

HAMPTON

RELIGIOUS

EDUCATION

BRAINSTORMING

SESSION

Charles Smith

Rev. Vaughn will you open up with a word of prayer for us please?

Rev. Vaughn

Sure, let us pray.

O God our father, we praise your name for this another glorious day and for every opportunity we have to be of service to thee. We thank thee Lord God that thou has brought many of us over the roads. You have brought us here Lord, God that we might be about your business. We pray that you will guide us and direct us and grant, Lord God, that through our collective thinking and sharing we will be able to do those things that will help others to excel in their kingdom pilgrimage. Be thou with us all and send your benediction upon that we might forever give your name the glory and the praise. Amen.

Charles Smith

I want to start by expressing my deep appreciation to Dr. Vaughn and Dr. Battle for the opportunity which was afforded us at the Hampton Ministers Conference to do what I call a miracle. And that is to be able to fuse together missions and to utilize a resource to see if we can do some documentation of some findings to make sure that we are on the right path doing the right thing for the benefit of our people. It appears that close to 90% of the participation who took a survey in the religious education conference turned them in. That is remarkable. I do not have the final count because I do not know exactly where we shifted around. Allegedly, there were close to 2,000 of the surveys for the second conference. It could have been less. It could have been more. The only thing that I want to report to you is that all of them were gone and as far as we know, 95% of all were turned in. When they came back, we showed the box of surveys, and I'll be honest with you, I don't even like to fill out a survey. A six-page survey and the only thing that I felt uncomfortable, I did not have a wide camera to see people standing two or three deep writing on the wall, writing on each other's back, writing in their arms and sitting at the table. In 24 hours, listen, all the surveys were turned in. That's totally unbelievable. Now God has said something to us for that to happen. That just doesn't happen any kind of way. I think it's timing and I think people appreciate that this is a creditable effort and I think it adds a sense of urgency to what we are all about and doing. The surveys have been sent off to be tabulated at Princeton University and then we will be doing the analysis together with them. I think it's going to tell us a lot.

There are some interesting side lines in that survey that's going to reveal a great deal to us generationally because as you know, we didn't ask for your name but we did ask for your age. Your age as it reflects in some of the other answers will tell us a great deal for what we are after. I think that the partnership between your leadership of what you are doing and the kind of support that we can give to that adds a whole dimension for long-term planning and that type of thing.

Dr. Battle

Will the survey guide to where we go?

Charles Smith

Yes. What we will be doing here is quantitative and though we targeted young people for the survey and the research that we did was with young people, that survey reached beyond young people. That survey indicated where your greatest need is. But we listed men, women, young men, young women, a whole

bunch of things. It may be that we might be shocked. I'm getting messages that young women need this kind of _____ so we may be shocked by what comes out of that survey.

That was done by design because although you get your foot in the door talking about young people, you have to sneak and find out the rest of the things. So, I am looking forward to its results and also we will be doing a survey at the CME Christian Methodist Episcopal Convention meeting in Birmingham the first week of July. There will be 2,500 young people there. It will help, give or take, seek to validate the original findings that we had. The difference will be that this is a control group of all church kids. The other one was kids from the block, the housing projects and everybody else.

We are not quite sure what we are doing in Baltimore but we were going to get that together. We were going to do 1,500. We have to modify that. We have youth at risk research coming out of that.

Now these get put together after all this information is together and analysis has been made, then you really can be in the planning mode in the true sense of the word. We can't wait on it for us to do the next thing. We must do what we are doing today.

Before we move on, I'd like to have a word either from Dr. Vaughn or Dr. Battle to us and I'll say a little something about our logistics.

Dr. Michael Battle

Would you contextualize what kind of word you want us to say in terms of what specific?

Charles Smith

Just say hello.

(Introduction)

As you all know, Marjorie is a consultant who works with me off and on. She definitely will be involved in research. Rebecca assists her.

Next is my daughter. My daughter is a marketing expert worldwide for IBM. She has either 3 or 4 Continents in the last 12 months from Shanghai to Frankfurt, Germany to Paris, to London where she advises the top leadership of IBM in marketing. She's a H_____ graduate. Her name is Selena.

We'll be joined by everybody else starting at different times.

Pat

For dinner we will have Mrs. Green's husband.

Charles Smith

Dr. Holloway will be with us this afternoon. Jessie Battle should be coming any time now.

Pat

Dr. Walter Thomas missed his train and I haven't heard from him.

Dr. Alfred Vaughn

He had not gotten his ticket.

Pat

His tickets came Federal Express and he wasn't home. He had to follow them up.

Dr. Michael Battle

I would like to say on behalf of the group from the Hampton Ministers Conference and anyone else can follow up, how appreciative we are to participate in this endeavor and that we are looking for some kind of continu_____ partnership as far as our planning for next year's Christian Education Conference. What I am hoping will happen, not only will it be the case that we are giving information to you but we will be receiving information as well from you as we shape and design our Christian Education Conference. Our Facilitator is here as well as the Dean of that Conference is here. Hopefully, we can do some things at next year's Christian Education Conference that will directly reflect a result of this survey saying what the needs are and we will design the whole program around meeting those needs with some additional inserts are things that we have do vis-a-vis the Conference. Even to the extent of accepting some recommendations in terms of persons we may invite. What I would like to see after our Conference last year is something coming out of this experience then taken to that Conference. It will give us an opportunity then to really test whether we are on the market. Then we will have Christian educators coming from everywhere to test what it is that we discover in this setting. We are here open and ready for work.

Charles Smith

I'll be honest with you. I need even more than that. On our time frame here, we will be pulling and requesting skills and follow through on many of the problems.

Two things:

1) We know that we are limited in certain things but our partnership can open up other opportunities to get certain things done and we can talk about that at a later date. The mere fact that we are able to pull you in from the various parts of the country today says that we are very serious.

This facility is quite a resource.

Dr. Michael Battle

There is one other person that Dr. Vaughn had mentioned to me the other day, C. Dexter Wise. He is Harvard trained, with a very brilliant mind and he has been engaged in the writing of Christian education material for about 15 years. They do all of their materials plus commentary, hermenetical interpretation and the like. He would be a very valuable part of this exercise. But we are willing for you to delineate what the skill areas are and the competency areas are and we'll make sure that we can try to meet those skill and competency areas.

Charles Smith

I want you to meet our Chief Operating Officer who has been with us a few months. He is dropping in on us. I am glad he could. What is happening here is they are coming in at a different time. This is part of the crew, maybe almost half. Let me tell you who they are and I'll let you say hello to them.

The largest and most prestigious interdenominational gathering of Church Leadership in this country, the Hampton Ministers Conference. There is no other entity that can take its place in America. Preceding that meeting is the Hampton Christian Education Leadership Conference which represents the Christian Education leaders out of the context of that Conference which is also interdenominational. Through the influence of the Executive Secretary and the Dean, we were permitted to be a part of them. We were invited to do a six-page survey among their ranks a couple of weeks ago. 90% of those Christian educators filled out the six-page survey. The Conference which took place subsequent to that, the Hampton's Ministers Conference which there were some 7,000 in attendance, give or take from all across the country. They made provision through Dr. Battle, the Executive Secretary, to give us 4-5 minutes on the program to tell them that we had done qualitative research but we wanted to do some quantitative research. We wanted inusers to tell us if we are on the right track or not before we move.

To our very pleasant surprise, give or take, we had some 2,000 surveys returned. To our knowledge, they are being tabulated now. Within 24 hours, 2,000 surveys were returned. The analysis of that is being done now.

We asked, as we prepare to take a look at the African-American community, that we sit down together that we might learn more about the basic market needs from their vantage point. This is the leadership of that Body. We are looking for ideas, for concepts and to take a look at some of the things we had done to enter this kind of partnership. Their mission is exactly the same as our mission. So they have come up to spend 24 hours with us. They represent different disciplines to see where we can partner and how they can give us assistance.

Chief Operating Officer

Let me just welcome you here. I just wanted to stop by and say thank you for coming. Thank you for agreeing to be part of this survey and interpreting the results for us. Our heart is basically to come along aside of all of you good folks in what you are doing and see how we can work with you, to see how we can support and help your mission. We really welcome all the input and all the expertise that you bring around the table. Thank you for coming. You are welcome here and you are in good hands with Charles. I know that he's a hard man to work with but I'm sure we can all sport him for awhile. We look forward to whatever comes out of this. We are looking forward to working with a number of different partnerships across the country to achieve our joint missions. We look out there across the US. we are becoming more and more convinced that we have to work in partnerships and alliances. I think gone are the days when one organization can say we're doing this and you're doing that. I think that it is time to join hands because we have a big, big job to do. We need all of our gifts, talents, and resources working together. So, I am looking forward to hearing what is coming out of this today and I just want to assure you of our full cooperation and support for what you're doing and I'm hopeful that we're going to find some common row here. I hope that we are going to come out of this with some specific detail objectives that we feel if we get behind these together we will make a big impact for the direction that we want to go.

Charles Smith

If anyone of you had the best of both worlds could think of any idea, tool or services that you could use to be effective in your ministry, we just want to throw out ideas. They might not be concrete but this is the concept. You've had various experiences. You know that there are certain things out there but you want

to have other things. Even if it's within the delivery system, within the ministries, within your local churches. First, before we tie down to target groups or anything we'd like to have a full flow of your wish list.

Dr. Battle

Let me understand something. Will you help us understand whether or not what we're doing is participation in helping to develop an interpretation of literature data or just the development of the package that the data is going to be translated. Are we looking at providing commentary hermeneutical interpretation or just suggesting ideas of a kind of language style that the Bible can be translated.

Charles Smith

All of it. Your question is because it gives us, well, I didn't want to pass out anything because people get, and that almost begins to hit it a little bit. Before I got tied down into something a little more tight, I just wanted to just let it flow. You work with young people, what do you need? What would you like to have? That's where we are right now. At the initial stage of it, wild ideas and concepts. Just assume, Dr. Vaughn, that you are dealing with all those preachers down there. You know what they desire and what they need.

Though we may have initiated with young people, but there is totally impossible to deal with any one segment of the population without dealing with the whole population within the Christian community. We are not necessarily limited to those people. Our target group is young people but our overall program is the African-American Church community as they serve.

Dr. Michael Battle

One of the things that I would like to see developed is a listing of materials on Kwanza and a detailing of African-American figures who demonstrate each of those aspects that then can be incorporated to be used in some part of the Sunday and Christian education material. The rationale is that very often when a kid reads a Sunday School package, when there is an example of a person who represents great unity is an example from the non-black world. We need to contextualize as many black figures. They don't have to be religious leaders. These would be people who have demonstrated in their lives, the principles of love, unity, and family, etc. We could start finding persons who could do very small mini-biographies on these persons and construct a mini-biography bank where you have a hundred to maybe a thousand African-American people, some well known and some not well known that you could always just pull out and use as examples. I think that's what will capture the minds of our young people. It's OK to see a black Jesus, but if you don't see black figures in history and in contemporary life who exemplify the ethical images that we try to project in our materials then kids go away still not thinking that we have examples who are like us. We need to consciously do that even using some of our own ministers.

For example, if there is materials going to the northeast, find some people in the northeast who are African-American people and do a little blurb on some of those people as they relate to some of these principles. This will take a lot of background work, a lot of research and a lot of contextualizing research geographically. With the resources that you have here, that shouldn't be so difficult to do.

Selena

In taking these African-American people, do you think that they can stand on their own as just being an ethical figure and somebody to look up to or does it need to go back into the context of the Bible?

Dr. Michael Battle

I think it can always go back into the context of the Bible. That's why you would give a theological context out of which the person's image is then being used. For example, if you are talking about the principle of humility, why only look at Biblical figures. Look at Rosa Park as an example or look at somebody who the group of Maryland may _____ indicate a man or woman who people in that area may recognize because of public notoriety. It has to be Biblically centered all the time but a conscious effort has to be made all the time to find non-whites who are, Biblically centered. Not because it is hard to find them but nobody has tried to find this before.

Rebecca

Young people are not able to identify with Biblical characters as much as we think. We use these figures to illustrate certain truths assuming that everyone will get the point. In our work, Marjorie and I found that people want a "now faith." Hebrew Chapter 11 is a good Biblical text, sometimes called the hall of fame, but our youth need someone of recent years that has experience or testimony of God's power in their lives. They need someone at a local level. It is good to hold up sports heroes and others who have done great exploits but youth need folk that they can touch or at least they can take a trip across to experience the lines of these persons. It will take a lot of research for us to search out these people and to write their story and to provide community-based role models. Even Rosa Parks' testimony is becoming cold. That's almost like saying Daniel or David and Goliath. We need some "now faith experiences."

Dr. Michael Battle

Of course that means that the research has to be ongoing.

Jerome Barber

To dove tail in with that, they then write themselves in as that example. We would create some type of open ended document that gives them opportunity to say that's also me. Not only is that Rosa Park but I see that also in me. I would like to see something along that line. We are dealing with our first group of young people on the 22nd of June and thankfully, it looks like we are going to be overwhelmed with the youth there. What I want to see and what will happen is they will leave there with a Bible in their hand. I was telling Rev. Battle on the way up that we haven't done our first one yet and already we've received calls to ask us to do local ministry where we young people are solving for the X. Basically, we take X by itself and try to find out X's identity. In doing so, we are trying to develop a Biblically based self-concept.

I want to see literature established that removes the mystique about the Bible but still encourages reverence and respect for God's Word. The Bible would not be a distant document to them but they would have a confidence that I can pick this up, handle it, allow it to speak to me and to my issues. There is then developed a hunger for the Word. It will no longer be a struggle to get young people to pick up the Bible. This would prevent them from developing the habit of the 90's where we don't do anything until Sunday and even then we let the preacher do it all. We want young people to go back to the concept of daily will I seek you. There will be something within them that is so confident about opening the Word of God.

I want to see young people with their own commentaries. Then the Word become made flesh to them, a real experience for them. This way, the language will not scare them off and the format will not intimidate them. Give them a confidence both handling the word and rightly dividing it also.

Dr. Michael Battle

It may well be that what we can do with a set of commentaries or a set of interpretation material, a section entitled "Where is My Church in this, Where is My School in This, Where am I in this? That creates the opportunity to write one's own commentary. What you may want to do periodically, perhaps quarterly, is have a competition where participants in the educational process are actually writing their own life story into the Biblical text and giving their interpretation as it fits to their home, their school, their church and their jobs. Follow up with the reading of these accounts or personalized stories or at least once a quarter.

Awards could be given to the winning Sunday School department. Church school departments are big on banners. Can you imagine the excitement over a banner awarded by the American Bible Society? The documents could be collected and that would keep alive this current availability of resources or volume of stories.

Something will have to be done for clergy and teachers.

Whatever we decide to do, you can expect two commitments from us.

- 1) We can provide the Christian education Conference to test it out.
- 2) We can provide at least an hour in the Ministers' Conference to present what we've done.

You will have huge groups who we'll know where we are. Then we can educate both the teachers and the preachers.

Jerome Barber

We also have young population of African-American males and females on a college campus where we can test the material on a year-round basis. In addition, there are the youth groups that are coming in every three months.

Young people want materials that are challenging and open ended. In school they are dealing with "Critical Thinking." They have to think and reason out situations.

Marva

Dr. Smith, executive summary speaks to the need for volunteers to explore community based ministries and international programs. I see this whole piece in making the Word of God become Rhema to our youth. The intergenerational concept could be expanded to involve young people in interviewing some of the mothers and senior citizens in the church. We have modern day Rosa Parks sitting in our congregations. This will help them with their interviewing skills, interpersonal skills and writing skills. Earlier we were discussing archiving. Why don't we put into print what our people have to offer and market it across the nation and throughout the world? There is a rich wealth of human resources right in our churches. I see that as part of a methodology of teaching. I go right to the methodology in making

it practical to the student on application assignments. By a certain time, students would be required to interview a given number of persons who model the traits that we took out of the Scriptures.

Dr. Alfred Vaughn

We have to get folk in the Church interested in becoming the real family of God. We have too many schisms when we ought to be a united family. The church today does not have the same type of unity that I knew as a boy. We have allowed those little schisms to separate and divide us. I tell my congregation of Sharon Baptist, that I am not interested in a Children's church, a teenagers church. Rather, I'm interested in a unified family. We don't have time to talk, to share. In my family, Bible study and prayer around the table was an understood thing.

There is another real concern that I would like to raise. Soon or later, we must develop material that deals with the preacher in healing himself. So many of our preachers are in trouble and they don't know where to turn Biblically or anyone else for help. So many are in denial and the Church is ill equipped to deal with them. They will deal with symptoms or side effects of the real problem. Sometimes we go to the extreme of throwing folks out. The Body of Christ ought to always be taking in or receiving folks. Some die lonely deaths because they are never able to heal themselves. Yet, they are the physicians. Sometimes, we have to ask where is our balm?

A priest does something and he is quietly placed at Shepherd Pratt but in the black community you are left to struggle almost by yourself.

Michael Battle

We have ignored the need to provide counsel for those who are in church leadership positions. We have become more judgmental and inclined to say that every problem is a sin problem and thus the simple solution is that the person needs to get saved. I participated recently in a conference of a number of religious communities, Jewish, Islamic, etc. on the failure of the different faith groups to own up to the problems of alcoholism, substance abuse, mental retardation and how we can break through the wall of that denial. Materials are needed to break through the wall of denial and then to indicate what the areas of denial are. This will enable us to provide the context for therapy.

I too am concerned about the issue of generational teaching. Concurrent with that approach it might be necessary to train a group of people to help youth deal with a group of senior material which would force them to deal with growing old. Have seniors who can't stand the baggy pants spend a month studying from the young people's perspective. Then the groups could come together and exchange what they have discovered about each other. This way intergenerationalism becomes entrenched

Charles Smith

I served as a trustee on the National Council on Aging. The largest growing program of this organization is the intergenerational program. I have materials and a training manual developed by this group. The best money to fund programs is in that area.

The only thing missing is the religious element. That's a wide open field.

Dr. Michael Battle

There is ample evidence for it right out of the Old Testament. Thus it's so easy for us to provide theological justification for it.

Joseph Dancy is probably one of the leading experts in gerontology among African-American scholars. He teaches at Norfolk State University. Two years ago he lectured at the Hampton Conferences on the issues of growing old or aging. It may be that putting Joe Dancy and a Jerome Barber in a room together, both of them being experts in their respective fields, and assigning them the task of coming out with common ground material. Put teenagers and seniors together and say, "you can't come out until you reach a consensus on a given topic.

Selena

What kinds of tactics are working now to bring children at risk into the church? What can ABS do to support your efforts?

Michael Battle

The issue is not bringing the youth into the church but taking the church to them. It's finding creative ways to take the same principles taught in the Biblical material and inserting it in a Kind of literature that is not such much Bible driven and taking it to the community. Before the Breakdown of the Sor_____ Union, I was impressed by the way people taught Christian education when Christian education was illegal.

They would have birthday parties and games out of which would come value driven lessons.

Barber

They have to have confidence in and hear it from their own. We have to encourage those who have remained in the Church and who can be just as impactful and can be ambassadors for Christ. They are missionaries who can make a difference. What draws young people is other young people. We have to help the "older brother", the one who stayed home, remain confident of the Father's love so that he does not criticize those coming in or those still out there but that they reach out in love. They need tools. They need empowering.

Marva

The overriding theme of this year's conference was our youth. Throughout each symposium and each lecture, participants were most interested in how to reach our youth. How do we keep the ones we have and at the same time reach others?

The church is finally seeing that the youth is not the church of tomorrow but right now. The future of everything we believe in is right now. The Shepherd watches over the sheep but sheep breed sheep. Young people will breed young people.

There is an indication that young people don't know who they are. God created everyone with purpose. Young people must be taught that they were created with purpose and be taught what that created purpose is.

Dr. Vaughn

While we save our youth we have to also save our elderly. Many people at the point where faith ought to be story, break down and become angry with God. We have to find ways to minister to these. There is a 92 year old lady in my church, who the doctors have pronounced terminal who is angry as they approach the Jordan River.

Barber

It sounds like at 92 we have to deal with the issue of purpose. Our society teaches that until you reach a certain age you don't have value and after you reach a certain age you lose your value. They need to hear in the Church that God has a place and purpose for us. We need a sound Biblically based program for self-concept.

Michael Battle

Part of what is missing in our educational material is the opportunity to talk genuinely about our failures. We want to rush so quickly past failures to success stories.

Open ended materials can also provide opportunity to discuss times of weakness. Instead of rushing to the victory of deliverance we would encourage addressing the intricate feelings of the moment of weakness.

To quote **Dr. Walter Thomas**, "sometimes God throws you out there in deep waters and He doesn't come and deliver us." Let people tread water instead of presenting the Bible as a quick fix. The reality is it is not a quick fix. So people grow old and realize that it is not as simple as I thought. So they get frustrated and wonder why God has forsaken them.

We need to be realistic about our presentation of the Bible story. They have been injured, were weak, were tried and had all kinds of problems. We are too quick to make a myth out of the characters in the Bible.

My approach to Jesus is that He was human. He felt pain on the cross. If He did not then He is not relevant. The spear hurt his side but he endured it.

Barber

We have not established an environment where people can feel open enough to be honest without fear of being accused of sin.

Dr. Jessie Battle (arrives).

I find the issue raised by Michael interesting. Obviously, when we look for Christ we ultimately find Christ at the end of that failure at some level or the other. One of the problems that practicing ministers find is the element of time. It becomes difficult to find that hurt and to develop it into something meaningful in the lives of today's congregants. If the Bible is going to maintain some relevance in lives of people today, this must be done. We are becoming more hard press to do it in our pulpits. We may have a little more freedom in classroom settings. The pulpit setting is becoming more and more difficult to present the Christ story in a holistic point of view.

Michael Battle

For one thing we put too much on the preaching moment. It is crucial to the savings of souls but the preacher has to do more than the preaching moment stuff. Sometimes that means training a group of young people how to go and tell their story being honest with their pain. It could be empowering seniors to go to other seniors and sharing how they dealt with lost. In the final analysis, we will discover that the methodology of redemption doesn't always come through a sermon preached.

One of the things African-American have historically done is tell stories. We have replaced storytelling time with testimonies that end up with the experience of victory. Some folks don't feel comfortable in testifying because they are not at the Victory moment.

Jesus dealt with the pain and frustration of people. He engaged in conversation with people. We need a cadre of people to do it. What is needed is people interested in more than building churches. We don't deal with the cross so we rush to Easter. Like Job, sometimes we feel like God is gone. If we are going to bring the Word to people who are unchurched we must force them to do critical thinking.

The American Bible Society can be helpful by providing materials that is value based but not explicitly Bible based. We can enlist people to teach in community centers and present value driven materials. Eventually, folks will request the theological.

Rev. Barber participated in one such effort where in a public school value based material was presented in the morning and a religious program offered in the evening. Response was tremendous.

Barber

They went home and got their friends and it was the most powerful thing that I have ever seen. The presenter in wisdom invited youth to follow their dream. Young people were sitting on the edge of their seats weeping. At the count of 3, they exploded. In the evening the same thing happened only he invited them to follow Jesus. Young people had returned for the evening session knowing what it was about.

During the day, in the context of the Public School System it was done in a way that they were "breaking through barriers."

I preached a sermon dealing with the question, What do you do when God is dead. This was Easter Sunday, the women were on the way to the tomb and for them, God is dead. Having informed some young people of my intentions they warned that I couldn't do that, especially not on Easter. There are moments in our lives when we feel that God is dead. Many times we have to deal with that outside the preaching moment. We have to bring people to the point where it becomes devotional and they are not depending upon everything to come from the pulpit. Pamphlets dealing with specific issues can be designed to assist people on a daily basis.

Jessie Battle

In St. Louis we have the usual crime problem. Our church is probably located in the worst ghetto. We have a serious problem reaching the unchurched. A couple of Years ago, Senator John Danford, who served Congress for a long time, re_____ with about 2 1/2 million dollars surplus campaign money. By law he had to either donate it to a non-profit organization or turn it over to the Republican Party. He

chose to establish in his hometown of St. Louis an organization which we call Interact St. Louis. I serve on the Board. The organization was established for the purpose of creating and facilitating some kind of program that will involve young people from our urban community in a recognized religious expression.

Jack Danford happens to be an Episcopal Priest also. He became very much endeared to this idea. More than 4 million dollars have now been raised and we have tried all kinds of programs in an effort to involve the youth. We are having problem getting to them. We have tried educational and social oriented programs. We've gone as far as to include jazz in an effort to win them.

In a regular meeting of about 30 clergy men we cannot come up with a simple idea to attract the interest of our young people. Rev. Barber has a program that I hope will work in Urban St. Louis, Chicago, and other urban cities.

Charles Smith

Marjorie and I did research in 17 cities across the country, where things are taking place. We found out who can reach them and how they are getting the job done.

Observe, you all have shifted the paradigm of Christian Education. You are shifting it where it really ought to be. The challenge is on hand and you may have more on your hand than you think.

Michael Battle

That is what we took a risk to do at this year's Conference. We are willing to boldly make even more of a shift to include what results as an outcome of this weekend.

I suggest to Jessie that part of the strategy is to have 30 youth present with the 30 clergy. Earlier in my experience at Hampton University, we could not get young people to usher. I solicited help from one of the wildest groups on campus, the Grove Phi Groove. These guys were in trouble on campus and I was on the Student Personnel Council. I made a bargain with them that if they would usher, I would speak a favorable word for them. The bad boys provoked others to jealousy and became a catalyst for getting others involved in the Church, so much so that on the first day of each Fall session, there is a mad rush to block out a date on the calendar to serve.

I would like to address another issue. If you go to an Episcopal Church, the lectionary is very much a part of the worship experience. The people know at least 3 Scriptures that the preacher is going to refer to in the context of his sermon. By lectionary law, he has to refer to those 3 Scriptures. Everybody has an opportunity to have read them. It may be that we can develop a list of _____ sermon suggestions that may grow out of the Sunday School materials. This would be preached preceding and not succeeding the Sunday School lesson. The materials would include illustrations that can assist in sermon development. The aim is to ensure continuity in the teaching and preaching process.

Some black churches are now tying together Wednesday night, the Sunday School lesson and the preaching experience on Sunday.

Jessie Battle

Please return to the issue of bringing a meeting between 30 clergy persons with 30 young people. You must bring somebody from your church who knows church staff but can relate to other kids. But you also want some of the guys with their pants hanging down and whose language might not be saved language. Some folks may not know that certain words are wrong.

Charles Smith

Before you leave here, I will baptize you into that world. I have examples on tape.

Barber

Too often we program for instead of with. We must bring in those that it is for at the planning level.

Jessie Battle

This is one of the things that we did do. We preachers have access to youth within the context of our churches. These are not the persons that we are trying to reach. They are already reached. We want the young fellow in the streets.

Michael Battle

You go to the schools and ask them to provide you with one or two students who have had some difficulty. You will find more than enough on the suspension list. You will discover that once you take these kids seriously you will discover that they have been trying to get somebody's attention all the time. They would probably love the fact that a group like your group would take them seriously.

Outline a program with the 30 ministers. Then present it to the 30 kids saying, "This is what we want to do. We think this will work." Ask them to analyze it to advise you whether it is perfect as presented, needs minor or major revisions. Let those kids go off by themselves and wrestle the material. Remember what Bill Cosby said, "You never ask a youngster his opinion unless you are willing to accept it."

Make sure that it's not a program that you are so invested in that you won't change. Do this once or twice and you have their attention.

Dr. Vaughn

You must establish some relationship with them. Then you have to understand their language. Listen beyond their profanity. They have key leaders too. If you get their leaders, you have them.

Marva

Any curriculum that we must address believes who now live at home with unbelieving parents. Materials on this issue will grab out youth attention. "What Do I Do When I Am the Jesus in My House?" Jesus was rejected in His family as Messiah.

Michael Battle

You mean that we are dealing with first generation Christians and they are young people.

Marva

How do I deal when I am the Paul in my community so that I am not discouraged and return to my former life?

Jessie Battle

How do address parents who are now suddenly faced with 50 year old expectation from a teenager? By this, I mean young people who finally accept Christ in a home where parents are saved. Parents now want this child to stop acting like the devilish diabolical child he has been all his life and start acting like a 50 year old Christian. They are not expected to have adolescent problems. That becomes discouraging.

Michael Battle

This goes back to the issue of honesty in dealing with the Biblical materials. As long as we are not honest . . . We want to create the image that Jesus is a pill. We must be realistic in dealing with parents and provide opportunity for round table discussion. Bring in the parents. Ask, "your kid just got saved, what are some of your expectations of him now?"

Jessie Battle

What are you going to do with this "line" preacher whose job is to make this transformation but is not willing because of the baggage of his own denomination?

Michael Battle

That is where societies such as this and interdenominational conference are exceptional. The American Bible Society can come into a town and invite various groups to participate in round table discussion without the baggage.

There are kids who get saved in college and parents are unfamiliar with Bible characters. Youth can't relate to these stories and cannot go home to get reinforcement. Round table needs to be provided to engage that kid in value driven . . .

Father, we have to develop our sign.

Jessie Battle

You tend to lose practicing clergy. If the American Bible Society announced a call to clergy in Baltimore, to discuss "Truth in Biblical Preaching," you probably would not having 3 clergymen coming to that meeting.

Michael Battle

You would call it "Truth in Biblical Preaching."

Charles Smith

I have met with church clergy in practically every major city in this country and I've presented some of the most contributing problems. First of all, the only person who can be there is clergy. Ten minutes after my presentation and say, "Smith, I need help. I don't know what to do and I can't let my church know that I don't know what to do."

The Navajo nation is allegedly the worst tribal group in the country. We are the only group that got all the chiefs together in one room in a hotel. They admitted that they would come under the aegis of the American Bible Society. We do in a way that is not offensive.

I say that everything that you have mentioned is how we get it done. Clergy are hungry and they need the help. You have almost outlined an approach that even I had not thought about the extent that you have done here today.

When I went through my divorce, I suffered every kind of depression that you can name. I had no one to turn to and I didn't trust preachers for fear of judgment. I cursed God out worst than Job did and was still preaching every Sunday. I had a strong enough faith to hold on and keep it going.

There are two major programs in this country. One is conflict resolution and the other is value judgment. The problem is when you go home you don't have the support and when you go to church you don't have the material. We have that program downstairs. They have the program and the material, including the video. They present it on a developmental basis. They can't teach the Word of God. They can teach values. These values don't have a foundation other than cultural values.

Michael Battle

You mentioned that there is a paradigm shift. If the shift is going to be managed successfully and not end up resulting in an eruption which leads to chaos. It's always a shift with intentionality and purpose, well thought out and well planned. Every time that the Billy Graham movement comes to town, they have sent in advance teams months ahead of time. People are strategically located in each of those conferences to raise key questions and stimulate discussion.

Let's say that the American Bible Society comes to town and holds a discussion which ends up being "Honesty in Preaching" but starts as dealing with letting the Word speak for itself. Have a discussion with some of the men in advance of the meeting. Those ministers then invite other ministers. Then you put out a blanket invitation. There will be 3 to 4 people who are going to be honest and who are going to legitimately raise the problem areas and take some serious risks. If those other guys who are hurting will come out, then you have used in the science of education, guided discovery. You have guided people to discover what you wanted them to discover in the first place. But the guided discovery must be filled with intentionality and purpose. This means that the leg work has to be done. You have a Barber and a Marva present who will raise personal ministry issues. Others will chime in.

In break out sessions you will have to leave time between meetings. There would be long gaps between break out sessions and plenary sessions.

If the American Bible Society does its homework the honest people in this room will be these and some other honest issues will come out.

Jessie Battle

One of the things that the American Bible Society might want to consider is the issue of Pastors needing Pastors.

Dr. Vaughn

A small group of us used to meet on Friday mornings for prayer and sharing. It was a meaningful time. Schedules and time eventually separated us.

Michael Battle

Preachers have to be trained to accept that and to do that effectively.

Dr. Vaughn

You have to be trained but part of it has to be a gift from God on the person who is a shepherd to the shepherd. You have to really respect the sanctity of what people are doing when they bear their souls to you. That belongs only between you and God.

Jessie Battle

We can be trained and part of that training is self awareness.

Michael Battle

There used to be a time in Church history when Churches had book readings where people read books and discussed them. An American Bible Society sponsored reading for ministers of a book like Genry Nowen's Wounded Healer, J. Alfred Smith's The Meaning of Suffering or C. S. Lewis' work on pain might sensitize ministers to the need of clergy helping clergy. Cassette versions could be used in situations where ministers have limited reading skills.

Barber

First generation salvation is an important issue for our young people. College students indicate that Christmas and Easter are difficult holidays for them. We are dealing with lifestyle evangelism. They are faced with the challenge of obeying parents who tell them to do things that are contrary to their new found lifestyle. How do they make a stand for God and at the same time respect the home?

Jessie Battle

This is powerful evangelism. You have another generation of unsaved folks and have a foundation laid for future generations

Michael Battle

The other side is if _____ become so fanatical that influence no one or they could become caught up in the Jesus is a pill thing that they become frustrated when they discover that Jesus is not a pill.

Dr. Vaughn

I have experienced a time where a child was beaten for receiving Christ. What do you say to the child in this situation?

Charles Smith

We are seeking to develop a thematic based curriculum but we want to look at the whole picture. We are not looking to develop a dated type program. The majority of our market will not be in any Sunday School.

Marva

This nation is becoming more reading conscious and stresses a "back to basic" approach to raising skill levels. Whatever we produce should be of such a nature that we are emphasizing critical thinking, writing and reading skills. These things will help us as a people raise to the level of excellence that we are capable of achieving. We teach our own best. Our churches need to again become the major institutions of education with a Biblically based curriculum with a standard of excellence that foster some of the standards expected of us to be productive, employable citizens. We need to produce quality products.

Charles Smith

Your suggestion is in line with a project that I am working at the moment. It is not yet at the final writing stage. "From the Fourth Grade to Prison and Back and Why" involved young boys who when the shift where critical thinking and cognitive development must take place did not take place. I track that. I feel that I have some answers and solutions as I deal with how Christ dealt with cognitive development thinking and points of intervention that the average pastor and Christian educator has not pinpointed.

Yes, anything that we do must be put in the context of a literal holistic approach

Marva

Wherever materials are marketed and used, teachers will have to be trained.

Barber

In Virginia they have adopted a concept of "working on the work" where as far as learning is concerned, no longer does a teacher come with a ready-made lesson plan. You have an idea where you want to take the class. The all-inclusive plan permits the child opportunity to work on the work. The class helps to develop the lesson that it will then learn. It will also develop the criteria to evaluate that lesson. What it does is show ownership. It also produces a product.

Michael Battle

The need to train

Any new paradigm that doesn't make the investment to train people to train and teach the paradigm is not going to work. Just as any new paradigm shift must have the intentionally driven, the training has to be intentionally driven. You have to train some people who want to be trained and who make a commitment to go out and train other people. That is the way you reduce your training dollars. You train then get a commitment of accountability to you, to train others

Train Coordinators

Who Train Church Workers

People in denominations

Christian educators in surrounding geographical area (trainers).

Hampton University is shifting its paradigm. What is encouraging is that professors no longer be dispersers of information but to be facilitators of knowledge. The ideal situation is one where professors no longer answer questions but encourage students to return to the text and force them to wrestle with a method of discovery. It's no longer teaching people what to think, it is teaching people how to think.

Because the unchurched is doing critical thinking with everything else, what we produce must incorporate the same methodology.

Barber

We introduced that in our classes last session. The only thing students know was the verse to be discussed. Ample thinking time was provided. Often things gravitated to where students looked to me to answer questions. I refused to answer. Instead, we wrestled with Scripture. All I did was to facilitate or guide the discussion. The whole process of learning has taken on these premier objectives.

One thing that is included in the Ark Builders Program, in addition to receiving a Bible and learning how to pray, is academic sessions. The Church becomes a storehouse again. We are challenging churches to deal with issues of academics. Do the mentoring and the after school tutorial programs.

Many times the self-concept of young people is destroyed by the public education system. Those dealing with them, especially the black male, are intimidated by them. They ignore them and in many instances, lower the educational standard and expectations.

Michael Battle

The process is called "dumbing down."

Marva

To teach them their purpose is to lose.

Michael Battle

Scholars provide fertile ground for us to provide what we are talking about here. Most schools are looking for someone to use that school after hours of operation.

Jessie's program, Project Sunshine, has implicit as well as explicit money. You can always add Biblical materials provided that you have another package at first.

In Sommerset, the school is operated by First Baptist Lincoln Gardens from after school until about 10:00 P.M. They do study sessions. They also have their Sunday School department in the local school building.

If you developed a program dealing with positive self image, self-esteem, values, etc., what inevitably will happen is that someone will ask _____ motivates your concern for me? The school will provide the door.

Dr. Vaughn

We have invited the school into church. We have established the Sharon Gilmore relationship, the adopting of a school. When they get on your ground, no one can tell you what to do.

Barber

Our superintendent called all the preachers in Newport News together and begged them. He understood that there was a delineation between church and state but the problem is so great that if they presented him a program, he would deal with all the legal issues. He said, "I need you desperately because the only

way to turn this thing around in this city is that the preachers have to take their rightful place and churches have to become active in the process. "I cannot do it by myself."

Michael Battle

We have been talking about empowering everybody else. Sometimes we need to be empowered. Can there be training sessions where ministers can come to grips with the need to assert the power that we have? Some ministers would never think that a school or community center would be willing to work with them. So they don't ask. There needs to be a vehicle to get preachers to see the vastness of power in front of us.

Dr. Vaughn

The only way to take back our streets and communities is to seize our power.

Barber

I showed a value driven movie in my church and added Jesus at the end.

In Kansas City, young people who drop out of high school are sent to a special program. _____ at the site to face over 250 young people. When I walked in, the director informed me that I could not preach, could not speak Jesus' name. Not wanting to blow the opportunity, I said, "mam, no problem." She said that the only way you can talk about it is if they ask questions about it. She thought that I would respond the same way that a previous preacher did and leave. I showed the movie and one child raised her hand and said "preacher, tell me what it means to be saved." I asked the director if I could answer the question. She responded yes, shook her head and walked out of the door.

Preachers need training in not missing blessings in disguise. You can take some things and tailor them down in such a way that it is not watering down.

Charles Smith

Discipline yourself and keep going and God will open doors.

Jessie Battle

Some preachers need to be less dogmatic as it relates to our own doctrinal hang ups.

(End of Friday's Session)

Saturday, June 15, 1996

Prayer - Jerome Barber

Charles Smith

Yesterday had in my judgment worked according to textbook. Before we move into today's portion, I'd like to change my agenda to allow those who are joining us today to have input in yesterday's discussion. First, Mike will recap the major points of discussion. You will get a chance to offer your input.

Michael Battle

We started off yesterday with a report from Rev. Smith indicating that from the Christian Education Conference he received about 90% of the surveys and from the minister's conference there was about a 95% reception of over 2,000 surveys. We began a brainstorming session with essentially three principal focuses.

1. The need to deal with some intergenerational material and intergenerational settings where the focus of material cannot be limited. It must sensitize the youth to the problems of the aging. It must also sensitize the aging to the realities of the youth.
2. We also focused on the methodology of presenting the material. Three critical things in that in that methodology was:
 - (a) appropriate language
 - (b) finding proper locations and
 - (c) Proper times to relate to the unchurched community.

A variety of suggestions came with regard to what kind of language used, language that is relevant, which intentionally brings in an Afro-Centrism. The language of the street is not always good English, nor is it void of vulgarity. In terms of times and location, quite often in our attempt to bring Christian education to people we may have to alter the time from a Sunday or after the location from a church and do things in a community center incorporating local schools and other kinds of things with a value driven program which while it is very Biblically centered, it's not explicitly Biblically centered. It is implicitly Biblically centered.

We talked about the need to have critical thinking tools operative in whatever materials that we produce.

I made a commitment to organize the Christian education program for the Hampton Conference in 1997 around the Agenda that we establish here. We will do that in direct cooperation with Charles Smith's office. We will look for input and direction on that. Secondly, we will provide opportunity at the Minister's Conference for an hour presentation of what we have done here. Charles, that would be better done by you and Marjorie.

Charles Smith

Based upon the _____ what's out there and what is needed in order for you to be effective in getting done what ought to be done. It could be service program products, etc.

Jessie Battle

I'd like to see a more structured training program that relates to the African-American church. I think that the larger percentage of practitioners from a theological standpoint are probably untrained. We need to try to bring some kind of training to the masses of black ministers.

Your organization can provide tremendous impetus to this kind of program.

Pat Ware

Training of pastors should go further. The problems youth have are adult problems. Yet, adults in the church have no clue as to how to relate to these problems. They don't know how to answer the hard

questions. All too often they haven't resolved many of these issues themselves. We must do something about the awareness level of the adults in these churches not only from a theological perspective but from a social perspective as well. They cannot dialogue with your people on sexuality issues because they do not understand them themselves from a Biblical perspective. Even if they understand from a Biblical perspective, they don't know how to follow through on what they know.

Much of what I hear from people who are trying to develop programs in the black church have a very Anglo-approach. White intellectual social workers tell them what black kids need and how to go about meeting that need. The majority of white people don't really understand our young people. Neither do they believe in them. They do not believe that our young people can embrace a life-style that is pure, holy and self disciplined. So they provide alternatives to help us deal with some of the consequences of what will happen after these young people who have done all these things. They know that they are going to be sexually active so they provide opportunity to deal with the consequences of that or when they are violent or when they drop out of school.

Darrell Holloway

Using other translations of the Bible can be tremendous tools for opening up the Bible content to young people. The Bible can also be used as a tool for empowerment. I wish that we had some black resources that spoke to the people. In a couple of weeks I have to preach a course on spiritual renewal. I'll have to come up with resources that are Eurocentric. I would like material that speaks to people's lives. I need more practical stuff. We can provide people with resources which will help them discover Biblical truths for themselves.

In their personal study time they can discover the answers to the difficult questions.

Charles Smith

Today people are seeking answers for themselves rather than accepting the preacher's interpretation at fact value not only about Biblical issues but also on denominationalism. They cross the board without hang-ups. Whatever meets their spiritual need is what they accept.

Michael Battle

... Some ministers are intimidated by questions because they think that is a direct attack on them. What is often happening is an authentic and legitimate effort to understand. We must help ministers to understand that there is no need to be so protective of the "authority" of the minister with the Word but to see the Word as something that all of us are in the process of discovering, even debating in the context of Church.

Pat Ware

If people really understood how to study the Bible and how to know Christ for themselves, they wouldn't be so easily influenced by all of the other that they hear.

Michael Battle

You had mentioned that denominations can personalize some of the materials that you do. Help denominations discover language whereby they can teach the meaning behind their sacraments and their creeds. Most students on the college campus who go towards a cultish group do so because they never

understood why they did what they did in their local churches. These materials would be in very simple form.

A pamphlet could be created around the theme, "Questions You Have Always Wanted to Ask Your Pastor But Were Afraid." A group like this can develop answers to those questions. This might force pastors to dialogue.

Distribute the material to different ministers and let them add their twist to it. That would free some ministers who are not seminary trained but act like they are.

Charles Smith

Last year we began just what you suggested. That is to go into target cities and set up training for ministers. This was a prototype. They are waiting on funding to expand. Dr. Kingley asked us to help him. He was well aware of our packaging resources to help get that done. We will be meeting July 1, 1996 to try to advance this effort.

There is a lady named Victoria Pratt who will connect with you on transformational theology. She will work with Dr. Kingley. As soon as I get a concept of where that program is, I'll share that with you. They reached 800(?) people in Chicago and Houston last year.

You are on target. That process has been started and they are looking for partners.

Jessie Battle

As we explore that, a lot of these residual questions will be answered. As pastors are better equipped to answer these questions, the idea of feeling threatened will cease to exist.

There is an organization out of Milwaukee called Church Development Institute which seeks to do the same thing. What they are trying to do is create some kind of materials where pastors and Christian education leaders can train, not having been trained. That's a difficult job because you have to redo your terminology and your references.

If we can't do this, many of the problems pertaining to youth and the various issues will be dissolved.

Pat Ware

There is a tremendous move in this country by people who want to reinterpret the Bible to say what they want it to say. As we are doing training with these pastors we must place these very sensitive issues at the top of the Agenda. We can't gloss over them anymore. So called Christian organizations now distribute materials criticizing traditional groups for "misinterpreting" the Bible. They propose to tell the American public what the Bible really means.

Many AID's organizations consider themselves Christians. Yet they have a strong homosexual appeal and many of the pastors are gay pastors.

We must deal with how to answer these questions and how to anticipate responses.

Barber

The thing about young people is that they are not afraid to ask the questions and unlike us, they are not intimidated by the resistance. They will ask until they get an answer until they are satisfied.

People often fight over terminology.

We must empower individuals on handling the Word of God.

I have a plan in the working to accomplish the task of having young people produce a plan for reading the Bible and getting something out of it. What they develop will be the method that we use for future youth groups. They will produce a Bible reading empowering plan for all young people that Ark Builders encounter.

We know they want to read the Bible so they will come up with an exciting way that will cause young people to want to read the Bible.

Charles Smith

We will now shift focus.

We will summarize our findings and then I'll show a film which contextualizes these findings. Of the 27 cities that we visited, maybe 20% of them had a faith system and were actually involved in church practices. Many were what I call cultural church members. Many were outside of the church. We made arrangements to interview focus groups made up of youth we _____ invited with the promise of receiving monetary gifts at the end of the sessions. Young males the ages 9-12 (4-6 grades) were the critical problems. The group consisted of teen-age mothers living at home. The third category of participants were Hispanic. Finally we interviewed counselors who professionally worked with the people every day.

Our intent was to get a perspective on certain issues from their vantage point. We were interested in finding out the basis for the decisions that they made. They were led to some view of the church and religion. Then we asked, "What's your wish list?" The most dominant need that surfaced during this process was a deep desire for a meaningful relationship with anybody or anything. They were feeling isolated and alone. There was no one in their lines who they felt that really understood.

Having gone in with some preconceived notions, I came out with some readjustments. I did not see the most common given answer, lack of self-esteem. Even in the worst of circumstances we saw the deep desire to be somebody and to get out of this environment. We did not see the so-called deep depression and negativism. They had made a correlation _____ between sin and blaming themselves. The paths of sin, right and wrong, were not clear to them. Their wisdom was to blame themselves for their circumstances but not a whole bunch of other folks.

Starting with the preacher, their assessment of the church was that it was largely hypocritical. Their concept of the church was that although they were not who they should be, still they did not want to be like church folks.

The young black boy ages 9-11 were the most dysfunctional and expressed a sense of lostness. They were a-typical. They talked about murder. They were the most frustrated, distraught, dysfunctional kids that I have ever seen in my life. They followed the textbook. These children of teenage mothers whose dysfunctional life creates the kind of hostility and resentment in their offspring ages 9-11 that teaches him and gives him the capacity for abuse that his immune system is so set up that that child is able to push everybody away. He develops that way. In the fourth grade where he has to make that shift from the global world to beginning to make decisions based on inductive and deductive reasoning, they couldn't do it. Mom could not help. They were all dealing with the male myths that we all deal with as black males.

My feelings, and my future writings will show that without help, as this typical child progresses through the succeeding stages of life, his steps lead him to prison.

As a church, we are missing the boat when it comes to interviewing with the right tools at the right time at the right place in that child's life.

Based upon our _____ we were interested in producing products based on thematic development to help leaders deal with the issues raised during our research. Marjorie outlined a series of topics under the overall theme, "relationships." The most prevalent subject today is violence. We put that on one side and love and empathy on the other side of a flow chart. The lack of empathy in youth is the result of the dysfunctionality that takes place. In the school systems solution to conflict resolution is the word empathy. Who talked more about empathy than Jesus Christ? Look at His intervention strategies. He dealt with every tool that we have to encounter. Yet, we do not teach or preach the Word that way.

The state of Washington has a curriculum manual from pre-school to high school on empathy training, conflict resolution that is second to none. School systems are using it. The only thing missing in their content and methodology is that there is no parallel theological study and support system for the family to go along with it.

Michael Battle

What's wrong with taking some of that material developed in the secular arena and inserting the appropriate theological and hermeneutical interpretations. We don't have to reinvent wheels when they are already made. We could seek the permission of the authors to adapt it that way.

Charles Smith

They welcome the support system. There is a proposal moving to Bob Franklin at Ford Foundation from these people. A tremendous challenge from your group (Hampton) is the development in that particular area.

Marjorie and I also listed the topics: hope, promise, self-esteem. The only thing that has held us together is the promise. Having the promise, the issue of segregation doesn't bother me. As a child, I never internalized it. I knew God would make something out of me.

Michael Battle

You might want to read Courtwright David's book, Can God Save the which deals with issues like the church's resistance to allowing God to say what He says. He is a relationality based theologian at Howard University.

Charles Smith

The area was family and home.

The Biblical Foundations is the basic teaching like we have been discussing here. The character formation is the developmental process over a long period of time.

In stage number one, for our developmental audiences, the first three grades, we have the same materials. The second group is the job groups.

The third group is what we have not been looking at in our developing materials in detail enough. That is the contextualization of a personality, cognition personality, temperament, behavior, value attitudes, health, biology influence and ecology. The Bible speaks to everyone of those. We just gloss over it. In terms of developing materials, we ought to be looking through a prism, keep that in mind.

Another one has to do with the tract of the areas of loneliness, etc. which are the basic findings that we had. The last one deals with the family of products.

To keep from doing what we do as preachers, I decided to develop what I call, "An Anatomy of Violence." You may have this document. I took one subject and sliced it every way I could as if we were going to develop products. Correlate other subjects with the given topic when you do this.

Pat Ware

I'm glad to hear that you are considering the issues of relationships and hope. For too long we have been told that we have to wait for our situations to change before we can be anything or have a productive life. After slavery and Jim Crowism we didn't have a lot of jobs but we had a promise. We've lost the vision. We have to rebuild the dream. These kids live in a nightmare and we have to help them see the dream.

It is not so hard to change the minds of frustrated black people. When they hear the truth they know it and they are ready to shift gears.

This is why so many men took part in the "Million-Man March," Faraakhan offered hope, vision and the possibility for change. The church hasn't given people anything that they can see, just the ethereal. The church fails to provide a ladder to reach this ethereal plan or ideal.

Barber

We have engaged the Student Christian Association on campus in a project called, "The Gospel According to You." There was a theme and verse beginning each week. At the end of the week, the group gave their version of what took place during the week through the medium of drama. It was the most powerful thing that we have ever done on that campus. Students were so excited that they invited

their friends. This became an evangelistic tool. After each performance, I would do an altar call. We had so many people come to Christ. The Gospel was presented but it was the Gospel according to you. I have been brain storming to select topic for next year. The subjects that we have discussed here will be the topics of discussion the next school term.

All kinds of things happen on college campuses but when you get to the bottom line, it is a relational problem, the family boy friend, girl friend, etc., the inability of them to maintain a long-term relationship.

In some of the computer games like Ninetendo, when things don't work out, you push a reset button and start over. That's how they are living like, at the at the end of a joy stick.

I enjoy picking Scriptures where these topics present themselves and through the process of discovery they are led to the position that you desired in the first place. It's a Godly setup.

Michael Battle

The reason Jesus died for us was out of relationship. It was a relationality that governed the whole thing. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" What Jesus did and the concept of revelation from the Old Testament is a concept of self disclosure. God disclosed Himself with man because God wanted to enter a relationship with man. Relationability is from Genesis to Revelation.

Jessie Battle

What all of this is saying is that we need to get back to a Bible-based theology.

Rebecca

You need to know what constitutes that Bible-based theology.

Michael Battle

We need to trust the power of Bible-based theology.

Rebecca

If you don't know what the Mark is, you don't know when you've missed the mark.

Jessie Battle

We used to make the mark. In former years, people had hope.

Michael Battle

We didn't have commentaries.

Jessie Battle

We didn't have the theological development that we now have.

In the years of the inception of NAACP and the Church was the core and the Bible was the hermeneutics, we didn't have these problems.

Jessie Battle

We have moved away from that Bible centered theology and I somehow we _____ to go back to it.

Rebecca

The Bible is a book of Covenant. When I saw the research summary and it described the _____ as "At Risk" kids, I said, "What do we mean by 'At risk kids'?" The world has one way of describing "at risk" and we have another. When we say "at risk," what is it that our kids are "at risk" of missing? The first thing that came to me is the Promise. They are at risk of missing the blessing, the benefits and the responsibilities (everything that comes along with the promise).

Jessie Battle

I have an in-depth book at home entitled, *The Gospel According to Jesus*. It revisits the synoptic Gospels from Jesus' point of view. I tried to teach it in my church. I could not believe the resistance. We have removed . . .

Rebecca

Of the Scriptures

Jessie Battle

Yes, and we no longer know His philosophies and when you introduce that you are talking foreign.

Michael Battle

This is a body that should be willing to give the interpretation and be bold enough to assert what is Biblically based. If we don't, white folks will or our young people will go find some answers in the cults that we find developing around every college campus across the earth. This is happening because no one like us has taken the risk of saying, "these are the answers to the questions that you wanted to ask." So what if we miss a little something in the process. The corrective modality is that we always are in process of reevaluating and rethinking the answers and the questions.

Darcell Holloway

I'm firm believer in experiential learning. When it touches you, you learn it. When I was in seminary they'd bring cutting edge stuff for us to try out. The Maedi(?) Institute developed an exercise called "Maesis," Biblical interpretation through psychodrama. This calls for creativity. We took the Hagar, Ahroham story. Participants chose roles to play, including God who dialogues with the people at the end. In Part II, you select a different set of people using the same story, putting it in contemporary context. The audience then can choose what happens. From that vantage point, Hagar was on the subway where the angel sat down next to her. I was Sarah who was Jewish in the story. The brother who played my husband was also Jewish. The girl playing Hagar was also Jewish. The racism came out so strong because he couldn't relate to me. He was more sympathetic to Hagar than he was to Sarah.

When I played this with my students who were all black, the story worked out another way. Some real powerful stuff came out.

Of course there is the issue of inclusively in trying to see God as a woman. When I did this with my students, nobody wanted to play God. The only person who had the courage to do it was a woman.

● People get to step into the mind of God. For the first time, I could conceptualize God as another gender. All kinds of things happened. People cried and the Scriptures came alive.

I'm saying that the universe is open to us in terms of the creativity and it doesn't take away from the story. With this methodology that this professor and his wife has developed, it allowed us to look at so many issues without anyone preaching from their vantage point. People were even able to look at themselves.

Jessie Battle

We had an experience a few years ago in South Korea among people from various denominations. There were differences but what they all had in common was Christ. After awhile, we could not even see denominational differences and we were stunned by that. Thus, there was a tremendous explosion of the Christian faith in Korea vs. America. There were thousands of Christians in attendance in every church. In December, I preached to thousands of people outside in the cold.

Darcell

I sang to 6,000 people outside in December.

Jessie Battle

This group were holiness. But in the Baptist Church, the service went on till 11:00 P.M. or 12:00 P.M. to 1:00 in the morning. In the Presbyterian Church, we found the same thing.

● We asked the president of one of the organizations to define the explosion, to explain what was happening in Korea that was not taking place in America. The answer was simply, Christ.

Americans have Christ with all the addendums.

Barber

Life has pain. That's an issue that we have covered up in the Church. A lot of people feel that their pain has disqualified them from being close to God or their pain was caused by God. So a person in pain as a result of sin is not going to go to the Bible.

Jessie Battle

They see pain as punishment?

Jerome Barber

Yes, and if I think that it is from Him, I am not going to go back to Him. We must have to help them understand that pain doesn't disqualify them from fellowship with God. He identifies with your pain. He is a God of promise, of relationship and One who identifies with our pain. He in the midst of our pain can still be God. If I know that while I'm going through this, it is not a "punishment."

Pat Ware

● The issue of absolutes surrounding Christ cause a problem for many. There are some things that He said that are right and wrong. To embrace that one has to give up a life-style that is comfortable. In

addition, we don't know what the alternative is. We really have not seen the alternative in practice, not even in the church. We have not seen a godly life demonstrated.

Michael Battle

We must follow through all the various experiments with the Word to the ultimate conclusion. We must guide the process through all the way. In portrayal people often go away with truth for the moment. At some point, you have to be firm to say, "I see the different experiments we've had with this, but the bottom line Jesus said"

Charles Smith

Let me shift you to the third word that dominated our research. There really is no difference between denomination except for the cultural, historical packages.

Michael Battle

We don't wear Jesus anymore, we wear denominations.

Charles Smith

The word I refer to is respect and disrespect. Marjorie will speak to this theme. When she concludes her discussion, I want to contextualize by putting you out into Urban America. Then I want you to help me through some thinking processes.

Marjorie Adams

True relationship is the main key. My personal ministry in Baltimore involves youth. Charles has shared with some of you about street ministry of which I am involved. This work grew out of the ministry to youth. We began by building relationships with these children. We have been there for the long haul. The ministry that Rebecca and I share is called BRICKS, Building Relationships and Involvement Through a Creative Kids-Support-System. The idea is the only way to build our community is to build one, brick, (child) at a time.

The research that Charles wants me to discuss relates to the teenage mothers living at home. Our findings suggest that the reason why these girls had babies was not because of low self-esteem. They were sexually involved thinking that they might have a relationship with the boy. Once that doesn't happen, the desire is shifted to the idea of having a child. The child becomes her hope for getting out of negative circumstances. To love and be loved will be a lasting relationship. For the first few years things go well. Upon entrance to school, the relationship gets rocky. The child acquires new ideas and friends and comes home with a different attitude. Mother is put on the back burner. She is now becoming estranged from her love and her hope. As things progress, discipline becomes difficult.

These mothers really want their children to respect them and other adults. They had little or no relationship with their mother. There did not exist any mutual respect, one for the other. Neither did they see the relationship with their parent changing in the future. They have determined that their child will be respectful.

They used respect and love synonymously. As discipline becomes more intense this teenage mother who is low on patience gives up. The child pushes her away, she distances herself from him saying, "do what you want to do."

We found out that when the relationship breaks down with the first child and the girl becomes pregnant again, it is not a problem of promiscuity. It is the continuous pursuit of a loving relationship. Maybe this time the dream will be realized. It is not an issue of desiring sex or the absence of birth control. In 90% of the cases there was no real relationship with the fellows. 98% of the males do not offer support for the children. The girls did not really expect assistance.

Pregnancy is not always accidental

Most of the girls worked because they didn't want to be recipient of welfare.

Michael Battle

The Church can provide solid relationship opportunities to these kids like middle class families do. They swim, skate, bike, etc. The church can become fictive parents developing long term relationships with these kids.

Research indicates that most girls are impregnated by males 3-5 years older than themselves.

Pat Ware

My experience as director of the Office of Adolescent pregnancy lead me to believe that the majority of these young guys wanted a baby to prove manhood. In many of these communities, the "rights of passage" was to get a girl pregnant. To marry that girl was seen as weakness.

Charles Smith

If there was a program for affirmation when this baby is born the Church could usurp that outside need to do it again.

One of the products that I want to produce is one that train people to make that affirmation. Outside groups are trying to do it but the Church is not.

Pat Ware

I think Mom's House in Philadelphia does this. Their success is noteworthy. The repeat pregnancy rate is almost zero.

Jessie Battle

Many ministers are afraid to affirm that baby for fear of sanctioning some ungodly activity.

Michael Battle

Raise the question in the context of the birth of the child, "What would Jesus do?" Be sure that raising the question does not offend the young lady.

Charles Smith

We are back to a paradigm shift from another level. This will not come from the preacher.

White denominations know how to do this. Southern Baptist women are the strongest group in America. They are after black women.

Southern Baptist Missionary Board launch three-year projects. There you see examples of the kind of materials they have created to address the issues and provide ministry for their people.

The action will not come from the top nor from the mainline denominations but from people who are on the front lines with the folks.

I have all their stuff.

They are now moving into the black community. They are providing simply outlined materials which ministries within the Church can use.

Christian education workers must educate the Church. It won't come from the top. When it comes in the back door, the preacher shuts up.

The program that I have developed for ABS includes a drama group crisscrossing the country and a three-month package of ideas to use. The practical hand on tools will be of no avail until they end up in the hands of the people.

The challenge for religious education is to educate people by working directly with people.

Always work with number 2 and 3 in the Church. They will get to the preacher. What you have also accomplished is that you will have released the preacher from pressure.

Charles Smith

From my experience as a pastor, I would like to share my model of youth ministry. All of my programming was put on a three-month cycle. At the end of any given three months there was an expectancy goal. Then we moved to the next.

Example

In September we planned for a 12-month retreat, out of town in a state park. From the retreat, every November there was a youth conference. The young people had to plan and work for it. This provided experience in stewardship and planning. At every youth conference they had to write a drama from a passage of Scripture, create the music and present the drama. The whole production was their responsibility including the directing.

This cycle continued for 17 years.

In November we had the Spring field trip. We traveled to practically every part of this country during spring break. The trip was paid for and Church supported. In 20 years, except for the first year, I never had a girl to get pregnant.

They had responsibilities entrusted to them. They had to keep up their grades, go to Sunday School, etc. Three days after school, the Church bus picked the kids up from school. They came to our Church, completed their home and prepared the dinner meal. They were sent home on the bus. We had peer parental support and no paid staff. The superintendent of school was chairman of our deacon board and taught in the after school program.

Every kid had to bring me his report card.

The Spring field trip gave them something to look forward to every year.

We had camp. Every kid went to camp. The Church and parents made a commitment to underwrite this as a primary ministry of that congregation. The genius out of all this was that the element of expectancy. Every three months they had something to look forward to that would be a reward for their hard work.

On Saturdays we rented the Mason's hall. I was there to chaperone.

Consider the idea of the short cycle of expectancy and always keeping something in front of your kids to keep them from distractions.

Marjorie

Rebecca and I incorporate this concept in our ministry on an even shorter cycle. Every Friday evening we involve our youth in what we call, "Hang in Night."

Charles Smith

Show Videos - The precise portion of the video is not available for viewing.

(Charles says there is a part that he wanted to show that dealt with language.)

What I need you to do now is share any concrete concept of specific methodology that comes to mind as a result of our total discussion. What type of product would you suggest that we begin to formulate? Later, I'll be interested in skilled personnel who under certain _____ assist in the production of these products.

Michael Battle

I think that we can begin soon by putting together the handbook to answer the questions that we spoke of earlier. Maybe we can gather some questions from the survey that you will conduct. We might come up with about a 100 principal questions. Denominations may feel free to put its spin on each question. We would leave blank pages for the additions they may desire to affix.

Charles Smith

We can do this as a Bible study guide. What we need you to do is to feed us the questions explored.

Michael Battle

If you would like, Rev. Barber and I with others can probably provide some questions in about 3 months.

Darcell Holloway

I'd like to see something more concise. For instance, *Jews for Jesus* does a brochure so attractive and simple that you want to read it.

How about selected Psalms sung to original music like rap, etc. I'd also like to see shorts on spiritual disciplines like worship, prayer and the like. People want practical helps.

Charles Smith

We have already incorporated rap into our interactive video. The plan is used Gospel and other music forms to accompany our Scripture products.

Darcell

I'm more interested in instrumental music with orations say with a Ben Tankard in the background.

Barber

A user friendly manual that Christian educators can use to develop youth ministry similar to your 3-month model would be helpful. Additionally, we need an information folder for circulation among Christian education workers locally or nationally to link us together. This will provide opportunity for sharing successful programs. The format must be simple, one page.

Jessie Battle

Have you considered a Bible for the unchurched?

Charles Smith

See, here is a *One Minute Bible with Daily Application for Living*. This is so simple. After one minute you are inspired and led right into the Word of God. This is put out by the Assemblies of God in response to Black Muslims.

We are open in terms of making the Bible presentation thematically done or to achieve a particular end. This is possible within our framework.

Pat Ware

For each idea presented, can we provide models or examples from communities where they have worked?

We need to know how to marry the Biblical stance with the research done in the world.

Charles Smith

What I hear you saying is that any given presentation has to contextualize knowing that you may or may not be going against traditions. Our job is to make sure that the Biblical truths get out there in such a way that it is clear and user friendly.

Pat Ware

We have to show people that Biblical truths are practical.

Charles Smith

What you are really saying is that in addition to information, the education process must take place.

Michael

I'd like to make an addition to the questions and answers handbook. Enough blank space can be provided to allow for responses such as the following in a workbook.

Format:

- 1) What does your church say?
- 2) What does your family say?
- 3) What do you think?
- 4) With whom have you dialogued about this issue?

"The Afro.-American Church' was designed to show what the left and right hand are doing in terms of successful programs.

We could produce a thematic translation. Present the topic with commentary with Scriptural notations. In this instance write out the verses rather than leaving the search for the reader. Then his becomes a thematic Bible which would cover a variety of issues.

Charles Smith

This is done. The Lutheran Church out of Chicago has a product. I'm interested in examining the material to make sure that it is hermeneutically and theologically sound and culturally sensitive.

So many young black folk suffer from the fact of who their parents are, the bad seed. Daddy is not around. Mama is a drug addict and has AID's. I have the challenge and I believe that you can help me to do this. There is a passage found in the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew dealing with all the begats and ends up with Jesus Christ. Within those begats are some of the worst rascals and bastards that you will ever find. Pull those people out and let them see what they did. They will see that it doesn't have anything to do with your birth.

This passage lends itself to all kinds of situations. The Good News is that Jesus was born out of that tree.

That's a message to our kids.

Dr. Ware

God made every human being after Himself and everything that we are talking about has to come back to His Character. That's where justice comes in. You have to deal with that in violence. He's a violent God and you can't get around that. The wrath of God is real. Matthew takes you back to Genesis to the essence of self-worth.

Charles Smith

Young people want to know why Adam and Eve goofed up. Why did that make me a sinner?

The Black Muslims are saying what you find here is not what God created but what you messed up.

Michael Battle

If we are governed here by what we do by relationality -theology which is a growing trend in theology, we would say that inspite of Adam's sin, God never abandoned His relationship with Adam. Adam was never cursed, the ground was cursed. God always sought a relationship with Adam.

Rebecca

We must keep in mind both in our relationship to one another as well as, or should I say, especially in dealing with young people whether it's parent to child or teacher to child, that God did not allow His holiness nor His rules to keep Him from restoring that relationship.

Barber

See Jesus dealing with the leper. Jesus had all kinds of ways of healing but see Jesus touching him, overriding all these regulations. Neither did he discipline the woman with the issue of blood for disobeying a rule. She went from a woman in that text to a daughter.

Dr. Ware

God wants us to be pure. How do we do that practically?

Rebecca

Starting where we are . . . the process which leads there and maintain the state.

Pat Ware

You must talk about the promise. With all that going around us today who can articulate the promise to black people. What is the promise?

Michael Battle

Yes, that's why we will do the thematic Bible and collect biographies of real live people who grow up in the context say of violence and surrender.

Pat Ware

We need to find the common thread that kept them focused. What were they looking to? They looking to the promise. What was the promise. We have to speak to the issue of vision. Is there a Vision for African-American youth? A lot of people are saying there is no vision, no hope. They say that we have lost a generation. I believe that there is hope but where is it?

What is this promise that you keep talking about? put it into words so that people can understand it. Articulate it in such a way that young people can catch it and want to move in the right direction.

Charles Smith

Work has been done dealing with the issue of hermeneutics and the hermeneutic process.

Miles Jones and John King published a work on hermeneutics and the black community that would make you jump for Joy. The think tank copy is unbelievable. I lectured to Miles' doctoral students on the challenge of hermeneutics to reach youth today.

An awesome book is coming out as a result of a conference we did here last year on mediums. The book is on one of the workshop done on hermeneutics. I will get that for you. It shows the difficulty in the hermeneutic process.

There is so much that we have already done with think tanks and workshops.

Michael Battle

What about the Vanderbilt study on "What Does It mean to Be Black and Christian"?

Pat Ware

Can you tell us what will be the outcome of this meeting?

Charles Smith

(Step 1.) We will share with you a summary of your statements which will become a body of information which we will sort out and begin to crystallize possible products and progress and try to place that into a right perspective and context. We will see how much we can do and how much can be done somewhere else.

(Step 2.) We will need to know those persons who can work with us on a per fee basis, to help develop product concepts that we present here to say yes, no, after, etc. The concept may not fit within the framework of what we can do but it may be in line with what someone else can accomplish. It needs to be done.

Once we have completed these steps, the body of what we have done becomes your information. It will be transcribed, summarized, and duplicated. You can review it and if it doesn't sound clear, mark it up and send it back. We will change it.

The time schedule is as follows. We close the budget year at the end of June and I wanted the expense of this session to be included so that is why I called you here almost on overnight notice.

My proposal which is flushing through the system is to within the next 90 days come up with product concepts. Once the concepts are in place, we will go into release date spring 1997. I would love to come to the meeting next year with the goods.

I am in the market division and I provide leadership for new markets. This is my first effort.

One assignment will be to send a supply of already available products knowing that they do not fit our people. The task will be to retrofit or to translate this into application for our people. This assignment is immediate.

So the first step is leveraging taking what we have and adapting it. The second step is the new product. The third step is rolling out the program. I have requested as much money to roll out the program as I need to produce the product. I know that direct market doesn't do it.

You will get a copy of the research findings as a result of the Hampton survey.

My relationship with you is that you are my brain trust. You are also my trustworthy trust. If you want to do something, call me before you do and get me in trouble.

With credible research we can get money.

(Closing Prayer)
Jesse Battle

VIRGINIA

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THINK-TANKS

The Black Preacher/"Preaching"

Black preaching dates back to slave times. The thrust of the preacher in those days was to liberate his people, to inspire them to change their condition. However, Black preaching has deviated from this core purpose; the preacher, instead of liberating, aims to captivate. The preacher is focused more on his style and its potential to thrill listeners, rather than on the whether the contents of his sermon are grounded in the Gospels, are readily understandable, and impart hope and a recognition to transform oneself and one's community.

Black preaching must also be more inclusive. It must continue to proclaim the plight and hopes of the impoverished and the oppressed masses, while at the same time articulating the troubles and challenges of specific groups which have not been within its traditional focus; young people, for instance. Since this inclusiveness will move preachers into uncharted waters, it will necessitate their acquisition of new insights and communication skills. This is especially required when dealing with the young people, who have a language and a subculture of their own.

Black Preaching

We are challenged to really understand what preaching is all about.

1. It originally functioned to bring good news to folk.
2. However, it has evolved into a form, a hardened, encrusted form in which people have felt obligated to submit themselves.

Evaluation/judgment of good preaching

On whether it does culturally sanctioned things:

- emotionalism
- "act the house up"

Consequences

- Often lacks a sense of follow-through regarding behavioral changes in the consequences of their lives
- Does the community change where they live?
- Consequences in their lives, or the does the community change? Are there substantive economic and political changes — liberty

and liberation in the life of the people?

Slave preachers

Concerned about make life changes. We have now lost that drive.

Stereotypical Black preacher

One who can't arouse folk emotionally.

Therefore, we have become prisoners to form and have forgotten about the genius of original Black preaching.

Black preaching: what is it?

Too much preaching has been form-oriented. Emphasis on preaching a certain way rather than "interpreting certain content."

Concentration has not been placed on how one can take the Word and interpret it in such a way that it has applicability to their condition to the extent that they are empowered to go out into the community and implement it.

Preachers' challenge

To use other kinds of interpretive lenses to look at the Word.

Interpretive lenses

Example: One of these lenses must be Afrocentric. One does not cancel out the other. It means one begin to interpret the Word of God in light of the "particulars" of one's own history.

It is not enough saying that the Word is applicable to everyone. That's like a blanket we can throw over all the conditions.

- We must segment the blanket
- It's got to be a patchwork quilt
- We must pay attention to each and every segment of this patchwork quilt and no longer regard the Word as a blanket that is just thrown over everybody
- We must see each part of the quilt as it represents their particulars of history

Findings

Suggest subdivisions, aspects of the quilt inside and outside the established Church.

Skills

It will require preaching and communication skills. No longer will we be able to preach a sermon and throw it over the congregation as if all of their needs and histories are the same.

Youth subdivided

Through the lenses of Afrocentricity there must be sensitivity to all the sociological and psychological development of these young people.

Many of them have gone through warped stages of human development. Their life cycles have not been what we call "conventional childhood."

They were prematurely forced into adulthood.

Challenge

We can't bring the socio-scientific paradigms from, quote, the universal academy.

We must understand that there is an Afro-American social psychology that has formed their "tragic and sad" journey.

Preacher's challenge

Preacher must understand that he is preaching to children that have experienced a rather warped journey.

Listening to Youth

Tradition and formal training incline the clergy to preach rather than to listen. Tradition places the congregation exclusively in the role of listeners, whose testimony or "witness" must confirm the viewpoints of the minister. Neither clergy nor laymen benefit from this condition.

Focus/refocus on youth

Self and community - even the hardcore at-risk youth communities are concerned about

Self-examination/analysis

- who am I?
- what bonding can I hope to achieve in the community? (that is just shot and eviscerated)

No Foundation Upon Which to Build

Two concepts

1. Self and identity
2. Relationship and community

Conceptual tools to move into a new understanding

Listening

I was fascinated with one of the interviews with a scholar in communications who left his work and went to work in the "hood" in Houston. He's a white Southern Baptist preacher. His last name is Izard. I spent three hours with him at the airport in Houston about 3 weeks ago.

I think any one of you sitting her today would be fascinated with the script from that meeting. Not only does he verify what he said, but he dealt with two things. He says, "The greatest crisis among the clergy today is that they have not been trained nor tuned to listen." He said they don't hear the story. The first that comes out of their mouth is not the real story. You hear a second story; sometimes a third story. And then it's not what they said, but what they didn't say. Then you gotta go back to the Book and whatever they said; there is a story there that comes. But real communication doesn't take place until the two of them collide. And he gave some illustrations of it. So it just sort of reaffirms this conversation in the last 10 and 15 minutes. And he went on and on. It was quite scholarly, but quite practical and mundane in his approach to the element of communication into storytelling. But, the key out of that was that most clergy are not trained to listen. To hear to story.

'Cause we have a blanket and you just unroll the blanket and cover. That's it.

And what you're talking about is misinformation as well, because you have the response of the congregation, which is to affirm the story that they would like to have heard. Not because it necessarily speaks to the truth, but it becomes socially accepted in the context of church to give accolades to certain kinds of story.

Blankets are comfortable.

Here comes that blanket again.

Secure . . . security blanket.

2/VUU

In a different way, but certainly it's relevant.

Security blankets.

3/VUU