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Tyndale University

A Collaborative Model to Increase Confidence for Preaching in Young Adults at
Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church, Saskatchewan

A Research Portfolio
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
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by

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ABSTRACT

This portfolio aimed to develop a collaborative model with six young adults of the Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church, Saskatchewan, to increase their confidence for preaching. A three-phase process was required to train the small group. The first phase involved allowing a few young adults to discuss the implication of an assigned Bible passage through the inductive Bible study method. The second phase involved training them to preach; the third phase allowed them to preach. For this portfolio, only the first phase was examined. The participants' involvement included choosing four Bible passages to develop into four sermons.

This portfolio has V chapters. Chapter I is the introduction, which gives a general overview of the portfolio while chapter II focuses on the researcher's personal journey and ministry context. Chapter III is about the author's philosophy of leadership, which governed and guided his ministry practice; chapter IV examines the field research; and chapter V is the conclusion and implication.

The data collection methods used for this research were reflective journaling, participant observation and a survey. While there were things that could have been done differently in the research for a more effective outcome, the project's conclusion revealed that the young adults' confidence was increased through their contributions in the group collaboration.

DEDICATION

To my Maker and King, the Lord Jesus, for the abundance of grace he bestows upon me daily. To my beautiful, supportive wife, Alexandra, my encourager. To my two gorgeous daughters, Vara and Caris, all things are possible with God.

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Truly, I am grateful to the Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church elders for permission to conduct this research. Also, I want to thank the six participants involved in this project who sacrificed their time to be at our small group meetings. Their contributions enriched my own journey, bringing awareness and insight to potential outreach opportunities for the Rosthern SDA Church.

To my leadership and preaching cohort, thank you, especially Pastor Dean Lashington and Wilma Nevers, for your support in enabling me to finish this degree promptly.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OR ACRONYMS	xiii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: PERSONAL AND MINISTRY CONTEXT	3
Lacking Confidence	3
Who Am I?	5
The Crucial Shift	6
Stepping into the Unknown	8
Answering the Call to Ministry	11
The Great Testing of Faith	12
The Need to be Others-Centred	13
Blessings of Graduate School	14
Ministry Context	18
Final Thoughts	21
CHAPTER III: PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP	22
Introduction	22
Part I: The Genesis of Shared Leadership	24
Empowerment: Receiving the Go Ahead	26
Communication: Make It Plain	28
Responsibility: Doing God's Will	28
Vulnerability: Naked and Not Ashamed	30
Risk: Free Will of Choice	31
Redemption: Taking Responsibility	32
What Restoration Looks Like	34
Being Versus Doing	37
Shared Leadership Theory	41
Biblical Reflection Versus Shared Leadership Theory	46
Shared Leadership Illustration	50
Conclusion	55

Part II: Leading Through Preaching Collaboratively	56
Introduction	56
Brokenness	57
Healing	61
Mission	64
The Never-Ending Leading Through Preaching	65
Asking the Right Questions	67
Conclusion	69
CHAPTER IV: PROJECT	70
Introduction	70
The Three-Phase Plan	71
Research Question and Opportunity	71
Response or Innovation	72
Research Ethics: Consent, Access, Risk and Supervision	72
Models and Resources	73
Project, Methodology and Methods	75
Field	75
Scope	76
Methodology	76
Data Collection Instruments	78
Phase and Timetable	79
Data Analysis	79
Findings	84
Personal Illumination	85
Collaborative Illumination	85
Confirmation of Hearing	85
Spiritual Formation	86
Meeting 1: The Good Samaritan Parable	87
Meeting 2: The Wise and Foolish Virgins Parable	88
Meeting 3: The Vineyard Workers	88
Meeting 4: Wheat and Tares	89
Responses to Survey Questionnaire	90
Participant Observation	97

Interpretation	99
Outcomes	101
Personal Illumination	102
Collaborative Illumination	102
Spiritual Formation	103
Confirmation of Hearing	103
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	105
Future Plans	107
APPENDICES	111
Appendix A: Information Letter	112
Appendix B: Consent Form	113
Appendix C: Pre-Survey Questionnaire	114
Appendix D: Post-Survey Questionnaire	115
Appendix E: Pre-Sermon Reflective Journaling Questions	116
Appendix F: Post-Sermon Reflective Journaling Questions	117
Appendix G: Participant Observation	118
Appendix H: Phase and Timetable	119
REFERENCE LIST	123

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participant attendance record.....	80
Table 2. Codes and categories	82
Table 3. Pre- and post-responses to question ten (attentive to inattentive)	96
Table 4. Pre- and post-responses to question ten (active to passive).....	96

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Three project phases	71
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OR ACRONYMS

DMin	Doctor of Ministry
RSDAC	Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
YA	Young Adults

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This portfolio aimed to develop a collaborative model with a few young adults (YA) of the Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church (RSDAC), Saskatchewan, to increase their confidence for preaching. The RSDAC had only two adults on the regular weekly preaching schedule, which made preaching challenging whenever both individuals were unavailable. At the same time, the second largest group in the church was the YA. However, only some YA had shown interest in preaching, but they expressed a lack of confidence since they were never taught how to preach.

The six research participants were invited to an information session meeting over Zoom, for conversation regarding the project, expectations and concerns they may have had. At the end of the first meeting, the participants were asked to take a survey questionnaire to measure their confidence level for preaching. At the end of the final meeting of the project, the same survey questionnaire was administered to see if there were perceived differences in their confidence for preaching. In addition, the participants conducted reflective journaling two times for each sermon; at the beginning as a group (brainstorming) and then a post-sermon meeting (debriefing) a day after.

The data from the survey questionnaires, reflective journaling and participant observation provided categories that showed ways in which the participants' confidence had increased for preaching.

There are five chapters in this research portfolio. Chapter II is about my personal and ministry context. This chapter covers my upbringing and how that impacted my confidence as an individual. It also covers how the Lord turned my perceived weakness into strength, and a description of my current ministry context. In Chapter III, I share my philosophy of leadership, which gives the framework from which I function as a leader and why I lead the way I do. Chapter IV is the Field Ministry Project, which shows the outcome and the YA experience in the small group model and the impact it had on their confidence collaboratively. Finally, Chapter V includes the conclusion and implications of this research: what I have learned, what went well and what could have been done better. Finally, all Bible quotations used in this portfolio are taken from the English Standard Version.

CHAPTER II:
PERSONAL AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

This project came from my own personal formation in how God was developing me and my current ministry context in the RSDAC. I came to appreciate and see great value in working with others, knowing that they had something unique to offer. God had also been teaching me to realize that in working in a group, I also had something unique to offer; therefore, the collaboration provided growth not only to others but to myself as well.

Lacking Confidence

Finding myself was hard. For me it was a daunting task to say the least; especially, when there was no awareness that I was missing in the first place. My name is Carvil Richards. I am an Afro-Caribbean who was born and nurtured in the fertile soils of Jamaica. Never in my wildest dreams would I have considered myself a leader in any capacity while I was growing up. After all, leaders have influence and authority. Not only that, being the youngest of six boys meant that my views, opinions, and comments were seldom up for consideration on any matter of discussion. Also, leaders have confidence and influence, and for this to be contagious, such a leader must be comfortable in his/her skin. I always found myself uneasy and wanting to fit in all five of my older brothers' shoes—literally and metaphorically, thinking this would be the only way to walk with confidence.

Because I was the youngest, people would compare me to my brothers. Such contrast allowed me to notice even more that they all had something unique about them. This was one of the great ironies of having a support system in my five older brothers, the small group in which I grew up. On the one hand, it could have helped to empower me by allowing them to see talents and gifts in me that I did not know were there, thus strengthening my confidence and esteem. On the other hand, I could have responded in an unhealthy way by being intimidated. Unfortunately, I leaned into the latter. My brothers from the next youngest are Andre the intellectual, Robert the charmer, Milton the charismatic, Evert the creative and Godfrey the compassionate; then our eldest sister Delane, the caregiver. My other elder sister Grace was not around much in my formative years; therefore, I do not know much about her. My experience taught me that I was so busy trying to copy and mimic others that I ended up not discovering who I was and what I had to offer. In reflection, the truth is that my siblings did not cause my lack of self-confidence; my inner fears and insecurities did. There was deep inner work that needed to be done that I alone could not do in a healthy way. In the book, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, author Palmer mentioned, “Indeed, doing inner work together is a vital counterpoint to doing it alone. Left to our own devices, we may delude ourselves in ways that others can help us correct” (Palmer 1999, Location 840). On my own, I did not see anything of value in me because I was looking at what my brothers had instead of seeking their help in discovering what I had; what was unique and different about me.

Who Am I?

While attending high school, the question of “Who am I?” did not let me go. “The deepest vocational question is not ‘What ought I to do with my life?’ It is the more elemental and demanding ‘Who am I? What is my nature?’” (Palmer 1999, location 169). I looked for the answer in different places; namely, smoking and alcohol. There was also a significant shift academically from being a highly academic student in primary school to dropping to an average student, which my parents could not understand. I managed to finish high school but not on good academic terms. In the school system in Jamaica, what matters is how many subjects you graduate with through the Caribbean Examination Council, which is a secondary school exit evaluation exam where the top grades are A or B. The standard amount an average student would take would be five subjects. As for me, I graduated with only two subjects, and received B and C grades.

After finishing high school, I could not move on to college since I did so poorly. Instead, I did two years of vocational training and graduated with a diploma in Industrial Electrical Maintenance. The great unanswered question of who I was led to my courting deeper questions of life. I could not picture myself working on construction sites as an average electrician. Except for one brother, the rest of my siblings were in the field of construction. Day and night, I wondered about my purpose and direction. To cope with the uneasiness, I would plunge into drinking alcohol. But I knew there was more. By believing there was more, something happened within me. I started to be more contemplative even while drinking, and I liked what I reasoned—that there was more. I developed a

habit that I never knew was possible; every Sunday, I would purchase the Sunday paper and read the entire thing. The main reason was to find job postings both locally and overseas. This routine lasted for more than a year. It dawned on me that the big answers to some of life's toughest questions could take me on a journey that would require me to step out of my comfort zone. I regret trying to figure myself out by myself, without realizing that there were others (my siblings) who could have helped me with my struggles and inner turmoil. It was because of my experience that I was moved to create a collaborative model so the worth and abilities of students (in relation to preaching) could be recognized and affirmed by others.

The Crucial Shift

In 2009 a significant shift happened in my life when I accepted what I later found out was a disguised opportunity. I was not one who had practiced praying to God earnestly. But for this, I did. The main reason was that I was angry, upset, humiliated, and confused. I knew there was more, and I believed it would come, and all I needed to do was prepare myself. Surely, I did not think it would be to babysit my grandnephew in the Bahamas. My eldest sister, who was living in the Bahamas at this time, said to me that her daughter needed someone to look after her baby boy and thought I would be a good fit. I was insulted! Being twenty years old at this time, I was getting better about seeking the insight and contribution of my brothers. They all shared their perspective on the option before me, either staying in Jamaica or going to the Bahamas. This was the first real big decision that had ever come before me to make. Two things that made this

decision even more difficult were: first, I was not looking to go and live in the Bahamas, and second, I never, ever thought about babysitting. So, with a confused mind, I listened to my siblings share their perspectives. I will never forget what Evert said to me, which empowered me to make the decision. He said this may not be what you had in mind, but sometimes opportunities arrive in disguise. I valued his perspective and insight although I could not see what they saw. I learned a valuable lesson about a caring support system; it motivated me to receive their perspective. I humbled myself and moved to the Bahamas in my early twenties.

While in the Bahamas, I babysat my grandnephew for more than a year. At first, I thought my time was wasted, but in the process of shifting my attention from myself and what I wanted to another person, I began to understand that in the presence of others, if I was open to hear and see what God was saying, I would receive transformation. My grandnephew showed me how impatient I was, and how I was bent on wanting things to always be done my way. These were traits the Lord wanted me to surrender to him for healing. Having a collaborative safe space where I could be empowered by others in building my confidence, and vice versa, was a great blessing that I hoped more individuals could take advantage of. It was for this reason that I designed the collaborative model to increase confidence for preaching in young adults at Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Stepping into the Unknown

Life in the Bahamas was stepping into the unknown. Upon arrival, I met the bright eyes of my seven-month-old chubby little grandnephew, whom I had agreed to babysit. I took care of that baby until he was ready for preschool. During this time, there was daily wrestling with myself, in tears, as I wondered if I had made a mistake. In the back of my mind, I had an idea of how life would have been in the Bahamas: clubbing, having fun, and going to parties. But none of the plans I had for myself came to pass. Little did I know that God was in all of this, and this was his way of getting my attention. In reflection it was as though God was preparing me for something that he had lined up that I could not have predicted.

In the first week, I attended church, a place I had not set foot in for years. I had stopped attending church ever since I was about thirteen years old. My sister went to church on Sabbath (Saturday), which was very shocking for me since before leaving Jamaica for the Bahamas the previous Saturday, I was at the club all night. It was quite a transition. I never imagined that the next Saturday I would have been in church. This first day at church, my sister introduced me to the retired minister, Pastor John Carey, who officiated her wedding. She spoke well of him, and so right away, I knew he would be someone I needed to respect. In the second week of church, this same retired pastor came to me before church began and said he would like to talk with me after church to which I agreed. I could not concentrate in church the whole time. After church, God blew my mind.

Pastor Carey informed me that the Lord had impressed on his heart to pray for me and ask if I would like to do Bible study with him. I was shocked! Of all the things I thought that he would want to talk to me about, this had never entered my mind. But what I said to him was even more shocking—I said yes. For six months, every Saturday evening, Pastor John Carey would come and study the Bible with me and tell me about Jesus and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I was not excited about his visits. I had never planned to come to the Bahamas and be a Christian! In contrast, I planned to have fun and go to clubs. Church was not a part of my plans. But at the end of six months of needed Bible studies, I made the most crucial decision of my life; I accepted Jesus as my personal Lord and Saviour. I immediately had a desire to work for the Lord but lacked the confidence.

I wondered if it would have been easier if I had been attending church in Jamaica, but now I was officially moving away from the kingdom of darkness into God's marvelous light: "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). Thank goodness, there were a few of my sister's friends at church that encouraged me in how to lead out in the roles that I would be assigned. They would normally give me helpful feedback on my youth Bible studies and recreational activities. One time, I was even asked to conduct a youth week of prayer and I had never heard of such a thing before. But I will never forget how one of my sister's friends, who was our youth leader at the time, walked me through two of the sermons that I wrote. Interestingly, she was a teacher, so she was both helping me with grammar

as well as theology. They saw the potential in me but realized that I was hesitant about letting God use me, because I was not confident in myself in these areas. These ladies mentored me in leadership activities at the church in the youth department, which included conducting Bible studies and preaching when it was youth day, where the entire service was conducted by young people. The encouragement I received helped boost my confidence both in myself and in God. I gained knowledge of who I was and the potential that was in me, through a small group community at my home church, Philadelphia SDA (Seventh-day Adventist) church in Nassau, Bahamas. In fact, the church eventually voted me to become the assistant youth leader.

Out of this experience in the Bahamas I saw that there were three areas in which my confidence grew due to the influence of the ladies in my home church. First, through the collaborative investment of their time and advice, they helped me understand myself better, which increased my confidence significantly. Secondly, the ladies gave me feedback both on what I was doing well, and what I could do better as we planned youth events together. Finally, their investment in me boosted my confidence level so much that I became an itinerant preacher in the Bahamas. Each Sabbath I preached in different churches. These three phases influenced my decision to create a collaborative model to help others in gaining confidence for preaching. Later in this portfolio, I will discuss in more detail the first phase of this model, which was done at the RSDAC.

Answering the Call to Ministry

After a few months of involvement in church youth ministry, I had the opportunity to attend a youth retreat. I went there wrestling with God because Pastor Carey and others were saying to me that they believed God had called me to ministry. I could not see what they were seeing, but they kept affirming this belief despite my feelings. On the first evening of the youth retreat, the speaker preached powerfully, but I do not remember either the sermon or the scripture reading. Nevertheless, I was transformed by it. In his ice-breaking moment, he stood before the crowd and informed us that Jesus invites people to come as they are but does not leave them where they are. I received this to mean God was calling me into a deeper commitment and relationship with him. His statement was my liberation. I left that place changed like Jacob saying, “Surely the Lord was in this place” (Gen. 28:16). After leaving the camp at the end of the weekend, I went to the bathroom, shut the door, and began to chop off my dreadlocks. I chopped off my dreadlocks as a sign that I had turned away from my old life and embraced fully what God had in store. Then like Job, I shaved my head and surrendered to the Lord’s will.

In the SDA faith, it was strongly encouraged that the first degree in preparation for ministry is done in one of the church universities. Since the closest one to the Bahamas was in Jamaica, I left the Bahamas in 2011 and attended Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica to train to become a pastor. In my first semester as an undergraduate, the Lord led me to connect with four students in my classes with whom I became great friends. These friends would eventually

become my study partners (especially for the challenging classes such as biblical Hebrew and Greek). This sort of collaborative support system allowed me to finish my program in the designated four years. Once again, God used these friends to pour into me and I into them, which increased our confidence that we indeed could pass our biblical Hebrew and Greek classes. I returned to the Bahamas a few days after I graduated with a bachelor's degree in religion and theology from Northern Caribbean University.

The Great Testing of Faith

After graduation, there was no position open for me as an intern pastor in the Bahamas, so I decided to apply for graduate school, and was accepted. What gave me the audacity to enter graduate school was God's provision and blessings in my life while in the Bahamas and during undergraduate studies. It was a difficult position to be in with few options. This also was a season in my life where I was greatly distressed.

Since I did not get employed in the Bahamas, I decided to return to Jamaica, but not to my hometown for fear of embarrassment. On my last day in the church in which I was baptized, a few of the members (who knew I was returning to Jamaica) gave me a few hundred dollars to buy food and accommodation. Not only this but in the final week before I left the Bahamas to return to my homeland of Jamaica, I got an email that I was accepted into graduate school at Andrews University in Michigan. I was sad that I had to leave the Bahamas, yet, on the other hand, glad that I was accepted into graduate school. I left the Bahamas with \$900 Canadian dollars and returned to Jamaica in

November 2015, not knowing how things were going to work out in terms of preparing for graduate school and paying the registration and tuition fees.

For five months I lived with the stress of uncertainty which brought me great sorrow in Jamaica. There were many nights I drenched my pillow with tears. It was a season of waiting and silence. God saw that my heart was not fully surrendered to him and the only way to get me to that place of submission was to put me in a place of solitude. Ruth Barton was right when she said, “Solitude and silence in particular enable us to experience a place of authenticity within and to invite God to meet us there” (2008, 28). Silence and solitude taught me that God wanted me to depend on him, not seasonally but always wholeheartedly.

The Need to be Others-Centred

Little by little, I began to see God’s hands move and start to open doors and provide. Each time God came through and increasingly convinced me that he had not forsaken me. By February of 2016, I had developed the spiritual discipline of fasting once weekly, not for things, but to be with God and learn to trust him and hear his voice. I thought I had truly surrendered, but another great test came for me. I knew of another student who had graduated a year before me and was in preparation for graduate school in the United States of America as well and was facing similar struggles. Then one morning, when I was praying and studying God’s Word, I was impressed by God to enter a day of prayer and fasting for the other student that was having similar struggles. I argued with God but soon realized it was a matter of trust. While there in silence, it was as though God wanted me to see that he had already taken care of my needs and it was only

a matter of time before it all was manifest. I did what I was told by my God and the next day I contacted the student and let him know that I felt impressed to intercede on his behalf in fasting and praying. He was also in tears. He was journeying alone in frustration as he expressed that he, too, was living near the university and like me, did not want to go back to his hometown just as a way of avoiding the questions and queries of people. In dedicating a day to pray and fast on behalf of the other individual, I learned that God wanted me to think of others and not only myself. I discovered that individuals struggle by themselves but could regain confidence in God if others come along and give support even when they too are going through their own struggles, “who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:4).

Blessings of Graduate School

Then it happened. The Lord worked it out and going away to graduate school had now become a reality. All the missing pieces of the puzzle, such as paying \$4000 Canadian dollars for an international student deposit, the USA F1 student visa, and the first semester tuition, were all taken care of. God be praised. While on the plane for graduate school in Berrien Springs, Michigan, the feeling was unreal. God had done it.

When I arrived at Andrews University in Michigan, which is the flagship university within the Seventh-day Adventist school system, I stayed with a gentleman whom I met through a friend. The first night I spent at his apartment, he was on a video call with one of his female friends to whom he introduced me. I

never said much, but a few weeks later, I met her in person, and we became friends. She had finished her studies and wanted to move on but was not sure where her boyfriend's plans for the relationship stood. Shortly afterwards, their relationship came to an end. I ended up spending a lot of time with her, and we became good friends. I grew to like her, and I began to ask the Lord like John the Baptist, "Is this the one or should I look for another?" (Luke 7:19). As God's providence would have it, she was the one and we eventually got married.

While in graduate school however, my wife noticed that I was passionate about preachers and preaching by the number of sermons I would watch at home and listen to when we would go for a drive. She realized that in seminary there were two types of students: firstly, those who were already in ministry and were now pursuing their master's in divinity. These would be the students who would have had previous church ministry and preaching experience. When applying to the school, the students who fit this criterion applied to the program that was called by the school as first track. Then there were the other students who had a previous career and felt called to ministry, the majority of whom had never preached a sermon before. When applying, they chose the program (called the second track) that included foundation courses that the other track would not have built in. For the second track students, seminary would be that first place and platform to develop the crucial gift of preaching. From my conversation with my wife, the need was clear: second track students needed additional help and support to increase their confidence for preaching. I sensed the Lord was saying to me that this was his idea and not mine. This was confirmed by an overwhelming interest

from second track students, when I shared the plans with them. Finding second track students to talk with was easy, since in each class that we were taking, we had to introduce ourselves and the track we were in.

For this support in preaching for second track students to be successful, I could not do it on my own. I would need help. So, I shared the vision with four of my fellow students who shared a similar interest in preaching and invited them to be facilitators of the vision. We even went as far as developing an executive summary and shared it with the dean of preaching at Andrews University, Dr. Hyveth Williams, and she loved it. The name of the group was Before the Pulpit. The meaning behind the name was that what people see in the pulpit does not come about by happenstance but by intentionality. It is the result of much practice, but in the end, the effectiveness of the sermon depends on God's Spirit. Our mission was to be a preaching lab that helped seminary students to develop the requisite skills to become greater stewards in the art of proclaiming the Word of God. We met every Thursday at 6:30 pm in the seminary lab and listened to two students share a sermon for fifteen minutes each followed by affirmation and suggestions for growth. Neither I, nor my fellow facilitators, pretended to be experts; rather, we sought to support one another. The feedback was not only limited to me and my fellow facilitators, but anyone present in the room was welcome to contribute. On average, we would have a weekly attendance of seven to ten individuals, not counting the facilitators.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have seen myself actually facilitating such a space to help ministers grow in confidence when it came to preaching.

Even though I did not see myself as an expert preacher, I felt blessed to know that I was able to help others gain confidence in being a better version of themselves. The real reason I enjoyed this process so much was that I enjoyed growing in my confidence level as well, in other words, in a collaborative space geared towards increasing confidence for preaching. Solomon wrote, “Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered” (Prov. 11:25). From the Before the Pulpit group, one of the participants said to me one evening after a preaching session that he could see me branching off in the area of coaching and creating my own website. Although I had never thought about that potential, that served as an example of the power of being in a collaborative space geared towards building confidence.

Not too long after getting married, my wife and I discussed where we would want to minister after seminary. I had always wanted to live in Florida since I was told the weather was close to that of my homeland Jamaica. My wife, Alexandra, was from a much cooler place, Saskatchewan, Canada. I never knew people could live in minus forty degrees Celsius weather in the winter. Rather than going back and forth, we prayed and asked the Lord to open the door and lead us to where he wanted us to work. He led us to co-pastor three small churches in Nova Scotia, Canada for two years. After this God opened a door for us to minister in a district with two churches. One church was in Saskatoon and the other in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

Ministry Context

Though one of the coldest provinces in Canada during the winter, Saskatchewan nonetheless has experienced significant growth as never before in the past three years. According to the Saskatchewan Government Executive Council, the population grew by 22,135 to 1,205,119 people in just one year (October 1, 2021 to October 1, 2022). This growth span has been the largest annual population growth since 1921 (Lumbard 2022). A key component for choosing to live here was the affordability of housing and abundance of job opportunities in various sectors. As for the cold (sometimes dipping to minus thirty-five degrees Celsius), I have managed to navigate and stay warm with proper winter clothing and gear.

As for the largest city of the province, “Saskatoon’s population will reach 279,455 by the end of 2023” (Canadapopulation.net). Saskatoon has evidenced diversity of people and culture. The Canada Population website reported in early 2023 that Saskatoon was comprised of the following ethnic origins: South Asian (5.5%), Chinese (3.2%), Black (2.2%), Filipino (4.5%), Latin American (0.8%), Arab (1%), Southeast Asian (0.9%), West Asian (0.5%), Korean (0.2%) and Japanese (0.2%) (Canadapopulation.net). Since May 1, 2021, I have been the pastor of two churches in Saskatchewan. Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Rosthern, which is one hour from Saskatoon, and Victoria Avenue (VicAve) Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is located in the city of Saskatoon.

Though the VicAve church started with primarily white Canadians, it became a multicultural church with most members from East Africa, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and a few white Canadians. Though a small congregation, which had an attendance of seventy to eighty individuals each Sabbath (Saturday) there was a great representation of all the age groups in the church. There were about twenty children and teens, ten young adults, twenty-six adults and ten seniors. However, the largest age group present was the mid-thirties to late forties, and these were the ones typically involved in the various areas of ministry in the church.

As for the RSDAC, the membership was exclusively white Canadians, where the majority had some form of connection to farming cattle or grains. My research project, which will be discussed in chapter IV, was conducted in the Rosthern church. Before the coronavirus pandemic, attendance averaged around forty-five to fifty people weekly. There were only a few children, but about seven teenagers (youth), eleven young adults, twelve adults and fifteen seniors attended every week. For this project, I only focused on the Rosthern SDA church since there was greater interest from more people who wanted to learn about sermon preparation. The community of Rosthern has close to 1700 people. The median age was sixty to sixty-four (Townfolio, 2016). This median age group was also the largest in the Rosthern SDA church. The YA at the RSDAC were very talented and involved in the media and music departments. The Rosthern church had only two adults on the regular weekly preaching schedule, which made preaching challenging whenever both individuals were unavailable. Outside of

music and media, there was no intentionality in giving the YA an opportunity to get involved in preaching, even though they were the second largest group in the church. The idea for this project was born when a few YA came to me and showed interest in preaching, and expressed a lack of confidence, primarily since they were never taught how to preach. One of the things that excited me when I became a SDA Christian was learning that this SDA church movement was started by young people who used to travel locally and preach the love of Jesus to others. Historically, part of our core as a church organization was empowering young adults for ministry.

Even before I shared the interest of the YA to the church elders and congregation, I sensed that the church would support this initiative. This was based on the knowledge that the Rosthern SDA church was always willing to support any initiative geared towards nourishing the spirituality of their youth and young adults. One of the first things that the previous pastor told me about the Rosthern church was that the church loved their youth and young adults and would do anything for them to grow spiritually. Therefore, I believed this project would not have been treated any differently, since it already had the full support from the board of elders and the church.

When I took the Strengths Based Leadership assessment (Rath and Conchie 2009), I ranked high in Consistency, Harmony, Futuristic, Learner, Developer and Connectedness (in order of prominence). A key factor about individuals who score high in Consistency is that we like knowing what to expect next, and we do not like to be caught off guard. Where preaching is concerned for

the Rosthern church, I saw value in having more trained individuals that were available to join the preaching team. The primary involvement of the YA would not be to serve as a standby when an adult preacher was not present but for them to be part of the regular preaching schedule.

Final Thoughts

My life journey taught me to appreciate and see value in other people with whom God allowed me to cross paths; instead of being intimidated by the gifts and talents God had blessed others with, I should celebrate them. I know God has given me something unique as well, and I realized when believers worked collaboratively, they became more impactful for the glory of God. As a futuristic individual, I was driven and motivated by what I saw—not with my eyes but my mind. For this cause, I constantly thought about not doing a disservice to our youth by not training and equipping them to be future leaders in the service of the Lord.

CHAPTER III:
PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

My philosophy of Christian leadership found its genesis, as in the creation narrative, in emptiness and void (Gen. 1:2). This journey revealed how I struggled for years with low-self-esteem (emptiness) and a lack of self-confidence (void) from my upbringing. In my early twenties, while doing undergraduate studies, I struggled with not being fit as a leader due to my calm personality and brokenness. I realized, however, that my journey was not unique. I thought of Gideon who could not see himself as a leader either due to his lack of confidence in himself. Gideon felt paralyzed and inadequate about who he was and what he could do. In this portfolio, whenever I use the phrase lack of confidence, I am referring to when an individual feels inadequate about who they are and what they can do. In contrast, competence is when an individual objectively possesses acumen. As a result, he told the angel of God that his clan was the weakest and that he was the least in his family (Judges 6:15). Like Gideon, God had a powerful way of reminding me that he did not look for me because I was gifted, skilled and eloquent (lest I rely on those things instead of his grace), but he was using me because I was willing. Though weak and vulnerable, when I accepted the call to work for God, he empowered me to do great things for his kingdom.

One way I have seen how God fulfilled his plan in my life was when I functioned collaboratively with a shared mindset. Gideon did not destroy the enemies alone. This victory and restoration of his lack of confidence came through God, but also collaboratively with other soldiers. He had three hundred men with him, whom he empowered and instructed what to do, so that they could win the battle (Judges 7:7). God looked beyond my brokenness, saw my potential; he then healed my brokenness, and empowered me to do his will. The Lord empowered me on my journey as a leader to be comfortable and kind to myself since I was uniquely made (Ps. 139:14).

I discovered through my concentration in preaching at Tyndale University, that my role as a leader was to lead through preaching. In other words, when I would embody the message to be preached and allow the Holy Spirit of God to use me, the listeners would sense the direction God was calling them and the church to go. My leadership philosophy therefore was one that valued preaching as a crucial avenue of leading the flock. I came to believe preaching can be even more effective in this way when there is a collaborative or shared component to it. In this paper, I will use the word shared leadership and collaborative leadership interchangeably.

I am taking you on my leadership journey in this chapter of the portfolio which has two main parts. Part one includes the following: My biblical reflection on shared leadership, Shared Leadership Theory, my biblical reflection in comparison to the Shared Leadership Theory, and a ministry context illustration of shared leadership. Part two will delve into leading through preaching.

Part I: The Genesis of Shared Leadership

Shared leadership is a gift. Every good and perfect thing comes from above (Jas. 1:17). In the book of Genesis, God revealed his intention for humanity before sin entered the world and many faith groups have recognized this, including mine—the SDA church. Today many Christian groups find in Genesis doctrines that establish their faith, such as the nature of humanity (Gen. 1:27), the Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3), and marriage (Gen. 2:24) to name a few. Yet, another crucial teaching nestled in the creation narrative is God’s invitation to others for collaboration in what he was doing. In Genesis, God creates a world according to L. Moberly, which is the object of his approval, indeed delight, as he pronounced it “very good” (Moberly 2009, 1). Moreover, God created everything without any preexisting material. Genesis 1:1 states *בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ*. (In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth). The word used in Genesis 1:1, which functions as the subject of the verse is *אֱלֹהִים (Elohim)*. According to Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Fredricks, “The form is plural in Hebrew to denote God’s majesty” (2001, 161). What is interesting is that the verb used for “create” in Genesis 1:1 is *בָּרָא (bara)*, which is a singular verb. That means the noun *אֱלֹהִים (Elohim)* is used with a singular verb *בָּרָא*. However, when God was about to create humanity, a shift occurred with the verb according to the narrative in verse 26: *וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ*. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Here in verse 26 of Genesis 1,

for the first time the plural noun אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*) is used with a plural verb נַעֲשֶׂה (*make*). Robinson argues that this “indicates that God created within the community of the Godhead (Gen. 1:1, 2, 26, 27), which is a personification of shared leadership” (Robinson 2018). On the contrary, Jacques Doukhan writes, the aim is to emphasize that in the creation of man, God shared this special moment with one or several other beings (2014, 38). The inclusive nature of God in his mission is loud in the ministry and mission of Jesus in the New Testament. In Mark 3:13-15, Jesus prayerfully chose twelve men whom he invited to share in his leadership. Jesus’ will and desire was never to do the work by himself. When Jesus called the twelve to share in his work, it was like creation where God invited Adam and Eve to keep and dress the garden. So “the twelve” referring to Jesus’ twelve disciples received their appointment and were sent out to fully represent the one who sent them along with the authority of the Sender (Bell 2014, 152). Indeed, as a leader there are some things that must be done by the leader alone. In Jesus’ case, no one else could have died for our sins except him (John 3:14). No one else was worthy to take the scroll and open the seal (Rev. 5:4-10). So it was in the creation narrative that only God could create something out of nothing. Only God could enable the creation of humankind in his image and likeness. Jacques Doukhan, in his essay “*Leadership in the Creation Narrative,*” shares that God went further when it came to the creation of humans, in that, not only did God share his creative operation, but he also endowed people with the gift of being created in his image (Doukhan 2018). Yet, though this is the case, God still saw in his infinite wisdom the benefit of shared leadership in

empowering humans with the ability to procreate and tend the garden. If this model of shared or collaborative leadership was practiced before sin entered the world, I think this should cause believers to realize the importance of leading in this way. For individuals today who lack confidence in working solo, God would have leaders realize the beauty of creating an atmosphere for collaboration in empowering one another.

Empowerment: Receiving the Go Ahead

When God created humankind in his image and likeness, it meant that men and women were able to think, reason and act in an intelligent way that was much superior to the rest of creation. God empowered humankind to share in his plans for creation by having royal dominion over the earth as God's representative (Waltke and Fredricks 2001, 181). In other words, shared leadership is empowerment. According to Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini in their book, "Empowerment is the intentional transfer of authority to an emerging leader within specified boundaries from an established leader who maintains responsibility for the ministry" (2011, 37). It is sharing one's power and authority with another with limitations as necessary for the task. The psalmist says, "Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" (Psa. 8:5). When Psalms 8:5 is translated literally from the Hebrew, God made humankind a little lower than, not angels but himself, which means God. One could argue that humanity's ability to procreate is a powerful demonstration of God sharing with humanity the ability to create and reproduce

other humans who would also have in them the image of God. Whenever I choose to allow others to share their perspective or disapproval on a task I am doing, it is empowerment for that person. In addition, this is exactly what collaborating to build confidence in others does; it brings empowerment. Empowerment was one of the pillars in shared leadership that convinced me to create a collaborative model to give YA a shared experience (in relation to preaching) that would help them develop, recognize, and be affirmed by others. The theme of collaborative empowerment is also strong in the gospel as well.

God has not called leaders to bear the burden of leadership alone in this era. Jesus did not do this, and neither should leaders. “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). The apostle John reminds that Jesus empowered others who came to him to be sons and daughters of God. In their book *The Family*, Jack and Judith Balswick stated that when people are empowered, they have been equipped, strengthened, built up, matured, and gained skills needed to function (2007, 28). All four of the Gospels capture this beautifully in the ministry and mission of Jesus, constantly empowering his followers to function to full capacity. Mark 3:13-15 demonstrates where Jesus did not monopolize or centralize his power for himself; on the contrary, he invited his followers to share in the leadership and his ministry (Bell 2014, 300). To truly model shared leadership, leaders must empower those around them to function at their best. Again, in the creation narrative, God empowered Adam and Eve to work in Eden’s Garden and

procreate (Gen. 1:27, 2:15). For empowerment to be effective, clear communication is a must.

Communication: Make It Plain

In leadership, communication is crucial for fostering a good working relationship. As such, when in conversation it needs to be clearly stated what is expected and what is not up for discussion. In the creation narrative, God told Adam what he was permitted to eat in the garden and what he was restricted from eating (Gen. 2:16-17). God demonstrated open communication with Adam and Eve, where they had full access to God and God to them. Again, to lead well, one must communicate clearly with mutual respect and listen, especially in a shared leadership context (Bell 2014, 36). When leaders are intentional in communicating clearly (speaking to be understood and listening to understand), the potential for misunderstanding, which can lead to conflict, is decreased significantly. Communication in the creation narrative was meaningful in doing God's will.

Responsibility: Doing God's Will

When God created Adam and Eve, it was for a progressive purpose. He did this so they could join in what he was doing—create and serve. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28). What

God did was to give humanity the authoritative status. Bruce Waltke and Charles Yu state in their book, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical and Thematic Approach*: “so that we are all kings, given the responsibility to rule as God’s vice-regents over the earth. God has called humanity to be his vice-regents and high priests on earth” (Waltke and Yu 2007, 298). Adam and Eve had this responsibility in which they were equipped and endowed to perform. “To procreate and to govern as they were blessed by God who also enabled them to procreate his image and similitude” (Waltke and Fredricks 2001, 326). A careful and close-up look at Genesis 1:28 gives a strong indication for this: “וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֹאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹשׁוּהָ וּרְדוּ בְדָגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-אֲדָמָה וּבְכָל-בְּהֵמַת הָאָרֶץ:” (And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth). In this verse the word פָּרוּ (*parah*) translates, fruitful. But a more literal translation would be “produce an offspring or harvest of the same kind in a successive generation, implying an abundance” (Swanson 2001).

This is saying from a shared leadership perspective that in the same way God empowered Adam and Eve to join and share in his creation, they now were commissioned to go and do likewise. There is the implication for replication in the text. In other words, just as God enabled and empowered Adam and Eve, they too, should do the same. Another aspect that comes from the creation narrative, which stands as one of the cornerstones in shared leadership, is vulnerability.

Vulnerability: Naked and Not Ashamed

Genesis 2:25 says, “וַיִּהְיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עָרֹמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יָתִבְּשׁוּ” (And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed). The word עָרֹמִים (*arom*) is translated to mean naked or bare. The practice of shared leadership indeed has at its core this element of leaders being naked (metaphorically speaking). In short, it is openly admitting that they cannot do everything by themselves. It is an acknowledgement that it takes courage to say to others on the team that someone is better equipped and gifted in areas that the leader is not. So, there is a certain level of nakedness that the leader has to display before their team. “From our post-Fall perspective, the seeming risk they took in exposing themselves and being vulnerable (in a world where they actually knew no risk or vulnerability) was instead a natural, unclouded willingness derived from the complete trust they manifested in their sharing experience” (Doukhan 2018). Leaders need to be honest with themselves and admit that they cannot do it alone; they need the help of other gifted people to lead effectively.

Thus, the greatest threat toward vulnerability in shared leadership is the thinking and action that says; I can do it all by myself. But an important element in practicing vulnerability is that leaders must create an atmosphere where they model trust to those they lead. When it comes to building confidence in someone, this works best when the leaders share moments when they also struggled with a lack of confidence. In other words, there must be moments of sharing on both sides. The collaborative model, which I chose for this research, is a vulnerable model. Meaning, for it to be successful, I need to identify with the participants as

a student and not a teacher—a facilitator and not an expert. This is why shared leadership is not easy to practice, and this style may not be for everyone, especially for leaders who like to be private. In the creation narrative, shared leadership comes with responsibility, but it also comes with risk. This goes back to the area of empowerment. With empowerment comes risk.

Risk: Free Will of Choice

At creation, אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*) God did something amazing when it was time to create humans. I discussed these special features earlier, such as humanity being created in God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). Yet another crucial gift that God bestowed on humanity was the ability to choose to obey or disobey (free will of choice). In other words, God loves all his creation, but the highlight of creation was that of humans. God wanted humanity to choose to love him in return without it being forced. This is the risk factor of shared leadership since it functions on the premise of sharing influence and authority by empowering others to serve. “Empowerment never involves control, coercion, or force. Rather, it is a respectful, reciprocal process that takes place between people in mutually enhancing ways” (Balswick and Balswick 2007, 28). A prime example of the risk factor in shared leadership in the creation narrative is, “Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name” (Gen. 2:19). This passage affirmed that God trusted Adam to name the animals, without micromanaging Adam as he

carried out the assignment. No, God did not do that. The Bible text emphasized God trusting the discernment and intelligence of Adam in naming the animals.

As Adam and Eve functioned in this shared leadership motif, the unfortunate thing happened. They themselves took a risk that straightway disrupted and affected God's intended plan. This they did by exercising their free will. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and listened to the enemy; as a result, sin entered, and both affected and infected the world (Gen. 3:8-11). Those who receive the invitation to serve in leadership will not always make decisions that harmonize with the mission and vision of the organization. There are times when decisions will be made out of pure self-interest, which can jeopardize the organization. God had foreseen what could happen if humanity should choose to disobey him in the creation narrative. Yet, his love compelled him to still carry out the task of making humanity.

Christian leaders today are not all-knowing like God. Therefore, it can catch them by an awful surprise when an empowered team member does the unthinkable (John 13:26-27; Psa. 41:9). When the leader takes the risk of empowering others to lead, the leader should celebrate them when they win and take responsibility when they fail.

Redemption: Taking Responsibility

What is so powerful about shared leadership in the creation narrative is that when Adam and Eve sinned in disobeying God, God could have left them to fight and figure things out on their own. God could have destroyed them and

started creation anew. Instead, he took the high road; he did not wait for them to come to him. Instead, he went after them (Gen. 3:8, 9).

As Malphurs and Mancini note:

Ultimately the established leader is accountable for the decisions made by those under him or her. By retaining responsibility, the established leader stays conscious of his or her accountability and maintains a vested interest in the ministry outcomes. In essence, the established leader holds ownership or final responsibility even though the decision-making power has been transferred. This helps foster a relationship of trust and security with the emerging leader. (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 39)

God did an amazing thing for Adam and Eve. First of all, God did not gloss over what had happened, especially since Adam and Eve did not confess their sin and plead to God for mercy in the first place. Rather, they exacerbated their sin and guilt by becoming defensive, not open. They evaded rather than accepted the responsibility for their actions (Waltke and Yu 2007, 364). So, God had to confront them before he took it upon himself to bring redemption. He confronted Adam, Eve, and the serpent, who were all involved in going against his will (Gen. 3:11-19). Adam and Eve tried covering themselves with fig leaves, but it could not work. God had to clothe them (Gen. 3:21). After the fall, there had to be some precautionary measures put in place to protect paradise. In his commentary on the early chapters of Genesis, Gordon Wenham et al. reason that God, in his grace, now allowed the one who originally kept the garden to till the land instead (1987, 454). Redemption does not mean re-establishment to the same position, nor does it mean without regulation. God did not redeem humankind to keep on missing the mark. On the contrary, he requires individuals to surrender and serve him; by clinging to him as he clings to us (John 15:4-5). The creation

narrative shows that God used shared leadership because he is a God of love who sees people not for who they are but who they will become if they surrender to him and let him take us to that level in Christ Jesus as Christian leaders.

What Restoration Looks Like

The Apostle Paul further expounded upon the biblical approach to the redemption element of shared leadership in the book of Romans. Paul addressed how God gave humanity the free will to choose, and instead of lovingly obeying, they did otherwise. As a result, sin and death entered the world (Rom. 5:17). The redemption that God in Christ provided for humanity is a crucial principle that those operating with a shared leadership mindset must grasp. Jesus' obedience made many righteous (Rom. 5:19). This act of love by the Lord indeed left a positive legacy. Unlike Adam, who left humanity in a bankrupt state, Jesus Christ climbed in and brought restoration, thus leaving a positive legacy.

From his own experience, the Apostle Paul knew what it was like to be restored collaboratively into the faith, and one who was instrumental in this process was Barnabas.

When Barnabas met Paul, Paul was known as a murderer. Barnabas did a risky thing. Knowing very little about Paul's conversion, Barnabas took him and led him to the rest of the disciples, according to Acts 9:27. In this statement, "he took him and led him," lies another powerful philosophical principle of leadership that I desire to adopt and follow. This restoration from Saul to Paul began with

Barnabas, but it also involved the collaborative affirmation of the rest of the disciples (Acts 9:27).

The manner in which Barnabas and the disciples received Paul into the community of faith demonstrates an effective principle that churches and organizations can model when it comes to restoration. In Jesus' case, what he did to bring restoration in a practical way was quite interesting. He first identified with humanity so that he could be touched by the plight of being human to better minister to us (Heb. 4:15, 2:17-18). He came and dwelled with humanity (John 1:14). So too, should the Christian leader follow Jesus carefully when restoration is needed. I believe that within the SDA faith, there has been a great emphasis on practical ways in which leaders and believers in Jesus can join in God's plan of reconciliation. I believe one such person who has developed this well in the SDA Church was one of the founding pioneers of the Advent movement in the mid-nineteenth century, Ellen G. White. In her book, *The Ministry of Healing*, she writes that "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. First, the Savior mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then he invited them, 'Follow Me'" (White 1936, 73). From this quotation, White mentioned three key movements which are Mingling, Showing Care, and Help in Healing. Below, I have shared my brief comments and application of each of the three key movements.

Mingling

To mingle with others is to spend quality time with them, getting acquainted with them, and learning their situation. Leaders should be intentional in working with a team and knowing the team members. There are many ways to do this. For example, at the beginning of a meeting, there can be a time for personal sharing, which can help team members get to know each other better. Another way, which can come with a cost (but is worth the price), is to have a spiritual retreat once or twice per year.

Showing Sympathy (Care)

The leader can show care for his/her team by following up with them outside of work time, not to discuss work but to check in to see how each team member is doing. I wanted the YA to know that I cared about their desire for preaching and this is why this collaborative model was developed to help overcome the lack of confidence they expressed. Another way the Christian leader can show genuine care is to be aware of some of the personal challenges team members are facing; then schedule to pray for one team member per day. If the team is massive, the leader could pray for a few team members each day.

Ministering to Needs

The leader can provide personal development training for team members each quarter, which does not always have to be about work but also about marriage and family life. This is one way a leader can help to empower his/her team to experience healing, both personally and corporately.

Is there a Main Leader with this Model?

Behind this shared leadership model, it can often be perceived that there is not a main leader, but in reality, there is. The main leader, however, is one who acknowledges that they do not have all the answers, and that there are others in the team who possess skills and gifts that the leader does not have. However, leaders should realize that God has blessed his church with various gifts in its members (Eph 4:11). As such, it calls the leader to be humble enough to recognize the gift of others and to empower people to work together. This is functioning in a collaborative way that helps bring all the strengths to the table. So, like God in the creation narrative, who empowered and equipped others to act and participate in his creation; the leader subscribes to this model. In other words, there is a key leader who invites and empowers others to function by principles of this model.

Follow Me as I Follow Christ

It is good for a Christian leader to realize that others are always watching to see how they deal with people. This can cause pressure if leaders shift their focus from Christ to self. However, when the leader daily seeks to surrender to Christ (Gal. 2:20), leaders then will know that their desire should always be to please God in everything rather than humans (Acts 5:29).

Being Versus Doing

The Lord has impressed on me the importance of functioning in my context with a mindset that values a certain posture. This is the posture of being

versus doing. The explanation of what I mean by this comes from Proverbs 3:5-6. In verse 5, the author speaks about trusting in the Lord wholeheartedly, which means one should be rooted in God and have the right relationship with him. When this is in place, first and foremost, it allows God to give guidance and instruction into his will. I want to model this on my team and have each person be of one mind by seeing the value in this principle for Christian leaders. As verse 6 mentioned, “He will direct your path.” This kind of leadership emphasizes the leader’s character and not so much their strategies (Bell 2014, 91). Put differently, the actions and executions of the leader flow from the personhood of the leader, who they are and their connections with the Lord (Bell 2014, 97). However, it must be noted that verse 5 is not downplaying human wisdom. As Murphy Roland shares in his commentary on Proverbs, human wisdom may come from higher education or life experiences, but the verse acknowledges the limitation of such wisdom (2002, 21). The word lean לַיְסָד in verse 5, when translated, means to support oneself. So, the author states that people should not seek to support themselves with wisdom and strategy because it has limitations. Rather, individuals should trust fully in the one whose wisdom is unlimited—the Lord. Likewise, collaborative leadership does not suggest that any one individual has all the answers; instead, it is in teamwork that God’s glory can be demonstrated.

Whenever the leader leans on their own wisdom, this becomes risky. Yet, at the same time, to a great degree, trusting in the Lord wholeheartedly is also risky (but it is always the better risk to take). When believers trust in the Lord fully, they run the risk of letting go of the desires and perceptions they have

regarding the outcome of what the team or leader wants. This serves as a reminder that leadership is risky. Wisdom suggests that believers take the risk of following God and trusting that his outcome will always be far better than that of trusting one's own heart. What this means for my context is that I should continually remind myself and those who work with me of the importance of trusting in God and nurturing that connection, so that I and my colleagues can better minister in a way that demonstrates that we have been with Jesus. "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). This passage in Acts 4:13 sums up the being versus doing in the context of collaboration, nicely, in a powerful and practical way for my ministry context. When others saw the confidence (doing) of the apostles, they did not credit it to their education or the lack thereof. Rather they gave acknowledgement to their connection (being) that they had been with Jesus.

What Peter and John did was an extension of Christ's ministry in being co-labourers with the Holy Spirit. Andrew Root shared in an online essay titled "Evangelical Practical Theology," that one is engaged in practical theology when there is a deep reflection on the continuation of Christ's work in the world (2014, 10). At its very core, the work of Christ was summarized in Luke 4. It is in this chapter that Jesus uttered these words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and to recover the sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). When Jesus declared these words,

he was quoting from Isaiah 61:1. This is significant since practical theology is rooted in deep reflection and interpretation of God's redemptive story. This means that Jesus lived out what he said in Luke 4:18 in a way that may not have mirrored what it looked like in Isaiah's time. Therefore, deep discernment and reflection are very important when one seeks to embark on practical theology since it flows from the resurrected Christ as guided by Scripture.

Root argues that the Bible is not the source of origin but Christ (2014, 11). However, I see value in one's practical theology anchored in Christ as revealed in Scripture. I find more assurance in this approach over using Christ as the primary guide without Scripture. So, Christ is always working, and it is my task as I work with my leaders in both churches to learn where God is working around us and to ask him how I can join. When my thinking is like this, I will lean more into God for the answers to the challenges I seek. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. say that at the core of everyday theology "is faith seeking understanding of everyday life" (2007, 17) by looking to Jesus for the answers. Therefore, Christ is the one whom I seek to find out what he is currently doing in my context. Then I may reflect on how I can join in what he is doing since the Godhead is always working (John 5:17). The Godhead is currently doing the same work that Jesus declared in Luke 4:18. It is a work to restore the oppressed and the broken.

The life I live daily is not free from brokenness. I believe everyone experiences some form of brokenness at some point or another. In his book *Practical Theology*, Terry A. Velting argues that the quest of practical theology is a constant reflection and enters into human situations with hope and healing by the

living Christ so that God's name is honoured and truthfully revealed (2005, 34). In my ministry reflection, often when church leaders want to make a difference in the community, they look to first try and solve a big project that will be intimidating for a small church, which overwhelms the congregants. But when leaders seek to find out where God is already working, it takes the pressure off in always wanting to start something new. Instead, when I think of it from the perspective that God is already doing something, it puts me back in that place of discernment (being) first, which leads to delivery (doing).

Shared Leadership Theory

Shared Leadership can be viewed this way: it is a dynamic, intuitive process in which a leader shares goals and responsibilities with all team members. In their journal titled, *Shared Leadership and Project Success*, Hassan Imam and Muhammed Zaheer argue that the key in shared leadership is for leaders “to lead themselves and each other” (2021, 464). What this means is that no one individual is the “superstar.” Leaders operating by this model must know that not every good idea will come from them. As Aaron K. Olson and Byron K. Simerson mention, the leader's task is not to produce clever ideas, but to discipline and humble oneself as a leader and build on the ideas of others (2015, 234). Undoubtedly, these are challenging times as technologies get more advanced, and everything is changing—some things for the better, others for the worse. The ones who feel this pressure the most, I believe, are leaders. Leaders are being pressured to produce and lead in a time such as this, where the problems are not just complicated or

straightforward but complex. Gary Nelson and Peter Dickens write in their book, *Leading in Disorienting Times: Navigating Church and Organizational Change*, that complex challenges have multiple variables at play in interconnected parts (2015, 82). John S. Burns says the greatest challenge facing leaders today is identifying and naming the key issues facing the organization and developing the appropriate solution (2014, 113). For this reason, individuals such as Peter G. Northouse in his book, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, believe that shared leadership has become crucial in helping organizations find a faster way to respond to the complexities being faced and bring effective resolution (2018, 534). These resolutions can come about when team members work collaboratively with the same mission and mindset.

Empowerment

To be sure, no one individual or leader possesses all the requisite knowledge and insights to lead any organization into the future destination effectively. Therefore, Michael W. Kramer and David A. Crespy argue that leaders operating by this theory “must empower groups with the authority and responsibility to make decisions” (2011, 1025). Not every leader may find this theory helpful, especially if they are obsessed with holding on to power and performance. Kramer and Crespy noted that leaders who see performances as extensions of themselves would certainly find it hard to relinquish control to allow for collaboration (2011, 1025). I assume that even in the political arena, most leaders today who are admired may have perhaps somewhat of a shared leadership operation privately. Yet, this is not often referred to or mentioned to

the public. As a result, emerging leaders may be tempted to believe that the leader they admire is an expert in all areas of management and leadership. They may not realize that the leader may have had others in their corner whom they empowered to carry out research and give consultation in areas of the leader's weakness.

There is also another aspect to empowerment that can be easily overlooked. Kramer and Crespy pointed out that often the emphasis is on the leader collaborating with the team, but leaders need to encourage and equip the team to work together as members with members and not only members with leaders (2011, 1035). In other words, the leader seeks to constantly create an environment where "members of the team take on leadership behaviors to influence the team and to maximize team effectiveness" (Northouse 2018, 533). This becomes crucial when one realizes that the expectation of success, whether in achieving or maintaining it, is the team's responsibility and not solely the leader's. According to Northouse, two crucial components must be in place for any team to be successful. These are performance: the quality of the outcome, and development; the cohesiveness of team relationship (Northouse 2018, 336-337). Team members will need each other and be there for each other for performance and development to occur in a meaningful way. Empowerment does not stand by itself; it comes with risk. Put differently, with empowerment comes risk.

Risk

With the giving away or sharing of power and influence, leaders operating by this model should be fully aware that team members can get distracted by various things, such as personal concerns or with the ambition to overthrow the

team leader. This could derail the effectiveness of the organization. Northouse postulates that “teams often fail because they let something else replace their goal, such as personal agendas or power issues” (2018, 558). An aspect of risk that threatens team or collaborative leadership is that this model’s effectiveness supposes that the team leader is empowered and skilled in group process, interpersonal skills and other matters (Northouse 2018, 554). In other words, the assumption is that the leader knows what they are doing, and they are competent in monitoring and managing their team, not forcefully but relationally. However, when this is not the case, one can end up with a frustrated leader leading a frustrated team in a frustrating environment.

Another risk factor that should be of concern for the leader is knowing when and how to intervene, especially when there is a problem within the team. The test the leader faces is the decision between continuing to observe and encourage the team or intervening when there is a challenge. Before the leader intervenes, careful contemplation must be done. If not, the leader runs the risk of using an intervention that could harm instead of help the team member (Northouse 2018, 542). Because of this, the leader should be aware of their own strengths and areas of challenge in their personality. Knowing this can give the leader an advantage in their assessment and discernment. Therefore, it is of great importance that the leader should be self-aware of their strengths and blind spots, when it comes to deliberating when and how to intervene in a situation with a team member, knowing that the stakes are very high at times.

“Hasty to act” leaders might prevent problems from getting out of control; however, they might not make the right intervention

because they do not have all the information, and such fast action might undermine the development of shared leadership. “Slow to act” leaders might encourage other team members to emerge as leaders (shared leadership), but the action-taking delay might cause the team’s problem to become unmanageable. (Northouse 2018, 543)

Every team member is different, and it is this difference that each member brings that makes the team dynamic. This means that there will always be potential challenges that need to be monitored and at times call for mediation. As such, the leader will always need to observe and analyze the teams to see what challenges the team is faced with, whether relational or environmental (Northouse 2018, 546), and seek out the appropriate intervention to bring resolution. The effectiveness of such intervention depends greatly on how well the team trusts each other as well as the leader.

Trust

The team’s goal is to execute and solve problems that the organization faces and help develop and maintain a clear vision. This does not happen by default, even in having a good team. However, it is something the team leader must work on, in creating that working environment and team spirit. Put differently, creating a respectful and trusting atmosphere is crucial for the flourishing of the team. “To build an atmosphere that fosters collaboration, we need to develop trusting relationships based on honesty, openness, consistency, and respect” (Northouse 2018, 539). Imam and Zaheer also shared emphatically that the success or failure of a team is based greatly on the presence or absence of trust: “Trust in the team moderates the relationship of perceived cohesion and

project success, in such a way that a high degree of trust in the team increases the likelihood of project success, and vice versa” (2021, 465). Leaders build trust by modeling the trust they want to see in their team. Traits the leader can model are honesty, openness, respect, and giving and receiving feedback without being defensive.

Yet, at the same time, the leader must keep in mind that leading by example will not necessarily make the environment free from stress; rather, it creates space where trust can be established. Heifetz and Linsky argue that trust is of paramount importance, it is not a safeguard against the challenges of leadership in organizations. As such, leaders should always be like a watchman on the wall in seeking to keep stress at a productive level and managing conflict, being able to see what is on the dance floor as well as on the balcony (Heifetz and Linsky 2017, 122). This is not all bad when one considers that the positives of shared leadership still outweigh the areas of concern. As Northouse mentioned, teams that operate by the shared leadership model have less conflict, more consensus, more trust, and more cohesion than teams not operating by the same shared leadership model (2018, 534). The key to remember is that trust in shared leadership promotes a positive collaborative work environment that allows cohesion to develop.

Biblical Reflection Versus Shared Leadership Theory

There are several similarities between my biblical reflection of shared leadership and the Shared Leadership Theory—both have a strong emphasis on empowerment. God in creation empowered other beings by involving them in

creation (Gen. 1:26), Adam to name the animals in creation (Gen. 2:19), and both Adam and Eve to procreate and have dominion over his creation (Gen. 1:26, 28). Likewise, the Shared Leadership Theory begins by emphasizing the leader giving away power and influence to the team. As Kramer and Crespy mentioned, “For collaboration to occur, leaders must empower groups with the authority and responsibility to make decisions” (2011, 1025). Another similarity between the biblical reflection of shared leadership and the shared leadership secular model is risk.

The creation narrative highlights that God’s greatest risk when he created human beings was a necessary risk (free will of choice). “God is love” (1 John 4:8), which means for humans and other created beings who can reason to show their love back to God, those creatures would need to choose to do so rather than be programmed. Therefore, when God created creatures (humans, angels, and other heavenly beings) and gave them the free will of choice, he knew full well that the creatures could choose otherwise than to obey him (Rev. 12:7-10). So the risk in creation was unidirectional, in that, it was primarily on whether creatures would choose to obey God out of love or choose to rebel. God is God. He is the Creator, and everyone and everything else is his creation. He is and will always be faithful even when creatures are unfaithful (2 Tim. 2:13).

In the secular shared leadership model, though, the risks are from both sides—leader and team. Leaders may run a great risk in trying to function by this model only to find themselves struggling if they do not possess the capacity to empower others with a clear role, if they are incompetent in conflict resolution

and interpersonal skills (Northouse 2018, 554). Not only this, leaders should also have a healthy dosage of self-awareness. A lack of self-awareness may cause the leader to bite off more than they can chew, meaning they end up in a position where they do not possess what it takes to deliver. Reggie McNeal, in *Practicing Greatness*, asserts, “Leaders who operate without self-awareness run the risk of being blindsided by destructive impulses and confused by emotions that threaten to derail their agenda and leadership effectiveness” (McNeal 2006, 11). Then, on the other hand, there is the risk of empowering team members. Team members may have agendas differing from that of the organization. Northouse observes that with shared leadership, “Teams often fail because they let something else replace their goal, such as personal agendas or power issues” (2018, 558). Team leaders can also undermine the leader by being uncooperative, disrespectful, and untrustworthy.

Both the biblical reflection and secular Shared Leadership Theory see value in team members knowing what their roles are and having clear job descriptions of what is expected. From the creation narrative, God was very clear about what Adam and Eve were permitted and prevented from doing. They were permitted to eat of every tree in the garden except one (Gen. 2:16-17). They were permitted to procreate and have dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). The only thing in the creation narrative that God told the couple they were prevented from pursuing was that they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). Likewise, in the secular theory of Shared Leadership Theory, success occurs when each team member knows what is expected of them. This

does not mean that team members cannot help each other when needed. Shared Leadership greatly encourages and permits this practice on the team, where “the focus of collaboration moves from the leader and group members to also include the collaboration among all members” (Kramer and Crespy 2011, 1035).

However, the prohibitions are disrespectful behaviours, unwillingness to resolve conflict, and especially one’s reluctance in listening nonjudgmentally to each other’s concerns.

There is, however, one crucial element of the biblical reflection of shared leadership from the creation narrative that the secular model falls short of, and that is the aspect of redemption. In the secular model, once the leader or a team member has done the unthinkable, whether that is a breach of confidentiality, misappropriation of funds or some immoral act, they are done. Typically, that leader or team leader is done. They would be fired. Depending on the organization, if the organization or its leaders or team leaders had been licensed to practice, they may lose their license.

Typically, there is no redemption for any leader or team member under the secular leadership model. However, in the creation narrative, humanity exercised its free will of choice and disobeyed God. God could have ignored them and moved on to create other worlds. God could have destroyed them and started creation over again from scratch, yet he did the very opposite. God did not wait for humanity to come seeking after him. He made the first move towards restoration (Gen. 3:8). Not only that, God also covered their nakedness. He came close to them rather than standing far off. Make no mistake; redemption does not

mean that the leader or team's leaders gloss over what happens. God did not. On the contrary, he had a crucial conversation with all the perpetrators (Gen. 3:11-15). In the book titled *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High*, authors Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Al Switzler and Ron McMillan share that "a crucial conversation is a discussion between two or more people where (1) the stakes are high, (2) opinions vary, and (3) emotions run strong" (2002, 3).

After this conversation, indeed, there were consequences to Adam and Eve's action in sinning against God, one that affected all of creation (Rom. 8:22). Yet, in his infinite love for humanity, God modified their job description assignment. For Eve she would still be able to procreate, but it would be in pain due to their decision (Gen. 3:16). God did not cause this to happen to them; rather, he told them it would prepare them. As for Adam, he would still work, but the conditions would be different (Gen. 3:17). Indeed, their decision has more consequences, but I choose to keep this framework in that context and leadership perspective.

Shared Leadership Illustration

I have experienced a powerful breakthrough with the practice of shared leadership in my ministry context. One of my elders was exercising leadership in a weekly Bible study in one of the churches that included five members and three seekers (people who had not yet accepted Christ and were not baptized). Since I am in a district, I am not at the same church every week. The three people (two

were female who came together and the other, a man who was invited to church by a member) visited this particular church the weekend when I was not there. After church, they talked with one of the leaders and showed interest in wanting Bible studies. The leader agreed to provide the studies and, with great excitement, went ahead and purchased the studies. The leader, who was one of my deacons, shared this information with me a day or so after. I had no issue with what the leader did; the study guide he purchased was one that I knew about (not my favourite, they inclined to lean in the direction of legalism if not presented well), but I did not make a big deal out of it.

Fast forward three weeks, the studies arrived and immediately, there was a Bible study being held every weekend on Sundays at 7:00 p.m. I attended a number of them and even led out in a few of the studies myself. Altogether, the studies took a few months to finish, with about four cancellations due to weather or personal challenges with participants. On average, each Sunday, eight individuals would be present for the studies, the three seekers and the rest regular church members. The studies were primarily designed to lead individuals to Christ as well as inform individuals of who we are as Seventh-day Adventists. In the studies, the cycle goes something like this: The leader asks the questions from the study guides (each person had a copy of the study guide), then goes around in the circle and asks each person to read a verse or two which was the answer to the question. How the studies were designed did not give room for question or critique. For weeks, this cycle continued, and I realized that only the church members would talk and share in the studies. The seekers would just listen (I

found out later that their listening was not only because they wanted to learn, but they did not sense in the atmosphere that they could share their concerns). At the end of the few months, the studies ended.

The individuals accepted Christ and got baptized. There was a pause in the studies for a month or so, then one Saturday evening, while I was home, the newly baptized babes in Christ came to my mind. I was thinking of them and wondering how they were doing. So, I decided to call them up to see how things were going and how they adjusted to the new faith. I did not attend the same church they were attending that Saturday or want to wait until the next week to check on them.

I decided to start by taking the approach of a second-person inquiry to find out how the experience was for those who attended the first Bible study. This approach was to especially connect with three new believers and see if there were other topics they were interested in studying or if they wanted to continue with the new studies chosen by the group leaders (Coghlan and Brannick 2010, 6). My approach was gentle and not forceful since I wanted them to know that they could trust me in sharing their honest thoughts and concerns about what the study leaders were doing and see how it could be done better by their collaborative contribution (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, 29). I also called the regular members who attended the studies. When I had asked them about their studies, the regular members all loved it. It reminded them of their purpose and mission. As for the newly baptized, the ladies and the gentleman shared that they were doing well and liked the new faith. But one of the ladies said she felt like a complete stranger and

that the studies were designed for conversion and not geared towards meeting her where she was on her journey with God. Right away, I became convinced that the study leaders must do something different (the studies had planned to resume in the next month by studying Bible prophecy). At the conclusion of the conversation, she shared that her preference would be to study one of the smaller books of the Bible rather than the approach she experienced at first. So I suggested a few of the smaller books of the Bible, and the decision was made for 1 Thessalonians. I then contacted everyone in the first study and shared the idea with them, and they all loved it.

The new method that would now be followed had at the centre a collaborative core. It was no longer designed to be one way (I have all the answers, so sit and listen). It was now inclusive (everyone was involved and had an equal say as to what they understood from the passage devotionally). The new method was guided by the acronym WORD (write, observe, reflect, declare). So, you “write the Bible verses by hand in a notebook (usually taking no more than five verses at a time); next you observe and record insights from the passage (the things you saw for the first time or in a different way, or what was challenging). Then, reflect on the big idea(s) that the Holy Spirit reveals and end with prayer declaring that word over your life” (Richards 2021, 21). This approach empowered the marginalized new believers and gave them the right to share in the studies’ discussion equally as everyone else. For sure, it included risk. One of the regular members cautioned me when I shared the approach with them. His concern was that new believers might share beliefs in the group that are not true

to scripture. I affirmed that this could be the case. At the same time, the beauty of journeying together is to hear and learn from each other and see what the Spirit would have us know, receive, or even disagree in love. The member agreed and was willing to give this approach a try.

On the very first night of the WORD Bible study on 1 Thessalonians, one of the newly baptized who had never spoken in the previous studies (except she would read a few Bible verses when asked) was surprisingly vocal. Apparently, she had made notes and was ready to share what the Lord showed her from the text and the cross-reference text to the verses being discussed. This happened throughout the entire study for four months. More than that, it caused the group to know each other more because this approach made others vulnerable to one another. It seemed like the Lord was speaking to everyone through the passage. This experience has been one of my greatest moments in applying shared leadership within the Bible study context. When the newly baptized members realized that the other group members were all broken individuals too, they were encouraged.

The issue I discovered was not that the first set of studies were not helpful, but they did not provide a way to share experiences and the ability to identify with each other in a real way. The shared approach to the studies even went further. The moderating or facilitating role moved from me and the deacon to everyone else in the group, having their turn to facilitate a study. Experiences such as this one with the Bible studies remind me that shared leadership practice should not only be limited to my leadership team. Shared leadership should always be

applied in different areas of the church's ministry such as Bible studies, preaching, and discipleship. There are individuals in the church who have the potential to do great things for God but are not able to because those who are in place and position of power are holding on tightly to it rather than sharing it.

Conclusion

The genesis of humanity is that people were created not to work, walk, or witness alone but to thrive and flourish in community. I see great benefit when this is transferred in ministry, especially preaching, where collaborating with others helps to increase confidence and overcome areas of weakness. It is no wonder why Jesus sent out the disciples two by two (Mark 6:7). It is not a sign of weakness when a leader practices shared leadership; on the contrary, it is a sign of strength (that one believes in the development and collaboration with and of others). Knowing that as I lead in a collaborative shared approach, the team with this demeanor has far greater potential for prospering. There is great value when this collaboration is adopted and practiced in preaching. I confess that at first, I was one who used to guard the area of preaching as a space where I needed to work and hear from God by myself. However, I have grown to see tremendous benefit and value in working collaboratively. It is important to note, however, that even when one has the perfect team, mistakes, disappointment and even disobedience have the potential of disrupting the destination. When this happens, my approach should not be one that glosses over the issue; instead, my intervention should be in such a way that is not punitive but redemptive (Gen.

3:8-9; Eph. 4:11-13). The desire to work collaboratively has also transformed the way that I go about preaching. This will be discussed in the next section called leading through preaching collaboratively.

Part II: Leading Through Preaching Collaboratively

Introduction

Everywhere one turns today, people are hurting. COVID-19, war, natural disasters—all over the world, there are people hurting. Put differently, people are dealing with tremendous brokenness in their lives. At the same time, this is not a new thing in the eyes of God. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3), all humanity has been suffering from sin, which manifests itself in the form of pain, problems, and perplexities. No wonder Jesus declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18). Jesus mentioned in this verse that a primary part of his preaching was to heal the oppressed (the words “the oppressed” also means “the broken”).

As I examined the life of Jesus, I see Luke 4:18 manifested itself in the life of a man referred to in Scripture as the demoniac in the Gospel of Mark (5:1-20). It is from this narrative that my theology and practice of preaching find their anchorage. Within this narrative, I have identified three moves that took place in the life of the demoniac. These are brokenness, healing and mission. In this section of this portfolio, I will reveal how these aspects have formed, and

functioned as to how I lead through preaching from the testimony of the demoniac. Equally important is to see the difference a collaborative community plays in this process with the preacher.

Brokenness

The world has been both infected and affected by sin (Rom. 5:12). Since the fall of humanity, sin has caused brokenness in our relationship with God and each other. As a result, every human has experienced some level or sort of brokenness in this life such as hurt, pain, trauma, and violation. Heartache is no stranger whether it has been done to oneself or by one to others.

As a preacher I am aware that I do not know all of the brokenness in my context, so allowing others to have a voice or perspective in the sermon can be helpful in knowing others' hurts and pain. Because of this, I firmly believe that every sermon should intentionally point out and address human brokenness. I do not mean in the same way in which John Koessler asserts that every sermon should solve a human problem (Koessler 2011, chap. 1); instead what I mean is that the sermon is not complete without talking about human struggles. The sermon should address the brokenness because if it does not touch on it, then it stands in the way of the listeners and the Lord. So, the principle is to begin the sermon by addressing and stating what this issue or brokenness is, because this was how Mark introduced his readers to this demoniac as recorded in Mark 5:1-20. Mark reports that Jesus and the disciples came over to the Gerasene, and right away, they were met by a man dealing with what I would call severe brokenness.

Firstly, he was possessed by a legion of demons (5:9). He was living in the tombs, and chains could not restrain him (5:3). To make matters worse, night and day, he would cry and inflict injury upon himself (5:9). While legions of demons may not possess those seated in the pew in churches, most believers can identify with David in drenching their couches with tears because of their problems (Ps. 6:6). So, in preaching, I want to start by highlighting a problem, whether based on some facts, quotations, or stories. When this process is brainstormed in a collaborative small group, the preacher perhaps would have a deeper insight of the hurt in the congregation. Starting the preaching moment in this manner helps to make the preaching concrete and relevant to what the listeners are dealing with. Jared Alcántara in his book, *The Practices of Christian Preaching: Essentials for Effective Proclamation* states that, “Concreteness is what makes the sermon matter and relevant on Monday mornings” (2019, 133). Not only Jared Alcántara, but Kenton C. Anderson advocates, too, in his book titled *Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation*, that starting the sermon with a story is a sure way of connecting with the listeners in helping them relate to what the preacher is saying (Anderson 2017, 48).

When the sermon begins with addressing human brokenness and the preacher moves to show the similar brokenness coming out of the text, it will likely suggest to the listeners that the preacher knows what they are feeling and are going through. Preachers who do not begin their discourse by addressing or highlighting some current human hurt and conditions may risk being apathetic preachers and not empathetic preachers. Lenny Luchetti said in his book

Preaching with Empathy, “The apathetic preacher comes across as nothing more than a non-commissioned salesperson with a laissez-faire ‘take it or leave it’ posture” (2018, chap. 1). Because of the real hurt people are dealing with daily, the listeners should be able to sense that the preaching they are listening to is from a place of empathy. Luchetti defines this kind of empathy in preaching as “the grace that enables preachers to imagine their way into the situational shoes of others, to understand the thoughts and feel the emotions of listeners” (2018, chap. 2).

So then, like a detective, in the sermon preparation moment, the preacher and the collaborative participants should look intently for evidence of brokenness in the text in the sermon preparation moment. Then once found, to begin reflecting on what this brokenness looks like at the time. Sometimes it is easier to find than other times, and sometimes it is not even stated; the preacher has to assume what it is. For example, with the demoniac, his brokenness was being possessed by the many demons. Yet, he was abandoned, too, so the preacher could also talk about abandonment at the beginning of the sermon. The preacher could begin the sermon with a story of a time when they felt abandoned, or a story of one of the participants (with their permission) in the brainstorming group. It could be a story about someone else that was abandoned, or even a descriptive scene of the demoniac and one’s surroundings, and how the preacher was living in that state of abandonment. As for me, there are times when the process happens in reverse, where the first thought that enters my mind is not the text but the current human condition, and then my next move is to find a Bible text that deals with

that same situation. Nonetheless, people must feel when the sermon has entered into their hurt with the word of the loving God. In other words, the audience from the outset should realize that the preacher is “articulating for them what they feel, know, and hope for but can’t voice themselves” (Luchetti 2018, chap. 2). The very question that Jesus asked the demoniac suggested to this abandoned man that Jesus cared for him despite his deplorable living condition. Jesus asked the man, “What is your name?” (Mark 5:9), a question that was coming from a heart filled with empathy and care.

Preachers of the gospel function in a twofold role as both prophet and priest. As prophets, they represent God to people, but as empathic priests, they represent people to God (Luchetti 2018, chap. 2). Therefore, preachers should realize that they are called to preach in such a way that the listeners can see and sense that, like Jesus, they, too, have been touched with the feelings of their infirmities (Heb. 4:15). Preachers are not Jesus, but should, like Jesus, allow themselves to be touched by the pain, problems, and predicaments that listeners are pondering daily. Preaching in this way becomes authentic since the preacher would allow him/herself as well as the rest of the group to wrestle, think about, and reflect on the particular human brokenness they will address. The preacher who goes on this journey in preaching would not be like a travel agent who can give untested advice, who tells things they have never experienced. On the contrary, according to Dave McClellan in *Preaching by Ear: Speaking God’s Truth from the Inside Out*, the preacher would be one who also travels the places described to others (2014, 32). The next big move in the demoniac story is an

encounter with Jesus, which I call healing. The healing for the brokenness only comes when believers encounter Jesus through the gospel.

Healing

In verse 8, Mark reports that “Jesus had already said to the demons to come out of the man.” In casting out the legion of demons, the possessed man, in response to this good news and freedom brought by Christ, fell down before Jesus. Here in the narrative, the man has encountered Christ and has also responded to that encounter. Healing occurs when believers encounter Jesus through the gospel in the preaching moment by the grace of God in real-time. Therefore, “Preaching must always be more than just an understanding of God. It must also be an experience of God” (Anderson 2017, 48). Though preaching is done from the Bible and its authority is derived from it as well, in this area of healing the goal as the preacher is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and “point past texts, and past even the gospel in scripture, to God-for-us in Jesus Christ” (Koessler, 2011 chap. 4). Just as the demoniac had an audience with Jesus, the aim of healing in the sermon is to do the same—to help people meet Jesus. The focus of the encounter should be on what Jesus has already done for people and not what people need to do for him. Different individuals in a small group may identify with various aspects to this healing, meaning they may all see the healing which could look different, yet this is what makes this process so rich. When combined, there can be greater insights to the healing in Christ that the text reveals. In other words, when the listeners look at their brokenness in comparison

to what they have heard the gospel says, this could well get a response from the listeners.

The early part of the book of Acts in the second chapter demonstrated how a group of people responded to the gospel when they heard it proclaimed by Peter. “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). This response is what Anderson refers to as conviction by the gospel which he believes “must express itself in words of repentance, words of gratitude, and words of praise” (2017, 70). All these responses are in view of the greatness of God who in Christ has guaranteed the healing humanity needs for the hurt and brokenness caused by sin. This is the good news of the gospel! Jesus summed it up in this way according to the Gospel of Luke, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (4:18). Luke 4:18 is both provided and promised in Jesus. It is provided so that people can experience liberation in Christ from their pain and suffering. But it is also promised, that if not in this life, when Jesus returns, he will release us from all our suffering and pain. I concur with what Anderson said, “Preaching, then, is not about inventing things for God to do. It is about appreciating what he has already declared himself to be doing and to meet him there” (Anderson 2017, 73). The aim the preacher should have in mind when they seek to discover the gospel in the text and then invite the listeners to receive it is to stress the difference the gospel makes. This is important to keep in mind

because the heart of the gospel is that it does not matter how broken a person is; God's grace and love is far greater than any sins. So, highlighting the difference between brokenness and healing is crucial. For the demoniac, in his state of brokenness, he was in isolation—living in tombs, in broken chains and shackles, and was being controlled by thousands of demons, which means he did not even know who he was. When Jesus asked what his name was, the demons answered on his behalf (5:9); this was his brokenness. But now, since he experienced healing by meeting the lovely Jesus, Mark shared further that, “And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid” (5:15). He experienced the gospel and met the Saviour who restored him from his brokenness, allowing him to be now sane and seated. The truth is, this is what the preacher should desire to do, to see that what God in Christ is offering is needed to heal the brokenness and to realize that it is free. No one knows if the demoniac ended up being possessed again. The truth is, it is possible for delivered people to go back and of such, preaching from brokenness to healing will always be needed and relevant.

The third transition in the demoniac's story demonstrates the man's response to the deliverance and mercy of Jesus. James Edwards, in his commentary on Mark's Gospel, called the image of the demoniac sitting at Jesus' feet “a picture of discipleship and salvation” (Edwards 2002, 159). Verse 18 says when Jesus and the disciples were leaving the area, the man who had been possessed came to Jesus and registered his desire to follow Jesus (5:18); in

response, Jesus did something powerful. Jesus said, according to verse 19, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19). Jesus, in other words, instead of allowing the man to follow him, told the man one way in which he can respond to the gospel which is very missional—“Go tell your friends what God has done for you.” The third element of my theology of preaching is mission.

Mission

About mission, Anderson expressed it in this way, “The purpose of our inspiration is to set our people out on a *mission*—the driving direction of the gospel in motion” (2017, 78; author’s emphasis). The mission, therefore, is for the preacher to remind the listeners that they need to know that God is already working, and he invites them like the demoniac to join in what he is doing. The demoniac did not do anything that made Jesus bring freedom and salvation to him; however, because he had experienced the healing love, it moved and motivated him to join in the work. Therefore, believers should join in God’s mission because they have experienced Jesus. I agree fully with Koessler when he said, before we take Jesus as our example, we first should accept him as a gift (2011, chap. 8). Bypassing the essence of the gospel and moving into mission only will lead one down the path of legalism. But when the believer with their brokenness meets the Saviour and the brokenness is disarmed by grace, the believer’s response becomes one of discipleship from a place of gratitude. “And

he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marvelled” (5:20).

Gratitude in this context is twofold. One, it arises in response to what God had done for people and two, it is out of appreciation for the invitation to join the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption. The God of the universe saw it fitting to invite disciples in his work of restoration. Therefore, the mission in preaching is the response to the reality that God views believers not only as his sons and daughters in Christ but also his fellow workers (1 Cor. 3:9).

The Never-Ending Leading Through Preaching

Preachers should be clear that they are called to make a difference in the world by the proclamation of the gospel by the grace of God. Not from a mindset that they are going to change the world, but to at least put a dent in it, as Anderson exclaimed, “not because we can fix the world, but because we are called to embody the character of God” (2017, 81). The mission is a reminder that by God’s grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, believers have been redeemed and empowered to be agents of change and make agents of change. This is the reality on the one hand. The reality, on the other hand, is that preaching has an end.

The never ending leading through preaching also comes from the mission, which is to prepare men and women for the soon coming of Christ. It is a realization that Jesus will come again, and he is coming again. As Koessler said, “Preaching is eschatological because it calls its hearers to live with the end in view” (2011, chap. 10). This is important because there will be some brokenness

that may not be fully healed in this life. For example, in the death of a loved one, while the gospel can and will give the bereaved loved one peace and healing, it will not bring back to life the dead person at this time. However, believers are promised that it will happen at the second coming of Jesus, that the dead in Christ will come to life again with new perfect bodies (1 Thess. 4:16). For now, “The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun” (Eccl. 9:5-6). Yet, there is hope for the believer who dies believing in Jesus; the hope of the resurrection where Jesus will restore the brokenness caused by sin. In the book of Revelation, John writes:

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4-6).

This passage is a powerful reminder that the ultimate healing for this world’s brokenness will happen when Christ returns. So, preaching then, should always be fully conscious of the second coming of Christ and that he will ultimately make all things new. But until then, there will always be pain, suffering and tragedy. The big picture of the gospel with this eschatological view in mind is that there is coming a day where sin, and Satan, will no longer be able to cause pain or suffering. There is coming a day when “he will wipe away every tear from

their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

I find great encouragement in knowing that I can preach the Word with conviction and passion, not because I have lived it faithfully in all its commands and precepts but because God is faithful. So, in letting the listener know the preacher is also in need of God’s daily grace as they are, I believe is of utmost importance. This is what William Willimon meant when he said, “We preachers must not only narrate a more faithful, truthful story than the one that holds the congregation captive; we also must show that—fellow sinners though we are—we are struggling to embody the gospel and to lead our congregations to do the same” (2020, 155). By sharing with the congregation that I too, am daily seeking God’s guidance as to how to live out the gospel, is a humbling way of letting the congregation know that we are journeying together.

Asking the Right Questions

Leading through preaching is practical and can be very effective when done collaboratively and equipping the participants with the tools to ask the right question about the Bible text. In that, I used the same three areas: Brokenness, Healing and Mission as a guide in writing my sermons. However, to make it practical, I came up with different questions for each area.

In the area of brokenness, the question that I ask is why is this so, or what is the cause for the brokenness? Meaning, what has been the cause for this condition, how did it get to this? In the case of the demoniac, Mark does not tell

how he got demon-possessed, but the preacher could think of examples that could be relevant. For example, perhaps his friend exposed him to satanic worship. Maybe he got exposed to drugs, and this made him an easy target for demons. The goal here is to give a reason. The preacher does not have to agree with the reason, but it needs to be stated even if it is subjunctive.

Next, the question to ask in the area of healing is this: what difference did the gospel of Jesus make in the text when discovered or uncovered by the preacher and the collaborative group? In other words, since the healing from the brokenness comes only from Jesus, when the gospel is released, how did it affect change and transformation in the text? The goal of this question is to show that just as the gospel made the difference in the text, it can do the same to the brokenness of the audience.

Finally, is the area of mission. In this section, the question that is asked is, what is God inviting me into? This question assumes that God is working, God is currently moving in the world, and by virtue of encountering the living Jesus and being touched by him, he extends to believers the invitation to be co-labourers with him. These questions have made it possible for me now to get more from the biblical text than before. They also help me to preach with more clarity since I now have a theology and practice toward preaching that is interwoven into each other.

Conclusion

Preachers should let those listening know that the preacher is aware of the challenges and struggles before them and what better way to do this than to invite them to wrestle with the Bible passage together. In other words, the audience must sense from the beginning that the preacher who is declaring God's word to them understands their brokenness. Therefore, preaching in this way could lead the people with their brokenness to better identify with the people in the text in their struggles. Then next usher the audience into the loving arms of the Saviour who alone can heal the broken heart (Luke 4:18). Put differently, the preacher should lead the audience into the gospel to experience the sympathizing Jesus, who is both Lord and King. Only Jesus can deliver believers from and disarm us of our brokenness with his relentless love, grace, justice, and mercy.

CHAPTER IV:

PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter of the research portfolio covers the first phase of the collaborative model to increase confidence for preaching in young adults at Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist church, Saskatchewan. This first phase involved the participants sharing their perspectives on assigned Bible passages and its implication through the inductive Bible study method. Though initially I wanted to start off with hermeneutical training, I remembered when I was in seminary there was a lady who was so fearful of preaching, especially standing in front of an audience, that we could not even evaluate her. Success for us that evening was just to get her up front to stand and speak. From that experience and what was expressed by the participants, I saw wisdom in focusing on the hermeneutical element in the second phase. So, the second phase will include teaching the YA the hermeneutical elements to preaching and this will be done in the summer of 2023. Phase three, which will cover the art of preaching, where careful attention will be given to delivery, voice, and dictions etc., will be done in November and December 2023. However, in phase one, I was encouraged to see how God used the times I met with the participants in their conversations regarding their needed growth. The contributions the participants made provided positive insights and areas of growth too. From the findings of this research, the participants'

collaborative contributions revealed the time spent together in brainstorming Bible passages for the sermons was beneficial, and it enriched their experiences and confidence in a significant way.

The Three-Phase Plan

The figure below outlines the project's three phases: what will be done in each phase and when it will be conducted. Again, for the purpose of this portfolio, the emphasis is only on phase one.

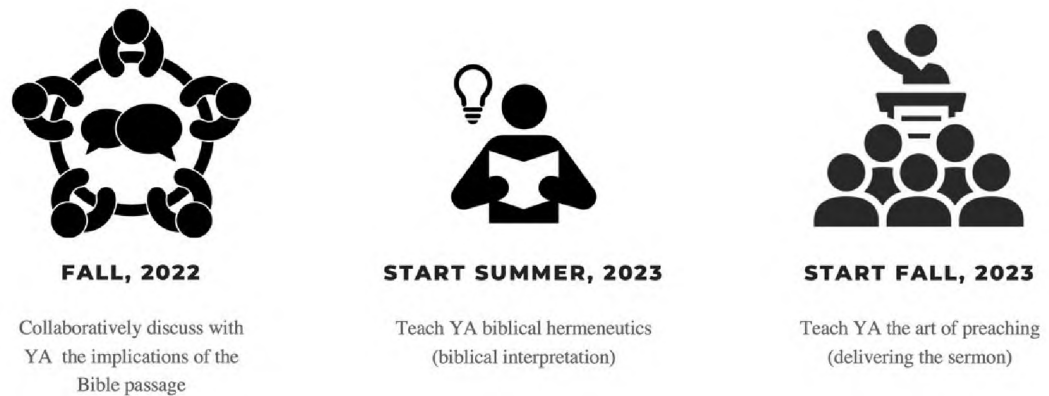


Figure 1. Three project phases

Research Question and Opportunity

This research explored a model to increase confidence for preaching in young adults at Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist church, Saskatchewan. As Chapter II of this portfolio states, the Rosthern church had only two adults on the regular weekly preaching schedule, making preaching challenging whenever both individuals were unavailable. I was not sure if the teens in the church shared the same burden of wanting to learn how to preach. Therefore, I sent out an email to youth over sixteen for an information session and conversation about the

preaching situation in the church and to brainstorm solutions together. At first, I thought that I would have had more than twelve youth altogether with young adults who would be part of this journey of training the next generation for preaching. But after the invitation was sent out, only six YA responded; therefore, I proceeded with the six who showed interest.

Response or Innovation

This research applied reflective journaling to examine the participants' experience at the end of each pre-sermon session meeting, and to see how the interaction in the group impacted their confidence level for preaching. In addition, the participants were all given a pre-survey questionnaire before the project began, to assess what their confidence level was prior to their involvement in the project. The same survey questionnaire was administered as a post-assessment to see how confident for preaching the participants felt after the project.

Research Ethics: Consent, Access, Risk and Supervision

Before proceeding with this research (and after sensing the interest from the YA), it was crucial that the board of elders give their approval. The board of elders of the RSDAC granted permission to conduct this research on behalf of the church on March 1, 2022. An additional element which was added to protect the participants was that each of them was given a code name that was only known by the individual participant and the researcher. The code names were: Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, Participant D, Participant E and Participant F. As well, participants signed the consent form, which informed them that every effort

would be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data, both now and in the future. The participants were assured that if they so desired, they could withdraw from the research project at any time. Finally, this project was also approved by Tyndale Research Ethics Board (REB) on April 14, 2022.

Models and Resources

To better understand how to involve the YA collaboratively for fruitful engagement, the researcher shared a biblical reflection in which this project finds anchorage using the following resources.

Charles, H. B. 2014. *On Preaching: Personal and Pastoral Insights for the Preparation and Practice of Preaching*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

This book contains three sections: Preparation for Preaching, The Practice of Preaching and Points of Wisdom for Preaching. This book gave me a framework called the Inductive Bible study method for sermon preparation, which includes “(1) Observation asks, what does it say? (2) Interpretation asks, what does it mean? (3) Application asks, how does it apply? and (4) Correlation asks, how does it relate to the rest of the Scripture? (Charles 2014, 37). I shared this inductive bible study method with the participants to use as a guide to get a better understanding of each passage as we brainstormed together. Providing this inductive guide or template for studying the Bible enabled the group conversation to flow smoothly, allowing each participant to follow along. For example, when it was time to share perspective and insight from (2) Interpretation, once it was announced, everyone shared accordingly.

McClure, John. S. 1995. *The Round Table Pulpit: Where Leadership & Preaching Meet*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

I found this book to be helpful in defining the way I should function as host in a collaborative space for brainstorming for sermons. McClure made a crucial point that hosts should always be conscious that in a collaborative group for sermon discussion, “all voices are equally valued” (1995, 51). This book helped me value the participants' perspectives, reminding me that I should consider not only the similarities of thoughts but the differences as well (McClure 1995, 58). The task of the group was clearly outlined, as McClure urged preachers to let the group know that their task was only brainstorming, not sermon structuring or writing. Having this clear goal made the roles and responsibilities more purposeful for the group.

Hulst, Mary S. 2016. *A Little Handbook for Preachers: Ten Practical Ways to a Better Sermon by Sunday*. Downers Grove: IVP Books.

In this book, the author states how preachers must take the effort off the listeners and place it on God. In other words, the preacher should help the audience see God in the sermon—who he is and what he has done (Hulst 2016, 34). One of the questions I would often ask in each session with the participants was, “What do they see God doing in the Bible passage?” There were times in their personal interaction with the passage, when no one saw what God did in the passage; such insight came in the group discussion.

Project, Methodology and Methods

This section of the portfolio describes the location where the project was done, how long it took, and the methodology and methods used. Also, though I made a written record of the participants' expressions during the discussions, the identity of the participants was protected using pseudonyms.

Field

This project began at the RSDAC in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, in September 2022 and ended late October 2022. As mentioned in Chapter II and the earlier part of this chapter, the RSDAC had only two adults on the regular weekly preaching schedule, which made preaching challenging whenever both individuals were unavailable. Some of the YA also saw this problem and wanted to be part of the solution by showing interest in preaching but expressed a lack of confidence, primarily since they were never taught how to preach. The YA said they had previously indicated an interest in preaching to the former pastors, but nothing materialized. To select the participants for this project, an announcement about the project was sent out to fifteen youths and young adults, and all that showed interest would be invited to participate. In the end only six showed interest. The six participants were all eighteen years of age and older, female, white Canadians. With the consent of the potential participants, the plan was to meet virtually using the Zoom platform for one hour each Tuesday to share in the sermon development process. There were two reasons for choosing to meet virtually instead of in person; two individuals who showed interest went out of province for graduate school (but still joined in church services virtually), while

the other four participants lived a great distance from the church. Therefore, after discussion with the group it was decided that meeting virtually would be a better option.

Scope

This project's scope was to involve a group of YA in the brainstorming phase of writing a sermon. This research measured the difference in confidence for preaching before and after their participation in the small group. In addition, this project did not involve comparing the participants' ability to hear from God in contrast with other members of the church. For phase one of this project, I was only concerned with the impact the collaborative sermon-based group had on the participants' confidence for preaching. In addition, the participants were not involved in the preaching of the sermons, only the brainstorming. The researcher plans to develop phase two of this project in the future, in which participants would brainstorm with the same group, developing and preaching the sermons. With their permission, I mentioned and quoted participants' exact words in the sermons without mentioning their names. After asking them if they were comfortable with having their exact expression in a sentence or two in the sermon, they all shared that doing so was totally fine with them.

Methodology

The methodology that governed this research was what Ernest T. Stringer postulated in his book titled *Action Research*, where he used the three terms "Look, Think, Act" (2014, 74). The Look phase is when I first met with the

participants to discuss and discern the areas of concern. This also meant having a conversation and asking the right questions from key individuals in the church, such as the church elders, parents, youth leaders, and the young adults themselves (Stringer 2014, 104). I followed this engagement with the six participants in our initial meeting to ascertain from them what they were noticing about the ministry of preaching in the RSDAC.

The Think phase followed, which analyzed and interpreted the information with the prospective participants (Stringer 2014, 164). In this phase, the participants discerned that for this project it was best for them to get exposed to a process of sermon preparation that could be a model they could follow when it was their time to preach. In addition, the participants also decided that the area of study should be that of a few parables, since they have various applications for the mission and ministry of the church.

Then finally, the Act phase. Here, the focus was to implement a plan to address any issues that arise (Stringer 2014, 184). The initial plan was to begin the project in July 2022, but that time was not practical for everyone. The next reasonable time for everyone ended up being the month of September 2022.

Following the Inductive Bible study method that H. B. Charles shared in his book, the participants were all given basic training, which involved Observation, Interpretation, Correlation and Application (2014, 37). The training was conducted on August 30, 2022, close to a week after the information session that the YA attended.

Data Collection Instruments

To measure the participants' confidence for preaching before and after this project, various methods were used to collect the data.

Survey Questionnaires: Before the first meeting each participant was given a survey questionnaire to measure their confidence level for preaching. This same survey was also administered at the end of the project to see if there were any differences in their confidence for preaching by virtue of being part of the sermon-based small group (see Appendices C and D for pre- and post-survey questionnaire). The ten question pre- and post-survey questionnaires were one of the primary data collection tools for this research. The questions on the survey included short answers and agreeing to disagree answers.

Reflective Journaling: Another method of data collection was reflective journaling. This method of reflective journaling was selected as it gives a longer and more sustained insight into lived experiences. It helped to negate the researcher-participant power dynamic since the participants could write at their own freedom (McIlwraith 2020, 120). In addition, the participants could write things down as they happened, so even if they forgot, after a few weeks or so, the journal's record would still stand true as a reflection of their thoughts and experience. To better facilitate this experience, I developed four questions for the participants as a framework of what I was asking of them for the purpose of the research. These questions could have been worded better for what I wanted to understand from the participants' experience (see Appendices E and F for the reflective journaling questions); however, this is a learning process for me.

Participant Observation: Finally, participant observation was employed as a method of data collection, especially since I also was part of the project, giving my perspective and observation some values and insight.

Phase and Timetable

The sequence of actions that I followed is outlined in Appendix H. At the end of the research, the participants were asked to submit their journals and questionnaires by taking pictures of all pages with their cell phones and emailing them to me. No one would be forced to turn in their journals and questionnaires; this would be completely voluntary.

Data Analysis

Data for this research was collected after the group of young adults met with me in late August 2022 for an information session. The actual project started on September 6, 2022 and ended on October 18, 2022 with the brainstorming and post-sermon phase.

The participants received the passage that would be discussed at least three to four days in advance, along with the Inductive study guide template. The Bible passages to be studied were decided on by the group at the end of the basic Inductive Bible study training on August 30, 2022. After voting on Zoom, the group chose four parables: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16) and Wheat and Tares (Matt. 13:24-30). The attendance record of all the participants is reflected in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participant attendance record

Parables	Good Samaritan		Wise and Foolish Virgins		Vineyard Workers		Wheat and Tares		
	Dates		September 6, 2022		September 20, 2022		October 4, 2022		October 18, 2022
Participants	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
Participant A	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Participant B	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Participant C	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Participant D	x	√	√	√	x	x	x	x	
Participant E	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Participant F	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	

The group met four times, every other Tuesday from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm, to share and discuss the preaching text for the Sabbath (Saturday) of that week. The reason for meeting every other week was that I pastor two churches, on a week on-week off cycle with both. For the Rosthern church, the researcher is there every second and fourth Sabbath (Saturday) of the month. So, to prepare the participants for the pre-meetings each Tuesday, excerpts from two Bible commentaries on the study passage were uploaded in private google document folders for each participant. The two Bible commentaries (used to provide electronic excerpts of no more than two pages) were the *New International Version Application Commentary* (Wilkins et al., 2004) and the *New American Commentary* (Blomberg 1992). The participants had also agreed that submitting

the data electronically would work better for them instead of paper submission (in fact, not all took a physical copy of the journals made available). Therefore, private google document folders were created for each participant where they could send and upload their journals and questionnaires. The google document folder was also employed to upload information to them pertaining to the passage to be studied from Bible commentaries.

Being the pastor of the participants, the researcher acknowledges the reality that there existed a power dynamic between pastor and participants. In seeking to navigate this in an ethical way, the methods of survey and reflective journaling to collect the data was used instead of interviews. This way the participants could choose to write and express themselves freely within their own comfort zone. Creating such a space is crucial, as Tim Sensing pointed out the importance of treating participants as individuals and letting them express themselves uniquely based on their background and upbringing. Doing this allowed them to feel freer in expressing themselves (Sensing 2011, 96). They were also reminded that they were free to share as much as they were comfortable with. At any time, they could quit the project and their reason would not be questioned. This way, no participant would be obliged to stay or even to share if they did not want to do so.

Before the first meeting, all six participants had sent in their pre-survey questionnaires that were used to get a sense of how confident the participants were in preaching before the project began. The data from the pre-and post-survey questionnaires, and the six reflective journals were coded, looking for thoughts,

ideas, things that occurred frequently or were surprising to me. Two types of coding were utilized to understand the data, which came from Johnny Saldaña’s book, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Descriptive coding was used to “summarize short phrases - most often a noun or phrase” (Saldaña 2016, 102), these included phrases such as “others helped me see,” “new perspective,” “God’s character,” etc. I also utilized the In Vivo coding method to record the participants’ exact expressions to honour their voices (Saldaña 2016, 106). In the discussion of the second sermon on the Wise and Foolish Virgins, participant A said firmly that “some people in the church look like they are not living like the wise virgins, and if we love these people, we should confront them about their spirituality.” As soon as the individual said that some of the participants had a look of shock on their faces. One actually spoke up and asked the participant for clarity, saying that the individual was uncomfortable with that statement. Specifically, the word “confront” seemed too “strong and bitter,” and it was proposed that the word “enquire” would be a more appropriate word. Participant A agreed while nodding repeatedly. This information came forth from the data, which was coded inductively and placed into categories and different themes. Placing the data into categories helped bring a better understanding of the recurring ideas and phrases (Saldaña 2016, 200), as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Codes and categories

Code	Coding method	Times used	Category
Others helped me see	Descriptive code	12	Collaborative Illumination

Code	Coding method	Times used	Category
Benefit from others	Descriptive code	10	Collaborative Illumination
Help others	Descriptive code	9	Collaborative Illumination
Share with people	Descriptive code	4	Collaborative Illumination
Group environment	Descriptive code	1	Collaborative Illumination
New perspective	Descriptive code	13	Confirmation of Hearing
Thought impression	Descriptive code	11	Confirmation of Hearing
Courage	Descriptive code	2	Confirmation of Hearing
Relevance to everyday life	Descriptive code	5	Personal Illumination
Making connections	Descriptive code	4	Personal Illumination
Testimony	Descriptive code	2	Personal Illumination
Biblical	Descriptive code	1	Personal Illumination
Deep subject	Descriptive code	1	Personal Illumination
Experiencing God deeper	Descriptive code	3	Spiritual formation
Experiencing God fuller	Descriptive code	2	Spiritual formation
God in prayer	Descriptive code	1	Spiritual formation
Relying on Jesus	Descriptive code	1	Spiritual formation
"personal story"	In Vivo code	5	Collaborative Illumination
"group Bible study"	In Vivo code	3	Collaborative Illumination
"church family"	In Vivo code	2	Collaborative Illumination
"praying with others"	In Vivo code	2	Collaborative Illumination
"safe place"	In Vivo code	2	Collaborative Illumination
"Bible study"	In Vivo code	1	Collaborative Illumination
"grace"	In Vivo code	8	Confirmation of Hearing

Code	Coding method	Times used	Category
"peace"	In Vivo code	6	Confirmation of Hearing
"acceptance"	In Vivo code	3	Confirmation of Hearing
"comfort"	In Vivo code	2	Confirmation of Hearing
"forgiveness"	In Vivo code	2	Confirmation of Hearing
"love"	In Vivo code	2	Confirmation of Hearing
"answer to prayer"	In Vivo code	1	Confirmation of Hearing
"brings comfort"	In Vivo code	1	Confirmation of Hearing
"heal my heart"	In Vivo code	1	Confirmation of Hearing
"gospel"	In Vivo code	7	Personal Illumination
"short and practical"	In Vivo code	2	Personal Illumination
"God's character"	In Vivo code	10	Spiritual formation
"connection to God"	In Vivo code	4	Spiritual formation
"closer to God"	In Vivo code	3	Spiritual formation
"trust in God"	In Vivo code	2	Spiritual formation
"direction from God"	In Vivo code	1	Spiritual formation
"God is working"	In Vivo code	1	Spiritual formation
"relationship with God"	In Vivo code	1	Spiritual formation

Findings

The information provided in this section gave an overview of my understanding of the data and what these findings meant, considering confidence for preaching. The research showed that all six participants had a positive experience being part of the small group. Some of the frequent phrases used by the participants in their reflective journals and from their surveys were “New Perspective” (used thirteen times), “Others helped me see” (used twelve times),

“Benefit from others” (used ten times), “Thought Impression” (used eleven times), “God’s Character” (used ten times) and “Gospel” (used seven times). These codes were then placed into four categories called “Personal Illumination,” “Collaborative Illumination,” “Spiritual Formation” and “Confirmation of Hearing,” (see Appendices E and F for the reflective journaling questions). These four categories were derived from words and phrases recorded by participants in their journals during their time in the group. In addition, these four categories are shown below in successive order with a brief explanation.

Personal Illumination

The analysis of the data collected referred to the participant's individual experiences and interactions with the Bible passages studied and the sermon that was preached. The expressions used in this section were those that each person came up with on their own, before or after the meetings.

Collaborative Illumination

This category which emerged from the data had to do with the participants’ experiences in the group in sharing and receiving from other participants, the affirmation and the challenge of thoughts and insights from the passage studied.

Confirmation of Hearing

This category came about based on the markers that the participants identified that confirmed that they heard from God through the group. In other

words, the participants were able to identify feelings or thoughts that came about that caused them to know that God had spoken to them.

God has a way of speaking to his people through the power of his Spirit to bring enlightenment, especially within a collaborative setting. God spoke to Daniel and his three friends when they needed to know what the king's dream meant. "Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:18). This example of Daniel shows one way God speaks collaboratively in the community—when we pray together. Also, God speaks to humanity through the Scriptures. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). So, confirmation of hearing has to do with the moments participants sensed they heard from God, be it by studying the parables on their own, while listening to the sermon in a church service setting, or within the group discussion.

Spiritual Formation

This category emerged from the words and phrases used by the participants that emphasized a deeper encounter with God.

These four categories came about from the data collected, which included reflective journaling. I designed the four reflective journaling questions for this

research, wanting them to be personal, calling for deep inner reflection from the participants. In addition, I wanted the questions to pertain directly to the RSDAC, allowing the participants to think carefully as to how the parable could be applied to the RSDAC. Below are the four reflective journaling questions on each of the parables studied, showing the pre- and post- results of frequent phrases and words used by the participants.

Meeting 1: The Good Samaritan Parable

What did you hear from God (word, phrase or idea that stood out to you)?

“God’s character,” “closer to God,” “experiencing God deeper,” “experiencing God fuller,” “trust in God,” “direction from God,” “God in prayer,” “relying on Jesus,” and “the need to care for others.”

How did you hear from God (thought impression, hearing or seeing something for the first time or being reminded about what was believed already)?

“New perspective,” “benefit from others,” “group Bible study,” “personal story,” “group environment,” “my thought impression,” “God speaking through a participant,” and “by myself.”

What do you sense God invites the group to learn, accept or experience (behaviour change, accepting forgiveness, grace, repentance)? “Peace,” “grace,” “love,” “forgiveness,” “God’s acceptance,” “comfort,” and “closer to God.”

Through this sermon, what do you believe God desires the Rosthern SDA church to be? “Praying with others,” “share with people,” “Gospel,” “Bible study,” “help others,” and “be a safe place for everyone.”

Meeting 2: The Wise and Foolish Virgins Parable

What did you hear from God (word, phrase or idea that stood out to you)?
“Closer to God,” “direction from God,” “God in prayer,” “relying on Jesus,” “the
need to care for others,” “the love of Jesus,” “seeing people as children of God,”
“support system that is available,” and “preparation for the return of Jesus.”

How did you hear from God (thought impression, hearing or seeing
something for the first time or being reminded about what was believed already)?
“New perspective,” “benefit from others,” “group environment,” “my thought
impression,” and “God speaking through a participant.”

What do you sense God invites the group to learn, accept or experience
(behaviour change, accepting forgiveness, grace, repentance)? “Grace,” “God’s
acceptance,” “comfort,” “closer to God,” “live in readiness,” and “help others stay
connected with Jesus.”

Through this sermon, what do you believe God desires the Rosthern SDA
church to be? “Praying with others,” “share with people,” “Gospel,” “Bible
study,” and “be a safe place for everyone.”

Meeting 3: The Vineyard Workers

What did you hear from God (word, phrase or idea that stood out to you)?
“Closer to God,” “direction from God,” “God in prayer,” “relying on Jesus,” and
“the need to care for others.”

How did you hear from God (thought impression, hearing or seeing something for the first time or being reminded about what was believed already)?
“My thought impression,” and “God speaking through a participant.”

What do you sense God invites the group to learn, accept or experience (behaviour change, accepting forgiveness, grace, repentance)? “Grace,” “God’s acceptance,” “comfort,” and “closer to God,” “live in readiness,” “help others stay connected with Jesus,” and “serve others.”

Through this sermon, what do you believe God desires the Rosthern SDA church to be? “Share with people,” “Gospel,” “Bible study,” and “be a safe place for everyone.”

Meeting 4: Wheat and Tares

What did you hear from God (word, phrase or idea that stood out to you)?
“Closer to God,” “direction from God,” “God in prayer,” “relying on Jesus,” “the need to care for others,” “the love of Jesus,” “seeing people as children of God,” “support system that is available,” and “preparation for the return of Jesus.”

How did you hear from God (thought impression, hearing or seeing something for the first time or being reminded about what was believed already)?
“New perspective,” “benefit from others,” “group Bible study,” “personal story,” “group environment,” “my thought impression,” “by myself,” and “God speaking through a participant.”

What do you sense God invites the group to learn, accept or experience (behaviour change, accepting forgiveness, grace, repentance)? “Grace,” “God’s

acceptance,” “comfort,” and “closer to God,” “live in readiness,” and “help others stay connected with Jesus.”

Through this sermon, what do you believe God desires the Rosthern SDA church to be? “Praying with others,” “Bible study,” and “God’s character.”

These were the main repeated phrases and words used by the participants from their reflective journaling record. Even though there were four different parables that were studied and discussed, some of the words and phrases showed up in almost all the journaling records.

Responses to Survey Questionnaire

On the survey questionnaire, there were six Likert questions (questions one to five, which used statements on a point scale ranging from one extreme attitude to another), questions six to nine were short answers. Finally, question ten was also a Likert question ranging from attentive to inattentive or active to passive. These survey questionnaires were analyzed to see if anything had changed as a result of the participants being part of this project.

Below are comparisons of each participant's responses on their pre-and post-surveys.

Question 1. I have found Bible studies in a group helpful in me hearing from God.

Regarding the answer to question one in both pre-and post-surveys, Participant E and Participant C’s answer showed their experiences of Bible study in small groups remained the same. Participant F’s pre-survey result was (N/A), which could have meant that the individual had never been part of a small group

Bible study prior to this one. However, in the participant's post-survey result, the individual agreed that this experience led to better hearing from God. Participant D's response before participating in this project changed from answering agree to somewhat agree. Participant B had prior experience in small group Bible studies, which apparently was not a rich experience in hearing from God. However, at the end of this project, the participant moved from "disagree" to "strongly agree," which evidenced the experience was very positive in comparison to the individual's previous experience in other small groups. In addition, the participant's journaling record showed agreement in that "others helped me to see" the passage in a new light (and credited God for the revelation). Though this question could have been worded better, it was encouraging to see one of the participant's experiences crediting God for speaking through the group. The participant's journal entry pertaining to the Wise and Foolish Virgins is as follows:

I just wanted to say that this meeting was an unexpected answer to prayer. One of my University courses has been really challenging to my faith—it is about colonial literature, and the professor has a strong anti-Christian bias, plus Christianity colonialism was more often than not an ugly mess.... Tonight, as we met together, I felt God's presence. I was reminded that there is something mysterious, beautiful, and real behind all of this. I've always had questions about this parable, and I walked away from tonight's Zoom meeting feeling surer of my understanding of it. More

importantly, through tonight, the Spirit redirected my attention to the person this parable points to and the good news about who He was, is and will be.

This is an example of how God usually speaks to each participant through the group. When believers come together, one never knows in advance the impact that will happen. It was not until I started journaling like this that I realized how meaningful the meetings were for the participants.

Question 2. My heart gets strangely warm when I listen to a sermon.

The purpose of this question was to see if there were any emotive experiences the participants had when they listened to sermons. Except for Participant D, all other participants' pre-survey responses were the same for question two where they answered: "somewhat agree." The post-survey results for Participant E, Participant A and Participant B were also the same as their pre-survey answer: "somewhat agree." Participant C and Participant F both answered "agree." As for Participant D, the pre-survey response was "disagree," while the post-survey response was "somewhat disagree." Based on the responses to this question, it appears that the participants' interactions with sermons were more cognitive than emotive. This appears to be true based on their reflective journaling and short answers from their survey questionnaires. The most frequently occurring phrases in how they hear from God were "New perspective" (thirteen) and "Thought Impression" (eleven). In reflection on this question, I think it could have been worded better to elicit what I wanted to find out from the participants.

Question 3. I learn better when I am in a group.

Both Participant E and Participant A's pre-survey response to this question was "strongly agree," while Participant F and Participant D's responses were "agree"; Participants B and C's responses were "somewhat agree." In the post-survey responses, four participants' responses were "strongly agree," Participant E "agree," while Participant D was "somewhat agree." It appears that for Participant D, at the end of their participation in the group, their learning experience was somewhat less than before. As for the rest of the participants, it appears that the group experience at the beginning and end of the project was positive. In journaling for the Wise and Foolish Virgins, Participant A said it was a great reminder to know that a "support system is in place for you when your oil is low."

Question 4. When I am in a group, I tend to listen more than to talk.

The responses to question four were mixed in both pre-and post-surveys. The intent of this question was to see who were more introverted in a group setting and who were more extroverted. All the responses from the participants' pre- and post-surveys answers were similar, if not exact, in some cases. This data reflected that there were some individuals in the group who were more verbally expressive than others. Oftentimes I would seek to engage the more introverted participants by asking them a question directly to get their perspective. This approach would help me not to let the more expressive participants dominate the discussions without inviting and seeking to involve the ones who tend to listen more.

Question 5. I am closer to God whenever I engage with a sermon in a deeper way.

The participants' pre- and post-responses to question five did not have much variance. Four participants' pre-survey responses were “agree,” these were Participant B, Participant C, Participant E and Participant F, while Participant A responded, “somewhat agree,” and Participant D “disagree.” In the post-survey, Participant A and Participant E answered “agree,” while Participants C and F “strongly agree,” Participant B “somewhat agree,” and Participant D “somewhat disagree.” This result revealed that most participants had a positive spiritual experience when they engaged with a sermon in a deeper way.

Question 6. Which aspect of a sermon do you experience God the most? Explain your answer.

Some of the most popular words and phrases from the pre- and post-survey questionnaires were “when it is biblical,” “that includes a personal story,” “relevance to everyday life,” “new revelation,” and “short and practical.”

Question 7. Do you believe that God can speak through others to you when you are in a collaborative group? Explain your answer.

Some of the most popular words and phrases from the participants' pre- and post-survey questionnaires were “feel closer to God,” “having gained a new perspective,” “group Bible study,” and “when I experience peace.”

Question 8. Does one of the following Bible passages resonate with you - Isaiah 1:18 or 1 Thessalonians 2:7? Explain why.

Some of the most popular words and phrases from the participants' pre- and post-survey questionnaires were "experiencing God deeper," "gives me courage," and "experience forgiveness."

Question 9. What is it that normally confirms to you that you have heard from God?

Some of the most popular words and phrases from the participants' pre- and post-survey questionnaires were "feel God's presence," "feel closer to God," "sense of peace," and "feel loved."

Question 10. Please circle the number that best describes how successful you believe you are in listening to sermons.

For this question the selection ranges were as shown below from attentive to inattentive or active to passive.

Attentive	1	2	3	4	5	6	Inattentive
Active	1	2	3	4	5	6	Passive

The collective pre- and post-survey responses of all the participants to question ten are reflected in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. Pre- and post-responses to question ten (attentive to inattentive)

Participants	Pre-response	Post-response
	Attentive to Inattentive	Attentive to Inattentive
Participant A	2	2
Participant B	2	2
Participant C	3	1
Participant D	3	4
Participant E	3	4
Participant F	4	4

Table 4. Pre- and post-responses to question ten (active to passive)

Participants	Pre-response	Post-response
	Active to Passive	Active to Passive
Participant A	4	3
Participant B	4	3
Participant C	2	2
Participant D	3	4
Participant E	3	4
Participant F	4	4

When pre-and post-survey questionnaires were compared, there were differences that participants recorded. Both pre-and post-survey questionnaires had the same ten questions, five of which had the range of strongly agree (one), agree (two), somewhat agree (three), somewhat disagree (four), disagree (five) and strongly disagree (six). Another one of the ten questions also used ranking, whether the participant experienced attentive listening versus inattentive listening and active listening versus inactive listening. The other four questions required

the participants to write sentences or short paragraphs. It was from these four questions, along with the four reflective journaling questions, that the data was coded (See Appendices C and D for the pre-and post-survey questionnaire).

The intent behind question ten was to see if, in being part of this project, there would be any changes in participants' attentiveness and active ability to listen to a sermon. The data revealed that participants A, B, C, D and E expressed a few changes which occurred over the course of this project. Participant F's results remained the same in pre- and post-replies which was "4" as seen above. Participant D moved from "3" in both pre-replies to "4" in post-replies. It appears that three of the participants, A, B and C, had become more active and attentive in their listening to the sermon due to involvement in this project. There was no or slight impact for Participants D, E and F.

Participant Observation

At the beginning of my first meeting with the group, the participants looked comfortable with each other since they had no difficulty making small talk with each other. As the participants interacted with the Bible passage using the Inductive Bible Study Method, different insights were brought out, which added value to the conversation. I will never forget, in the parable of the good Samaritan, one of the participants said this:

Normally we all would want to identify with the Samaritan in the story. But this can add too much pressure in wanting to do things. So, where I see myself in the story is the beast of burden. I see Jesus as the good Samaritan and myself as the donkey who Jesus

places the burden of the wounded on. I see myself as the donkey working alongside Jesus, the good Samaritan.

I was surprised by this insight when it was brought forth about a believer being like the donkey. At first, I was a bit uncomfortable with the interpretation but after others shared their understanding of that interpretation, I embraced it. This is an example of how new perspectives and insights came out of the discussions. Two of the participants were always quiet throughout the meetings. After the first session, I reflected on how engaged the participants were, when I realized it was important to figure out a way to get these two participants more involved in the discussions. At the next meeting, I decided to ask them by name if they had anything they would like to share. This invitation made the difference in their engagement.

So, every time there was a round of interesting conversation going on, I would ask the two quiet participants what they had to share or contribute. One of these reserved participants had great difficulty with their internet, which added to the situation. As we shared our perspectives on the passages, I noticed that each participant had different insights they gathered from the passage, yet the group always found a way to see some value in each point raised, which encouraged the participants to be more confident in their process. In our first meeting, one of the participants, who listened more than spoke, shared thoughts on some implications of the passage, then said, “I know what I have just said is not deep, but that is what I saw.” The rest of the group all replied and showed great appreciation for

the contribution. These were some little ways in which confidence was given an opportunity to increase.

Another participant at our second meeting was wrestling with a concept from studying the passage and expressed in written form how the group brought great clarity to what the individual was thinking. The participant wrote, “It was a ‘where two or three gather in my name, I am there’ moment.” The individual saw the group as God’s agent that was helping her to better understand the passage, which increased the participant’s confidence in God’s grace. At the same time, I noticed that there were different viewpoints that emerged, yet God revealed himself in the diversity of views and perspectives. This was surprising to me, as I expected more similarity of views than differences. This takeaway was invaluable. I was not the only one who had this experience.

Interpretation

The objective of this research was to develop a Collaborative Model to Increase Confidence for Preaching in YA at RSDC, Saskatchewan. The results of this project showed that the participants did have a positive experience in the group in hearing from God, which increased their confidence for preaching. Two of the participants, at the end of the last meeting asked, “When would we get the opportunity to write our own sermons and preach?” One of those two participants said, “I have my topic that I want to write a sermon on.” Out of curiosity I asked what topic the participant had in mind. The answer was “something to do with mental health.” This showed me two things. Firstly, the confidence level for preaching had increased and secondly, this created an opportunity for the church

to hear a sermon on mental health, something I have never preached on at this church. This is one of the great benefits I saw in having YA being part of the preaching team, in that they would bring awareness to subjects and topics that oftentimes have been overlooked or deemed irrelevant. I could see the RSDAC benefiting from hearing a sermon on mental health awareness, especially since there are a few members that are dealing with issues relating to mental health.

What I will be doing next is to encourage the YA to continue this collaborative sharing and discussion on Bible passages and their implications so that the Inductive Bible Study Method tools will remain active in their minds. The research findings suggest that through this collaborative initiative, the participants had positive experiences in hearing from God, which positively impacted their confidence. Training the YA for preaching is the next step.

All participants were able to do their pre- and post-survey questionnaires easily. However, only three participants completed their pre- and post-reflective journaling. In correspondence with the participants after the project, part of the challenge was nothing to do with the actual journaling; instead, there were other competing factors regarding school. This could be because the project was conducted at the beginning of the school semester in September.

Participant D quit the project because the individual sensed it was competing with time in school. Nonetheless, Participant D was still willing to do the post-survey, which surprisingly showed that the limited time spent on the project still impacted the individual hearing from God. In the individual's post-survey regarding the group experience, the participant said, "When we were in

Bible study, there would be several times where others would say something, and it would either change my perspective or add to it.” This response caused me to believe that the time spent in the group, though limited, had a positive impact on the participant’s confidence.

At the end of the project, each participant was contacted privately in an Instagram chat group created for this purpose and asked the question: Which of the sessions did you find most helpful in your hearing better from God: pre-sermon or post-sermon discussion? Four of the participants said they hear better from God in the pre-sermon meetings, while the two others said they hear better from God in the post-sermon meeting.

Outcomes

The primary outcome of this research revealed that the participants did hear better from God, which impacted their confidence for preaching. Though all the participants knew each other prior to this research, I sensed an even deeper closeness occurred among the participants, based on the assumption that they shared personal insights about their spiritual lives. The reactions of surprise from one another showed that perhaps no one knew of these inner thoughts. One participant shared about how often the individual wondered before regarding the assurance of salvation, but after being in the group, was reminded that, “God loves us all and we are not saved by what we do, but by who he is.” There is closeness that comes about, which requires vulnerability for it to be truly effective and transformational. To benefit from a model such as this one, participants must be open to listen to others’ perspectives even if they do not agree. Seeing things in

a new light was one of the most repeated phrases from the data. What I observed with the YA in how they handled new ideas was that the YA were willing to accept a new idea, especially if it was gospel-centred, emphasizing what Jesus did for us and is doing now in the world. The data findings would suggest that in developing a model to increase confidence collaboratively for preaching in the YA of the RSDAC, the four main areas where this was done were Personal Illumination, Collaborative Illumination, Spiritual Formation and Confirmation of Hearing.

Personal Illumination

This category from the data showed that the participants recognized significant insight and inspiration from their own personal study of the parable and while listening to the sermon. As a matter of fact, almost all of the participants said they looked forward to hearing the sermons that came about from the discussion, especially since they spent time wrestling with the passages themselves. In seeking to increase confidence for preaching, some personal work needed to be done by the YA on their own.

Collaborative Illumination

The participants identified receiving significant insight and inspiration from the collaborative study of the parable. Being in the presence of others with the same shared value was one of the strengths the YA had. All of the participants had the same desire of wanting to increase their confidence for preaching. I feel

this factor made the YA more open to hear and receive what others had to say. There was a deep level of spiritual vulnerability as they shared their personal application of the passage to their lives. The group also had a good balance in my view, where some of the participants tended to highlight what God wanted us to do, while others tended to highlight what God has done for us. In the journaling of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, one participant wrote, “I need to reach out to people that I might see hurting.” For the same question, another participant wrote, “There is a support system for you when your oil is low.” The point here is not to emphasize one over the other; rather, to show how the group added perspective and balance to each other, which is so crucial for effective preaching.

Spiritual Formation

Developing confidence for preaching does not come about without a strong connection with God. The participants identified the importance of spending personal time with God in prayer, Bible study, worship and witnessing. It is God that gives us strength and courage to work and be co-labourers in his vineyard. There is a call for relying on Jesus daily, spending time in his Word and developing a strong relationship with God so that when the YA preach it would not be words alone, but it would be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Confirmation of Hearing

God gave confirmation to the participants each week in the discussion session even with things that did not pertain directly to the study. The participants

shared that they had received confirmation in multiple ways of God communicating with them—both personally and in the group. For instance, one participant spoke about being lazy in not taking their car to get an oil change even though the warning light had been on for more than a month. Someone responded out of concern by sharing the dangers of not heeding the warning and what could possibly be a terrible outcome. In the journal, the participant who needed to change the oil in their car wrote that they saw the responses from the group as God's way of speaking to them; therefore, they were encouraged to get the oil change. The next day after the meeting, when the participant got the oil changed, the individual posted in the research group's Instagram chat, “I did it this morning; my oil has now been changed!” For this participant, what she received as confirmation that God spoke was courage. The participant did not have the courage to do it before, for reasons I do not know, but after sharing in that group meeting and receiving what others in the group had to say, the individual went to get it done.

At the end of our final meeting, all five participants that did the entire project expressed an interest in wanting to do the project again. Of course, not at the beginning of a school semester but at any other time. It was interesting to see that in their journaling the YA were passionate about areas such as “equality, experiencing the gospel in the sermon, God’s character etc.” In other words, the things the YA were passionate about, they managed to show from the various parables we studied.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A collaborative model was developed with a few young adults of the Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church, Saskatchewan, to increase their confidence for preaching. As mentioned earlier, at the end of our final meeting and with a bright smile, one of the participants said to me, “I have my topic that I want to write a sermon on.” Out of curiosity I asked her what topic she had in mind, to which she mentioned something to do with mental health. The collaborative approach did allow the participants to grow in their confidence for preaching and God’s ability to speak to them through their peers.

Participant B said this in journaling on the Wise and Foolish Virgins, “For the first time, I felt that there was hope, even in times when my metaphorical oil is running low. That sense of hope was what I felt God was trying to communicate with me.” This response came because of others sharing a more gospel perspective on a parable, whereas Participant B never had, since the individual had always self-identified as a foolish virgin with no oil. I find such takeaways very encouraging. It is my conviction that this project has shown that God has prepared some members of the church to serve in the various ministries for its upbuilding, and the sermon-based small group should be one of such ministries to be included in the church.

I learned from this project that there are people in churches who are gifted but lack confidence to function in those areas of giftedness. If ministry leaders journey with them collaboratively, that process can bring empowerment. Also, this model is transferable to other ministry contexts. If a preacher would like a more robust understanding of their congregation to preach more relevant and meaningful sermons, collaborative sermon-based small group bible study is an effective option. This could be done in a one-year cycle where three to four times a year (and for at least two months), a different group could join in the sermon-based group to deepen their desire to hear from God.

Having said this, from the experience in this project, much attention should be given to the time of year if one is going to involve participants who are in school. There was strong conflict for some of the participants between choosing to do schoolwork or coming to the pre-sermon meeting. One of the YA who was affected greatly was a freshman in college. If this project had taken place in summer, it is likely that more participants would do reflective journaling, if not all. In the beginning, all participants agreed to journal three times per cycle for a total of twelve journaling entries; however, after the first cycle, most participants only found it possible to journal twice per cycle (pre- and post-sermon). Only in the beginning did all participants do these three sets of journaling. We had to agree on doing only pre- and post-sermon after the group session. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, though not all were able to do the reflective journaling, they all did the pre- and post-survey questionnaire. So perhaps, by using surveys alone with teens or young adults, one may have a

greater chance of participants feeling less burdened and thus more willing to do survey evaluations. As the research question was refined over the course of the project, it was evident that the questions, though carefully designed, could have been more relevant relating to confidence. The two-month time frame of the project gave me sufficient data to determine that the participants' confidence for preaching had increased.

One thing that was also mentioned by one of the participants, which was insightful, was the suggestion to conduct the same project with some seniors (older members). The participant said since the Rosthern SDA church is mainly made up of seniors, this experience could be a great blessing to their spirituality. This is certainly something I am willing to explore further. Another area worth exploring for further development could be creating a sermon-based small group with the pastor from Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church to collaboratively hear from God. Rather than focusing on increasing the group members' confidence in preaching, this time it would allow the pastor to benefit by discussions with the group, gaining their insights and increasing his ability to hear from God. The group members, as well as the pastor, could benefit from the process.

Future Plans

Phase one, which is what this portfolio covered, was to increase confidence in the participants who expressed a lack of confidence for preaching. This lack of confidence they shared was the feeling of being inadequate about their ability to preach. So, phase one was a gentle way of seeking to help increase

their confidence. They were not required in this phase to know anything about homiletics, the art of preaching, nor hermeneutics, the ability to interpret Scripture effectively. I provided them with at most two pages of excerpts from Bible commentaries. This allowed the YA to have a deeper insight of the parables based on these excerpts from the selected commentaries such as the *New International Version Application Commentary* (Wilkins et al., 2004) and *New American Commentary* (Blomberg, 1992). As stated before, phase one was a gentle way of seeking to help increase their confidence, while phase two will be geared towards competence.

Phase two of this project will occur in the summer of 2023 for two months, (July and August), and the focus of this phase will be competency. By competence, I mean the YA will (hopefully) develop the needed skill set to write Christ-centred sermons and preach them effectively. In addition, the YA will be required to read a few selected chapters which will be determined by me from the book titled *On Preaching* by H.B. Charles. This book is easy to read, and it offers great insight in both writing sermons and preaching them. The YA will be required to read the required chapters before the beginning of July 2023. They will be emailed scanned pages from the book so they will not have to purchase the book (unless they wished to do so). Then during the summer of July and August, we will have four one-hour meetings on Zoom, every other Monday at 7:00 pm where we will discuss one of the assigned chapters. Half an hour will be devoted to discussion time, and then the next half hour will be a short presentation that I

will do on sermon writing. At the end of phase two, each of the YA would be expected to write a sermon which will be preached in the late fall.

In phase three (in late fall), I will do one presentation on the art of preaching (body language, pronouncing words, using stage space) and then the YA will preach their sermon. From there, I will schedule them for preaching once every other month. At the end of each sermon, the YA who preached will be evaluated by the rest of the group. Then on the following Sunday, we will meet on Zoom for half an hour and share the feedback. This evaluation process would be done for all the YA until everyone receives an evaluation.

It is important to know if, in the end, this entire process does make an impact on the YA lack of confidence and in them developing competency for preaching. A final personal evaluation form will be given to the YA for them to rate themselves and I will have a one-on-one session with each YA to discuss their self-assessment. This calls for having open and honest conversations with each YA. If any YA does not seem to demonstrate competency in their preaching, I will have to tell them in a gentle way what my concerns are. If they would like me to help them in the area or areas of concern, I will do so and provide additional resources to help. But if they decide that they do not want to go through that process, I will have to share with them that I will re-start the process by giving someone else the chance to grow. This is an overview of what phase two and three entails.

Finally, I do see great potential to develop this model and make it available to other churches. I mean to create an online platform and call it Before

the Pulpit: Together We Preach. I could offer consultation in preaching and also counsel people interested in empowering young adults for preaching.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information Letter

Greetings everyone!

This letter serves as my invitation to you to participate in my research for my Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at Tyndale University.

There are many ways in which an individual can hear from God - Scripture, spiritual songs, dreams, to name a few. I also believe one can hear from God through community-in this instance small groups. The purpose of my research project is to allow you to have first-hand experience and exposure to the brainstorming phase of sermon preparation. The next step will be to measure if you hear better from God by virtue of being part of the sermon-based small group.

In the small group, all participants, including me, would read and make notes in advance (on our own) of the assigned Bible passage that will be developed into the sermon for that week. The meetings would be every other Tuesday for one hour, over Zoom, to discuss the passage and to listen to each other and give feedback. The title of my research topic is “developing a collaborative model with a few young adults of the Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church, Saskatchewan, to increase their confidence for preaching.” I hope that there will be at least seven to ten young adults (age 18 minimum) interested in participating in this project.

This research will be done over two months, starting the second week in September and ending in late October 2022. The participants' ability to better hear (by understanding Scripture and its application to life) from God will be measured through survey questionnaires, reflective journaling, and participant observation. For each of the four sermons, there will be Zoom meetings before and after the sermon, and opportunity for journaling. At the beginning and at the end of the project, the same survey questionnaire would be administered.

If you have any questions, please direct them to me, Pastor Carvil Richards at

Also, if you have any question about the ethical nature of this research please contact the Chair of Research Ethics Board at Tyndale University at reb@tyndale.ca.

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. As we seek to explore other ways to hear from God.

Blessings,

Pastor Carvil Richards

Appendix B: Consent Form

Please print name clearly:

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I will be participating in research called “Creating Sermon-Based Small Group with the Young Adults from Rosthern Seventh-day Adventist Church to Collaboratively Hear from God.”
3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time without consequence.
4. I understand that data will be collected by means of survey questionnaires, reflective journaling, ethnography and unstructured group interviews.
5. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data, both now and in the future. I also understand that the data may be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will be of generalized findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. If I am interested, I am entitled to a copy of the findings.
6. I understand that there is no monetary incentive or reward for my participation in this research.
7. I am aware that if I have any questions or concerns about this research or my participation, I should direct them to the researcher, Carvil Richards
or to the Assistant Director of the
DMin Program, Dr. Mark Chapman at 416-226-6620 Ext. 2602
8. I should direct any ethical concerns about the research to Tyndale’s Research Ethics Board at REB@tyndale.ca.

Participant Signature: Date:

Appendix C: Pre-Survey Questionnaire

Name _____ Date _____

Instructions: Please begin by filling in the above blanks with your code name, date and message title. Then read each statement carefully and respond by circling the answer that best describes your personal experience with sermons and spiritual small groups. Please answer each question as openly and honestly as possible.

Thanks again for participating in this study.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	I have found Bible studies in a group helpful in me hearing from God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
2.	My heart gets strangely warm when I listen to a sermon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
3.	I learn better when I am in a group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
4.	When I am in a group, I tend to listen more than to talk?	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5.	I am closer to God whenever I engage with a sermon deeply?	1	2	3	4	5	6	
6.	Which aspect of a sermon do you experience God the most? Explain your answer.							
7.	Do you believe that God can speak through others to you when you are in a collaborative group? Explain your answer?							
8.	Does one of the following Bible passages resonate with you Isaiah 1:18 or 1 Thessalonians 2:7? Explain why?							
9.	What is it that normally confirms to you that you have heard from God?							
10.	Please circle the number that best describes how successful you believe you are in listening to sermons.							
	Attentive	1	2	3	4	5	6	Inattentive
	Active	1	2	3	4	5	6	Passive

Appendix D: Post-Survey Questionnaire

Name _____ Date _____

Instructions: Please begin by filling in the above blanks with your code name, date and message title. Then read each statement carefully and respond by circling the answer that best describes your personal experience with sermons and spiritual small groups. Please answer each question as openly and honestly as possible.

Thanks again for participating in this study.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	I have found Bible studies in a group helpful in me hearing from God.	1	2	3	4	5	6	n/a
2.	My heart gets strangely warm when I listen to a sermon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
3.	I learn better when I am in a group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
4.	When I am in a group, I tend to listen more than to talk?	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5.	I am closer to God whenever I engage with a sermon deeply?	1	2	3	4	5	6	
6.	Which aspect of a sermon do you experience God the most? Explain your answer.							
7.	Do you believe that God can speak through others to you when you are in a collaborative group? Explain your answer?							
8.	Does one of the following Bible passages resonate with you Isaiah 1:18 or 1 Thessalonians 2:7? Explain why?							
9.	What is it that normally confirms to you that you have heard from God?							
10.	Please circle the number that best describes how successful you believe you are in listening to sermons.							
	Attentive	1	2	3	4	5	6	Inattentive
	Active	1	2	3	4	5	6	Passive

Appendix E: Pre-Sermon Reflective Journaling Questions

1. What did you hear from God (Word, phrase or idea that stood out to you)?
2. How did you hear it from God (Thought impression, hearing or seeing something for the first time or reminded about what was believed already)?
3. What do you sense God invites the group to learn, accept or experience (Behaviour change, accepting forgiveness, grace, repentance)?
4. Through this sermon, what do you believe God desires for the Rosthern SDA church to be?

Appendix F: Post-Sermon Reflective Journaling Questions

1. What did you hear from God (Word, phrase or idea that stood out to you)?
2. How did you hear it from God (Thought impression, hearing or seeing something for the first time or reminded about what was believed already)?
3. What do you sense God invites the group to learn, accept or experience (Behaviour change, accepting forgiveness, grace, repentance)?
4. Through this sermon, what do you believe God desires for the Rosthern SDA church to be?

Appendix G: Participant Observation

The participant observation which I did for this research had to do with paying attention to how the participants were interacting in the group meetings. I looked for their facial expressions, body language and tone as they responded to the questions and the sharing in the conversation we had about the Bible passage.

Appendix H: Phase and Timetable

Steps	When	Duration	How
Meet with board of elders.	March 1, 2022	1/2 hour on Zoom (or in person at the church)	Discuss the project and answer questions about the research.
Email out information letter about project	Wednesday, August 17, 2022	½ hour	Contact youth and young adults (via Instagram youth group) and ask them for their email addresses to which I would email the information letter. Those interested would be invited to join an information session Monday, August 22.
Invite all youth and young adults who are interested in learning about the project and wanting to be part of it.	Tuesday, August 22, 2022	1 hour on Zoom at 7 PM	Discuss the project and listen to the participants thoughts as to the direction of the project, their expectations and to answer questions.
Distribute consent forms and questionnaires.	August 24, 2022	15 minutes	This will be done via email to all the participants.
Basic training in the Inductive Bible Study method.	August 30, 2022	1 hour (on Zoom or in person at the church)	The participants will be taught how to use the Inductive Bible Study method when studying the Scriptures; and to discuss reflective journaling.
Decision on what the 4 sermons would be.			Finally, the four sermons would be decided upon.
Hand out Journals and passages to study.	Thursday, September 1, 2022	10 minutes	I would drop off the journals and pens at the church, so the participants can have their journals before the first Tuesday meeting. In case there

Steps	When	Duration	How
			were any participants who would not be present at this time, I would make arrangements for them to receive the journal and pen.
First pre-sermon meeting.	Tuesday Sept 6, 2022, at 6 PM	1 hour	Icebreaker, prayer, discussion, brainstorming, journaling, closing prayer.
First sermon preached.	Sabbath, Sept 10, 2022, at 11:30 AM	30 minutes	Participants will receive a text message at 2PM to do reflective journaling without group interaction.
First post- sermon meeting.	Sunday, Sept 11, 2022, at 6 PM	30 minutes	Group discussion about the sermon and then reflective journaling
Second pre-sermon meeting.	Tuesday, Sep 20, 2022, at 6 PM	1 hour	Icebreaker, prayer, discussion, brainstorming, journaling, closing prayer.
Second sermon preached.	Sabbath, Sept 24, 2022, at 11:30 AM	30 minutes	Participants will receive a text message at 2 PM to do reflective journaling without group interaction.
Second post-sermon meeting.	Sunday, Sept 25, 2022, at 6 PM	30 minutes	Group discussion about the sermon and then reflective journaling.
Third pre-sermon-meeting.	Tuesday, October 4, 2022, at 6 PM	1 hour	Icebreaker, prayer, discussion, brainstorming, journaling, closing prayer.
Third sermon preached.	Sabbath, October 8, 2022, at 11:30AM	30 minutes	Participants will receive a text message at 2 PM to do reflective journaling without group interaction.

Steps	When	Duration	How
Third post-sermon group meeting.	Sunday, October 9, 2022, at 6 PM	30 minutes	Group discussion about the sermon and then reflective journaling.
Fourth pre-sermon group meeting.	Tuesday, October 18, 2022, at 6 PM	1 hour	Icebreaker, prayer, discussion, brainstorming, journaling, closing prayer.
Fourth sermon preached.	Sabbath, October 22, 2022, at 11:30 AM	30 minutes	Participants will receive a text message at 2 PM to do reflective journaling without group interaction.
Fourth and final post-sermon meeting.	Sunday, October 23, 2022, at 6 PM	40 minutes	Group discussion about the sermon, reflective journaling, and the final group debriefing.
Ask participants to do the post survey questionnaire and submit it with their final journaling.	Monday, October 24, 2022	15 minutes	Note: At the end of each post sermon-based meeting the participants will be asked to scan their journaling notes and email to the researcher.
Submission of scanned copies of journals and post questionnaires.	Sabbath, November 12, 2022	10 minutes	Participants will be reminded that they are not obligated to hand it in if they don't feel like doing so.
Analysis and Evaluation	November 1-15, 2022	two weeks	I code, analyze, interpret and evaluate data.
Thank participants	November 25, 2022	20 minutes	Email thank you letter to participants.
Submit first final draft of portfolio for feedback.	December 15, 2022	10 minutes	Email to Dr. Chapman the draft portfolio.
Make corrections to first final draft after reviewed by	January 16-20, 2023	4 days	Email Dr. Thornton my advisor, Abstract and Introduction from DMin portfolio final first draft.

Steps	When	Duration	How
Dr. Chapman then sent to advisor.			
Work with advisor for editing and reviewing	January 25-February 20, 2023	20 days	Send the various chapters of the portfolio to advisor for reviewing and adjustments.
Submit DMin portfolio to readers.	February 21, 2023.	10 minutes	Email the DMin portfolio to the readers.
DMin portfolio presentation.	Tuesday February 28, 2023, at 10 AM.	1 hour	This will be done virtually on Zoom.
DMin Hearing	March 7, 2023, at 10 AM.	4 hours	This will be done virtually on Zoom.
Complete all revisions from the feedback received at the hearing	March 22, 2023	2 weeks	Taking time off from work to focus on the needed revision.
Submit final draft of DMin portfolio to DMin office.	March 31, 2023	few days	Organizing with someone in Toronto to drop off the physical copy at Tyndale since I am in Saskatchewan.

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