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IN SEARCH OF BEST DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES IN RELATION TO THE PRACTICE OF
PREACHING

A Major Applied Project
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By
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April 2018

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ABSTRACT

In Search of Best Devotional Practices in Relation to the Practice of Preaching. Doctor of Ministry. Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary, 2018. pp.

Preachers are tasked with faithfully carrying the Word of God to their people on a weekly basis, yet preachers often struggle to be spiritually fed for their own sake as well as for the sake of their congregations. This project seeks to investigate the connection between personal prayer and devotional reading and proclamation. In seeking best devotional practices among pastors, this study reveals a number of benefits to the man who is tasked with regularly proclaiming the Word. This study is intended to encourage devotional practice for the strengthening of preachers by providing a wealth of resources and a rationale for making devotional practice a priority for preachers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Most pastors can define Sabbath, though seemingly have little memory of it in their own experience. The same is true for most in our society. The idea of a day of rest is usually viewed as a luxury for those with time to burn, but we view ourselves as too busy. This is the mantra of most who sit in the pews. Many lament the “good old days” of blue laws and forced work restrictions, but find it now impossible to make choices that run counter to how the “real world” operates. The “real world,” of course, is defined for many as everything that takes place outside of the church.

The situation for many pastors is largely the same. We are actively engaged in providing fulfilling, Christ-centered times of Sabbath for our people in the divine service, but we are too busy to meditate upon God’s Word. Beyond this, the rhythm of Sabbath rest in each day through devotional reading or weekly through a time of hearing God speak, and the entire idea of resting our bodies is a foreign concept. I should begin in confession, not in blanket statements about others. This is my sin, but it is one I know I am not alone in.

Author Eugene Peterson puts it well,

Of all the commandments, not one is treated with such disregard by pastors as this one. We are capable of preaching good sermons on it to our parishioners, and we take great care to provide them a Sabbath of good worship and holy leisure. But we exempt ourselves. Curious. Not many of us preach vigorously on the [sixth] commandment and then pursue lives of active adultery. But we conscientiously catechize our people on the [third] commandment and without a blush flaunt our workaholic Sabbath-breaking as evidence of an extraordinary piety.¹

¹ Eugene Peterson, “The Pastor’s Sabbath,” *Leadership* 6, no 2 (1985): 52. I altered the numbers of the

Such lives of busyness that are reticent to slow down to hear the Word of God stifle the pastors' ability to serve. This is uniquely true of our preaching, for preachers embody the message of the Gospel. The devotional reading and the larger devotional life of the preacher² directly and indirectly influences the proclamation of the Gospel. As 1 John 1:3 puts it, "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you." If preachers cease to hear the Word of God spoken to us and do see the working of God through a life of devotional practice, how can they proclaim?

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this Major Applied Project will be to describe the devotional practice of preachers as a model and encouragement to pastors who have not made their devotional life a priority. After studying the devotional practice of a group of preachers, a presentation will be developed for use in circuits and/or other meetings of pastors to encourage them to deeper devotional reading and practice for their own wellbeing and in service to their congregations.

The purpose of my research will be to look at the influence of the devotional life on the preaching of pastors. The goal would be to seek what, if any, correlation exists between preachers and their engagement in devotional practice and reading.

Some desired outcomes of the project would be:

1. Devotional "best" practices of various preachers will be described.

commandments in Peterson's article to match Luther's numbering.

² David R. Schmitt, "Devotion and Community," in *Inviting Community*, ed. Robert Kolb and Theodore Hopkins (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2013), 112. Schmitt argues for a larger definition of devotion. In contemporary circles, devotion is often spoken of only in reference the personal study of Scripture. Schmitt encourages us to expand of our view. "The Word of God is a means of grace, the source of all devotion. That Word in its oral, written and sacramental forms is necessary for devotion. It is the means whereby the Spirit forms devotion. To limit the devotional life to such acts of reading and meditation, however, obscures the Spirit's works, overlooking the biblical witness itself, which attests that the fruits of the spiritual life flow from meditation upon the Word."

2. A description of the correlation between devotional practice and preaching will be become clear.
3. A presentation will be developed that will discuss the findings, give suggestions for developing more devotionally fed pastors.

Process

The process for this study will be to speak to the President of the Missouri District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (hereafter LCMS) and solicit his help in order survey numerous pastors of the district at the Missouri District Pastor’s Conference. I hope to have as many as possible fill out a questionnaire that will be made available at the conference. From the responses, I plan to narrow the group to five to seven preachers who speak most constructively of their own devotional practice. With this group, I will seek more information as to the benefits personally, professionally, and especially in regards to the preaching task. If willing, I would review some of their recent sermons with them seeking how their devotional practice has influenced their preaching and if this is a positive influence. These later interviews would be done in person. The information from the beginning questionnaires and the later interviews, along with my theological study, will form the basis for a presentation that I would offer to present to circuits of the LCMS around the state at their meetings, as I will have spoken with pastors from around the state and also with the circuit visitors.

Presuppositions

I presuppose that pastors are shaped by their daily patterns, and therefore the engagement in regular devotional reading and practice will shape the language, attitudes, priorities, and ideas of pastors as they enter the pulpit. This is true to some degree whether devotional reading and

practice are regular parts of life or not. Either way, the preacher is not merely a performer, but carries his life with him into the pulpit even as he seeks to proclaim the Word of Christ.

On the other hand, a pastor may be naturally gifted as a speaker without the benefit of regular devotional reading and practice, but the absence of this life would most certainly diminish what the preacher could be.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

First John 1:3 highlights a fundamental theological reality for the preacher, “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you.” The opposite is causally related, that is, we proclaim that which we have seen and heard. Without hearing the Word of Christ, there is nothing to proclaim. Faithful preaching begins in the Word, but not merely in exegetical study for the sake of preparing a sermon, but in a habit of regularly hearing the Word as God’s living Word. A devotional reading of Scripture and, by extension, personal engagement in devotional practice, prepares the preacher to go into the study and hear the Word of God for the sake of the people to whom he will preach. Paul regularly defends his message by arguing that he is passing on what was passed to him. In this chapter, the Scriptural case discussed above will be made for the preacher hearing the Word before preaching the Word.

Then, this Biblical theme of hearing the Word and then preaching will be highlighted in the writings of various Lutheran teachers as this topic is of particular interest in Lutheran works on pastoral theology. C.F.W. Walther and Theodore Mueller’s pastoral theologies will be consulted in addition to writings from other American Lutheran church leaders that emphasize the importance of the character of the pastor/preacher who is shaped by the Word. The cumulative effect of these writings lays the foundation for the vital role that hearing the Word plays in the preaching task.

The next major theme in this chapter is to highlight the importance of Sabbath observance by pastors. As pastors are regularly serving others on the Sabbath, they do not have the same

opportunity to receive the Word of Christ. This chapter will make the argument for the importance of the devotional life as a means to resting in the Word of Life in Christ.

Finally, this chapter will consider the importance of hearing the Word in order to avoid Law and Gospel abuses. As the preacher is shaped by the Word, he is prepared to hear the Word and not mechanically seek categories of Law and Gospel. In doing so, the preacher will be more faithful to God's Word as he proclaims the Word within the Law and Gospel dialectic.

The Biblical Testimony

In his *Pastoral Theology*, C.F.W. Walther commented in his section on "The Personal Life of the Pastor" that, "Continued study is a major aspect of a preacher's life. If all Christians should grow in knowledge and not remain children in understanding (Col. 1:11; 2 Peter 3:18, 1 Cor. 14:20), that is without doubt much more necessary for a servant of the Word."¹ Walther's principle seems self-evident that the speaker of God's Word must regularly hear God's Word. Nevertheless, this theme is reinforced in Scripture and through various writings on pastoral care and theology. This study will take time to consider a number of Scriptures that point to the necessity for the preacher to hear the Word regularly in order to preach the Word.

Romans 10:14–15

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Michael Middendorf considers the words of Romans 10, "While God uses real flesh and blood proclaimers in this passage Paul does not place his emphasis upon the human beings who

¹ C.F.W. Walther, *Walther's Pastorate: American Lutheran Pastoral Theology* trans. John Drickamer (New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, 1995), 269.

bring the Good News. Instead, the all-encompassing character of his argument assures us that whenever the action of these verbs is done, the main actor is the Lord himself, who bestows the riches of his righteousness and salvation on all who call on him (10:12–13). Thus far, the Gospel is entirely God reaching toward all of us through the Word about the Lord Jesus, whom he raised from the dead. (10:8–9)”²

The act of preaching, of proclamation, is to be an instrument of the Lord Jesus Christ and to declare His Word of life. The One who changes hearts is not the preacher, but the Lord Jesus through His powerful Word. The preacher will be shaped by the Word that he is to proclaim. This brings to mind the common biblical image of the herald³, the messenger. For the messenger to declare the Word, he must know the Word. For the feet of the preacher to carry the good news of Christ, and not another Gospel, the preacher will need to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen in order to carry Christ’s Word and not his own. Another image that is brought to mind is the witness. Thomas Long clarifies, “The preacher as witness is not authoritative because of rank or power, but rather because of what the preacher has seen and heard.”⁴

First John 1:3

that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John speaks of the personal encounter with Christ as formative for his sharing with the recipients of his letter. He is writing as a first-hand witness who has heard the voice of Christ,

² Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 9-16 Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2016), 1011.

³ In his discussion of the Biblical image of the preacher as herald, Thomas Long comments, “So the herald preacher has one clear task with two parts: to attend to the message of the Bible and to proclaim it plainly.” Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 21.

⁴ Thomas Long, “Preaching as Bearing Witness,” in *Pastor: A Reader for Ordained Ministry*, ed. William Willimon (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 106.

seen Him with his own eyes, and even touched the Word of life in human flesh who gives eternal life. Through the means of grace, the Word of Life in human flesh has come to us. We have touched Him as His body and blood are placed on our lips. We have heard His voice (John 10:27–28)⁵ and believed in Christ the crucified and risen Lord. We may not be witnesses in the same sense as the apostles who were eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus, but as His messengers today we follow in the same pattern. We hear the message of the eyewitnesses as recorded in the Scriptures and the living Christ calls us to go and proclaim “that which we have seen and heard.” “Only those who themselves are ready to hear from these eyewitnesses, to believe and so to live may know Jesus.”⁶

First Corinthians 15:1–5

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, [2] and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

[3] For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

On three occasions in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:2, 11:23, 15:3), Paul references the handing on of what he had received. “The verbs παραλαμβάνω ‘to receive’ and παραδίδωμι ‘to hand over, transmit’ denote the reception and transmission of the Christian tradition, which is the very Gospel itself . . . They apply to the handing down of the apostolic teaching, whether it was given orally or in writing.”⁷ In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul returns to this same pattern of passing on what he

⁵ “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

⁶ Bruce Schuchard, *1–3 John Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 97.

⁷ Gregory Lockwood, *1 Corinthians Concordia Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 359.

had also received. In the earlier discussions, Paul was teaching regarding traditions and then the Lord's Supper. Now as Paul speaks regarding the central teaching of the Christian faith, the resurrection of Christ, he emphasizes this as the essence of the Gospel. He also makes plain the pattern of receiving the Word of Christ that is "according to the Scriptures," and then proclaiming and passing on that same message.

Second Timothy 3:14–17; 4:1–2

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16] All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[1] I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

One final passage is worthy of discussion in laying the foundation for the need for preachers to hear the Word of Christ regularly in order to preach faithfully. Up to this point, the main thrust of the Scriptures has been to simply establish the pattern of hearing preceding speaking. The pattern is somewhat self-evident, but also of such an essential nature that it is regularly discussed in the Scriptures. In speaking to the young pastor Timothy, Paul goes a step further in emphasizing the need for pastors to hear the Word regularly in order to speak the Word regularly.

These well-known verses from 2 Timothy reach from one chapter into the next and so often are separated from each other. Timothy is receiving instruction from Paul to remain faithful in the task of proclaiming the Gospel. Second Timothy 3:16–17 are often used to discuss the inspiration and efficacy of Scripture, and rightly so, but these are also personal words of

instruction to a young pastor who “from childhood has been acquainted with the sacred writings.” In direct context, Timothy is the first “man of God (who) may be complete, equipped for every good work, (3:17)” as he “continue(s) in what you have learned (3:14).” Certainly Timothy will go on in 4:2 to “preach the Word.” In doing so, many others will be taught, reproved, corrected and trained in righteousness, just as the inspired Word has continued to do for Timothy.

Scriptural Pattern Reinforced in Lutheran Pastoral Theologies

Pastoral theology texts within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have always placed a premium on the importance of how the Word of God shapes the preacher. This Scriptural tradition was reinforced from the beginning of our church body in C.F.W. Walther’s *American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*. In his requirements of public preaching Walther notes that,

The most important of all official functions of every pastor is public preaching. He should devote the greatest diligence to it. The most important requirements of public preaching are: (1) that it contain nothing but God’s Word pure and unalloyed (1 Peter 4:11, Acts 26:22, Romans 12:7, Jeremiah 23:28, 2 Timothy 2:15); (2) that God’s Word be correctly applied (2 Timothy 3:16–17); (3) that the whole counsel of God be proclaimed to the listeners for their salvation (Acts 20:20, 26-27); (4) that it meet the special needs of the listeners (Luke 12:42; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:11–6:2); (5) That it be timely (Matthew 16:3); (6) that it be well organized (Luke 1:3); and finally, (7) that it not be too long.⁸

For preaching to contain nothing but God’s Word pure, be correctly applied and to proclaim the whole counsel of God, the preacher will need to be regularly fed from the feast of God’s Word himself. Not only is this true, but to know the special needs of the listeners is also to know the Scriptures. Certainly, an individual may know some of their own need, but part of the pastoral task is to recognize the spiritual needs of the people as revealed in Scripture, whether

⁸ Walther, *Walther’s Pastorale*, 60.

those needs are apparent to parishioners or not. Such discernment for a pastor is grounded in a thorough knowledge of Scripture and prayerful attention to his flock. So Walther continues in encouraging diligent preparation for preaching that is grounded in the regular study of the Word and prayer. “In no other way can a pastor incur greater guilt for unfaithfulness in his office – in no other way does his high, holy office work greater damnation for him – than if he does not apply the greatest diligence in study, reading, and prayer to give his congregation the best that he can give every time.”⁹

Over recent decades the standard pastoral theology within the LCMS has been the text compiled by Norbert Mueller and George Kraus in 1990. In their work, Mueller and Kraus are more explicit about the importance of the devotional life for both the personal well-being of the pastor and the preaching that he undertakes. They point out that

Paul very interestingly notes (1 Timothy 3:6) that the pastor ‘must not be a recent convert,’ presumably because an effective ministry depends upon a firm faith growing out of a mature understanding of the grace of God. A shepherd of souls will want to nurture and enjoy a daily relationship with Christ through prayer and meditation on God’s Word in addition to the regular preparation for a sermon or teaching a Bible class. This calls for self-discipline and time management in all matters, a common-sense use of his time. A personal devotional life, a proper family relationship with his wife and children, and even adequate time for recreation are legitimate aspects of the pastor’s call to serve. Abandonment or neglect of family, friends, and one’s own spiritual development signal a faltering ministry. Congregation members soon sense when their pastor is in emotional, spiritual, or even physical trouble.¹⁰

Mueller and Kraus also make the direct link between personal study of God’s Word and the preaching task. It is noteworthy that they extol both separate devotional reading and prayerful reading of the intended preaching text.

Good preaching begins not with sermon study but with Bible study. Every day the pastor must begin by reading the Bible for himself in a devotional manner, quite apart

⁹ Walther, *Walther’s Pastorale*, 60–61.

¹⁰ Norbert H. Mueller and George Kraus, eds., *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1990), 33.

from sermon preparation. The faithful pastor, who applies to himself the Word he reads, will find also that the study of Scripture with the technical tools of exegesis will both yield the fruit of growth as a pastor and theologian and provide stimulation to personal meditation and growth as a Christian. Only the pastor who has himself been humbled daily by God's Word and been lifted up and empowered by God's gracious promises is prepared to share God's Word with people who also need to be humbled and lifted up. Daily meditation on God's Word will not happen automatically or by accident, but it will yield rich benefit. When the pastor of God's people undertakes a regular plan of Bible study, he will find himself more and more attracted to it. The pastor will then become a man of prayer – prayer which flows from the Word he reads and meditates upon...

As the pastor begins his sermon preparation, he first lets the text speak to him personally. After responding to God prayerfully, on the basis of the text, he then can turn to formal preparation for applying the text to the lives of others.¹¹

A few important principles arise from Mueller and Kraus' work here. First, they extol devotional reading of Scripture apart from sermon preparation. The purpose of such reading is to build up the servant of Christ by being served by Christ in His Word. Secondly, this is encouraged daily by taking on a regular plan of study. With the understanding that this regular plan may vary depending on the individual pastor, they don't make any suggestions as to what this might look like, except to make a regular plan and keep it. This can be considered to be a matter of ongoing formation. They speak of the pastor becoming "a man of prayer." Apart from regular devotional practice, the life of faith can become academic in nature. To be a "man of prayer" insinuates, not just one who occasionally prays, but one who finds it natural to pray because it is part and parcel to his very character and pattern of life. Finally, sermon preparation work is encouraged to begin in a devotional pattern. That is, the pastor begins by hearing the Word as spoken to him before considering technical work or how he might preach it to others. This is natural to the man who has been shaped by regular devotional practice and prayer. Every encounter with the Word of God is understood as the speaking of God. For the text to be

¹¹ Mueller and Kraus, *Pastoral Theology*, 83–84.

communicated well, the preacher will need to listen as the Lord speaks these words to him first.

A more recent text that is not a full-fledged pastoral theology but is worthy of consideration in this overview is Kurt Brink's *Overcoming Pastoral Pitfalls*. Though now some twenty years old, this text is extremely helpful with direct application to the topic. Brink's text is a treasure trove of collected wisdom from district presidents of the time and past leaders in the church body. In many ways, the tone of Brink's encouragement regarding "Pitfalls Associated with Bible Study and the Devotional Life," can be well summarized in his declaration that "Satan's greatest victories over us preachers are won when he successfully keeps us from prayer, Bible Study, and Christian growth."¹² Preachers who are kept from prayer do not regularly speak to the Lord who has called them. Preachers who do not study the Scriptures are not hearing the Word that they are to be proclaiming. If preachers neither hear the Word of the Lord, nor speak back to Him in prayer, Christian growth seems an impossibility.

Brink goes on to utilize the image of Paul in 2 Cor 5:20 that we are to ambassadors of Christ. This is true of all of God's people and all the more important for those in the office of the ministry.

The Lord of Church wants every Christian pastor to be an ABLE ambassador of His. St. Paul says, 'He (God) has made us able ministers of a new 'last will and testament.'" (2 Cor. 3:6) God wants us undershepherds to be masters of the Word like Apollos concerning whom Acts 18:24 says, 'He was a learned man and mighty in the Scriptures.' Asking the Lord's Holy Spirit to burn these two passages of Scripture deeply into our heart, and cultivating the hidden life, will, by God's grace, be a life-changing and ministry-changing experience.¹³

To be an ambassador is to know the message so deeply that we do not merely know it, but it becomes who we are, men "learned and mighty in the Scriptures."

¹² Kurt Brink, *Overcoming Pastoral Pitfalls* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), 8.

¹³ Brink, *Overcoming Pastoral Pitfalls*, 14–15.

The implications of being thoroughly shaped by the Scriptures are many and particularly important for the preaching task. Brink continues,

Christian pastors who devote themselves faithfully to the practice of the hidden life will be confirmed in their faith, will gain a new serenity of mind, will obtain fresh courage and power to witness more effectively for Christ, will notice that the problems of the parish do not loom as large, will more quickly find Scripture's answers for parishioners desiring counsel, and new strength to confront the trials and troubles and burdens of their high calling in Christ Jesus – a priceless gain indeed!¹⁴

Each of these attributes would serve the preaching task, but of special note is the encouragement that pastors “will gain a new serenity of mind, will obtain fresh courage, and power to witness more effectively for Christ.” A clear mind aids the preacher in writing and speaking as He seeks to communicate the Word to a specific group of people. Courage is needed for the task, if the preacher is to be faithful to a Word that will sometimes be difficult for individuals to hear, especially when an aspect of the law cuts particularly close to home. The preacher can be tempted to soften such a proclamation in the interest of self-preservation. Courage is needed to speak the needed Word, even while discretion is important to say the Word in the most beneficial manner. Finally, the power to witness more effectively for Christ is cultivated in the preacher who is strengthened in the hope of Christ. The preacher who is shaped by the whole counsel of God on a regular basis is better prepared to witness to the unique needs of many who come needing to hear the many facets of the Gospel message.

Brink's use of some past leaders within the LCMS is also quite welcome. The sainted Professor Theodore Graebner is quoted from his 1932 work, “Pastor and People: Letter to a Young Preacher.” The pastoral letters contained there begin with his comments on the relative long life of ministers in his day. He does attribute some of this longevity to many preachers

¹⁴ Brink, *Overcoming Pastoral Pitfalls*, 15.

living in rural areas at the time and being somewhat active, but with the other pressures of the ministry, his encouragement to the young preacher relies on the strength gained from the Word of God. Graebner commented that,

There must be some hidden source of strength, a continuous inflow of nervous and mental power, a constant process of repair which is fed from some great reservoir of courage and determination, and good cheer and faith. That hidden well-spring of youth and vigor is the Word of God. It is the peace of God that passes all understanding, which remains unshaken, at its center through all the storms of life. There is the secret of that mending process which lengthens life. Signal proof here of the literal truth – taken literally by our Lord when He quoted it in the great Temptation – of the prophet’s words, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything the Lord says.” (Deut 8:3) . . . The (strongest compensating force that keeps pastors from succumbing to the strain of the ministry) is the continuous application of the Gospel preacher to the Word of God.¹⁵

It is an encouraging thought to the young preacher that the Word of God strengthens and lengthens life. Of particular interest to this study is his assumption that the Gospel preacher has “continuous application . . . to the Word of God.” In the context of Graebner’s writing, such continuous devotion is akin to someone who runs and becomes a runner.¹⁶ In continuous application to the Word of God, the pastor is a Gospel preacher. He is defined by what he does and his preaching is shaped by the rhythm of regularly hearing the Word.

Brink offers another lengthy quote from LCMS forefather, Ludwig Fuerbringer, professor and president of Concordia Seminary St. Louis. Fuerbringer beautifully describes the essential nature of the devotional life of the preacher.

¹⁵ Theodore Graebner, *Pastor and People: Letters to a Young Preacher* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1932), 1–3.

¹⁶ The image of running and eventually becoming a runner is borrowed from James K. A. Smith. He comments in addition that, “acquiring virtue takes practice. Such moral, kingdom-reflecting dispositions are inscribed into your character through rhythms and routines and rituals enacted over and over again, that implant in you a disposition to an end (telos) that becomes a character trait – a sort of learned, second-nature default orientation that you tend toward ‘without thinking about it.’ It’s important to recognize that such dispositions are not ‘natural.’ We’re not talking about biological hardwiring or natural instincts. Virtues are learned and acquired, through imitation and practice. It’s like we have moral muscles that are trained in the same way our biological muscles are trained when we practice a golf swing or piano scales.” James K A Smith, *You are What You Love: the Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 18–19.

The hidden life with Christ in God is permanently a part of the office of the ministry. True, when Christ ascended into heaven, visible bodily contact with Him ceased. But God has not ceased to speak to His servants. He speaks in His Word. His Word, the Bible, Holy Scripture, is the Holy of Holies into which they are to enter to meet with God and to commune with Him. When we have entered, the veil closes after us; we are with God alone. But is that really the case? The temptation is ever present for us pastors to read the Scriptures only “officially,” only with the thought of employing what we read in our official duties or to enrich our theological understanding. There is such a thing as a professional reading of Scripture. Too conscious of our profession, we do not permit God to draw near to our wants to speak to the pastor individually. He does not want the pastor’s own soul to starve while he directs others along the way of life. All of us – pastors, presidents, professors, recognize this danger, this temptation. That explains the words of an earnest theologian of the later Lutheran Church, Paul Anton, in his *Sentences for Pastors*, “Because we have constantly to do with sacred things, we become so accustomed to them that we, more than anyone else, are in danger of becoming hypocrites.”¹⁷

Fuerbringer highlights a few final notes that have yet to be pointed out by other writers.

Fuerbringer is concerned that it is an occupational hazard to treat the Scriptures only professionally, and that such reading of Scripture would lead to the starvation of “the pastor’s own soul.” The image is a striking one. The preacher can become so narrowly focused on the task of preaching that he becomes a farmer who obsesses over crop production, yet never partakes of the bounty of the harvest. He knows everything about the corn he grows, but in never eating of it first, he starves while surrounded by abundance. Such is the danger for the preacher who never eats, yet feeds others and implores them of the danger of not eating. This leads to a second, and related point that Fuerbringer highlights. He is concerned about hypocrisy. Certainly, all preachers are sinners and, therefore, are in one sense hypocrites. Nevertheless, there is a special danger if the preacher implores others to study the Word and does not do it himself. At this point, his hypocrisy specifically undermines the importance of the Word in the lives of the hearers. The preacher must practice what he preaches. This begins with hearing the

¹⁷ Ludwig Fuerbringer, “May God Preserve Unto Us a Pious Ministry,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 6 no.1 (1935): 16–17.

Word.

Keeping the Sabbath

Any pastor can offer a definition of the word “Sabbath,” and yet seemingly have little memory of it in his own experience. The same is true for most in our society. The idea of a day of rest is usually viewed as a luxury for those with time to burn, but “I’m too busy.” This is the mantra of most who sit in the pews. Many lament the “good old days” of blue laws and forced work restrictions, but find it now impossible to make choices that run counter to how the “real world” operates. The “real world,” of course, is defined for many as everything that takes place outside of the church.

The situation for most pastors is largely the same. Pastors are actively engaged in providing fulfilling, Christ-centered times of Sabbath for our people in the divine service, but they are too busy to hear God’s Word. Beyond this, the rhythm of Sabbath rest in each day through devotion or weekly through a time of hearing God speak and the entire idea of resting our bodies is a foreign concept.

Author Eugene Peterson puts it well,

Every profession has sins to which it is especially liable. I haven't looked closely into the sins that endanger physicians and lawyers, woodworkers and potters, but I've had my eye on the snare from which pastors need deliverance: it is the sin of reversing the rhythms. Instead of grace/work we make it work/grace. Instead of working in a world in which God calls everything into being with his word and redeems his people with an outstretched arm, we rearrange it as a world in which we preach the mighty work of God and in afterthought ask him to bless our speaking; a world in which we stretch out our mighty arms to help the oppressed and open our hands to assist the needy and desperately petition God to take care of those we miss.¹⁸

The great litmus test for this reality is to ask a pastor or a group of pastors one simple

¹⁸ Peterson, “Pastor’s Sabbath,” 51.

question, “How are things going?” To get a sense of this topic, I asked that question to the pastors of the Arnold Missouri Circuit Winkel Conference in a conversation that I led on Sabbath rest. The answer I received from the entire group was almost predictably, “Busy.” In that one word answer there is a sound of defeat, but what underlies it is an insidious badge of honor. As one pastor in the circuit meeting put it, “I’m forever telling everyone how busy I am because they rarely see what I do. I’m validating my position, my existence. My busyness justifies my existence.” Something was amiss in all of this busyness, as people and certainly among pastors.

Sabbath in Relation to the Care of Creation, Creatureliness, and the Body

This sin is quickly highlighted in the consideration of creation care. Caring for creation sounds like the realm of recycling projects, fighting for clean air, and encouraging the wise stewardship of land. It may be all of those things, but fundamentally it begins in the recognition of the Creator and humanity’s relationship to the Creator. The recent LCMS document, “Together with All Creatures,” makes this point for us well,

The intrinsic value of creatures, as creatures of God, defines both the limits and the possibilities of our own creatureliness. Creatureliness, both ours and those of others, is destroyed when we transgress those boundaries. In the Old Testament God sets boundaries for His creation. Creation unravels when those boundaries are blurred or erased. The same applies to our creaturely life and the creaturely life of others. The heart of original sin ultimately lies in the refusal to accept our creaturely limits. As it did with Adam and Eve, this refusal brings disastrous consequences in our relationships to God, others, and the wider creation.¹⁹

As this quote points out, the reality of God as the Creator raises some fundamental issues for us to consider. First, we are creatures. This seems an obvious reality from Scripture. “Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his” (Ps 100:3). As Paul confesses as Athens, “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). We are creatures and that

¹⁹ The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Together with all Creatures: Caring for God’s Living Earth a Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), 84.

means that we are accountable to a Creator. Creatures are contingent, depending on the Creator for existence and life. This is a theological reality that is fundamental and yet profound. Such a confession demands that the Creator defines my existence, not I myself. So Luther describes us in the Small Catechism,

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and my senses, and still takes care of them...He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life...All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.²⁰

Who I am and all that I am is dependent upon the Creator.

Second, God the Creator's definition for each person forces us to consider the importance and value of the material. God has given me "my body and soul...and still takes care of them." The corporeal matters immensely to God, and to recognize the fullness of this we need look no further than our Lord Jesus Christ in both His incarnation and His resurrection. Christ takes on human flesh to redeem humanity, indeed more than that, to redeem creation. As Professor Jeff Gibbs points out, "In Him (Jesus), the reign of God is already present in anticipatory fashion and when God's reign breaks in finally and completely, then He will heal our bodies and all creation and will raise us up forever."²¹ He will heal our bodies and all creation! Our bodies, as part of this creation, are valued by God enough to send His Son to rescue us – body and soul. The resurrection of Jesus, then, is just what Paul says in 1 Cor 15, "the firstfruits." It is just the beginning of what God intends in the new heavens and new earth at Christ's return. So as N.T.

²⁰ *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 16. Note: other Lutheran confessional writings will be referenced in shortened form with quotations from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000).

²¹ Jeffrey Gibbs, "Regaining Biblical Hope: Restoring the Prominence of the Parousia" *Concordia Journal* 27 no.4, (2001): 313.

Wright points out then, “The resurrection is not, as it were, a highly peculiar event within the present world (though it is that as well); it is, principally, the defining event of the new creation, the world that is being born with Jesus.”²²

When considering the care of creation, this forces us to consider that if God cares so deeply for the physical world as to become part of it and redeem it and promise a coming day of a new creation, we ought to care deeply about the created order now in anticipation of the final day. On the basis of the resurrection, Wright encourages Christian engagement in this world.

The universal early Christian belief was that Jesus had already been demonstrated publicly to be Israel’s Messiah and the world’s true Lord through his resurrection...And if we believe it and pray, as he taught us, for God’s kingdom to come on earth as in heaven, there is no way we can rest content with major injustice in the world. We must recognize...that the final putting to right of everything indeed wait for the last day. We must therefore avoid the arrogance of triumphalism...imagining that we can build the kingdom by our own efforts without the need for a further great divine act of new creation. But we must agree with the first view that doing justice in the world is part of the Christian task.²³

If the final day is marked particularly as the day of the resurrection of all flesh, than human bodies must be of particular interest to the Creator, and of particular interest to us. The care of all creation matters to those who are new creations in Christ, and while this care extends well beyond the walls of the home, the care of creation begins not at the pastor’s front door, but as he looks in the mirror. The pastor is given many vocations to care for those around him, but he is also uniquely given to care for his body that Christ will raise on the last day.

Recognizing the individual’s place within creation then includes caring for our own bodies, according to God’s design. For one to keep the Sabbath is simply to live as a creature of the living God. This thought dovetails with Luther’s view of the role of the commandments as

²² N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 70, Kindle.

²³ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 188.

natural law flowing out of the first article of the creed. As Charles Arand muses,

If I were to rearrange Luther's Large Catechism, I would place the exposition of the Ten Commandments directly after the exposition of the first article and before the second article of the Apostles' Creed. In the first article Luther describes all the good things that God has given us. These are creaturely gifts necessary for our creaturely life. The Ten Commandments describe how to use these creaturely things in accord with the purposes for which God created them. It is not by accident that Luther concludes his explanation of the first article with the words, 'For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him.' In the Large Catechism he adds the words, 'according to the Ten Commandments.'²⁴

After all, the Ten Commandments function for Luther as the expression of natural law. This is just how God designed creation to be. And as Arand also points out, "Redemption does not overthrow creation, and so it does not overthrow the law of creation. Instead, redemption recovers and restores creation...redemption enables Christians to recover creation and the order of creation as the way in which God intended us to live out our lives. In a similar way Christians can reembrace God's created design for life as expressed in the Ten Commandments."²⁵

God the Creator has a design for His creation that includes Sabbath, a day of rest in His Word. Such rest is not solely spiritual rest, or is it merely physical. For all truly human undertakings are matters of body and soul. To keep the Sabbath is to cease work for the purpose of gladly hearing the Word of God, finding rest in His Word, and in doing so, finding also rest for our bodies. To care for the flesh and blood creation that God has made me to be, the Christian gladly follows the design of Sabbath.

Gaining Definition: The Oft Neglected Gift of Sabbath Rest

While my intended discussion group for the topic of Sabbath was pastors at the circuit

²⁴ Charles Arand, "Luther's Radical Reading of the Sabbath Commandment," in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views*, ed. Christopher John Donato (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 222.

²⁵ Arand, "Luther's Radical Reading," 220.

meeting that was mentioned above, Sabbath rest is a need beyond the clergy. Prior to the circuit meeting, I began by asking members of my congregational leadership at Hope Lutheran in High Ridge, MO a few simple questions. (1) What does Sabbath mean? (2) In light of this definition, what does it mean to keep the Sabbath? Finally they were asked, (3) What prevents you from keeping the Sabbath? My ultimate goal was to ask the same questions of pastors, preach on the topic, and lead a discussion on the importance of Sabbath rest for pastors all at our Circuit meeting.

As a place to begin discussion with the pastors, I sought answers from congregational leaders about the Sabbath and how that compared to pastors. The question that garnered the most interesting answers was simply to define Sabbath. The answers by pastors were incredibly monolithic. Nine of the ten pastors that I asked this question of gave a dictionary type definition. Here are their answers: “rest, rest, restoration, to stop and rest, a day of rest in the Lord, God given rest from labor, rest, a day or time of rest, but specifically to gladly hear and learn God’s Word.”

My congregational leaders spoke of worship, a time or whole day for reflection on creation and God’s mercy. They spoke of rest and rest in Christ. Pastors included many of these ideas in subsequent questions, but it struck me as interesting that pastors gave such brief answers, while the laity fleshed out a broader definition.

In reflecting on these answers, pastors first viewed Sabbath as information, one piece of doctrine to define. The many faceted answers of the laity perhaps grew out of the fact that while they are just as consumed with busy-ness, their time of worship is a time of Sabbath. Pastors struggle to make any time for true Sabbath rest. Pastors certainly hear the Word of God, but usually only from their own mouths. Even in the daily rhythm of resting in God’s Word through

regular devotion, pastors struggle. According to a 2010 survey of LCMS Missouri District pastors, 10% of those polled had no devotional life at all. Of those surveyed, the average time spent resting in God’s Word on a daily basis was five minutes, though on average this was done only three and a half days a week.²⁶

Pastors can define the Sabbath and see the need for regular rest in God’s Word and for their bodies, but their keeping of the Sabbath, in any sense, is often quite anemic. Perhaps this is directly related to the concern of the brother pastor who was referenced earlier. We live in a society where people are defined by what they do. The entire notion of Sabbath rest runs counter to this even for pastors. In an *Unhurried Life*, author Alan Fadling muses,

The gift of a Sabbath day—a day measured not by productivity but by relationship and worship – helps us remember that life is given, not earned. But we live in a culture that expects us to earn everything we have. In *Spiritual Direction*, Henri Nouwen gets more specific, suggesting that we live in a culture where our identity is based on how well we do, how much we do, how much we possess and what others say about us. When these factors are the source of our identity, it’s not hard to understand why we are hurrying through life. The thinking — however conscious or unconscious goes like this: if I do more, I am more. If I have more, I am more. If more people recognize me more, I’m more valuable. This idea is subtle, and insidious in its undermining of the Sabbath. What happens to our sense of identity if we stop our activity to observe the Sabbath day? If I am what I do, who am I on a Sabbath day when I do nothing productive?²⁷

Sabbath as Time to Stop and Remember Who We Are

Perhaps more important than defining the Sabbath is for the Sabbath to be the vehicle by which God defines us. After all Jesus was the one who said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). In context, Jesus is speaking against the legalistic observance of the Sabbath, but He is not speaking against keeping it. Keeping the Sabbath holy

²⁶ LCMS Missouri District Pastor’s Survey Fall 2010, as reported by District President Ray Mirly.

²⁷ Alan Fadling, *An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus’ Rhythms of Work and Rest* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 114–15.

is to be a blessing to God's people who find their identity and rest in the Creating and Redeeming God. In other words, His work for us is definitive, not our work. Our work in our various vocations is simply living out who God has made us to be. Sabbath is essential, then, not to earn God's favor or slavishly follow orders, but to be restored in who He has created, redeemed, and sanctified us to be as we rejoice in who He is and what He has done.²⁸

Properly understood, the Jewish tradition carries this sense of Sabbath. As Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote, "the Sabbath is not dedicated exclusively to spiritual goals. It is a day of the soul as well as of the body; comfort and pleasure are an integral part of the Sabbath observance...the Sabbath is a reminder of the two worlds – this world and the world to come; it is an example of both worlds. For the Sabbath is joy, holiness, and rest; joy is part of this world; holiness and rest are something of the world to come."²⁹

For the Christian who knows the in-breaking of the world to come in Jesus Christ and His resurrection, the celebration of the Sabbath is a time to recognize and rejoice in what God has done in our world for flesh and blood people, what He continues to do in providing for us and for our salvation and what He will do when Christ comes again in glory. Or as Marva Dawn puts it, "A major blessing of Sabbath keeping is that it forces us to rely on God for our future. On that day we do nothing to create our own way. We abstain from work, from our incessant need to produce and accomplish, from all the anxieties about how we can be successful in all that we have to do to get ahead. The result is that we can let God be God in our lives."³⁰

²⁸ Eugene Peterson comments, "At regular intervals we all need to quit our work and contemplate his, quit talking to each other and listen to him. God knows we need this and has given us a means in Sabbath – a day for praying and playing, simply enjoying what he is." Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: the Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 82.

²⁹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 19.

³⁰ Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 29.

Again, Eugene Peterson in his article on “The Pastor’s Sabbath” ties the rhythm of rest and work into what it means to be a human creature, created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ. As Peterson describes it,

The Hebrew evening/morning sequence conditions us to the rhythms of grace. We go to sleep, and God begins his work. As we sleep he develops his covenant. We wake and are called out to participate in God's creative action. We respond in faith, in work. But always grace is previous and primary. We wake into a world we didn't make, into a salvation we didn't earn.³¹

This daily rhythm of rest as a gift of God’s grace is repeated day after day as a gift of our generous God. This sets the pattern for life is to be lived. From day to day, the Lord builds into our needs, the necessity of rest. As Peterson goes on to point out, this pattern becomes formative for Christians who pause every seven days to consider the manifold gifts of God that come to us each day without our efforts.

Sabbath-keeping presumes the daily rhythm, evening/morning—we can hardly avoid stopping our work each night, as fatigue and sleep overtake us. But the weekly rhythm demands deliberate action. Otherwise, we can go on working on the seventh day, especially if things are gaining momentum. Sabbath-keeping often feels like an interruption, an interference with our routines. It challenges assumptions we gradually build up that our daily work is indispensable in making the world go.

But then we find the Sabbath is not an interruption but a stronger rhythmic measure that confirms and extends the basic beat. Every seventh day a deeper note is struck—an enormous gong whose deep sounds reverberate under and over and around the daily percussions evening/morning, evening/morning, evening/morning: creation honored and contemplated, redemption remembered and shared.³²

In speaking with congregational leaders, the sentiments of Peterson were echoed. One wise woman who is not afraid to say such things said, “I guess pastors need Jesus too, and you have to stop long enough to listen.” Or as Peter Taylor Forsyth put it, “Christ came not to be ministered

³¹ Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 56.

³² Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 57.

to, but to minister, and our first duty (as pastors), therefore, is to be ministered to by him.”³³

Hearing the Word to Properly Distinguish Law and Gospel

In the theological tradition of Lutheranism, the proper distinction of Law and Gospel is a matter of utmost importance. Martin Luther wrote in a 1532 sermon that, “Distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel is the highest art in Christendom, one that every person who values the name Christian ought to recognize, know, and possess. Where this is lacking, it is not possible to tell who is Christian and who is pagan or Jew. That much is at stake in this distinction.”³⁴ As this study seeks best practices in the devotional life in service to the practice of preaching, the preacher who regularly hears the Word in devotional study is shaped by that Word to faithfully and properly distinguish Law and Gospel.

The emphasis on properly dividing these essential doctrines of Christianity continued to be emphasized through the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy.

The distinction between law and gospel is a particularly glorious light. It serves to divide God’s Word properly (cf. 2 Tim 2:15) and to explain correctly and make understandable the writings of the holy prophets and apostles. Therefore, we must diligently preserve this distinction, so as not to mix these two teachings together and make the gospel into a law. For this obscures the merit of Christ and robs troubled consciences of the comfort that they otherwise have in the holy gospel when it is preached clearly and purely. With the help of this distinction these consciences can sustain themselves in their greatest spiritual struggles against the terror of the law.³⁵

The task of rightly dividing Law and Gospel is uniquely the task of the preacher of God’s Word. To avoid mixing the two teachings or obscuring either true and good teaching of God’s Word is a necessary task of the preacher. For just this reason, C.F.W. Walther spoke extensively

³³ John W. Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 284.

³⁴ Martin Luther, “The Distinction between Law and Gospel: A Sermon by Martin Luther,” trans. Willard L. Bruce, *Concordia Journal* 18, no.2 (April 1992): 154.

³⁵ Solid Declaration V.1 in Kolb and Wengert, 581.

on the topic with his students at Concordia Seminary and the written account of those evening lectures in Walther's *The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel*³⁶ has been a foundational text in shaping Lutheran preaching within the Missouri Synod. Holding up these doctrines in proper tension and ultimately the desire to let the Gospel always predominate has been a great treasure to the church.³⁷

The emphasis on the Law and Gospel dialectic has also limited our reading of Scripture, at times, as we seek first to shoe horn many texts into a predetermined message of condemnatory law and justification. The problem can be well highlighted by an anecdote from Dr. David Schmitt's chapter from *Preaching is Worship*,

Consider the following concern of a parishioner about Lutheran preaching, 'It seems that all my pastor ever preaches is Law and Gospel. I know that I am a sinner and that my salvation comes only through God's gracious work in Christ, and I truly rejoice in the life of daily repentance. It's just that when the pastor preaches, this all he ever talks about. I don't want him to stop, but I wonder if there's more. Isn't there more for me to consider as a Christian than the confession of my sin and the proclamation of my salvation in Christ?' Faithfully answering this parishioner's concern can reveal the difference between godly concern for the proper distinction of Law and Gospel in preaching and the errors of Law and Gospel negligence, on the one hand, and Law and Gospel obsession, on the other.³⁸

In this quote, Schmitt points to the concerns of his article and for preachers in our reading and proclamation of the Scriptures. He highlights two potential problems: Law and Gospel negligence and Law and Gospel obsession. In the former case, the preacher becomes so enamored with new techniques for sermon proclamation that little concern is given to

³⁶ This has been the traditional title, although the most recent translation has the title *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*. C.F.W. Walther, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2010).

³⁷ Walther's Thesis XXV reads "you are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your teaching." Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 455. Richard Lischer shares this same sentiment more succinctly, "We preach life and death – with the advantage to life." Richard Lischer, *A Theology of Preaching: the Dynamics of the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1992), 47.

³⁸ David R. Schmitt, "Law and Gospel in Sermon and Service," in *Preaching is Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 31.

evangelistic proclamation. This negligence can appear as a Lutheran add-on to baptize a new sermon technique.³⁹ A fellow pastor once referred to this unconnected insertion of Law and Gospel as the “Calvary drive-by,” when the preacher makes sure Jesus’ dying and rising are tacked on in a manner disconnected from the rest of the sermon. This negligence can similarly appear as Schmitt points out, “from the force of habit...In this case, Law and Gospel are certainly proclaimed every Sunday, but in a formulaic manner that may cause some hearers no longer to listen to what is being said.”⁴⁰ In this case, Law and Gospel proclamation are so repetitive that they are not heard at all. Regardless of its form, Law and Gospel negligence jettisons the Word of God either by ignoring it or through lazy proclamation. Whenever God’s Word receives such short shrift in the preparation of sermons, the people of God suffer.⁴¹

Law and Gospel obsession on the other hand is not concerned with new techniques or a product of lazy proclamation, but focus on Law and Gospel to the detriment of the text. In an effort to hold up the message of justification by grace through faith for Christ’s sake, preachers can be tempted to violate the intention and meaning of text in order to arrive at a Law and Gospel teaching irrespective of the Scripture passage at hand. Richard Lischer described this

³⁹ “Law and Gospel negligence occurs when pastors use these methods without serious consideration of whether or not the resulting sermon properly distinguishes Law and Gospel.” Schmitt, “Law and Gospel,” 22.

⁴⁰ Schmitt, “Law and Gospel,” 23.

⁴¹ Eugene Peterson in his text *Eat this Book*, which will be considered later, reminds the preacher of the danger in forgetting that we are handling God’s Word. “And those who don’t know the conditions implicit in the technology of the Bible are likewise dangerous to themselves and others. And so, as we hand out Bibles and urge people to read them it is imperative that we also say, *caveat lector*, let the reader beware....Just having print on the page and knowing how to distinguish nouns from verbs is not enough. I might own a morocco leather Bible, having paid fifty dollars for it, but I don’t own the word of God to do with what I want; God is sovereign. The word of God is not my possession. The words printed on the pages of my Bible give witness to the living and active revelation of the God of creation and salvation, the God of love who become the Word made flesh in Jesus, and I had better not forget it. If in my Bible reading I lose touch with this livingness, if I fail to listen to this living Jesus, submit to this sovereignty, and respond to this love, I become arrogant in my knowing and impersonal in my behavior. An enormous amount of damage is done in the name of Christian living by bad Bible reading. *Caveat lector*, let the reader beware.” Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book: a Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 82.

temptation, “One (danger) is that we lay the same stencil over every text, asking, ‘Where is the law and gospel? Rather than, ‘What is God saying to his people?’ This rigid approach assures the congregation of an explication of judgment and grace whether this particular text offers it or not.”⁴²

Within this error, the desire to preach Law and Gospel faithfully becomes not a primary concern, but the only concern such that “the preacher focuses upon the Law and Gospel dialectic in preaching with such rigor and all-consuming attention that everything that occurs in the office of preaching is reduced to an overly simplistic bad-news-then-good-news paradigm.”⁴³ The reading of Scripture is done only to locate Law and Gospel. The sermon structure of every sermon is Law and then Gospel. The function of every sermon is first to condemn sin and then speak the justification of Christ. From Luther to Walther and to the present day, the proclamation of Law and Gospel is central in Lutheran preaching, but the problem of Law and Gospel obsession is when the narrow proclamation of Law and Gospel becomes the whole of Lutheran preaching, and in essence, preachers are informing their people that this is all that the Scriptures say as well. As Schmitt illustrates, “When the principle of Christocentricity overrides the principle of textual integrity and the preacher uses a text to lead to Christ but does so by ignoring or distorting what the text actually means in context.”⁴⁴

The way to faithful proclamation would not be to jettison the Law and Gospel dialectic, but to hold it in tension with the other purposes of preaching, in particular in faithfulness to the clear and yet manifold teachings of Scripture. The message of justification is the central doctrine of the Scripture, but it is not the only message of Scripture and it is not the only metaphor to

⁴² Lischer, *Theology of Preaching*, 43.

⁴³ Schmitt, “Law and Gospel,” 25.

⁴⁴ Schmitt, “Law and Gospel,” 26.

describe the Gospel. Regular devotional reading and practice may help the preacher to see the Law and Gospel dialectic as an undergirding structure in how God speaks to us, but not in such a limited fashion that we cease to hear what God is literally saying in the text because we come to the text looking for a predetermined message.

If only we would start from the same place as C.F.W. Walther, we would be led to keep the Scriptures before us. As Walther pointed out in his second thesis on the proper distinction of Law and Gospel, “If you wish to be an orthodox teacher, you must present all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, yet you must also rightly distinguish Law and Gospel.”⁴⁵ Walther does not minimize the Scriptures to only the distinguishing of Law and Gospel, but holds this distinction alongside all articles of faith. To gain such breadth of knowledge and understanding, the preacher must be in the Word. To be an orthodox teacher will mean being shaped by the whole Word of God and not shaping the Word of God to fit new techniques or a well-worn stencil. This means preachers are under the Word of God, not acting as masters of it.⁴⁶ It is an art-form that the preacher grows into not merely by week after week of preaching, but also in the regular hearing of the Word that shapes that proclamation. The regular study of God’s Word for the preacher’s edification helps to avoid reading the Scriptures only as a means to an end. The temptation to only seek Law and Gospel or to seek first how to use a new preaching technique is lessened when the preacher is accustomed to simply hearing the Word for its own sake.

John Pless beautifully describes the proper balance that is encouraged by regular study of

⁴⁵ Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 35.

⁴⁶ Gustav Wingren, *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church* trans. Victor Pogue (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1960), 70. Wingren describes this trap of seeking to master the Word in terms that we have not been fully created in faith towards what we will be. God is renewing us, re-creating us, shaping us now by His Word. We are foolish to presume any place above it. Wingren writes, “Every such wish of putting ourselves above the Word instead of under it, of mastering the Word instead of allowing it to master us, implies a failure to see that God creates by his Word and we are being created; we behave as if we were perfect, fully created. In fact, we are on the road towards the resurrection of the dead.”

the Word of God in his consideration of Walther's theses. Pless writes that,

Teaching the Christian faith is more than repeating biblical words and phrases. It is an art that requires attention to the content and contours of the scriptural message, as well as the way that God's words do their work in exposing sin and bringing forgiveness to the repentant. Law-Gospel proclamation is reduced to generic slogans and empty assertions if attempted without the reliable content of the Holy Scriptures. Yet where proclamation is attempted without discerning the difference between the Law and the Gospel, the Scriptures are undercut, even if they are acknowledged as truthful.⁴⁷

The preacher must be able to hold together the Scriptures and Law-Gospel dialectic in concert with one another.

Conclusion

From the words of Scripture through the Lutheran Confessional documents and on to the pastoral theologies of the LCMS, a common theme emerges that the preacher must listen and be shaped by the Word of God in order to proclaim it. This is not merely an academic exercise to mine the selected text for nuggets to fit the sermon, rather the Word of God sets the agenda for the preacher. The preacher who is well accustomed to hearing the Word in devotional study is prepared to listen faithfully in order to proclaim faithfully. Devotional practice is important for the preacher who, like all of God's people, needs the refreshment of Sabbath rest in the promises of God. The regular Sabbath of resting in the promises of God in Christ is a necessity for the preacher who often does not share in the Sunday Sabbath, at least not in the same manner as the rest of the hearers. In order to faithfully preach Law and Gospel and avoid the extremes of Law and Gospel negligence or obsession, the preacher needs to hear God's Word regularly without concern for the Sunday sermon. As Herman Stuempfle well put it, "Every time we preach, the

⁴⁷ John T. Pless, *Handling the Word of Truth: Law and Gospel in the Church Today* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 19.

Word must triumph over us as well as employ us.”⁴⁸ For the Word to do so, the preacher is well served to listen to the Word, not only in sermon preparation, but also in personal devotion. In this way, the preacher is accustomed to the practice of hearing the Word, not shaping the Word.

⁴⁸ Herman Stuempfle Jr., *Preaching Law and Gospel* (Ramsey, NJ: Sigler, 1990), 82.

CHAPTER THREE

RECENT RESEARCH

The importance of preachers hearing the Word of God before proclaiming it is clearly not a new concern. Nevertheless, current literature has added some important voices to this discussion. In this portion of the study, three primary topics will be considered: the writings of Eugene Peterson, the burgeoning literature that considers the intersection of listening and preaching, and a few commonly used devotional materials will be considered. As an individual, Eugene Peterson has written extensively on pastoral ministry and the importance of preachers feasting on the Word of the Lord in order to be prepared to speak. His writings are uniquely significant to the topic of devotional practice influencing preaching. Beyond Peterson, there is a wealth of recent literature that focuses on the connection between listening and preaching. The importance of listening has been highlighted not just on the part of the congregation, but also for preachers who must listen to the Scriptures and their parishioners. This focus on listening continues the Biblical imperatives outlined in the previous chapter. Finally, in this section, some commonly used devotional materials for preachers will be considered, in particular, Luther's admonition to a life of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* and the influential and helpful *Minister's Prayer Book*. These tools are vital to consider in light of their influence upon the devotional lives of Lutheran pastors. In addition, these tools reinforce the importance of the devotional life in preparing the preacher to proclaim the Gospel.

Devotional Life of the Preacher in the Writings of Eugene Peterson

Eugene Peterson has been a prolific writer in regards to pastoral ministry over the past 40

years. Much of his writing has been to encourage a move away from the view of pastor as professional to pastor as caretaker of souls. He seeks to extol a time honored tradition when “pastoral work was defined as preparing people for a good death.”¹ For Peterson, “preparing people for a good death” means becoming wise as to our mortality and finding hope in the gracious God. He often pits this pastoral concern against the modern rush to be bigger, faster, flashier.² Such goals do not conform with the Biblical vision of the office of the ministry. Peterson has written extensively then how life as pastor and preacher is to be shaped then by a life of prayer, which is begun in listening to God’s Word and punctuated by Sabbath (as mentioned earlier). For the purposes of this overview of Peterson’s guidance in the devotional life of the preacher, this study will focus on the insights from four of his many texts in chronological order: *Working the Angles*, *Answering God*, *The Contemplative Pastor* and, the more recent, *Eat this Book*.

In the 1980’s Peterson wrote a series of three books on the work of pastors in North America.³ Together the works were intended to provide a “biblical orientation and theological understanding in cultural conditions decidedly uncongenial to such orientation and understanding.”⁴ For the purpose of this study, his second work in the series, *Working the Angles*, offers the best guidance in the necessary relationship between personal devotion and faithful proclamation.

Peterson describes the image of his title in writing, “the visible lines of pastoral work are preaching, teaching, and administration. The small angles of this ministry are prayer, Scripture

1 Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 30.

2 Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 31.

3 *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, *Working the Angles*, and *Under the Unpredictable Plant*.

4 Peterson, *Working the Angles*, inside cover.

and spiritual direction... Working the angles is what gives shape and integrity to the daily work of pastors and priests.”⁵ He is describing ministry as a triangle with lines that anyone can see, but whether the lines of the triangle will connect is dependent on what happens in the angles. The two overriding concerns for this study are the first two angles of prayer and Scripture.

Peterson is abundantly clear that prayer and Scripture are intimately linked. “We do the obvious: we restore prayer to its context in God’s Word. Prayer is not something we think up to get God’s attention or enlist his favor. Prayer is answering speech. The first word is God’s Word.”⁶ Long before the preacher can speak to the people of God, he is in the study⁷ for the time of prayer and meditation on the Word of God. The Word of God remains primary. He speaks to us, only then can we answer Him in prayer.

This study of God’s Word certainly has an outcome, but Peterson is careful to warn against reading the Scriptures solely or primarily as a means to an end. Preachers ought not to come to the Scriptures first as a source to build the finish product of the sermon.⁸ We come first because the Word is the source of life. Peterson reminds us, “The Word is as foundation in the work of salvation as it is in the work of creation. Just as everything outside us originates in the Word of God, so does everything inside us.”⁹

⁵ Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 5.

⁶ Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 47.

⁷ Peterson offers the helpful reminder on the Pastor’s Study, “(A related misnaming replaces ‘pastor’s study’ with ‘office,’ thereby further secularizing perceptions of pastoral work. How many pastors no longer come to their desks as places for learning but as operation centers for organizing projects? The change of vocabulary is not harmless. Words have ways of shaping us. If we walk into a room labeled ‘office’ often enough we up doing office work. First we change the Word, then the Word changes us.)” Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 67.

⁸ Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 98.

⁹ Peterson points out the danger of this way of reading the Scriptures. “This acquisitive mode is so culturally expected and congregationally rewarding that it cannot fail to affect our approach to the Scriptures. When we sit down to read the Scriptures we already have an end product in view: we want to find something useful for people’s lives, to meet their expectations of us as pastors who deliver the goods.” Such reading makes the Scriptures something we use, not listen to. Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 48.

The application of Peterson's description of the pastoral task of reading Scripture is readily apparent in the task of preaching. If we are to be speakers of God and for God to His people, we must read the Scriptures in the expectation that he speaks through them.¹⁰ In the Scriptures we will not only learn information about God to share with the people, but God's Word shapes and directs us as His people and, in particular, as His messengers. As Peterson puts it, "God's decision to use words as a means for revealing himself and shaping us means that we must pay attention both to what he says and to how he says it."¹¹ This means that preachers have a life-long need to heed the words of Hebrews 2:1, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." As speakers of the Word, who may be prone to believe that we have heard it all, Peterson warns, "The greatest errors in the spiritual life are not committed by the novices but by the adepts. The greatest capacity for self-deceit in prayer comes not in the early years but in the middle and late years. It strikes me that it is not wise to treat lightly or as a matter of personal taste what most of the generations of Christians have agreed is essential."¹²

Two books written in 1989, *Answering God* and *The Contemplative Pastor*, highlight similar concerns. *Answering God* was written for a more general audience as an encouragement and explanation of seeing, as the subtitle puts it, "the psalms as tools for prayer." Certainly, the Psalms have been recognized as the "prayer book of the Bible"¹³ by authors such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Answering God* is of special consideration because Peterson offers thoughts connecting prayer and the reading of Scripture that apply further when the preacher moves from

10 Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 113.

11 Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 126.

12 Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 177.

13 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Psalms: the Prayer Book of the Bible* trans. James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974).

not only speaking back to God from His Word in prayer, but also speaking His Word to the congregation in the sermon. The preacher should be a man of prayer, and one reason for this is that prayer is speaking back to God on the basis of His Word. Prayer becomes an ongoing classroom for the re-speaking of God's Word in the life of the preacher, so that we become shaped by His Words, not vice versa. As Peterson puts it, "We don't always like what God speaks to us, and we don't always understand it. Left to ourselves, we will pray to some god who speaks what we like hearing, or to the part of God that we manage to understand. But what is critical is that we speak to the God who speaks to us, and to everything that he speaks to us, and in our speaking (which gathers up our listening and answering) mature in the great art of conversation with God that is prayer."¹⁴

The Psalms, as the specific intersection of Scripture and prayer, become a blessed tool in the devotional practice of the preacher. Not only this, as Scripture, the Psalms demand to be spoken not merely to the situation of the moment, but in light of the whole context of God's Word. Peterson comments, "Since the Psalms are not themselves by themselves, they cannot be prayed in isolation from their context, those sixty-five other 'creatures' that God uses to shape salvation in us."¹⁵

The other work that Peterson wrote in 1989, intended specifically for pastors, is *The Contemplative Pastor*. Naturally, many of the same themes from *Answering God* are expounded and applied directly to the preacher. Peterson clearly viewed devotional practice as essential in the ongoing shaping of the character of the preacher. Pastoral tasks, for our purposes the preaching task, need be prepared for continually in the study. This means a commitment of time.

14 Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: the Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 6.

15 Peterson, *Answering God*, 17.

Of prayer, Peterson wrote, “I know it takes time to develop a life of prayer: set-aside disciplined, deliberate time. It isn’t accomplished on the run, nor by offering prayers from a pulpit or a hospital bedside. I know I can’t be busy and pray at the same time.”¹⁶ When considering the tasks of the preacher, Peterson viewed personal devotion as a preparation before the time of specific sermon preparation. “I need a drenching in Scripture; I require an immersion in biblical studies. I need reflective hours over the pages of Scripture as well as personal struggles with the meaning of Scripture. That takes far more time than it takes to prepare a sermon.”¹⁷ As Lutherans who declare that God is at work in His word, this sentiment should ring true for us. As preachers, we are speaking for God. This is a high and holy task that demands that we first have been spoken to by God (Scripture reading) and spoken back to God (prayer). Peterson goes as far as to say, “This is my basic work: on the one hand to proclaim the Word of God that is personal – God addressing us in love, inviting us into a life of trust in him; on the other hand to guide and encourage an answering Word that is likewise personal – to speak in the first person to the second person, I to Thou, and avoid third-person commentary as much as possible.”¹⁸

During the writings of these previous works, Eugene Peterson served as a parish pastor outside of Washington, DC. In later years, Peterson spent time as a professor of theology before retiring. His work, *Eat This Book*, could well be seen as the summary of his consideration of the importance of reading Scripture in the life of the Christian, and all the more, in the life of the preacher. The title of the book is borrowed from Revelation 10:9–10¹⁹, where John is instructed

¹⁶ Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 20.

¹⁷ Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 20.

¹⁸ Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 93.

¹⁹ Revelation 10:9–10, “So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, “Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach

to eat the book, much like Old Testament prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel had done before him.

The image of eating the Scripture is employed as the metaphor by which to consider all of our reading and hearing of God's Word. For the Lutheran reader, it is hard not to hear echoes of the Collect of Grace to Receive the Word, "Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord."²⁰ Peterson highlights the physical nature of God's Word. "Language is the primary way in which God works. In the Scriptures that give witness to these words this language is referred to in very physical ways. We hear the words, of course. But we also see the words ("I turned to see the voice," Rev 1:12), chew them (Ps 1:2), taste them (Ps 19:10), walk and run in them (Ps 119:32), and, in this final image, we eat them: Eat this book."²¹

To eat this book, means to consume the whole thing. The preacher is not at liberty to nibble, just as John, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were not able to sample from God's Word. As preachers of God's Word, we seek to follow the pattern of Paul, who "did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). As Peterson reminds us, in swallowing the whole council of God, we are not in charge. God is. "We open this book and find that page after page it takes us off guard, surprises us, and draws us into its reality, pulls us into participation with God on his terms."²²

The preacher needs a daily reminder that God is God and we are not, especially as he

was made bitter."

²⁰ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 308.

²¹ Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 61.

²² Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 6.

seeks to proclaim the mysteries of the gospel.²³ This has personal applications for the preacher, “We don’t form our personal spiritual lives out of a random assemblage of favorite texts in combination with individual circumstances; we are formed by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the text of Holy Scripture. God does not put us in charge of forming our personal spiritualities. We grow in accordance with the revealed Word implanted in us by the Spirit.”²⁴ This daily discipline of being shaped by the Word of God prepares the preacher for when he engages in sermon preparation. When the preacher turns to that time of listening to God, he goes with the understanding that he will be listening with other listeners in mind as well. Peterson reminds the preacher that “they, Scripture and souls, are the primary fields of operation of the Holy Spirit. An interest in souls divorced from an interest in Scripture leaves us without a text that shapes these souls. In the same way, an interest in Scripture divorced from an interest in souls leaves us without any material for the text to work on.”²⁵

Connection between Listening and Preaching

One particular area of focus among homiletical writers is the connection between listening and preaching. Eugene Peterson has already been shown to have touched on this topic,²⁶ but a wealth of writing has been undertaken on this particular topic. The concern of this writing is

²³ Eph 6:19.

²⁴ Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 15.

²⁵ Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 17.

²⁶ In this illustration, Peterson highlights the multiple listening relationships that occur in preaching (for example - between God and the preacher through the text, between God and the people through the preacher, between the preacher and the hearer). “Listening is an interpersonal act; it involves two or more people in fairly close proximity. Reading involves one person with a book written by someone who can be miles away or centuries dead or both. The listener is required to be attentive to the speaker and is more or less at the speaker’s mercy. It may be carried around from place to place, opened or shut at whim, read or not read. When I read a book the book does not know if I am paying attention or not; when I listen to a person the person knows very well whether I am paying attention or not. In listening, another initiates the process; when I read I initiate the process. In reading I open the book and attend to the words. I can read by myself; I cannot listen by myself. In listening the speaker is in charge; in reading the reader is in charge.” Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 88.

regularly for the parishioner and recognizing his or her role in the preaching task. Underlying this newer focus in homiletical study is the concern for preacher and people to be listening to the Word of God. After all, as William Willimon wrote, “The nation of Israel, and later the church, are a people formed by God’s speaking and our listening, a community given birth by God’s communication with us through Scripture.”²⁷

Helping Johnny Listen was written as a primer to encourage better listening to sermons. Such encouragement is worthy of a study of its own. For our particular consideration in this study is the emphasis that author Thadeus Bergmeier places upon what he calls “the preaching intersection.” Bergmeier envisions every sermon as an intersection of two speakers. As he describes it, “In the preaching intersection, how the preacher and listener intersect, God still speaks through what he has spoken through his Holy Scriptures; and, as the preacher and listener work in harmony with each other, the words of God are able to be heard and understood.”²⁸ Bergmeier continues in much of his work to focus on how the listener can be better prepared to receive God’s speaking through the preacher.

Yet before turning to his primary concern, Bergmeier outlines a theology of preaching that is informative for this study. He rightly declares, “Foundational to a theology of preaching is the fact that God is the first preacher.”²⁹ This can be seen throughout the Scriptures. In the creation of the world, God spoke and brought all things into being. As the writer to the Hebrews tells us, “In many and various ways God spoke to his people of old by the prophets, but now in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:1–2). In Christ, the eternal Word of God, God has

²⁷ William Willimon, *Shaped by the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 12.

²⁸ Thadeus L. Bergmeier, *Helping Johnny Listen: Taking Full Advantage of the Sermons We Hear* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 1.

²⁹ Bergmeier, *Helping Johnny Listen*, 3.

spoken clearly as to who He is and of His salvific work for the world. Even in the rest of Scripture, the principle of God as the first preacher remains. “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). So even today, as the Scriptures are heard, God is preaching, speaking, to His people.

This means that before a preacher ever opens his mouth, he has already heard the proclamation of God in the Word of Scripture. Certainly, to proclaim this message to his parishioners, he will need to be attentive to God’s Word, that God’s powerful Word may do the work He intends. Bergmeier writes, “When preachers are faithful in opening the Bible and explaining the book by telling what it has to say about the lives of the listeners, the words that they lay out for the listeners are exactly what God has to say. This needs to be abundantly clear: the preacher is not what is powerful; the message is.”³⁰

Since God is the speaker in His Word and through His messengers, the faithful sermon is indeed Word of God. Bergmeier makes this point, “When preachers are faithful to the text of the Bible and preach the text and not themselves, it is as if God is speaking to their audiences during those sermons. In the re-oralizing of the text, God speaks.”³¹ By this manner of speaking, the first oralizing of the text is by the Spirit of God at work in the inspiration of the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16). The sermon becomes the re-oralizing of God’s Word today. In between, the preacher listens to the Word in order to faithfully carry God’s message to His people. To be prepared to listen on behalf of the people, the preacher is shaped by the regular hearing of the Word.

Preacher, Can You Hear Us Listening by Roger Van Harn more explicitly treats the topic

³⁰ Bergmeier, *Helping Johnny Listen*, 2.

³¹ Bergmeier, *Helping Johnny Listen*, 13.

of listening, and does so through the image of the pastor as pioneer listener.³² The work of the preacher is to scout out the territory of the Scriptural text and come back to tell the others. Van Harn wrote of university students who came to the congregation he served near the school. They came seeking a kind of credential, but not of the sort that can be earned by advanced degrees. When the students came, “they wanted to know if their pastor had listened to them and for them before speaking – especially when the speaking came as a sermon in worship. The credential they were looking for was evidence that their pastor/preacher was a pioneer listener on their behalf. The pioneer is the person who goes on ahead to make it safe for others to follow.”³³

The image of the pioneer listener is helpful for the preacher to consider. He goes on ahead to test the terrain and returns to guide others over a path that he has already walked for them. Van Harn points out the difficulty in this image through a quotation from Merrill Abbey, “Before we are interpreters of the Word, we are sinful men who stand in desperate need to hear it.”³⁴ How true! The preacher needs to hear the Word of God also. The preacher needs to hear the

³² Van Harn’s image is borrowed from Thomas Long, and then expanded upon. Long’s description was, “Imagine that the biblical text for next Sunday’s sermon is not a piece of literature but a deep and mysterious cave. The preacher is a trained explorer of caves who descends into this one, flashlight and ropes in hand, filled with the excitement of discovery. Others have explored this cave before, indeed the preacher has read their accounts, studied their maps, been excited by the sights they have seen, marveled at the treasures they have discovered, and is impelled by their assurance that there are new treasures yet to be found. The preacher moves ever deeper into the cave, sometimes ambling easily through wide passageways, other times wedging his way through an opening barely large enough to squeeze through. He wanders down alluring grottos, only to find they end in cold, bland walls. He shines his light across chasms too wide for him to cross with the equipment he has. He inches his way down a high and narrow ledge, once almost losing his footing and tumbling into the black infinity below. Suddenly, he turns a corner and there it is, what he has been looking for all along. Perhaps it is a waterfall, tumbling from a great height to the floor below. Or perhaps it is an enormous stalactite, an icicle eons old which overwhelms him by its sheer size. Or maybe his flashlight has illumined a wall of gems, filling the dark space with dancing fire and color. He stands before the sight in a moment of awe and silence. Then, knowing what he must do, he carefully retraces his path, scrambles to the mouth of the cave, and with the dirt of the journey still on his face and his flashlight waving excitedly, he calls to those who have been waiting on him, ‘Come on, have I got something to show you.’” Thomas G. Long, “The Distance We Have Traveled: Changing Trends in Preaching,” *Reformed Liturgy and Music* 27 no.1, (1983), 14.

³³ Roger E. Van Harn, *Preacher, Can You Hear Us Listening?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 15.

³⁴ Van Harn, *Preacher, Can You Hear*, 17. from Merrill Abbey, *The Word Interprets Us* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 64.

sweetness of the Gospel, the correction of the Law, the guidance of God's exhortation, the joy of forgiveness and freedom in Christ. To be a pioneer listener, demands diligent and prayerful sermon preparation. The temptation towards production can often inhibit listening. The preacher's own need, and obligation to the people, impel the hearing of the Word outside of sermon preparation, so the time of preparation can be both for the people and himself. This will help the preacher hear the Word first on God's terms, not his own. As Van Harn points out, "The minister, however, is not called first of all to be creative; he or she is called to be a faithful listener so that others can hear the Word of God."³⁵

Michael Quicke's *360 Degree Preaching* is intended as a guide to developing sermons in a holistic manner, as the subtitle of the book describes "hearing, speaking, and living the Word." Perhaps most significant for this study is Quicke's emphasis on the character of the preacher as integral to proclamation. Quicke states this succinctly, "preaching is an overflow of who a preacher is."³⁶ Who the preacher is influences his engagement with the sermon text and his interaction with the hearers, and this is effected by his knowledge, skills, and character. Knowledge entails information that has been gained about the world in general, and in regard to the Scriptures in particular. Skills pertain to the abilities that make an excellent communicator, whether this be in word choice, delivery of a message, creativity or presence. Character describes who the preacher is and how he relates to others. A significant aspect of character is spiritual maturity. Quicke writes,

Maturity grows out of consistent discipleship. Through experience and reflection, one learns what it means to be dependent on God. Such maturity rejects simplistic solutions and generic sermon applications. By God's grace and power alone are mature preachers made (Eph. 3:7-9). Preachers never go off duty from maturing.

³⁵ Van Harn, *Preacher, Can You Hear*, 19.

³⁶ Michael Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 89.

Everything within and around preachers contributes to what is traditionally known as ‘indirect preparation,’ a daily weaving together of every experience and insight to form character.³⁷

Needless to say, such maturity is formed in many different arenas: daily experience, pastoral care, marriage, parenting. In short, all of life may shape maturity, but only when all of life is understood through the lens of God’s working in the world through His Son and as revealed in Scripture. For the preachers, “our relationship with Scripture should never be cerebral only, as though God is primarily sharing information. He is sharing himself – ‘O taste and see that the Lord is good’ (Ps. 34:8). Scripture empowers holistically – whole persons in the whole church for the whole of life.”³⁸

Quicke encourages listening as a primary skill of the preacher. Preachers listen to the Scriptures. Preachers listen to their people. These forms of listening begin long before the sermon and continue through the preaching of it and as the Word of God is then lived out among God’s people. The preacher begins, works, and ends listening, especially to the Word of God. Quick quotes the work of David Schlafer in listing five voices that may influence preachers: Scripture, the preacher, the congregation, the cultural environment, and worship. Of course, they are not of equal value, as if they have voting rights and can join ranks to outvote Scripture. So the spoken Word of the sermon is both an orchestration of, and a response to, the many voices to which good preachers are constantly listening.”³⁹

Devotional Materials for Preachers

The case has well been stated as to the importance of the devotional life for the preacher,

³⁷ Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching*, 95.

³⁸ Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching*, 53.

³⁹ David J. Shafler, *Your Way with God’s Word* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1995), 3–4.

but how have Lutheran preachers done so? In this section, consideration will be given to the encouragement towards *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*, as well as the guidance of Doberstein's *Minister's Prayer Book*. These guiding lights have been most influential in how Lutheran preachers have been encouraged to take up devotional practice.

Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio

The starting point in discussing how a Luther preacher would take part in the devotional life begins with the instruction of Martin Luther in his *Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings*.⁴⁰ His instruction is subtitled in Doberstein's Prayer book, "a Right Way to Study Theology,"⁴¹ but Luther had an expansive view of theology. It was no mere academic discipline. To be a theologian was to be one who speaks and teaches the Word of God. Theology is the right speaking of God, which demands the training of the whole man of God, not merely his intellect. This is reflected in the discipline that Luther encourages: *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*. These have often been translated as prayer, meditation, and suffering.

Luther describes prayer, not as prayer in general, but in this way, "pray to God with real humility and earnestness, that he through his dear Son may give you his Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding."⁴² Such prayer is focused on the anticipated receiving of God's Word. God's Word remains central in prayer, in meditation and in suffering. Here in prayer, the Holy Spirit is implored to give the gifts He has promised in His Word. There is a humble understanding that apart from the working of the Spirit, no one can understand the

⁴⁰ Martin Luther, "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings." *Luther's Works*. American Edition. ed. Lewis Spitz. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1960): 283–88. Hereafter the abbreviated form of *LW* is used for *Luther's Works*.

⁴¹ Doberstein, *Minister's Prayer Book*, 287.

⁴² *LW* 34:285–86.

Scriptures. John Kleinig describes this aspect of the making of a theologian, “the Holy Spirit turns would-be masters of theology, spiritual self-promoters, into humble, life-long students of the Scriptures.”⁴³

Oratio leads directly into *meditatio*. Meditation has often come to be thought of in the context of Eastern Mysticism, a Buddhist emptying of the mind. Christian meditation that Luther has in mind is quite different. He says plainly, “God will not give you his Spirit without the external Word.”⁴⁴ Prayer and meditation are connected and linked by the Holy Spirit working through the Word. Further, Luther does not envision a silent contemplation of the Word: “You should meditate, not only in your heart, but also externally, by actually repeating and comparing oral speech and literal words of the book, reading and rereading them with diligent attention and reflection, so that you may see what the Holy Spirit means by them.”⁴⁵ Therefore, Kleinig expounds on this point, “the decisive thing is not how we meditate, but on what we meditate...Christian meditation focuses on Christ and his Word.”⁴⁶ This is the heart of the Christian life. Prayer leads to contemplation of Christ and His Word. Our lives in Christ, which are regularly accompanied by trial and tribulation, are lived trusting in the Word. Kleinig, therefore says of seminary students, and could easily say of all preachers, “They will most certainly not become good preachers of God’s Word unless they have first become meditative listeners of it. The fruit of meditation, as Luther recognized, is the preaching and teaching of God’s Word.”⁴⁷

⁴³ John Kleinig, “Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66, no.3 (2002): 260.

⁴⁴ *LW* 34:286.

⁴⁵ *LW* 34:286.

⁴⁶ John Kleinig, “Meditation,” *Logia* 10, no.2 (Eastertide 2001): 46.

⁴⁷ Kleinig, “Oratio,” 263.

Prayer and meditation focused on the Spirit directing us to consider Christ and His Word, leads us into the rest of life and suffering. The final of Luther's three terms has been left in German, as here, or translated as temptation or struggle. The point is that the right study of theology culminates in experience. Prior to Luther, many believed that proper meditation led toward total peace. Luther saw things differently. Steven Hein points out that meditation and prayer focused on Christ and his Word bring us peace with God through work of Jesus. Yet, "peace with God brings conflict and adversity with the world, the flesh and the devil."⁴⁸ Kleinig helps us consider further, "as soon as he (any pastor) meditates on God's Word and so draws on the power of the Holy Spirit, the devil attacks him by stiffing up misunderstanding, contradiction, opposition, and persecution."⁴⁹ Why? Satan desires for pastors, most of all, to avoid hearing the Word of God. Instead, our Lord desires the experience of suffering to drive us back to *oratio* and on to meditation to be better prepared when the attacks of Satan come, for they will. Therefore, among other recommendations, Kleinig states that seminary faculties "need to be diligent in our devotional life and help students to establish the practice of daily devotions, with an emphasis on meditation on God's Word, prayer, and spiritual vigilance."⁵⁰ This pattern of *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio* is to become the pattern of the preacher's devotional life and life in general.

The Minister's Prayer Book

John Doberstein's *The Minister's Prayer Book* was written in 1959 to offer a tool in forging a shape to the devotional life of the preacher as described by Luther. This is reinforced in

⁴⁸ Steven Hein, "Tentatio," *Logia* 10, no.2 (Eastertide 2001), 33.

⁴⁹ Kleinig, "Oratio," 264.

⁵⁰ Kleinig, "Oratio," 266.

his introduction, “pastoral care in the full sense of one’s total ministry, is always proclamation of the Word addressed to the real human situation. But I, the minister, must receive pastoral care, too; I must hear the Word of God spoken to my situation.”⁵¹ He offers a number of ways in which the minister may be ministered to. Such pastoral care may come from an ecclesiastical superior, a fellow pastor, a father confessor, and from the congregation among whom, he serves. Each one is extolled as having a unique and important role. But Doberstein then turns to “receiving pastoral care in solitariness.”⁵² His description of this is by rehearsing the three-fold devotional practice described by Luther, though in a different order: *meditatio, tentatio, oratio*. Everything begins in the Word of Christ that is lived out and proclaimed, which leads the minister to a time of prayer on the basis of Christ’s Word and trials of the day. Doberstein is careful to differentiate this practice from sermon preparation. “It must be understood that this is the pastor’s personal and daily meeting with God; therefore preparation for preaching and teaching is not to be regarded as a substitute for regular private devotions.”⁵³

The rest of Doberstein’s book is split in roughly two parts: an outline for daily devotional practice and encouragement toward such a practice. The outline is structured around prayers and readings for the seven days of the week. From there are added Scripture readings that align with the church year. The second half of the book is a compendium of wisdom through the ages regarding the importance of the devotional life, the challenges of serving in the Office of the Ministry, and encouragement from God’s Word among other topics. Through his selections, Doberstein seems to indicate two major points. First, the devotional life is necessary to the faithful carrying out of pastoral ministry, in preaching and all other tasks. Therefore, use this

⁵¹ Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book*, x.

⁵² Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book*, xi.

⁵³ Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book*, xii.

form or not, but read Scripture regularly. Here, his quote of Origen is apt. “Do you then, my son, diligently apply yourself to the reading of the sacred Scriptures. Apply yourself, I say. For we who read the things of God need much application, lest we should say or think anything too rashly about them.”⁵⁴ In addition, the devotional life is of utmost importance for the preacher because it shapes the preacher. In particular, Luther’s view of *oratio* and *meditatio* in constant tension with *tentatio*, makes the preacher’s whole life focused on Christ and His Word. This forms the character of the man who will proclaim God’s Word. Doberstein quotes many in this vein, including Johann Michael Sailer. “The life of the preacher must be the prologue of the sermon he would preach, the commentary on what he really teaches and the epilogue, the seal of the sermons he has preached. The preacher is not he who teaches for an hour on Sundays and festivals, but he teaches by deeds, for whole weeks, months, years, his whole life long, what he preaches on particular days in words.”⁵⁵ The preacher shaped in the study, living by God’s Word and grace through the week, and in diligent, prayerful preparation is well equipped to proclaim the mysteries of the Gospel. However individual preachers carry out the devotional life, an ancient prayer that Doberstein includes is shared by all preachers, “Come, Holy Spirit, shepherd him who is to shepherd others; guide him who is to guide others; discover to him (the Scriptures) who is to discover them to others; give to him who is to give to others, Lord Christ, have mercy upon us!”⁵⁶

Conclusion

Recent literature reinforces the essential nature of the pastor’s devotional life for the

⁵⁴ Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book*, 310.

⁵⁵ Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book*, 272.

⁵⁶ Doberstein, *Minister’s Prayer Book*, 132.

practice of preaching. The rich and varied writing of Eugene Peterson implores pastors to slow down from the busyness that is often celebrated and “eat the book.” Regular feasting on the Word of God enables pastors to be prepared to honor Scripture and the people who will the Scriptures proclaimed. This same theme of honoring both people and the Word of God is emphasized by the recent plethora of literature that considers the relationship of listening and preaching. Listen to people and, for the purpose of this study, the essential listening to the Word of God is a precursor to being a faithful proclaimer of the Word as one who serves as a pioneer listener. In this endeavor, the preacher’s devotional life serves as preparation before serving as a pioneer listener for a text that will be considered in worship. Finally, Lutheran preachers have entered the devotional life in recent decades through the pattern of *oratio, meditatio, and tentatio* as reinforced through *The Minister’s Prayer Book*. While other resources certainly are used, these foundational patterns among modern Lutheran preachers have affirmed the importance of the devotional life in service to the practice of preaching.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

In this chapter, I will discuss the gradual development of identifying a specific ministry challenge. This process was shaped by my course work in the Doctor of Ministry program and challenges that I experienced for myself in personal devotional life and which I observed in the lives of fellow pastors both in Illinois and Missouri. As time wore on, I became more focused on the intersection of the devotional life and preaching. Through this chapter, I will discuss the background that led to this topic, how the topic was shaped through various classes and conversations, and ultimately the qualitative research conducted among pastors of the LCMS Missouri District. In this chapter, I hope to move from the theoretical discussion of the importance of devotional practice and its influence on preaching to how pastors experience this reality themselves.

Background

I began the Doctor of Ministry program in the summer of 2009 at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. At the time, one of the objectives I set for myself was to grow in preaching, and so I enrolled in DM-925 *Current Trends in Homiletics*. The course focused on writers of the so-called “New Homiletic”¹ and how these new methods could be faithfully appropriated within a

¹ David Schmitt offers a simple description of this expanded field, “In regard to the influence of theory, the field of homiletics has recently expanded. With H. Grady Davis’s *Design for Preaching* and Fred Craddock’s *As One Without Authority*, a period of growth and experimentation in homiletics was born. For half a century, new forms and methods of preaching were introduced through practice into the field of homiletics. Scholarship has clarified specific schools of homiletical thought within this broad field now known as the New Homiletic.” David Schmitt, “Law and Gospel”, 22.

Lutheran context. In the course of preparing for this course, a required text was *Liturgical Preaching*, which has since been released in a new edition entitled *Preaching is Worship*.

Two essays were formative in this process that has led to this project. The first essay was Dale Meyer's essay, "The Place of the Sermon in the Order of Service."² Of particular interest to me at the time was Dr. Meyer's concept of *homiliai*, which Meyer defined as "planned and unplanned contacts, pastoral and social interactions with your people."³ He set this in relationship to *homilia*, the Latin term that gives us the field of homiletics. He defines *homilia* as "conversation." Meyer wanted to emphasize the importance of preaching as a conversation (*homilia*) that grew out of conversations (*homiliai*) from living in the midst of the members of the congregation. What struck me was the larger sense of conversation that is inherent in preaching. The preaching event grows out of multiple conversations. The preacher is in conversation with God through His Word, constantly and in particular in preparation to share a specific Word with the people. How that Word will best be heard and applied requires the preacher to be in conversation with his people in advance of the sermon. This means an integrated series of conversations as the preacher hears from the Lord, is in conversation with congregants through the week, and seemingly culminates the conversation in the sermon. Yet, I say seemingly because this just leads the preacher back into the Word and care for the people in an ongoing conversation.

While these thoughts bounced around in my mind, I was also influenced by David Schmitt's article, "Law and Gospel in Sermon and Service."⁴ As I discussed this article earlier in

² Dale E. Meyer. "The Place of the Sermon in the Order of Service." in *Preaching is Worship: the Sermon in Context*, ed. Paul Grime and Dean Nadasdy (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 3–14.

³ Meyer, "Place of the Sermon," 8.

⁴ Schmitt, "Law and Gospel," 15–33.

this project, I will not say as much about the content, other than how the tendency toward abusing the Law and Gospel dialectic seemed to reinforce my thought about needing to be attentive to the conversation of devotional practice. I was reminded of the importance of listening to what God's Word says, not merely what I assumed it would say before I heard the text.

Schmitt's essay also led me toward enrolling in his class on sermon structures (DM-929) during my second term on campus in the Summer of 2010. During that time, he discussed with me the possibility of following the Homiletics Concentration for the Doctor of Ministry program. I was intrigued by the possibility and began to take classes accordingly. In addition, I began to consider what a Major Applied Project in this concentration might look like. I remember conversations with fellow students who commented on the similar nature of many projects in the Homiletics Concentration, and I wanted to consider a different path. Instead of analyzing sermon techniques or structures, like many of the projects with which I was familiar, I began to consider a project that would benefit the preacher.

Until the winter term of 2014, this thought remained in the background for a few reasons. First of all, I had not yet brought together in my mind some of themes regarding devotional practice and preaching that had piqued my interest in various courses. In addition, in the fall of 2010, I received a call to a new congregation. In January of 2011, I said farewell to the saints in Milford, IL and began serving as Pastor of Hope Lutheran in High Ridge, MO. Receiving a call in the midst of the process led me to delay taking courses during 2011.

Narrowing the Topic

Following occasional classes through 2012 and 2013, in January of 2014, I took DM-915 *Care of Creation*. The course was focused on broad themes related to the reality that our primary

identity is that of creature.⁵ At the conclusion of the course, we were given an open-ended assignment that took any portion of the class and applied it. The topic that had caught me during that term was the importance of Sabbath. The theological portion of this project that focuses on Sabbath grew out of that 2014 project as I considered the importance of Sabbath rest for pastors. As part of that project, I conducted surveys of congregants at Hope Lutheran in High Ridge, MO and compared their responses with those of the pastors of the Arnold Circuit. This was part of a presentation on the importance of Sabbath at a Circuit Winkel meeting as I led a discussion about the challenges and methods of taking Sabbath rest as pastors (Appendix One). Following this time, I began to more seriously consider how Sabbath rest for pastors is an essential need of preachers. This led me to consider the connection between hearing the Word and proclaiming the Word.

In the summer of 2014, I took the *Project Writing and Research* course (DM-995) which focuses students on the process of writing the Major Applied Project. Through my work for that class, I began to consider how a manageable project could be conducted that connected the devotional life and the practice of preaching. My initial proposal for a Major Applied Project sought to consider the influence of the devotional life in exemplary preachers. The concept was to look for a correlation between exemplary preachers and a rich devotional practice. During this period, I also spoke with Dr. David Peter to serve as my advisor and he accepted. My initial proposal was completed in August of 2014, though it was not immediately sent for approval.

I knew that there were some possible deficiencies in this model. First of all, defining exemplary preachers could present a challenge on its own. My solution to this would be to

⁵ “By confessing God as the creator, we confess that we are creatures.” The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Together with all Creatures*, 30.

request names of exemplary preachers from circuit visitors throughout the Missouri District. While this would, by no means, provide an exhaustive list of exemplary preachers, peer nominations seemed the most feasible manner for compiling a pool of preachers. I also knew that an exemplary preacher would be all in the eye of the beholder. Some might prioritize Scriptural knowledge and explication, while others would emphasize rhetorical flair or creativity. My thought was not to determine this standard, but simply to let the circuit visitors provide a cross section of different sorts of exemplary preachers. A second deficiency in this model is that I was assuming a correlation between “exemplary” preachers and personal devotional practice. This further would be exacerbated by the unclear definition of what an exemplary preacher might be. Still, I believed that a correlation could exist.

During the remainder of 2014 and through all of 2015, my project was placed on hold due to some congregational issues that demanded greater attention. These issues persisted into the summer of 2017 and are the main reason that this project has not been completed sooner. Nevertheless, in the summer of 2016 I spoke with my adviser and we discussed moving forward. We discussed seeking names to serve as possible interviewees. In addition, he encouraged me to meet with two other faculty members and work on getting my Major Applied Project proposal approved. Following that meeting, I spoke with Missouri District President Lee Hagan and through the district office, I contacted all of the circuit visitors in the state to request names of exemplary preachers.

Through my responses from the circuit visitors and my conversation with additional faculty members, I decided to change the focus of the Major Applied Project. The circuit visitors who responded were generally unsure of what an exemplary preacher might be, and I presume this was a major factor in receiving very few replies. Then on September 6, 2016, I met with my

adviser David Peter and also Joel Okomoto and Bruce Hartung, each of whom had read my proposed project. They offered a variety of clarifying questions, but perhaps most helpful and pointed was a comment by Dr. Okomoto when he stated, “the idea of an exemplary preacher is too vague and varied to be helpful.”⁶

Process for the Project

After this meeting, I considered moving towards the view of seeking out some best practices in devotional practice for preachers. The plan would be to look more generally at pastors in the LCMS Missouri District through a survey of devotional practice and the relationship to preaching, this would compose the major qualitative research component. Following this, I would conduct interviews to delve deeper into common themes and add a second layer of qualitative research. The end result would be collecting resources, suggested practices and attitudes towards devotional practice that benefit preaching to be shared through presentations at Circuit Winkel meetings.

With this general framework in mind, I rewrote and submitted my proposal for this Major Applied Project in November of 2016, and it was accepted. At the same time, I prepared the survey on “The Devotional Life and the Practice of Preaching” (Appendix Two), and I sought and received permission from President Hagan to present and distribute the survey at the November 2016 Pastor’s Conference. From the survey, I received 107 replies. Further congregational complications placed the writing of the project on hold until the summer of 2017. On May 30, 2017 all 107 replies were cataloged in a spreadsheet (Appendix Three).

After cataloging all of the replies, I met again with my adviser, Dr. Peter. We discussed

⁶ This was stated in written notes and suggested texts that he brought to the September meeting.

common themes that appeared in the survey data, much of which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter. We also began discussing possible themes to take from the survey data in order to conduct further research for the theological background portions of this project. Following the meeting, it was determined to work on additional writing until the background and theological portions of the project were in draft form. Then we would meet again to identify possible questions for the follow-up interviews.

Writing of the sections of the MAP regarding background, theology, and the project in the context of recent research continued on a once-a-month basis through the summer and fall of 2017. This haphazard pattern made writing of the paper quite difficult, and so I spoke with the elders of Hope Lutheran Church in High Ridge regarding some concentrated time to finish work on the project during January and February of 2018. These first three sections were largely completed during the week of January 15–19, 2018. A follow up meeting with Dr. Peter was held on Friday January 26th to discuss interview questions and consent forms (Appendices Four and Five) and a timeline for completion of the project that would meet deadlines for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Another component to the project would be to share the results with brother pastors. During February 2018, the Arnold and Farmington Circuits received a presentation on some key findings of the research, surveys, and interviews. In addition, a catalog of resources with descriptions that were often provided by publishers or creators was provided to pastors for their own use in selection of devotional materials. (Appendix Seven)

Alongside the presentation, follow-up interviews were conducted with pastors who provided varied and more in depth answers on the survey that had been conducted in 2016. During these interviews, no knowledge of the previous survey was expected. Candidates were

contacted by the method that they had provided on the original survey. During this initial contact, interviewees were sent a copy of the interview questions for them to consider as they wished, and the interview consent form was provided for them to return as best suited them. The interviews were scheduled for thirty minutes a piece over a two week period from February 5-16. Each of the interviews was conducted by phone as many of the contacts were some distance from me.

When the interviews were completed, the remainder of the project was written during the week of February 19–23. Some of the material from the interviews was included in the initial presentations that have been offered. Additional insights are found in this project that have not yet been shared as part of the presentation. As a follow-up to this presentation, information will be shared with Grace Place retreats as they have requested information following the taking of the survey at the 2016 Missouri District Pastor’s Conference.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION

The field research for this project was conducted in two main portions. The first component was a survey of Missouri District LCMS pastors at the annual pastor's conference. The survey entitled, "the Devotional Life and the Practice of Preaching," entailed five broad questions. Following that analysis of survey data, interviews were conducted with a number of participants in the initial survey. Participants reflecting a variety of devotional practices and more complete answers were chosen. The culmination of the process was a presentation to be shared with Circuit Winkel meetings to share findings of the research and a catalog of suggested devotional materials with eye towards practices that would benefit preaching.

Analysis of Survey Results Regarding the Devotional Life and the Practice of Preaching.

Before the close of the 2016 Missouri District Pastor's Conference, the survey was described to pastors and their participation was requested. One hundred seven total survey forms were received with 105 completed. The large pool of respondents gave a depth and breadth to the information that was collected. In addition, this group would serve as the pool from which to interview additional pastors. Not all pastors were open to further interviews, as evidenced from the 14 respondents who chose to remain anonymous. Nevertheless, this left a pool of 91 pastors to choose from for further discussion. The questions of the initial survey will each be reviewed, and the results of the follow up interviews and a summary of the presentation that grew out of this research will conclude this chapter.

Survey Results

Please describe your regular devotional practice in a given week.

This open-ended question provided incredible variety in responses. Many of the answers reflected the resources that were used, although I will discuss those results in more detail later in this chapter. For now, the most basic observation that I should make is that both the surveys and the follow up interviews seemed to indicate a generally high value for daily devotional practice is held, and yet the practice is very broad based on the materials that are used, the time of day, the length of time spent, and who is present.

In general, devotional practice is a once a day endeavor for the pastors of the Missouri District. The vast majority who stated a time during the day when they personally pray and read the Scriptures commented that morning was the daily routine. There was some variation in this. A number of pastors referred to morning devotions as the first thing undertaken in the morning, “before exercise and breakfast.” Others made sure that this time was undertaken at home, perhaps during breakfast or over the morning cup of coffee. A number of pastors had created a routine upon arrival at the church. For some, the daily devotion is prepared on the desk the night before and greets them when they arrive in the office. Others drop what they have in their office and immediately move to the sanctuary for a time of prayer, and for some, singing of hymns. In one manner or another, many sought to create a daily routine of hearing God’s Word first thing in the morning.

Others embraced evening as the set time to hear the Word of God. This practice broke into two distinct groups. The first group spoke of sharing evening devotions with family. Family structure varied between just husband and wife or in other cases, included children. Nevertheless, the most common evening time of devotion was corporate either at the supper table or before bed. The other common practice for those who spoke of some form of evening devotion was that

this was the bookend to the day. Few pastors referenced evening devotions as the only time that they set aside time for personal prayer and reading of Scripture. On the other hand, a number of pastors spoke in some form of “morning and evening prayer.” A handful of pastors spoke of a very regimented practice of praying the various liturgical offices of the day, but most had distinct practices in the morning and evening. For instance, one respondent spoke about prayer in the morning and reading of multiple chapters in the Bible through the evening.

Some of the pastors specifically spoke about the length of their daily devotions. On the whole, those who spoke about an amount of time had more set patterns for their personal practice, which necessitated more time. Those who mentioned time spent in devotion each day regularly reserved at least thirty minutes and, often, up to an hour of time. A few pastors also spoke about reserving a longer amount of time for personal reflection of 3–4 hours once a week.

An interesting finding was the number of pastors who share their devotional time with others. 16 respondents mentioned sharing devotional time with their wives. This group included a number who only spoke about devotions with wife and family, and others for whom this was one of two devotional times during the day. A group of 12 pastors described daily devotions with their family. Unlike the previous group, those who wrote about family devotions nearly universally described a second personal time of devotion. Outside of the family, a few pastors also spoke of daily devotions with fellow “staff.” A small group also spoke of the importance of brother pastors who may join in devotion together or discuss their devotional lives for the sake of accountability.

Accountability raises the last noteworthy finding in this question: the issue of discipline. Since this project is aimed towards preaching, I did not specifically ask questions related to the frequency of devotional practice though the need for regular devotional practice for preachers is,

in part, predicated on the common temptation for preachers to eschew the devotional life. While other studies have confirmed this temptation among pastors, a number in this study also confessed to their devotional life being “sporadic,” “hit and miss,” “not regular,” and “erratic.” The implications of this will be discussed later under the question regarding the relationship between devotional practice and preaching. For now, it is clear that at least some pastors recognize the struggle in establishing a disciplined devotional practice.

On the other hand, a number of pastors described a very disciplined practice. This discipline might be due to a personal process that the individual described.¹ Others described a disciplined practice in terms of the level of priority given to their devotional practice. It needs to be “first thing” and “a daily priority.” The importance of the making the devotional life a priority for the preacher is reaffirmed in the advice that is offered under question five below.

Do you consider sermon preparation to be a time of personal devotion? Why or why not?

Earlier in this study, Mueller’s instruction was mentioned that, “Good preaching begins not with sermon study but with Bible study. Every day the pastor must begin by reading the Bible for himself in a devotional manner, quite apart from sermon preparation.”² In conversation with pastors in the past, I had found that this thought had been questioned. In addition, my project is to consider the importance of Sabbath rest for preachers. To some degree this necessitates a separate time to receive the Word of God that is outside of the sermon writing process. Therefore, I wanted to see how Missouri District pastors viewed sermon preparation, and if it superseded Mueller’s encouragement toward “reading the Bible for himself in a devotional

¹ For example: One pastor’s practice included: Daily 30-40 minutes (1) Psalm for the week in order through the Psalter (2) Daily reading of Scripture variety of plans (for example 1 Year - NT) (3) Daily Prayers - list of prayer topics for every day and specific lists for each day, (4) Devotional books & prayer books Sunday pray for preachers from 5–6am.

² Mueller and Kraus, *Pastoral Theology*, 83.

manner.”

The pastors responded in essentially three ways: yes, no, and sort of. The largest number of respondents considered sermon preparation to be devotional in some manner, and within this group, there were respondents who contended that their sermon preparation contained the totality of their devotional practice. A smaller group stood with Mueller and stated no, they are not the same and should be kept separate to some degree. While some of each of these previous groups gave less than emphatic answers, some plainly answered yes and no. To these various answers, we will now turn.

Some 53 respondents indicated that yes, sermon preparation is devotional practice. One pastor recognized that this is not keeping with the encouragement of Mueller and others in the history of our church. He commented, “I know we are told this is not devotional time, but I always preach to me before I preach to others. If my sermons don’t preach to me, they won’t preach to others.” This first reason for seeing sermon preparation as devotional practice has to do with the reality that God works through the Word. This was the most common theme among respondents who held to sermon preparation as devotional practice. One pastor put this in explicitly theological terms, “Absolutely! You cannot divide the efficacy of the Word based upon how we are using it – we do not make it efficacious.” This argument was repeated time and again that the Spirit works through the Word as He chooses. So one pastor declared, “Being in the Word is sheer joy....a great pick me up and relative enlightenment and conviction.” Every encounter with the Word is an opportunity for the living God to speak to us. Therefore, we don’t get to decide how the Word will work on us. As we study in preparation for the sermon, the text will apply to us as the Spirit sees fit.

This theological point is very closely connected to a second point that may be described as

an issue of personal character or integrity. This related point was made by pastors who said,

“I cannot speak to others about God’s Word until God’s Word first speaks to me. Before I speak of your speck, I must deal with my log.”

“Yes, I preach to myself first and try to recreate for the congregation what the text has done to me.”

“Yes, the sermon is for me as much as for the congregation”

“For me to preach, I need to own my words”

In each of these cases, the theme seems to be a matter of the preacher having the Word of God work on him in order to be prepared and communicate the Word as it will do the same thing in the life of his people. I want to be clear that this is not a matter of manipulation, but integrity. The attitude described seems to be, “I need to hear this Word first. As the Spirit, works through His Word in my life, I anticipate how it will do the same as this same Word of God is preached in the sermon that I will proclaim.”

One final attitude seemed common among those who viewed sermon preparation as devotional practice. This was less common, but no less significant. The earlier groups that I mentioned largely still had a separate devotional practice, but also viewed sermon preparation as an additional time of devotional practice, at least the early portion of sermon preparation. For a smaller group of pastors, devotional practice is actually shaped by sermon preparation. The assigned readings in general or the chosen text for the coming week would become the focus of devotional practice for that seven day period. One pastor pointed out that, “sermon prep requires prayer and study.” These hallmarks of devotional practice are also key components of sermon preparation, and so the two are connected. Another pastor declared that, “the devotional flows into the vocational.” Here the logic seems to be that the preacher’s time in devotion directly

leads into the preacher's calling to proclaim the Word of God. Prayerful contemplation of that same Word of God leads naturally into the task of proclaiming the Gospel on the basis of this specific Word of God. Another pastor sought to fully incorporate the devotional and vocational when he stated, "Yes, I normally learn by heart the passage of Scripture that I'll be preaching that week." The taking of Scripture to heart forms the preacher, and specifically in this particular Word of God in order to fully proclaim it. This practice of learning the Scripture by heart that is to be proclaimed seems to integrate all three aspects of those who viewed sermon preparation as devotional practice. The Word of God learned by heart will certainly be at work throughout the week upon the preacher. That same Word is also shaping the character of the preacher as he repeats the Word. Finally, devotional practice and sermon preparation have great overlap as devotional practice is guided by taking this Scripture to heart. This practice seems to embody, in an intentional manner, what one pastor said, "All week, every day is sermon prep time."

The second large group responded to the question negatively. 36 respondents agreed with Mueller that sermon preparation needs to be kept separate from devotional practice. This group saw sermon preparation as having a different focus, and therefore should be kept separate. To be fair, this group also recognized the theological reality that God's Word is efficacious, but the manner in which it is heard in sermon preparation versus devotional practice is still distinct. One response said it well, "Not to deny the Spirit's work through the Word, often convicts me during sermon prep and also comforts. But I intentionally separate those in my daily planner to protect morning and evening devotion."

One theme that came through frequently in this group is that sermon preparation is work, a vocational task. Devotional practice is not. Therefore, pastors described sermon preparation as "a business thing" and devotional practice as "for fulfillment." These differing purposes of the two

disciplines showed up again and again. So another response said, “Daily time (in devotion) is entirely unrelated to work responsibilities.” There was often a clear desire to separate the two, and in part because the focus was not the same, as a response stated, “In preparation I have an agenda, so I’m not listening in the same way.” Another almost directly quoted this response, “I don’t reflect on the passage in the same way.”

At least two different manners of speaking arose for those who believed that they did not listen to Scripture in sermon preparation in the same way that they listen in personal devotion. The first distinction came in terms of whether they were listening for themselves or for the benefit of others. This theme was consistent.

“I’m writing the sermon for others, rather than for my own edification.”

“My sermon is not for me alone (personal), but rather for the church (communal)”

“Sermon preparation is ‘work’ that strives to feed the flock, not necessarily me in the process (though I do benefit from the study)”

“During sermon preparation, I am thinking of my people at that time. My problems and fears may also be my peoples, as well, but that time is not thinking of me, but them.”

In many cases, there is a recognition that one may receive a benefit from hearing the Word in sermon preparation, but the purpose is to go there for the sake of others. Lurking in the background is always the question, “How does this passage impact the members of my parish?” In this manner of thinking is not self-centered, but the implications are. “How does this Word of Christ impact my life?” is a different emphasis than, “How does this Word of Christ impact my people?” It may not be beneficial for the preacher to seek a total bifurcation between the two, and most preachers admit this is not the case, but the focus on the congregation can short cut the preacher making personal application in sermon preparation in the same way that he naturally

would in devotional reading.

The second distinction is related. One could say that the first distinction is focused on the purpose of sermon preparation, namely it is for the sake of the Church and proclamation to God's people. The second distinction is related to the purpose of devotional reading, which is to receive from God. A few pastors highlighted this distinction.

“With sermon preparation I tend to go into it with a goal or agenda that probably limits my hearing of the text. During my devotion time, I have my guard down and just listen.”

“No. Sermon preparation can be devotional, but it is focused more on crafting, writing, etc. I consider devotion to me on the receiving end.”

The focus of the devotional life is on receiving the gifts of God. The focus of sermon preparation is on delivering the gifts of God. The difference in focus can “limit my hearing of the text.”

For those who do not see sermon preparation as devotional practice, this does not mean that there needs to be a total disconnect between the two disciplines. A few pastors noted that personal devotional practice leads to preaching. This theme will be explicitly undertaken in question four of this survey. Among those who saw a distinction in the two practices, there was a sense that “I consider personal devotion to be a time of sermon preparation.” Personal devotion prepares the preacher before he considers preparing the sermon. Not only this another pastor commented, “I have now grown in my devotion time to realize personal devotion time prepares for preaching and pastoral ministry.” This attitude seems to apply the logic that the preacher must receive first in order to give later. “Often what I receive in my private devotional time flows over into my preaching.”

Some of the respondents had a hard time choosing sides. 16 pastors gave an overt answer

of yes and no. It should be stated that many in the previous groups equivocated in some manner on their answers, but these respondents boldly stood on the fence. This group voiced many of the same attitudes as in the other groups, but saw clearly both sides of the distinction between sermon preparation and devotional practice. On the whole this group leans towards an attitude that there may be moments of devotional contemplation with in sermon preparation, but that they are not synonymous. This group can be exemplified by the response. “Yes and no. Sometimes I learn a lot that I had not previously applied to my life. Other times it is more mechanical.” Another answered similarly, “Yes and no. Sometimes the message and study is impactful but at other times I'm so focused on putting out a product (sermon) I'm not inwardly digesting.” These answers seek to honor the theological reality of God’s work in His Word, and yet acknowledge that the differing foci of sermon preparation and devotional practice means that they are not equivalent.

What resources do you find particularly helpful in your personal devotion? (for example particular authors, types of prayer, keeping a journal)

The resources that are utilized by the pastors of the Missouri District are extraordinarily diverse. At least 86 different resources were named that pastors felt were beneficial in their devotional practice. In offering a presentation on Best Devotional Practices in Support of Preaching, I developed an annotated bibliography to share with pastors that provides a synopsis of each resource as described by the publisher (Appendix Seven). For the sake of analysis, the list is quite large and diverse, but a few themes are worthy of mentioning.

A number of common tools were listed among pastors. Concordia Publishing House’s *Treasury of Daily Prayer* was mentioned by over a quarter of the respondents. When considering the *Pray Now* app, which provides the *Treasury of Daily Prayer* in a digital format, this text is used in some manner by roughly a third of Missouri District pastors. The book offers a daily

lectionary, prayers, writings of the Church Fathers, prayer services and more. A second commonly used resource is Concordia Publishing House's quarterly periodical *Portals of Prayer* that includes daily readings, a brief devotional writing, and a prayer. The third specifically named item to use in devotional practice was the book of Psalms. Numerous pastors both included the Psalms in a larger devotional regimen or simply encouraged "praying the Psalms."

These most common items are either from the LCMS publishing house or, in the case of the psalms, carry with them the explicit encouragement of Martin Luther.³ When it comes to resources, most pastors use something to help provide a pattern to the devotional life. This comes in the form of daily devotional books or periodicals (like *Portals of Prayer*) or with the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, a schedule of readings and prayer through the Church Year. Overwhelmingly, the resources that are suggested by pastors are either directly from Scripture or from Lutheran (especially LCMS) authors. This practice could come from a number of reasons: common affiliation, common confession, familiarity, or shared practice with the laity. The overwhelming use of LCMS materials was expected, and yet I had a desire to know why it was so common. Therefore, it became one of the topics to be discussed in follow-up interviews.

Of note, a smaller number of pastors availed themselves of devotional material from outside of Lutheran circles. In most cases, pastors did not list specific titles, but authors and preachers that they utilized in their own devotional practice. What seemed noteworthy was that typically, pastors who used non-LCMS materials did so exclusively and intentionally. As one pastor put it, "Be open to different authors, books, magazines, etc. What and who does God use to touch/influence your heart, mind and soul?" This attitude of casting a wide net seemed

³ Martin Luther, "Preface to the Psalms," in *The Prefaces to the Early Editions of Martin Luther's Bible*, ed. T.A. Readwin (London: Hatchard, 1863), 43. Luther commented, "But I maintain that no legend and no manual of devotion has ever yet appeared, or can, superior to the Book of Psalms; and if a man wished either to read or to select what is best, both in example, in legend, and in history, he could not do better than adopt the Book of Psalms."

common among those pastors who commonly utilized non-Lutheran authors.

An unexpected finding was the common use of digital or electronic media to support the devotional life. Podcasts, blog posts, audio Bibles, online sermons, prayer apps, and emailed daily devotions were used in various ways by many pastors. I plan to follow up on these topics with my deeper interviews to discuss how pastors use these materials. To investigate the pros and cons of the use of technology in the practice of the devotional life sounds like an entire additional Major Applied Project that would be worthy of investigation. For the sake of this project, it is noteworthy that technology is so often used, and in the interest of sharing the best practices, I am interested to receive input from interviewees.

Perhaps one last theme in the sources should be mentioned. Numerous pastors spoke in the previous question about separating the devotional life and sermon preparation because the latter of the two is “work” or “business.” Pastoral formation in the LCMS places a high value on academics, and rightly so. To some degree this academic ideal shapes the lives of many pastors. It is not surprising then that certain academic and professional texts are mentioned as resources in the devotional life of pastors. Academic journals from both Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (*Concordia Journal*) and Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN (*Concordia Theological Quarterly*) are listed as devotional resources. In addition, Bible commentaries are also frequently mentioned, as well as other professional texts. Most of these texts would not traditionally be considered devotional texts, but in the educational climate of LCMS clergy they find a home in devotional practice. Accordingly, these texts are listed separately in the catalog of resources, as they would not normally be used for devotional practice.

How does your personal devotional practice influence your preaching?

The most introspective question that was posed to the preachers of the Missouri District

offered substantive answers that coalesced into a few themes. In terms of content and practice three points were noticed. First, preachers could see how their personal devotional practice had yielded illustrations and applications that connected to various sermons. Second, the practice of devotional reading and prayer helped pastors slow down and dig deeper into a given text, rather than just skimming the surface. Beyond this, a third realization was that by constantly being in the Word, preachers found it easier to make broader connections throughout the Scriptures. Ultimately, preachers found that their devotional practice also shaped their character as preachers. This realization was two-fold. First, devotional practice was seen to be a matter of integrity. This integrity was part of a larger sense of formation through the reception of God's Word.

The first, surface level at which preachers were able to see the influence of devotional practice on their preaching was in the content that could transfer from a devotion to a sermon. Frequently, this connection took place in the form of illustrations or applications that had been a significant piece of a recent devotion that connected to the point being made in the sermon. As one pastor put it, "often insights from my private Bible reading pops up in sermons." This process often does not occur immediately as the devotional reading and sermon text for a given week may not align. Another respondent commented, "I usually do glean something from my devotions that gets used in my sermon 1–3 weeks later." While many responded that illustrations and applications will appear in sermons after being considered in private devotion, this also became a noticeable reason why regular practice of the devotional life benefits the practice of preaching. As one preacher stated, "when I get into a good pattern it (devotional practice) does (influence preaching) because it often provides other illustrations & applications." Certainly, developing a cadre of sermon illustrations is not the primary reason for a preacher to engage in

regular devotional reading, but it is a secondary benefit.

A second theme that became apparent in how preachers perceived their devotional practice influencing their preaching came in how the practice of personal devotional reading prepared preachers to look closely at the text to be preached. In light of the necessity to produce a sermon for the coming Sunday, preachers can view sermon preparation as merely sermon production. Quickly, the process can become very superficial as the preacher scans the text in search of a hook. He can quickly seek the first hint of Law and Gospel and fall into some of the traps that were discussed earlier rather than actually listening deeply to what this text of Scripture is proclaiming. Personal devotion helps to mitigate this temptation as, “being in the Word personally makes sermon prep a little deeper and fuller,” commented one pastor.

Digging deeper into the specific text is an obvious benefit to those who intentionally combine devotional practice and sermon preparation. When the sermon text is engaged devotionally, the preacher will naturally dig deeper into the text as he considers it over a period of time in daily prayer. As one pastor put it, “for me, preaching themes for a season shapes my devotional life.” Through devotional practice, the preacher spends a great deal of prayerful consideration on a text. A pastor who memorizes his homiletical texts each week gave the simple explanation that, “by Sunday I have meditated for a week on the texts.”

Regular devotional practice was not only seen as helping the preacher dive deeper into the specific text, but also to find broader connections through the whole of Scripture. One pastor explained that, “continual reading of the lectionary helps lay out background information from the texts on which I preach.” The preacher is given a broader scope of the larger narrative of the book from which the pericope happens to be taken. This same principle applies to the whole of Scripture. As the preacher is regularly considering the Word of God in prayer, he is able to make

wider connections with the text he is currently handling. So a number of pastors said something similar to, “the Word of God that I pray inevitably shows up in my preaching.” As the Scriptures are read and heard more broadly by the preacher, he is able to apply them more frequently to the text upon which he is preaching. “Things come up later that I’ve picked up along the way,” said one pastor. “It’s good to have a back catalog of nuggets to spring to mind when going over texts.” The broadening benefit of devotional practice also in how language is used. “By reading & studying I get the best thoughts and styles from many. I don’t specifically go to them but am influenced in style, content, and grabbing hold of the text to communicate it in a winsome way.” As this pastor mentions, whether in devotional writings or in Scripture proper, the wide variety of language employed to proclaim the Gospel becomes the native tongue of the preacher who has spent time hearing it.

The previous connections between devotional practice and the preaching task that pastors recognized in themselves were largely confined to how the content of the sermon is enriched through devotional practice. The preacher himself is also greatly shaped by the regular habit of devotional reading and prayer. The preachers of the Missouri District described this in two ways. The first way is a specific instance of being shaped that is evident to the congregation. This is best described by the pastor who wrote, “It’s an integrity issue. I can’t talk about walking by faith in the Spirit if I’m not doing it myself. I want listeners to say, ‘He sounds like he knows Jesus.’” It has been previously discussed that the Word of God is efficacious on its own. In the translation of the Latin text of the Augsburg Confession we confess that, “Both the sacraments and the Word are efficacious because of the ordinance and command of Christ, even when offered by evil people.”⁴ Nevertheless, we rightly desire pastors who are truly Christians and seek to be

⁴ The Augsburg Confession, VIII.2 in Kolb and Wengert, 43.

faithful. While an evil person may proclaim the Word, Satan will use hypocrites to try to undermine the credibility of the church's message. There is a reason why Paul tells us that an "overseer is to be above reproach" (1 Tim 3:2). A pastor should be faithful. It is to the benefit of God's people if they can say of their pastor, "He sounds like he knows Jesus." So, a number of pastors spoke of this issue of integrity, and how personal devotional practice enables the preacher to be a man of integrity as he proclaims God's Word. So one said, "the more I am in the Word, the better I can make my preaching believable." Another commented, "(when I'm in the Word) I am more informed, emboldened, courageous, and joyful in Christ, seems to put wind in my sails." One pastor who sought to memorize the text as part of his devotional practice commented that I try "to speak the Words as though they were my own."

The issue of integrity is a matter of formation. Many Missouri District pastors said that their personal devotional practice influenced their preaching predominantly by forming them. One pastor simply said, "(devotional practice) is essentially formative and thus essential to (preaching). A pastor cannot give what he himself has not received." Another respondent echoed that same sentiment, "I always tell my people, 'You can't give what you don't have.' Daily devotional discipline is absolutely necessary as a disciple, and servant of Christ." This formation is not only a matter of habit, but is also a matter of the work of God in the life of the preacher. "Having a personal devotional practice allows me to have peace of mind and be in tune with the Holy Spirit," commented another pastor. Devotional practice serves to shape the preacher through the working of the Holy Spirit, and so another pastor commented, "I'm sure preaching would suffer without my daily devotions."

While pastors did not discuss specifically how preaching might suffer without regular devotional practice, a number of respondents did comment on how the preacher would suffer. He

would starve and thirst. A common image of the need for regular devotional practice in the service of preaching was that devotional reading of God's Word serves to nourish the soul of the preacher. Some comments included,

“It's the well from which I draw to speak of God's promises to others - devotions preach to me and my needs.”

“Personal devotions are a general spiritual strengthening - all spiritual strengthening affects preaching.”

“Keeps well full.”

“It keeps me ‘fed’ and growing in God's Word... devotional life helps me see many connections within God's Word to proclaim the whole counsel of God.”

“It nourishes me for the task and also gives me resources. I am always amazed how often content from my daily devotion fits with a Bible Study or lectionary reading for preaching. The Spirit works!”

Certainly to be fed, nourished, and satisfied by the Word of God is Biblical language, especially in the context of being fed with Word of God, Jesus Christ.⁵ This feeding on the Word of God nourishes, shapes, deepens, and broadens the proclamation of Christ.

What one practice of the devotional life would recommend to novice preachers?

The final question that I asked the pastors of the Missouri District held two purposes. First, I wanted to share practical advice with preachers about the blessing of the devotional life. Second, in asking for advice, I would see what was actually the most important aspect of the devotional life for these pastors. The advice was nearly as wide ranging as the resources used in

⁵ For instance, John 4:14, 6:35.

the devotional life, but a number of themes became evident.

The major theme that arose in the survey answers was to engage in devotional reading and prayer regularly. This was the most consistent advice given throughout the entire group with encouragement like “be regular,” “make sure to do it every day,” “find regular times,” “develop a consistent habit,” and borrowing from the Nike slogan, “Just do it!” Every other piece of advice probably assumes this, but the understood importance of the devotional life for the preacher is self-evident in the fact that no pastor dissuaded such practice. There was not a single piece of advice to do something more important or not to worry about taking time for devotional reading and prayer. Though great diversity in practice may exist, there was a universal encouragement to “do it regularly.”

Closely related to the theme of engaging in devotional practice regularly was the encouragement to make it a priority. Some pastors emphasized the fact that important items end up on our calendars. So they advised, “make it happen! Schedule it as an appointment.” More pointed was the instruction, “Make it a priority! Even put it on the calendar and don’t let anything ‘bump’ it from the schedule. Consider it your ‘Spiritual Exercise’ program.” In addition to the image of daily exercise, the image of nourishment returned in the instruction, “make it a priority. (You) must be fed well to feed others.” More specifically, the need for spiritual nourishment was directed to be “First thing in the morning. Prioritize your day this way, because it's more important than food (Matt. 4:4) or exercise (1 Tim. 4:8).” One more image was used to describe the priority of devotional study and prayer, an investment that grows. As one pastor put it, “it's exactly the same as a savings account. After two years in ministry you've banked some 700+ days of Scripture input. After 21 years, do the math. We become what we eat and feed ourselves day after day. Always learning, repenting, changing, stretching...” Clearly these first

two pieces of advice go hand in hand. In order to “do it regularly,” it must be a priority. Both of these items must be held together for either piece of advice to be followed.

The remainder of the direction given by the pastors of the Missouri District surrounded the theme of how to engage the devotional life faithfully and with an eye towards preaching. Perhaps most pointed in this connection was the encouragement to listen, not just to the text, but also to listen to others proclaim the Word. In this vein, a pastor encouraged new preachers to “let others preach to you; listen to recorded sermons from brother pastors online.” Now this could be viewed as an encouragement to get ideas or suggestions from brother pastors, but the other answers from this respondent seemed to indicate a need for preachers to have the Word preached to them, as they so often are the speaker. Certainly there is benefit in listening to sermons on the text that will be preached in a given week, as one pastor shared, “I read sermons from other preachers on the text I am using to see how they are approaching the text for proclamation.” Such an activity might either fit sermon preparation well or provide another avenue for sermon preparation and devotional practice to meet.

A number of pastors gave specific advice on how novice preachers might well undertake devotional practice. Some pastors encouraged a regular reading plan at the outset of the year. One advised, “commit each January to a disciplined, daily Bible reading plan that includes quiet meditation, reflection, *oratio, meditatio, tentatio.*” Setting a schedule may help in the keeping of a regular pattern of study. Another pastor pointed toward the need for grace in such a schedule. He encouraged, “find a time to read Scripture for devotion and schedule it - and when you get off track don't feel guilty - start again.” Certainly there is a temptation to quit, start over, or feel defeated when good intentions in the devotional life have fallen flat. To borrow from the language of many of the pastors, it is not a good thing to skip meals, but having skipped one or

two, go back to eating. Such an understanding of the gifts with which our Lord desires to feed and nourish our souls, should help us eagerly receive the gift instead of giving into Satan's lies that regular study is impossible or too demanding. Many pastors encouraged joining with others in devotional practice. For instance, "personal prayer life begun with prayer, praise & thanks, and prayer time to include spouse & children & with a brother in Christ whenever possible."

This encouragement seemed to circle around three ideas. First, in the family the pastor is fulfilling his vocation as the head of the household. Second, praying and studying regularly with his wife and/or a brother pastor helps with accountability. Finally, meeting with others gives an opportunity for conversation and a deeper understanding of the text. One last common "how to" should be mentioned, and this was the encouragement to change location. A number offered this advice either daily or on a weekly basis. This advice mirrors Eugene Peterson's encouragement for the pastor to seek regular Sabbath rest. As one pastor said, "get away from the office for a few hours every week for some peace and quiet to think and to pray. Go for a hike, go into the woods, find a park, go to a coffee shop." Stepping away to hear the Word of God refreshes the preacher to return anew to proclaim the refreshing Word to others.

Another category of advice on the devotional life for young preachers centered less on "how to," and instead gave instruction on what is worth focusing on. A constant refrain was "pray the Psalms." Various pastors implored, "pray the Psalms...keep in the Greek/Hebrew," "pray the Psalms out loud. Hear them spoken out loud," and "the discipline of being in the Word. Learn to pray the Psalms." This encouragement to read and pray the Psalms fit within the wider encouragement to read and "pray through Scripture passages." This might mean "continuing to read through the Bible every year" or simply to "read God's Word daily to be spiritually fed." I appreciated the encouragement from a few pastors to sing. For instance, "learn Scripture and

LSB hymns by heart - repeating, singing them throughout the day all week.” Perhaps most general was the encouragement to “rely on those who have gone before us.” Whether in the Words of Scripture or through the writings of faithful Christians, the preacher is well served to be strengthened in “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

The final pieces of advice that emerged from the survey seemingly picked up again on the theme of integrity. The word was not used, but the concept that was shared in various ways was that the preacher needs to take ownership of his devotional practice. This means that the preacher needs to develop a devotional practice that works and he will stick to. Pastors described this in multiple ways. One said, “everyone is different. Give intentional thought and time, and find what works for you.” Another commented similarly, “find something that works. We are always under attack.” The sense of urgency and importance of the devotional life of the preacher demands careful thought and the intentional dedication to a regular plan. A related piece of advice is that through intentional thought and regular reflection, the preacher should develop a routine over time. This was simply encouraged in the statement, “start small and grow your practice/routine over time.” The novice preacher doesn’t need to follow someone else’s exact pattern, timing, and location for devotional practice, but he needs to develop a regular practice of which he takes ownership. This is essential because “we are under attack” and as one last pastor wanted to remind new preachers, “do not preach to others until the Word has preached to you.” Whether the devotional practice includes the readings that will be preached upon or not, each preacher has a continual need for himself and his people to first hear the Word.

Interviews with Select Survey Respondents

The 2016 survey of Missouri District pastors provided a wealth of information. Yet out of a desire to delve a bit deeper into some of the points raised by the initial survey, a series of follow-

up interviews were conducted in early 2018. Candidates were chosen for a variety of reasons, but primarily because they provided substantive answers, expressed an intentional and active devotional life, and provided a variety of answers to the survey questions. Some of the avenues for additional research were interesting, but not necessarily fruitful. For instance, I wanted to ask more about role of technology in the devotional practice of these pastors. In fact, some were chosen to seek follow-up interviews because of their expressed use of technology. Nevertheless, upon speaking with these pastors, I realized that to look further into the use of technology would have necessitated an additional set of questions past what I asked, and would have strayed from the purpose of this project. Other directions proved to be more fruitful in the scope of this particular project. Summaries of the pastors' answers are provided in Appendix Six, and to the major findings we now turn. As the interviewees answered with the understanding of anonymity, they will be referred to by numbers which correspond to their answers in the Appendices.

The pastors were asked what led them to their current devotional practice. Three answers seemed to come the forefront. A few of the respondents referenced the devotional practice of their family around the dinner table as children. Interviewee 3 referenced his mother's faithfulness in leading this daily activity saying, "God used this time to instill the habit in me." Others described their current practice as one of gradual growth. Even if the pattern began in childhood, their current practice came about over time through trial and error. Interviewee 4 pointed out that, "My current pattern just grew on me. I have appreciated daily praying the Psalms and using Matins. Early on I used other devotional books, but as time went along I focused more on the Scriptures and prayer services. I found this was important because it needed to be familiar in order to be absorbed." Finally, a couple of the pastors found that their current intentionality regarding the devotional life grew out of a sense of personal reflection. Something

was lacking or could be lacking and each felt the need to re-evaluate their practice. His personal frustration will be revisited in a later question, but interviewee 2 pointed out that, “After about 12 years in the ministry, I knew that I needed to be more intentional. I knew that regular, personal study of the Word, and prayer was lacking.” What was striking in terms of this study is that he was concerned about a phoniness in his preaching that stemmed from his deficient devotional practice.

The earlier pastoral survey also demanded a closer look at the distinction between sermon preparation and devotional practice. While my respondents were varied in their original survey answers, they were generally uniform in their answers in their interviews that the two are distinct. The only caveat would be Interviewee 1 whose holistic view of devotional practice doesn’t fit as neatly into the general definitions that I have used in this project, but is noteworthy in terms of seeing devotional and vocational practices as fully integrated.⁶ Nevertheless, I will focus on the answers of the remainder of the interviewees.

The consensus that arose from the interviews is that while sermon preparation may have devotional moments for the preacher, separate devotional practice is important as the foundation for the preacher’s vocational study of the Word in sermon preparation. The relationship between the practices was well described by Interviewee 2, “Sermon preparation (is) secondary to personal devotional time. I am first Jesus’ little lamb. Second I am an under shepherd of Jesus’ lambs. So private devotional life leads to sermon preparation geared towards the people because I’m accustomed to considering what the Word & Spirit do to me.” This description fits well with

⁶ “Devotional practice is holistic. Life situations demand the response of the pastor and that takes me into study of God’s Word and then it is shared. That includes preaching.” Holistic view of devotional life and preaching. Life and ministry lead to the need to consider a topic or text devotionally. This contemplation will lead at times into the vocational tasks of preaching and teaching. This influences how I and we as a congregation see God and His work, which leads us back into life and ministry.”

the “receptive nature” of devotional practice as described by Interviewee 4. The significant distinction is that devotional practice is undertaken for the explicit purpose of receiving God’s gifts in His Word.⁷ Therefore, while sermon preparation may also bring us God’s gifts as He desires to give them, the purpose is for the giving of God’s Word to the congregation. Again Interviewee 4 said it well, “(Sermon preparation) is an action of serving the neighbor in studying the Scripture as opposed to a devotional practice for my own strengthening.” A number of the interviews highlighted the importance of the devotional life for the preacher as distinct from sermon preparation because the preacher needs to be “fed the Word” and needs the Word like exercise to be “spiritually healthy.” A preacher who is malnourished and in poor shape will have preaching that is less than it should be. Certainly the Word remains efficacious, but a spiritually starving and sluggish preacher can be a hindrance to the faithful proclamation of the Word.

Among the interviewees, they expressed two primary influences of devotional practice on their preaching: the formative nature of the devotional life and the practical gaining of illustrations or Biblical allusions. These themes were also present throughout the survey data, yet in the longer form interview, the formative nature of devotional study was present in every answer. They spoke of how “the Word is integrated in me as a disciple of Jesus” and “devotional practice may be somewhat of a chore, yet it is part of who I am.” Further, “the biggest influence (of the devotional life) is on me, that I am fed on the Word of God.” Interviewee 5 saw a very direct connection, “Prayer time shapes who I am. I’m an encourager, which is by focusing on prayers of thanks each day. That pours over into my preaching – gratitude to God for all of His mercies toward us.” This formative nature of devotional practice that shapes the preacher even

⁷ In light of this divide in purpose, but understanding that there may be overlap, Interviewee 5 offered his helpful practice. “During my prayer time or Scripture reading time, I do keep a pad of paper and a pen handy so if I have a thought I can write it down and remove that distraction and get back to what I’m doing.”

shows up in how illustrations arise. As Interviewee 4 put it, “I don’t go into my devotional time looking for things. They find me.”

Each of these pastors described a fairly regular devotional practice, and yet challenges were evident. Interviewee 2 discussed the personal discomfort that led him toward a more regular devotional practice. “It was an awkward feeling in the pulpit. It didn’t seem right that I was becoming a professional preacher, a Word of God dispenser, rather than a person talking to people about our God and His mercy.” Such honest self-reflection was apparent through each of the pastors as they discussed their own struggles, and is a helpful example to fellow pastors in humbly examining their own weaknesses and needs. A major challenge to devotional practice for a number of these preachers is in maintaining focused attention. They talked of the propensity for the mind to wander, the phone to ring, the temptation to fall asleep. Various solutions were suggested including early morning devotion to avoid phone calls, keeping a “home altar” or “prayer kneeler” as a dedicated place for prayer and meditation, and not laying down for evening prayers.

I once again asked for some words of advice for novice preachers, especially in relation to the devotional life. A portion from each interviewee is important to share.

Interviewee 1 - He wants you to share JESUS, but he also wants YOU to share Jesus.

Interviewee 2 - The personal reading of Scripture allows for the professional to have integrity, as coming from a man who believes and has experienced what he is saying. You need the personal to carry the Word to the congregation professionally.

Interviewee 3 – Two things: #1 is to stay in the Word. #2 is know your gifts and use them while working on your weaknesses.

Interviewee 4 - You need to be fed to have something to give. It will bear fruit in preaching

and teaching, though that may not be right away.

Interviewee 5 - Take time for prayer. Also stay in His Word. As we pray, God answers in His Word. The two go together. In fact, don't think these stand alone. Prayer and the Word are always working together. God speaks to us, we speak to God, He speaks to us, and so on. The pattern is who we are.

These pieces of advice reaffirm the central findings in all of my research. The Word shapes the preacher. Hearing the Word regularly prepares the preacher personally and professionally to share the Gospel. After all, the preaching task is carried out by pastors who live amongst their people. Pastors are not performers. As stated before, they are Jesus' little lambs who are called to be undershepherds of Jesus to serve other lambs. Preachers need the strengthening and shaping of God's Word, just as the rest of the flock does. In fact, preachers need the strengthening and shaping of God's Word even more so as they "need to be fed to have something to give."

Sharing the Best Practices

In February of 2018, I presented key findings of the project with the pastors of the Arnold and Farmington Circuits in Missouri. These findings broke down to six noteworthy items that have been discussed:

1. Variety of devotional practice
2. The tension between vocational needs and personal edification in view of sermon preparation and devotional practice.
3. The use of technology in devotional practice
4. The influences of devotional practice on preaching
5. The importance of a disciplined pattern of study
6. Advice for new preachers on the devotional life

As these items have been discussed in some detail, I will not return to them now. The purpose of the project was to share some best practices of the devotional life in the service of preaching. To this end, survey results were discussed to reinforce the importance of the devotional life for the practice of preaching and then to share resources that could be of benefit to fellow preachers. The primary document that was discussed was the “Catalog of Devotional Resources of Missouri District Pastors” (Appendix Seven). In light of the reality of incredible diversity of devotional practice and in recognition that different preachers will benefit from different disciplines, all of the resources were shared. This included academic books, devotional guides, technological resources, and beneficial practices. Beneficial practices included meeting with brother pastors, setting aside a specific location for prayer and devotional reading, and more. I purposely made the choice to make the presentation simple so that it could easily be shared at additional Circuit Winkel meetings, and yet providing a wealth of materials to allow pastors the freedom to find what materials may be most beneficial to them.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the outset of this project, I knew the importance of devotional practice for the spiritual health of any Christian. As the explanation to the 2017 edition of Luther's Small Catechism puts it, "God wants us to be regularly engaged with His Word and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips. God's Word is the treasure that sanctifies everything."¹ For the preacher's lips to be sanctified by the Word of God regularly is all the more important before his lips share the Word of God. I also knew from my own experience and anecdotal conversations that the daily discipline of devotional practice had been a challenge for myself and other pastors. The genesis of this project was personal as I could sense a correlation between times in my ministry when I had been more faithful in devotional practice and how that had enriched my preaching.

The two key findings of this study were in the reaffirmation of my assumptions that devotional practice is both a struggle for pastors to prioritize, and yet an incredible blessing to them as preachers when it is a priority. The blessings largely centered in the need for pastors to be continually conformed to the image of Christ. One pastor after another spoke of how their time in God's Word shapes who they are and that comes out in their preaching. This formation is both a matter of the head and of the heart. Daily reading of Scripture and prayer certainly increases the aptitude of pastors who then read the Scriptures more deeply and see the story of God's work in the world more broadly through a wider familiarity with the Bible. At the same time, regular prayer and devotional reading serves the deeper purpose of shaping who we are as

¹ *Luther's Small Catechism*, 78.

Christians. To borrow from the catechism explanation just referenced, God's Word is the treasure that sanctifies everything. This means both head and heart. In a church body that rightly demands pastors with high academic achievement, there is a temptation to consider the study of God's Word as a mere academic exercise. Devotional practice for preachers enables the preacher to be shaped as a person who is receiving God's Word, not only looking to use it to teach and preach.

The struggle of devotional practice was not a surprise either anecdotally or theologically. From a theological perspective, I know that Satan is a roaring lion, looking to devour, (1 Pet 5:8) and he desires preachers who twist the Word of God, lack depth or are weakened by unfaithfulness in personal study. Naturally, Satan will use any means to distract preachers from hearing the Word, just as he seeks to distract all Christians. With preachers, he has the added incentive of potentially harming many more Christians through the preacher. In my own experience, I know the temptation to jump into email, answer the phone, get to work on a Bible class, or start writing a sermon instead of first hearing the Word myself. Many pastors confirmed this struggle in following through on regular devotional practice in various ways: distractions in the office, frustration over finding a pattern that worked, and guilt over having failed to be faithful. This is why one of the few pieces of specific advice that I have shared in presenting on the survey results is, "recognize this as a spiritual struggle! When you are starved, your people will be eventually too."

Beyond these assumptions, I was surprised at the multitude of resources. I wanted to share the plethora of sources, in part, because the lack of resources cannot be a good excuse for pastors. Pastors shared multiple years of daily devotional books that cover a year at a time. Others shared multiple digital devotions that appear in email inboxes or as a notification on a

smartphone. Some of the resources teach better how to contemplate the Psalms and pray through the Scriptures. There are not enough years in the life of most preachers to exhaust the resources that were shared. A listing of these resources is provided in Appendix Seven.

Beyond this, other suggestions were personally beneficial and potentially helpful to brother pastors. The encouragement to find a manner for accountability through family members, a written devotional log, or speaking regularly with another pastor would be beneficial to anyone who has a difficult time getting a set habit. Changing locations can be a great blessing whether this means changing posture through the use of a kneeler or getting away from the phone to the sanctuary or to a park.

Perhaps the most intriguing discussion in this whole project was the relationship between sermon preparation and devotional practice. As an inherent rule follower, I followed the instruction of Mueller that the two items need to be distinct in the life of the pastor. In large part, I was confirmed in this thought. The disparate purposes of the two endeavors demands that they both be carried out. Devotional practice is for the purpose of receiving the Word. Sermon preparation is intended for sharing the Word. Yet as the Word is always at work, some sense of integration is probably helpful. In one presentation, the suggestion was mentioned to keep a devotional log of thoughts, verses and quotes that grew out of devotional practice that could be revisited and possibly used in pastoral ministry or just revisited to remember them. I have taken up this practice and found it personally enriching, though I have yet to use a single insight in my preaching. At the same time, the log serves the purpose of accountability that was mentioned earlier, as I can see when I miss a day.

Through this project I have seen where additional study could be beneficial to preachers. I referenced the number of materials that are delivered electronically. Another study could look

into the role of digital technology as a source of pastoral devotion. To truly look into this topic, there may be a desire to look into the tendency for technology to distract as well as to inform. Using a digital platform could be beneficial by interrupting less important activities and calling the preacher to time in study, but also could reinforce lower attention spans. Clearly such research is beyond the scope of this project, but could be helpful to pastors who are engaging technology in various ways as part of their devotional practice.

When I set out on this project, I wanted to encourage other pastors in the devotional life because of my own experiences. I found that my story was common among preachers. I was struck to hear from pastors who had struggled in the devotional life and recognized that it impacted their preaching negatively. In most cases, the preacher knew this to be the case, whether the congregation perceived the problem or not. One survey respondent made the point of saying that his early morning routine on Sundays includes praying for preachers. I have taken up this practice myself – praying for other pastors, for myself, and for all those who will hear. There is nothing novel about this, but necessary nonetheless. The same could be said of this project. There is nothing novel in suggesting that preachers need the Word of God. But the reminder is necessary. The very best practices that I discovered were not in resources, but in simple disciplines. “Just do it.” “Make it a priority.” “Stick to it for you and your people.” I appreciated how various preachers used many resources to follow through, and I pray this information is beneficial to other pastors in developing their own pattern of receiving the gifts of God that are for them. This was the best reminder of all that the Gospel is for the preacher too. There is nothing novel about this truth, but certainly something wonderful that is too easily forgotten in the rush toward Sunday.

APPENDIX ONE

Sabbath Question Responses

Gathered from Discussions with Hope Lutheran High Ridge and Arnold Circuit Pastors
February 2014

The following questions were on a single piece of a paper and preceded a discussion of the significance of Sabbath observance for all Christians, and the unique challenges for pastors observing the Sabbath.

Congregation

What does Sabbath mean?

- Holy day to reflect on God, His creation
- Day of worship
- To keep the day holy
- Rest in Christ, weekly day set apart for God
- Day of rest, taking time to honor God
- Keep that day holy, day to worship – Christian keep this on Sunday
- Church, fellowship, growth, enjoying Sunday School children
- Day of worship and prayer and serving the Lord
- A day of rest and to worship the Lord
- A day of rest, a day to worship our Lord
- Hebrew – last day of the week remembering the day God rested after creating the earth.
Christian – 1st day of the week, remembering the day of Jesus' resurrection
- A day dedicated to worship
- The seventh day
- The day of rest and worship. On the 7th day God rested after 6 days of creation
- Day of rest to keep Holy, in observation of the 7 days God created the universe and all in it
- Day of rest & prayer
- It is the Lord's day
- A day to rest and honor God
- A day to reflect and remember God and His forgiving grace. A day to worship
- Pray and thank God for the gift bestowed
- A day of rest or a time of rest

- Rest
- Day set aside to gather as the body of Christ to worship

In light of this definition, what does it mean to keep the Sabbath?

- To observe it with prayer and worship to God
- To attend regular worship, honor God in all that you do, prayer, Bible readings, etc
- To be true and faithful to the faith
- Set time apart from “normal” activities to seek rest and renewal in God’s Word
- Be diligent in prioritizing worshipping God in a corporate setting
- Worship, pray, keep time for worship and rest
- Come to worship and have time for God & His work
- To keep the Words and works of the Lord always in everyday and everything, but especially hold Sunday or Sabbath as His day for prayer and to praise him
- Set aside time each week, break away from daily crazy schedule to focus on and thank God for His goodness and mercy to me and all He has given me
- To set aside time to worship the Lord, go to church and remember God’s blessings (creation)
- Rest, worship, prayer
- Have a day for worship
- To give honor and praise – to rest on that day as God did in the beginning
- Dedicate this day to prayer and worship
- Set aside 1 day out of the week in respect, worship and praise for the 7th day of creation by our God
- It is the Lord’s day
- It is important to give praise to the Lord
- Spend time with God and family, reflect on God’s blessings
- A state of mind and commitment
- Remain faithful to God and His Church
- Take time to rest
- To respect limitations and gift of respite from work
- Worship, praise God for salvation

What prevents you from keeping the Sabbath?

- Sick children, life obligations
- Work, weather, tv
- Temptation, my busy lifestyle
- Multiple busy schedules
- Most people have problems with priorities
- I am able to go to church and worship on Sunday, but also do my weekly chores on Sat/Sun. So keeping Sabbath is not always easy

- The devil – sometimes I want to sleep in
- Family, time and work gets me off track and I fall away from my obligations to the Sabbath
- Schedule, time, work on Sunday mornings
- Complacency, illness, other distractions
- Business
- My human lack of giving God His glory
- Lifestyle, family events, lack of focus on God’s instruction in Scripture
- Sin
- Work & play
- Laziness
- The world, shopping, our own stubbornness
- Daily distractions
- Loss of faith
- Everyone, school, work, guilt
- Meetings, the feeling that I must “do more,” crises, requests from others, abilities that seem to demand to be used
- Obligations

Pastors

What does Sabbath mean?

- Rest
- Rest – set aside
- Rest, restoration
- To stop and rest from what you were doing
- A day of rest in the Lord
- God given rest from labor
- Rest
- A day or time of rest, but specifically to gladly hear & learn God’s Word
- Saturday

In light of this definition, what does it mean to keep the Sabbath?

- Our rest is in Christ, who cares for and died for our whole person – body & soul – hear God’s Word, worship, vacation, sleep, live healthy lifestyle
- Set aside a special day for God
- Set aside time for restoration
- To rest from one’s work and go to church and gladly hear God’s Word and take it to heart
- To be refreshed by God
- Devoted, intentional time resting from labor
- To rest physically and spiritually in God’s Word/Christ’s work

- Honor the time set aside to rest in God's Word
- In Spirit

What prevents you from keeping the Sabbath?

- I don't get private prayer. It's difficult to excuse/momentum
- Church responsibilities, laziness, other interests, lack of discipline
- Changing ministry schedule and home life
- A dull heart
- Schedule/demands
- Schedules, my own expectations, poor planning, emergencies
- Sin, insecurity, task oriented, pride
- The thorns and thistles of life
- Selfishness & pride

APPENDIX TWO

Survey – The Devotional Life and the Practice of Preaching

The Devotional Life and the Practice of Preaching

As a pastor of the LCMS Missouri District, I am seeking your help with this brief survey. My Doctor of Ministry major applied project is seeking what correlation there might be between a pastor's devotional life and his preaching.

Any answers that you provide will be confidential. No names will be printed in the final paper. I only ask for your name on this form for two reasons. First, I can contact you if I need to clarify an answer. Second, I will be seeking to follow up with some of the respondents with personal interviews to collect more information. Thank you in advance for your willingness to help.

Jason Wagner

Pastor – Hope Lutheran High Ridge, MO

1. Please describe your regular devotional practice in a given week.
2. Do you consider sermon preparation to be a time of personal devotion? Why or why not?
3. What resources do you find particularly helpful in your personal devotion? (e.g. particular authors, types of prayer, keeping a journal etc.)
4. How does your personal devotional practice influence your preaching?
5. What one practice of the devotional life would recommend to novice preachers?

Name _____

Best Contact: (email address, cell phone, etc.) _____

PLEASE PUT THIS SURVEY IN THE ENVELOPE ON YOUR TABLE. THANK YOU.

APPENDIX THREE

Survey Results – The Devotional Life and the Practice of Preaching

Response	Q 1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
1	morning & evening scripture with devotional materials	no. In preparation I have an agenda so I'm not listening in the same way.	daily prayer, portals of prayer, men's devotional bible	more like field preparation than plowing	frequent, disciplined, attentive
2	read 1 chapter a morning from bible & prayer	yes and no - sometimes the message & study is impactful but at other times I'm so focused on putting out a product (sermon) I'm not inwardly digesting	bible, study bible, notes	often ends up in my sermons that is insights from my private Bible reading pop up in sermons. At times I have had sermon series that spring from devotional time	read, read, read pray, pray, pray
3	as of the present my devotional practice is lacking	not necessarily, but it does at times serve that purpose because you are in the word. It is not that special "God & Me" time	psalms	when I get into a good patter it does because it often provides other illustrations & applications	do it

4	I strive for 15 minutes daily using multiple resources	no. Sermon prep is just that, and not time for personal devotion	"God Grant It" by CFW Walther is the resource currently I'm using. Also used Treasury of Daily Prayer	rarely does it directly influence, but indirectly being in the word does guide preaching	read the Word
5	Lutheran Book of Prayer // Daily Lectionary	Yes. I learn from the translation and being able to see the overall flow of the text more clearly	translations, usage of the text in other resources (Book of Concord, Pieper's Dogmatics, etc)	continual reading of the lectionary helps lay out background information from the texts on which I preach	continue cultivating your understanding of the languages
6	I spend 35-40 minutes in devotion with my wife using many materials	no, but it helps me to write sermons and to be acute to communicate the Gospel to others	Portals of Prayer, By Word & Pray, Engelbrecht devotions of Small Catechism, Kraus' Prayer Book, Luther's Psalm Book, Walther devotional, Bo Giertz (To Live with Christ)	by reading & studying I get the best thoughts and styles from many. I don't specifically go to them but am influenced in style, content and grabbing hold of the text to communicate it in a winsome way	
7	prayer by dad, chapter of scripture, scripture in portals of prayer, psalm (same), portals of prayer devo, section of catechism, prayer	is used to but have found I am thinking of my people at that time - my problems & fears may also be my peoples' as well, but that time is not thinking of me but them		what part of our lives does not influence our preaching? What I read give me some focus and ideas	be regular - join with your wife or brother pastor for accountability

8	read bible in the morning pick something not using in church	no, it's more of a business thing, not for fulfillment	digital reminders - can forget to do when things interrupt	usually give me ideas	
9	daily scripture reading in Greek when possible, periodic discussion with brother pastor	yes, I like to listen to other guys who have preached on the same text	Tim Keller, Matt Chandler, John Piper, Ravi Zacharias, Todd Freil, Hank Hannegraff - books & sermons/podcasts	immersion in the word	start sermon prep early - weeks in advance If you are good don't be afraid to go longer, deviate from the lectionary
10	BLANK				
11	usage of older devotional materials, portals of prayer, our daily bread, Christ in the Home, Christian Hymns, poems	no	study of hymnody, spirituals, psalms	anecdotal material often in sermons, eg poems, "shoes in church"	listening to Christian radio/ media/ tapes/ cd's study of and listening to Negro Spirituals
12	1) prepare the worship service which is not the same week after week 2)read through appointed lessons seeking unifying themes 3)what does this mean 4) what does this mean to me 5)struggle with a brother about difficult passages 6) review with others concerning authenticity	yes - I cannot speak to others about God's Word until God's Word first speaks to me. Before I speak of your speck, I must deal with my log.	luther's prayers, bible reading, several commentators, hymns, circuit conferences	see #2	do not preach to others until the Word has preached to you

13	Sermon and Bible study preparation mostly	it has to be. If I haven't applied a text and all its context to myself I'm not ready to apply it to others	Lectionary @ Lunch, Pastor Kevin Martin	for me, it's the other way around - preaching themes for a season or continuing education/new resources for homiletics shapes my devotional life	let others preach to you; listen to recorded sermons from brother pastors online
14	mon-thurs 15 min translate OT, 15 min translate NT, 20 min in English, 10 min in prayer fri/sat 15 min in English, 5-10 min prayer	no - I don't reflect on the passage in the same way	variety in the place in Scripture that I am looking at	devotional thoughts support main theme of sermon	consistency
15	Listening to God's Word on Audio Bible most days of the week, a total of 3+ hours per week, plus listening to the chapel services & sermons at Concordia Seminary plus reading Scripture 1 plus hr per week	When I prepare a sermon I strive to let that be partially devotional on my part, but I don't generally consider that part of my devotional time (perhaps Greek overlaps)	listening to regular chapel services	I usually do glean something from my devotions that gets used in my sermon 1-3 weeks later	reading all of the Bible thru quickly in 6-8 weeks, then listing to 6-8 chapters per day on audio.
16	I rotate using devotional books (listed below) and also have a method of Gospel and OT readings regularly	not generally, though it is certainly nourishing and edifying, I consider personal devotions to be separate	Treasury of Daily Prayer, Doberstein's Minister's Prayer Book, Sauer's prayer books, ???	Insights can find their way into the sermon, and certainly passages mediated upon can often be quoted	make it a priority - must be fed well to feed others

17	Daily with my wife at noon meal using Portals of Prayer / Daily individually using Lutheran Book of Prayer & Treasury of Daily Prayer	yes because it's prayerful study of God's Word	see #1 above	I often find items to include in my sermons or items that help form/shape my sermons	Daily use of Treasury of Daily Prayer and daily marriage/family devotions
18	LHM daily devotional email, national & local news	Yes, I begin the week reading the texts and meditate on it through the week	Concordia Commentaries are very helpful	By Sunday I have meditated for a week on the texts	Do your prep work at the beginning of the week
19	1st thing w/cup of tea - before exercise & b'fast Spend 45-60 minutes Recite 2 Timothy & Titus every 6 days. Daily read some Hebrew (see) Some Greek (All 4 Gospels annually) hymn - esp 895	no. This is time for to feed on the Word - without trying to make it "work" for me. This time is NOT for business/work. It is for me to model how a Christian prioritizes God's Word	Treasury of Daily Prayer, esp the Writing & Collect and Sun-Sat Prayers, I track daily what I do. It keeps me accountable	I often discover insight that blesses me & finds its way into my preaching that I never would have encountered, had I only sermon/Bible Class prep	First thing in the morning. Prioritize your day this way, because it's more important than food (Matt 4:\$) or exercise (1 Tim. 4:8)
20	Daily 30-40 minutes(1) Psalm for the week in order through the Psalter (2) Daily reading of Scripture variety of plans (1 Year - NT, whole Bible, Matthew) (3) Daily Prayers - list of prayer topics for every day and specific lists for each day, (4) Devotional books & prayer books Sunday pray for preachers from 5-6am	No. Daily times is entirely unrelated to work responsibilities. It's Jesus and Darrel not Jesus and Pastor. Sermon prep includes "How has this word impacted me personally" but is not the foundation of my devotional time	John Baillie - Diary of Private Prayer Ken Boa - Face to Face - guide to praying the Scriptures, Readings from dead people - Luther, Walther, Augustine, etc.	It's an integrity issue. I can't talk about walking by faith in the Spirit if I'm not doing it myself. I want listeners to say, "He sounds like he knows Jesus."	Commit each January to a disciplined, daily Bible reading plan that includes quiet meditation, reflection, Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio

21	I read the Bible myself, devotion with church staff and assorted meetings	It is devotional if I am letting the Word work on me as I prepare, but it is not alone sufficient	I read the word & pray. Sometimes the reading spurs research.	of course	keep it simple and consistent
22	Prayer, song, Portals of Prayer, Lutheran Hour app, Christian Radio, living critically	Yes. God's Word applies to me, a sem prof told us to preach to yourself & you'll hit your people	Christian Radio & non-Lutheran resources, even though you must listen critically - has been helpful to me	When God's Word points out my sin or encourages or comforts me, I can better apply God's word to God's people	Bible reading - study for personal life, not just for events at church
23	Subscribe to and daily read 3 different emailed devotions	no. But my weekly Bible classes preparation does serve that purpose at times	email devotions (LCMS & non-LCMS)	provides illustrations at times - sometimes I use a devotion as a "starter idea" for a sermon	
24	None	yes			
25	Matins with the reading of a Concordia Commentary Monday - Friday	Yes. The text is preaching to me and those bound to me - as humanity and as the church	Concordia Commentaries	I use it all the time - biblical insights	the above

26	early morning prayer time w/ a prayer journal on iPhone which aids me in focusing on prayer, praise & thanks to begin worship, then intercessory prayers - bedtime prayer then 3-5 chapters in Bible	no. Not personal devotional time - I once did, but I have growing my devotional time to now realize personal devotion properly prepares	prayer journal - keeping in touch with people I pray for in order to update and be aware of changes & give prayers of thanks to God. Max Lucado. Portals of Prayer. Hope-Filled Living LHM internet daily devos	I am more informed, emboldened, courageous, and joyful in Christ, seems to put wind in my sails. I gather sermon illustrations & greeting before worship comments on Sunday. A closer walk with God and Christ is a bond & partnership that assures me of God's blessing upon my message	personal prayer life begun with prayer, praise & thanks and prayer time to include spouse & children & with a brother in Christ whenever possible
27	daily (5x a week) in morning at 7:15 with my wife and boys	yes - being in the word is sheer joy...a great pick me up & relative enlightenment & conviction	Hopeful Living, Portals of Prayer, other devotional books (some CPH, some not)	Great supplemental resources & illustrations great to relate to members a familiar resource	It's a great substitute for coffee // Nike...just do it
28	morning devotion with staff, devotion ???, every prayer with family	yes & no depends on text	the church fathers	????	rely on those who have gone before us
29	family devotion with wife, Invocation / Short Reading / Explanation / Prayer / Listening to Seminary Chapel Services, Lectionary Study, Book of Concord (annually)	Yes, I preach to myself first and try to recreate for the congregation what the text has done to me	Treasury of Daily Prayer, Luther, Confessions	see #2	Listen / Read Good Sermons

30	Prayer with my wife and children every night before bed	No, I'm writing the sermon for others, rather than for my own edification	Treasury of Daily Prayer	I'm not sure that it does	make sure to do it every day - find regular times
31	sporadic yet very present	yes, diving into God's Word and talking with Him about it	Scripture is my usual go to; other sources barely used	I feel I can barely preach properly if I haven't devoted	The Scripture and talking to God rather than others to make that connection
32	Reading Bible & Study each weekday, Prayer, occasional theological book, prep for sermon & Bible Study	yes, sermon prep requires prayer and study	Bible, Lutheran Confessions	Continual improvement	keep studying the Bible
33	Daily Portals of Prayer	yes, the sermon is for me	Life Light, Portals of Prayer, Lutheran Witness		start the day with devotions, early in the morning is my quiet time
34	Bible Study, LHM daily devotions, preparation of LifeLight, Reading of God's Word	Yes, as I think about God's Word applying to me	LHM daily devotions, looking at materials for days of commemorations	seeing issues pertinent to living for the Lord	develop as a consistent habit
35	Psalms Reading, Scripture Reading, Greek text study, prayer	yes, the sermon is for me as much as the congregation	Luther, Luther, Luther...Psalms, Greek text	it is essentially formative and thus essential to it. A Pastor cannot give what he himself has not received	pray the Psalms...keep in the Greek/Hebrew

36	going into the sanctuary, hymn singing & Bible reading, back in the office for Portals of Prayer & reading a couple pages of Luther's Works	not a substitute for devotion, but yes, tends to be	Luther's Works, LSB	Not sure how to answer, but it certainly does	use the hymnal - sing!
37	Treasury of Daily Prayer, Praying for each congregational member by name. Hymn singing Daily	Sort of, through visiting my members & listening to them, I can see if things can be appropriately addressed in the sermon	I like Fredrick Buechner. Treasury of Daily Prayer is tremendous	being in the Word personally makes sermon prep a little deeper and fuller	daily devotion - however it takes place
38	Pray vigils daily from the Brotherhood Prayer Book (Emmanuel Press), Pray vespers from BPB with my family when my schedule allows, pray a chief part of the catechism, Lord's Prayer, chief hymn of week, Bible reading each night w/family	no, I consider my personal devotion to be a time of sermon preparation	Brotherhood Prayer Book, Treasury of Daily Prayer, LSB, TLH, Anglican Breviary (1955)	the Word of God that I pray inevitably shows up in my preaching	Pray the Psalms

39	I eat my breakfast & drink my coffee while reading God's Word. I have a rotation of 4 locations in Scripture, 1st is OT, 2nd Prophets, 3rd Gospel, 4th is Epistles, I also read a Psalm each day and read a portion from the confessions - usually takes 30 minutes	no - it is work	Bible, book of Psalm w/ Luther's intros & prayers, other resources	I'm sure there's a connection, but it would be hard to identify. I'm sure preaching would suffer w/out my daily devotions	find one, do it, stick with it
40	Every morning using the Psalms, Treasury of Daily Prayer, and a prayer guide I created with some revision to a fellow brother's model	Somewhat, I would say the general preparation to begin includes prayer and meditation. But I do not rely on this alone - so I say yes, but there is more	Treasury of Daily Prayer, Reading the Psalms Luther	I may meditate on a text that goes with the (text) I'm preaching on - can be helpful	pray the Psalms out loud - Hear them spoken out loud
41	Scripture study & reading Oswald Chambers each morning for 20 minutes	yes, time for self-introspection	Scripture , Oswald Chambers - My Utmost for His Highest	energizes it	read God's Word daily to be spiritually fed
42	Daily reading of Scripture and use of two or three devotion booklets (including Portals of Prayer) except on Sunday	Yes, but in a limited way. I do try to apply the message to myself, but it doesn't replace my daily devotion	always Portals of Prayer, but a changing list of other resources such as "Today's Light"	There are always insights in my devotional life that make it into my sermons	Prayer through a Scripture passage
43	Sermon Prep, 3 Bible Study prep, Family devotion	yes, it is first for me and then to apply to the laity	Word of God & dialogue. For me, talking about it broadens it beyond what I could see	See #2. Word of God for me then brought to the people	Everyone is different. Give intentional thought & time & find what works for you

44	Perhaps 2-3 times per week - hit & miss	no, it is work	Treasury of Daily Prayer	It gives a depth & richness	do it! Do not confuse with Sermon/Bible Study prep
45	Usually @ least 30 min preparation in the morning & evening. Periodic devotions through the week - preparation and listening to Worship prep/attendance One day a week is usual (3-4 hours) for deeper reflection	yes, for me to preach I need to own my words. Therefore, I see that time not only important to preparing my message to God's people, but also for me	Various devotionals - tapes - personal counselor/confessor, someone to reflect with spiritually	see #2	find something that works. We are always under attack.
46	First thing I do when I get into my office is open Bible to my reading plan. I read 1-4 chapters	Yes, but the time described above is not part of that. I am energized by sermon prep bust as an associate pastor I preach once a month	our elders and pastors follow a devotion plan together	if God tells me something during the week through devotions then I strongly consider putting it in my sermon	family devotions (Faith 5) is pivotal to me and my family
47	I utilize the Treasury of Daily Prayers and the sermon text on preaching weeks	yes, as the text "reads me," I am better equipped to speak the Word to the congregation	the Psalms have been tremendous (& non-Lutheran authors to get another perspective)	the more I am in the Word, the better I can make my preaching believable	pray early in the morning & always do it
48	Daily reading , prayer and journaling	not usually, but often what I receive in my private devotional time flows over into my preaching	journaling, ??? Reading	often! I always tell my people "You can't give what you don't have." Daily devotional discipline is absolutely necessary as a disciple, and servant of Christ	Pick a book...make it your own...work through the Scriptures...pray...journal...share with others

49	Every morning read Treasury of Daily Prayer and read from Lutheran Confessions	yes, but not the only time of personal devotion. God's Word works as God desires, whenever it is read/studied	Lutheran Confessions, Higher Things devotions	follow the pattern of sound words - drawn from Scriptures directly	start small and grow your practice/routine over time
50	Time set aside for "eating" God's Word - Eugene Peterson	sometimes, depends on situation/text/context	prayer & journaling - time alone outside - oratio/tentatio/meditatio	immensely	make it happen! - schedule it as an appointment
51	Prayer Journal, Scripture Reading (Life Application Bible)	(No) I feel that my devotion time must be set aside from the daily routine/schedule	journaling, online devotions, Life Application Bible	thoughts from various resources	to make it a priority
52	I don't always do this - I let other work get in the way. Treasury of Daily Prayer, the Minister's Prayer Book, Day by Day, Book of Common Prayer, Luther, Church Fathers	only in later stages - much of the prep work is preparing/gathering materials to study later	Minister's prayer Book, Going through upcoming readings, Pastor's Prayer for the Congregation in the TLH agenda	things come up later that I've picked up along the way. It's good to have a back catalog of nuggets to spring to mind when going over texts	Go through upcoming readings in Bible Study with parishioners
53	Daily mostly	yes, dig into the Word	hymnal, Day by Day, Pray Now, Portals of Prayer, Catechism	keeps well full	disciplined daily time
54	mornings using Treasury of Daily Prayer	yes, but not exclusively	Treasury of Daily Prayer	very often it tracks with the readings - If I am in God's Word myself my preaching is better	make sure you do it everyday

55	unfortunately it isn't regular. I use devotions on average 3-4 times per week (outside BC and sermon prep)	no - my sermon is not for me alone (personal), but rather for the church (communal)	Bible readings that are already divided out regarding chapters & verses. Church directory - I pray for my members using the directory praying for certain individuals alphabetically	the thoughts of the devotions influence my thoughts during sermon prep and when I'm writing the sermon. They shape the way I picture things and are helpful for illustrations.	use a devotional that ties into the lectionary readings
56	Read 2 chapters in English, 1 chapter another language / devotion with wife - pray for family, friends, those not yet Christians, missionaries, government leaders, church leaders, congregation to carry out the great commission, sing a hymn together / (a lot more)	never preach			set a times each day to do it, let fellow pastor's know and members of your congregation so they respect that time
57	I have a number of different devotions during the day & week including devo w/wife, devo on internet, devo book	usually not - I gain personal devotional insights as I do sermon prep	Leading Like Jesus, Sauers Daily Prayers, Books by Max Lucado, Dennis Rainey, James Dobson, Rick Warren	I often use stories from devotions in sermons I would say my devotions impact my sermon prep in a big way	Be open to different authors, books, magazines, etc. What & who does God use to touch/influence your heart, mind and soul

58	Studying the text daily that you will be preaching and praying through it	Absolutely! You cannot divide the efficacy of the Word based upon how we are using it - we do not make it efficacious	text - a simple way to pray - Luther	it helps me to focus on the implication of the text - the "so what?" of the text	praying through the text
59	Personal devotions in God's Word & devotional outreach to hundreds of subscribers / family & ecclesiastical devotions throughout the week	not necessarily - but there are devotional aspects to the preparation of study, writing, preaching	we publish devotional materials (Hopeful Living) for our older adults & I have a daily devotion I send to hundreds of subscribers - I personally find God's Word the best resource for my personal devotions	Direct correlation into what is proclaimed from the pulpit from what God's Word teaches & prepares me to do	make it a priority as you would provide your body with food - it is essential
60	Daily reflection and study through prepared and published devotions from a brother pastor	yes! In addition to looking for what to share with the flock I also am looking for what I need to be fed with	God's Word Today - Journey Men, Men of Integrity	In addition to sharing insights gained from the devotion, it is also a way to proclaim the joy of personal devotion	don't be hesitant to learn from others and receive the Word from others
61	Morning - office (Bible) Night - just reading, no pastor stuff	yes, I am in Scripture for them and myself	Bible only unless I need help - Use Concordia Commentary	makes it more applicable	just do it

62	daily Bible reading and prayer - done at home before office time, along with BOC	yes - the devotional flows into the vocational	Bible, Book of Concord	as we pray, so we worship. God intentionally leads us to the way and words that guide us as we have a close connection to the Word	don't stop reading God's Word and the confessions
63	prayer time spent talking with God	yes - working in the Lord's Word is refreshing - comforting as you apply it to yourself	Luther's Devotional Book - Intercession for members	see #2	set a time early in the week - 1st fruit commitment to God doing ??? & prayer & medication - guess a good work
64	Luther's morning prayer / Use of devotional booklet and/or forthcoming lessons. Frequently inspirational readings	Don't preach regularly anymore, but when I do, this is most devotional as I reflect on the Word, and sing the hymns in prep for worship	kept journal in past and entered extended prayers. God away from it. Rely heavily on Scripture & hymnal. Hard to find books like Phil Yancey	Previously a great deal. Gave me illustration ideas & occasional direction	Read the hymns. Find the ones that are most meaningful for yourself (and maybe others)
65	Conversation and reading of texts, literature received mailings	yes, because it is time spent with focus on my Lord	Concordia Journal // CTS Journal	it gives me illustrations, sometimes focuses	devotion, sharing with spouse, friends
66	listen to podcast Bible reading, read occasional Scripture, read & study for Bible Class & Sermon	yes - The Word speak to me as well just as much, then as I speak it to the people	keeping a "record" type list of what was/will be read	improves the preaching because I'm in the Word more	I'm a novice

67	as time allows I make devotional time	yes and no - at times devotional situations result	I use the Bible - spend time in prayer	I believe it gives me time to reflect on life and how God is at work in my life	
68	erratic - generally 15-30 min. 3-5x per week	no	Treasury of Daily Prayer, Reading the Psalms with Luther, Large Catechism	Indirect	
69	Reading of Portals of Prayer & Scripture recommended, Reading of Meditation - striving to read through the Bible	Yes, for I take time to meditate on those texts and how they apply to me & my congregation	Concordia Pulpit Resources and those mentioned above	It has finally encouraged me to take more time to meditate on the Scripture text	Start early to develop this practice. I was not encouraged to do this until late in my ministry
70	at least 3-5x week - To Live with Christ (Giertz), John Baillie's Diary of Private Prayer, A Year with C.S. Lewis, Meditations (Gerhardt), Reading the Psalms with Luther	yes - I grow and research and pray - insight & Holy Spirit's guidance	I pray the hymns in LSB several times a week, and make use of the prayer section in middle	It's the well from which I draw to speak of God's promises to others - devos preach to me and my needs	It's exactly the same as a savings account. After two years in ministry you've banked some 700+ days of Scripture input. After 21 years, do the math. We become what we eat and feed ourselves day after day. Always learning, repenting, changing, stretching...
71	prayer in sanctuary prior to each day - Giertz To Live with Christ @ dinner w/family	yes - the Word accomplishes its purposes	prayer booklet w/ prayers of saints	the Word always takes root and grows	being still & listening...know that I am God

72	Read Bible and pray // family devos	sometimes - while going over the Scripture I sometimes find a tid bit which is something affecting me. I notice that my sermons in those weeks are better	just use the Bible mainly the Psalms	see #2	find a quiet place read for 10 min (Bible) and then mediated on those words and pray to God to help you through the day
73	try to read Treasury of Daily Prayer & BC recommendation	yes - God's Word speaks to me too	mostly use Luther	not sure yet (only practicing 3 months)	
74	daily the first thing I do when I get to my office / working through Scripture in English / try to take time in original languages	no - because my focus & intent isn't for my edification, but for the edification of others. I often benefit from it greatly, but it's not devotion	journal Bible / Book of Concord / various commentaries	when my devotional life is lacking I usually struggle with the content of my sermons	Recognize this as a spiritual struggle! When you are starved, your people will too.
75	daily readings from Psalms, Proverbs, 2 books of OT, Gosepls & Epistles combined with prayers	yes & no - Every time with the Word is personal, but sermon preparation is also consideration for what the members of the congregation need to hear	Bible, Confessions, Pastor at Prayer	personal devotions are a general spiritual strengthening - all spiritual strengthening affects preaching	be in the word daily & use a formalized structure. A book like Pastor at Prayer is helpful

76	my wife and I sing hymns from LSB with our children & pray together. I learn a portion of Scripture by heart & repeat it to myself throughout the week & let it prompt me to prayer	yes - I normally learn by heart the passage of Scripture that I'll be preaching that week	LSB, the Bible	I normally speak the Scripture from memory- retelling the narrative or repeating the Epistle in my sermon, trying to speak the words as though they were my own	Learning Scripture & LSB hymns by heart - repeating, singing them throughout the day all week
77	Usually I read the daily devotion from Treasury of Daily Prayer, followed by the readings for the upcoming Sunday and pray	no - I don't have a great reason. With sermon preparation I tend to go into it with a goal or agenda that probably limits my hearing of the text. During my devotions time I have my guard down and just listen	Treasury of Daily Prayer & ESV Bible	most weeks there be something in my devotional time that speaks to the topic of the sermon	I like reading the same book of the Bible over & over, like 20 times over the course of a week or two
78	LHM devotional & Treasury of Daily Prayer - also a 2 year BOC reading plan & 1 year Scripture plan	Yes - Sermon prep can be devotional if you view it in that lens. It also cannot be if the person prepping is not viewing it that way	Treasury of Daily Prayer / Personal Journaling / LHM daily devotions	Having a personal devotional practice allows me to have peace of mind and be in tune with the Holy Spirit. Clears my mind to preach	novice preacher
79	Treasury of Daily Prayer - one of the very best tools in my opinion	yes - not the exegetical, by the "ruminating" on the text	see #1 above	insights which I discover for me (my sins, God's comfort, etc) are very much a part of my preaching as I often tell my hearers	the discipline of being in the Word - Learn to pray the Psalms

80	every morning at the beginning of the day	no - that is my vocation	Bible	more personal Bible means stronger relationship with God (F, S, HS)	continue to read through the Bible every year
81		no - because sermon is more working time. The setting & worktime is not devotional	Bible Gateway App - Bible verse - send to family members, prayer list, Bible	always something in quiet time & devotion that works into sermon	Praying the Psalm for the week & use for shutin and hospital call
82	I use "For all the Saints" which is a daily set of readings from OT, Epistle, Gospel with a reading from a churchman through church history. I also read through the Psalms	Certainly - because I am investing time in the study of God's Word	I am no reading "A Minute of Margin" Richard Swenson	I will often find illustrations or ideas that I can incorporate into my sermons	I read sermons from other preachers on the text I am using to see how they are approaching the text for proclamation
83	daily Old and New Testament / Portals of Prayer and LHM devotion	no - I feel it is not letting the Word truly settle in	again - Portals of Prayer and LHM	it helps with personal knowledge and another perspective	daily in the Word
84	Treasury of Daily Prayer - sometimes Portals of Prayer	yes - apply to myself and congregation	see #1 above	see #2	find a time to read Scripture for devotion and schedule it - and when you get off track don't feel guilty - start again
85	Bible reading, prepared devotions - not specifically scheduled, but as I have downtime	yes - drives me to think deeply and to review portions of Scripture I might no otherwise encounter	Bo Giertz / Luther's "Faith Alone" / Treasury of Daily Prayer / original language	deepens and broadens the insights I can share with my people	original language reading from Scripture

86	I use logos and a series of books I have collected over the years	yes - I know we are told this is not devotional time, but I always preach to me before I preach to others. If my sermons don't preach to me, they won't preach to others	quiet reading of Scripture	devotional thoughts and lessons often spill over into principles empower preaching	do what works for you / not all devotional practice will fit your schedule
87	reading through a book of Bible at a time, Luther Morning Prayer, Lord's Prayer, Treasury of Daily Prayer, KFUD-Thy Strong Word, Issues etc (Looking forward to Sunday morning)	yes - I often use the upcoming reading for devotional times	I'm pretty old school - Scripture, prayer, quiet time in nature - some blogs have been helpful lately - Chad Bird, Jagged Word, 1517 Legacy, Christ Hold Fast	I think it's important for me to preach to myself first. I need Law & Gospel just as much, if not more than my people	get away from the office for a few hours every week for some peace and quiet to think & to pray / go for a hike, go into the woods, find a park, go to a coffee shop
88	daily wife & I close the day with Portals of Prayer & prayers for family and all special needs of day & friends / we also use intentional devotions at meals / advent & Lent - LHM devos	yes & no - sometimes I learn a lot that I had not previously applied to my life. Other times it is more mechanical	like devotions like Herman Gockel / prayer lists are helpful	I find good illustration for preaching in some devotional material	have devotion & personal prayer with your wife & children regularly
89	daily - Portals of Prayer w/ my wife, personal Luther's morning and evening prayer - sporadic other devotions (sometimes G. Kraus' books)	no - although I do benefit from applying it to my life		ideas sometimes dovetail w/ the pericope and find their way into the sermon or other parts of the service	family devotions - Portals of Prayer (spouse) or Little Visits w/children

90	I try to read a book of the Bible, chapter or chapters, each morning. I had used Treasury of Daily Prayer - Matins previously	no - it can be devotional, but it is focused more on crafting, writing, etc. I consider devotion to me on the receiving end	For all the Saints, Pastor's Prayer Book, Treasury of Daily Prayer	It makes preaching deeper, richer, more rooted in Scripture	It is something I struggle with - consistency - stick with it every day
91	morning prayer, short devotionals through the day, family prayers, bedtime prayers, Christian/theological books	yes - word preaches to me, so I can preach // no - sometimes becomes an academic exercise	Portals of Prayer, hymnal prayers & daily services, LCC & LHM online, Lucado, Luther, online Pastor's social media posts	when I do more prayer & devotionals they provoke more insights for preaching	do devotions that speak to you personally as well as those that challenge you - most of all fill your day with as much Gospel as possible
92	Three devotionals each morning, have also used Daily Prayer and similar resources in the past and wanted to resume again	no - it's sermon preparation - some secondary devotional benefit	Portals of Prayer, Bread for the Day, Meditations (WELS)	from time to time I find a new/fresh way of expressing Biblical truths	I have found the most benefit for preaching to come from Meditations since it follows the pericopes
93	Beginning of the day w/ CPH app "Pray Now", review Scripture lesson at lunch, evening devo after dinner, publish daily devotionals on Fri/Sat	no - different focus/purpose, devotion for personal reflection, sermon prep for proclamation	"Pray Now" app, Portals of Prayer, You Version Plans	by supporting and enriching the dept of reach into personal experiences	separate from sermon prep
94	try to read 3-4 devotional books in morning with wife	look for "memorable" phrases, illustrations that could be used in sermons		retired	find a convenient time and stick to it

95	daily prayer, Scripture reading, some devotional material from Luther, Wather & others, pericope group, daily or several times a week translate Greek & Hebrew	yes - text must 1st work on me as preacher	Luther, Walther, Treasury of Daily Prayer	Bringing in added connections that would otherwise be lacking	a pericope group that translates one lesson each week, daily Scripture reading
96	morning prayer/matins each morning, both privately and with my wife, using LSB & Treasury of Daily Prayer. Praying the Psalms & hearing the daily readings as scheduled in TDP	no - sermon preparation is "work" that strives to feed the flock, not necessarily me in the process (though I do benefit from the study)	LSB, Treasury of Daily Prayer, Walther, Gerhard, Starck, Giertz, written prayers in these volumes, ex corde prayers, listening to Bible readings via esvbible.org	It keeps me "fed" and growing in God's Word. I can use Biblical narratives/passages from devotional life readily as sermon illustrations. Devotional life helps me see many connections within God's Word to proclaim the whole counsel of God	make it a daily priority! Even put it on the calendar and don't let anything "bump" it from the schedule. Consider it your "Spiritual Exercise" program
97	daily reading of Scripture & prayer, often with our children & then on my own	yes - in the sense that it gives me opportunity to study the word in its original language & reference the Confessions	I enjoy resources that structure a devotion with prayer, Scripture & some literature or devotional reading - Treasury of Daily Prayer, For All the Saints, The Still Point (Sarah Arthur)	It nourishes me for the task and also gives me resources. I am always amazed how often content from my daily devotion fits with a Bible Study or lectionary reading for preaching. The Spirit works!	set a time to do it

98	hit and miss on a daily basis	yes - in depth study is devotional to me	?	it keeps me in the word - and that is good	do it?
99	a few minutes a day with my wife	it can be, but it is the not the goal	LHM Daily devotions, chapel sermons on the web or by podcasts	sometimes a story of illustration, other times inspiration and soul searching	iTunes U Chapel Sermons
100	regular reading of Scripture (2-year plan), devotional materials (CPH, Seminary, etc)	yes - God's Word applies to my life, God's Word speaks to me, before I speak to others	Bible reading guide, Publications authored by seminary professors	illustrations, insights, quotations	set aside a regular time - make it a habit
101	prayer first thing in the morning and last thing at night - usually an hour is spent on the 2nd or 3rd day of the week	yes - first I preach to myself. I find in my preparation and study I am strengthened and uplifted in my faith. I begin on Sunday evening reading the passages to start the process	varied	it helps to focus my thinking and brings richness to my preaching	start early - give yourself time. Find a place where you can be productive and be open to the Holy Spirit
102	Mon-Fri: LSB 151, read a Psalm, 3 chapter in OT book, 3 chapter in NT book, presently working through "A Day with the Church Fathers" (CPH), prayers using the format in "Prayer and Preaching" (LSB 265), Lord's Prayer, benediction from P&P	certainly - it is the study of the Word (from the Greek, lost my Hebrew) in great detail	reading through the Bible (from NASB to ESV to NIV), Treasury of Daily Prayer, now "A Day with the Church Fathers." I keep a journal where I record particularly good things from devotional books by putting a note in my Bible that the comment is related to	often times the devotion material sees things I didn't see or says it much better than I have or would have said it	make it a habit

103	some days I read Portals of Prayer with my wife, some days I read commentaries, studying for sermon, when I do visitations	yes - because that is when I dwell on the Scriptures	commentaries; synod resources	what speaks to me helps influence what will speak to the congregation	take time for it - it is too easy to fall out of practice because you become "too busy"
104	every morning - I receive an email devo	yes - all week, every day is sermon prep time / the text drives my preparation not my devo	keeping my eyes open to see what is happening in life around me that reflects the theme/text for Sunday	it depends if it matches the text for the week, the devo prepares me for the day ahead, they are not really used for sermon prep time	it is a great habit
105	Praying the Psalms monthly, devotions w/ family selecting a book of the Bible and stepping our way through it, pick up other devotions along the way	not generally - but it is God's Word w/in my own life	the Psalms!	The Psalm deal with a wide gamut of life & faith encounters	pray the Psalms monthly
106	It varies tremendously minimum - Invocation, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer - Treasury of Daily Prayer	sometimes I end up thinking about it - not purposefully though	Apostles' Creed & Lord's Prayer	I'm not sure that it does	Confess the Creed & pray the Lord's Prayer
107	morning - The Pastor's Devotional (LCMS 1990) Bob Sauer 2 volume a daily year-round devo / night time (w/wife) Today's Light, Portals of Prayer 4-5 nights a week	no - not to deny the Spirit's work through the Word, often convicts me during sermon prep...and also comforts// but I intentionally separate those in my daily planner to protect morning & evening devo	see #1 - occasionally will substitute or add (esp. Advent & Lent) - Luther's Prayers, Psalms, devos, etc.	when I get to office 2 days a week, Large Catechism reading / I do not purposefully connect sermon text with my devos, but sometimes notice how much the text permeates many aspect of work & life	Be or become early morning - ahead of day, ahead of family, ahead of office Pastor who greets Sunrise in worship

APPENDIX FOUR

Interview Consent Form

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to investigate the best devotional practices in relation to the practice of preaching as part of the completion of my Major Applied Project in the Doctor of Ministry program at Concordia Seminary. In this research you will be asked a number of questions regarding your devotional practice and its influence on your preaching.

Please be assured that any information that you provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will your name be reported along with your responses. Please understand that your participation in this research is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time during this study.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study and I freely consent to participate.

Name: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX FIVE

Interview Questions

General Items

1. Please describe your devotional practice.
2. How did you come to use these resources?
3. Why are these beneficial?

Lutheran/Non-Lutheran Resources

4. Many of my respondents use entirely Lutheran or non-Lutheran resources. Why do you find your practice beneficial?
5. Have you considered (the opposite of what they are doing)? Why or why not?

To Use Technology or Not...

6. Another interesting aspect of my research is the number of pastors who use resources that require internet technology (websites, email, podcasts, apps). How have you found those beneficial? Why have you used them? [or in contrast – Why have you not used these sources?]

Sermon Preparation vs Devotional Reading

7. Do you view your sermon preparation as devotion? Why or why not?
8. Do you have additional devotional time?
 - a. If yes,
 - i. How is that time different from sermon preparation?
 - ii. Why do you keep the two separate?
 - b. If no,
 - i. Can you describe your sermon preparation?
 - ii. How does it serve as a time of devotional reading?

Influence on Preaching

9. How do you see the influence of your devotional life on your preaching?
10. What are some challenges that you experience in devotional practice?
11. What challenges do you find in preaching?
12. Do you see any correlation between these two?

Discipline of Devotional Life

13. Many of my respondents indicated a struggle in keeping the discipline of a regular devotional practice. Do you find this to be the case for you? Why?

14. What practices are helpful to you in maintaining regular devotional time?

Advice to New Preachers

15. What advice would you share with new preachers?

APPENDIX SIX

Interview Summary Notes

Interview #1

Please describe your devotional practice.

Growing up “devotions” meant a community activity. After supper every night, Dad would lead us in a Scripture reading and ask some questions. For me, devotion has become the practice of meditating on an aspect of the faith. Ministry and life continually lead me down a devotional road that includes preaching. I don’t preach without preaching to myself. The sermon has to apply to me, if it is to apply to the Christian community. Such continual devotional practice is cumulative. One area of study for preaching or Bible study or pastoral care tends to blend together.

How did you come to this sort of practice?

I grew up as the middle child in a pastor’s home. So I have always been aware of others and sought to be comfortable in who God has made and called me to be. The body is made of many parts, and so I try to honor that in my devotional life. Also, I’ve been in the same place for my whole ministry (over 30 years). So that has allowed me to be more holistic in how I see ministry. In a good way, there is never a time when I’m not pastor. That’s just a piece of who I am. So meditation and pastoral vocation are always intertwined.

What are some resources that you’ve used in devotional practice?

Most of my devotional practice has grown out of specific concerns or situations. So I took up reading on infant Baptism and the Sacraments due to family questions. This guided my personal study. Often life guides what I study. So when marriage was a hot topic, I studied what it is and shared that with the people. For a time, I considered what it meant to be a church member and shared an article about that from David Peter with the elders and we discussed it together.

I’ve undertaken a process of finding out of print books that I believe would be beneficial to my brother pastors, and I’ve scanned them and reformatted them to share for Circuit conversation. If I see something missing or a way to help brother pastors, I focus on that. These are just examples. Devotional practice is holistic. Life situations demand the response of the pastor and that takes me into study of God’s Word and then it is shared. That includes preaching.

What does your sermon preparation look like?

For example, I preached a series for Advent that came from something at the Pastor’s Conference. The conference was about the Reformation and I got caught on a thought from Martin Luther. I’m paraphrasing, “You’ll never exhaust what God has to say in one text.” I carried that with me and I preached on the angel’s visit to Mary through Advent considering a

different aspect each week. (So the preacher has a Word to share. He is guided by the Word and influenced by personal experience (including personal devotional thought) and congregational life together and together that comes together in the sermon.)

Devotional life is what God's word means for me, and I have to be able to describe that before I can say what it means for them. I want to be clear though, this is not just willy nilly. I don't just hop from thing to thing. Devotional life is based on God's Word and on Jesus for us.

What challenges do you find in preaching?

After 30 plus years, I don't want to be the rambling guy. The one who just gets up and starts talking about something or nothing.

As a long-term pastor (he listed many blessings), I'm concerned that people are so connected with me that people don't connect with Jesus.

On the other hand, I'm worried about the greater disconnect with people. It is harder to get and hold attention, but how to do this without just being an entertainer is the challenge.

The two great pieces of preaching are textual accuracy and connecting people to the truth.

What advice would you share with new preachers?

There are basic things for anyone: Preach the Word. Make it personal to you and to them. Be above reproach. Otherwise, the advice would depend on the person.

I would encourage them to be themselves. God has chosen them to serve His people. He wants you to share JESUS, but he also wants YOU to share Jesus.

Interview #2

Please describe your devotional practice?

First thing in the morning for about 45 minutes. I spend time in Word and Prayer. In the fall of each year, I set a reading schedule for the year. I usually decide between broad or deep. I've done the whole Bible or just the New Testament in the year when I wanted a broad picture of Scripture. As the goal has been to go deeper in the Word, I will read a single book. One year it was Matthew, this year it is Hebrews. Depending on the day, I may read the same section for a number of days or even weeks to meditate on.

In terms of prayer, I keep lists on note cards. One list has items that I pray for everyday. The other lists are for different days of the week. I also like to keep post-its handy to be able to write down a prayer request whenever I tell someone, "I'll pray for you." I have also used Lutheran Prayer beads on occasion (with beads for the 10 Commandments, Creed and Lord's Prayer plus ones for the Beatitudes and Fruit of the Spirit).

How did you come to use these resources?

After about 12 years in the ministry, I knew that I needed to be more intentional. I knew that regular, personal study of the Word and prayer was lacking. The lists came together over 4-5 years as I figured out what prayers I want to remember daily or not.

Do you view your sermon preparation as devotion? Why or why not?

Yes, in a secondary way. I have thought of preaching as – you spend time in the word and see what it does to you, then share with the congregation in an appropriate fashion. So the

sermon is a testimony of what God has done in my life. But even this view of preaching grows out of sermon preparation being secondary to personal devotional time. I am first Jesus' little lamb. Second I am an under shepherd of Jesus' lambs. So private devotional life leads to sermon preparation this geared towards the people because I'm accustomed to considering what the Word & Spirit do to me.

What distinction do you see between the two things (devotional life and sermon preparation)?

Preaching is a corporate event. The Word has a claim on me and this congregation. What impact does this Word have on our life as the body of Christ? Devotional practice is private. The Word has a claim on me. What impact does this Word have for my personal walk? The answers aren't always different, but they can be.

How do you see the influence of your devotional life on your preaching?

One word – integrity. The Word is integrated in me as a disciple of Jesus. When I say, “Look what God is up to,” this is not academic, it's personal. So when I say what God is saying to us, I mean us.

What are some challenges that you experience in devotional practice?

The challenge was more 10-12 years ago. Daily devotional practice was a discipline. The change came as, over time, there was a shift from I need to do this to each time being a joyful habit to start the day.

You talked about feeling the need to make devotional practice far more regular. What led you to this?

It was an awkward feeling in the pulpit. It didn't seem right that I was becoming a profession preacher, a Word of God dispenser, rather than a person talking to people about our God and His mercy.

What advice would you share with new preachers?

Learn the balance between personal and profession reading of Scripture. The two are not divorced. The personal allows for the professional to have integrity, as coming from a man who believes and has experienced what he is saying. You need the personal to carry the Word to the congregation professionally.

Interview #3

Please describe your devotional practice.

I'm an early morning guy, especially since being an empty nester. My practice is in two parts. The first comes from a Grace Place Retreat and is both devotional and physical. It includes a series of stretches, music, and prayer. After this, my morning prayer is from Robert Sauer's *Daily Prayer*. The prayers are wonderfully written for pastors and also takes you through the Scriptures each year. In the evening, I've always had family devotions with my wife and we read Portals of Prayer and a variety of other things.

How did you come to use these resources?

Largely I came to this pattern by habit. My mother set the example of family devotions. She led them as Dad worked evenings. She made them fun. During later years, I dabbled in

various meditations and exercise routines. God used this time to instill the habit in me.

Have you used other Lutheran resources?

Bo Giertz, Luther material, Martin Scharlemann's *The Making of a Theologian* includes devotions, prayers, homilies – a wonderful little book.

Have you used any non-Lutheran sources?

Some Roman Catholic material has been quite good – Thomas a Kempis, Henry Nouwen. This material has been more occasional, than regular.

Do you view your sermon preparation as devotion? Why or why not?

No. Sermon preparation is not intentionally devotional. I tend to approach a sermon professionally, as the sermon is the center of the Divine Service and our life together as the body of Christ.

Still, 5-8 times a year maybe, something in my sermon preparation gets me off and leads me to personal study and devotion, and then I'll bring that home and share it with my wife.

What is the distinction between sermon preparation and devotional practice?

(The distinction) is practical – there is an outcome for others in the sermon. The divide is also artificial. After all, my doctrine, our doctrine, says every time we open the Scriptures, the Spirit is bound to come as a magnet and do with me as He wishes, no matter how I approach the Word.

How do you see the influence of your devotional life on your preaching?

By my academic nature, I want to say that I don't or I'm not sure. The truth is we can't see into the hearts of others, and we can't even see into our own heart. Yet my suspicion is that the devotional life and preaching are more integrated than I imagine. Devotional practice may be somewhat of a chore, a necessary habit, yet it is part of who I am. When I write a sermon, I'm not thinking about how this will help me. It seems less narcissistic – i.e. how will this help me? Yet, I know that the Word does help me. Perhaps all of this reveals sin in me, not wanting to recognize my own needs and prioritizing other things over hearing the Word myself because if I skip devotion, there are "fewer" consequences than skipping sermon writing.

What challenges do you find in preaching?

After many years, it's becoming more difficult not to preach the same sermon. So it's a challenge to keep fresh. I want to be Lutheran, and yet communicate to younger generations who are less knowledgeable of the things of faith. So it is a challenge to jump the generation gap.

Can you describe your sermon preparation?

We plan our preaching schedule about 3 months at a time. On Sunday I read from 3-5 different translations for the text to be preached on that week. On Monday morning, I spend about an hour in exegetical study and another hour in the commentaries. Either Tuesday or Wednesday, I put together a basic outline and consult 4-5 sources for illustrations. Beyond this, you know how it goes, something goes on during the week in the life of the congregation or the world or in class that works its way in. Then by Thursday afternoon I have a manuscript.

What advice would you give to a new preacher?

This would be different if I knew the man. But in general, #1 is to stay in the Word. The Word points to the mysteries of the Sacraments. The Word shapes our prayers and leads us to confession. The Word is the center that gives us Jesus. Stay in the Word in Study and Devotion. Family devotion comes first. Personal devotion comes 2nd only because you also have study. The Word is essential because while the Spirit is with us always, He guarantees His presence in His Word. #2 is know your gifts and use them. Learn your weaknesses and work on them.

Interview #4

Please describe your devotional practice.

Morning prayer takes place just after rising. By morning prayer, I mean either the service of Morning Prayer or Matins. I regularly use *Lutheran Service Book* or the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*. I use hymns, but most often speak the words. I will sing them, if I have them on a recording. I appreciate reading both the Church Fathers and the readings from the Old and New Testaments.

How did you come to use these resources?

My current pattern just grew on me. I have appreciated daily praying the Psalms and using Matins. Early on I used other devotional books, but as time went along I focused more on the Scriptures and prayer services. I found this was important because it needed to be familiar in order to be absorbed. I look at my devotional time as my foundation, as spiritual training.

Have you used other Lutheran resources?

I use intentionally Lutheran sources and the Scriptures because I want the Gospel to predominate. In addition, my prayer life is in tune with the Church year and others in the larger Church. This means there is a common language with others who are doing the same. I have promoted the use of the *Treasury of Daily Prayer* in my congregation (introduced through a study on Prayer Life) and so we have a shared devotional life and language together. Beyond this, while some non-Lutheran materials are quite good, I am always concerned with discerning whether the material is faithful or not. This puts more focus on discernment when the purpose of devotional practice is to receive.

Have you used any non-Lutheran sources?

Early on in ministry I read some Max Lucado books because I appreciated the way that he writes, but I stay with predominantly Lutheran sources now.

Do you use technology? How?

I use iTunes to play various hymns that I have collected and can listen or sing along. For 30 minutes a day, I listen through the Bible (esvbible.org), which has two benefits. First, it reinforces my need to listen, to receive the gifts of God. Second, I get a broader scope of the Scriptures by listening through the whole Bible continuously. Besides this, I use the Pray Now App (the *Treasury of Daily Prayer* in digital form), which brings all of the days resources together at once. I also produce a podcast called Sacred Meditations, which is 1-3 minutes long and includes brief prayers and devotional materials from LSB and Lutheran theologians like Luther, Walther, Gerhard.

Do you view your sermon preparation as devotion? Why or why not?

Not intentionally, although there is some overlap in hearing the Word of God.

What is the distinction between sermon preparation and devotional practice?

In sermon preparation, the pastor is being somewhat fed through the Word. But sermon preparation is work and I'm thinking of the people in the pew. It is an action of serving the neighbor in studying the Scripture as opposed to a devotional practice for my own strengthening.

How do you see the influence of your devotional life on your preaching?

The biggest influence is on me, that I am fed on the Word of God.

Beyond that many times I will have something jump out in my devotion and I will think, "Ooo that's good, I can use that." But I don't go into my devotional time looking for things.

They find me.

What challenges have you found in devotional practice?

Making it regular. I've had to make it not an option because this is for my own good. Like going to the doctor. So put it on the schedule and get up to do it.

Paying attention is also a challenge once you are in the routine. It is tough to really listen because it is easy for your mind to wander. Then I've had to come to grips with routine. Routine is good. It gives foundation for my day and life. Then I've had to get past the thought, "what if I don't get it or get something today." I've realized that I had to learn to be fed. I'm being shaped day by day through God's Word and that is better and longer lasting than finding a novelty from one day to the next.

What challenges do you find in preaching?

Being prepared is a challenge. It's hard to find time to do it and well. The tyranny of the urgent always pulls away from the important. Then as the years go by, I wonder, "what do I have to say?" That's the downside of familiarity when I become concerned about what I will say this time around the lectionary.

What advice would you give to a new preacher in terms of the devotional life?

I'd start with the Nike thing – Just do it. Put it on the calendar. Put it in your phone. Keep it like a doctor's appointment. You would only miss it for a true emergency.

Do it in the morning. I say that simply because there is less distraction before the phone rings for the first time.

Then find a special location that is just for the purpose of devotional reading and prayer. It serves as a visual reminder and prepares you for that intentional time.

Then I would say grab something like the *Treasury of Daily Prayer* because it's all in there.

Then think that this is exercise for your health, your spiritual health.

Devotional practice is important for keeping a pastor grounded and focused on his calling. You need to be fed to have something to give. It will bear fruit in preaching and teaching, though that may not be right away.

Interview #5

Please describe your devotional practice.

I need to say that my devotional life is focused more on prayer than reading. Well, they

are largely two different times for me. The morning is the time of prayer. Then in the evening I read through the Scriptures five chapters every night.

I have a favorite place that I go to pray, my home altar, and I try to remove all distractions. I do this early in the morning. I am up by 5am to begin my prayer time. I keep a memo list on my iPhone so I can add to it at any time. I begin with my list of thank you's, then I move on to intercessory prayers: members, schools, pastors, District, Synod leaders, government, world leaders, that Planned Parenthood would be removed from tax roles, ISIS and Mafia would be thwarted in their goals and converted.

How did you come to use these resources?

I went to a Professional Church Workers conference and a pastor made the comment that he hadn't prayed for 17 years. I wondered, "Could I get to that point?"

Earlier in life, prayer became important to me when I told my Father-in-law that I would pray for him. I forgot, but was reminded when I ran across Aussie shampoo. That's what he went by. So I bought the soap and decided I would pray for him when I shampooed my hair. Then when I prayed I would remember others and the list grew, and I became more disciplined in praying.

Use of Technology? How?

Mostly I develop the prayer list on my iPhone. If I say that I will pray for someone, that's how I remember. I stop what I'm doing and put it into my phone. That way I remember when it is time to pray. In addition, I use some instrumental music during my prayer time to shut out distractions.

Do you view your sermon preparation as devotion? Why or why not?

No. I try to separate the two. During my prayer time or Scripture reading time, I do keep a pad of paper and a pen handy so if I have a thought I can write it down and remove that distraction and get back to what I'm doing. Sermon preparation is work, while my devotional time is time with God.

How do you see the influence of your devotional life on your preaching?

Prayer time shapes who I am. I'm an encourager, which is by focusing on prayers of thanks each day. That pours over into my preaching – gratitude to God for all of His mercies toward us. At times, I have some illustrations that come from prayer and devotional reading also.

What challenges have you found in devotional practice?

The biggest thing is distractions that try to pull you away. It could be other thoughts or busyness. At night, it could be sleep. That's why I keep the pad of paper to write down thoughts and clear distractions. In the evening, I don't pray or read in bed. I kneel to pray so I don't fall asleep.

What challenges do you find in preaching?

The time constraints. It is easy to get too long and not stick to the point. Also, people don't know Bible stories, so I have to flesh out and explain the stories and that limits going deeper into them. Also, I'm afraid that being too academic and doctrinal can get in the way of the relationship that God wants with us. Doctrine is good, but I try to emphasize God's relationship

with us in preaching.

What advice would you give to a new preacher in terms of the devotional life?

Take time for prayer.

Stay in relationship with the Father. You are not alone.

There will be tough times but God is there to answer.

Also stay in His Word. As we pray, God answers in His Word. The two go together. In fact, don't think these stand alone. Prayer and the Word are always working together. God speaks to us, we speak to God, He speaks to us, and so on. The pattern is who we are.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Catalog of Resources Used in Personal Devotions of Missouri District Pastors

Print – Basics

Each of these items are mentioned repeatedly. Certainly the Scriptures make perfect sense. The texts are also regularly used in the devotional and worship life of the Church. Various daily reading plans were also mentioned and are readily available online.

Bible

Lutheran Study Bible

The first Bible in English developed with notes that are distinctly Lutheran, The Lutheran Study Bible provides Christians with deep and meaningful perspective as they read and study God's Word. Prepared by Lutheran contributors from over twenty church bodies, this Bible features Lutheran scholarship, insights from key Church Fathers, and rich devotional commentary to help Christians grow in faith and apply God's Word to their daily lives.

Concordia Self-Study Bible

The Concordia Self-Study Bible provides the older version of the NIV Bible (1984) translation with Zondervan's NIV Study Bible notes, modified by Lutheran Bible scholars.

Greek & Hebrew

Life Application Bible

Zondervan's website describes this resource, "The Life Application Study Bible was created for the reader who wants to answer the question, "What does God's Word mean for my life today?" This distressed bonded leather edition is full of features that will help you understand the timeless lessons of the Bible, including application notes, character studies, maps and charts, detailed book introductions, and more. The NIV Life Application Study Bible is a rich resource to help you live out your faith in practical ways."

Lutheran Service Book

CPH calls the "Lutheran Service Book: Pew Edition is a hymnal with a rich compilation of Christ-centered services, psalms, hymns, and prayers to nourish the faithful week after week for generations to come." Various pastors described using the hymnal to regularly

sing or meditate on the words of hymns and to utilize the Daily Lectionary and prayer services.

Book of Concord

The Book of Concord is the authoritative collection of the Lutheran Church's statements of faith. It contains documents which Lutheran Christians have used since the sixteenth century to explain, defend, and advance their witness to the truth of God's Word.

Print – Academic & Professional Resources

Christian Dogmatics by Francis Pieper

The English translation of Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*, this work was the standard LCMS Systematic textbook for nearly a century

Confessing the Gospel: A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology - 2 Volume Set

The first dogmatics published by the Missouri Synod in nearly a century, this book seeks to demonstrate this Lutheran approach to confessing the gospel not only with respect to its content, but also with respect to the method of its presentation. Each chapter in this two-volume set is structured around five building blocks—scriptural foundation, confessional witness, systematic formulation, historical and contemporary developments, and implications for life and ministry. (description by CPH)

Concordia Commentaries by various authors

The Concordia Commentary Series: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture is written to enable pastors and teachers of the Word to proclaim the Gospel with greater insight, clarity, and faithfulness to the divine intent of the biblical text. This landmark work will cover all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, interpreting Scripture as a harmonious unity centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Every passage bears witness to the Good News that God has reconciled the world to Himself through our Lord's life, death, and resurrection. The commentary fully affirms the divine inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture as it emphasizes "that which promotes Christ" in each pericope. (partial description of the series by CPH)

Concordia Journal

The Concordia Seminary website describes the Concordia Journal as, "one of the flagship theological journals of North American Lutheran Christianity. The publication explores urgent ideas, themes and issues related to the past, present and future of global Christianity and today's world from a confessionally Lutheran perspective. Concordia Journal is published quarterly (winter, spring, summer, fall)."

CTQ Journal

Concordia Theological Quarterly, a continuation of The Springfielder, is a theological journal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, published for its ministerium by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. (as described on ctsfw.edu)

Concordia Pulpit Resources

Known as “CPR” for short, this quarterly preaching journal for pastors has been a true lifeline since 1991. You’ll find everything from outlines and full manuscripts for sermons to textual studies and children’s messages. Each issue also boasts of book reviews, articles, illustration ideas, and seasonal sermon series for Advent and Lent. (description by CPH)

Print – Lutheran Devotional & Prayer

God Grant It by CFW Walther

This is a translation of the collection of lectionary-based devotions for the entire church taken from Walther's sermons and published by CPH in 1894. Beginning with the first week of Advent, *God Grant It* provides a daily devotion for each day in the year, placing particular significance on the church year. Through these classic sermons of Walther, the modern reader will be reminded that God's mercies are new every day, that His mercies are ours by the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each devotion is accompanied by a Scripture reference and a hymn verse. The daily devotion will take less than ten minutes to read. (description by CPH)

Treasury of Daily Prayer

Cultivate an enriching devotional life with a book that nourishes your time with God. This comprehensive Lutheran resource brings together Scripture readings, prayers, psalms, hymns, and devotional readings from the church fathers to guide daily prayer and meditation on God's Word. Organized around the Christian Church Year, *Treasury of Daily Prayer* is designed to be an all-in-one tool for daily devotions for individuals, families, and small groups. (description by CPH)

Lutheran Book of Prayer

The Lutheran Book of Prayer has assured and guided generations of Christians in their personal prayer life. The current volume (5th edition) contains personal prayers for almost every life circumstance, including:

Prayers for morning and evening, Prayers for Worship and the Life of the Church, Prayers for our World, Nation, and Community, Prayer for Neighbors, Family, and Ourselves, Prayers for the Sick, Convalescing, and the Dying (description by CPH)

The Lord Will Answer

Grow each day through this timeless collection of heartfelt requests and the Lord’s faithful answers presented in one-page, easy-to-use devotions. *The Lord Will Answer: A Daily Prayer Catechism* includes: Questions about faith, life, and eternal life, Answers drawn from God’s Holy Word, Prayers of the Bible, Prayers and meditations from great Christian teachers. The devotions are arranged by the seasons of the Christian calendar and Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, classic models of devotion. The prayers and topics are carefully indexed so that you can find just the right words for your prayers and the answers you need. (description by CPH)

The Pastor at Prayer by George Kraus

This is a devotional resource designed to assist pastors in their prayer life, strengthen them in their ministry, and provide basic readings and a framework for daily prayer and meditation on God's Word. A comprehensive reading of the Scriptures and the Confessions forms the heart of the resource. This revision presents all the prayers in contemporary style, and updates all referenced texts to those currently available. (description by CPH)

Reading the Psalms with Luther by Martin Luther

This is an English translation of *Luther's Summaries of the Psalms*, 1531 which was originally done in 1993. This latest edition includes the ESV translation of the Psalms, Luther's introductions to each of the 150 psalms and a suggested schedule for reading the Psalter. The book includes application of the psalm to the life lived under the cross and connects various psalms to the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. (description adapted from CPH)

To Live with Christ by Bo Giertz

To Live With Christ translates a collection of Giertz's classic devotions for those who want to explore their Christian faith and to connect God's Word in their daily lives. The devotional readings embrace the church-year calendar, just as Giertz did, preparing you for Sunday worship service. Each Christ-centered devotion includes a Bible reading, meditation, and a prayer. The collection points readers to the cross of Christ, offering the assurance of God's grace, love, and forgiveness, helping them draw closer to their Lord. (description by CPH)

Minister's Prayer Book by John Doberstein

The 1986 edition described the book on the dust jacket, "The aim of this book is to deepen and discipline the minister's life of private devotion. Basically the theme is the minister's calling, and a different aspect of this calling governs the order of devotion for each day of the week. A wide variety of method and material is incorporated. The prayers, lessons, psalms, collects, and intercessions are ordered according to the theme for the day, and at the same time they are coordinated with the traditions of the church year. The book includes an unusually fine anthology of prayers and meditations drawn from a wide range of sources which, together with brief texts for Sundays and church festivals, offer a rich liturgical contribution. First published in 1959, and revised to incorporate the two-year Lectionary cycle in its tables, the collection of readings remains unchanged. The value of this collection endures: now more than ever ministers from all traditions need to meditate and reflect upon the nature and work of their office, and to return to the source of their strength in Scripture and spiritual reading"

Currently out of print, but available through various online resale stores.

Brotherhood Prayer Book

Adorned with liturgical artwork and music, The Brotherhood Prayer Book (BPB) is a book dedicated to the singing of the canonical prayer offices and the entire Psalter pointed to Gregorian tones. For more information visit the website of the Lutheran Liturgical Prayer Brotherhood online at llpb.us (description from Emmanuel Press)

Luther's Works

Luther's Works: The American Edition, published by Concordia and Fortress Press between 1955 and 1986, comprises fifty-five volumes. These are a selection representing only about a third of Luther's works in the Latin and German of the standard Weimar Edition, not including the German Bible. Additional volumes are currently being published by Concordia. (description by CPH)

Daily Prayer by Robert Sauer

As it says, it is a daily prayer book, in two volumes. It uses the New International Version of the Bible and prints out the Psalms and Scripture readings for the various days throughout the Church Year. This set is getting difficult to find as it has been out of print for some time, but can still be located on some resale shops online.

A Simple Way to Pray by Martin Luther

When asked by his barber and good friend, Peter Beskendorf, for some practical guidance on how to prepare oneself for prayer, Martin Luther responded by writing this brief treatise first published in 1535. *A Simple Way to Pray* is a fresh modern translation bringing us Luther's practical instruction, using Luther's I.T.C.P. method of prayer (Instruction, Thanksgiving, Confession, Prayer). This method anchors prayer in the catechism or other biblical texts, but allows the Holy Spirit to prompt thoughts via the Word, which may be chased more freely by the mind at prayer. This short letter is found in Luther's Works (Vol. 43, Page 193-211). A free PDF can be found here: <https://wmpl.org/filed/resources/public/Literature/ASimpleWaytoPray.pdf>

Life Light from CPH

LifeLight Bible Study series offers in depth studies of books of the Bible and Biblical teachings. The studies are arranged in daily study portions.

Meditations on Divine Mercy by Johann Gerhard

Meditations on Divine Mercy is a book of 45 prayers that Johann Gerhard wrote prior to 1612. Translated from the German by Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, this book is available for English readers to enjoy and appreciate. Additional features include a chapter on the purpose and benefits of prayer, as well as an explanation of the blessing and historic aspects of daily meditation. (description by CPH)

Sacred Meditations by Johan Gerhard

Written by Johann Gerhard as a young man, the author delves deeply into the truth and paradox of Christian faith and life. Each devotion a powerful journey into the revelation of God to the human race, Johann Gerhard's meditations immerse the reader in Christ, bringing him or her through trial to glory, through anguish to peace, through doubt to certainty, through confession to absolution, through cross to resurrection. This classic work of Lutheran spirituality reminds us all that the Word of God is living and breathing, changing not only how we think or live, but even who we are. The book can be purchased or found here for free:

<http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1802/GerhardSMeditations.pdf>

A free audio version is also available here: <https://librivox.org/sacred-meditations-by->

johann-gerhard/

For All the Saints by Frederick J. Schumacher

This set of 4 pocket-sized volumes is designed to be used for daily prayer and Bible reading. Based on the two-year daily lectionary in the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the volumes cover a 2-year period. Resources include: The orders for Matins, Vespers, Responsive Prayer and Compline, opening prayers for each day plus special commemorative days appropriate to the season, the full RSV text of the three Scripture readings for each day, a fourth reading and a closing prayer for each day from one of the saints from the 2nd to the 20th century, and short biographies of all the saints whose writings and prayers appear in the daily readings. (description adapted from American Lutheran Publicity Bureau)

Starck's Prayer Book by Johann Starck

Since 1921, the Concordia Edition of Starck's Prayer Book has encouraged thousands of Christians in their personal prayer lives. This updated edition provides a comprehensive collection of prayers and meditations that speak to contemporary Christians while preserving the richness and depth of expression of the original. (description by CPH)

A Year with the Church Fathers: Meditations for Each Day of the Church Year by Scott Murray

Drawn from the themes of Scripture itself, these devotions consider the salvation plan of God fulfilled in Jesus and carried to the world through the Church. The in-depth, thought-provoking content offers rich insight into Scripture and the Christian life and encouragement in the faith. Along the way you will drink deeply of the fountain of eternal life and gain in understanding of the message of God's Word. Each day includes Scripture readings, prayers, and a quote from the church fathers with explanation. (description adapted from CPH)

Through Faith Alone: 365 Devotional Readings by Martin Luther

Freshly translated from the original German into today's English, this book contains devotionals taken from Martin Luther's writings and sermons between 1513 and 1546. Conveniently divided into daily readings, this devotional will point you to Christ and a deeper understanding of faith. (description from CPH)

What Jesus Means to Me by Herman Gockel

A brief devotional book with eleven topical chapters that consider the many blessings of Christ. The current version from CPH was updated to use the ESV, but is largely similar to the classic 1948 text.

Print – Non-Lutheran Devotional & Prayer

Diary of Private Prayer by John Baillie

Baillie was a prolific devotional writer in the Calvinist tradition. This selection of prayers is meant for personal devotion. Baillie instructs the reader, that this book includes "prayers for all the mornings and evenings of the months...These prayers are to be regarded as aids; they are not intended to form the whole of the morning's or evening's devotions or to take the place of more individual prayers for oneself and others. The

prayers are suited to private use, not to the liturgical use of public worship." Included are blank pages for personal petitions and intercessions to be written down.

Face to Face: Praying the Scriptures for Intimate Worship – Kenneth Boa

This text guides the reader over three months of time through a series of daily Scripture readings that are the basis of prayers. Usually prayers are simply suggested as applications of the chosen readings, and the reader is to apply that direction in personal prayer.

Beyond Words by Fredrick Buechner

The book jacket describes the work in this way: "In this second book of his popular lexical trilogy, Frederick Buechner profiles more than 125 of the Bible's most holy and profane people -- and one whale. In his lively and witty prose, Buechner brings to life such moments from scripture as: Adam's pangs of regret for a remembered Eden, Delilah's last glimpse of Samson as they dragged him away, and Lazarus's first impressions upon rising from the dead. To read Peculiar Treasures is to realize that many of these legendary figures are not who we thought they were. But they are -- in their human dreams, ambitions, and imperfections -- very much like us." The readings comprise a mixture of Biblical material with literary suppositions into what might have happened or been thought by various Biblical personalities.

Anglican Breviary

This resource is described at anglicanbreviary.net, "SINCE the earliest days of the Church, Christians have continually prayed the Divine Office, in which the services of Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline are said throughout the day as a means of sanctifying time to God and obeying the command to "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). THE Anglican Breviary contains the only authentic English form of these ancient prayers -- a direct translation of the Roman Breviary "put into English in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer."

My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers

My Utmost for His Highest is a daily devotional by Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) that compiles his Christian preaching to students and soldiers. *My Utmost for His Highest* is broken down into 366 sections for each day of the year, meant to be read daily for inspiration. The book was published after Oswald's death in 1917, with his wife Gertrude Hobbs compiling the passages after his death from her shorthand notes. The devotionals in the book cover a range of subjects, from what a person should pray for to reflections on the follower's daily activities.

Book of Common Prayer

The Book of Common Prayer is the foundational prayer book of the Church of England. It was one of the instruments of the Protestant Reformation in England, and was also adapted and revised for use in other churches in the Anglican Communion. It replaced the various Latin rites that had been used in different parts of the country with a single compact volume in English. First produced in 1549, it was drastically revised in 1552 and more subtly changed in 1559 and 1662. Print versions are readily available, but an online

version is also available here: bookofcommonprayer.net

Lead Like Jesus by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges

From the book jacket, “Ken Blanchard along guides readers through the process of discovering how to lead like Jesus. It really could be described as the process of aligning two internal domains—the heart and the head; and two external domains—the hands and the habits.”

A Year with C.S. Lewis

The daily meditations have been culled from Lewis’ celebrated signature classics: *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles*, and *A Grief Observed*, as well as from the distinguished works *The Weight of Glory* and *The Abolition of Man*. (from the book jacket)

A Minute of Margin by Richard Swenson

(from the back cover) In 180 daily readings, Dr. Richard Swenson addresses the need to close the gap between rest and exhaustion in our overloaded lives. Dr. Swenson’s unique suggestions will help you slow down, simplify, and change your perspective on what really is, and what isn’t, urgent in life. *A Minute of Margin* offers help and encouragement—“prescriptions”—for restoring harmony in our everyday lives. By re-establishing leeway between your schedules and your limits, you’ll be free to live more “peace-full” lives.

At the Still Point compiled by Sarah Arthur

A collection of weekly devotions. The week includes a daily opening and closing prayer, as well as a psalm. There are multiple Scriptures to be read at some point during the week. A group of poems and prose writings from many authors make up the bulk of the book and are to be considered alongside the Scriptures and the prayers. This is the book for Ordinary Time. Two other books have been compiled for the rest of the Church Year.

Various Authors

A number of authors were listed by respondents with no specific reading mentioned. Some of these authors write material that is devotional in nature, while others tend towards doctrinal works. These names are shared as a group, due to the lack of a specific work cited.

Suggested non-Lutheran authors include:

Max Lucado, Dennis Rainey, James Dobson, Rick Warren, Phillip Yancey
Tim Keller, Matt Chandler, John Piper, Ravi Zacharias, Todd Freil, Hank Hannegraff

Periodicals

Bread for the Day from Augsburg Fortress

Bread for the Day is a daily-use devotional resource which includes: A brief scripture reading (NRSV texts) for each day of the year. A new text is printed each year in conjunction with the lectionary from Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELCA hymnal). A prayer and hymn are assigned for each day. Various seasonal material is included such as, introductions to the seasons, blessings for various occasions, meal prayers for holidays,

and notes on festivals and commemorations. An order for daily prayer is also included.

Portals of Prayer

This LCMS produced devotion is intended for use by all. Each daily devotion includes a Bible reading, meditation and prayer to apply to your daily life. The devotional booklets are produced quarterly and are available in print and digital formats.

Our Daily Bread

This non-denominationally produced resource is in a similar format to *Portals of Prayer* with a short daily reading and a devotional reflection. This resource is available in print, email or mobile formats. *Our Daily Bread* is produced by donations and so is available at no cost or obligation to all.

Hope Full Living

Creative Communications for the Parish has created this quarterly devotional that is specifically geared towards Senior Citizens. A single Bible verse is followed by a short devotional reading and prayer. The end of each day includes some action to apply the devotion and longer Scripture passages to read. The resources can be received by mail or past issues are available online.

Lutheran Witness

The flagship magazine of the LCMS is more geared towards information than devotion, but does include a Bible Study each month in addition to various articles. It is available in both print and digital forms.

Today's Light

Daily readings and devotionals in a quarterly magazine intended to help readers dig deep into God's Word. An overview of the day's Scripture reading is offered. In addition, there are "Sharpen the Focus" sections helping you clearly understand the passage and see its meaning for your life, and "Zoom In" sections highlighting interesting parts of the text you may not notice at first glance, and give practical suggestions for living according to God's Word daily. Six readings each week: daily Monday through Friday and one for the weekend. *Today's Light* is available as a magazine subscription. Also, an edition of the Bible is sold by CPH that includes a simplified version of the resources with the Biblical text.

Christ in Our Home

Christ in Our Home is a quarterly devotional resource that encourages readers to live out their faith daily. Each reflective reading is accompanied by a daily scripture reference and prayer for the day. (description from Augsburg Fortress)

Digital

Lectionary at Lunch

A series of audio files covering the readings for the Sundays with discussion and explanation of the verses. Past files can be found at <https://scholar.csl.edu/lal/>
Recent files can be found at <https://concordiatheology.org/lalp/>

Pastor Kevin Martin – Our Savior Raleigh website

A number of pastors mentioned listening to sermons of various other pastors. This was an individual website that was mentioned and includes audio and text of sermons.

<https://www.oslcraleigh.org/category/sermon/>

God's Word on Audio – App

Youversion App

ESV Bible App

Bible Gateway App

These various Bible apps provide various translations of the Bible and, in most cases, daily Bible verses are sent to a phone via notifications.

Seminary Chapel services

Many pastors mentioned listening to regular sermons through the LCMS seminaries.

Concordia Seminary St Louis - <https://scholar.csl.edu/chapelsermons/> or through itunesu

Concordia Theological Seminary Ft Wayne - <http://www.ctsfw.edu/daily-chapel/> or through issuesetc.org

LHM Daily Devotions

Daily Devotions are provided by Lutheran Hour Ministries on their website, via email, on a podcast or through a Devotions App on a smartphone.

Higher Things Devotions

(from higherthings.org) “Higher Things is pleased to provide free daily devotions, called “Reflections,” for youth and their families. These Reflections are centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and are based upon each day’s texts from the weekly readings in the one year lectionary and from Luther’s Small Catechism. Higher Things Reflections are free, like the Gospel! They may be reproduced for congregational, personal and other non-commercial use.” Reflections are available by email or on the website. There is also an option to print devotions in two month increments.

KFUO-Thy Strong Word

Hear an in-depth study of the books of the Bible with host Pastor William Weedon and guest pastors from across the country. In addition to the radio broadcast, studies are available by podcast or at <https://kfuo.org/category/thy-strong-word/>

Issues Etc (looking forward to Sunday)

Various pastors (usually Dr. Carl Fickenscher or Dr. David Petersen) discuss the pericope readings for the coming Sunday with host Pastor Todd Wilken. In addition to this segment being broadcast on KFUE radio, it is available on the issuesetc.org website and via podcast.

The Jagged Word

A blog written by a group of LCMS pastors and laypeople. <https://thejaggedword.com>
This is one of a variety of blogs and podcasts related to 1517 Legacy.

1517 Legacy

1517 Legacy seeks to promote the truth of the Gospel through various means: conferences, speakers, podcasts, radio programming, and blogs. As an educational tool, the blogs and podcasts seems most beneficial. <https://www.1517legacy.com>

Christ Hold Fast

Similar in format to 1517 (and with some overlap in contributors) with writers from a variety of churches with Reformation backgrounds. The site refers to the group as a “Law and Gospel collective.” <http://www.christholdfast.org/>

Meditations (WELS)

The Wisconsin Synod produces this daily devotion that is based on the Church Year. With Scripture, meditation and devotion, the daily product is available in print, via email, online or through an app. <https://wels.net/serving-you/devotions/daily-devotions/>

Pray Now App

PrayNow is designed to meet the needs of the Christian who wishes to follow a disciplined order of daily prayer centered in the Scriptures and to use the rich resources of the church’s ancient daily orders of prayers with writings from the Church Fathers. This app contains the content of the Treasury of Daily Prayer in digital form. It is available on iTunes and Android.

Mutual Consolation

A number of pastors described regular conversation as an integral part of their devotional practice. This took a number of different forms. The common practice was family devotion, but other pastors spoke of some kind of conversation regarding confession, devotion or simply following the same reading program. While each of these has a different emphasis, the common thread was the importance of accountability in maintaining regular devotional practice.

Each day with his wife and/or family
Speak with a Brother Pastor – discussion
Confessor
Reading plan with Elders or others

Memory

A few different patterns for memory work were shared. The repeated emphasis was the importance of “drinking deeply of the Word” and “having the Word become shape” the pastor. Specific practices used included:

- Recite 2 Timothy & Titus every 6 days
- A verse each week

- The sermon text each week

Original Languages

More Light for the Path by David Baker & Elaine Heath

The book jacket states, “Hone biblical language skills while studying God's Word in a daily devotional format. Include meditations, grammatical notes, and translation aids.” This unique text bridges a gap between academic and devotional resources.

Tools

Reminders

A number of Pastors commented on the benefit of having reminders on their phone to interrupt them from other tasks to stop and do their devotions.

Journals

Journaling was described in a number of ways.

Prayer Journal on a smartphone was offered as a way to keep track of prayer requests. Other pastors mentioned keeping a journal of devotional thoughts with the idea that these could be revisited to consider for sermons or teaching. A final thought was simply to track what is read each day in order to provide accountability.

Change of Venue

A number of pastors spoke of going to unique place to focus on the Word. Some pastors would go to the Sanctuary. Others encouraged taking regular time away from the office for prayer. Some said this time could be spent outside or at the seminary.

APPENDIX EIGHT

Some Key Findings - Presentation

- 1. Personal Devotional practice among pastors has incredible variety.**
 - a. Substance – see the collected uses
 - b. Family or Personal or Both

- 2. Tension Between Vocational Study vs. Personal Edification**
 - a. Sermon preparation as devotional practice
 - b. Others – the two should never mix (purpose is too different)
 - c. Many in the middle

- 3. Digital World Reaches into the Pastor’s Study**

- 4. Influences on Preaching**
 - a. Indirect influence (see #2)
 - i. Matter of Integrity – “He sounds like he knows Jesus.”
 - ii. Formative – it shapes who I am, this comes out in my preaching
 - iii. Deeper, broader connections to the whole of Scripture
 - iv. Keeps me from being shallow when I approach the text
 - v. Illustrations & Application
 - b. Preaching influences devotional life (sermon prep as devotional practice)
 - i. What God’s Word does to me, I see how it can benefit the congregation
 - ii. Sing hymns on the texts – often become language for sermon
 - iii. Memorizing the text/contour of the text

- 5. Importance of Discipline**
 - a. Many commented on the struggle
 - b. Many also commented on the personal loss and how preaching suffers when devotional life suffers
 - c. “Recognize this as a spiritual struggle! When you are starved, your people will too.”

- 6. Advice for New Preachers – i.e. This is What is Most Important**
 - a. Just do it.
 - b. Read the Word.
 - c. Find something that works.

- d. Seek the Encouragement/Accountability of others.
(spouse, family, brother pastor, listen to others preach)
- e. Stick to it – for you and your people.

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