RESOURCING THE POSTMODERN PASTOR
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Introduction

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

1. What are the ministry priorities of Church of the Nazarene pastors 35 years old or younger?

2. What are the attitudes of these pastors about Christian beliefs, spirituality, and congregational faith formation?

3. What types of resources do these pastors seek in order to foster spiritual growth in their adult congregants?

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

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

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

In summary, the young pastors (Sample A) in this study were predominantly White males and full-time pastors who had completed at least some education in a Nazarene college or university; most earned a degree there. They had been pastoring five years or less and described their congregation's worship style as a blend of traditional and contemporary, although they had a higher frequency of liturgical style worship than the older pastors (14% and 8% respectively).

They described their congregations as a mix of approximately 60% of persons older than 45 years and 40% younger than 45 years.

Table 1

Demographics of Study Participants in Comparison to all Nazarene Pastors

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

All values reported as a percentage

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

Findings

Ministry Priorities of Pastors 35 years old or younger

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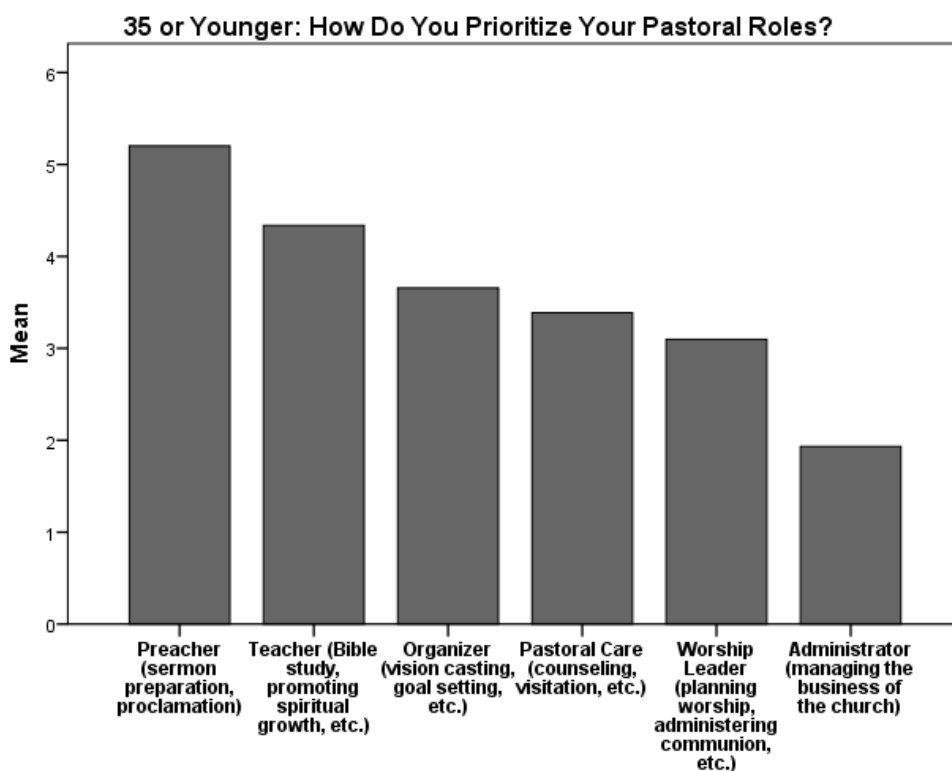
Figure 1. Young pastors' prioritization of pastoral roles, 1 = *least important*, 6 = *most important*.

Upon further examination of the frequencies of individual responses, 78.5% of pastors in Sample A reported that Preacher was their first or second ministerial role priority. Additionally, 53.3% of these pastors identified Teacher as their first or second

ministerial role priority (see Figure 2). The young pastors appeared to be making a strong statement that the top priority of their ministries is the pastoral task of delivering the Word of God to congregants in preaching or teaching venues.
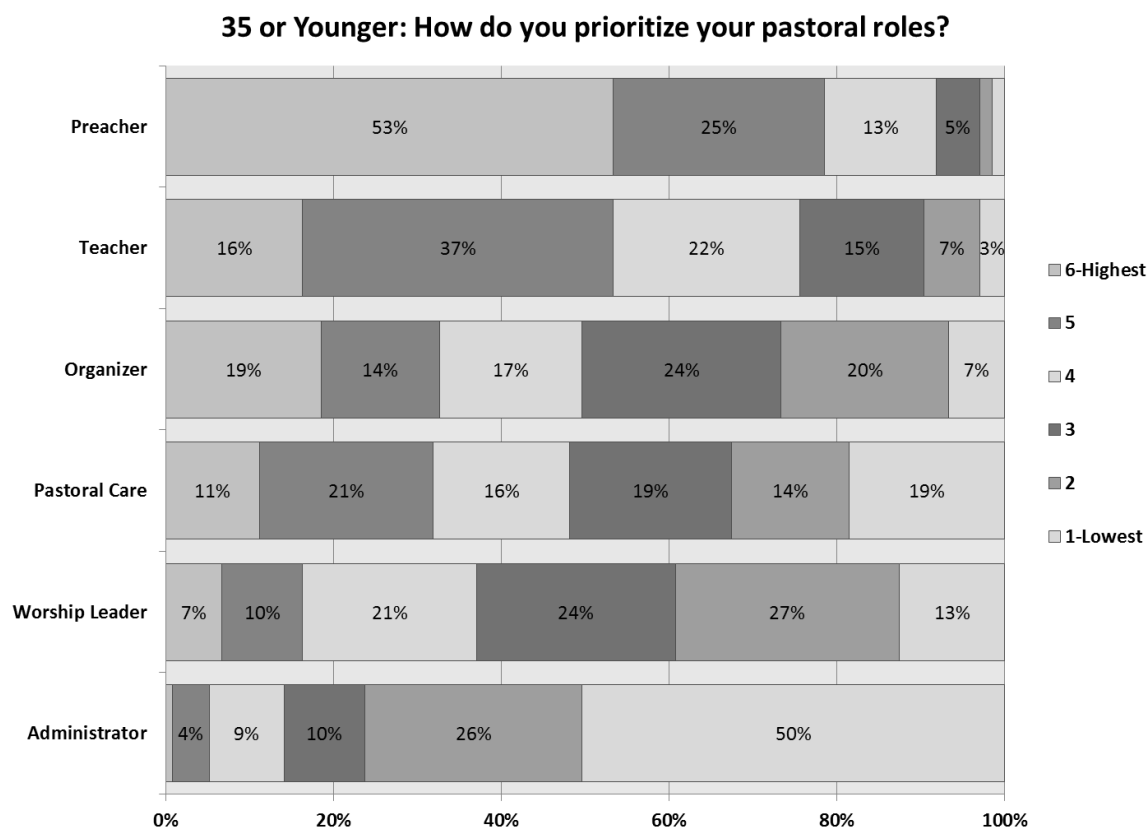
35 or Younger: How do you prioritize your pastoral roles?

Role	6-Highest	5	4	3	2	1-Lowest
Preacher	53%	25%	13%	5%		
Teacher	16%	37%	22%	15%	7%	3%
Organizer	19%	14%	17%	24%	20%	7%
Pastoral Care	11%	21%	16%	19%	14%	19%
Worship Leader	7%	10%	21%	24%	27%	13%
Administrator	4%	9%	10%	26%	50%	

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

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

Table 2

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

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

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

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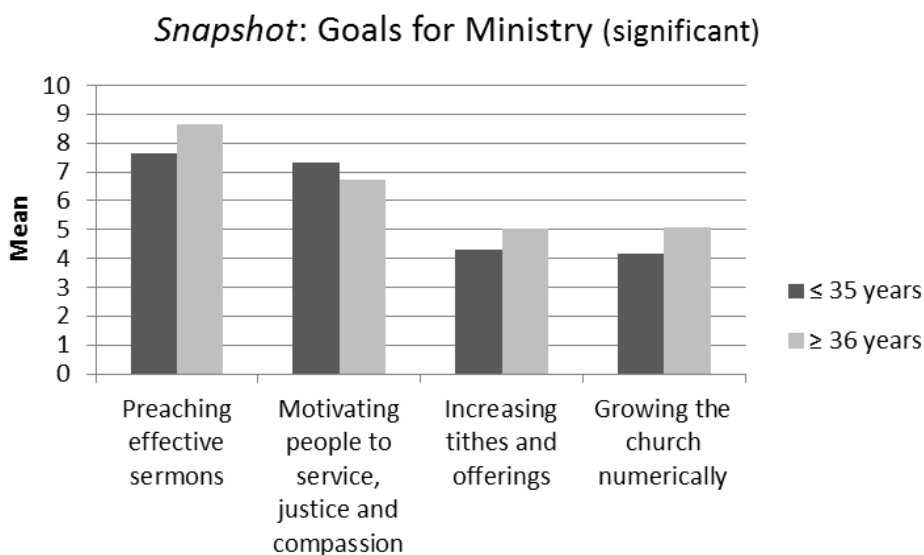
Snapshot: Goals for Ministry (significant)

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

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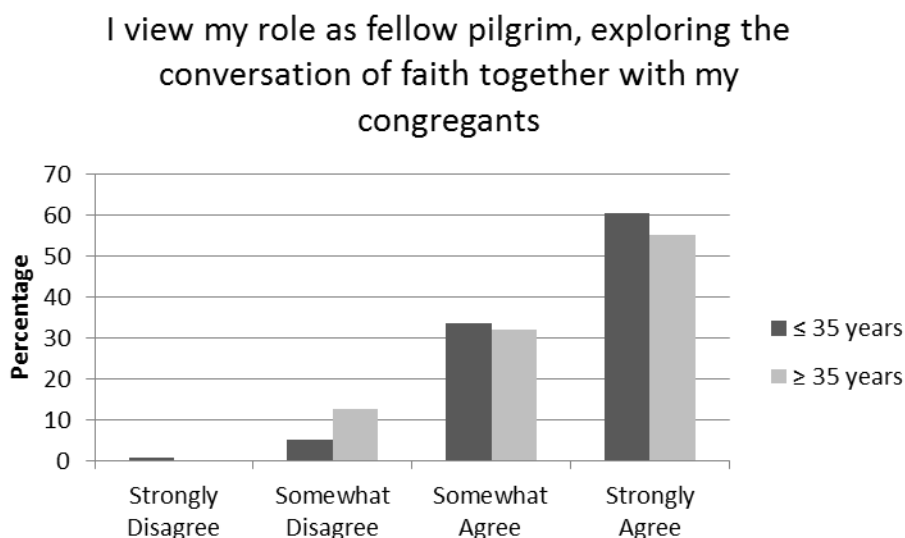
I view my role as spiritual CEO of my congregation

I view my role as fellow pilgrim, exploring the conversation of faith together with my congregants

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

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

Table 3

Pastoral Role: Age ≤ 35 vs. ≥ 36 years

		n	M	SD
I view my role as spiritual CEO of my congregation.	Age 35 or younger	135	2.28**	1.02
	Age 36 or older	87	2.62**	0.99
I view my role as fellow pilgrim, exploring the conversation of faith	Age 35 or younger	135	3.54	0.63
	Age 36 or older	87	3.43	0.71

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*
** $p < .01$

Summary, research question one.

In summary, when considering research question one, the young pastors surveyed clearly identified their primary pastoral roles as preacher and teacher. However, within those roles they envisioned themselves functioning not as congregational CEOs, but as fellow pilgrims exploring

the conversation of faith together with congregants. When asked to identify their goals for ministry, the pastors reiterated their commitment to leading people in faith formation and in preaching or teaching their congregants. They were more interested than the 36-or-older pastors in matters of social justice. They were less interested than the older pastors in growing the church numerically or raising tithes and offerings.

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

In order to answer research question two and as a starting point in the examination of young pastors' attitudes toward spirituality and discipleship in their congregations, the researcher thought it useful to determine if these pastors believed there was a difference in worldview between them and their adult congregants. A series of questions explored this possibility, as well as whether the pastors would self-identify as someone with a postmodern worldview. A Likert-type scale measured the responses; 1 = *strongly disagree,* 4 = *strongly agree.*

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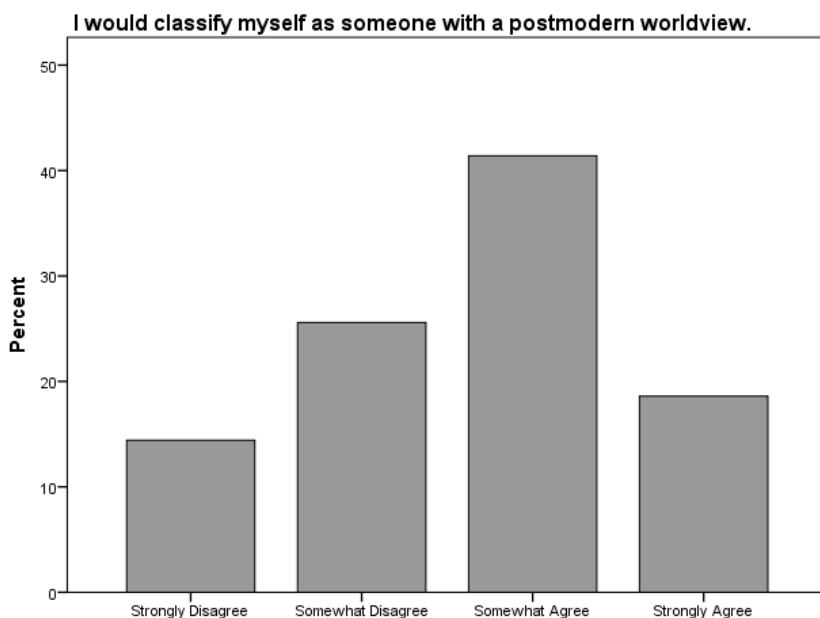
Figure 5. Young pastors' self-identification as someone having a postmodern worldview. Reported as a percentage.

In the interest of determining whether this perceived generation gap was a sentiment shared by older pastors as well as the young demographic, the researcher compared responses from Sample

A and Sample B for the same set of questions (see Table 4). A *t*-test was run to determine the statistical significance of the differences between the younger and older groups on each of the worldview questions. In three of four cases, the difference between the younger pastors' and older pastors' responses were statistically significant.

Table 4

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

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

Note: Likert-type scale, 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree
**$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

When considering whether there was a generation gap between them and their congregants, the young pastors reported significantly higher scores than the older pastors: $p < .001$ level, $t(220) = 4.7$. Similarly, the young pastors resonated more strongly with the sentiment that their congregants' worldviews differed from their own: $p < .01$ level, $t(216) = 2.9$. There were no statistically significant differences in the levels of agreement between Sample A and Sample B when considering whether pastor and congregation shared the same understanding of discipleship and spiritual formation. On the last question in the set, the young pastors were more willing to classify themselves as someone with a postmodern worldview: $p < .001$ level, $t(220) = 3.6$ (see Figure 6).

Snapshot: Perceived Differences in Pastors' and Congregants' Worldviews (significant)
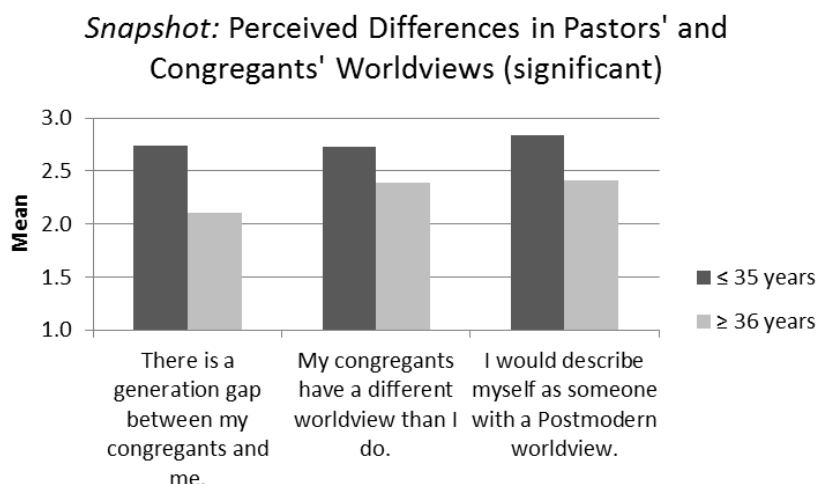

Figure 6. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' statistically significant responses on questions pertaining to worldview, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

Authority.

Although the young pastors resonated with the term *postmodern*, their responses seemed to fall in line with a more conservative approach to sources of authority, especially as that pertains to Scripture. When asked to describe how important various sources of authority were in the teaching of their congregations 98% of the young pastors responded that the *Bible* was "absolutely foundational" to worship and teaching, followed by the *Holy Spirit* (82% absolutely foundational), *historic creeds, doctrine and tradition* (25% absolutely foundational), *human reason* (13% absolutely foundational) and *personal experience* (12% absolutely foundational). None of the 35-or-younger pastors considered the Bible less than a "very important" source of authority in their churches, earning the proportionally highest mean score on any question in this study with 3.98 out of 4.0. (see Figure 7).
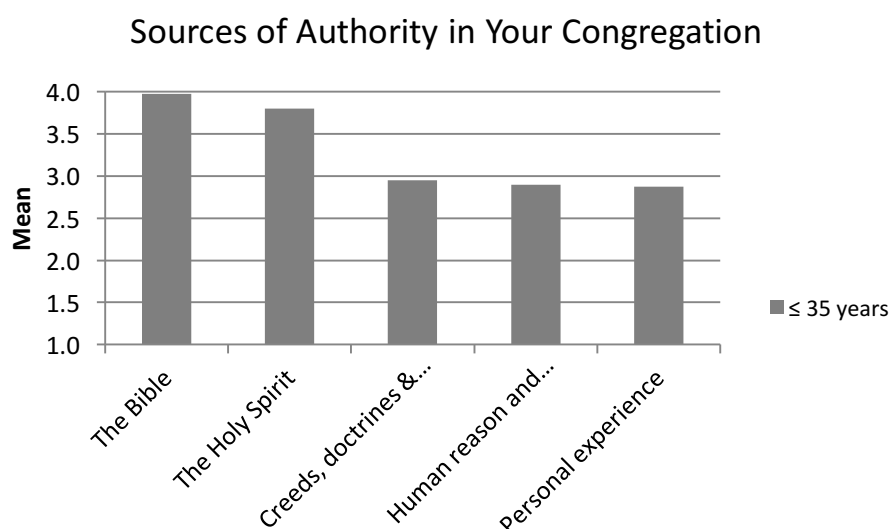
Sources of Authority in Your Congregation

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

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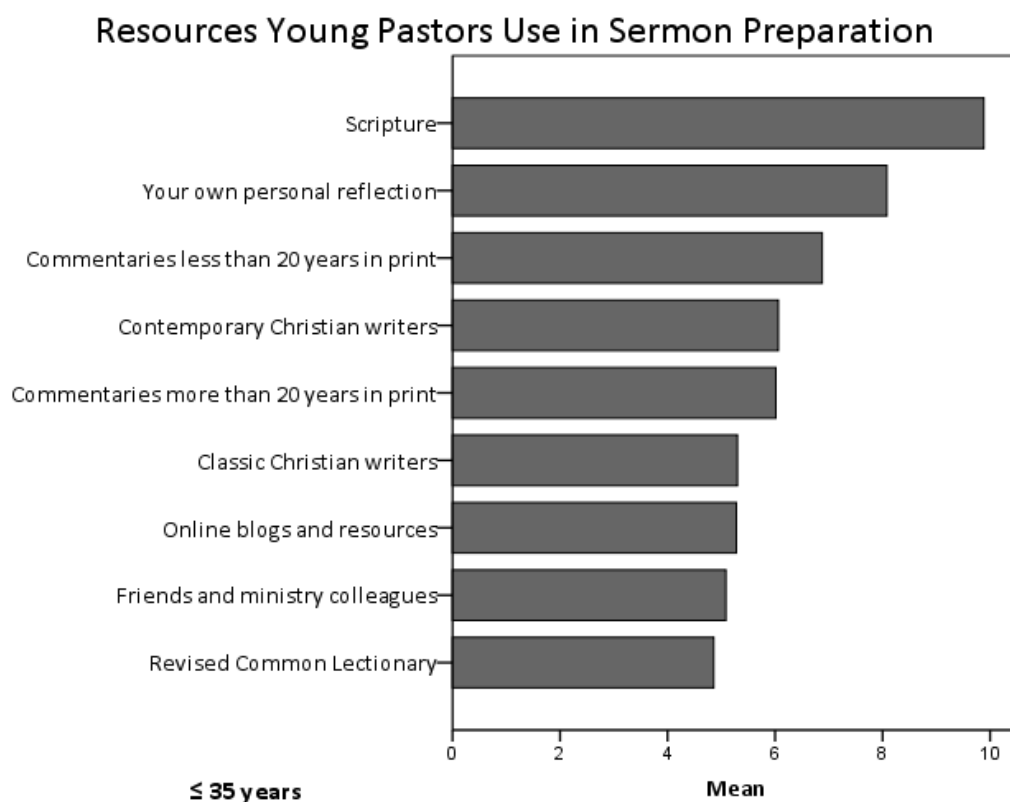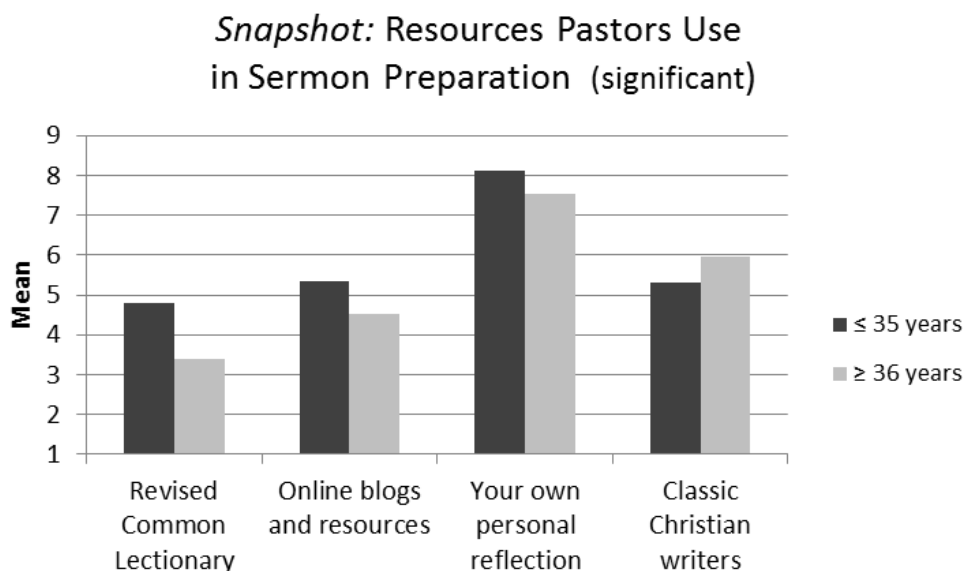

Figure 8. Resources young pastors use in sermon preparation, 1 = *least common*, 10 = *most common.*

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

Snapshot: Resources Pastors Use in Sermon Preparation (significant)

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

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

Table 5

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

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

Note. Reported as a percentage of young pastor respondents

Salvation.

Pertaining to matters of salvation, the pastors were asked to indicate their level of agreement (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) with a series of six statements. In responding to the statements, the young pastors affirmed the importance of a "personal relationship with Christ as the sole vehicle of salvation" (92%), but 40% of the respondents indicated that they believed "although salvation is found in Christ that does not preclude God from redeeming in other ways." Although 26% of the respondents were neutral, nearly half (47%) expressed agreement with the statement "Salvation is God among us." A majority of Sample A respondents expressed some level of disagreement with the statements, "People can be saved without making a

conscious decision about Jesus" (67%); "Everyone can be saved, even after death" (81%); and God works through all religions to save people, not just Christianity" (76%).

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

Salvation is found in Christ, but that does not preclude God from redeeming in other ways
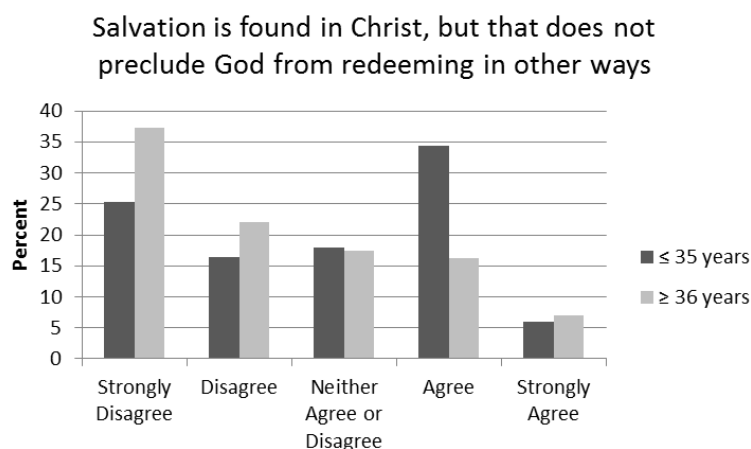
Figure 10. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' responses, reported as a percentage

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

Table 6

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

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

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*
**$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

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

- Salvation is found in Christ but that does not preclude God from redeeming in other ways, $p < .01$ level, $t(219) = 2.5$;

- Salvation is God among us, $p < .001$ level, $t(216) = 4.3$

- People can be saved without making a conscious decision about Jesus, $p < .001$ level, $t(217) = 3.6$

- Everyone can be saved, even after death $p < .001$ level, $t(218) = 4.3$.

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

Snapshot: Pastors' Views on Salvation (significant)
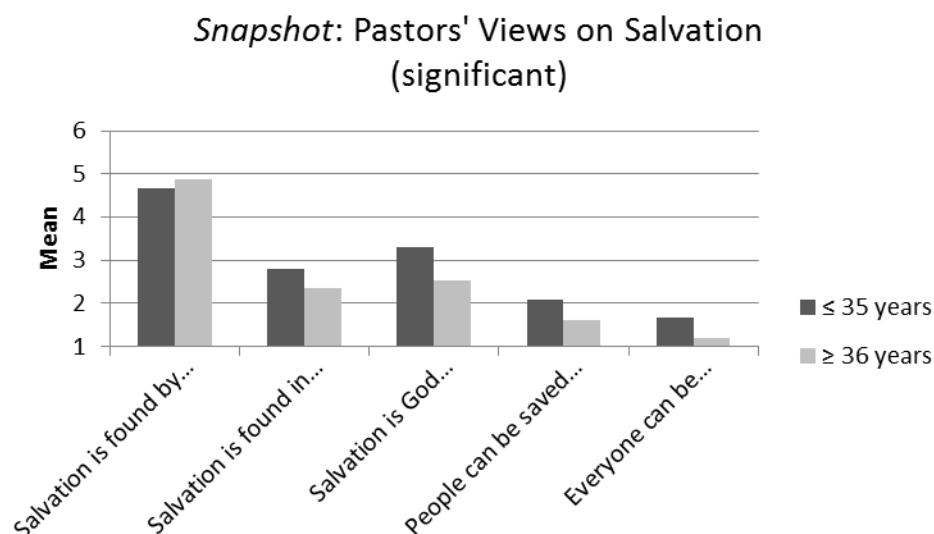
Figure 11. Young pastors' vs. older pastors' statistically significant responses on questions pertaining to salvation, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*

Scripture.

Overall, the young pastors demonstrated a high view of Scripture consistent with earlier questions in the survey designed to explore their understandings of authority. Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with seven statements about the Bible on a Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and descriptive statistics were run on the results. The majority of young pastors expressed some level of disagreement with the notion that the Bible was fully inerrant, but they did embrace it as a document written by persons influenced by the Holy Spirit and as authoritative for living. The young pastors soundly rejected the notion that the Bible was simply good literature or merely one holy book among others (see Figure 12).
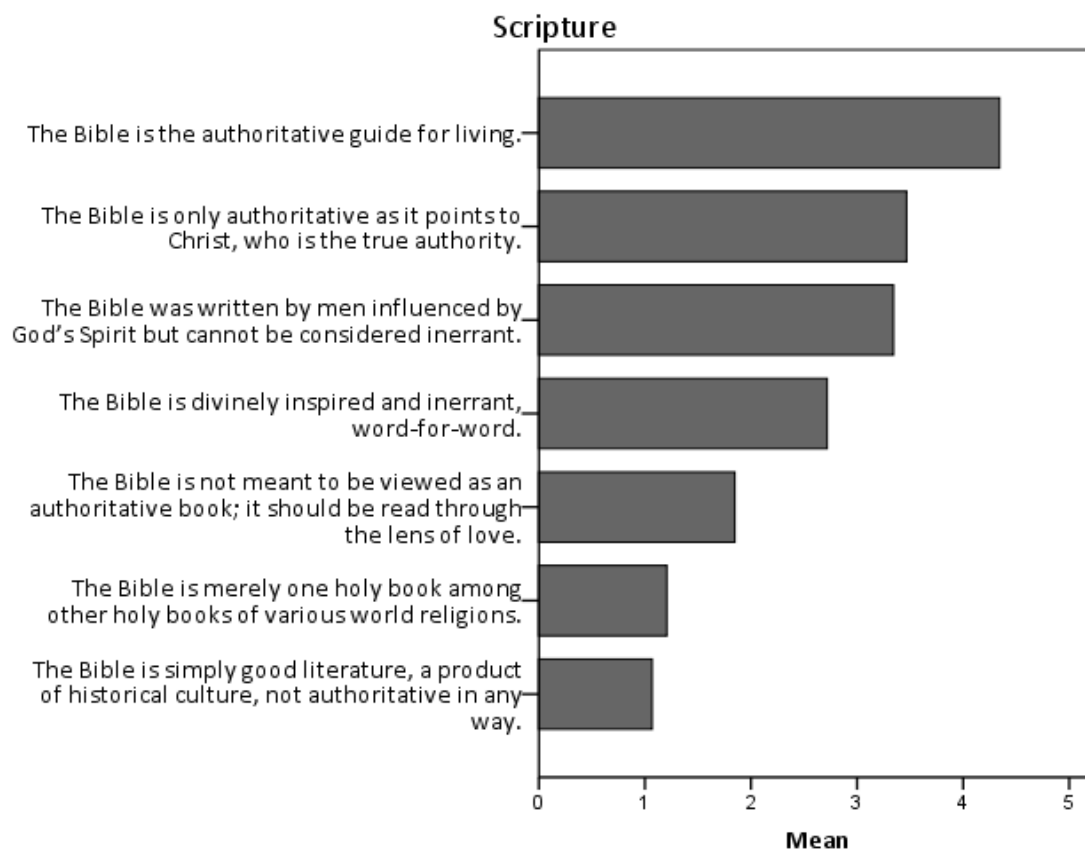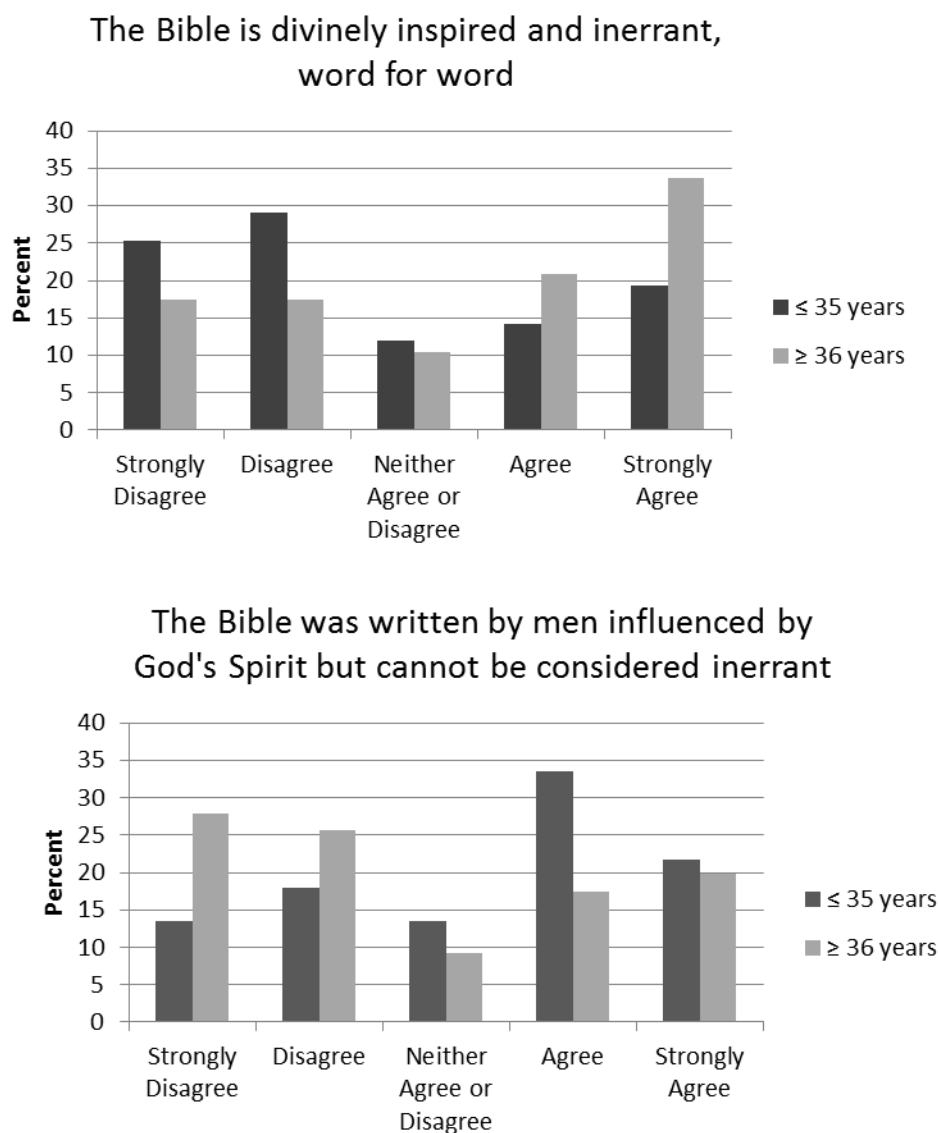
Figure 12.
Young pastors' views on Scripture. 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*.

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

The Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant, word for word

The Bible was written by men influenced by God's Spirit but cannot be considered inerrant

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

Statistically, the young pastors' views were distinct from the older pastors in significant ways (see Table 7). As demonstrated by *t*-tests on each question in the group, the 36-or-older group of pastors gave higher marks to the following two statements: (a) *The Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant, word-for-word*, $p < .01$ level, $t (219) = 3.1$; and (b) *The Bible is the authoritative guide for living*, $p < .01$ level, $t (219) = 2.6$. Conversely, the younger pastors responded more favorably to the notion that the Bible was: (a) *Written by men influenced by God's spirit but cannot be considered inerrant*, $p < .01$ level, $t (219) = 2.9$; and (b) *Only authoritative as it points to Christ, who is the true authority*, $p < .01$ level, $t (214) = 2.7$.

Table 7

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

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

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*
**$p < .01$.

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

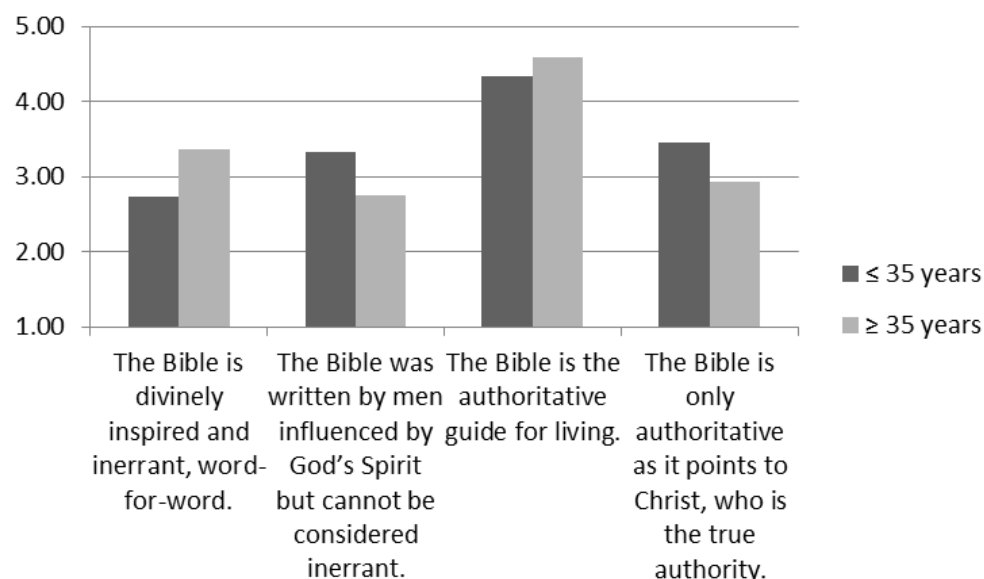Snapshot: Pastors' Views of the Bible (significant)

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

The Church and the World.

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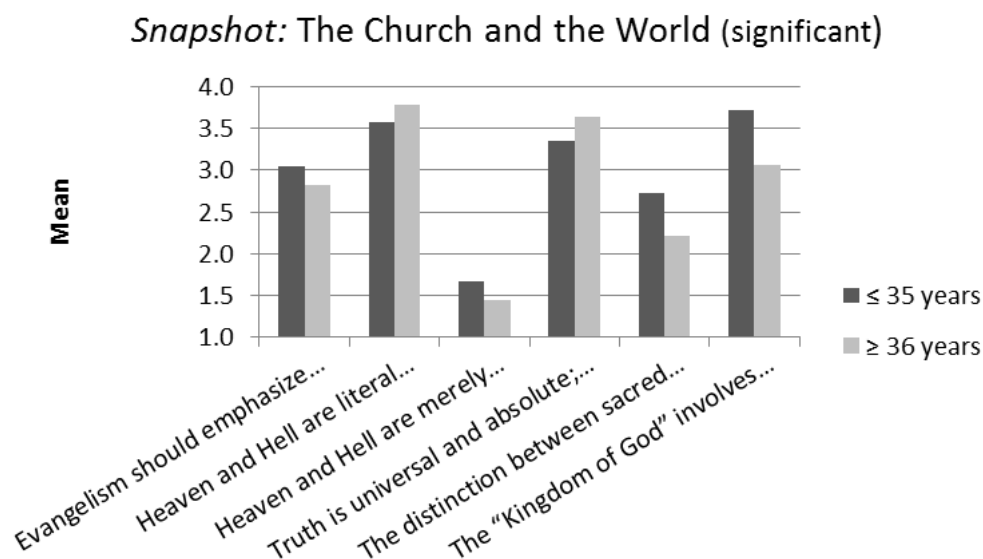
Snapshot: The Church and the World (significant)

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

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

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

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

Table 8

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

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

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

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

Spiritual growth and spiritual practices.

After ascertaining some basics about the respondents' views on Christian beliefs and spirituality, the researcher explored the young pastors' attitudes on fostering spiritual growth in adult congregants. A 10-point Likert-type scale was used to answer the question, "Which of the following practices do you consider the most important for your congregants to participate in so that they will grow spiritually?" The researcher ran descriptive statistics on the results from this group of questions; Figure 16 summarizes those results. The young pastors responded strongly that they believed *prayer* ($M = 9.33$, $SD = 1.22$) was the most important practice congregants should engage in to foster spiritual growth. Prayer was followed by a cluster of practices that shared a mean score of more than 8: (a) *reading the Bible in personal devotions* ($M = 8.71$, $SD = 2.00$); (b) *studying the Bible in a group* ($M = 8.54$, $SD = 1.66$); (c) *practicing spiritual disciplines* ($M = 8.43$, $SD = 1.89$); and (d) *participating in a small group* ($M = 8.32$, $SD = 1.81$). The pastors prioritized *serving the poor and needy* ($M = 7.97$, $SD = 2.01$) above *listening and responding to*

sermons in church (*M* = 7.64, *SD* = 2.05) and *attending classes where teaching happens* (*M* = 6.80, *SD* = 2.38). Two statements received Mean scores of lower than 5: (a) *considering books/art/film through the lens of faith* (*M* = 4.43, *SD* = 2.52) and (b) *discussing issues of faith with others via social media* (*M* = 4.12, *SD* = 2.32).
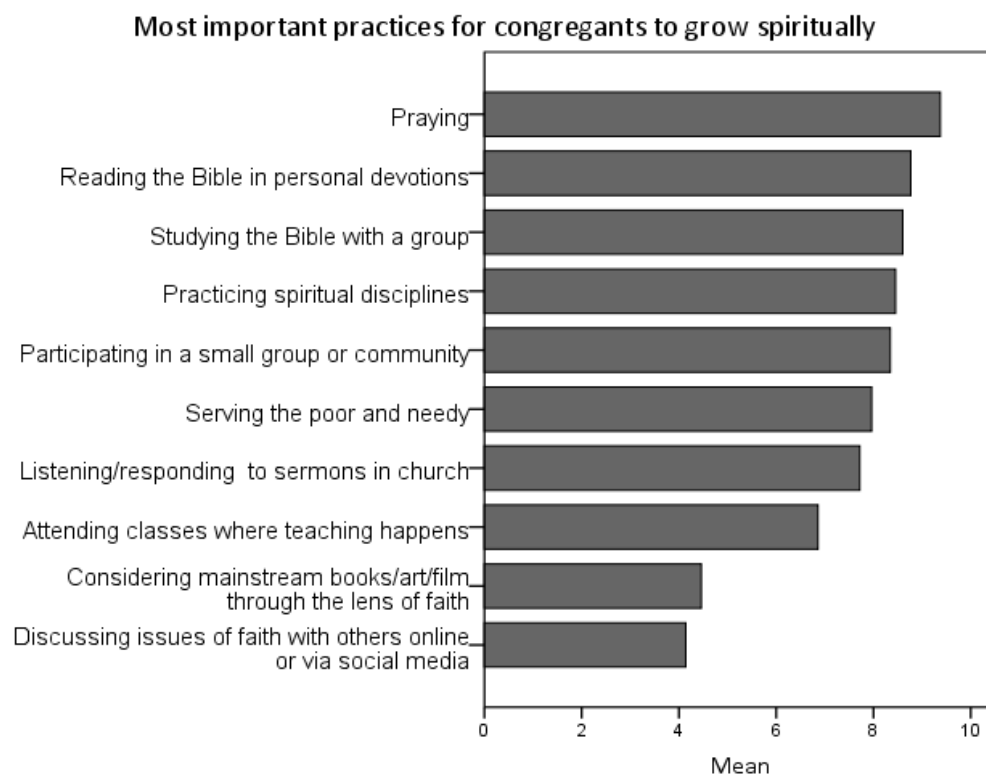
Figure 16. Young pastors' prioritization of spiritual practices for congregants: 1 = *least important*, 10 = *most important.*


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

Most Important Practices for Congregants to Grow Spiritually (significant)
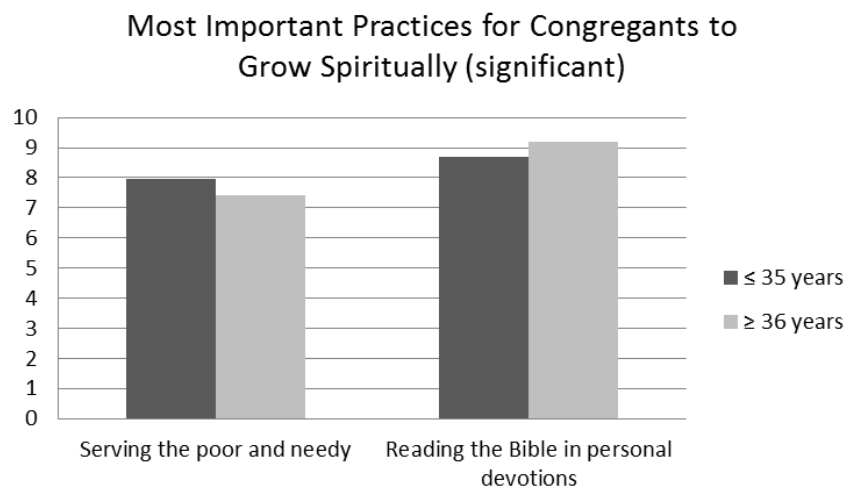
Figure 17. Young pastors vs. older pastors statistically significant responses to questions pertaining to spiritual growth in congregants, 1 = *least important*, 10 = *most important.*

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

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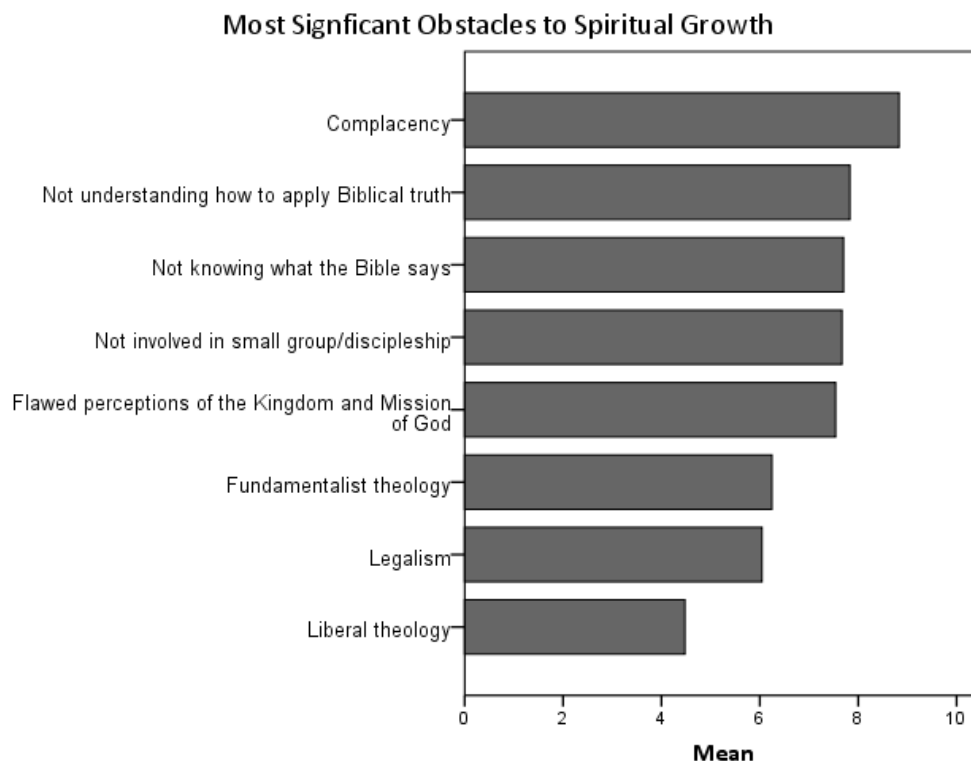
Figure 18. Young pastors responses when asked to identify obstacles to congregants' spiritual growth: 1 = *not a threat,* 10 = *significant threat.*

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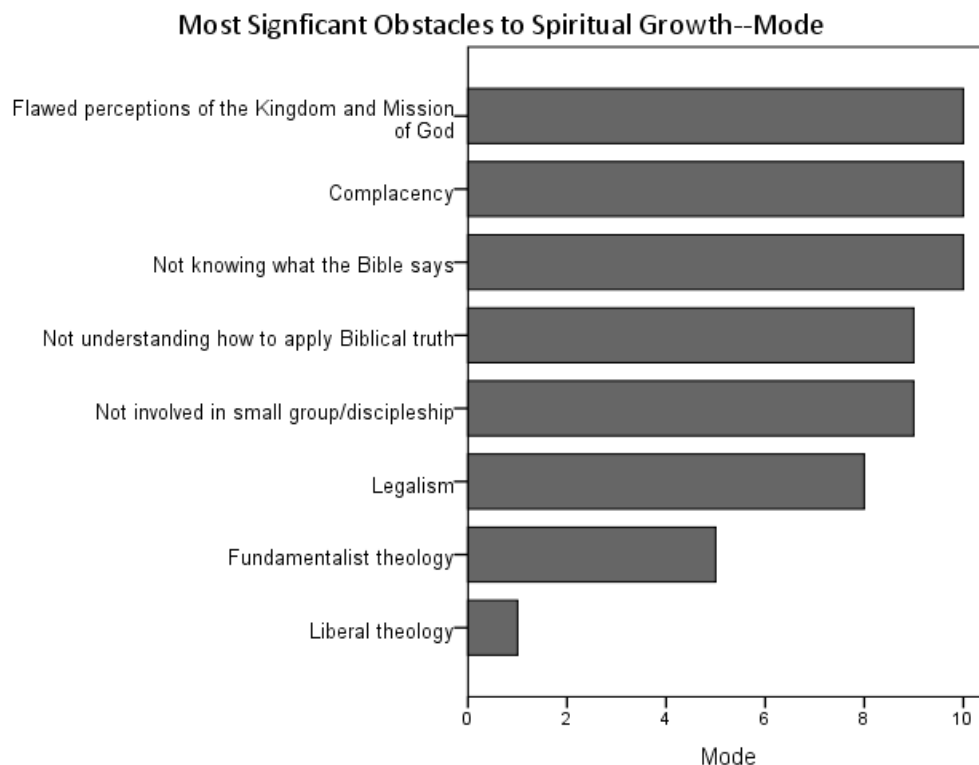
Figure 19. Young pastors' most frequent responses when asked to identify obstacles to congregants' spiritual growth: 1 = *not a threat,* 10 = *significant threat*

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

Faith formation in the local congregational context.

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

respondents *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed* with the statement, "Teaching people to serve others is more important that teaching them the Bible."

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

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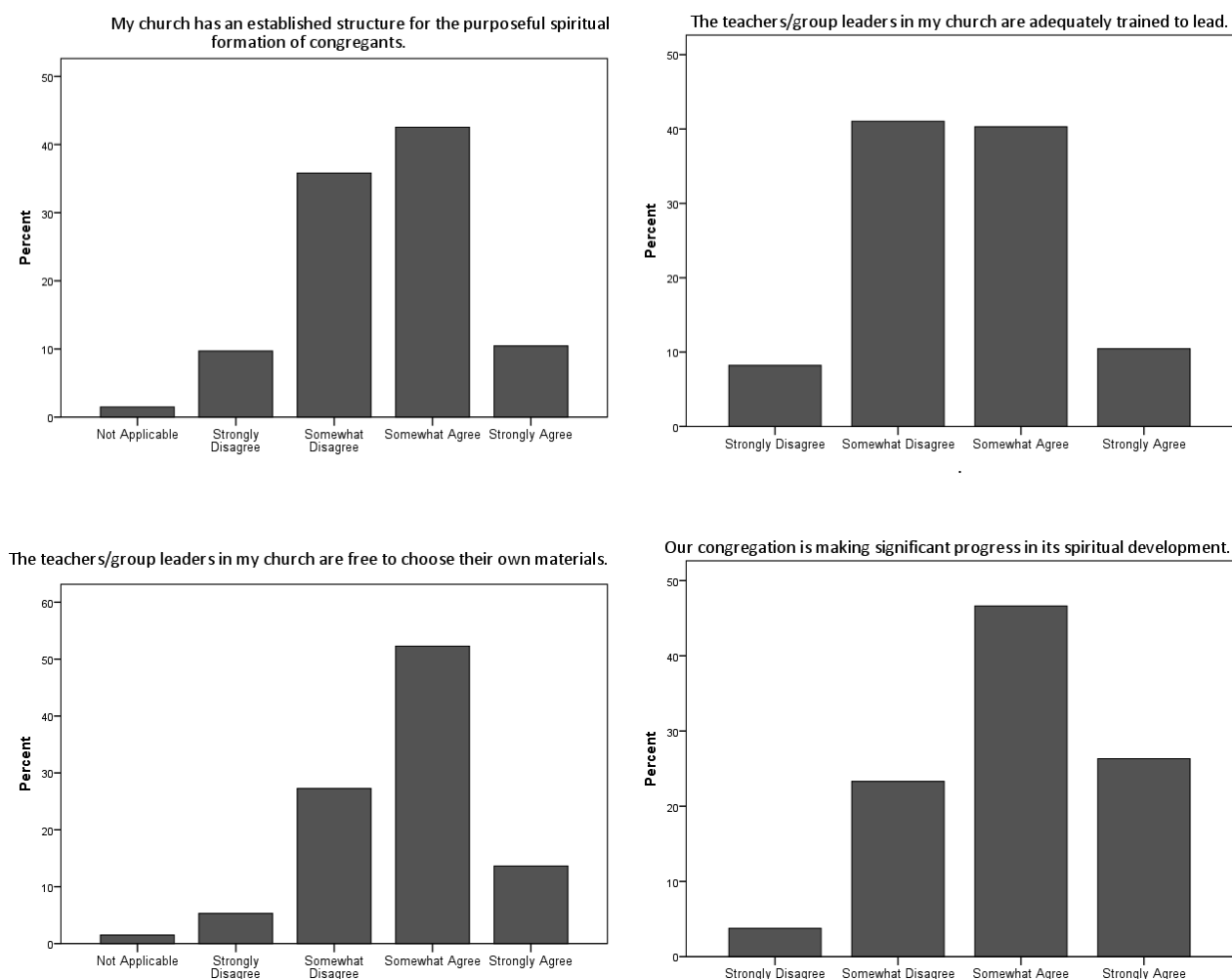
Figure 20. Young pastors' views on discipleship in their congregations, reported as a percentage.

The researcher ran a correlation analysis to determine if there was a positive relationship between any of the following three variables and the pastors' beliefs that their congregations were making significant progress in their spiritual development: (a) *my church has an*

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

Table 9

Young Pastors' Views of Congregational Spiritual Development

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

**$p = .01$

Finally, the researcher compared the responses of Sample A and Sample B to the series of questions on faith formation in the local congregational context. Differences on five of the eight statements proved statistically significant (see Table 10). The 35-or-younger pastors agreed more strongly that "faith formation happens as people do life together," $p < .01$ level, $t(218) = 3.0$; and "teaching people to serve others is more important than teaching them the Bible," $p < .001$ level, $t(214) = 3.4$. Conversely, the 36-or-older pastors agreed more strongly that "understanding the Bible is the foundation for spiritual maturity," $p < .05$ level, $t(219) = 2.02$. The older pastors also were more likely to agree that their churches had "an established structure for the purposeful spiritual formation of congregants," $p < .05$ level, $t(217) = 1.93$; and that their "teachers/group leaders were adequately trained to lead," $p = .01$ level, $t(219) = 2.48$.

Table 10

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

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

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

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

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

Summary, research question two.

The responses of the 135 pastors aged 35 or younger to the questions of Christian belief, spirituality, and discipleship in their congregations painted a fascinating picture of this demographic of young leaders. The majority (68%) of these pastors classified themselves as

having a postmodern worldview, and 61% indicated that there is a generation gap between their congregants and them. Additionally, they identified themselves as having a different worldview than their congregations (61%) and more than one-half said congregants do not share their understandings of discipleship and faith formation.

The young pastors almost unanimously identified the Bible as an "absolutely foundational" source of authority in their congregations, and said it is their primary resource for sermon preparation along with their own personal reflections. The top three thinkers these young pastors gleaned insight from do not share any particular denominational affiliation: Founder of Methodism John Wesley, Anglican Bishop NT Wright, and nondenominational pastor Andy Stanley.

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

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

In themes pertaining to the church's interface with culture, the young pastors expressed very strong support (93%) for the idea that the Kingdom of God involves an invitation to participate in the restoration of the world. A majority of them also agreed with the postmodern idea that the distinction between sacred and secular is an artificial boundary. They tended to believe in absolute truth, but less so than their 36-or-over peers. More than three-fourths of the young pastors believed evangelism should emphasize presence over proclamation. And, although 90% expressed some level of agreement with the statement "Heaven and Hell are literal destinations in the afterlife," nearly 20% expressed some level of agreement that "Heaven and Hell are merely symbolic ways to view our relationship with God." On every statement in this section of the survey instrument, the young pastors' responses were less traditional than the older pastor group at a statistically significant level.

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

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

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

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

Types of Resources Young Pastors' Desire

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

Most important faith formation ministry.

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

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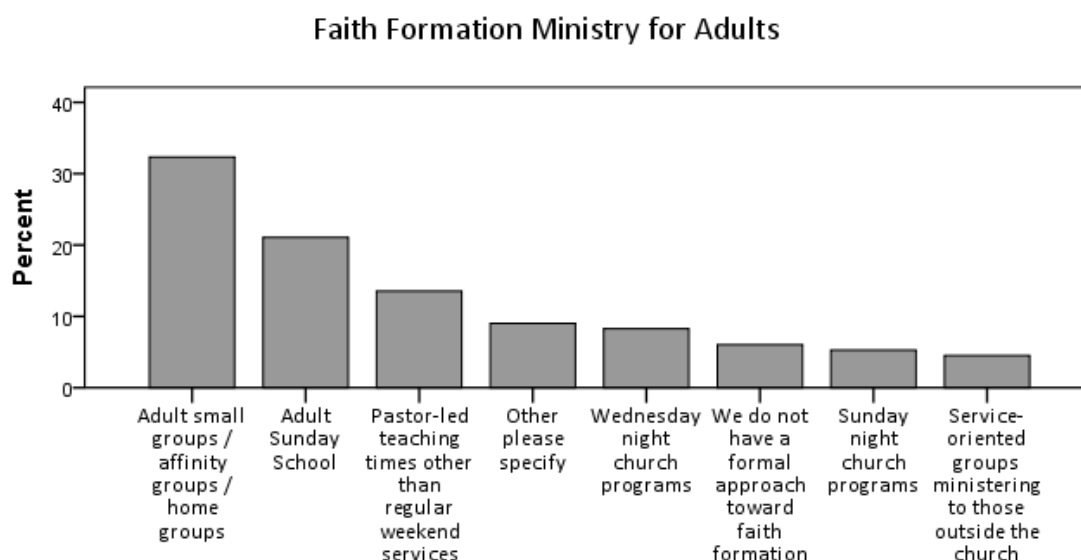
Figure 21. Young pastors chose one option as most important faith formation ministry for adults; responses are reported as a percentage.

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

Primary format of resources used.

The next section in the survey instrument used a Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*never use*) to5 (*very often use)* to explore what format the young pastors preferred when choosing spiritual formation resources for their churches. There was no clear preference among the respondents, though descriptive statistics revealed the highest mean score was given to *printed ongoing Bible study curriculum* (see Table 11) and the second highest score was given *to printed short-term Bible studies*. Scores indicated that the young pastors use a variety of kinds of resources, including content tied to sermons, books about faith, and video series.

Table 11

Primary Format of the Resources Young Pastors Use

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

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

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

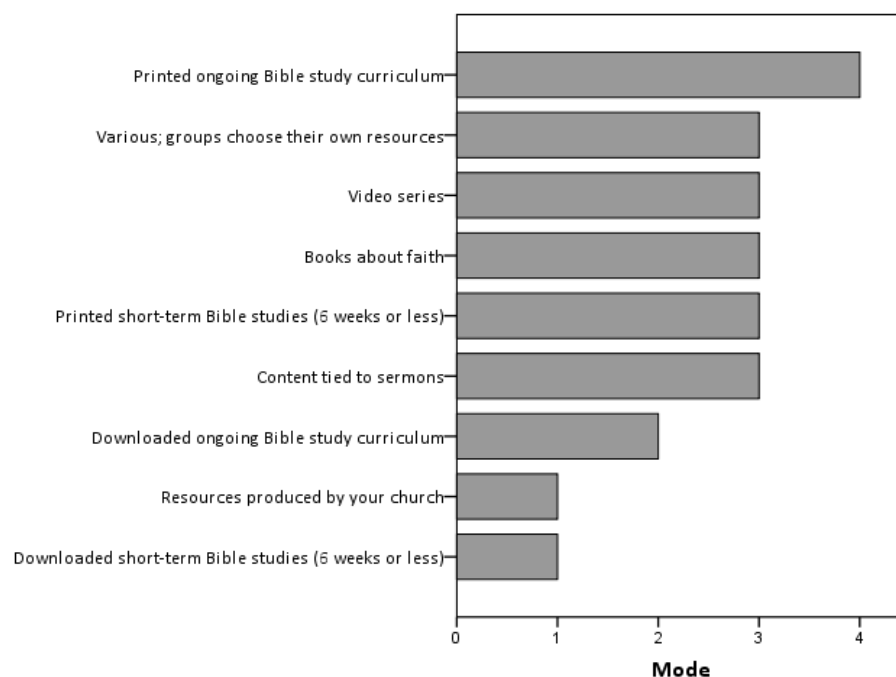Primary Format of the Resources You Use: Mode

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

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

- Printed ongoing Bible study curriculum, *p* < .001 level, *t* (218) = 3.6
- Downloaded ongoing Bible study curriculum, *p* < .01 level, *t* (213) = 3.1
- Printed short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less), *p* < .05 level, *t* (218) = 2.1
- Downloaded short-term Bible studies (6 weeks or less), *p* < .05 level, *t* (218) = 2.0

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

Table 12

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

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

Note. Likert-type scale, 1 = *never use*, 5 = *very often use*
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

Next, the researcher was particularly interested in discovering if pastors who felt free to use whatever resources they like without constraint would prefer similar kinds of resources. The researcher discovered a weak positive relationship between pastors who were free to implement the kinds of programming they desired and who chose to use resources produced by their own churches, $r(130) = .22$, $p.< .05$. The researcher also discovered a moderate positive correlation between pastors who believed their churches were making progress in their spiritual development and pastors who used resources produced by their own local churches, $r(133) = .31$, $p.< .01$.

Desired outcomes for adults in faith formation ministries.

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

Table 13

Young Pastors' Desired Outcomes for Adults in Discipleship Ministries

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

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

Teaching approaches.

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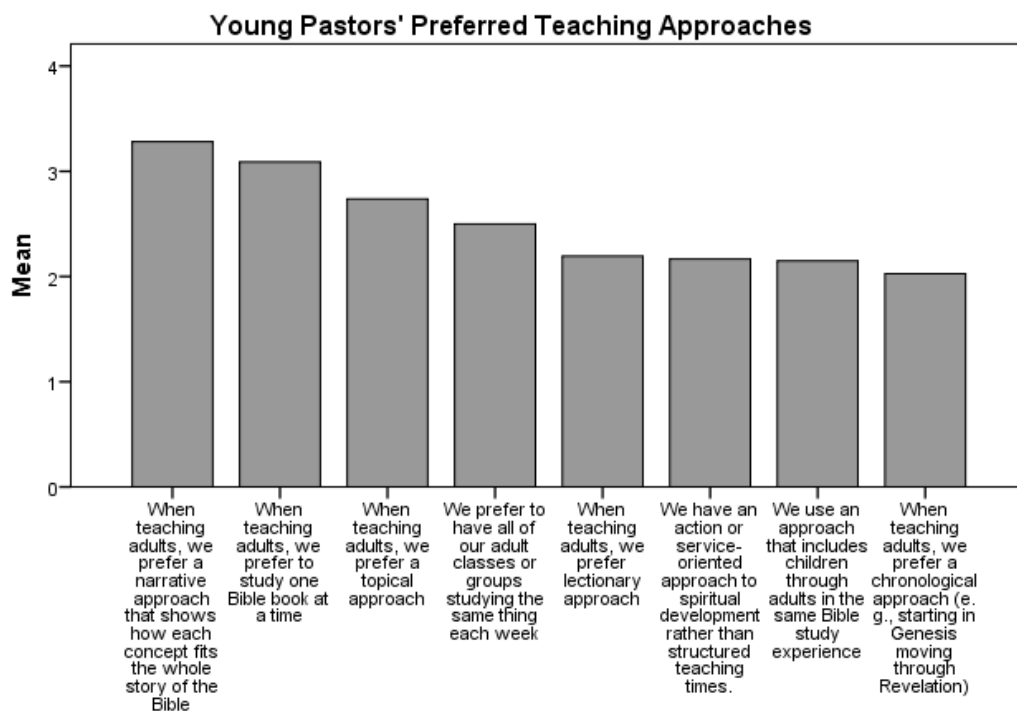
Figure 23. Young pastors' preferred teaching approaches, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*.

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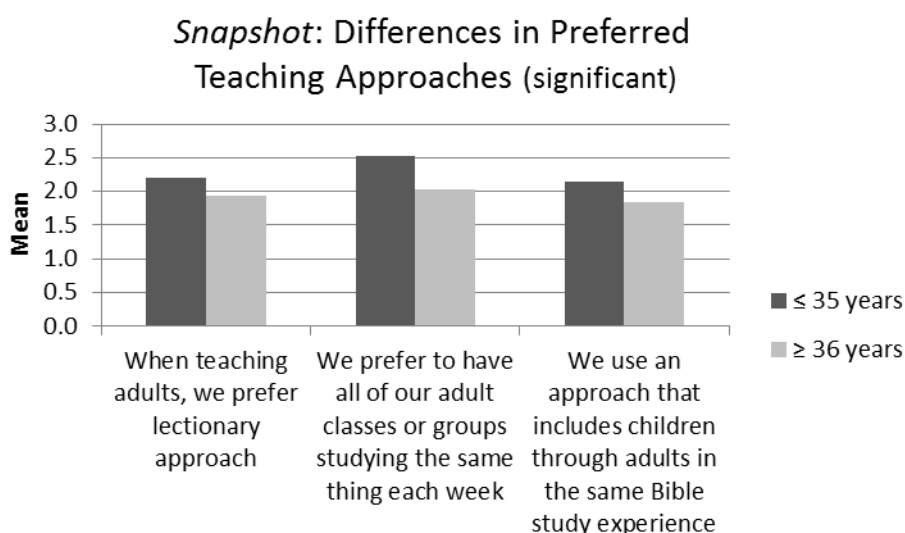

Figure 24. Younger and older pastors' statistically significant responses to three questions regarding their approaches to faith formation. 1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree.*

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

- When teaching adults we prefer a lectionary approach, $p.<05$ level, $t(211) = 2.0$

- We prefer to have all our adult classes/groups studying the same thing each week, $p.<001$ level, $t(208) = 3.9$

- We use an approach that includes children and adults in the same Bible study experience, $p.<01$ level, $t(204) = 2.4$

Table 14

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

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

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

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

In follow-up telephone interviews, select young pastors were asked to "describe the kinds of resources you are looking for to promote spiritual growth in your adult congregants." In each

church-size group, pastors expressed a strong interest in resources that moved participants toward dialog, interaction, reflection, and action. Pastors in the larger church-size groups mentioned improving Biblical literacy and desiring to educate congregants on how to read the Bible. "We need to learn anew how to teach the Bible," one pastor said. "The way we read and understand Scripture is horrific." Another expressed a need for resources that "clearly teach the Bible in order to help people get into the Word."

Summary, research question three.

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

The young pastors also expressed a preference for printed Bible study resources (both ongoing and short-term) versus downloadable or digital resources. The 36-or-older pastors reported more frequent usage on all choices for resources, which could be an indicator that the older pastors were more friendly toward curricula in general than the younger pastors were. A moderately strong correlation existed between pastors who believed their churches were making progress in spiritual development and pastors who used resources produced by their own local churches.

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

Implications for Nazarene Publishing House

Ultimately, the researcher desired to determine what the implications of pastors' preferences were for the future work of Nazarene Publishing House. To this end, a list of typical product features were compiled by the editorial and marketing teams of NPH. A Likert-type scale was developed with responses ranging from 1, *not important at all,* to 4, *very important*. The young pastors placed a high priority on the following features, which all had mean scores between 3 and 4: (a) *Bible focused*, (b) *rich theological content*, (c) *encourages conversation*, and (d) *written in a fresh, engaging way*. The pastors considered *having a prominent name or speaker* not important at all (M = 1.82) and *published by my denomination* as only somewhat important (M = 2.28). The remainder of the features scored a mean of between 2 and 3 (see Figure 25).

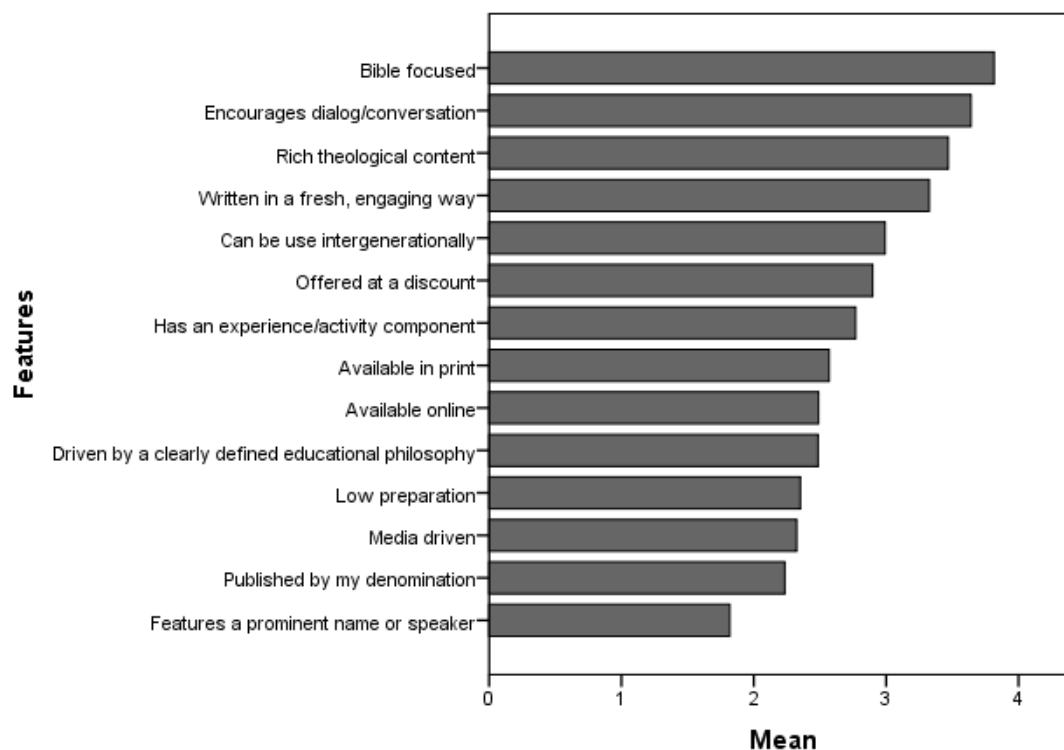## Important Features When Choosing Faith Formation Resources

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

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

Table 15

Features Young Pastors Value when Choosing Faith Formation Resources

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

When considering features important to pastors in choosing faith formation resources, differences in Sample A and Sample B were statistically significant on three items. Younger pastors considered it less important to choose resources that were (a) *published by their denomination*, $p < .01$ level, $t (218) = 3.0$; (b) *driven by a clearly defined educational philosophy*, $p < .05$ level, $t (216) = 2.0$; and (c) *are available in print,* $p < .01$ level, $t (216) = 2.6$.

Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

lowest threat. As one might expect, the younger pastors considered a flawed perception of the Kingdom and mission of God to be a greater threat than did the older pastors.

On a practical level, implementing a plan for faith formation in their congregations seemed to be a place where the young pastors diverged from one another. About half the pastors expressed that they had a plan to form their congregants spiritually. About half the pastors believed their teachers and leaders were adequately trained. Interestingly, there was a moderately strong positive correlation between pastors who believed their congregations were making progress in their spiritual growth and pastors who had a plan in place for faith formation.

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

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

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