

UTILIZING VISUAL OBJECTS IN PREACHING TO ADULTS IN ORDER TO
INCREASE MEMORY RETENTION OF SERMON CONTENT

By

BARRY GLYNN SIMON

May 1999

AN APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MISSIONS
ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Barry Simon, D.Min.

Utilizing Visual Objects in Preaching to Adults in order to Increase Memory Retention of Sermon Content

Lillian Breckenridge, Ed.D., Supervisor

This project was developed because the researcher believed strongly that preachers could increase the congregation's memory of sermon content. The project sought to prove that an intentional inclusion of visual objects within an adult message would increase the retention of sermon content.

The project took place at Valley Fellowship Church, an independent charismatic church located in Huntsville, Alabama. The church, which has two Sunday morning services, had a combined Sunday morning attendance of 371 at the time of the project. The project involved three Sunday mornings. Each Sunday, one morning service served as a control group while the other service served as a test group. The only variable manipulated in the project was the use of a visual aid with the test group and the absence of a visual aid with the control group. Twenty volunteers for each service were solicited via phone by a research assistant and asked to complete three questionnaires immediately following the

service that they attended. One questionnaire secured demographic information. The second questionnaire tested the volunteers' abilities to recall the sermon's themes and points. The third questionnaire sought to test the volunteers' abilities to recognize the theme and points in a multiple-choice format. Five volunteers from each service were asked to complete follow-up questionnaires two weeks after the sermon. The questions on the follow-up questionnaire attempted to identify how many of the volunteers were able to still recall the sermon content.

A research assistant tabulated the results and demographic variables were established to identify who was most affected by the visual objects. The questions were totaled and then averaged together to generate the overall differences and similarities of the two groups.

The results of the initial questionnaires revealed a five percent difference in retention between the groups as a whole on the recall questionnaire with the visual group scoring higher. On the recognition questions, the test group scored one percent higher than the control group. Finally, the follow-up questionnaire revealed that the visual group remembered 28.5 percent better than the non-visual group.

The visual objects did increase the adults' abilities to retain sermon themes and points. The hypothesis was supported. No statistically significant claims were made due to the use of unvalidated materials in questioning but the project did generate positive results.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of Jerry Glynn Simon, who planted seeds that
will continue to bear fruit

PREFACE

Society is changing. The electronic age has created new challenges for the Church. In this age of multi-media frenzy, questions rise whether the sermon is a legitimate way to continue to convey the Gospel. The sermon is a legitimate and necessary tool in the Church today. The changes in society afford the pastor opportunities to utilize creativity and variation in sermon delivery.

This project sought to find if visual objects used in the course of preaching to adults increased the retention of sermon themes and points. Valley Fellowship Church, an independent charismatic church, located in Huntsville, Alabama, served as the setting for the project. Through the course of the project, the hypothesis proved to be true. In this project, the primary Bible translation was the New International Version.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the help of countless people. Several of these people deserve special mention. First, Valley Fellowship Church, including the pastors and congregation, deserves special thanks for allowing the project to take place in its services.

Two librarians worked hard to insure that the researcher received the materials that were needed. Carolyn Baker, of the Interlibrary Loan office at Oral Roberts University, was a true blessing. Barbara McCullough, from the library at Lee University, offered the researcher check-out privileges that assisted in completing Chapter two in a timely manner.

Dr. Clifton Pearson, chairman of the art department at Alabama A & M University, also deserves special accolades for loaning materials and expertise in presenting the potter's wheel message. Special thanks goes to Pastors Keith Buchanan, Steve Hill, and George Sawyer for their insight and expertise in the subject of visual preaching. The supervisor of the project, Dr. Lillian Breckenridge, provided excellent insight and helped to guide the researcher through the obstacles involved in this type of research. Professor Carol Blan and Dr. Dan Hedges, the dean of the Doctor of Ministry program also provided excellent insight and assistance in the process, as well. The researcher's wife, Stephanie Simon, deserves perhaps the

most recognition for assisting throughout the Doctor of Ministry experience. Her listening ear, expertise, and patience caused the process to be a true learning experience. She typed, edited, and proofed each page of the manuscript and made much of the researcher's writing sound better than he ever dreamed it would. Any mistakes or errors that remain in the manuscript should be attributed to the researcher.

Finally, thanks be to God for His blessing and favor as the project was developed and completed.

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