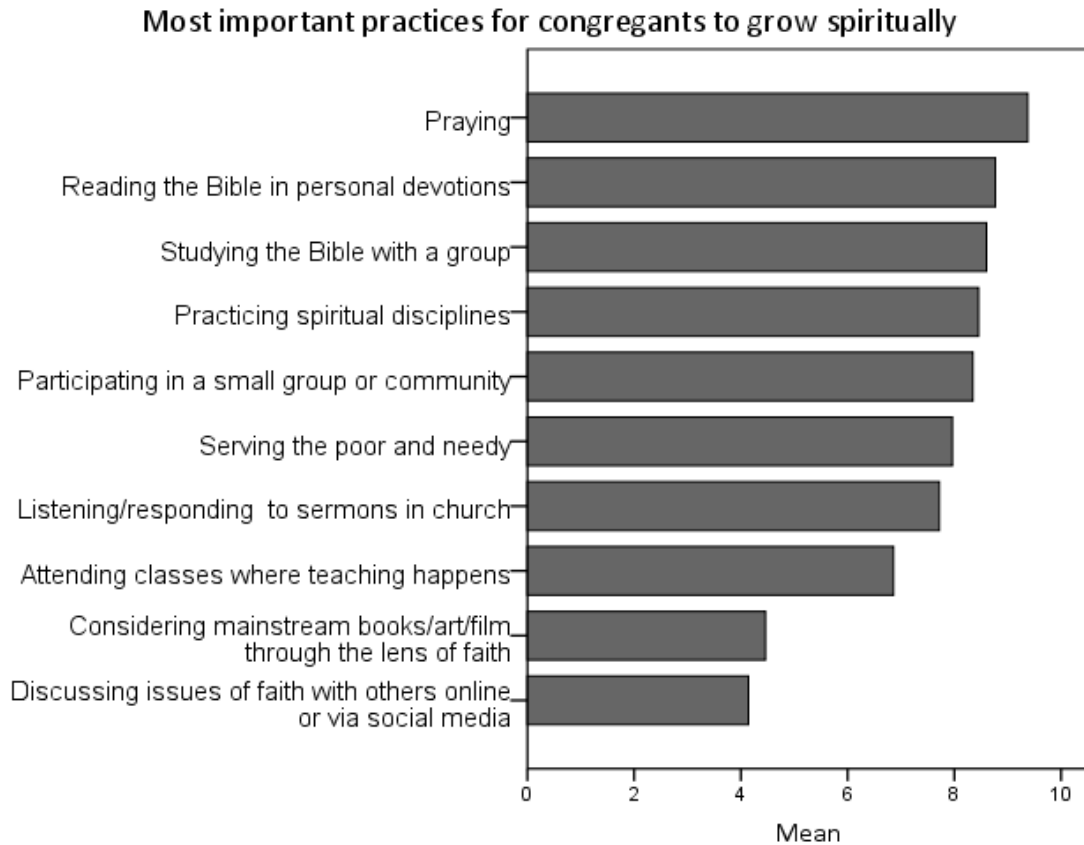


Figure 16. Young pastors' prioritization of spiritual practices for congregants: 1 = least important, 10 = most important.

When comparing Sample A to Sample B on the spiritual practices set of questions, two statements proved statistically significant. The younger pastors gave higher marks ($M = 7.98$, $SD = 2.01$) to serving the poor and needy than did the older pastors ($M = 7.42$, $SD = 2.27$). This was significant at $p = .05$ level, $t(219) = 1.9$. Conversely, the younger pastors gave lower marks ($M = 8.70$, $SD = 2.01$) to reading the Bible in personal devotions than did the older pastors ($M = 9.20$, $SD = 1.46$). This was significant at $p < .05$ level, $t(220) = 2.0$, as shown in Figure 17.

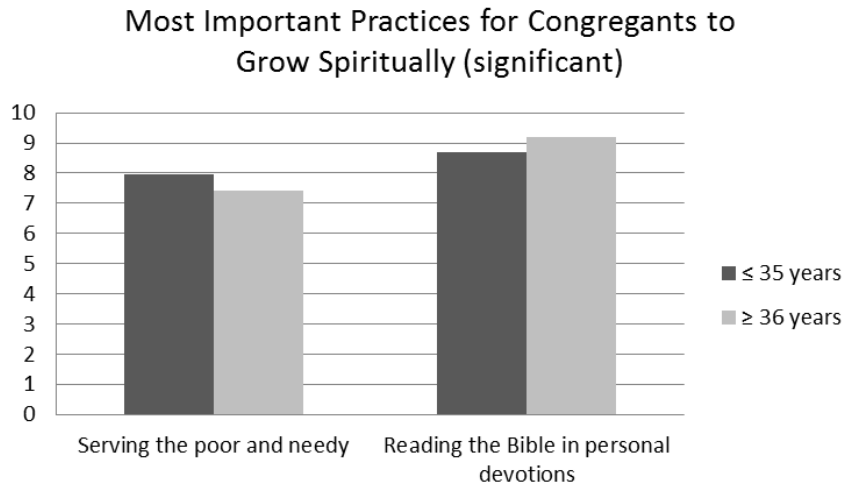


Figure 17. Young pastors vs. older pastors statistically significant responses to questions pertaining to spiritual growth in congregants, 1 = *least important*, 10 = *most important*.

Using the same Likert-type scale, respondents were then asked to rank the most notable obstacles to the spiritual growth of their adult congregants from *not a threat* (1) to *a significant threat* (10). The researcher ran descriptive statistics on the group of questions; Figure 18 summarizes those results. The young pastors clearly identified *complacency* ($M = 8.82$, $SD = 1.57$) as the most significant risk to their congregants' spiritual growth. The remainder of the options were clustered in the Mean range of 6 to 7. The young pastors did not consider *liberal theology* ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 3.0$) to be a high risk to the spiritual growth of their adult congregants.

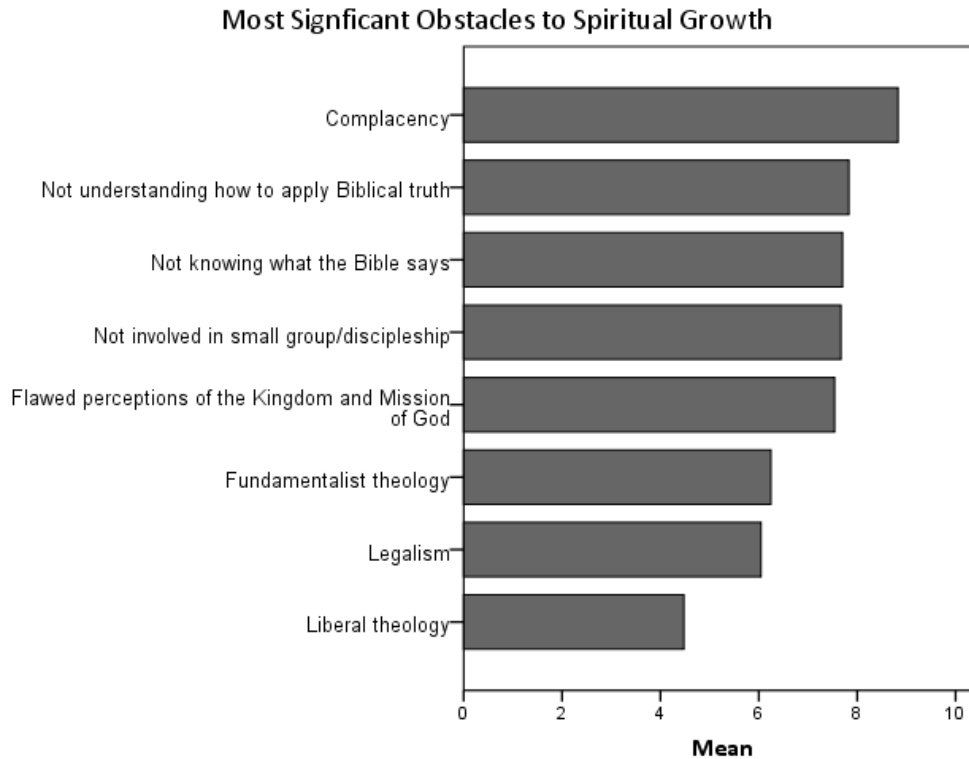


Figure 18. Young pastors responses when asked to identify obstacles to congregants' spiritual growth: 1 = *not a threat*, 10 = *significant threat*.

As demonstrated by Steinberg (2010) and also shown in Figure 19, utilizing the mode score when seeking to understand the implications of data can helpful because it provides a clear and simple summary statistic that provides additional meaning the researcher may miss if considering only the mean score. In this study, when examining the set of questions where respondents were asked to identify the most significant obstacles to their parishioners' spiritual growth, the mode score is useful. The pastors most frequently designated the score of 10 (most significant obstacle) to (a) *flawed perceptions of the Kingdom of God*, (b) *complacency*, and (c) *not knowing what the Bible says*. Conversely, the pastors most frequently designated the score of 1 (not a threat) to *liberal theology*.

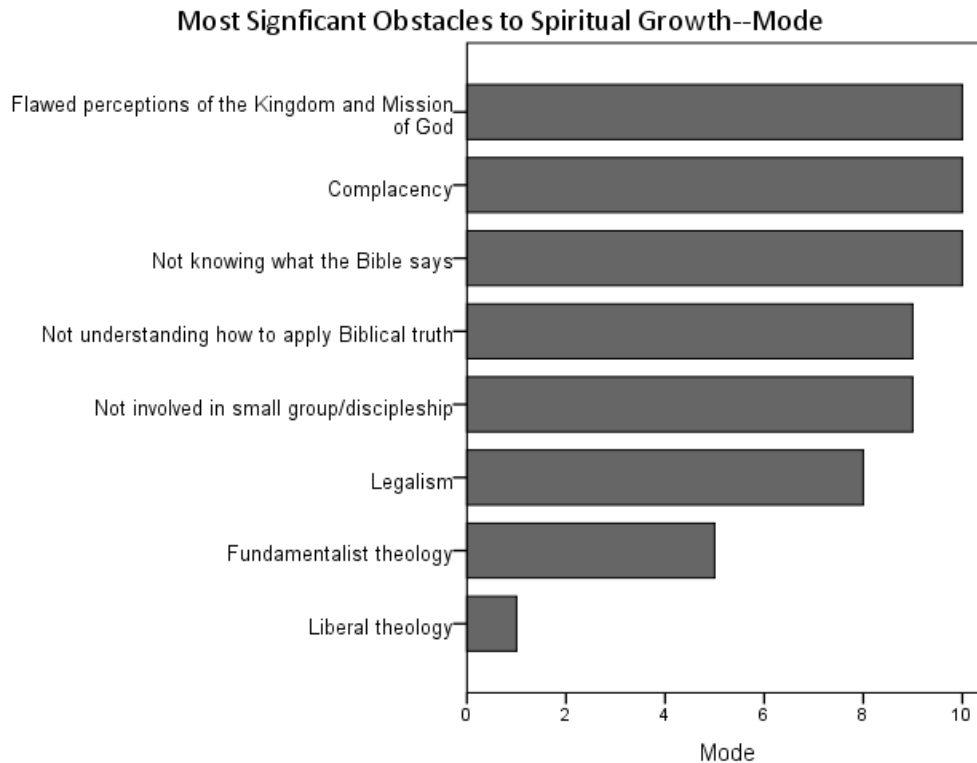


Figure 19. Young pastors' most frequent responses when asked to identify obstacles to congregants' spiritual growth: 1 = not a threat, 10 = significant threat

In assessing threats to their congregants' spirituality, the 35-or-younger pastor group demonstrated a departure from the 36-or-older pastor group on four responses. The young pastors considered *flawed perceptions of the Kingdom and Mission of God* to be a greater threat than did the older pastors: $p < .05$ level, $t(220) = 2.2$. The 36-or-older pastors considered (a) *liberal theology*, (b) *not knowing what the Bible says*, and (c) *not understanding how to apply Biblical truth* to be greater threats than did the younger pastors: $p < .01$ level, $t(220) = 2.1$, $p < .05$ level, $t(218) = 2.0$, $p < .05$ level, $t(218) = 2.2$, respectively.

Faith formation in the local congregational context.

The next series of questions in the survey examined young pastors' attitudes toward faith formation in their congregational context. Eight 5-point Likert-style questions were presented with response possibilities ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4) and *not applicable* (0). These questions yielded mixed results. For example, when asked whether "understanding the Bible is the foundation for spiritual maturity," 98.5% of the respondents in Sample A chose *somewhat agree* or *strongly agree*. However, when asked to evaluate the statement, "Faith formation happens as people do life together. A lot of formal teaching isn't necessary," the young pastors were more polarized; 55% of the respondents *somewhat/strongly agreed* with the statement and 44% *somewhat/strongly disagreed*. Further, 75% of the respondents *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement, "Teaching people to serve others is more important than teaching them the Bible."

When asked about practical faith formation practices in their local churches, the young pastors diverged in their answers with two out of the four questions splitting the percentages near the 50% threshold (see Figure 20). Approximately half the pastors reported that their church has an established structure for spiritual formation of congregants. Similarly, approximately half believed their teachers were adequately trained. Two-thirds of the pastors reported that their teachers had at least some freedom to choose their own materials. Nearly three-fourths of the pastors believed their congregations were making significant progress in their spiritual development.

Discipleship in My Congregation

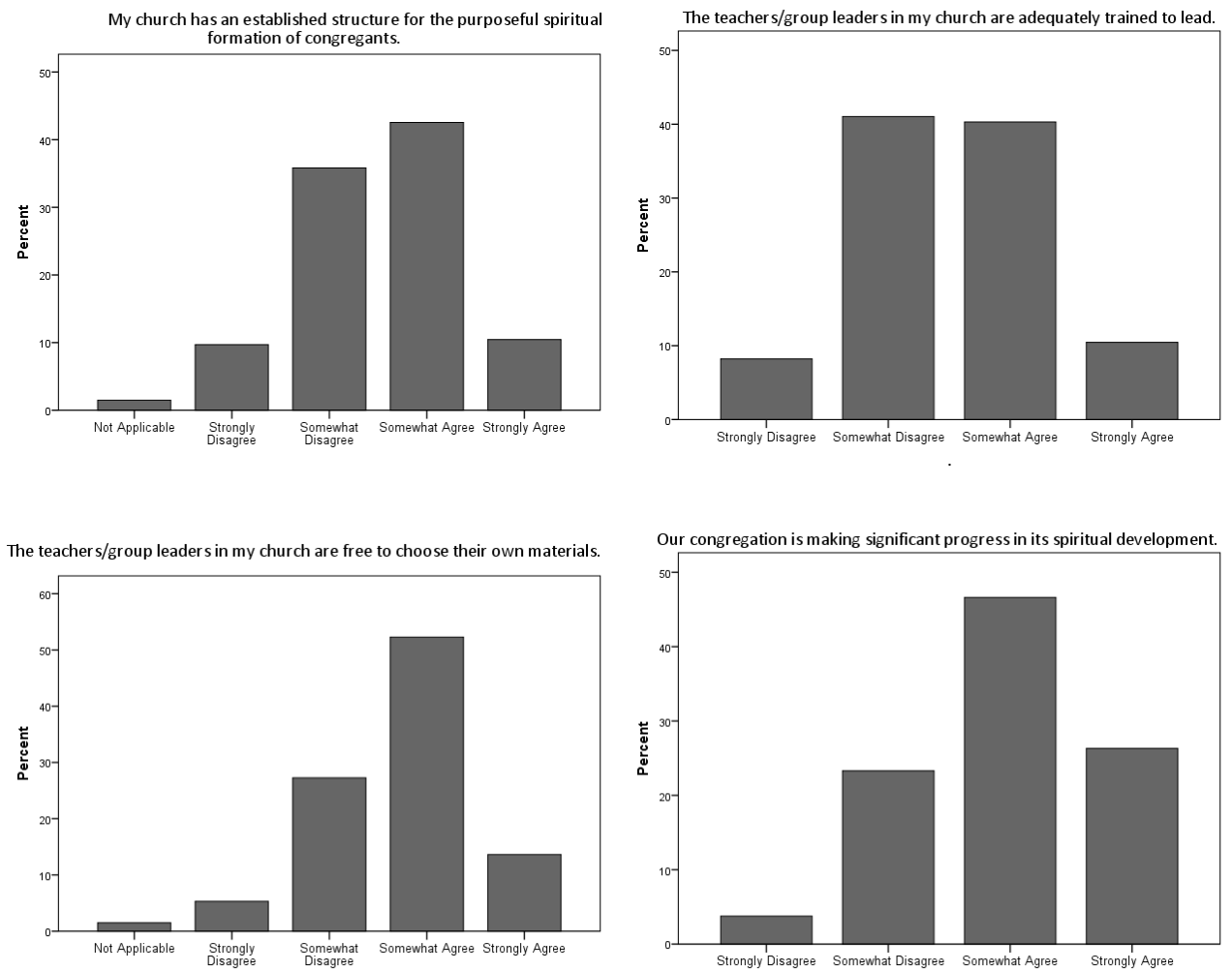


Figure 20. Young pastors' views on discipleship in their congregations, reported as a percentage.

The researcher ran a correlation analysis to determine if there was a positive relationship between any of the following three variables and the pastors' beliefs that their congregations were making significant progress in their spiritual development: (a) *my church has an established structure for purposeful spiritual formation*, (b) *the teachers/leaders in my church are adequately trained to lead*, and (c) *the teachers/leaders in my church have freedom to choose their own materials*. The

researcher discovered a statistically significant positive relationship between the pastors' belief that their congregation was growing spiritually and two of the three variables. Pastors whose churches have an established spiritual formation structure are more likely to believe their congregations are making progress in their spiritual development, $r(133) = .46, p = .01$. Similarly, pastors who believe their teachers/leaders are adequately trained are more likely to believe their congregations are making progress in their spiritual development, $r(132) = .46, p = .01$ (see Table 9).

Table 9

Young Pastors' Views of Congregational Spiritual Development

	Correlation
My church has an established structure for the purposeful spiritual formation of congregants.	$r(133) = .46^{**}$
Our congregation is making significant progress in their spiritual development.	
The teachers and group leaders in my church are adequately trained to lead.	$r(132) = .46^{**}$
Our congregation is making significant progress in their spiritual development.	

$**p = .01$

Finally, the researcher compared the responses of Sample A and Sample B to the series of questions on faith formation in the local congregational context. Differences on five of the eight statements proved statistically significant (see Table 10). The 35-or-younger pastors agreed more strongly that "faith formation happens as people do life together," $p < .01$ level, $t(218) = 3.0$; and "teaching people to serve others is more important than teaching them the Bible," $p < .001$ level, $t(214) = 3.4$. Conversely, the 36-

or-older pastors agreed more strongly that “understanding the Bible is the foundation for spiritual maturity,” $p < .05$ level, $t(219) = 2.02$. The older pastors also were more likely to agree that their churches had “an established structure for the purposeful spiritual formation of congregants,” $p < .05$ level, $t(217) = 1.93$; and that their “teachers/group leaders were adequately trained to lead,” $p = .01$ level, $t(219) = 2.48$.

Table 10

Pastors' Views on Faith Formation in the Local Context: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

	<i>Age group category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Understanding the Bible is the foundation for spiritual maturity.	Age 35 or younger	135	3.61*	.56
	Age 36 or older	86	3.77*	.52
Faith formation happens as people do life together. A lot of formal teaching isn't necessary.	Age 35 or younger	134	2.64**	.74
	Age 36 or older	86	2.33**	.74
My church has an established structure for the purposeful spiritual formation of congregants.	Age 35 or younger	133	2.55*	.81
	Age 36 or older	86	2.77*	.82
The teachers/group leaders in my church are adequately trained to lead.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.53**	.79
	Age 36 or older	86	2.79**	.69
Teaching people to serve others is more important than teaching them the Bible.	Age 35 or younger	131	2.02***	.72
	Age 36 or older	85	1.67***	.75

Note. Likert-type responses, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

The researcher desired to hear from the pastors in their own words regarding spiritual growth in their congregations. In addition to the written survey instrument, an independent party hired by the researcher interviewed five pastors in each church-size group (less than 50, 50-99, 100-249, 249+) via telephone subsequent to the completion of the survey. The first question the interviewer asked was, “Please describe the ways you believe spiritual growth best happens in your congregants.” In response to this question, nearly every pastor mentioned some form of relational component, where faith was formed within the larger community of believers. For pastors in the less-than-50 church size, the predominant response was “small groups”; for pastors in the larger church sizes, Sunday school was mentioned frequently as well as small groups.

Summary, research question two.

The responses of the 135 pastors aged 35 or younger to the questions of Christian belief, spirituality, and discipleship in their congregations painted a fascinating picture of this demographic of young leaders. The majority (68%) of these pastors classified themselves as having a postmodern worldview, and 61% indicated that there is a generation gap between their congregants and them. Additionally, they identified themselves as having a different worldview than their congregations (61%) and more than one-half said congregants do not share their understandings of discipleship and faith formation.

The young pastors almost unanimously identified the Bible as an “absolutely foundational” source of authority in their congregations, and said it is their primary resource for sermon preparation along with their own personal reflections. The top three thinkers these young pastors gleaned insight from do not share any particular

denominational affiliation: Founder of Methodism John Wesley, Anglican Bishop NT Wright, and nondenominational pastor Andy Stanley.

Though they have a high view of Scripture and say it anchors their sermon preparation, the young pastors do not always share the same view of Scripture as many of their 36-or-older counterparts. Respondents largely viewed the Bible as a document written by men influenced by the Holy Spirit but not inerrant. They were more open to the view of Scripture as authoritative only in matters pertaining to Christ than the 36-or-older group, who tended to view Scripture more as an authoritative guide for living. Both groups soundly rejected the notion that the Bible is just another book or not meant to be authoritative in any way.

In matters of salvation, the young pastors' responses seemed to reflect a mindset that one might describe as postmodern. Although a very high percentage (92%) of pastors affirmed that they believed a personal relationship with Jesus was the only way to salvation, 40% supported the idea that though salvation was found in Christ that did not preclude God from saving in other ways. Nearly one-half (47%) resonated with the statement, "Salvation is God among us." In each of these cases, the young pastors' responses were statistically significant when compared with the 36-or-over pastors whose responses were more conservative.

In themes pertaining to the church's interface with culture, the young pastors expressed very strong support (93%) for the idea that the Kingdom of God involves an invitation to participate in the restoration of the world. A majority of them also agreed with the postmodern idea that the distinction between sacred and secular is an artificial boundary. They tended to believe in absolute truth, but less so than their 36-or-over

peers. More than three-fourths of the young pastors believed evangelism should emphasize presence over proclamation. And, although 90% expressed some level of agreement with the statement “Heaven and Hell are literal destinations in the afterlife,” nearly 20% expressed some level of agreement that “Heaven and Hell are merely symbolic ways to view our relationship with God.” On every statement in this section of the survey instrument, the young pastors’ responses were less traditional than the older pastor group at a statistically significant level.

Regarding spiritual practices, the young pastors strongly affirmed prayer as the most important habit their congregants can engage in to grow spiritually. The young pastors also placed substantial emphasis on group Bible study, spiritual disciplines, and small-group participation. They regarded serving the poor and needy as more important to spiritual growth than listening and responding to sermons or attending classes where teaching happens. The young pastors placed considerably more emphasis on serving the poor than did the older pastors and considerably less emphasis on reading the Bible in personal devotions; the differences between groups in both of these areas were statistically significant.

The young pastors identified complacency as the greatest threat to spiritual growth (mode = 10) in their adult congregants. They viewed liberal theology (mode = 1) as the least threat. As one might begin to expect from examining the survey instrument results thus far, the young pastors considered a flawed perception of the Kingdom of God to be a greater threat than did the older pastors. Additionally, they considered liberal theology, not knowing what the Bible says, or how to apply Biblical truth to be lesser threats than did the older pastor group.

The young pastors were most polarized as a group when it came to describing their churches' implementation of faith formation. About half the respondents reported that they had an established structure in place and half described their teachers/leaders as adequately trained. Although three-fourths of the pastors reported believing their congregations were making progress in their spiritual development, there were statistically significant positive correlations between those congregations making progress and those congregations who had a plan in place and whose teachers were adequately trained.

Overall, the researcher believes that a fair summation of data gathered to answer research question two would be that the attitudes of young pastors participating in this study remain somewhat conservative regarding topics having direct impact on the spiritual formation of congregants, topics such as Scripture, salvation, church and culture, and spiritual practices. However, their responses demonstrate a marked difference from the 36-or-older pastors in nearly every category. These shifts appear to be consistent with the literature reviewed for this study examining the influence of postmodern thought on thought and practice in the Church.

Types of Resources Young Pastors' Desire

In order to answer research question three, and to explore the kinds of resources young pastors desire to use for discipleship and faith formation, the researcher employed portions of the LifeWay Research (2012) instrument, which was used by the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association to survey more than 2300 pastors in 15 denominations. Adaptations from this survey were used with permission and obtained the following results.

Most important faith formation ministry.

To begin, the researcher believed it was important to ascertain which ministry the young pastors would identify as the most important vehicle for adult faith formation in their church settings. Respondents were asked to choose one option to answer the question, “Which one of your church’s current ongoing ministries for adults do you consider the *most important* discipling/faith formation ministry for adults?” Thirty-two percent of the young pastors chose *Adult small groups* as the most important ministry followed by *Adult Sunday School* at 21%. These two choices were followed by (a) *pastor-led teaching times other than Sunday* at 14%, (b) *Wednesday night church* at 8%, (c) *Sunday night church* at 5%, and (d) *service-oriented groups ministering to the community* at 5% (see Figure 21). Six percent of respondents reported having *no formal approach toward faith formation* and nine percent selected the response *other*, specifying *prayer meetings* as the most frequent write-in response in this category.

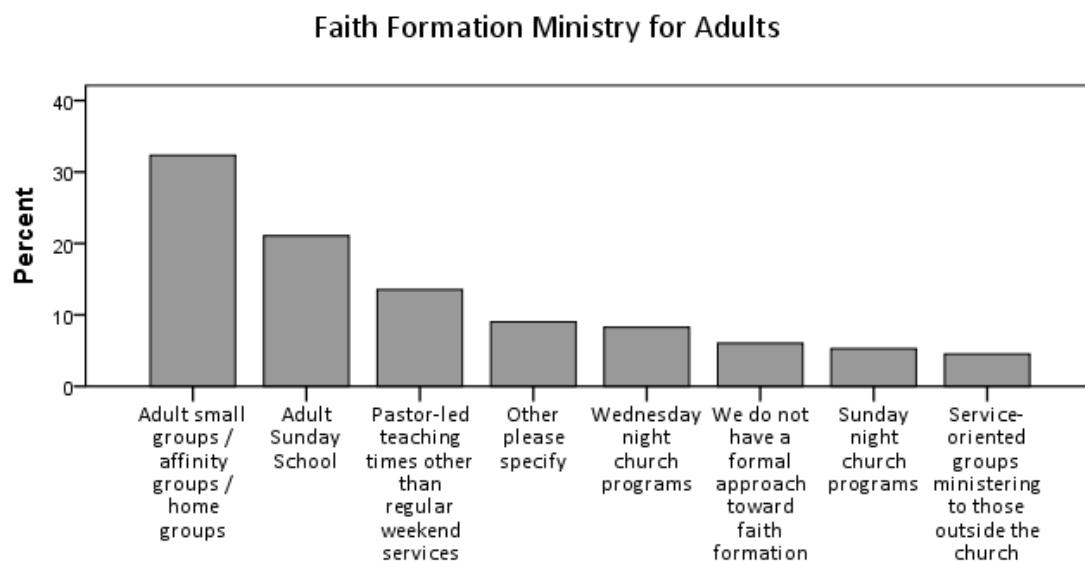


Figure 21. Young pastors chose one option as most important faith formation ministry for adults; responses are reported as a percentage.

When the responses of the young pastors group were compared using Chi-square to the responses of the older pastors, the results were statistically significant. Pastors in the 36-or-older group reported that Adult Sunday School was their most important faith formation ministry (37%) compared to 20% of the 35-or-younger respondents. Conversely, the young pastors preferred Adult Small Groups (32%) more than the 36-or-older group (28%). Young pastors preferred Wednesday evening (8%) over Sunday evening (5%). Older pastors preferred Sunday evenings (7%) over Wednesday evenings (3%). These findings were significant at the $p < .05$ level, $X^2 = 14.58$

Primary format of resources used.

The next section in the survey instrument used a Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*never use*) to 5 (*very often use*) to explore what format the young pastors preferred when choosing spiritual formation resources for their churches. There was no clear preference among the respondents, though descriptive statistics revealed the highest mean score was given to *printed ongoing Bible study curriculum* (see Table 11) and the second highest score was given to *printed short-term Bible studies*. Scores indicated that the young pastors use a variety of kinds of resources, including content tied to sermons, books about faith, and video series.

Table 11

Primary Format of the Resources Young Pastors Use

	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
Printed ongoing Bible study curriculum	134	3.26	4.0	4	1.38
Content tied to sermons	133	2.91	3.0	3	1.12
Various; groups choose their own resources	132	2.89	3.0	3	1.12
Video series	133	2.80	3.0	3	1.03
Books about faith	133	2.79	3.0	3	1.01
Printed short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less)	133	2.74	3.0	3	1.07
Resources produced by your church	132	2.46	3.0	1	1.27
Downloaded ongoing Bible study curriculum	132	2.19	2.0	2	1.07
Downloaded short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less)	133	2.17	2.0	1	1.04

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *never use* , 5 = *very often use*

The mode of this series is helpful in extrapolating the implications of the scores as shown in Figure 22. The pastors' most frequent score for "printed ongoing Bible study curriculum" was 4, *often use*. The pastors' most frequent score for "downloaded short-term Bible studies" was 1, *never use*. The pastors' most frequent score for "downloaded ongoing Bible study curriculum" was 2, *seldom use*. Pastors expressed a strong preference for print resources as opposed to downloadable ones for use in discipling congregants.

Primary Format of the Resources You Use: Mode

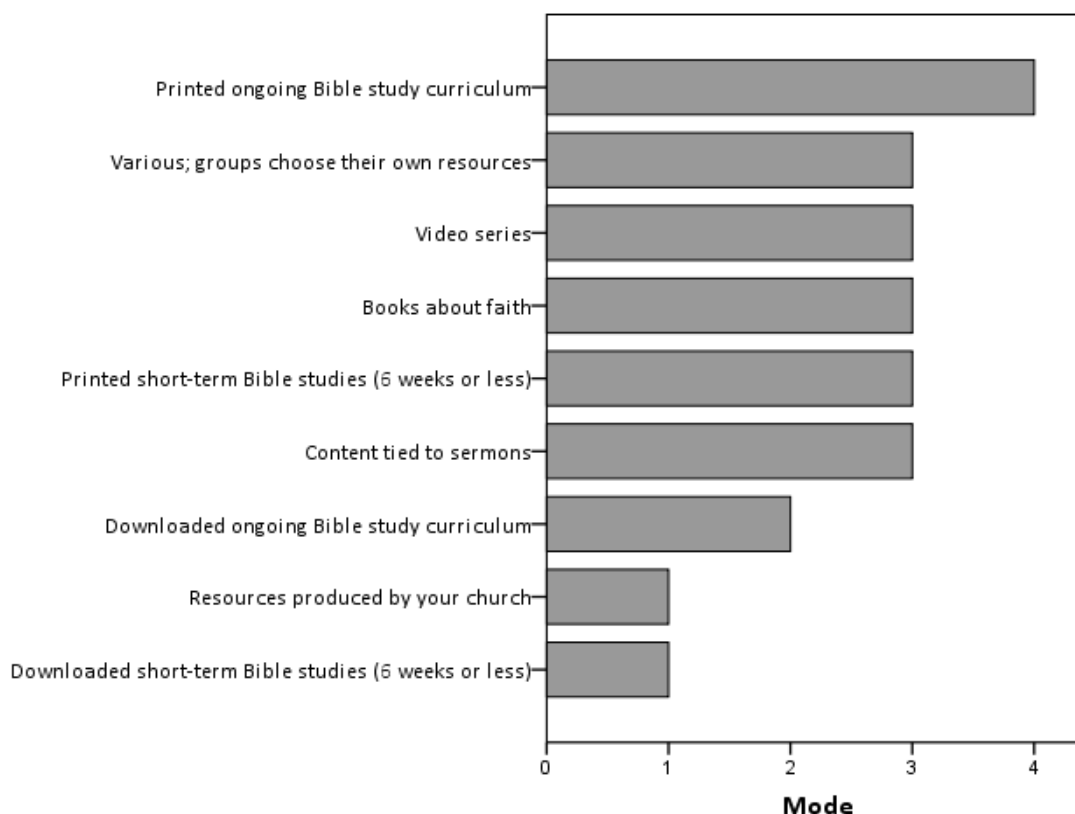


Figure 22. Young pastors' most common response regarding choice of resources, 1 = never use, 4 = very often use

When considering the primary format of resources young pastors preferred, the researcher performed a *t*-test to determine if there were significant differences in the scores of Sample A and Sample B. The 36-or-older pastors scored higher on every response with the exception of “various, groups chose their own resources.” The older pastor scores were significantly higher on four statements, each having to do with Bible study curriculum (see Table 12):

- Printed ongoing Bible study curriculum, $p < .001$ level, $t(218) = 3.6$
- Downloaded ongoing Bible study curriculum, $p < .01$ level, $t(213) = 3.1$
- Printed short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less), $p < .05$ level, $t(218) = 2.1$

- Downloaded short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less), $p < .05$ level, $t(218) = 2.0$

The generally higher scores for the Sample B on each statement could suggest that the 36-or-older pastors may use curricular resources of all types more frequently than the 35-or-younger pastor group.

Table 12

Primary Format of Resources Pastors Use: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

	<i>Age Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Printed ongoing Bible study curriculum	Age 35 or younger	134	3.26***	1.38
	Age 36 or older	86	3.91***	1.08
Printed short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less)	Age 35 or younger	133	2.74*	1.07
	Age 36 or older	87	3.05*	0.96
Downloaded ongoing Bible study curriculum	Age 35 or younger	132	2.19**	1.07
	Age 36 or older	86	2.64**	1.02
Downloaded short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less)	Age 35 or younger	133	2.17*	1.03
	Age 36 or older	87	2.46*	1.02

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *never use*, 5 = *very often use*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Next, the researcher was particularly interested in discovering if pastors who felt free to use whatever resources they like without constraint would prefer similar kinds of resources. The researcher discovered a weak positive relationship between pastors who were free to implement the kinds of programming they desired and who chose to use resources produced by their own churches, $r(130) = .22$, $p < .05$. The researcher also

discovered a moderate positive correlation between pastors who believed their churches were making progress in their spiritual development and pastors who used resources produced by their own local churches, $r(133) = .31, p < .01$.

Desired outcomes for adults in faith formation ministries.

In the subsequent series of questions, the researcher explored the outcomes pastors desired for adult participants in discipleship ministries in their local churches. A 10-point Likert-style scale was used, with possible responses ranging from *not desired* to *most desired*. The highest mean scored from the eight items was “develop a greater faith in Christ,” which was the only response with a mean greater than 9. The remainder of the items were clustered in means of between 7 and 8, as seen in Table 13.

Table 13

Young Pastors' Desired Outcomes for Adults in Discipleship Ministries

	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Develop a greater faith in Christ	133	9.41	1.0
Demonstrate more love in relationships	132	8.87	1.4
Better understand Scripture and its application	133	8.75	1.4
See their vocations as a part of God's mission	132	8.55	1.9
Start serving others more	133	8.26	1.9
Participate in life together	132	8.12	1.9
Develop a sound theology	132	7.92	1.9
Gain practical help for daily living	132	7.75	2.0

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *not desired* , 10 = *most desired*

Teaching approaches.

The survey instrument next examined pastors' preferences on various philosophical approaches to faith formation in their congregations. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used with responses that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The young pastors expressed a preference for a *narrative approach to teaching that illustrates how each concept fits into the whole story of the Bible* ($M = 3.24$). The young pastors' second choice was *studying one book of the Bible at a time* ($M = 3.11$). The remainder of the results clustered around a mean of two as shown in Figure 23. At another juncture in the survey instrument, young pastors expressed 83% agreement with the statement, "A scope and sequence is important when choosing educational materials for the local church."

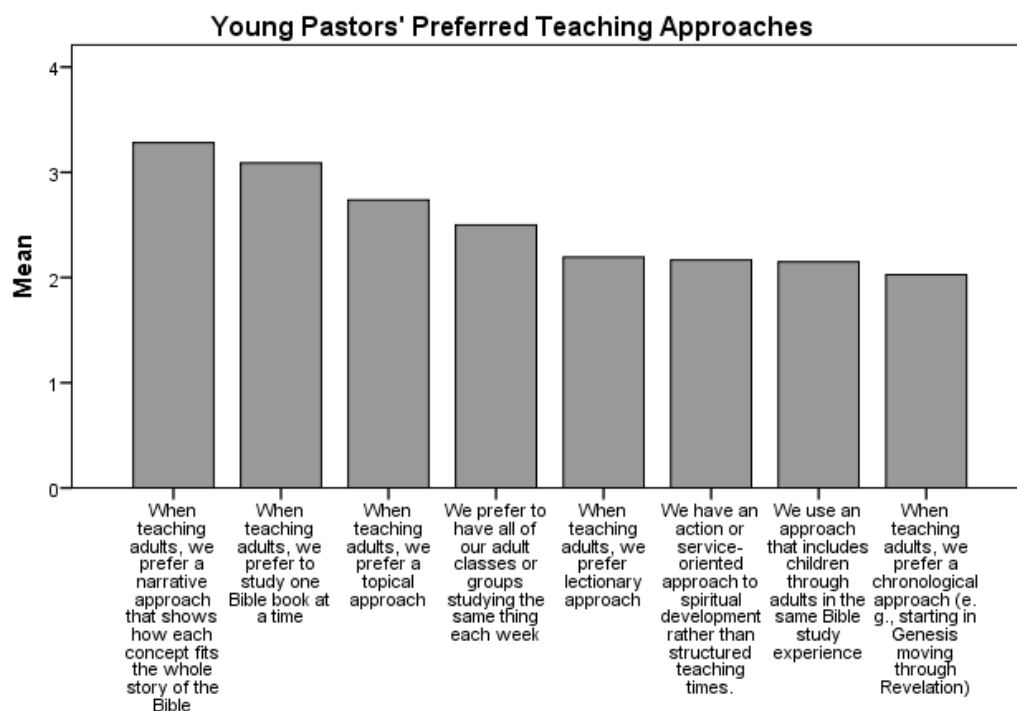


Figure 23. Young pastors' preferred teaching approaches, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

When comparing the young pastors' preferred approaches to faith formation to the older pastor group, three responses proved to be statistically significant (see Figure 24).

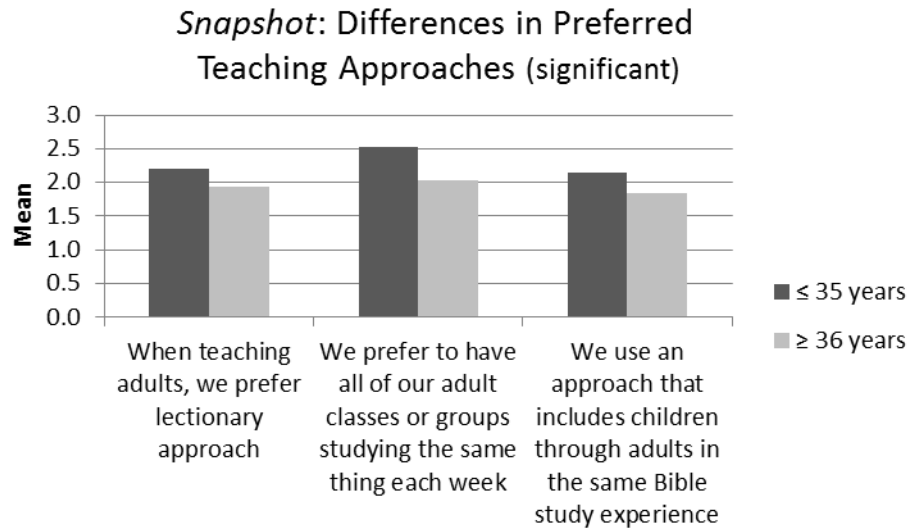


Figure 24. Younger and older pastors' statistically significant responses to three questions regarding their approaches to faith formation. 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

As shown Table 14, out of the eight total items, the 35-or-younger pastors scored higher than the 36-or-older pastors did on three that were statistically significant:

- When teaching adults we prefer a lectionary approach, $p < .05$ level, $t(211) = 2.0$
- We prefer to have all our adult classes/groups studying the same thing each week, $p < .001$ level, $t(208) = 3.9$
- We use an approach that includes children and adults in the same Bible study experience, $p < .01$ level, $t(204) = 2.4$

Table 14

Pastors' Preferred Teaching Approaches: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

	<i>Age group category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
When teaching adults, we prefer a narrative approach that shows how each concept fits the whole story of the Bible	Age 35 or younger	132	3.25	.70
	Age 36 or older	85	3.31	.72
When teaching adults, we prefer to study one Bible book at a time	Age 35 or younger	132	3.11	.76
	Age 36 or older	84	3.01	.70
When teaching adults, we prefer a topical approach	Age 35 or younger	129	2.74	.92
	Age 36 or older	85	2.85	.72
We prefer to have all of our adult classes or groups studying the same thing each week	Age 35 or younger	129	2.54***	.93
	Age 36 or older	81	2.04***	.84
When teaching adults, we prefer lectionary approach	Age 35 or younger	132	2.21*	.99
	Age 36 or older	81	1.94*	.86
We use an approach that includes children through adults in the same Bible study experience	Age 35 or younger	129	2.15**	.91
	Age 36 or older	77	1.84**	.78
We have an action or service-oriented approach to spiritual development rather than structured teaching times.	Age 35 or younger	128	2.14	.84
	Age 36 or older	80	1.96	.82
When teaching adults, we prefer a chronological approach (e.g., starting in Genesis moving through Revelation)	Age 35 or younger	127	2.07	.87
	Age 36 or older	84	2.04	.83

Note. Likert-type responses, 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

In follow-up telephone interviews, select young pastors were asked to “describe the kinds of resources you are looking for to promote spiritual growth in your adult congregants.” In each church-size group, pastors expressed a strong interest in resources that moved participants toward dialog, interaction, reflection, and action. Pastors in the larger church-size groups mentioned improving Biblical literacy and desiring to educate congregants on how to read the Bible. “We need to learn anew how to teach the Bible,” one pastor said. “The way we read and understand Scripture is horrific.” Another expressed a need for resources that “clearly teach the Bible in order to help people get into the Word.”

Summary, research question three.

In an attempt to understand better what kinds of resources young pastors desire to use for faith formation in their congregations, portions of the LifeWay Research survey instrument were adapted and employed. The results revealed a more traditional side of the 35-or-younger pastor respondents. The majority of these young pastors (53%) regarded adult small groups and adult Sunday school as their most important faith formation ministry, followed by pastor-led teaching times and Wednesday night church. Six percent of young pastor respondents reported having no formal approach to discipleship in their congregations. More than 83% of young pastor respondents believed that a scope and sequence is important when choosing educational materials for use in their congregations.

The young pastors also expressed a preference for printed Bible study resources (both ongoing and short-term) versus downloadable or digital resources. The 36-or-older pastors reported more frequent usage on all choices for resources, which could be an

indicator that the older pastors were more friendly toward curricula in general than the younger pastors were. A moderately strong correlation existed between pastors who believed their churches were making progress in spiritual development and pastors who used resources produced by their own local churches.

The most desirous outcome from discipleship and faith formation ministries expressed by the young pastors was that congregants would *develop a greater faith in Christ* ($M = 9.4$ on a scale of 1-10). Other outcomes were clustered together with means of between 7 and 8. To achieve these outcomes, the pastors expressed a preference for 1. *narrative-based teaching*, 2. *studying one book of the Bible at a time*, and 3. *a topical approach to Scripture*. The young pastor group demonstrated an affinity for a lectionary approach to teaching that was statistically significant from the older pastor group. Similarly, they preferred having all classes studying the same thing at the same time and using an approach that was intergenerational.

Implications for Nazarene Publishing House

Ultimately, the researcher desired to determine what the implications of pastors' preferences were for the future work of Nazarene Publishing House. To this end, a list of typical product features were compiled by the editorial and marketing teams of NPH. A Likert-type scale was developed with responses ranging from 1, *not important at all*, to 4, *very important*. The young pastors placed a high priority on the following features, which all had mean scores between 3 and 4: (a) *Bible focused*, (b) *rich theological content*, (c) *encourages conversation*, and (d) *written in a fresh, engaging way*. The pastors considered *having a prominent name or speaker* not important at all ($M = 1.82$) and

published by my denomination as only somewhat important ($M = 2.28$). The remainder of the features scored a mean of between 2 and 3 (see Figure 25).

Important Features When Choosing Faith Formation Resources

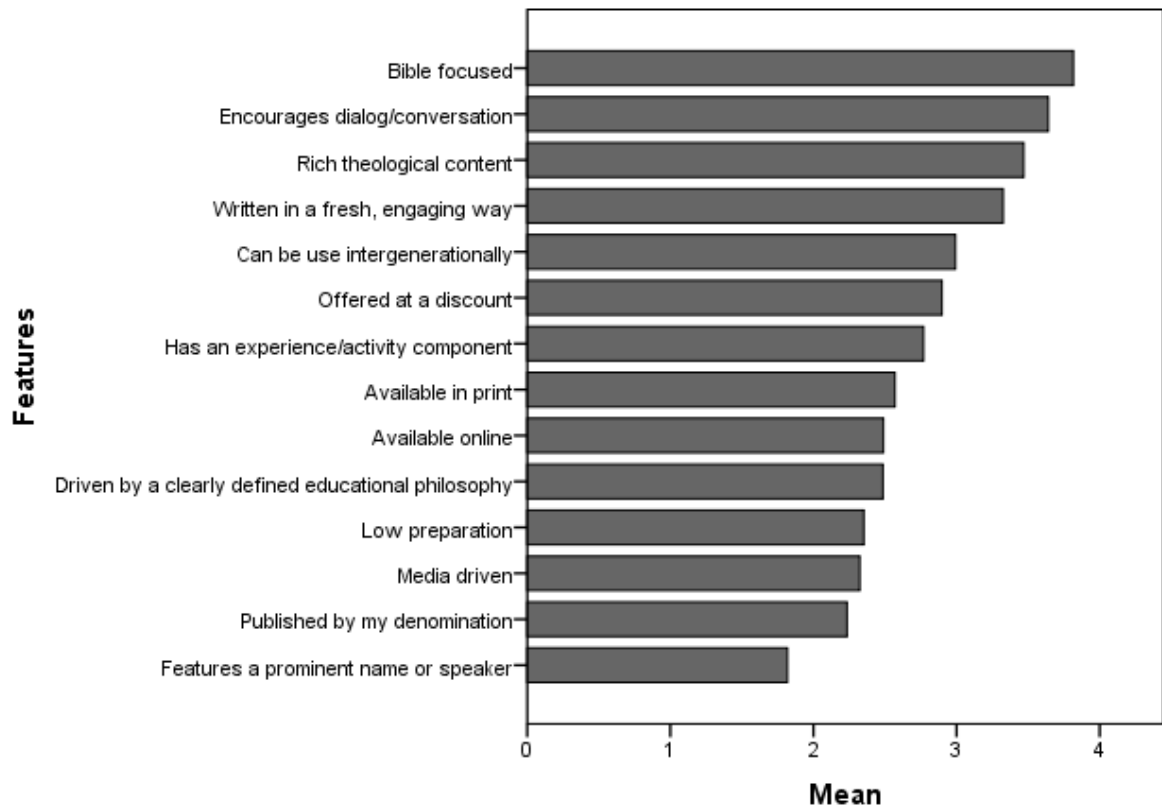


Figure 25. Young pastors’ prioritizing of important features for faith formation resources, 1 = *not important at all*, 4 = *very important*.

The mode scores are helpful in understanding what value the majority of pastors placed on particular items in this series, as shown in Table 15. For example, the pastors expressed less interest in whether resources were “published by their own denomination” ($\theta = 2$, *not very important*) than whether these resources “could be used intergenerationally” ($\theta = 3$, *important*) or were “offered at a discount” ($\theta = 4$, *very important*).

Table 15

Features Young Pastors Value when Choosing Faith Formation Resources

	Mode	Likert response
Encourages dialog/conversation	4	
Bible focused	4	
Offered at a discount	4	<i>very important</i>
Rich theological content	4	
Written in a fresh, engaging way	4	
Available online	3	
Can be use intergenerationally	3	<i>important</i>
Available in print	3	
Has an experience/activity component	3	
Driven by defined educational philosophy	2	
Media driven	2	
Low preparation	2	<i>somewhat important</i>
Published by my denomination	2	
Features a prominent name or speaker	1	<i>not important at all</i>

When considering features important to pastors in choosing faith formation resources, differences in Sample A and Sample B were statistically significant on three items. Younger pastors considered it less important to choose resources that were (a) *published by their denomination*, $p < .01$ level, $t(218) = 3.0$; (b) *driven by a clearly*

defined educational philosophy, $p < .05$ level, $t(216) = 2.0$; and (c) *are available in print*, $p < .01$ level, $t(216) = 2.6$.

Impressions of NPH.

To conclude the survey, participants were asked an open-ended question, “Please finish the following sentence. The first three words or phrases I think of when I hear the name Nazarene Publishing House are . . .” There were 360 responses to the question, which the researcher manually divided into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative, according to the connotation the words carried. Additionally, the researcher combined appropriate responses that shared meaning but used slightly different words, e.g. “not relevant” and “irrelevant.” The young pastors gave 138 negative responses, 105 neutral responses, and 117 positive responses about their impressions of NPH; this equates to 38%, 29%, and 32% respectively. Table 15 provides the most frequent words in each of the categories, and number of occurrences.

Table 16

Words/phrases Describing Nazarene Publishing House

Positive	<i>n</i>	Neutral	<i>n</i>	Negative	<i>n</i>
Helpful	14	Books	17	Expensive	17
Improving	8	Curriculum	13	Dated	9
Theologically sound	9	Nazarene	11	Old	6
Better	5	Traditional	9	Behind	5
Relevant	4	Holiness	10	Irrelevant	5
Trying	4	Commentaries	6	Struggling	3

Subsequent to completing the survey instrument, five pastors from each church-size category were interviewed by phone to glean a better understanding of the implications for the future ministry of the Nazarene Publishing House. The young pastors

responded to the question, “Agree or Disagree: Nazarene Publishing House produces resources relevant to my ministry. Please explain your answer.” Seventy three percent of the pastors agreed with this statement; 16% expressed qualified agreement, and 11 % disagreed. The pastors who disagreed tended to be in the small-church size group and expressed sentiments that NPH materials were sometimes too academic and not always friendly to a layperson’s perspective. Several pastors talked about the need for more Bible study materials. One pastor described NPH small group materials as “not relevant” and remarked, “We buy our stuff from Zondervan.”

Purchasing habits was the topic of the fourth question asked in the follow-up telephone interviews: “Where do you purchase the majority of Christian formation resources?” For small churches (less than 100), Amazon was mentioned in every pastor’s response, mostly in the context of saving money. For larger church sizes, NPH was a more common option along with Amazon and Christian Book Distributors. Several pastors among all church-size categories made positive comments about the *House Studio* imprint, which is the NPH brand targeted to a young-pastor demographic.

Conclusions

The results of this study presented a multifaceted portrait of a new generation of young pastors and leaders. In answer to research question one, the pastors clearly expressed a commitment to preaching and teaching as their top ministry priority. Their goals were focused on spiritual formation of congregants and teaching them the Bible much more so than growing the church numerically or raising tithes and offerings. The young pastors envisioned themselves more as fellow pilgrim on a shared journey of faith

formation rather than a congregational CEO. The young pastors were highly interested in social justice, spiritual disciplines, and community life.

Research question two explored the attitudes of young pastors toward Christian faith, discipleship, and formation in their congregations. The respondents' mindsets in many areas represented statistically significant shifts from their 36-or-older counterparts. The majority of the young pastors identified themselves as "postmodern" and affirmed that there was a generation gap and difference in worldview between them and their adult congregants. (Many of these pastors are leading congregations in which the preponderance of members are older than 50 years.)

Although the young pastors reported that the Bible is an "absolutely foundational" source of authority in their congregations, the majority of the pastors did not regard Scripture as inerrant; rather they saw the Bible as a document written by men but influenced by the Holy Spirit. They used the Bible as their primary resource for sermon preparation, along with their own personal reflection. The top three thinkers the young pastors gleaned insight from were John Wesley, Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright and non-denominational pastor Andy Stanley.

In matters of salvation, one may surmise that many of the respondents have been influenced by postmodern thought. Although the group strongly affirmed the view that salvation was found in Jesus Christ alone, 40% believed that salvation in Christ did not preclude God from saving in other ways. Nearly half the pastors agreed with the statement, "Salvation is God among us." The young pastors' responses were consistently different from those of the older pastors at a statistically significant level.

When considering the church's interface with culture, more than 90% of young pastors resonated with the belief that the Kingdom of God involves an invitation to participate in the restoration of the world, which is a theme frequently associated with the writings of NT Wright. Not surprisingly, a majority of the pastors also agreed with the postmodern notion that the distinction between sacred and secular is an artificial boundary. The pastors largely believed that evangelism should emphasize presence rather than proclamation. Approximately 20% expressed some level of agreement with the statement that Heaven and Hell are merely symbolic ways to talk about our relationship with God. In the section of the survey instrument dealing with the church and culture, the responses of the young pastor group differed in statistically significant ways from those of the older pastor group on every question.

The young pastors identified prayer as the most important habit their congregants can cultivate in order to grow spiritually, along with Bible study, spiritual disciplines, and participation in a small group. Serving the poor and needy was considered more important than listening and responding to sermons or participating in classes where teaching happens. The pastors perceived complacency to be the number one threat to spiritual growth, and liberal theology to be the lowest threat. As one might expect, the younger pastors considered a flawed perception of the Kingdom and mission of God to be a greater threat than did the older pastors.

On a practical level, implementing a plan for faith formation in their congregations seemed to be a place where the young pastors diverged from one another. About half the pastors expressed that they had a plan to form their congregants spiritually. About half the pastors believed their teachers and leaders were adequately

trained. Interestingly, there was a moderately strong positive correlation between pastors who believed their congregations were making progress in their spiritual growth and pastors who had a plan in place for faith formation.

The researcher would conclude that the information gathered to answer research question two revealed a subtle but unmistakable paradigm shift in thinking on the part of 35-or-younger pastors, who demonstrated statistically significant differences from the 36-or-older group in most questions in this section of the survey instrument pertaining to worldview, matters of authority, salvation, Scripture, the church and the world, spiritual practices, and faith formation in the local context. Because these divergences seem to be consistent with the literature on postmodern thought reviewed in this study, the researcher suspects the differences in Sample A and Sample B may (1) be indicative of an underlying paradigm shift in thinking and (2) point to the influence of postmodernity.

Research question three explored the types of discipleship and spiritual formation resources young pastors want and need. The pastors' responses in this section of the survey instrument revealed a fairly traditional approach to practical ministry. More than 50% of the pastors identified Sunday school or small groups as their primary faith formation vehicles. More than 80% believed a scope and sequence is important when choosing educational materials. Most of the pastors expressed a preference for print over digital resources for use in their churches. The researcher suspects this preference may be driven by the fact the majority of young pastors are pastoring smaller churches with older congregations who may not be adept at using digital resources. Further, the practicality of using digital resources with a limited budget for technology may push churches toward print.

Ultimately, the pastors' primary goal for faith formation was a greater faith in Christ. To move congregants forward in their growth, the young pastors preferred narrative-based teaching. They demonstrated an affinity for using the lectionary that the older pastors did not. Additionally, they also had a stronger preference for intergenerational ministry and for all classes studying the same thing at the same time.

Research question four was the impetus for this study: What are the implications of young pastors' attitudes for Nazarene Publishing House? Clearly, the pastors' preferences and responses aligned with the findings of Wiese (1998) and others who observed that young pastors did not exhibit great denominational loyalty or desire resources that had a strong denominational affiliation. The young pastors in this study believed it was more important that discipleship materials were offered at a discount, written in an engaging way, or encouraged dialog than that they were published by the denomination or driven by a defined educational philosophy. They did, however, express a strong preference that the material be Bible-focused and rich in theological content.

The young pastors' impressions of NPH could help provide leaders direction for the future. Some view NPH resources as too expensive and outdated; others view them as theologically sound and helpful. Embedded within the data are clear markers for developing relevant, practical, and user-friendly materials that meet the need of a new generation of users.

Implications and Recommendations

The mission statement of the Nazarene Publishing House is to "engage the church for the mission of God." If NPH is to remain a viable entity moving forward, it must capture and nurture the young pastors that will constitute its future customer base.

Undoubtedly, some of those present and future customers participated in this research study. Though many of the young pastors expressed fond sentiments of NPH and its commitment to ministry, their impressions of the institution were that of a traditional, slightly behind-the-times provider of expensive and sometimes outdated resources. In an age where cultural expectations are shifting, denominational loyalty is waning, and digital publishing is exploding, these young pastors' sentiments can give impetus to NPH and perhaps other denominational publishers to make needed changes.

The researcher's primary recommendation is to create a conduit of communication with young pastors whereby the theological dialog of the church is advanced. The challenge is great, because the theological dialogue is of the utmost importance; these young pastors will be shaping generations of believers who come after them. In the midst of a rapidly shifting cultural landscape, Webber (2002) observed:

Young evangelicals are returning to the Wesleyan past, to the Reformers of the sixteenth century, and to the ancient past of the first three centuries of the church, for inspiration and wisdom. This new movement is not a perpetuation of twentieth-century evangelicalism but a much older faith and practice, more tested by time, more rooted in the tradition of the ancient church. (p. 239)

Nazarene Publishing House and other denominational publishers stand at great door of opportunity. Implementing the practical kinds of results discovered in this study—offering bigger discounts, creating resources that foster dialog, developing more small group resources, and more—is the simple portion of the assignment. The real challenge is to engage young pastors in a stimulating and meaningful conversation on faith, a conversation that keeps them and their congregants coming back for more.

To that end, the researcher recommends follow-up studies that explore in more detail what a new generation of faith formation resources might look like. Questions that could be asked include:

- How can strategic partnerships be developed between denominational publishers and churches?
- Where are practical ways to engage young pastors in the creation and development process of a new generation of faith formation resources?
- How do the resource needs of pastors differ when they are serving in large vs. small congregations or older vs. younger congregations?
- How can denominational publishers better come alongside pastors in the day-to-day work of ministry?
- Regarding faith formation, what are the attitudes of an even younger demographic of pastors and associate pastors, say less than 30 years old?

Ultimately, the mission of the Nazarene Publishing House and other denominational publishers is to multiply the sentiment of one young pastor who reported in a telephone interview for this study, “We are an NPH church and proud of it. We need them. We trust them.” This is the task at hand; May the Lord himself give us wisdom and fortitude for these days.

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Appendix A
Survey Instrument

Appendix B

Phone Interview Follow Up

FOLLOW UP PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name:

Church size:

Part. #

Please describe the ways you believe spiritual growth best happens in your adult congregants.

Please describe the kinds of resources you are looking for to promote spiritual growth in your adult congregants.

Agree or disagree: Nazarene Publishing House produces resources relevant to my ministry.
Please explain your answer.

The best/most effective spiritual formation/education resource our church has ever used was :

Where do you purchase the majority of Christian formation resources used in your congregation? Top 2.