



## THE CULTURE OF NOTE-TAKING AND EFFECTIVE SERMONIC COMMUNICATION

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### ABSTRACT

Sermon note-taking has long been practiced in various “church cultures,” and some may wonder about the future of the practice. Challenges to note-taking include secondary orality, the emergence of the *digital* generation, and the technologization of the world. This paper, engages with homiletics, systematic theology, communication studies, and discipleship studies to demonstrate the relevance of note-taking for enhancing listener engagement during the sermon. First, this paper will suggest a biblical and theological premise for note-taking. Second, it will investigate the relationship of note-taking to good listening and journaling. Third, it will describe methods of effective note-taking for both oral and digital-sermon hearers. Fourth, it will discuss the criticism that note-taking is a distraction to the listeners. This paper will show that note-taking is still practiced by church-goers, and that while it should be encouraged, it should not be forced on worshippers in any way.

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### INTRODUCTION

There is a long tradition within Christianity of believers carrying a Bible, a hymn book, and a jotter with them to church. Younger children grew up meeting in this culture. This practice affects children as they engage in it by producing a sense of

responsibility, and a commitment to God and things of the Spirit. Indeed, even when they have yet to experience salvation, they commit to the practice of note-taking at one level or another. Sermon note-taking is a practice that has persisted for many years and does not show signs of fading away anytime soon.

One might think that sermon note-taking would be at risk of fading away as the world becomes more and more paperless and many are going digital. However, this reality has not necessarily led to a reduction in taking notes because that can be done effectively on phones, laptops, and tablets with convenience. Nevertheless, the arrival of a new generation that questions practices like note-taking which have been helpful to previous generations, may challenge the future of such practices. Alongside this is the arrival of the *digital* generation. They are digital but oral. Being oral, they prefer to talk and listen rather than to read and write. Being digital, a record of any event—either audio or video suffices for them, and they do not need to carry any notebook to church to jot.<sup>1</sup>

However, these developments do not seem to be on the way to killing note-taking during sermons. Given the perennial significance of note-taking, this paper examines how it can enhance effective sermonic communication. First, it builds a biblical and theological premise for note-taking during sermons; second, it investigates note-taking as a function of a journaling culture and encouraging good listening; third, it proposes processes and methods of effective note-taking and note-keeping for both oral and digital sermon hearers; fourth, it demonstrates that sermon note-taking is very much alive, and suggests that a better understanding of the concept and contemporary note-taking methods will strengthen the practice and deepen the spiritual life of its practitioners.

## A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PREMISE FOR SERMON NOTE-TAKING

Note-taking is an age-old practice. The Bible is replete with commands by God to “write.” God told Moses several times to

write or write down (Exodus 17:14, 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:19). Isaiah was told to write (Isaiah 30:8). So was Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:2, 36:28), Ezekiel, and others throughout the scriptures. While they were not in a formal preaching situation, the concern of God for the preservation of His very word is noteworthy. God is speaking, and He does not want these servants to forget, trivialize, or lose the content without giving it to the end-users or future generations. This principle is foundational to the argument that Christians should engage in note-taking during a sermon.

Mark and Patti Virkler strengthen this foundation by describing the experience of Habakkuk and John. While the Virkler's write about believers hearing God's voice personally and individually, the principle they shared is equally relevant to those listening to sermons. They identify four keys to hearing God's voice in Habakkuk 2:1-3: stillness, vision, spontaneity, and journaling.<sup>2</sup>

First, Habakkuk stands ready. He was still, stationing himself, waiting for God to speak. Secondly, he "watched to see." Keeping watch could also mean looking out, observing, giving attention to, or gazing at. Third, he hears God's voice within, that "still small voice of God that is registered within us as spontaneous thoughts that light upon our mind."<sup>3</sup> Fourth, Habakkuk records the vision. He writes down the thoughts and pictures as they flow to him from God.<sup>4</sup>

John also exhibits this model of hearing God's voice and documenting it. Revelation 1:10-11 states, "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: 'Write on a scroll what you see...'" According to Virkler and Virkler:

Being "in the Spirit" suggests that John had quieted himself down. He heard a voice—in this case the voice of an angel—and it is not quite so soft as the "still, small voice" of God. "Writing in a book" is journaling, and "what he sees" indicates the use of vision. So once again we see a prophetic writer in Scripture using all four keys

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at one time to receive revelation from God—and, in this case, two visions that last 22 chapters!<sup>5</sup>

It follows, therefore, that the value placed on God's written Word is expected to spur those who hear sermons to want to document the message, revise it, personalize it and live it out. Sermons are preached by men and women to whom God has given a particular word from scripture and are saddled with the responsibility of expounding it. They stand as God's oracle or spokesperson at that particular point in time. This is why expository preaching of God's Word remains sacrosanct. Once a preacher is faithful to the text and allows the text to speak, God is speaking, and as such it must carry weight before the hearers. David Allen emphasizes the authority of the biblical text when he submits that:

In Paul's final charge to Timothy he said: "Preach the Word!" (2 Tim 4:2). Three principles critical for homiletics emerge from this understanding of biblical authority: 1) Scripture is the very Word of God; 2) Scripture is inerrant and thus totally trustworthy; 3) Scripture is sufficient for the faith and the life of the church and for every Christian. The biblical and theological foundation for text-driven preaching is the fact that God has spoken in Christ and in Scripture, and the nature of this revelation itself demands a text-driven approach to preaching. The authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture serve as the theological grounds for text-driven preaching.<sup>6</sup>

Albert Mohler draws out the implications of biblical authority for preaching when he states:

If God has spoken, we too must speak. There is a command here to preach and teach. Again and again, Israel receives this order to speak, and in like manner, the church also is under this standing order. We preach and we teach and we speak, because God has spoken. Because

God has spoken, we dare not remain silent. There is a task here. There is urgency here. We are to be the speaking people of a speaking God. The people of God are not to be marked by their silence, but by their speech.<sup>7</sup>

This view is shared by Martin Luther and John Calvin. As Mark Jones notes, Calvin celebrated God's gift and consecration of the mouth and tongues of humanity so that they could re-echo his voice.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Luther held that the preacher's words are not human words, but God's Word.<sup>9</sup>

These convictions undergird the reverence with which Christians listen to God's Word in the form of preaching. This is the reason he or she considers preserving it for a use that transcends the number of minutes the preacher has used in delivering the message.

### *Note-Taking As A Process Of Journaling*

Closely related to the idea of inscripturation is the concept of preserving God's Word or message through the process of journaling itself. Journaling is an age-old spiritual discipline—men and women write about their encounters with God as they walk with him daily. It involves keeping notes and documenting experiences, interactions with scriptures, impressions and visions, prayer and answers.<sup>10</sup> Donald Whitney defines journaling in this way:

A journal (a word usually synonymous with diary) is a book in which a person writes down various things. As a Christian, your journal is a place to record the works and ways of God in your life. Your journal also can include an account of daily events, a diary of personal relationships, a notebook of insights into Scripture, and a list of prayer requests. It is where spontaneous devotional thoughts or lengthy theological musings can be preserved. A journal is one of the best places for charting your progress in the

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other Spiritual Disciplines and for holding yourself accountable to your goals.<sup>11</sup>

Journaling has great benefits, such as fostering spiritual growth, aiding spiritual self-discipline, maintaining concentration and focus when studying the Bible, meditating or praying, and serving as a permanent reminder of God's activities in one's life.<sup>12</sup> Whitney adds that journaling helps in self-understanding, meditation, expressing one's thoughts and feelings to the Lord, remembering God's work, and creating and preserving a spiritual heritage. It also helps clarify and articulate insights and impressions, monitor goals and priorities, and maintain other spiritual disciplines.<sup>13</sup>

While journaling can be done independent of sermon-note taking, the benefits one may derive from journaling are transferrable to sermon note-taking. Some keep separate notes for sermons, while others include jottings of sermons in their journal. In the words of Whitney:

Journaling is an effective way of teaching the things of God to our children and transmitting our faith into the future... Never underestimate the power of a written record of faith acting as a spiritual time capsule. The writer of Psalm 102:18 recognized it when he said of his experience with God: "Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord."<sup>14</sup>

Many of the resources Christians enjoy today are products of documentation, journaling and sermon-note keeping which have lasted for generations and continue to bless the body of Christ. Examples are some of the books authored by Watchman Nee. One likely finds information like this in some of the prefaces or introductions to the books:

The greater part of this book derives from a series of addresses on the subject of "the word" given by Mr.

Watchman Nee (Nee To-Sheng) of Foochow to Christian believers in Shanghai city in the early period of the Sino-Japanese War. To them have been added other talks on the same general theme given at various places and times during the period 1938-41. I am indebted to several friends for the notes which have supplied the book's source material.<sup>15</sup>

It is, therefore, evident that certain books are products of note-taking efforts, which has lasted beyond both Nee and his followers.

### *Note-Taking As A Function Of Good Listening*

When preachers preach sermons, they expect that the congregation will listen, so they can hear and act on God's Word. Listening, in this regard, has two dimensions. The first dimension is an agreement that the sermon is the very Word of God to those under it at a particular point in time and that it demands their full attention. As Charles Stanley opines, "God doesn't speak frivolously. He doesn't joke around. God means what He says, and He will do what He says. He doesn't speak to you in idle term. He expects you to respond to His voice, heed His word, and act on it."<sup>16</sup> So, God would never intend to waste His word under any circumstance, and a listening ear will gladden his heart and profit such listeners.

The listener to God's Word understands that God speaks both in general and absolute terms, and he speaks to each person as an individual. There are times to receive the word as a group. However, many times when the Word of God profits a people, it begins with a sense of responsibility on the part of each individual. In the words of Stanley:

When God speaks, He is speaking to you. Everything in the Bible applies to your life in some way. Every message that is based on the Word of God has truth embedded within it that is for you. There is no such thing as a chapter

in the Bible, a sermon based on God's Word, or a book that expounds and explains God's Word that is not for you. Each of us must take God's Word personally!<sup>17</sup>

An index of good listening is note-taking. Stanley further shares that:

When I am preaching, I can always look out at the congregation and tell the people who are attentively listening for the Lord to speak to them personally. They often have a notepad open and a pen poised to take notes. They are diligently looking for God's directions. To be attentive means literally to attend, or to pay attention, to each word. This is more than expectancy that God is speaking. It is listening to each word for all nuances of meaning, all aspects of the message that God is giving. When we truly listen attentively, we don't miss a thing!<sup>18</sup>

This does not mean that those who do not take notes are not listening, but it establishes that note-taking may indicate good listening.

John Piper warned that inattention is Satan's game. When people come to church, they should be careful about Satan's strategies to distract them from giving "serious attention to God's word."<sup>19</sup> Some of those strategies include making people stay up too late on Saturday night so as to begin to sleep on Sunday while the sermon is on, bringing different distractions during the service so they as cannot to concentrate on the message, and bringing thoughts about things to do in the new week during the sermon.<sup>20</sup> That is why Piper himself encourages note-taking as he preaches.<sup>21</sup>

The second dimension to listening in relation to sermon note-taking is communication. There must be good listening in any good communication where the sender encodes a message to a receiver, and the receiver decodes the message and sends feedback. Yet listening is different from hearing. Stephen E. Lucas distinguishes between hearing and listening. Hearing,



according to him, "is a physiological process, involving the vibration of sound waves on our eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses from the inner ear to the central auditory system of the brain."<sup>22</sup> Listening, however, "involves paying close attention to, and making sense of, what we hear."<sup>23</sup> Ronald W. Johnson adds that "listening is a proactive response. You have to get involved with another person to really listen to her."<sup>24</sup> Lucas adds that as much as people would think they are listening, they only grasp about 50 percent of what they hear. They also "remember only 10% of the original message" by the next day.<sup>25</sup> That is why he suggests some steps to becoming a better listener.

The first step Lucas suggests is to take listening seriously. It is to take it as an active process. It is not listening to the radio while studying or listening to the television while searching for something from room to room. The second step Lucas notes is to resist distraction. It is impossible to remove distractions in a real world, but it is possible to discipline oneself to concentrate. It involves a conscious effort to pull the mind back to hear the speaker and compel it to stay there. It may involve attempting a mental review of what the speaker had said to assure that it is well understood. One other way to do it is to listen between the lines. Listening between the lines could help assess the speaker's verbal and non-verbal language.<sup>26</sup>

The third suggestion Lucas offers is to avoid being "diverted by appearance or delivery."<sup>27</sup> Some are not impressive in their personal presentation or looks but are good speakers. Some are "unusually attractive" while others are not. A "polished delivery" or "speaking eloquently" does not guarantee they are good speakers.<sup>28</sup> So, it is often safer to respond to "the message" rather than "the package" it comes in.<sup>29</sup> The fourth suggested by Lucas is to suspend judgement.<sup>30</sup> While one may not agree with everything a speaker says, good listening involves "hear[ing] people out *before* reaching a final judgement."<sup>31</sup> It is not good to block people out before their point of view, that is, "their ideas...evidence....[and]...reasoning have been heard and processed."<sup>32</sup> The fifth suggestion by Lucas is to focus one's

listening.<sup>33</sup> A listener does not need to absorb every word of the speaker. A good listener focuses on the speaker's specific points, and on the "accuracy, objectivity, relevance, and sufficiency" of that evidence.<sup>34</sup>

The last step Lucas recommends to become a better listener, which is most crucial to this discussion, is to develop note-taking skills. According to Lucas, "when note taking is done properly, it is a surefire way to improve your concentration and keep track of a speaker's ideas."<sup>35</sup> Good note-taking is neither writing down everything the speaker says, nor picking on one fascinating fact or the other to jot down intermittently. There are several ways to take notes, but according to Lucas "the keyword outline" is the "best for listening to...formal speeches."<sup>36</sup> This involves jotting down the "speaker's main points and supporting evidence in rough outline form."<sup>37</sup>

Ellen Range discussed that visual listeners might want to put down his or her impression of a message. They may make sketches or drawings on paper. He or she may draw pictures, make a map or create a flowchart. They may want to compare two or more things by drawing overlapping circles (also called Venn diagram). They may use web-shaped drawings called mind maps, word webs or graphic organizers.<sup>38</sup> So, it is not all about writing; each listener can decide the best and most convenient way to keep a record of the sermons they had and place it in their memory for as long as they can.

It follows, therefore, that note-taking is one function of good listening. If someone expects that a sermon would benefit him or her, that person is likely to develop listening skills that will help one grasp God's Word as it proceeds from the preacher's mouth. Applying the art of listening to sermons, Nicholas Davis Friday suggests the need for hearers to prepare for a sermon by listening ahead of time. It is helpful to prepare the heart and mind one day or several days before Sunday worship, and to get enough sleep on Saturday night to avoid exhaustion on Sunday morning. It is also good to read the preaching passage ahead of time if that information is available.

He adds that jotting down the sermon outline and related biblical text is critical for later reflection. It affords the opportunity of getting back home to study more, meditate and ask such questions as, “Did the preacher stick faithfully to the text?” “What insights did he have to leave out for the sake of time that might illumine the text and deepen your understanding of God’s word?”<sup>39</sup> It is difficult to discuss good listening without asserting the importance of note-taking or jotting.

## PROCESSES OF EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING

There are several tips can help in effective sermon note-taking. First, listen to sermons with the proper writing tools—pen or pencil and jotter. Some churches provide these tools, and some leave spaces in their weekly church bulletin for jotting. Some jot right in their Bible. Each of these methods has its advantages and disadvantages.

Second, avoid transcribing everything the preacher says. The danger is to miss out on some of the things the preacher is saying or get distracted from thinking about what the preacher is saying. It is better to summarize the key points and grasp the structure of the entire message. Third, write down related passages. Even if the preacher uses a single passage, he or she will likely refer to a few other passages along the line. It is good to note them for further study as they might help illumine the sermon better.<sup>40</sup> Fourth, look up from time to time. This allows one to pause, take a step back, “make new connections, glean new insights, and ponder new applications related to the biblical text,” as the focus remains on listening to the message.<sup>41</sup> It also encourages the preacher. Good communication requires eye contact, and the preacher may think everyone is bored or distracted when their eyes are away from him or her.

Fifth, note the date and speaker. Connecting a sermon with a date and speaker is an excellent reminder of when the sermon was given and who delivered it. This practice, like journaling or as a part of journaling, helps people record what they learn in the various seasons of life. Sixth, write down a one-

sentence summary of the entire sermon before it ends. That is a way of solidifying one's understanding of the message and relating it briefly to anyone who asks about the sermon.<sup>42</sup>

Seventh, avoid the distraction that comes from wanting the best-taken notes. The goal should be communion with God, not achieving "perfect accuracy, comprehensive details, [and] beautiful penmanship" in one's notes.<sup>43</sup> Eighth, revisit the sermon throughout the week. There is no point taking sermon notes only to shelve it somewhere and one day discard it. It may not be convenient for some to review it every day, but it should be done at least once before the next sermon.

Subsequently, sermon note-taking has many advantages. It helps to put a message in one's own words for better understanding. It can be re-read in the following days and meditated upon. Furthermore, it keeps the message in one's memory, helps the person jotting to pay full attention during the sermon, and enables one to resist the temptation to sleep. Likewise, it is also easy to share sermon notes with others – either for further clarification or during such a person's time of need.

## HELPING ORAL LISTENERS RETAIN SERMONS

As a writer observed, "taking sermon notes may not work for everyone. Some people get more out of sermon if they are just listening, or if they doodle or something. What's important is being open to try different things and find what help you benefit the most from your sermons."<sup>44</sup> This observation is apt when one considers the influence of secondary orality and contemporary listeners. Orality is simply the preference and reliance on oral rather than written communication.<sup>45</sup> While scholars classify orality into primary, residual and secondary, the common denominator is that oral listeners and learners do not enjoy writing. They prefer to communicate or receive communication through songs, stories, proverbs, folklore, dance, drama, poetry and related forms. Interestingly, several African communities, depending on their level of education, are characterized by their preferences for these forms of communication.<sup>46</sup> It is doubtful

that all preachers would include these forms of communication in their sermons. Unfortunately, it is likely that not very many preachers recognize the need to engage aural listeners. This raises the question of which form of communication is best for reaching aural listeners.

The best form of preaching for aural listeners is narrative, where a sermon is packaged as a story and delivered inductively.<sup>47</sup> Preachers need to engage the communication strategy of aural listeners in this case. Aural listeners benefit from the use of mnemonic devices and formulas, repetition and redundancy, personal relationship, and the active use of memory and memorization.<sup>48</sup> Jared S. Runck summarizes the features of oral communication:

The first key feature of oral expression is the use of repetition. Of course, this makes total sense. In an oral culture, "there is nothing to backloop into outside the mind, for the oral utterance has vanished as soon as it is uttered." Redundancy "keeps both speaker and hearer surely on track." Secondly, oral expressions are characterized by "larger-than-life" characters. The key figures of the ancient tales were heroes, "persons whose deeds are monumental memorable and commonly public." Finally, oral expression is typically empathetic and participatory. The point of the story was "to sweep the audience up into the rhythm of the song." Thus mesmerized, the audience members "identified uncritically with the action in scene after scene." They literally *became* the characters in the story.<sup>49</sup>

He adds that "memory is basic to oral cultures; language is mythic and narrativized precisely to increase its mnemonic capacity."<sup>50</sup> Yet, it is one thing for listeners influenced by secondary orality to learn this way from a sermon; it is another for the preacher to provide a sermon experience that the aural listener may benefit from. When an aural listener comes to the

church without a notebook, it does not mean he or she did not listen to the sermon.<sup>51</sup>

As a result of cultural processes (including technologization), digital listeners have emerged from the soil of secondary orality. Samuel Chiang observes:

In the twenty-first century, with social octane through networks and fueling through 24/7 technologies, each powerful story may go viral with digital platforms sustaining and immortalizing the story. From an idea-transmission perspective, and how a story gets moved along, a powerful combination of the spoken and hearing (oral) catalyzed with the technology that tethers social networks together, and 'digital' was birthed.<sup>52</sup>

W. J. Moon describes digital listeners as "those who have the ability to read and write, but they prefer to learn or process information by oral, rather than written, means, aided by electronic audio and visual communications."<sup>53</sup> Preserving a sermon for this set of people may mean recording the sermon on phones, tablets or iPads, or requesting the CD of a sermon after the church service is over. They love to play messages over and over again on their phone or use their car tapes instead of writing and reading it over and over again.

## NOTE-TAKING AND THE DIGITAL GENERATION

Digital technology has produced various alternatives to writing on paper. Today, there are note-taking apps such as Evernote, Microsoft OneNote, Milanote, Simplenote, Zoho Notebook, and Joplin.<sup>54</sup> With an android or Apple phone, a tablet, an iPad, or other devices in their hands, some listeners are ready to take notes during sermons in ways that are more comfortable for them than writing on paper. Those who use these methods are different from the *digital* listeners discussed earlier. These are still interested in writing, but they type-write rather than hand-write.

Rachel Macdonald, however, opines that it is still better to write on paper or use handwriting than typing. She gives two reasons for this. First, it takes longer to write than type, especially for those proficient with a keyboard. The listener who is writing is, therefore, compelled to paraphrase what they hear, putting it down in short clauses and as quickly as possible. In this process they use their own words, and summarize their discoveries instead of copying word for word, which enables them to retain the message in their memory much longer.<sup>55</sup>

Second, electronic devices are distracting. Apps are developed to make money, and it is common for adverts pop up when they are in use. This may cause users stop their sermon note-taking intermittently to attend to the advertisements, thereby distracting them. It becomes a real battle to focus on the sermon, and the listener ends up multitasking, ultimately missing out on some of the things the preacher had said. Even where there is no internet connection, there is still a lot to distract listeners who take notes digitally.<sup>56</sup> However, Macdonald concludes that “at the end of the day, any notes—paper or electronic, summarized or verbatim—are superior to no notes. They can be revised and referred to, and help stop the brain from wandering away from the task of delving into God’s word. But it turns out that the person who first suggested that their church provide a pencil to everyone present was really on to something.”<sup>57</sup>

## A CASE AGAINST SERMON NOTE-TAKING

Some have built out-right cases against note-taking during the sermon. It is not uncommon for those who oppose sermon note-taking to begin their argument by quoting Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Jared C. Wilson, for instance, begins his argument against note-taking in this way when he quotes Lloyd-Jones’ work *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors*. Lloyd-Jones states:

I have often discouraged the taking of notes while I am preaching... The first and primary object of preaching is

not only to give information. It is, as Edwards says, to produce an impression. It is the impression at the time that matters, even more than what you can remember subsequently... While you are writing your notes, you may be missing something of the impact of the Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Wilson also quotes Timothy Keller, who says in one sermon "I don't mind if you take notes at the beginning of a message, but if you're still taking notes at the end, I feel like I haven't brought it home."<sup>59</sup> Wilson discourages sermon note-taking, because he wants people to "see preaching in the worship service, not...primarily [as] an educational transmission to their minds, but as [a] prophetic proclamation aimed at their hearts."<sup>60</sup>

Mark Jones is concerned that note-taking could discourage a preacher who has done so much work in preparing his or her sermon, but is unable to look listeners in the eyeball during delivery. He states:

I want to make eye contact with my people. Very often their faces tell me a lot, even when I need to re-explain something or when I need to slow the pace down. But it can be off-putting when those you are looking at are never looking at you. Plus, there is something about looking into the eyes of others when you are preaching that can be deeply moving for them, whether a point of conviction or a point of assurance from the word preached.<sup>61</sup>

Jones fears that God's sanctuary may begin to feel more like a lecture hall than a place of worship, and that people can become guilty of a more intellectual approach to the Word of God instead of letting Him touch their hearts.

But that is why each listener who takes sermon notes must perfect the skill and not divorce heart from head. Moreover, preachers must be conscious that someone who desires to preserve this precious Word of God coming from their mouth is following their sermons by jotting for future reference and action. Sermon note-taking may be encouraged, and advice



offered so that individuals may decide what they want to do and how best to do it within their capacities.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined the practice of sermon note-taking in the church. Note-taking was found to have its roots in the value attached to the Word of God as delivered during the preaching of Scripture. This value inspires its hearers to preserve the message of the sermon for reference, review, and communication to others who need to hear it. Sermon note-taking is also a process of journaling and a function of good listening. Like every other profitable practice, sermon note-taking has specific processes and methods. Note-taking is not a verbatim transcription of the preacher's words. Instead, there are gems that the note-takers must record so they will not be bored or miss out on essential aspects of the sermon, while keeping eye contact with the preacher. In anticipation of Sunday, listeners may pray for the pastor's preaching by asking God to bless his sermon preparation and delivery. Preachers, for their part, must be conscious that many listeners are trying to take notes about the gems in their sermons.

Yet not all listeners love to write. Some are aural listeners, and some are *digital*. They have distinct ways they listen to and record what they hear. So, there is no one-size-fits-all for note-taking. Each individual must find the best way to preserve the precious word of God for their future use. In an increasingly digital, paperless society, some listeners prefer taking notes with different apps on their phones and tablets. However, some discourage note-taking, because they consider it distracting, and charge that it turns the worship process into an academic exercise. Furthermore, they assert that it prevents people from maintaining eye contact with the preacher. Nevertheless, these reasons are insufficient to discourage sermon note-taking. The advantages far outweigh the disadvantages, and some of the challenges note-taking creates can be addressed with the right skills and a proper attitude towards note-taking.

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NOTES

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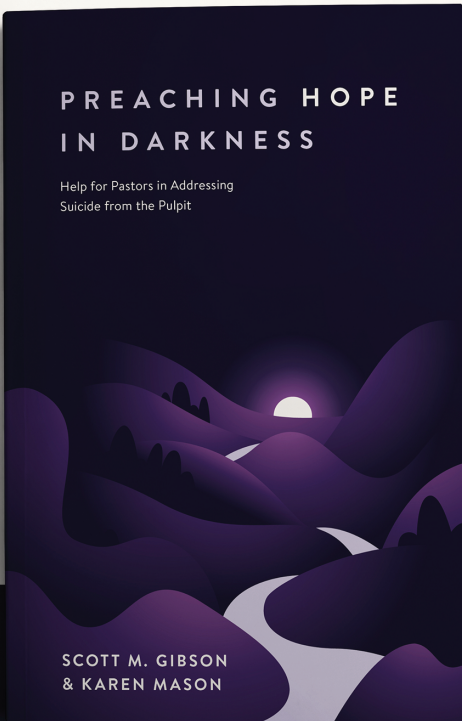
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