View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
brought to you by CORE
provided by Asbury Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT

"WE ARE PREACHING WITH YOU PASTOR":

CONGREGATIONAL INPUT FOR THE ACCURATE

AND RELEVENT APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

by

Keith P. Missel

The focus of this project is the challenge and problem of applying the Word of God in an accurate and relevant way to a local context. The premise of this work develops the reality that application is much more difficult than one may realize for various reasons outlined in the biblical and theological precedent.

The goal of the dissertation is to create a team to support the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. The quality characteristics of the team include chemistry, competency, and character. The uniqueness of this team rests in the development and the process of support provided to the pastor. The pastor trained team members for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. The team was proactive, coming to feed-in sessions prepared to provide input. The team covenanted together and made prayer the foundation of the meeting time. The qualitative nature of the study resulted in the team discerning the value of the input to the pastor on a weekly basis for an eight-week period.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

"WE ARE PREACHING WITH YOU PASTOR":

CONGREGATIONAL INPUT FOR THE ACCURATE

AND RELEVENT APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

presented by

Keith Patrick Michael Missel

has been accepted toward fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

_____	4-10-2007
Mentor	Date
_____	4-10-2007
Internal Reader	Date
_____	4-10-2007
Dean, Doctor of Ministry Program	Date

“WE ARE PREACHING WITH YOU PASTOR”:

CONGREGATIONAL INPUT FOR THE ACCURATE

AND RELEVENT APPLICATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Keith Patrick Michael Missel

May 2007

© 2007

Keith Patrick Michael Missel

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements viii

Chapter 1 PROBLEM 1

Background 1

Statement of the Problem 2

Misunderstanding of the Nature of the Word of God 2

Misunderstanding of the Preaching Ministry 7

Misunderstanding in Theological Education 13

Misunderstanding of the Complexity of Application in Preaching 14

The Purpose 20

Research Questions 20

Research Question #1 20

Research Question #2 20

Terms Defined 20

Description of the Project 21

The Pastor's Responsibility 21

Individual Team Member's Responsibility 23

Methodology 24

Subjects 25

Instrumentation and Data Collection 25

Delimitation and Generalizability 26

Overview 28

Chapter 2 LITERATURE 29

Biblical Precedence....30
Application through Warning....32
Application through Guidance....34
Application through How-Tos....36
Application through Personalization....39
Application through Persuasion....41
Application through Audience Analysis....44
Theological Precedence....48
The Church Fathers—Allegorical Application....49
The Reformers—Textual Application....51
Post Reformation—Dogmatic Application....53
Pietism—Devotional Application....55
Puritans—Scholastic Application....57
Rationalism—Naturalistic Application....58
Modernism—Subjective Application....59
Evangelical Protestantism—The Principlization of Application....60
Principilization—A Model for Accurate and Relevant Application of Scripture..61
Understanding the Original Situation....62
Finding General Principles....63
Applying General Principles Today....65
The Team Precedent....68
Building the Team....74
Defining the Team....74

Core Values of the Team 74
Team Chemistry 75
Team Competencies 77
Team Character 80
The Tasks of the Team 80
The Dialogue of the Team 82
The Representative Team 83
The Training of the Team 84
Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY 87
Research Questions 87
Research Question #1 88
Research Question #2 88
Subjects 88
Methodology 89
Qualitative Research 89
Content Analysis 89
Measuring Accuracy and Relevancy 90
Chapter 4 FINDINGS 93
Research Question #1 94
Research Question #2 101
Chapter 5 DISCUSSION 109
Major Findings 109
Major Findings #1 110

Major Findings #2 111
Major Findings #3 113
Major Findings #4 115
Major Findings #5 117
Major Findings #6 118
Implications 120
Limitations of the Study 121
Serendipitous Experiences 121
Serendipitous Experience #1 121
Serendipitous Experience #2 123
Serendipitous Experience #3 124
Serendipitous Experience #4 125
Serendipitous Experience #5 127
Recommendations 128
Recommendation #1 128
Recommendation #2 129
Recommendation #3 129
Recommendation #4 130
Recommendation #5 131
Future Research 132
Final Reflection 133
APPENDIXES
A. Training the Team 134

B. The Process of Team Sermon Making 143

C. Team Covenant 146

D. Team Satisfaction.....147

E. The Epistle to the Philippians.....152

WORKS CITED 153

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a first generation Christian, I must begin my acknowledgements by thanking God. His love transformed my life twenty-eight years ago. Thank you, Lord, for providing such a wonderful opportunity in the Beeson Doctoral Program. These past five years have been incredibly formative for my spiritual journey.

I am thankful for the patient and steadfast input provided by my dissertation committee. As my mentor, Dr. Donald Demaray constantly challenged me to write better. As my second reader, Dr. Stacey Minger patiently supported me in fulfilling the structural dynamics of dissertation writing. As the Dean of the Doctoral Program, Dr. Leslie Andrews provided the wisdom and insight needed to keep my dissertation moving forward.

I am also grateful to the staff and fellowship of First Baptist Church, Aurora. Their willingness to provide time away from the church to pursue my Doctor of Ministry is greatly appreciated. I am indebted to Rick Myers, John Babri, Jane Harty, and Ellen Missel for their participation and support of helping me to apply God's Word accurately and relevantly.

I must also recognize my family for their love and support these past five years. First, I want to thank my wife, Ellen, who constantly cheered me on in this endeavor. I also, want to express my gratitude to my three children, Erin, Seth, and Jacob, who encouraged Dad to persevere. In addition, I want my mom to know I appreciate her ongoing encouragement to finish well.

Finally, I want to thank the endowment of Ralph Waldo Beeson at Asbury Theological Seminary for making this scholarship available.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM

Background

In the fall of 2002, Dr. Haddon W. Robinson taught a biblical preaching course for the Beeson class of Asbury Seminary. My earlier exposure to Dr. Robinson took place twenty years ago in Bible school when our preaching class used his primer Biblical Preaching. In one of his lectures, Dr. Robinson stated, "It's when we're applying Scripture that error is most likely to creep in" ("Biblical Preaching"). This statement caught my attention and has haunted me since then, for application is critical to the pastor's primary task, the transformational communication of the Word of God. If Dr. Robinson's observation proves true, and my research suggests it does, then faulty application of the biblical text deters God's transformation of the hearer. Paul cautions Timothy to handle the Word of God "correctly" (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV). Clearly, "correct" treatment involves responsible application.

Interestingly, this problem also caught the attention of the editorial staff of Leadership Journal, who decided to interview Dr. Robinson. In that interview, Ed Rowell and his team asked Dr. Robinson the following question: "After preaching a sermon have you ever said, 'I wish I hadn't applied it quite like that." Dr. Robinson's response is shocking:

> That is the story of my life. In my twenties I preached some things I believed deeply then, but now I wonder, how in the world did I come up with that? I remember believing that headship meant the husband ought to take care of the finances. Worse, my wife insists that in a sermon on marriage, one of my main points was that a wife ought not serve her husband instant coffee.

This humble confession inspires me to explore solutions to this problem of accurately and relevantly applying the Word of God when preaching in a particular local environment.

Statement of the Problem

Dr. Robinson is not the only scholar, educator, or pastor concerned with this matter. My research reveals four primary issues surface relevant to application of God's Word.

Misunderstanding of the Nature of the Word of God

Over the past few years, my morning routine to Starbuck's causes me to pass by a partially erected home in the city of Aurora where I live. For some reason, the construction work came to halt and sits abandoned. Similarly, many conscientious preachers, having begun the process of exegesis, fail to finish the task by neglecting the arduous work of application. This failure, to apply the Word of God in preaching, results in incomplete and ineffective ministry of the Word. "This deficiency is one of the greatest problems in Christianity today" (Zuck, "Application" 278).

Because the Bible is God's Word, it has everlasting relevance; therefore, the Scriptures speak to all people in every age and every culture (Fee and Stuart 19). Unfortunately, this relevance of preaching creates a gaping hole in many pulpits throughout Christendom, both past and present. For most centuries, the application of the biblical text has been construed as a second order reflection presented through catechisms, manuals, seminars or moral training. If more information were the primary reason for God giving humanity biblical Revelation, then this concern over application would cease; however, the opposite is true for obeying. Applying the truth of Scripture is the Lord's will. Heartfelt obedience brings glory to God and blessing to the individual.

In Deuteronomy 30:15-16, Moses closes his ministry reminding the people of Israel that a life blessed by the Lord results from obedience of God's Word:

> See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

For Israel, blessing and prosperity were conditional. The blessing of God on his people only resulted if the people of God, out of love for God, applied the law of God.

Similarly, finishing his longest recorded sermon, Jesus Christ, the expert communicator, gives equal emphasis to hearing and applying the Word:

> Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. (Matt. 7:24-27)

The Sermon on the Mount suggests the genuine response of a redemptive relationship with Christ is love shown in obedience. Jesus said, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me" (John 14:21). For Jesus, the supreme goal of preaching involves developing a love relationship with God and practicing of the truth of Scripture. Likewise, James, the half brother of Jesus, commanded Christians, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (Jas. 1:22). The apostle Paul furthers the argument reminding Timothy of the transforming power of Scripture:

> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to

> make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

Moses, Jesus, James and Paul all believed the goal of Scripture was to equip God's people to do good works. Elliott E. Johnson, elaborating on this teaching from Paul to Timothy, comments on the goal of interpreting Scripture:

> According to Paul, Scripture as a whole and in each part continues to be profitable. Its profit lies both in making us wise to salvation and in coaching us about what God wants us to do. This is the common object of interpretation. In addition, its profit extends to reproof of the believer in error. Finally, it prescribes correction in how to get right and training in how to stay right. (213)

In addition to his letter to Timothy, Paul, in his greeting to Titus, states that "knowledge of the truth" will lead to "godliness" (Tit. 1:1). Again, Scripture's goal for believers is sound doctrine, resulting in application to life. Listening to the Word produces a lifestyle of doing what the Bible says. "The goal of life is the interpretation and performance of Scripture" (Willimon 191). Orthodoxy and orthopraxy go hand in hand. "Doctrine and theology are in primary intention aimed at making sinners into saints, and immature Christians into Christian men" (Zuck, Rightly Divided 267). The apostle Paul reflects this balance of teaching and application by stressing good works in the pastoral epistles. Sixteen times Paul reminds Timothy and Titus about the importance of living the Word (1 Tim. 2:10; 3:1, 7; 5:10, 25; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:17; Tit. 1:16; 2:5, 7-8, 10, 14; 3:1, 8, 14). Bryan Chapell suggests that the Westminster divines understood the nature of the Word of God when they formulated the answer to the catechism question, "What do the Scriptures principally teach? The answer, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man" (200). The healthy journey of a Christian rests upon a

right understanding of the Word of God. Scripture promotes the welding of three components: intimacy (love for God), theology (doctrine of God), and biography (obedience to God). These three elements act as legs on a stool, equally supporting the saving work of God in a believer's life.

Considering further the nature of the Word of God, the authors of Introduction to Biblical Interpretation state, "The Bible claims that its message is relevant for later generations, not just its original readers" (Klein, Bloomberg, and Hubbard 402). The unique nature of the Bible demonstrates its far-reaching implications. The Scriptures belong to a broad category of literature, similar to legal writings. The nature of this genre peaks beyond the original audience to future generations. Analogously, in 1789, the framing of the Constitution of the United States transpired. The Constitution declares the right of free speech for all citizens. The individuals ratifying this document intended not only for the immediate generation's freedom but for future generations as well. Similarly, the Word of God applies to all people, in all places, and at all times because of God's divine intention.

Clearly, the Old Testament suggests the Bible remains relevant for all times. After Moses wrote down the Law and assigned the Levites as its custodians, he gave instructions for its reading every seven years before the assembled people (Deut. 31:10-11). Individual parents, however, were to teach the Law to their children on a regular basis (Deut. 6:7-25). After centuries of relative neglect, Josiah obtained a copy of the Law, recognized its continuing authority, and led the people in renewing their commitment to God's covenant (2 Kings 22-23).

The New Testament contains equally striking evidence in confirming the design

of God's Word included relevance for both the original readers and subsequent generations. Commenting on the Gospel records, Amos Niven Wilder provides helpful insights on the relevance of Scripture for all times:

> These stories, long or short, in one way or another carry over into the future. The rounding off is usually in some sense still to come. The hearer or reader finds himself in the middle of the action. We are in the middle of the play.… God's last word is still to be spoken.… The Gospels end with attention eagerly directed to the future. (59-60)

Jesus directed the disciples to the future because he commanded his followers to teach their converts "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19), he also prays not only for his immediate followers but also for those who would believe in him "through their message" (John 17:20). In this prayer for his immediate disciples and his disciples to come, Jesus asked the Father to "sanctify them by the truth" (John 17:17). A generation later, Jesus visits the church of Sardis in Asia Minor and commends people "who have not soiled their clothes" (Rev. 3:4). He builds them up for their walk of faith, stating they were "dressed in white" and lived a lifestyle of "overcoming" (Rev. 3:4-5). Unquestionably, Jesus is interested in his bride adorning herself for the bridegroom.

In addition to the Gospel accounts, the apostle Paul writes believers in Rome and states, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Finally, Paul, in recounting Israel's history to the Corinthian church, states, "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). John R. W. Stott ties these truths together presenting a remarkable argument regarding the continuity of Scripture's relevance throughout the ages:

> It is possible to detect four successive stages in which God spoke and speaks. The first was the time of testing in the wilderness when God spoke but Israel hardened her heart. Next came the exhortation of Psalm 95 to the people of that day not to repeat Israel's earlier folly. Thirdly, there was the application of the same truth to the Hebrew Christians of the first century AD, while, fourthly, the appeal comes to us as we read the Letter to the Hebrews today. It is in this way that God's Word is contemporary: it moves with times and continues to address each fresh generation. (101-02)

Stott's argument is compelling, for application remains central to the nature of Scripture, as it begins with the Old Testament and continues through the New Testament. Its relevance must always be more than a second-order reflection.

Because the Bible itself presents application as the highest priority that flows out of love for God (Deut. 11:1), it remains essential to biblical preaching. Application gives ultimate meaning to exposition (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Gordon D. Fee summarizes the Scripture's goal saying, "The ultimate aim of all true exegesis is spirituality" first for the interpreters then for the hearers (30). This spirituality is wholistic, flowing out of love (Deut. 7:9-12), growing through the truth (John 17:17), and demonstrated by a life lived in obedience because of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Although the Bible values internal and external acts of spirituality, it is much more than a spiritual code to obey, for individuals can conform to external dynamics without a change of heart. Therefore, the Scriptures place emphasis upon the inner spiritual life rather than upon a mere social circumspection (Zuck, Rightly Divided 268-69). This project holds these dimensions of spirituality in tension and champions love as the ultimate motivating force for lifestyle (1 John 5:3).

Misunderstanding of the Preaching Ministry

Over the past few decades, dozens of articles and various books have surfaced addressing concerns about application in preaching. In an interview with Michael Duduit, Rick Warren states, "I hear people talk about life application preaching as if it were a

genre or type of preaching. But I think if you don't offer life application in your sermon, then you're not preaching. It may be a lecture, it may be a study, it may be a commentary, but it is not preaching" (3). Saddleback Community Church offers Purpose Driven Conferences addressing the topic of preaching. The seminar Warren teaches is called Preaching for Life Change. In this module, he highlights one of the primary concerns regarding application in preaching, which is the remnants of scholasticism in the pulpit. Warren believes in being a "biblical preacher,… messages must always be life-oriented not information-oriented" (4). Scholastic preaching is not a new phenomenon; it began in the medieval period of church history. Michael Fabarez believes, "All modern Christian preachers bob in the wake of church history's legacy of medieval scholasticism" (20). The idea of scholasticism is associated with words such as "school" and "scholar" and develops a more academic approach to preaching. Although scholasticism ignited during the medieval period, it survived through the Reformation and reignited under the Puritans. Furthermore, scholasticism continues to find its way into most sermons preached in Christian pulpits today.

According to Jay Adams, for the modern preacher, Christian history presents two primary choices regarding application. These alternatives either involve the Puritan method or the Reformation approach to preaching and application (Truth Apparent 79). The Reformers believed the whole sermon was application; therefore, from start to finish they communicated application all during the message. Reformation preaching developed application not merely as an appendage to the message or a secondary part of it but as the primary thing. Undeniably, they worked hard at exegesis; however, they preached what the text had to say about the people sitting before them.

In contrast, the Puritans approached preaching by teaching systematic theology. According to Adams, after preaching their scholarly lessons "they tacked on at the end of the sermon various and sundry 'uses' or 'improvements on the text' by way of application" (Truth Apparent 79). Adams despairingly states, "Unfortunately the idea of tacking on the application at the end has persisted" in our pulpits (79). The ultimate problem with scholastic preaching is the expectation to know more, not necessarily to be more. Scholastic preaching focuses on the intellect, delivering information to the mind with limited regard for transformed lives. Paul reminded the Corinthian church that "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Knowledge of God's Word without application is dead orthodoxy. Knowledge with application is biblical Christianity.

Another concern regarding the ministry of preaching is the matter that some preachers believe application will somehow take care of itself. Their arguments are multifaceted. They reason content is all that is needed in preaching (Hostetler 18). In addition, Roy B. Zuck suggests they speculate that once the meaning of a passage is clearly articulated, correct application will naturally follow ("Application" 279). Finally, desiring not to insult the intelligence of their audience, after presenting biblical truth, they leave the application for the audience to figure out (Veerman 23). If any one of these three arguments were true, the preacher's job would be much simpler; however, Reuel L. Howe describes reality, stating, "Laymen have no awareness of responsibility toward the sermon" (50). This criticism by Howe may sound demeaning or too limiting of God's people, but personal experience suggests it is close to the truth. I agree with John Calvin who believed that leaving men the choice to follow what is taught to them will result in

their never moving a foot (Chapell 199).

Another concern similar to this assumption that application will automatically follow the sermon is the warning posed by Karl Barth, who maintains the preacher need not call the congregation "to make decisions" (66). His stance suggests, "If any decisions are made, it is through a direct encounter between man and God—an encounter in which the preacher plays no part" (66). The implications regarding Barth's position is striking. According to Barth, a preacher must never directly build a bridge between the biblical text and the audience's particular needs or issues. As far as the preacher is concerned, application can only be inferential, and it must never be direct, for directed application may prejudice the decision-making process (Adams, Truth Applied 20).

The Bible does not support the idea that application will somehow take care of itself. In addition, Scripture never promotes the impossibility of one human being applying the truth of God's Word to another while preaching. Nowhere does the Word of God limit the application of the sermon to the Spirit of God alone. The ministry of the apostle Paul continuously modeled preaching the Word of God should stimulate the audience to action. Paul never presupposed application automatically happens or preachers' should defer to God alone in the application process. Paul's instruction to Timothy highlighted a variety of verbs reminding Timothy regarding the goal of preaching. In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul writes, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction." Paul solidifies his command to Timothy using three strong verbs in the imperative mode. Timothy's preaching should include convincing, correcting, rebuking, encouraging, and exhorting. These commands are behavior driven. For Paul, preaching

demanded response; it necessitated life change that grows out of a love relationship with Christ.

Nevertheless, Paul's directed approach to application does not mean the interplay between the Holy Spirit and the preacher's efforts to apply Scripture are unrelated. Walter C. Kaiser presents a solid argument for the combined effort of God's Spirit and the preacher:

> Even when we have faithfully discharged our full range of duties as exegetes and when we have also pressed on to apply that exegesis by principlizing the text paragraph by paragraph into timeless propositions which call for an immediate response from our listeners, we still need the Holy Spirit to carry that word home to the mind and hearts of our hearers if that word is ever going to change men's lives. (236)

The book of Acts stands as a testimony to this interplay between the Spirit of God and the ministry of preaching. In Acts 2:38, Peter preached the gospel, the Holy Spirit created conviction, the people responded with a question, and Peter gave specific next steps for them to take. Furthermore, a number of years after Pentecost, God directed Peter to Joppa to preach to a God-fearing man named Cornelius. In the midst of offering forgiveness by faith in the finished work of Christ, the apostle Peter once again experienced this powerful interchange, for "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" (Acts 10:44). Barth's perspective is extreme in that he suggests the preacher plays no part in the application of the sermon. Nevertheless, the preacher must remember how vital a role the Holy Spirit does play in preaching.

Over the centuries, a wide range of biblical scholars and preachers have expressed their understanding of how preaching and application work harmoniously. Although the emphasis varies slightly from one author to another, the need for application in sermon making is paramount in their writings. The most dominant themes among these authors

suggest that without the presentation of application (Russell and Russell 30), genuine relevance (Broadus and Stanfield 165), or significance (Osborn 343; Klein, Bloomberg, and Hubbard 391) of the Word of God for an individual's life, the sermon ceases to exist (Greidanus 157). In addition, numerous scholars place emphasis on preaching that existed to "bear the demand of God" on the individual's life (Duduit 108). The demand of preaching calls for obedience, as beliefs turn into actions and change in behavior results. Finally, a good number of authors championed a more wholistic approach to application in preaching. Their emphasis includes the experience of the heart (Wesley 132-33), as beliefs, attitudes (Zuck, "Application" 286), and actions (Calvin 1.6.2.) combine over time to form genuine transformation of life (Richard 116; Henrichsen and Jackson 144) in relationship to God and one another (Wald 90). These scholars and preachers represent more than five hundred years of perspective on application and preaching. Preaching, therefore, must concern itself with the significance of the text for life and the call for obedience of faith and wholistic transformation of the heart.

Finally, a cursory examination of the communication of Jesus will demonstrate Christ's preaching as application driven. Bob and Rusty Russell comment on the teaching of Jesus and how application permeated his sermons:

> Jesus, the greatest of all time, was a master at applying biblical principles to the lives of his listeners. When Jesus read the Scripture in the synagogue (Luke 4:14-30), he made a direct application to the attitudes of his listeners toward the Gentiles. It was a Gentile widow who helped Elijah, Jesus noted. And it was a Gentile leper that Elisha healed. The Jews in his audience were convicted, not just because Jesus read the Scripture and explained what it meant, but because he connected it to their racist attitude. In fact, they were so convicted that they tried to kill him! But they certainly didn't ignore him. (30)

James Earl Massey reinforces and amplifies Russell's conclusion stating, "A study of the

predominant preaching method of Jesus (the parable form) shows that the Master was usually direct in applying his message" (212). For the most part, Jesus preached in direct response to the needs and questions of the people, thus, making his preaching application centered.

Preaching, therefore, "is an encounter involving not only content but relationship, not only ideas but action, not only logic but emotion, not only understanding but commitment" (Howe 42). The conscientious preacher will work hard at exegesis but provide equal effort for application and personalization. The diligent preacher will assume the average Christian needs support in moving from sermon to lifestyle. The thoughtful preacher will not dismiss the Spirit's role in application but work for a vital interchange between the application of truth and the Spirit's conviction. Preaching that purposes a wholistic response to God is biblical preaching.

Misunderstanding in Theological Education

Many evangelical scholars and educators believe a serious problem exists between theological training and the everyday practical ministry needs of pastors. Some believe this tension originates in the biblical and practical departments of theological seminaries (Smart 29). Their primary concerns suggest seminaries offer significant training in the area of exegesis, doctrine, preaching, and counseling but very little training in the field of contemporary life and how to engage the modern mind with the gospel (McQuilkin 236; Kaiser 202). The difficulty of making the transition from the "then" of the original biblical text to the "now" of contemporary life, for the most part, is minimized or unaddressed in theological education. Kaiser believes this issue "has received so little attention in our evangelical training centers and pulpit practice that our

best efforts are crippled" (202). William Hull surveyed the most widely read homiletics textbooks of this generation. His discovery is alarming: "These manuals almost give the impression that preaching is a self-contained event conceived in the mind of the preacher and completed upon delivery to a congregation as if the world out there scarcely exists" (584). Graduating from seminary, the preacher quickly realizes the question for everyday ministry is application—building a bridge or stretching the bowstring between the meaning of the text and the relevance for the contemporary audience.

The challenge for most seminary students is that their awareness of the ancient world is much better than the modern world. One seminarian spoke for many when he said, "I think I was better prepared to be a professor of theology than a preacher to businessmen" (Howe 40). My own personal experience validates what these scholars have suggested, which is theological training focused primarily on the analysis of the original context and with, at best, only secondary emphasis on contemporary application. Surely, most agree the biblical authors never intended their writings to be limited to objects of study. Instead, theological education must insist that one of the primary goals of training is detecting how the Scripture influences audiences today. Therefore, a bridge between academia and the real world needs construction.

Misunderstanding of the Complexity of Application in Preaching

According to Robinson, "application is harder than it appears" (qtd. in Rowell). In my personal interview with Dr. Bob Russell, he stated, "Application is harder than exegesis." Chapell concurs, stating, "Application is the most difficult aspect of expository preaching" (216). David Veerman served as the senior editor for the Life Application Bible. He comments on the difficulty of application by saying, "Even now, after years of

writing application notes for study Bibles and Bible studies, I find that seeing application in the text doesn't come easy. And it's ever more difficult to think through application for myself" (23). These key leaders demonstrate the value of working harder at application, especially in the area of accuracy and relevancy.

One of the primary arguments in the difficulty of application is the apparent discontinuities between the ancient and modern world. The most common ones manifest themselves in the areas of theology, kingdom history, culture, and genre. The challenge of theology has developed primarily because the revelation of God's Word came progressively over roughly a thousand-year period. The theme or narrative of the text must be traced from Genesis to Revelation before one can assert the truth and relevance of God's Word for today (Greidanus 168). In addition, biblical writers address specific theological issues to people with unique needs and concerns. The church in Corinth developed a theology of worship because of problems they experienced regarding spiritual gifts and tongues. Paul concluded, "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40); however, the theological implications of this principle to a North American church requires great discernment because of discontinuity.

On the other hand, the challenge of culture exists primarily because of the distance between the ancient Near Eastern world and the modern Western world. The perilous road from the biblical culture to contemporary culture is hazardous. The chasm remains great, and many preachers get lost in their journey.

In addition, the chasm of genre relates primarily to form. People struggle to understand the Psalms and Proverbs. They are confused whether the Psalms and Proverbs are general or absolute answers to the issues of life and faith. In addition, the poetry of

the Song of Songs challenges the exegete to decide if the book is a manual for intimacy in marriage or a picture of Christ's relationship to the church. Further, the Epistles are letters to particular churches in the first century. Therefore, the reader stands challenged about how far to extend the relevance of the New Testament Epistles for today. Many thorny problems exist because of the distance that occurs over theology, culture, and genre. Addressing these issues is a healthy first step in order to apply the Bible in an accurate and relevant way.

Another challenging application issue relates to the gulf between the needs of the audience of the biblical world and the audience today. To deal with this gap, Stott calls for bridge building. In his book, Stott illustrates his point by sharing a personal encounter with two students from Oxford University. These two brothers grew up in a Christian home; however, both denounced their family's faith. One brother affirmed atheism, and the other embraced agnosticism. Their problem was not with whether Christianity was true but whether it was relevant. These young men struggled to relate the ancient biblical truth to the modern world. Stott goes on to say he "often thanked God for that conversation [because] nothing has brought home more forcefully the gulf which people perceive between the Bible and themselves, and the challenge which confronts Christian preachers today" (138-39). Solving the problem of bridge building remains difficult. In his book, Michael J. Quicke devotes a chapter to this difficult theme of bridge building entitled, "Understanding the Times." He states, "Preachers should be latter-day members of the tribe of Issachar" (65). In 1 Chronicles 12:32 one reads that "men of Issachar … understood the times and knew what Israel should do." These leaders possessed discernment in order to exegete the culture and decide how to live for God. Quicke

believes that “today’s preachers need to understand popular culture” as well as the “culture of their listener’s,” for preaching “occurs in local contexts with their own cultural mixes” (66). Preaching in the twenty-first century requires the determination to bridge the gulf between the unchanging Word of God and an ever-changing world. Contemporary preaching must refuse to sacrifice truth for relevance or relevance for truth. Faithfulness to Scripture and relevance to the audience must remain essential.

Equally important to exegeting the culture is understanding each congregation. To exegete the congregation is to discover its “DNA” and its standing before God. Daniel M. Doriani writes, “Exegeting the congregation means knowing that its history, social strata, age, region, and ethnicity create unique traits and recognizing the thought world of the pastor and congregation may differ” (38). The preacher must remember sermons are never general information presented in a vacuum of time and space. On the contrary, preaching delivers timely and timeless truths to men and women of all ages who have a zip code. R. Daniel Shaw and Charles Edward van Engen summarize these two components saying, “Audiences need to be able to hear God speak in acceptable and meaningful ways in their own language spoken in the context of their culture” (177). Elizabeth Rice Achtemeier says, “The preacher stands at the crucial point where the exegeted text and the exegeted congregation meet” (60). To know the congregation is to know their happiness and their hurts, discern their temptations and trials, and preach accordingly.

As previously stated, the challenge for most preachers is that their training supports biblical exegesis but gives little attention given to cultural and contextual exegesis. The best preachers are deliberate and purposeful and get to know the

congregation and the context in which they live. Transformational preaching demands the preacher stay embedded in both the sacred text and the context of the particular culture and congregation.

Finally, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) Summit II reinforces the difficulty regarding the application of Scripture. In November 1982, this council labored to address the concern of "interpretation and application" of the biblical text. The council's premise states, "Biblical authority is an empty notion unless we know how to determine what the Bible means" (Radmacher and Preus xi). James Packer, member of the ICBI, capsulized the challenge that faced the council by reminding them of the seriousness of the task: "What Scripture says, God says" (xi). This council concluded their session, publishing more than nine hundred pages.

According to Brian Shealy, "this collection of articles had the purpose of completing the solution to the problem of biblical authority … as far as its interpretation and practical application to our lives are concerned" (100). However, to some extent, this goal was frustrated. Four years later, in December 1986, this council (Summit III) reconvened in Chicago, Illinois. Articles were prepared in advance for council members on critical topics with the following purpose:

> Thresh out ethical guidelines for the public and institutional life of the church from this perspective of the inerrant truth and divine authority of the Bible. Here some of the finest minds among evangelical leaders of our generation have set themselves to the task. (Kantzer xvi)

Some of the topics addressed included the Savior and his work, sanctity of human life, divorce and remarriage, work and leisure, wealth and poverty, and war. Circulating papers before the four-day meeting transpired. Scholarly responses to each essay resulted. With complete transparency, Kenneth S. Kantzer comments regarding the Summit,

saying “It would be difficult to find a group more dedicated to conservative orthodox protestant theology. Yet evangelicals are an independent lot. No one seemed to agree with anybody. Every issue became a battle ground” (xvi). Kantzer further describes the outcome declaring, “Discussions ranged freely over the topics presented, and it very quickly became apparent that scholars committed to inerrancy do not necessarily agree on how that inerrant Bible should be applied to the practical issues of living the Christian life” (xvii). The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy stands as a testimony to the importance of laboring at accuracy and relevancy in the application of God’s truth.

One of the primary issues raised during the council was distinguishing the “supracultural from the cultural” (qtd. in Larkin 107). Carl Henry sums up the tension:

> The problem of biblical content and cultural content is rapidly becoming a central concern in current evangelical discussions of Scripture, since more and more theologians hold that the New Testament writers in some respects teach as doctrine what in fact reflects the cultural milieu in which they live. (Larkin 107)

Without question, these scholars who worked in concert at the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy are a graphic demonstration of the challenge for all who take seriously the accurate and relevant application of the Word of God. The testimony of the Council’s experience challenges me even more to address this vital topic of accurately and relevantly applying the Word while preaching.

These four issues—misunderstanding of the nature of the Word of God, misunderstanding the preaching ministry, misunderstanding in theological education, and the misunderstanding the complexity of application in preaching—clearly reveal the need for this dissertation topic: accurately and relevantly applying the Word of God to everyday life.

The Purpose

The purpose of the research was to appraise the value of an application design team, developed within the context of the First Baptist Church of Aurora, whose goal was to assist me, as pastor, in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. My assumption was that this team would support the application process, resulting in life change among active participants of the First Baptist Church Aurora.

Research Questions

The two research questions address the effectiveness of the team to support the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Research Question #1

To what extent is the application in the pastor's sermons similar or dissimilar with the input of the application design team?

Research Question #2

What adjustments in application took place in the sermon because of the team's input prior to the sermon delivery on Sunday morning?

Terms Defined

In this study, the principal terms are defined as follows.

An **application design team** is a select group to assist the pastor in bridging the gap between the biblical text and the participants at the First Baptist Church of Aurora for the purpose of accurate and relevant application of God's Word for life change.

For the purposes of this study, **application** is defined as the communication of Scripture's truth and relevance in both a general and specific way with a plea for personalized implementation.

Description of the Project

The project involved assembling and training a team of four individuals to assist me in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. I met with the team for four training sessions prior to preaching a seven-week series on Philippians. Throughout the series, the team met with me each week to provide input for sermon application and compare their ideas with my proposed application. The sermons, typically exegetical in nature, were preached during the 10:30 Sunday morning worship service of the First Baptist Church of Aurora.

The Pastor's Responsibilities

Exegesis. Ultimately, the pastor is responsible for the correct handling of God's truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Resourcing. Thirty days before preaching the first sermon, I oriented the team to the study book (see Appendix E for an outline). This orientation included an overview of the book highlighting background issues, flow, themes of the book, and other key topics that deserved attention. Two weeks out, I provided a two-page synopsis of the first two messages with key themes, a general overview of the meaning of the text, and a simplified sermon outline. This approach established a healthy pattern as the team moved forward together. I had my first draft sermon, with application, completed before the team meeting.

Teaming, by invitation only. I selected the team according to criteria established in the research. Teams are not born; they are made. Healthy team dynamics are essential to the success of this project; therefore, the team was assembled by special invitation of the pastor. The criteria for participation included team chemistry, team competency, and

team character, as described in the literature review. Although such criteria limited the available pool of people from which to draw, they are of incalculable value because they help produce an excellent team. A unified team is an unstoppable force.

Training. Training is a significant element of this project. Prior to the first meeting, each team member was given two weeks to read and digest Jack Kuhatschek's book, Applying the Bible. The team then met with me for four, two-hour training sessions to learn how to apply God's Word in an accurate and relevant way. The first two training sessions focused on discussing and implementing the three key principles of application from Kuhatschek's book. The training involved four specific examples from various genres in Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments, to provide balance and awareness. The third training session introduced the team to Doriani's grid for application and trained them how to use it. The final training session concentrated on the concept of the ladder of abstraction and its relevance to sermon application.

Awareness. The literature review suggests team members already have a model for application, consciously or subconsciously, and their model may not be hermeneutically sound. For the team to assist me, team members first had to become aware of their own personal approach to the application of God's Word and how it could be improved to become more accurate and relevant. I gave the team a review of how the church has historically approached application in order to achieve this awareness.

Preparation. This project studied the book of Philippians in the summer of 2006 with the hope that an application design team would assist me in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. For this goal to be realized, long-range preparation

was vital. Therefore, I prepared various resources for the team and provided training in the weeks leading up to the sermon series, as described.

Individual Team Members' Responsibility

For the effectiveness of the application design team, members must take their participation seriously.

Immersion. In the thirty days leading up to the first sermon, team members read the book of Philippians once a week. The goal was for the team to become better acquainted with the near and far context of the epistle. The team was also responsible for interacting with the two-page synopsis I provided in preparation for the team meeting.

Proactivity. The literature suggests a proactive approach is vital to the success of the team as they supported me in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. The more proactively the team engages the material and each other, the greater the value of the team to me.

Weekly meetings. The team met once a week on Monday evening for ninety minutes to interact with me regarding Sunday's sermon. After briefly discussing the exegetical conclusions and proposed sermon outline, the meeting focused on the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. The team provided input and suggestions, which were compared to my initial thoughts in the manuscript. After the meeting, the sermon was rewritten for accuracy and relevancy in application. Team members were encouraged to give input and suggestions throughout the remainder of the week as I prepared for Sunday morning.

Team prayer and covenant. Unity is essential to the success of the team; therefore, spending a portion of the team's time in prayer for each other, the Sunday

morning worship, and the contribution of each team member to the overall project was an integral part of team meetings. In the early 1960s, Browne Barr became a leading spokesperson regarding "sermon seminar groups," which provided preachers with congregational input for Sunday's sermon. Over years of trial and error, he quickly learned the form of the seminar group changed from time to time; however, one ingredient never changed: prayer. "The period of prayer remains the keystone of the experience. It may be introduced by a re-reading of the text or some related Scripture…. This quarter hour adds a dimension which keeps the seminar from fostering an unhealthy introversion" (Barr and Eakin 78).

To further encourage unity, the team created a covenant and committed themselves to it by periodically reviewing the covenant and assessing the team's overall support for each other (see Appendix C). The goal of the covenant was to establish ground rules for how the team functioned and how individual members interacted and supported each other along the way. In his book, George Cladis provides a framework for developing a team covenant and suggests team covenants are forged between equal partners on the basis of covenantal love and commitment (37). I wrote up a draft covenant, and the team reviewed and revised the covenant together. Once the team finalized the document, everyone signed the covenant and reviewed it monthly to evaluate our commitment to each other as a team.

Methodology

This was an outcome-based, qualitative study in the descriptive mode. The project evaluated the contribution of the team to the pastor for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were four members from First Baptist Church Aurora who fit the quality characteristics for participating on the application design team. All four individuals possess the gift of teaching and currently serve as teachers in the church. One member currently attends The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Two other team members teach professionally in their respective fields. Three of the four members are married and have children. The age of the team ranged from midtwenties to early fifties. In general, these individuals represented the diversity of First Baptist Church Aurora in age, gender, and lifestyle.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A triangulated approach to data collection took place in the following ways.

Journaling. Journaling was an important instrument to determine the value and evaluate the process of the application design team. For two months, team members kept a journal describing their input and support of the pastor for accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The journal included three primary areas of reflection. First, team members reflected on their preparation time. Preparation impacted the effectiveness of the group meeting to provide input to the sermon. Second, team members evaluated their preparedness to engage the topic at hand. To prepare the team, I proactively provided a two-page summary of the message to be preached fourteen days from the meeting. Over the next seven days, team members interacted with the text with a goal of presenting their views in the meeting. Journaling the meeting time involved observation regarding participation, team dynamics, flow of the meeting, and the ultimate product for accurate

and relevant application of God's Word. Acting as secretary, I recorded the meeting and worked toward integration points with the sermon. As meetings finished, each team member was encouraged to record his or her perspective by journaling. The meeting closed with the collating of data and purposed integration to the Sunday sermon. Finally, throughout the week, journaling took place about each team member's personalization of the truth of the sermon to life. Team members reflected on the clarity, accuracy, relevance, and motivation in their own life to apply the Word of God.

Recording. Audio recordings of the meeting time took place weekly to support the evaluation of the process. These recordings serve as supplemental and backup to the primary resources of the sermon manuscripts, journals, and application charts. The audio recordings of the team meetings ensured objectivity and provided a resource for analyzing data.

Interviewing. At the conclusion of the study, an interview questionnaire was implemented with all team members evaluating their personal and team contribution to the pastor for accurate and relevant sermon application. The questionnaire measured their satisfaction level regarding the overall process of participating on the team. In addition, the questionnaire supported measuring the value of various aspects of the process including training, reading, input, and overall impact of the team for accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Delimitation and Generalizability

More than twenty years of ministry as a preacher and teacher of God's Word provided ample motivation to pursue this research. A clarion call exists among the people in the pew for accurate and relevant application in preaching. The First Baptist Church of

Aurora, where I currently serve as senior pastor, continues to sound the alarm. This study was limited to active and mature participants of First Baptist Church Aurora.

The church is a thirty year old Southern Baptist congregation. First Baptist Church is located on the crossroads of four communities with a mixture of white and blue collar workers. The surrounding communities are steadily growing, and most households consist of families with young children. Average morning worship attendance is nearing two hundred, with roughly 130 involved in Sunday school and small groups throughout the week. During the two years leading up to the study, the church has experienced steady growth both spiritually and numerically. Giving has increased 60 percent, providing resources for staff and ministry. Furthermore, congregational morale has been high. A good rapport was built between the staff and the congregation. The staff is made up by the senior pastor, a part-time associate pastor for assimilation and discipleship, and a part-time associate pastor for children and youth ministry. In addition to the ministerial staff, a full-time preschool director provides healthy, ongoing connections with the families of our community. When I was hired as senior pastor in November 2003, the ministry description provided by the church highlighted the need for equipping the membership and taking them deeper in God's Word. This project, Lord willing, will support the church's goal of maturing God's people in their faith.

I believe this study will benefit any pastor who is interested in gaining support through congregational input for sermon application. Furthermore, I believe the principles and training resources for accurate and relevant application will benefit anyone interested in applying God's Word in a healthy and biblical manner. My hope and prayer

is the application design team will become a model for many churches and will lead to more accurate and relevant application of God's Word in preaching.

Overview

Chapter 2 of this study establishes the biblical, theological, hermeneutical, and ecclesiastical context for the proposed study. Chapter 3 presents the research pattern. Chapter 4 reports the research discoveries. Chapter 5 provides a review and interpretation of the research findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE

For nearly two thousand years, the church has struggled to establish a model with standard principles and consistent patterns to assist in the application of the biblical text to life. Robinson in his book Biblical Preaching highlights this challenge: "No one book has ever been published, devoted exclusively, or even primarily, to the knotty problems raised by application" (89-90). After examining the hermeneutical classics, John Goldingay expressed his frustration, noting that "they simply assume that if you can understand a passage's 'meaning,' the question of 'significance' will look after itself" (351). Unfortunately, application will not look after itself. It demands special attention by any preacher who desires to apply the Bible to life with integrity.

Beginning with the book of Acts, I observed how the apostles of the first century preached the Word of God. As a complement, I examined Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and compared how Jesus applied Scripture with the preaching in Acts. From the examples of Christ and the early Church, I established valid and helpful principles for application of the Word of God.

In addition, I reviewed Christian history to consider the relationship between hermeneutics, preaching, and application. The goal was to learn from the past and discover healthy models or patterns for application of the Word of God.

Furthermore, I examined and interviewed three contemporary churches that recognized the challenge of application and the value of approaching preaching as a team. As a result, I have developed transferable principles for creating, implementing, and training a healthy and competent team to assist me in application of the Word of God.

The purpose of the research was to appraise the value of an application design team developed within the context of the First Baptist Church of Aurora for the purpose of assisting me, as pastor, in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Biblical Precedence

The Bible is a book of proclamation and definitely promotes the idea that, from the beginning, God communicated through the sermon. God values life-change preaching; therefore, accurate and relevant application remains essential to biblical communication. God's Word establishes the precedent for application in preaching. This section explores the preaching in the book of Acts and at the Sermon on the Mount delivered by Jesus and elucidates the priority of application in preaching.

The book of Acts demonstrates the truth that "the church came to birth with preaching, and preaching came to birth with the Church" (Ford 53). In Luke's apology to Theophilus, readers may be in awe by the prominent position and central role preaching played in the witness of the apostles to Christ. Luke records approximately twenty-eight speeches and accounts for nearly one-third of the book's material with Peter and Paul as the dominant communicators (Ridderbos 7; Willimon 145). Colin Brown clarifies preaching in Acts: "The accounts in the preaching of Acts are clearly summaries and do not give everything the speaker said" (2:64). However abbreviated, these sermons may be (Acts 2:40), they, nevertheless, provide tremendous examples from which to learn regarding apostolic preaching in the early Church. The sermons in the book of Acts have a unique distinctive from others' collections of great sermons throughout church history. Much remains to learn about preaching from individuals such as Chrysostom, Spurgeon, Swindoll, and Robinson, one must remember apostolic sermons are "God-breathed" and,

therefore, serve as enduring models of preaching for all time (Wagner 25-26).

In addition to the preaching in Acts, the Sermon on the Mount represents the longest and most comprehensive sermon of Christ recorded throughout his three-year itinerant preaching ministry. As the multitudes continued to flock to Jesus (Matt. 4:25), Matthew records, “He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him and He began to teach them” (Matt. 5:1-2). Debate exists regarding the intended audience of the Sermon on the Mount. The options involve either the “crowds following Christ” (Matt. 7:28) or his disciples (Matt. 5:2). Although the crowds overheard his teaching and were welcomed to do so, the message clearly targets his true disciples, in particular the twelve, for later in the sermon, he addresses his primary audience, calling them the “light and “salt” of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16).

The scope of this project, limits developing a comprehensive treatise on the Sermon on the Mount. Christian history differs considerably regarding the meaning and significance of Christ’s message and presents a long and varied history of interpretation of the mountain sermon. However, because the preaching of Jesus establishes a pattern to follow, the value of discovering the meaning of this masterful sermon is enormous.

The Sermon on the Mount presents an ethic for God’s kingdom, which invaded history in the person and preaching of Jesus Christ. The sermon promotes an “inaugurated eschatology” that recognizes an “already/not yet” ideal for all believers in every age. However, the realization of this ethic or ideal will manifest itself in the consummation of the kingdom at Christ’s return, when God will be “all in all.” Therefore, the relevance of the Sermon on the Mount for today examines God’s standards and moral demands for those who respond to the kingdom of God by faith in Christ

(Guthrie 163-64). These expectations flow out of a redemptive and loving relationship with Christ (Matt. 5:3-11). Jesus' teaching does not present a standard for the world to follow; instead, it is for those who have turned their back on the world to follow Christ. The personalization of his message to his disciples supports this position. In this sermon, he speaks to his true followers as the "salt" and "light" of the world. The by-product of living according to kingdom ethics is that the world may see the good deeds of Christ's followers and praise the Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

In this survey of preaching in Acts and the Sermon on the Mount, the discovery of six principles for application in preaching were discovered: application through warning, application through guidance, application through how-tos, application through personalization, application through persuasion, and application through contextualization.

Application through Warning

Luke records that Peter's first sermon concludes with a strong admonition saying, "With many other words he warned [diamartuvromai] them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:40-41). According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, the Greek verb diamartuvromai, rendered "warned," is a "strengthened form of through, intensive), is used in the Middle Voice; primarily it signifies to testify through and through, bear a solemn witness; hence, to charge earnestly" (Vine). In addition, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida define diamartuvromai as being "emphatic in stating an opinion or desire-to insist." An

additional picture of warning takes place in Acts 20 as the apostle Paul rallies the leadership of Ephesus for his farewell address. In this speech, Paul reflects on his three-year ministry among them. Knowing he would not see the elders of Ephesus again, Paul, presents the challenge, with great concern and emotion:

> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. Know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning [nouqetw`n] each of you night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)

Paul's preaching ministry in Ephesus constantly involved warning the church. The Greek word nouqetevw means, "to advise someone concerning the dangerous consequences of some happening or action-to warn, give warning" (Louw and Nida). Paul's ministry to the church, including the elders and pastors, involved perpetual warning. He established a vital example for application in preaching. He preached proactively, continuously warning of dangers lying ahead. He left no stone unturned. He shared all possible truth with all possible people in all possible ways. By warning the church, Paul became a faithful guard to God's people.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned the people against a variety of issues. Indicting the religious leaders, he said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Later in the sermon, he warned the people against being "like the hypocrites" (Matt. 6:5). Again, Jesus pointed the finger at these religious leaders. The Pharisees corrupted the spiritual disciplines of praying, fasting, and giving; self-glory reigned as their goal. Jesus did not tolerate their behavior, and through their negative

example, he warned the people to live differently. Furthermore, addressing the issue of adultery, Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away,” or, “If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (Matt. 5:27-30). His warning was clear. Losing a part of the body is preferred to losing the whole body to hell.

Christ’s straightforward preaching using hyperbole warned against the dangers of hell. His honesty and audacity invoked attention. The direct and frank preaching of Jesus is one of the reasons the temple guards told the chief priests and Pharisees that, “no one ever spoke the way this man does” (John 7:46). The Sermon on the Mount testifies to the power of Christ’s preaching through warning, for the Bibles states, “The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt. 7:28-29).

While warning and negativity should not dominate preaching, Scripture is clear the apostles and Jesus champion warning as a means of application in preaching.

Application through Guidance

In Acts 8, Luke highlights the sovereignty of God in preaching as the “angel of the Lord” (Acts 8:26) directs Philip toward Gaza for a divine appointment with an Ethiopian Eunuch. As Philip approached his destination, the Spirit of God told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it” (Acts 8:29). As Philip approached the chariot, he heard the man reading the scroll of Isaiah, the prophet. Philip inquired, “Do you understand what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30). The Ethiopian responds to Philips’ question saying, “How can I … unless someone explains [oJdhgevw] it to me? So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:30-31). Unfortunately, the

Ethiopian's questions regarding God, Scripture, and salvation went unanswered in Jerusalem. However, the Spirit of God provided the council necessary, and Philip guided this Nubian pilgrim to a genuine salvation experience, by explaining the gospel message through the writings of the Isaiah, the prophet (Ogilvie 118).

The Greek verb oJdhgevw means "to guide or to direct, with the implication of making certain that people reach an appropriate destination" (Louw and Nida). This kind of guidance is at the heart of biblical preaching and application. Philip is a model of the significant role all evangelists and preachers play, as spiritual guides, in the lives of not-yet Christian individuals. The preacher must first remember people are lost, "like sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). These sheep need God's counsel and his holy guidance. R. Kent Hughes says Philip provides an example that "all of us should be able to explain Christ from the Scriptures" (121).

Clearly, the example of Philip guiding the Ethiopian eunuch reflects God's ambition for his servants to be a guide to the blind. In addition, the preaching of Philip demonstrates the value Old Testament Scriptures play in guiding people to the Lord. In Acts 8:35, Luke states, "Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." The passage to Scripture in which Luke refers is Isaiah 53:7-8. For the preacher, both Testaments, Old and New, must find their way into the pulpit for preaching and application.

In similar fashion, the Sermon on the Mount explodes with guidance. As Christ opens his sermon, he refers to the religious leaders of the day as "blind guides" (Matt. 15:12-14). The Pharisees could not fulfill the role of spiritual guide, for they needed guidance themselves. All throughout the message, Jesus repeats this phrase: "You have

heard that it was said,… but I tell you" (Matt. 5:27-28). Jesus provided a wealth of guidance by clarifying or redefining existing concepts familiar to the audience. As a guide to the people, Jesus redefined relationships (Matt. 5:21-26), adultery (Matt. 5:27-30), divorce (Matt. 5:31-32), oaths (Matt. 33-37), vengeance (Matt. 5:38-42), and dealing with enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). He addressed timely subjects such as spiritual disciplines (Matt. 6:1-18), treasure (Matt. 6:19-24), worry (Matt. 6:25-34), judging others (Matt. 7:1-6), prayer (Matt. 7:7-12), salvation (Matt. 7:13-14), and false teachers (Matt. 7:15-23).

According to Arnell Motz, "more than half of Jesus' teaching was triggered by a question or 'life-situation.' That is, he started with a problem, not a text" (15). The problem for the Ethiopian related to understanding the Old Testament Scripture regarding the Messiah. Philip provided the guidance he needed. The problem for Jesus' audience related to redefining authentic spirituality. Jesus guided his disciples through the Sermon on the Mount by clarifying the confusion established by the life and teachings of the Pharisees. According to Robert N. Bellah et al., the problem with America coincides with Rome's debacle many centuries ago: "We have reached the point where we cannot bear either our vices or their cure" (294). How desperately America needs the sure and stable guidance of God's Word. The apostles and Jesus exemplify guidance as a viable approach for application in preaching.

Application through How-Tos

According to Adams, the missing note in evangelical preaching is the "how-to emphasis" (Preaching with Purpose 127). The challenge for preaching today, in contrast to preaching in the past, is the call for the imperative, specific, action-oriented, and verdict-driven application as a response to the sermon (H. C. Brown 60; Rowell 33).

Purposeful preaching focuses the sermon toward heartfelt life change demonstrated through personal accomplishments that deal with practical life issues such as faith, finances, family, and the future (Wiersbe and Wiersbe 93; Zuck, "Application" 280).

The preaching recorded in Acts reflects a constant call to specific application and action. In Acts 2:38-39, Peter replies to the Jews who ask him how they need to respond to his message by saying, "Repent and be baptized." From this particular example, the preacher should assume at times during preaching the Holy Spirit will challenge individuals with the same question regarding their message. Prompted by the Spirit of God, the congregation may also ask, "What shall we do?"

Paul's preaching echoes Peter's by offering another example as a call to action. Knowing he would not see the elders at Ephesus again, Paul exhorted them to keep watch, be alert, shepherd, and oversee the flock of God. As a result of Paul's specific direction, the elders of Ephesus knew exactly what he expected them to be and do. He gave the leadership the necessary plan of action to fulfill their ministry in his absence. Specifying next steps, the how-to implementation of the sermon provides the direction often lacking in preaching.

This application is one of the most important aspects of the preacher's work and must be practical (Broadus and Stanfield 169), personal, specific, adding a time element for healthy accountability (Zuck, "Application" 294). Furthermore, because of Zuck's commitment to the how-to approach, he includes a valuable list of ninety action verbs for writing the "I will" application statements of the sermon (Zuck 295). Tim Timmons argues for deliberate challenges in preaching:

> 5 percent of an audience are innovators, 15 percent are adapters, and 80 percent are adopters. If this is even approximately accurate, most of our

> audiences will not act on their own. They need simple action-steps they can adopt to apply truth. (25)

Perry reinforces Timmon's perspective regarding action-steps in application:

> Application should be present in a sermon because many of those in the audience lack the spiritual, homiletical, hermeneutical, and mental skills necessary to apply the truth of the sermon to themselves. Many lack the will or desire to apply the truth of a sermon to sensitive areas in their lives. (147)

Presenting concrete next steps for the hearer follows the pattern modeled by Jesus. The master teacher at the Sermon on the Mount fills the minds and hearts of the audience with specific, concrete, visual, practical, and definite demands upon his listeners (Baumann 140). The Sermon on the Mount stands as a perpetual testimony for challenging one's audience to act upon the truth of God's Word. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus presents four analogies establishing parallelism between the function of the virtues outlined in the sermon and the moral mission of his disciples. Christ refers to his disciples as salt and light. As salt brings flavor and preservation to food, so the disciples will affect all of humanity. In addition, his disciples shine to all humanity, as a city set on a hill shines to the surrounding countryside, and as a lamp illuminating the house. If salt loses its taste, it becomes worthless as spice. If light remains hidden, it cannot shine before people. Christ's concludes this pericope with the following demands: "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Jesus believed his audience needed help understanding how the truth of preaching related to everyday life. Jesus demonstrated little reserve in specifying action in response to truth. The authority of his preaching (Matt. 7:29) correlates, in part, to the unapologetic call for response (Matt. 7:24-27).

The preaching of the apostles and Jesus demonstrate that building bridges for lifestyle, demanding next steps, and supplying practical how-tos remain a necessary part of biblical exposition. If Aristotle's axiom remains true in that "we are what we repeatedly do," then preachers must provide such specific, concrete direction for application.

Application through Personalization

The book of Acts commonly records the use of the second person pronoun for application in preaching. For example, in Acts 2:12-26, the apostle Peter uses seventeen second person pronouns in his sermon to connect with his audience. He personalizes his sermon telling the men of Israel, "You disowned the Holy and Righteous One…. You killed the author of life," therefore, "every one of you," needs to repent and be baptized. He concludes his sermon saying the promise of the Holy Spirit "is for you and your children." Commenting on Peter's preaching, G. Campbell Morgan suggests this sermon is the "perfect pattern for true Christian homiletics to the end of time" (14). In Morgan's assessment, "the difference between the preaching that does nothing and the preaching that does something is the difference between preaching before, and preaching to people" (34). Peter preached to the people and their response, prompted by the Holy Spirit moved them to action.

Considering further how the apostles preached to people, Paul's example in Acts 17 demands examination. While preaching in Athens, Paul contexualized the gospel in a personalized way. After being indicted for bringing some "new" and "strange" teaching (Acts 17:19-20) to Athens, Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and began preaching:

> Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23)

One cannot miss the personalized style of Paul to the Athenians. He captured the audience, in part, through intimate, personalized speech. Finally, in Acts 20, Paul, addressing the elders of Ephesus, uses the second person pronoun sixteen times, in eleven verses.

Jesus' practice at the Sermon on the Mount supports this concept, for the "words 'you' and 'your' are stated or implied 221 times" (Lewis and Lewis 71). Jesus preached specifically to his listeners, for this sermon highlights Jesus asking nineteen questions, giving the sermon an overall feel of dialogue and participation on the part of his audience (Baumann 244; Lewis and Lewis 70). Clearly, both the preaching of the apostles and Jesus targeted the individual or group through sermons with application. The value of personalized preaching and application to the listener involves the recognition that the speaker purposes a more direct, heartfelt communication and application (Vines and Shaddix 183). History records when Spurgeon preached to three thousand or twenty three thousand: "Everyone felt God was speaking to them personally" (Blackwood 163). The great orator, Daniel Webster says, "When a man preaches to me, I want him to make it a personal matter, a personal matter, a personal matter" (qtd. in Reu and Steinhaeuser 365-66). Haddon W. Robinson and Scott M. Gibson urges preachers to discern when the time of explanation has passed and the time for application has come:

> At that point, it's appropriate for the preacher to leave behind "we" in favor of "you." No longer is the preacher representing the people to God, he is representing God to the people. "We've seen the biblical principle;

> we've seen two or three way others have applied it. Now, what does this say to you?" (94)

Robinson and Gibson complete their argument saying, "Life changing preaching does not talk to the people about the Bible. Instead, it talks to the people about themselves, their questions, hurts, fears, and struggles, from the Bible" (94). Application through personalization: "brings the hearer under the claims of the Gospel; it searches his heart and reins; it brings into divine encounter; it makes the listener say; 'I am the man,' or 'he is speaking to me" (Whitesell 91). Although both the apostles and Jesus emulate personalized application and groves of great preaching followed their footsteps, preaching need not neglect the inclusive pronouns of "we" or "us." The preacher needs to discern when the value of identifying with the audience supercedes the practical and direct approach to personalization.

Application through Persuasion

Application is the rhetorical process (Braga 205) of persuading people to act (Chapell 200) by moving their will (Morgan 13), both personally and practically (Broadus and Stanfield 170) in accordance with the truth of God's Word.

Throughout the book of Acts, convincing individuals and audiences regarding the truths of the person and work of Jesus Christ became one of Paul's primary preaching goals. In Acts, Luke records Paul constantly communicating in a persuasive manner. The Greek verb `ejpeivqonto` means to persuade or have confidence in another's teaching. As a result of Paul preaching in Thessalonica, Luke records that "some of the Jews were persuaded `ejpeivsqhsan` and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women" (Acts 17:4).

In addition, Acts 13 describes Paul taking the good news to Pissidian Antioch and

preaching the gospel in their synagogue:

> As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged [e[peiqon] them to continue in the grace of God. (Acts 13:42-43)

Paul's pattern for preaching centered on meeting with the Jews first to persuade them for the good news of Jesus Christ. Again, in Acts 18:4 the Bible states, "Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade [e[peiqen] Jews and Greeks." Furthermore, in Acts 19:26, while preaching the gospel in Ephesus, Demetrius the Silversmith accused Paul of turning the people away from their gods:

> And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced [peivsa"] and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man made gods are no gods at all.

Demetrius accurately assessed the situation. Paul preached persuasively, purposing to lead people away from their pagan gods to Jesus Christ. In Acts 26:28, Paul shares his conversion story with King Agrippa. Agrippa sensed Paul's urgency and goal for preaching as he inquired of Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade [peivqei"] me to be a Christian?" (Acts 26:28). In the last chapter of the book of Acts, the apostle Paul, while under house arrest in Rome, calls the Jewish leaders of the community together in order to share his story. Initially, he reflects on his arrest in Jerusalem and appeal to Caesar. These leaders were not aware of Paul or the circumstances of his arrest. They were, however, keenly aware that "the sect" of Christianity was being talked about everywhere. The Jewish leaders arranged to meet with Paul, and a large number came to where he was staying. Luke records that from "morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to

convince [peivqwn] them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets" (Acts 28:23). Paul's ministry resulted in some being "convinced [ejpeivqonto] by what he said, but others would not believe" (Acts 28:24).

Paul models that preaching and persuasion go hand-in-hand. "An analysis of his message to Jewish, Gentile, and Christian audiences reveals … a continuous attempt to persuade" (Campbell 291). The pulpit breathes reconciliation and transformation because of the persuasive, Spirit-empowered preaching of the Word of God.

Jesus, too, preached persuasively. In the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus presented two options to his audience as a means of persuasion. Knowing the truths of his message, he now influenced his disciples to make the right choice. Their options included the construction of their spiritual houses on one of two foundations. He reminded them the wise builder puts "into practice" the Word of God (Matt. 7:24). In contrast, the foolish builder disregards truth and chooses not to apply the sermon preached. Christ persuasively presents the choices and lovingly pushes people to decide how they live, wisely or foolishly. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Christ constantly clarified the audience's choices. He presented them with two kinds of trees and fruit (Matt. 5:15-20), two kinds of roads and gates (Matt. 7:13-14), and two kinds of foundations and builders (Matt. 7:24-27). They could either hate one or love the other, for Christ tolerated no middle ground. Jesus knew the impossibility of serving two masters and his persuasive preaching called for a decision.

The biblical examples of Jesus and Paul clearly demonstrate the incredible asset of persuasion as a means of communicating and applying God's truth.

Application through Audience Analysis

Contextualization in preaching, attempts to build bridges, purposing to unite the ancient biblical text with the modern audience and communicating the gospel in a way that makes sense to people within their unique context (Whiteman 2-3; Osborne 339). Contextualization is necessary, for it began with God revealing his Word through the nation of Israel with the goal of continual recontextualization to the nations of the world (Hesselgrave 85).

Luke clearly distinguishes how diverse context affects both preaching and application. The book of Acts accounts for a minimum of nine unique audiences where contextualized preaching transpired. Apostolic preaching took place before a diverse audience throughout Acts. When examining the sermons of Peter, Stephen, Philip, and Paul; one must marvel at their audience adaptability. Some of their audiences included God-fearing Jews and proselytes (Acts 2, 8), the hardened leaders of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4, 7), Samaritans (Acts 8:5-25), an Ethiopian official (Acts 8:35), Gentile God fearers (Acts 10-11), Diaspora Jews and God fearing Gentiles (Acts 13:13-43), peasant Gentiles of Lystra (Acts 14:4-16), Greek Philosophers of Athens (Acts 17), the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20), and Roman Imperial Magistrates (Acts 24-26). Adams reminds the preacher, "You cannot preach to everyone in exactly the same way and expect your preaching to be effective. Paul and Peter did not; neither may you" (Truth Applied 32). Consider a few examples of contextualized preaching and application from the book of Acts.

In the first eight chapters of Acts, Luke profiles Peter and Stephen for preaching the gospel to their own people, the nation of Israel. Throughout their preaching, the

audience examines the Old Testament Scriptures as a basis for truth. A common denominator existed between the people and Old Testament cannon. Paul said these Scriptures are "able to make one wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). Because of their unique Jewish audience, both Peter's and Stephen's sermons were saturated with Old Testament truth. In his commentary on Acts, I. Howard Marshall states, "The heart of Peter's speech is built around the exposition of Old Testament prophecy" (71-72). William J. Larkin observes the movement style of preaching for Peter, to his brethren, was from "argumentation to proclamation (Acts 2:32)" (56). His contextualized message, from the Old Testament was so persuasive that on Pentecost, three thousand responded for salvation and baptism.

In Acts 17, evidence abounds for the apostle Paul's ability to contextualize his preaching. As Paul ministered to cities oriented toward paganism and Gentile philosophies, his pattern for preaching demonstrates a concern for the context. Paul encountered Epicureanism and Stoicism in Athens. The Areopagus speech presents the best clue to the type of reasoning into which Paul entered with pagans who had little or no reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. Although the Old Testament is absent in Paul's speech in Athens, Paul does refer to their religious practices, poets, and philosophers in order to build a common denominator and proclaim truth. Paul's introduction to the Athenian audience won the day as stood he up and declared how religious they lived. His opening seems to unite his hearers and get their attention. In addition, Paul sparked their interest, by referring to the altar of the "UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). As a result of his wise opening, the Athenians were in a position of acknowledged ignorance and in need of instruction (Adams, Audience Adaptations 31;

Barnes 247).

Furthermore, in contrast to his preaching in Lystra, Paul seems to slow down his communication in Athens because his audience was more pagan and sophisticated. Four years previous, while preaching in Lystra, he opened his sermon appealing to simple elements in nature, such as rain and food. In Athens, Paul appeals to the poets and philosophers. By referencing these Greek poets, C. H. Rieu suggests, "He had shown them that he was knowledgeable and cultured" (153). Edith Hamilton's analysis of Greek religion sheds light on the value of Paul's contextualization in his introduction:

> Greek religion was developed not by priests nor by prophets nor by saints or by any set of men who were held to be removed from the ordinary run of life because of a superior degree of holiness; it was developed by poets and artists and philosophers. (159)

Paul modeled wisdom in preaching as he learned the art of contextualization. Although few hearing this particular sermon by Paul converted to Christianity, others were open to hearing more (Acts 17:32).

Paul's preaching, although contextualized, was not an end in itself. He called for change. Paul concluded his message with God's call for "people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Although Paul tailormade his sermon to his audience, he did not divert from his basic gospel formula that calls all people everywhere to "turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21). All true gospel preaching must conclude here, regardless of the audience or context.

Lee Iacocca provides a tremendous example of contextualization. In the early 1980s, he conducted the recovery for the bankrupt Chrysler Corporation. In his autobiography, he highlights the need for audience analysis in the business world:

> That's what Bob Hope is doing when he sends an advance man to scout his audience so that he can make jokes that are special to them and their situation. If you are watching on television, you might not understand what he's saying. Nevertheless, the live audience always appreciates it when a speaker has taken the trouble to learn something about who they are. Not everyone can afford an advance man, but the message is clear: public speaking does not mean impersonal speaking. (Iacocca and Novak 55)

Application design teams are the "advance men," working in concert with the pastor to pave the way for meaningful, relevant, and contextualized communication. Fred B. Craddock highlights the value of these advance men suggesting, "The interpretation of the parishioners in their personal, domestic, political, and economic contexts does not replace but joins the interpretation of Scripture in its context to create the message" (Preaching 39). The preaching of Jesus and the apostles worked like a Swiss Army knife, for it accommodated a variety of audiences, contexts, and needs. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus targeted as his primary audience citizens of the kingdom of God. Therefore, relaying to his audience the attributes necessary to live and enjoy one's citizenship in the kingdom, Jesus contextualized his message. In Jerusalem at Pentecost, Peter's sermon interpreted current miraculous activity in the light of biblical prophecy and warned the Jews for repentance and baptism. Paul's preaching identified with religious Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, secular philosophers, and church leadership. To one audience, Paul neglects the depth of the Word of God (Acts 17); to another he preaches "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

From the preaching in Acts and the Sermon on the Mount, one infers that contextualizing the sermon and application plays a variety of roles for the individual. Contextualization engages the not-yet-Christian but also enriches the disciple. "Bull's-eye preaching," as Marshall Shelley suggests, softens the hardened hearts, and heals the

broken ones. (“Leadership Journal”) Bridge-building communication delivers both milk to the infants and meat to the mature. Audience-targeted preaching provides comfort to the grieving and rebuke for the sinning. Clearly, depending on the audience and their needs, contextualized preaching provides a menu of options. Parishioners, periodically communicate the heart of contextualized communication, when they say, “Pastor, how could you have known?”

Both the preaching of Jesus and that of the apostles model creative contextualized preaching to their audience. The book of Acts is a valuable resource for preachers. The leadership of the early Church and the Sermon on the Mount present a collage of principles for preachers to follow and improve the process of accurate, relevant application of Scripture. Effective preaching concerned with application will follow the examples of the apostles and Christ by warning, guiding, persuading, personalizing, contextualizing, and presenting tangible how-tos, while preaching toward accurate and relevant application.

Theological Precedence

Application of God’s Word rests upon the bedrock of legitimate biblical hermeneutics. Nevertheless, over the centuries “there has been a grave omission in scholarly biblical hermeneutics—the development of guidelines for applying Scripture authentically (McQuilkin 12). In recent years, missiologists have helped, and sometimes forced, the church to begin developing principles for applying the Word of God.

An examination of hermeneutics throughout church history provides reasons why the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word demands attention. For most of church history, a struggling and confused hermeneutic produced a questionable

application of Scripture. Although this survey remains cursory, it does demonstrate the significant reason why the application of Scripture is of utmost concern as proposed in this project. This overview examines eight major stages in church history and the influence of hermeneutics on the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The Church Fathers—Allegorical Application

The origins of allegorical interpretation stem back to the Greeks. The Greeks adopted the position out of convenience and desperation as a scheme to hide and excuse the mythological exploits of their gods and men, which were no longer accepted as real or literal. In Alexandria, Egypt, Jewish scholars followed their example, and perceived an allegorical approach could solve some of their problems of adapting the teachings of the Old Testament to a developing Hellenistic world (Tan 45-48). Allegories' influence on the early church is far reaching. Kaiser comments on the challenge facing the young Church regarding hermeneutics:

> The history of exegesis in the early Church is basically a history of struggle between the two schools of Alexandria [allegorical] and Antioch [literal]. But even before the tension of these classic institutions, the early Church fathers exhibited a decided tendency toward the allegorization of Scripture (57).

The struggle between these two systems challenged and frustrated the direction of the Church, for nearly two thousand years. Bernard L. Ramm highlights the tension by commenting on the Syrian or literal School of Antioch:

> It has been said that the first Protestant school of hermeneutics flourished in the city of Antioch of Syria, and had it not been crushed by the hand of orthodoxy for its supposed heretical connection with the Nestorians, the entire course of Church history might have been different. (Protestant Biblical Interpretation 48)

Although the literal school of Antioch experienced its demise while the allegorical school

flourished, a few early Church fathers, including Lucian (AD 312), Theodore (AD 350-428), Chrysostom (AD 354-407), and Theodoret (AD 386-458), sided with the literal or plain school of interpretation and produced some of the best exegetical literature of ancient times (Tan 51-52). However, Origin and Clement of Alexandria institutionalized the system of allegorization in the late second and early third century. Although Origin recognized "the literal or plain meaning," according to Paul Lee Tan, he seldom referred to it in his commentaries but emphasized the "theological or spiritual meaning" (49). "Origin so popularized the allegorical method that, in the eyes of church historians, he has become allegorization personified" (49). Allegorization is imputing to the text a meaning that is not there. For Origin, every passage potentially offered a threefold meaning: (1) a literal or historical meaning, (2) a moral meaning, and (3) a spiritual or theological meaning. The latter two represent deeper or higher meanings beyond the literal or normal meaning of the text.

Influenced by the literal school of Antioch, Jerome developed some sound principles for hermeneutics; however, "in practice he was an allegorist,… even allegorizing the New Testament" (Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation 34). Unfortunately, the influential theologian Augustine (AD 354-430) followed their footsteps and partially adopted the allegorical system as he believed it was the real meaning of the Bible because, he thought, "the literal interpretation kills" (35).

Coupled with the demise of the literal school of Antioch, Augustine's allegiance to allegory paved the way for the advance of the allegorical school. In addition, the powerful Latin Pope Gregory the Great (AD 590) embraced allegorical interpretation. Gregory's allegiance to allegory, paved the way for the Western Churches wholehearted

adherence to allegorical interpretation. Although Hugh of St. Victor, Stephen Langton (the Archbishop of Canterbury), and Thomas Aquinas offered glimpses of hope for a more literal interpretation, the medieval period suffered greatly under scholasticism, mysticism, and allegorical interpretation. “The principle book of the mystics was the Song of Songs which they readily interpreted as the love relationship between God and the mystic resulting in spiritual delights told in term of physical delights” (Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation 60). John MacArthur characterizes the medieval period from 476-1500 as employing “faulty exegesis with allegory” (46). A fourfold method of interpretation called “quadriga” reigned between the fourth and sixteenth century. According to this approach, each passage of Scripture contains four meanings: literal, moral (tropologic), mystical (allegoric), and prophetic (anagogic). In this system, for instance, Jerusalem literally represents a city with that name, while allegorically it displays the universal Church. Furthermore, prophetically, Jerusalem presents the heavenly city, and morally it is the human soul (McQuilkin 39; Tan 72). Joseph M. Cross sums up the first fifteen-hundred years of hermeneutics and application concluding that, “with the disappearance of a literal or plain interpretation of the text went with it any need for any additional step of application, for allegorical interpretation was application of the text, just without any solid foundation to base the application” (24).

The Reformers—Textual Application

Meanwhile, a light in this darkness appeared because a Jewish believer, Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1340), began to press the literal sense as the only reasonable basis for exegesis. The importance of the role he played in the history of hermeneutics and exegesis is apparent in the celebrated aphorism, “If Lyra had not piped, Luther would not

have danced" (Kaiser 60). In addition, John Colet (1467-1519) furthered Lyra's position by rejecting allegory altogether. The groundwork for the Reformation progressed as the Reformers renewed their interest in original languages. Furthermore, Luther affirmed and established the single literal meaning of the text as the only proper basis for exegesis. Luther believed the Spirit of God was the simplest writer in all of heaven and earth. Luther's position was harsh, stating that Origen's allegories were not worth so much as dirt; for they were empty speculations and the scum of Holy Scriptures. More than any others, Calvin and Luther reversed the dominant approach of allegory and set the stage for a healthy hermeneutic (Kaiser 59-61). Calvin taught that "the Word of God is … applicable at all times, but there is a difference between explanation and application, and application must be consistent with explanation" (Kaiser 24). The Reformers knew if the text is interpreted inaccurately, then the application will be faulty as well.

This paradigm shift in hermeneutics is demonstrated in Reformation preaching and application. Calvin, Luther, and the early Reformers demonstrate by their sermons and commentaries a high view of homiletics and application derived from legitimate biblical hermeneutics. Because of this renewal in hermeneutics, the Reformers wedded application to the sermon. They demonstrate that a more healthy hermeneutic, grounded in biblical exegesis, results in application true to the biblical text and meaningful to life.

The Reformation provided a bridge from the often whimsical and always random interpretive efforts of the early Church and middle centuries of the Church into the Protestant era. This bridge emphasized the authorial intent and became the object of search for those who would interpret, understand, and apply the Word of God more authentically. The Reformer's influence changed application of the biblical text forever

and paved the way for further progress and development on the subject of hermeneutics and application.

Post Reformation—Dogmatic Application

According to Ramm, the "Post-Reformation period was a period of theological dogmatism. It was a period of heresy hunting, and rigid, creedal Protestantism" (60). Ramm quotes Farrar who states this period was "characterized by a three-fold curse: 'The curse of tyrannous confessionalism; the curse of exorbitant systems; the curse of contentious bitterness'" (60). Referencing this bitterness among the theologians of that era, Farrar writes, "They read the Bible by the unnatural glare of theological hatred" (Protestant Biblical Interpretation 60).

Zeal motivated scholars and theologians to understand all of God's Word, define Scripture's doctrines, and synthesize its truths. For instance, during this period, the followers of the French Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) and Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) violently opposed each other's theological positions. As a result, in 1610, a year after Arminius' death, a group of forty-four ministers of the Dutch Reformed church signed a document known as the Remonstrance, or protest, that contained the five articles of Arminianism. These articles came "with a plea for moderation and Christian peace in the church" (McCullough 28). Nevertheless, the articles detailed their rejection of Calvinist theology and set the stage for further infighting. Eight years later, at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) in the Netherlands, Calvinists convened to decide between these two divergent systems of theology. Selected representatives "broadly attended this synod from the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Germany, and Switzerland" (Houghton 143). This Synod resulted in the condemnation of

the teachings of Jacobus Arminias while the Heidelberg and Belgic Confessions were upheld. It also established the 93 Canons, which are the primary points of the doctrine of Reformed churches throughout the world. Those who held to Arminianism needed to recant or be banished from their office and exiled from their land. Most were exiled, while one prominent leader, Hugo Grotius, was imprisoned and another beheaded. In 1630, those previously exiled were allowed to return. Not until 1795 did the teachings of Jacobus Arminias' become "officially recognized in the Netherlands" (Dowley 384).

The ambition of systematizing and defining the truths of God's Word remains honorable; however, the creation of coherent systems resulted in a filter through which all passages of Scripture are interpreted. This approach reflects dogmatic theology. The outgrowth of dogmatism was that scholars no longer spoke about hermeneutics or a set of guidelines for interpreting Scripture. The new lingo spoke of hermeneutic in the singular based on a particular system of theology. The system became the hermeneutic and dogmatic theology ruled the day. Therefore, Christendom boasts "the New Hermeneutic, the Calvinistic Hermeneutic, the dispensational hermeneutic, and many others" (McQuilkin 59).

The implication of dogmatism for accurate and relevant application of God's Word remains far-reaching. Dogmatic theology eschews application, and the hermeneutic remains closed, supporting the system, not necessarily the Scripture. Louis Berkhof reflects the attitude of those committed to such extreme systems quoting Hugo of St. Victor from the middle ages: "Learn first what you should believe and then go to the Bible to find it there" (23).

All who desire to apply God's Word accurately and relevantly must work hard at

overcoming their bias toward extreme systems of theology. Every theologian possesses a system that operates explicitly or implicitly; however, regardless of the system, interpretation must be accomplished rigorously under the independent authority of Scripture, and hermeneutics must stay plural (McQuilkin 62).

Pietism—Devotional Application

Pietism rose in the late seventeenth century and flourished throughout the mid-eighteenth century. Pietism reacted to the rigid dogmatism of the post-Reformation period. With an initiative to recover the "Bible as spiritual food and nourishment to be read for personal edification" (61), Pietism prospered. The forerunners of Pietism included the voices of Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) and Johann Arndt (1555-1621), who bemoaned the shortcomings of the church and advocated a revival of practical and devout Christianity. Under the influence of Richard Baxter, Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) organized his "*Collegia pietatis*, wherein believers met for Bible study, devotions and prayer" (Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation 61). Following in Spener's footsteps, A. H. Francke (1663-1727) organized a college "for the study of Scriptures with an emphasis on philology and the practical bearing of Scripture on life" (61). The Pietist tradition, emphasizing the devotional, practical, and edifying study of Scripture, involved significant movements and individuals including the Lutherans, the Moravians, the Puritans, John and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, and the Quakers. The influence of Pietism continues today throughout Christendom. The current devotional reading of Scripture, including small group Bible study for the express purpose of both understanding and applying the Word of God, stems directly from Pietism. Pulpits everywhere encourage parishioners to immerse themselves in a daily diet

of biblical truth and personally apply those truths to life.

Without question, the Pietist movement produced significant spiritual fruit, and that spirituality endures today. Nevertheless, this movement presents numerous challenges worth considering. First, the tendency to spiritualize or moralize the text may result from the goal of discovering spiritual food for the day. Ramm believes "all sorts of distortions have been made of the historical records of the Old Testament (and occasionally the New) in order to derive a spiritual blessing or to make a devotional point" (Protestant Biblical Interpretation 63). Zuck reminds that the first question of Bible study is not, "What is the devotional here?" nor, "What is of practical importance here?" nor, "What is inspirational here?" but, "What does this passage mean?" ("Application in Biblical Hermeneutics and Exposition" 287). Devotional reading of the Scripture may overlook this foundational premise. Spiritualizing allows the Bible as a whole to become a metaphor for application. The story of the great patriarch Joseph illustrates how spiritualizing creates a spiritualized metaphor for preaching. Out of jealousy, Joseph's brothers treated him harshly and threw him into a cistern, a metaphorical pit, in which to die (Gen. 37:23-24). Joseph's pit becomes an image for all pitiful experiences in life. The devotional reader, hoping to discover the spiritual nugget for the day, uses Joseph to illustrate how to deal with "life in the pit." The pit of depression, financial hardship, family problems, and all of life's lesser situations, seem fair game for preaching and application. The need for genuine application diminishes; the spiritualized text produces the application.

The second concern regarding the devotional reading of the Bible suggests this approach may replace or become a substitute for the more deliberate effort needed to

handle with great accuracy the Word of God. Paul commanded Timothy to "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Undoubtedly, the tension existing between thorough study of God's Word and devotional interaction will never cease. The pastor desiring to address this concern should offer basic courses in understanding and applying the Bible to life. In addition, over time, the pulpit can become a testimony to a legitimate hermeneutical process that leads to accurate and relevant application.

Puritans—Scholastic Application

Unfortunately, the early Puritans (1600-1699) reintroduced medieval scholasticism in exposition and preaching, and challenged the Reformer's effort for the proper application of Scripture. The scholastic preaching of the Puritans championed the teaching and preaching of systematic theology, lessons on particular words that triggered their interests. Their sermons concluded with various uses or improvements of the text that were added on by way of application (Adams, Truth Apparent 79). Modern pulpits everywhere championing the systematic theology approach focuses on knowledge as the basis for spirituality. The rationale suggests that the more one knows, the more spiritual one becomes. Erwin Raphael McManus challenges this perspective:

> Biblical interpretation must be missiological, not theological. A theological construct for interpretation finds success in the attainment of knowledge. The more you know, the more mature a Christian you are thought to be. And yet knowledge of the Bible does not guarantee application of the Bible. To know is not necessarily to do. When the construct applied to the Bible is missiological, you engage the Bible to discover the response required of your life. It is significant that the history of the first-century church is called the book of Acts, not the book of Truths. (72)

In concluding the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did not pass out tests to see who could quote his teachings or review his points. Jesus closed his sermons with a challenge toward application: “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matt. 7:24). Scholasticism is not antithetical to accurate and relevant application; they can complement one another. Missiological and theological interpretation can work hand in hand.

Rationalism—Naturalistic Application

Rationalism teaches human reason can, in principle, be the source for all knowledge. The founder of rationalism is René Descartes (1596-1650); however, theological rationalism can be traced to three eminent fountainheads: Christian von Wolff (1679-1754), Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781). These men tried to tie biblical revelation to natural revelation and make natural revelation the entire source for Christianity (Kaiser 62). As an accepted philosophy, rationalism did not gain a widespread adherence until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, primarily in Continental Europe. J. Robertson McQuilkin believes one consequence of the Reformers breaking the stranglehold of allegorical interpretation was that the “rationalists were free to express their viewpoints” (40). Rationalism in biblical studies “boils down to the fundamental assertion that whatever is not in harmony with educated mentality is to be rejected” (Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation 63). The ultimate test for the trustworthiness of the Bible resides in the individual’s sovereign reasoning. The strict rationalist faces three primary challenges with Scripture. First, some Scriptures, such as imprecatory prayers, remain morally unworthy. Instead of seeking

harmony with the whole of Scripture, the rationalist simply denies the validity of the Bible. In addition, both the miraculous and the apparent contradictions in the Bible suffer rejection by the rationalist. After the Reformation, the advances in science accelerated rationalistic interpretation. As science flourished, so did the criticism of long-accepted teachings of Scripture. The unfortunate position rationalists assume is adopting the presupposition of rationalism. This compliance relies exclusively on the scientific approach "to discern the meaning of the text and the message of God that may be found there" (McQuilkin 29).

The rationalistic premise led to a "liberal theology" and the "destructive Biblical criticism" of the Scriptures (Kaiser 62). This movement peaked in the nineteenth century and resulted in most theological seminaries accepting its tenets by the middle of the twentieth century. McQuilkin states, "The end result of the rationalistic approach to Scripture is simply this: there is no sure word from God" (29). The implication for accurate and relevant application of God's Word remains clear. Without a sure word from God, no sure application exists from God's Word to everyday life.

Modernism—Subjective Application

Just as Pietism rose in response to dogmatism, existentialism rose in reaction to rationalism. By the end of World War I, existentialism displaced rationalism. The key personalities promoting this system included Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), Karl Barth (1886-1968), Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002). Existentialists emphasized the place of human feelings and the will in hermeneutics, thus promoting a more subjective approach to interpretation. The climax of this line of thought calls for a "return to the religion of

Jesus, but not the religion about Jesus" (Kaiser 63).

Over time, this existential approach sophisticated and evolved into what is now called the New Hermeneutic; however, many problems surface with this existential New Hermeneutic. Ultimately, this approach denies propositional truth and promotes multiple legitimate interpretations of a passage and a more subjective dynamic to application. The New Hermeneutic focuses attention on what the passage is saying to the modern interpreter, often disregarding the text's original meaning, leaving no objective control for interpretation and application (Shealy 97; Fee and Stuart 26). Furthermore, the New Hermeneutic disregards traditional hermeneutical guidelines for determining meaning by promoting an interplay between interpreter and text as the interpreter affects his or her text (by his or her own culture, beliefs [ontology], and methods for discovering meanings) as much as the text affects the interpreter (McQuilkin 53; Kaiser 30-31).

Because the essence of the New Hermeneutic denies propositional truth and promotes relativism, subjectivism, and multiple meanings of one passage, it remains flawed. God's authority stands behind the word spoken in the ancient text; however, his authority does not stand behind what the subjective interpreter brings to the text. "The Bible is true and authoritative; the interpreter may or may not be" (McQuilkin 54). Therefore, in the New Hermeneutic, accurate and relevant application remains blemished at best; no objective control supports this system.

Evangelical Protestantism—The Principlization of Application

Only in recent years has adequate scholarly attention been given to hermeneutics and application for preaching. Today, more than anytime in the past, evangelical scholars agree on the primary rules of hermeneutics in relationship to application of Scripture.

Ramm provides a summary of this agreement saying, “All practical lessons, all application of Scripture, all devotional material, must be governed by general Protestant hermeneutics” (“The Devotional and Practical Use of the Bible” 267). This agreement motivated evangelicals in the latter part of the twentieth century and leads to the prolific writing on the topic of application. In part, these scholarly works include: Irving Lester Jensen’s Enjoy Your Bible (1969), Bernard L. Ramm’s Protestant Biblical Interpretation (1970), Oletta Wald’s The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study (1975), Walter C. Kaiser’s Toward an Exegetical Theology (1981), J. Robertson McQuilkin’s Understanding and Applying the Bible (1983), Kenneth S. Kantzer’s Applying the Scriptures (1987), Sidney Griedanus’ The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text (1988), William J. Larkin’s Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics (1988), Elliott E. Johnson’s Expository Hermeneutics (1990), Jay Adams’ Truth Applied (1990), William W. Klein, Craig L. Bloomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard’s Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (1993), Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart’s How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth (1993), Grant R. Osborne’s The Hermeneutical Spiral (1994), Jack Kuhatschek’s Applying The Bible (1996), Roy B. Zuck’s Rightly Divided (1996), Daniel M. Doriani’s Putting the Truth to Work (2001), and Michael Fabarez’s Preaching That Changes Lives (2002). The reading and referencing of these books took place for this project and resulted in a synthesizing of the principles espoused. These principles, coupled with lessons from church history, allowed the development of a healthy model and supportive resources for accurate and relevant application of God’s Word.

Principlization—A Model for Accurate and Relevant Application of Scripture

Kaiser popularized the concept of principlization and presents a concise definition

stating, “To principlize is to state the author’s propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless truths with special focus on the application of those truths to current needs of the Church” (149-63). To simplify the potentially complicated process of developing a workable model for application, this paper utilizes the foundational teaching from Kuhatschek’s book. His book advocates three primary steps for application: understanding the original situation, finding general principles, and applying general principles today. Interestingly, a good number of application schemes, presented by notable scholars examined for this project, follow this process, with mild variations.

Understanding the Original Situation

Kuhatschek suggests the need for becoming a “Time Traveler” in order to bridge the two to three thousand-year historical barrier that exists with Scripture. The need for historical perspective remains vital for application. Common sense suggests a text cannot mean what it has not previously meant. Honesty with the text and focusing on the purpose, goals or questions behind the text and the reasons for including the passage remains paramount in understanding the original situation (Greidanus 173). Paul writes to all the New Testament churches and addresses unique problems and situations. “Unless we understand these problems or questions, the letters are like listening to one end of a telephone conversation. We hear what the author is saying, but we don’t know why he is saying it” (Kuhatschek 39).

The more one understands regarding the historical context of a biblical passage, the better off he or she will be in understanding the author’s original message. Not only does time remain an issue, language, culture, and geography all combine to create distance between the original and present situation. One primary question needs to be

answered: “What did the author mean to convey to the original readers?” (Kuhatschek 47).

Kuhatschek suggests implementing five questions as guidelines to support the discovery of the original setting. First, what type of literature are you studying? This question deals with genre. Second, what is the big picture of the book? This question addresses an overview of the book as well as recognizing where the book fits into the overall flow of the Bible (Jensen 121-25). Third, how does the book flow from passage to passage? Studying the book, section by section, allows for continuity of thought and understanding. The immediate context remains king to accurate interpretation. Fourth, what is the mood of the passage? Some books are informative and evangelistic, like Luke and John. Other books contain responses to questions and problems, such as 1 Corinthians and Galatians. Finally, what are other evangelical scholars saying about this passage? Commentary by other evangelical scholars adds additional insight but also provides a healthy check and balance regarding interpretation (Kuhatschek 47-50).

Finding General Principles[1]

A great example in Scripture for discovering general principles for application comes from the teachings of Jesus Christ:

> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:34-39).

In response to this expert in the law, Christ summarized the 613 recognized individual commandments taught by the Jewish rabbis with two commands. He further clarified his

[1] Refer to Appendix A, training session 2, for further development of this principle.

position saying, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:40). Jesus did not mean the 613 commands given in the Old Testament were unnecessary. On the contrary, they defined and illustrated how love works in specific everyday situations; however, he summarized hundreds of imperatives by presenting two commands. These two general commands are applicable to all situations. They transcend the specific, individualized command because “they express the inner motive and ultimate goal of every law given by God” (Kuhatschek 53).

Furthermore, the Bible contains many levels of application. Charles H. Kraft promotes a model recognizing three levels of abstraction: the basic ideal, the general principle, and the specific cultural form or symbol (255). In addition, Kraft identifies a problem with this approach because Scripture often lacked clarity regarding what level of abstraction to place the biblical passage for application. According to Kuhatschek, “these levels are like a pyramid, with only two commands (love for God and neighbor) at the pinnacle and all other commands at various levels between the pinnacle and the base” (54). Fewer principles reside at the top; they are broader and more generic in nature. The principles nearer the bottom remain more numerous because they present additional detail and specificity for application. Sometimes, the directives at the base of the pyramid seem obscure and irrelevant; however, moving up the pyramid allows discovery of the universal, timeless principles or reasons for a particular command. Robinson helps determine a line of demarcation (Taylor 48) and develops another tool, called the “ladder of abstraction:”[2]

> I picture a “ladder of abstraction” that comes up from the biblical world and crosses over and down to the modern setting. I have to be conscious how I cross this “abstraction ladder.” I want to make sure the biblical

[2] Refer to Appendix A, session 2 for a visual representation of the abstraction ladder.

> situation and the current situation are analogous at the points I am making them connect. I must be sure the center of the analogy connects, not the extremes. Sometimes, as I work with a text, I have to climb the abstraction ladder until I reach the text's intent. (28)

The ladder of abstraction supports the arduous process of developing principles for accurate and relevant application of the text. Kuhatschek suggests asking three key questions[3] to determine the general principles in any given passage. First, does the author state a general principle? Second, why was this specific command or instruction given? The question addresses the reason for the principle. Discovering the why allows one to move up the ladder of abstraction, discerning application for the modern audience. Third, does the broader context reveal a general principle? Ultimately, the whole of Scripture remains the broad context for interpretation and application; however, recognizing where a passage fits in the flow of redemptive history is vital to discovering these principles (Jensen 121-25). "As we look for biblical principles, we are seeking to feel God's heartbeat in the verses, paragraphs, chapters and books of Scripture. With the help of the Holy Spirit, our goal is nothing less than to discern the mind of God" (Kuhatschek 62). The process of detecting the heart of God may seem difficult or a bit technical; however, the reward of applying these transforming principles far outweigh the effort.

Applying General Principles Today

Adams states that "how-to material always must grow out of biblical principles and be appropriate to them in every detail" ("Preaching with Personalized How-To" 129). The Bible places an emphasis on principles for guidance in the spiritual life. To principlize is to present the timeless truths of the author, focusing on the application and relevance for the body of Christ and the individual (Jensen 121-25; Greidanus 157-58).

---

[3] Refer to Appendix A, session 2, for further development of these three questions.

These principles are latent within the text, awaiting the biblical exegete to mine spiritual gems available for all (Kaiser 152; Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation 200). Principlization challenges the preacher to build a bridge summarizing the Bible passage in terms applicable to a wide range of readers and situations. In addition, principlization stimulates the preacher to "span the gulf between the past and the present, with a truth that is relevant for both" (Campbell 27). In didactic preaching, the principle remains relatively easy to discover. In narrative, the process remains more difficult. Osborne states that "historical passages, particularly Old Testament stories, possess more of an indirect application" (33).

Although the art of principlization is a straightforward process, the preacher must recognize tension exists in the application scheme. From His response to the teacher of the law, Jesus communicated that he remained interested in the big picture, the principles supporting the law. Nevertheless, Jesus also prioritized the specific, detailed commands. He told his disciples, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 15:14). Recognizing this tension, Kuhatschek presents a balanced approach to application:

> He urged his disciples to move from the pinnacle back down the base. It isn't sufficient to love God or our neighbor in the abstract. Just as love is behind every command in Scripture, so the converse is also true: every command in Scripture is a specific way of expressing our love for God and our neighbor. (67)

Therefore, after discovering the general principle, one must move back down the ladder of abstraction to apply the principle to everyday life situations. Kuhatschek provides numerous options for applying these principles (see Appendix A for explanation).

In concluding this section on applying general principles, preachers must realize that not every application comes with the force and authority of "thus saith the Lord"

(Exod. 9:13; see Appendix A). With a goal of specificity in application, discernment remains vital for accurate and relevant application.

I chose for this project Kuhatschek's book for the excellent approach it affords to application but also the transferability of his concepts and principles for training a team. This project also examined a variety of other resources, including the significant work by Doriani, Putting the Truth to Work. These resources provided complementary models and supplemental perspectives for the vast topic of applying the Word of God more accurately and relevantly to contemporary life.

Church history reflects a collage of models regarding hermeneutics and application for preaching. Although some of these approaches may seem appropriate for the past, from my theological and cultural viewpoint, many of them fall short for establishing a healthy model for contemporary Christianity. However, valuable lessons endure. The allegorical approach reminds the church how vital the actual meaning of the text is to accurate and relevant application of Scripture. The conviction of the early school of Antioch, which developed further in the Reformation and matured in modern evangelicalism, provides a healthy pattern to follow. The scholasticism of the Puritans exemplifies the value of study; however, it also provides an imbalanced approach to application. The Pietists, revolting against the bitter dogmatism of the post-Reformation era, drove a movement of personal Bible study and application that continues today. This model remains valuable when careful exegesis takes place to support the personalized application. The rationalist approach interrupts genuine application with its bias toward science and the non-supernatural. Although placing an emphasis on application, the relativistic approach of the New Hermeneutics must remain suspect. The recent

scholarship of evangelicals provides a wealth of material worth engaging to support the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. The principlization of application provides a valuable model worth consideration, and it is grounded in traditional Protestant hermeneutics and supported by a broad spectrum of scholarly theologians.

The Team Precedent

For the most part, the Protestant tradition has focused on the congregation as the recipient of the sermon, and the pastor as the source for preaching. The tradition warned against the listener playing too large a role in the sermon preparation or delivery. One parishioner boldly declared, "The sheep should not tell the shepherd what to preach."

Nevertheless, the picture of pastor and parishioner in dialogue for sermon making extends all the way back to the Old Testament. The Lord, through the prophet Malachi, involved Israel in the message by asking pointed and rhetorical questions. For example, in Malachi 1:2, the Lord reminds Israel by saying, "I have loved you." Immediately following the declaration, God engages Israel saying, "But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'" Five times in the book of Malachi, God uses the rhetorical phrase "but you ask" to promote dialogue and interaction between the communicator and his audience.

This conversation continued in the New Testament as seen in synagogue worship. Informality and openness prevailed in the synagogue setting. For Jesus, the interaction in the synagogue started at age twelve. In Luke 2:46, Mary and Joseph found him after three days "in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions." The interaction engaged both teacher and pupil in the synagogue. Luke 4:14-30 presents the interaction of Jesus as an adult with the people in the synagogue while preaching. Jesus was not unique in his approach because the practice of first-

century synagogue worship involved any adult male addressing the congregation (Plummer 119). Participation was the expectation in the synagogue setting. According to Harold Freeman, “the form of the early church Christian sermon was a replica of the Jewish sermon in the synagogue” (92). Not only did Jesus engage synagogue participants in sermon making, he involved others wherever he preached. Ralph L. and Greg Lewis observe, “The Bible records 153 questions that he asked his listeners” while preaching (69). In addition, on the day of Pentecost, Peter formed his first sermon based on the crowd’s questions and indictments of drunkenness among the disciples. After presenting his sermon, the crowd asked Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter responded and three thousand moved forward for repentance and baptism. Later, in the book of Acts, Paul’s preaching followed a pattern of discussion and debate by reasoning with his audience (Acts 17:1-10; 18:19). The Greek word for reason is `dielevxato` and means to “conduct a discussion” (Bauer, Gingrich, and Danker). Fritz Reinecker suggests the verb means to “reason … to teach with the method of question and answer” (2:305-06).

Furthermore, some scholars argue that Paul promoted a “shared preaching” while writing his first epistle to the Corinthians (McLaughlin 342). In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul wrote, “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.” James also used Hellenistic literary devices to develop arguments that engaged his audience. In James 2:14, he asks, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” Certainly, James got the audience’s attention by his direct, yet interactive,

approach to preaching. Although this interactive and participatory dimension of preaching extends through the New Testament, in due time, through the influence of Greek and Roman rhetoric, the duty of preaching was delegated to the professional clergy (Freeman 87; Thompson 32).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, various pioneers promoted the dismissal of a monological approach to preaching in favor of the dialogical. The preacher, they said, should engage the congregation's help for sermon preparation (Ritschl 147; Smith 133-34). The minister's goal should be the production of a more cooperative dialogue and enable the church to preach by activating their meanings in relation to what the preacher is saying through creative and varied conversations (Forsyth 79; Heuvel 71-72; Sweazey 13-15). Over the years, these conversations took place in a variety of ways. A proactive approach for sermon making involved groups feeding into the sermon with church members (Thielicke 25; Eggold 57-60; Baumann 266-70; Freeman 100; Howe 79), input groups with inactive or nominal church members[4] (Reid 110), vocational specific feed-in groups (Kirkpatrick 6), reading and ad hoc resource groups (Stott 195), and Bible study groups (Reid 111). In addition, conversation from the pulpit to the pew increased through dialogue preaching (McLaughlin 342; Craddock, Preaching 39), post-sermon question and answer times (Robinson, "Listening to the Listener"; Kirkpatrick 5), and feed back groups (Newton 119; Thompson 110). During this period of experimentation and renewal, Craddock's book As One without Authority introduced and argued for a more inductive approach to preaching. A decade later, Lewis

[4]Reid presents the amazing story of Horst Symanowski in post-war Germany. He pastored in Mainz-Kastel, West Germany, a very industrial area. On Friday evening, he gathered factory workers for a sermon discussion group. Symanowski introduced the text for Sunday's sermon, and a lively, earthy discussion, often lasting two to three hours, transpired. Although many of these factory workers never attended Sunday worship, their presence was experienced through the sermon (110).

and Lewis produced their book, Inductive Preaching, which further promoted and popularized the inductive method.

The methodology of inductive preaching reflects a conversation between pastor and parishioner, like two individuals taking a trip together. Inductive preaching allows the hearer to arrive at the general truth at the same time and by the same route. Application, then, becomes an outgrowth of the journey, relieving the preacher from constantly having to spell it out. Craddock believes, "If they have made the trip, then it is their conclusion, and the implication for their own situation is not only clear but personally inescapable" (As One without Authority 57). Furthermore, in 1987, the publishing of two books synthesized these varied and unique approaches to preaching and advocated "that for biblical preaching to be effective it must be done in more than one way. Otherwise the preacher risks boring his audience Sunday after Sunday as they hear sermons prepared and preached exactly the same way" (Pritchard 47). Harold Freeman's book, Variety in Biblical Preaching, reflects "buy-in" to the general principle that preaching must be more engaging, participatory, shared, and communal. Ultimately, a conviction matured that preaching should not be a solo event and that more cooperation between clergy and laity in the process of sermon making is required by the New Testament picture of the multi-gifted body of Christ (McLaughlin 342; Randolf 7; Killinger 26; Howe 79; Chapell 200; Pagitt 23). These ambitions gain support from Scripture. A proper theology of the church emphasizes the connectedness of God's people. In the book of Romans, Paul celebrates the diversity in the body of Christ and the priesthood of the believers with the reminder that "each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:5). The diversity of gifts that come together in the body of Christ

creates a dependency upon one another. The various individuals that make up the body work as a whole and support the other members. By implication, this picture extends to the pastor in preaching. Howe reasons, “We profess that all ministries are ministries of the church. Since the church is made up of clergy and laity it follows that both have responsibilities in all ministry, and this is no less true of preaching” (24-25). The body of Christ can service the pastor in sermon making. The preaching of the church should be more communal because of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believers.

However, even with the witness of Scripture and solid support from many evangelicals, the mere suggestion of parishioner and pastor collaborating in sermon preparation results in astonishment by many. The concept is foreign to most preachers, and the practice, for the most part, remains absent from ministry. Over the years, the church has struggled to embody these ideas. Using the metaphor of a symphonic and choral presentation, Rudolph Bohren presents the most graphic illustration of the monopoly the preacher possesses with respect to the sermon:

> The clergyman directs, plays first violin, and sings the solo. At most, the chorus provides a musical background.… The terrible thing is that … from top to bottom, chairs, music stands, kettledrums, snare drums, violins, violas, flutes; somewhere on a chair a musician, tired, his arms folded; obviously intermission. The picture of our congregation today. It is vital to summon the players, show them their instruments, and give them the pitch. (181-82)

Summoning the players is harder than one might realize. In pursuing contemporary models for study, only a few churches have shown the body of Christ their instruments for collaboration in preaching. Three pioneers across America provide examples of collaboration for preaching and application include Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, Community Christian Church in Naperville, Illinois, and

Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Of these three churches, two provided interviews, personal time with their leadership, and group time in their team planning sessions for this project. The exposure allowed hearing their story firsthand. Doug Pagitt of Solomon's Porch wrote the book entitled, Preaching Re-Imagined, where collaboration in preaching is loosely developed. Although I struggle to support numerous assumptions in Pagitt's book, his model for sermon making parallels this project and is worth examining. While each church accomplishes their team approach to preaching differently, common denominators were easy to discover and supported the key ingredients of building a team at First Baptist Aurora.

Of the three churches examined for this study, the concept of collaboration and team preaching with an emphasis on application originated with B. Russell, the forty-year veteran pastor of Southeast Christian Church. The city of Louisville knows B. Russell, the senior minister, for his ability to preach the Word of God in an accurate and relevant way. In his book, Dave Stone calls B. Russell the "practical applicator" (127). According to Stone, the "practical applicator speaks to help people implement something. The target is the listener's habit" (127). This quality, attributed to B. Russell by his coworker of sixteen years, directly relates to involving others in the process of sermon preparation for application.

Community Christian Church in Naperville, Illinois, views itself as a sister church to Southeast Christian's ministry. Inspiration for their team approach was the result of the various pastors associating with each other over the years. Dave Ferguson, the senior minister, relies heavily upon his team to support his multisite church-planting dream. By examining these three models for team preaching, the following convictions and quality

characteristics were established as nonnegotiable in developing the support team to assist the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Building the Team

The process of building the team begins with the pastor. The pastor must first recognize the need for help and support in delivering the application of God's Word in a relevant and accurate way. This admission may be humbling; however, it remains vital for application to reflect the text and the audience receiving the message.

Defining the Team

The definition of a team involves "any group of people who need each other to accomplish a result" (Senge et al. 354). In this case, the pastor needs a team to support the accurate and relevant application of the Word of God.

Core Values of the Team

Of the three churches studied, Solomon's Porch is currently the only nonprofessional team supporting the pastor. To prepare for preaching on Sunday, Pagitt established a Tuesday evening discussion group to promote the type of preaching he calls "progressional dialogue" (185). This group meets for two hours. Pagitt believes this time he spends in discussion with church members complements the time he spends in study reading commentaries. Pagitt believes he is able to broaden his understanding of the sermon topic through the input of others and then take the rest of the week to synthesize the truth while seeking the implications for his audience (186). B. Russell currently relies on his staff to support the team approach to preaching; however, over the years, he has experimented with a variety of models, some of which included meeting with other pastors and involving nonprofessionals from the congregation. At one point in time,

Southeast Christian supported sermon making through a team of one hundred members providing input, resources, and support to the preacher. B. Russell and Southeast Christian graciously provided valuable insights for this project.

While examining these three churches, numerous core values pave the way for building a support team for preaching. These core values combined to make these churches the fruitful, unified, and multiplying team-teaching ministries they have become. These core values include team chemistry, competency, and character.

Team Chemistry

The leadership of Southeast Christian and Community Christian places a high value on the chemistry of the staff and team members. While spending the better part of an afternoon with the preaching team at Southeast Christian, the friendship among the preaching team (B. Russell, Stone, and Kyle Idleman) along with the support staff (Dave Kennedy and R. Russell) became immediately apparent. B. Russell and Kennedy's relationship goes back many decades. In addition, Stone has served with B. Russell as his associate for sixteen years. Long-term relationships among the staff produces unrivaled team chemistry. The meeting opened with lunch, and laughter prevailed throughout the time together. Significant discussion regarding the NCAA basketball tournament continued throughout the afternoon with B. Russell periodically giving updates on scores. The formality and informality of the meeting created a dynamic of enjoyment and progress. At the end of our meeting, Russell's successor Stone summed up the chemistry of the group saying, "The comradery on the team is unprecedented."

In similar fashion, the relationship between D. Ferguson, the lead pastor of Community Christian, and Tim Southerland, who oversees the team-teaching process,

dates back to 1989, as they participated in an internship together in Fullerton, California. After the internship, they ministered apart for two years; however, they worked the team-teaching method by phone. For the past fifteen years, their friendship is a model to the staff team of Community Christian. While journeying with the staff team at Community Christian Church for two days of research, the chemistry and synergy of the team were continually apparent. This synergy is both unique and refreshing for a variety of reasons. Similar to Southeast Christian, friendship carries the day at Community Christian Church. Through casual communication, much laughter, and weekly staff lunches, the team demonstrates enjoyment of each other. The group expressed themselves openly and honestly. Undoubtedly, transparency is a core value at Community Christian Church. The group members displayed enjoyment in dealing with the scriptural topic and presenting their views. During the meeting, no one seemed pressured to contribute; however, the majority of the input came as the topic inspired personal response. The team seemed both to enjoy and respect each other. During the two-hour team teaching meeting, no one looked inhibited to share or engage in the discussion. The open forum was both casual and formal. This healthy balance promoted progress throughout the meeting and culminated in an outline and individualized assignments.

Pagitt agrees in regarding the need for chemistry within the team. He writes, “The kind of preparation requires the preacher to have an intimate relationship not only with the text, but also with the people” (187). For the group to be a resource to the pastor for the accurate and relevant application of Scripture, team chemistry must exist. The goal of selecting team members who already exist in community and enjoy one another’s

friendship is a high priority. Open and honest dialogue among these team members is essential.

Team Competencies

Both Southeast and Community Christian believe one of the key elements of the team approach is competency. Russell affirmed the maturity of his team and their ability to ask the hard questions. Both churches model a proactive, long-range planning approach that contributed to the competency of their teams. This proactive approach included some common denominators: having a team leader, planning a full-year preaching calendar, gathering and digesting resources regarding the upcoming topics, and meeting regularly to prepare for future series and weekly sermons (see Appendix B).

Clearly, both ministries model diversity among team members can produce a more mature and competent ministry environment. Having a variety of individuals contributing from their strengths and gifting remains the unique element about these team's dynamic that leads to a fruitful and competent end. Sutherland, who leads the team-teaching process at Community Christian, is undoubtedly the catalytic individual. His role is highly specialized. As an avid reader, Sutherland overflows with information and provides ongoing interaction among the team. His counseling background brings awareness to needs and issues that may go overlooked by the average pastor. He seems to be the cultural architect of the team.

Each church possessed numerous members with gifting in outlining the material being discussed. D. Ferguson, R. Russell, and Kennedy demonstrated this valuable resource for the team and, therefore, added to the team's competency.

In addition, both teams possessed mature, well-rounded, and seasoned pastors who provided for a depth and accountability in the Scriptures. B. Russell and Earl Ferguson provided the Bible background and pastoral longevity leading to a healthy accountability to be honest and accurate with Scripture and application, as the team works hard to address contemporary issues and the specific needs of their people. The diversity of age on the team provides another healthy dynamic for competency. The younger pastors seem more in tune to culture, while the more seasoned pastors bring discernment vital for the long haul. This dynamic leads to a well-rounded approach to teaching and application. Sutherland suggests, “The key to team preaching is the reality that the richness of the group supports the journey of sermon-making. Each one brings something unique to the table.” B. Russell provides a few cautions. He suggests team members must share a “commonness of theology, attraction to similar biblical material, and a comparable homiletical style.” Long-term, Russell believes these three common team attributes will stabilize and allow the team to be most productive.

Furthermore, enhancing competency took place as both churches provided support resources and services to the team. Community Christian has a ministry team called “central services” that provides administrative and information technology support to all campuses and ministry teams. Central services develops support in the area of graphics, media, and application resources. The church planters on the team, scattered throughout the country, could never provide these quality resources on a weekly basis.

Both Sutherland and B. Russell highlighted the need for team members to come prepared for the team-teaching meeting. Their preparedness enhances the time together and the final product. Sutherland challenges team members for their best effort. He

believes if everyone gives an A+ effort, the meeting and product is much more fruitful. Sutherland's goal is having the team come back with a "cut and polished stone that he can put together as a piece of jewelry" approximately eight to nine weeks out.

As both meetings concluded, team members seemed motivated and encouraged, because by the end of the meeting a general outline was established, team members were assigned tasks, and progress for sermon construction was made.

Finally, competency matures as each team member evaluates the weekly process and ministry. Both churches have an approach that works for them. Community Christian uses a "zoomerang survey." The zoomerang survey consists of a specific list of questions relating to the quality of the ministry and worship service. Everyone involved in planning the worship participates in the survey. This procedure invites accountability and encourages everyone to give his or her best and learn from the course of action. Southeast leaves comments on voice mail for whomever is preaching on Saturday to tweak for Sunday. B. Russell views this input as "constructive encouragement."

E. Ferguson states, "I just don't think there is anything better than a team approach" for preaching and applying the Word of God. Sutherland says, "Preaching alone is so much harder." The team at Southeast agrees; however, B. Russell suggests keeping the team small and manageable. He recommends a team of two to three key individuals. Competency remains vital to the success of a team at First Baptist. Spiritual maturity coupled with diversity among team members remains foundational to the progress of the team. Establishing a proactive process is vital.

Team Character

Although discerning the character of a team in one or two days of interaction is difficult, I am convinced team members' walk with the Lord matters and contributes to the oneness of purpose and heart in ministry. The unity among the team members was apparent and warming. This togetherness stimulated progress in ministry, and love, support, and encouragement abounded. B. Russell discussed the need for "mutual respect" and a "healthy self-esteem" because the interplay of ideas and suggestions may cause feelings to get hurt. Sutherland commented regarding the team approach to preaching at the church saying, "Everybody in the congregation has their favorite, and nobody makes a big deal about it." I sense the congregation at Southeast Christian shares the same healthy approach to team preaching as well. To the pastors' and congregations' credit, egos and self-centeredness do not get in the way of team preaching.

These three models provide inspiration and present strong evidence to validate the team approach to application in preaching. In building the team at First Baptist, these core values remain nonnegotiable.

The Tasks of the Team

The preacher's problem includes both the task of identifying the relevance of Scripture and also the task of making the truth as applicable as possible to the diversified audience. The same truth may apply differently to the single college student in contrast to a married couple with two teenage children. The range of diversity in the audience includes family background, age, income, gender, race, spiritual awareness and maturity, and current life issues. One preacher cannot begin to represent such an eclectic audience;

thus, the team remains incredibly valuable because it provides insights and suggestions in regarding the accurate and relevant application of God's Word the pastor may miss. Awareness of the problems people bring to the preaching event remains essential for identifying with the audience.

Timmons believes in the value of defining the audience for the preaching event. When requested to speak, he asks five basic questions:

> First, who is my audience (age, sex, background, prejudices)? Second, what are their questions (thoughts, feelings, struggles, pains, needs)? Third, which of those questions shall I address? Fourth, what is God's answer to this question? Fifth, how much time do I have? (18).

However, asking the right questions is just the beginning. The challenge continues by further asking, "How does one discover the questions?" (18). Timmons believes the "most effective way is to live with people" (19). Getting answers to these questions and gaining audience awareness may initially be accomplished through a team because all live, to some extent, a cloistered life. The preacher gains perspective through this support community as they raise awareness regarding the needs of the whole. George Sweazy champions a symbiotic relationship between pastor and congregation:

> Congregations teach their preachers; a minister learns more from his church members than he ever learned from his seminary. The best of all teach him the meaning of faith, the secrets of the human heart, and the skills of his profession. Devoted, loving, wise congregations make devoted, loving, wise ministers. (318)

The team represents and assesses the needs of the particular body of Christ. The interaction produces insights and suggestions for sermon application that may otherwise go unnoticed. These interactions, over the course of time, support the goal of biblical application including persuasion, personalization, contextualization, practical how-tos, warnings, and guidance. Undoubtedly, this paradigm will challenge many preachers

because the model is unique are rarely practiced. Chapell relieves some potential anxiety and tension by positively commenting on collaborative efforts in preaching:

> [Through partnerships] preachers [do not] abdicate their divine calling, but that they use committees and conversations with leaders and others in the church to take the temperature of the congregation to discern the type and dosage of scriptural medication needing to be administered. A pastor who does not arrange to take the pulse of the congregation is a poor physician of souls. (58)

For too long, the preaching task remained a solo event; however, the Spirit of God is birthing a new model for preaching, regardless of the apprehension it may bring by some.

The Dialogue of the Team

The primary reason for pastor and parishioner to engage in this team approach for application in preaching is to create a proactive and supportive dialogue between the pulpit and pew for the purpose of accurate and relevant application. The more healthy the dialogue, the more fruitful is the input. The team in dialogue will talk openly and honestly about life in general, including family, friends, work, and other real-life concerns. The team must work hard at communication, providing checks and balances purposing to be understood rightly and communicated accurately. The more diversity on the team, the more listening and learning must take place (Stott 192; Doriani 82; Howe 46).

The proactive team will assist the pastor by raising questions of dialogue between the individual in the pew and the message. The team is responsible to represent the questions, concerns, and issues that may surface during the sermon. The pastor approaches the sermon as a continual dialogue. The preaching provokes questions the pastor works to address throughout the dialogue. Stott suggests, “Preaching is rather like

playing chess, in that the expert chess player keeps several moves ahead of his opponent, and is always ready to respond, what piece he decides to move next" (61).

For dialogue to mature, developing the skill of perceiving and listening is essential among team members. Doriani reminds that "listening to others is essential if our messages are to meet real needs" (68). This approach to addressing the needs of the congregation is validated by the fact that Jesus, Paul, and Peter all preached with their audience in mind. Both epistles to the Corinthian church addressed context-specific dynamics. Paul confronted issues regarding disunity, incest, drunkenness, worship, spiritual gifts, love, reconciliation, and the validity of his apostleship, to name a few. Similarly, in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus searches the core issues of the seven churches in Asia Minor. His sermons include both encouragement and rebuke to these localized congregations. H. C. David Read comments on the value of perceiving and listening:

> It remains an axiom of Christian preaching that the road from study to pulpit runs through a living, demanding interrupting manse; out into the noisy street; in and out of houses and hospitals, farms and factories, buses, trains, cinemas … up between rows of puzzled people to the place where you are called to preach…. For the living Word there is no by-pass road from study to pulpit. (55)

Ongoing and healthy dialogue among the team is one of the primary highways from the pulpit to the pew. When healthy dialogue exists short cuts and by-passes, will naturally be avoided.

The Representative Team

The value of the team surfaces from the vantage point that people with different backgrounds and lifestyles provide wisdom and resources representing the whole. This project established a variety of elements relating to the diversity of the team as of utmost importance. Taking into account the age, gender, race, background, lifestyle, and

maturity of faith team members remained vital, so that the team represented the greater body of First Baptist Church. I believe this diversity will positively impact the suggestions regarding the application of the Scripture to the congregation.

The Training of the Team

In order for the application design team to assist the pastor in the application of the biblical text, the team needs a basic model, standard, or working grid in order to approach the text credibly. One of the remarkable realities for all who preach the Word of God is the fact that if an individual knows where to look, an abundance of application exists in almost every text. Because of the nature of God's Word, most texts hold more potential applications than one coherent message could develop. The ultimate task then, "is not finding something to say, but fingering the one chief application that drives home the central theme of the text and arrays the sub points around it" (Doriani 81).

In order for the team to discover the principal application(s) of the biblical text, the group read, studied, and implemented the truths outlined in Kuhatschek's book. In addition, they were exposed and trained in a variety of supplemental resources.

Of the other resources I read for this project, the most helpful was Doriani's book. Doriani promotes seven sources for consideration regarding application of the Word of God (see Appendix A). From this resource, the development of a template took place, not simply to provide a final checklist but to offer a starting point for accurate and relevant application.

Because of the complexity of Scripture and the difficulty of application the pastor and team must provide balance and discernment in using this grid for application. The motivation for application is always a response to the love and grace of God. Application

ultimately begins within, as the mind and heart receive transformation by the Word of God (Rom. 12:1-2). Chapell posts a warning worth consideration:

> Too much emphasis on duty, action, and what do you want me to do? can leave the impression that application always requires the pastor to dictate some behavior in a sermon. Application may be attitudinal as well as behavioral. In fact, a frequent mark of immaturity among preachers is too much (or too early) an emphasis on behaviors in the sermon. (200)

The pastor and the team must depend heavily on the Spirit of God to lead regarding balancing the attitudes and actions of application. Donald E. Demaray agrees encouraging further balance, suggesting "listeners are stung with insult when the preacher tacks 'The moral is…' onto every sermon as though it were an Aesop's fable" (129). His advice is straightforward: "Say enough to drive home the certitude at hand. The message clearly stated, the Spirit of God and the human spirit make applications tailored to meet individual needs" (129). The sermons of Jonathan Edwards, with all their power, show the evil of always having a regular "application," formally announced or indicated. According to John Albert Broadus and Vernon L. Stanfield, "Often a brief and informal application is best" (166). Clearly, these leaders suggest that discernment and balance are essential when applying God's Word accurately and relevantly. Sensitivity to God's Spirit, regardless if the application is direct or indirect, straightforward or not, is essential. However, a deep conviction promoted throughout this dissertation suggests that where the application begins, there the sermon begins.

The success of this project hinges greatly on the team. Collaborating for sermon-making reflects biblical theology and the priesthood of the believers. Significant support for building a team to assist the pastor in sermon making existed throughout the past century. A few contemporary churches demonstrate the incredible value of team

preaching for accurate and relevant application of Scripture. Robinson summarizes the heart of collaboration in preaching:

> Great preachers do not build strong churches nearly as often as great churches through their feedback make strong preachers. These congregations give their preachers the home court advantage by active listening to what they have to say. (“Listening to the Listeners” 69)

My hope and prayer is that God will use this application design team to build into the me the necessary ingredients to become a strong preacher. I welcome the home court advantage as I listen and respond to what the Lord is saying to me, through the team.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As demonstrated throughout the first two chapters, the accurate and relevant application of God's Word demands significant attention from the preacher. A variety of hurdles need to be overcome. This project is an attempt to overcome one major problem—heresy or error in application. The proposed means to overcoming this problem is the creation of an application design team trained to assist the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The purpose of the research was to appraise the value of an application design team developed within the context of First Baptist Church of Aurora for the purpose of assisting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. My assumption is the application design team will positively support the application process and result in life change among the active participants of the First Baptist Church of Aurora.

Research Questions

The value of an application design team in assisting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word is the focus of this research. Although the expectation of the team is life change for the congregation, this project will not evaluate the response of the congregation. The research questions focus entirely on the team. If the team dynamics come together as previously outlined, the pastor's goal of accurately and relevantly applying God's Word will take place.

Research Question #1

To what extent is the application in the pastor's sermons similar or dissimilar with the input of the application design team? This study measured accuracy and relevancy in application by comparing the input of the team members to each other and to the pastor's original application points in the first sermon manuscript.

Research Question #2

What adjustments in application took place in the sermon because of the team's input prior to the sermon delivery on Sunday morning? Measuring the adjustments in the sermon from the first to the second draft of the manuscript demonstrates the value of an application design team for accuracy and relevancy in preaching. If the pastor's original manuscript experiences minimal changes from week to week, the slight adjustments suggest the value of the team is limited. However, if the adjustments are significant from week to week, the value of the team increases proportionally.

Subjects

The population of this study included four members at the First Baptist Church of Aurora who met the criteria for teaming. The church is a thirty year old, Southern Baptist congregation. First Baptist Church is located on the crossroads of four communities with a mixture of white and blue collar workers. Average morning worship attendance is nearing two hundred with roughly 130 involved in Sunday school and small groups throughout the week. At the time of this study, the staff team included myself as the senior pastor and two part-time associate pastors who oversee assimilation and discipleship and children's and youth ministries. One of the ongoing connections to our community is the My First School, a preschool ministry, which has a full-time director.

The application design team consisted of individuals who fit two primary criteria for involvement. First, team members were selected by virtue of their diverse representation of the body of Christ at First Baptist Church. The goal of the team was to have members represent variety in age, gender, and life situation.

The second criteria for team members came from the model churches who were already serving as a team. The three nonnegotiable attributes are competency, chemistry, and character.

Methodology

This project is an outcome-based, qualitative study in the descriptive mode.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research purposes to establish the meaning of a phenomenon through the perspectives of the participants. The participants become a culture-sharing group that examines how shared patterns of behavior develop over time. The research collects open-ended data that emerges through time with prevailing themes (Creswell 18). One of the key elements of collecting data is to observe participants' behaviors by participating in their activities (20-21). The participants for this project are the four members of the application design team. The observational data is the value the team brings to the pastor for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. This data must be collected through a variety of sources. Observations, interviews, journaling, audiovisual recordings, and questionnaires can all play a part in collecting the necessary data.

Content Analysis

The process of analyzing qualitative material consists of moving from wide, universal information to more precise, discernable themes and categories. The goal for

these specific categories and themes is to discern meaning. To assess the value of the team and its influence on the sermon application, criteria was established to measure accuracy, relevancy, congruence, and change.

Measuring Accuracy and Relevancy

The first research question asks, to what extent is the application in the pastor's sermons similar or dissimilar with the input of the application design team. As team member's worked independently of one another, the more similar their application, the more accurate and relevant to the text. Answering research question 1 was enabled by content analysis, which examined the application worksheets, recordings, the first and second draft of the sermon and the questionnaire.

To measure the similarity and dissimilarity of the application, I set up a systematic process that every team member followed weekly. This process involved using an application design chart that I created and provided for the team (see Appendix A). Every week, the team processed the exegesis of the biblical text using the application design worksheets. The application design chart walks team members through a five-step process preparing them to provide input for accurate and relevant application to the sermon.

The first step of this process involved a commitment to understanding the original setting of the text (see Appendix A). Team members gave attention to the genre, overall themes, flow, mood of the passage, and evangelical scholarship. In the second step, every team member utilized the ladder of abstraction to determine general principles to insure the accuracy and relevancy of the application. Team members answered three key questions connected to the ladder of abstraction, thus supporting measuring the accuracy

and relevancy of the application. The third step of the process considered 28 options for applying the passage of study. These 28 options came from Doriani's book Putting the Truth to Work. The fourth step involved every team member applying these general principles to the context of First Baptist Church Aurora. The diversity of the team allowed for a more contextualized approach for relevant application. The fifth and final step included every team member learning to discern between the implications and the more dogmatic "thus saith the Lord" applications of the biblical text.

The application design chart functioned as the guide for the team, further establishing my ability to measure similarities and dissimilarities in application. After each input session, I collected the application charts and processed the information the following day. The application worksheets were essential to keep the team focused on the text and systematically work through a process for accurate and relevant application. The application design charts provided an objective measuring device for the similarities and dissimilarities in application.

In addition to examining the application matrixes, I compared the first draft to the final draft of the sermon, which was influenced by the team. I completed the first draft of the sermon before the 2 hour input session on Monday nights. After receiving input from the team, I rewrote the sermon. Comparing the first draft to the final draft of the sermon aided in measuring the similarity and dissimilarity of application. Once again, an objective resource; the sermon manuscripts, provided an invaluable tool for measuring congruence in application.

Finally, upon completion of the project, team members filled out a questionnaire (see Appendix D) evaluating their experience on the application design team. The

questionnaire provided important insight about the value of the process and presented helpful insights into team member's perspectives regarding congruence in application.

Answering research question 2 was enabled by content analysis, which compared the first draft to the second draft of the sermon. Research question 2 asks, what adjustments in application took place in the sermon because of the team's input prior to the sermon delivery on Sunday morning. The process of measuring the amount of change between the two sermons was straightforward. Because I completed the first draft of the sermon prior to receiving input from the team, I had an objective document to compare the final manuscript against. If the input from the team changed the first draft of the sermon significantly, the process of feeding into the sermon supported the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. If the input from the team resulted in minimal change to the sermon, the process of feeding into the sermon did not support the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. In addition to examining the manuscripts, the questionnaire aided my in understanding of how the team members perceived the adjustments to the sermons as they provided input.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Over the course of this study, I have come to agree with Robinson that most error takes place in the application of the sermon. The reasons for inaccuracy in application are many. Theological institutions have not prioritized or provided adequate training for the accurate and relevant application of the biblical text. In addition, church history has not provided a healthy hermeneutic to support the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. Further, most preachers are not aware of the complexity of the issue and therefore do not give adequate attention to accurate application in sermon preparation. As a result, for nearly two thousand years, good-hearted men and women have entered the Christian pulpit without standardized methods or principles guiding them in the application of the biblical text to life.

My own ministry journey reflects the tension of accurate and relevant application in preaching. Over the years, I am convinced I missed the boat regarding accurate and relevant application of God's Word. In studying the Scripture, I have always placed a high priority on exegesis. In fact, most of my study time focused on exegesis; however, I rarely gave equal attention or priority to application. I also did not have a systematic process for accurate and relevant application of the biblical text. If a critical examination of the sermons I preached over the years took place, I am convinced Robinson's concern would be true of my preaching.

Therefore, I now believe accurate and relevant application demands special attention and a systematic approach by all who preach the Word of God. This project was an attempt to provide a resource to aid preachers in overcoming the significant problem

of the inaccurate application of God's Word. The purpose of the research was to appraise the value of an application design team, developed within the context of the First Baptist Church of Aurora. The four-member design team helped me, as pastor, in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

For seven weeks, a team of four members at First Baptist Church supported me in determining the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. To prepare the team to help me, I provided an exegetical outline of the sermon one week before the input session. In addition, I completed the first draft of the sermon before the team met on Monday nights. During these two-hour sessions, the team discussed application for each exegetical point in the sermon outline. The participants worked from a standardized application chart to provide input for accurate and relevant application. After each session, I collected the application worksheets. Over the next few days, I evaluated the input from the team and rewrote the sermon based on their contributions. Comparing the final sermon to the first draft of the sermon helped discover similarities and dissimilarities of application between the team and the pastor. Generally, the application provided by the team was congruent with the original application of the pastor.

Research Question #1

To what extent is the application in the pastor's sermons <u>similar or dissimilar</u> with the input of the application design team?

After examining the original and adjusted manuscript of all seven sermons, most sermons display a high degree of likeness between the team's input and my original application. The similarity or congruence of application did not happen spontaneously or accidentally. The team worked through an objective process and used a standardized

worksheet in order to discover the application points. In addition, the criteria established in Chapter 1 for congruence pushed the team through a process that promoted insight and agreement about accurate and relevant application. By taking every exegetical principle and filtering the concept through the application grid, each participant discovered relevant and accurate application points.

The first sermon from Acts 15:36 through Acts 16:40 entitled, “The Joy of Caring,” displayed a high degree of likeness regarding application between the first and second drafts of the sermon. Many times during the session, team members affirmed one another and the application points developed throughout the sermon. The application design chart reveals a primary reason for the high amount of congruence in the first sermon. The team used the application chart to interact with five criteria set up in Chapter 1 for accuracy and relevance in application. Reviewing the charts of each team member reveals substantial congruence in application. For instance, on criteria 2, the ladder of abstraction, all team members stated the four exegetical points processed “straight across.” Straight across means the bridge for application from the ancient text to the modern world is direct and much simpler to discover and agree on. By gaining agreement on the ladder of abstraction, the team moved forward with the practical and tangible elements of application.

Another example of congruence came from the first exegetical point. This exegetical point promoted following the example of Paul who modeled passion for the well-being of the church. Participant 2 focused the team’s attention on the example of Paul in Acts 20 where he invested three years of intense ministry in Ephesus. I added this

portrait of Paul as an application point, encouraging God's people to emulate his heart, as he cared for the church, through a shepherding lifestyle.

In addition, exegetical point 2 related to Paul developing teams for ministry. Our congruence and application came by using criteria 2 and addressing whether the broader context of Scripture reveals the general principle. I included suggestions for application from participants 1 and 3 by highlighting Moses and Jesus who served God in the context of team. In addition, exegetical point 3 promoted being passionate, as Paul was, for sharing Christ. Again, participant 2 used the Ladder of Abstraction, reinforcing the principle by suggesting the need for preparation in sharing one's faith, as taught in 2 Peter 3:16. I added this passage to the outline and presented various ways of preparing oneself to share the gospel. Participant 4 took the application for passionately sharing Christ a step further. By responding to criteria 4 to apply the general principle to the context of First Baptist Church, participant 4 suggested and oversaw a practical exercise the whole church could support. This individual had 1,500 brochures prepared for canvassing either new housing developments or neighborhoods around the church. The brochure highlighted the summer ministries including Vacation Bible School, Wonderful Wednesdays, and the summer sermon series. Participant 4 kept track of the individuals and teams who responded to the application and what area they canvassed. The contextualized application encouraged an entry-level opportunity where all members could express the love of Christ in their community. Participant 4 introduced and supervised the effort, while I simply provided coaching and support along the way.

The second sermon presented a survey of the book of Philippians entitled, "The Path to Real Joy." Once again, the likenesses of application among team members

significantly outweighed any dissimilarities in application. In this sermon, the exegetical outline promoted four paths to real joy as taught by Paul in the book of Philippians. As the team processed these four exegetical truths, the dialogue and input prompted one story after another, all inspiring accurate and relevant application.

The first exegetical point challenged the congregation to choose joy by serving together. By using the application chart, Participant 4 engaged the team in answering the following four questions of application: what is God calling us to be, what is God calling us to do, what is God calling us to pursue, and what is God calling us to discern from the passage studied? Regarding doing, participant 4 shared a story about a few individuals from First Baptist who served with joy by joining in a community parade on the fourth of July, the previous week. The following Sunday, I shared this story highlighting how their involvement promoted various ministries of the church including Vacation Bible School and the My First School preschool ministry. Also, participant 1, affirming the same exegetical point, provided a personal story about his first ministry experience at First Baptist Church. The ministry occurred the previous year by serving Kool-Aid in Vacation Bible School. Sharing the story reminded people that serving God through simple tasks such as pouring Kool-Aid can be a joyful experience when done in a spirit of devotion.

Further, participant 2 supported the second exegetical point to choose joy regardless of circumstances. That team member, reflecting on the context of First Baptist Church, provided a story of a woman in the church who chose joy amid chronic illness. This particular woman carries herself so humbly that I felt comfortable sharing her story during the message.

The third exegetical point of the sermon encouraged choosing joy through unity. The Ladder of Abstraction promotes answering three questions to aid in application. These questions include does the author state a general principle; why was the specific command given and does the broader context of Scripture reveal a general principle? Participant 3 surfaced another story by answering the "why" of the specific command. That Sunday morning I shared that story of how disunity over whether to air-condition a sanctuary, robbed a congregation of joy, as that challenging decision resulted in a church split.

Finally, as participants 1 and 2 answered the "why" question of joy through unity, they both expressed a perspective that unity leads to health and health leads to unity. The issue of health surfaced on their application charts in response to the same question, showing congruence. This truth inspired another story about a new family who recently joined the church because of unity. That following Sunday morning, the team preached through a series of application points that prompted relevant stories. Undoubtedly, their input supported the exegetical outline and displayed accuracy and relevancy in the application of the sermon.

The third sermon entitled, "The Joy of Sharing," discussed the joy of sharing the gospel from the first chapter of Philippians. After examining the application worksheets, the consistency of similarities prevailed once again between my application and team members. Eleven of the twelve worksheets presented by the team displayed almost complete congruence for application. Further, as the team met to provide input, the likenesses in application continually overlapped, resulting in the assurance that application was true to the biblical text.

Session 4 discussed the primary theme of "Joy in Unity" from Philippians 1:27, 2:2, and 4:1-3. Although the whole team reflected likenesses in application, one team member stands out regarding congruence and reveals a significant truth about teams feeding into the sermon. During the session, participant 3 regularly chimed in and greatly contributed to the application of the sermon. While discussing exegetical point 1 that "the cause of disunity is selfishness," participant 3 shared a heartfelt testimony. The Spirit of God used the application chart to inspire this testimony, as participant 3 reflected on the "implications" of the principle for First Baptist Church. The passion expressed during our session prompted my immediate request for a testimony on Sunday morning. This individual did share a testimony during the worship service and God worked powerfully.

Because of the spiritual journey and input of participant 3, I discovered two wonderful realities for accurate and relevant application. First, presenting the testimony during the initial part of the message strengthened the application of the sermon. I sensed the testimony connected with the audience and prepared the congregation to hear the cure for disharmony from Philippians 4:1-3.

In addition, participant 3 personally benefited from the experience of feeding into the sermon as reflected in a note I received the following week:

> The joy of unity was clearly and heartfully portrayed in today's sermon. There is no doubt unity is preferred. Unity is huge, unity is needed, and unity is required. Thank you for sharing your microphone and especially, for helping me to feel "huggable" while sharing. Wonderful job. Heartfelt job Keith. I praise God for placing your family here.

The experience of participant 3 reflects that input and congruence flow more naturally out of heartfelt life experiences. The more a person's spiritual journey connects with the

biblical text, the more engaging that person for accurate and relevant application. Most of the seven sessions, feeding into the sermon, revealed this truth as a reality.

Session 5 also displayed a significant amount of likeness between the pastor's and the team's application. The study involved Philippians 2:5-11 and promoted, "How to Have a Joyful Attitude." One dominant feature showing similarity in application throughout the sermon was how often I quoted team members.

The first exegetical truth stated that joy comes by reflecting the self-denying attitude of Christ. By working through the application chart and processing the question of discernment, participant 4 inquired, "Have you ever stopped to consider what holds us back from living a life of self-denial?" Participant 4 expressed four reasons selflessness is difficult. The team processed these four suggestions, and I chose to develop two in the sermon. I quoted participant 4 many times, presenting why Christians struggle to live selflessly.

In addition, as the team developed the third exegetical truth that joy comes through the attitude of humility, participant 2 once again processed the need for discernment. This team member suggested that "before we address the attitude of humility we must first discern what biblical humility is." Although I already planned to define humility, from the input of participant 2, I worked harder to describe, explain, and apply biblical humility throughout the message.

Finally, in response to the question of doing from the application chart, participant 1 chimed in and said the life of Christ proves that "humility is displayed by putting aside our agenda for the agenda of others." I shared this quote and connected it to existing material, presenting the example of Christ who gave up the glory of heaven to die on a

cross. Because of the significant amount of congruence in application, I quoted team members throughout this particular sermon.

During session 6, I planned to preach one message on Philippians 2:12-18, entitled, “The Joy of Finishing Well.” However, the significant amount of input from the group resulted in one sermon becoming a four-part mini-series. The team feeding into the sermon influenced every major point and sub-point of the sermon. The team provided anecdotes, extra Scripture, and a personal testimony during the sermon. Participant 4 provided the application exercise for closing the message. This application solidified the final exegetical point and the overall teaching of the morning. The activity provided an opportunity for personal reflection and evaluation regarding experiencing joy by finishing well. The final sermon reflects minimal input and, therefore, limited similarity or dissimilarity in application from the team.

Without question, the similarities in application between the pastor and the team remained consistent throughout our seven weeks together. Five of the seven sermons display a high likeness in application. By systematically working through the application criteria as outlined on the worksheet, congruence for application of each sermon was extremely high. The significant amount of likenesses in application between the pastor and team supports the goal of the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word.

Research Question #2

What <u>adjustments</u> in application took place in the sermon because of the team’s input before the sermon delivery on Sunday morning?

Six of the seven sermon manuscripts underwent significant changes from the first draft to the final script preached on Sunday morning. Team members consistently

provided a wealth of material for consideration. Their input significantly influenced the application of the sermon.

As I report my findings about changes in application, I will distinguish between major and minor adjustments in the application points. Major adjustments suggest a new direction or fresh territory pursued in application because of the input sessions. Minor adjustments suggest a tweaking of the application from the original manuscript. The second and seventh sermon revealed minor changes in application, while the remaining five sermons revealed major changes in application.

The first session resulted in one major adjustment and many minor additions for application. I entitled the sermon "The Joy of Caring." The first major point promoted believers "pursuing passionately the well-being of the church." Participant 4 significantly influenced the direction and application of the first point. This team member expressed that "care for Christ's church does not come easy." The team followed that concern and provided four hurdles for believers to overcome in order to care for Christ's church: the challenge of selfishness, time, perspective, and risk. I developed these four points in the sermon and closed the application by asking two questions, challenging the congregation to personalize their care for Christ's church. The first sermon received the most adjustments in application out of the seven.

The second session resulted in minor changes in the accurate and relevant application of the sermon. The topic, "The Path to Real Joy," presented a survey of the book of Philippians highlighting the theme of joyful living. The input came in a balanced way with each participant contributing equally to the sermon. The team provided six creative, inspiring, and life-changing stories I scattered like seed throughout the sermon.

Each of the four exegetical points received a fresh touch as the team preached through their stories. In particular, one application illustrates the value of these relevant stories for application. Participant 2 highlighted one member of the family at First Baptist who chose joy regardless of her circumstances. Many people were aware of her health concerns and the potential of her having cancer. When I announced during the sermon that tests proved she was cancer free, the congregation responded with jubilation; nevertheless, the real impact of her story is her lasting joy regardless of her failing health. Clearly, none of these stories alone dramatically affected the message; however, the cumulative total for application was powerful.

The third session provided major adjustments in application and proved to be the most difficult and potentially most fruitful session of the project. The challenge stemmed from the inability of participant 1 to comprehend and agree with an exegetical point in the outline. This individual's journal provides insight about the importance exegesis plays in preparing the team to aid the pastor in application. The journal reads, "There is great difficulty applying the Scripture when the team participant is either unclear about the meaning/interpretation or there is disagreement." For this participant "application broke down when exegesis or disagreement hit a stumbling block."

During the session the team explored the point of tension; however, the more dialogue we had, the more disagreement. Participant 1 stated, "Rather than engage and press the point, I thought it prudent to concede the issue in the interest of harmony." The humility of this team member resulted in deferment to the pastor and promoted unity in the group. The result of this debate, however, was productive for application. Because of participant 1, the first major change resulted in rewriting one exegetical point and two

sub-points to provide clarity and set up the foundation for accurate and relevant application. In addition, I spent two extra hours studying the controversial point and simplifying the truth and application.

Besides this main adjustment, participant 3 inspired me to address how to develop a “no fear” attitude toward sharing the joy of the gospel. Before this participant’s input, I did not entertain the problem of fear in sharing one’s faith. The application resulted in exploring how to write and share one’s testimony as a first step in overcoming fear. In addition, I provided numerous copies of various books on witnessing and made them available at the resource table. After worship, the books sold out, showing the value of the insight on addressing fear in witnessing. A simple statement, “that Christians need to have a no fear attitude like Paul” as we share the gospel, led to a significant addition in the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word.

The fourth session also provided significant adjustments in application for the sermon. The preaching passages from Philippians 1:27, 2:2, and 4:1-3 addressed the topic of “Joy In Unity.” While working through the application worksheet, participant 3 shared a personal story picturing her struggle with unity in the church. This team member’s story paralleled the ministry journey of two women: Euodia and Syntyche highlighted in Philippians 4. The following Sunday morning, participant 3 shared her story, and God worked powerfully. Later the following week, one member of the church shared that reconciliation took place with two coworkers as he applied the sermon and testimony to his life.

In addition, participant 2 provided input resulting in a major revision of the sermon content and application. I introduced the sermon, diverting from the book of

Philippians to James chapter 4. The letter of James provides insight about why disunity is a problem in the church. James highlights three primary reasons disunity is problematic. Participant 3 suggested I connect James chapter 4 to the comprehensive teaching and examples in the book of Philippians. This suggestion provided biblical reinforcement to the three application points from the book of James and further promoted the theme of unity in Philippians.

The fifth sermon discussed "How to Have a Joyful Attitude" from Philippians 2:5-11. The message developed four attitudes of Christ that bring joy to living. The first exegetical point developed the attitude of self-denial. The session provided a major revision from participant 4 who asked if "we ever stopped to consider what holds us back from living a life of self-denial?" This member shared four relevant reasons self denial is difficult. The team unpacked these four points, and I selected two of the four to develop in the sermon. Feeding into the sermon resulted in two new application points, with examples from the life of Christ on living a life of self-denial.

I developed the sixth sermon from Philippians 2:12-18 and entitled the message "Finishing Well." This session produced three major changes in the application of the sermon. The first significant change resulted in participant 1 sharing a testimony about involvement in small groups and Sunday school. The testimony explained the exegetical point that obedience to Christ is supported by healthy accountability. The testimony gained the attention of the congregation and encouraged taking next steps for spiritual accountability.

The second significant change came from participant 4 and resulted in using Don S. Whitney's book Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health to close the message.

The sermon ended upbeat as I encouraged the congregation to examine and rate their spiritual well-being. Whitney provided an insightful and compelling list to examine spiritual health that I published on the back of the bulletin. The ten categories are macro in nature and address spiritual life issues including passionate spirituality, loving relationships, brokenness over sin, thirsting for God, and longing for his Word. Individuals evaluated their journey by scoring a 0 for rarely, 1 for sometimes, and 2 for regularly. In the end, I encouraged the congregation to thank God for the areas of maturity in their lives and to focus on one or two areas of growth. The survey focused attention on the application and the congregation's response to the exercise was extremely positive.

The final major change for application resulted as the sixth sermon grew to become a four-part miniseries entitled, "Finishing Well." Through extensive study of the passage and input from the team, the Lord convicted me to slow down and develop the topic of finishing well more thoroughly. The application design team affirmed the process, and God worked powerfully over the next few weeks. In many years of preaching, I have never taken seven verses from God's Word and developed a four-part miniseries. This mini-series is a testimony to the comprehensive nature of Scripture and the value of feeding into the sermon by the application design team.

The final session resulted in minor additions to application. I believe the primary reason is the development of the mini-series. In this seventh sermon, I focused on one verse from Philippians 2:12b-13. Paul commands Christians to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Although a limited amount of application came from the

input team, the sermon and the four-part series proved the value of input from the application design team.

After comparing the first drafts to the final drafts of the sermons, clearly, the team supported the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. Five of the seven sermons received major revisions in application. The other two sermons received minor revisions in application. All the adjustments in application came as the team processed each exegetical point through the application design chart. The application matrix provided an objective process that continuously resulted in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The team was successful, as they aided me in overcoming the problem of error in application. The consistent amount of congruence supported the accuracy of the application. In addition, the significant amount of adjustments in the sermon suggests more relevancies in application.

In Chapter 5 I reflect on the theological underpinnings of a team supporting the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. From this project, six major findings resulted and will be developed more comprehensively in the next chapter:

- A team supporting the pastor is invaluable for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.
- The criteria for selecting the team are essential to supporting a pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.
- Training the team is essential for participants to support the accurate and relevant application of the Word of God.

- The diversity of the team supported contextualized application, which is essential for accurate and relevant application in preaching.
- The principlization of application, coupled with a systematic approach to application, fostered accuracy and relevancy in applying God's Word.
- Preparing the exegesis for the team is vital to the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

In addition to these major findings, I share valuable insights and serendipitous discoveries I made throughout the journey. Finally, I provide recommendations for anyone interested in emulating a similar model and pursuing further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The origin of this research project can be traced to a doctoral class on biblical preaching taught at Asbury Seminary by Dr. Haddon Robinson. During one of his lectures, Dr. Robinson stated, “More heresy is preached in application than in Bible exegesis.” Robinson uses the term heresy, loosely. His concern is not with the primary or foundational teachings of Orthodox Christianity. Robinson’s apprehension originates when preachers apply biblical truth in the wrong way, thus making the application of that truth, heretical. Throughout that lecture, the only thing I could think about was this riveting concern of heretical application in preaching.

Therefore, the purpose of my research was to appraise the value of an application design team, developed within the context of the First Baptist Church of Aurora, whose goal was to assist the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. More than ever, I am convinced the body of Christ can serve the pastor in sermon making for the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. The following six theological perspectives reflect major findings gained by evaluating and interpreting the data outlined in Chapters 1 and 2.

Major Findings

To aid the process of interpreting and evaluating the findings of the study, I administered a questionnaire to each participant on completion of the project. The answers to the questionnaire were extremely helpful for evaluation and determining the major findings.

Major Finding #1

A team supporting the pastor is invaluable for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9-10) and the diversity of gifts in the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5) suggest clergy and laity both have responsibility in preaching. For seven weeks, I facilitated a cooperative dialogue with a team of four individuals from First Baptist Church. This ongoing conversation enabled the church to assist in preaching as the body of Christ by supporting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The participants heartily affirmed the process and their contribution to the application design team. As presented in Chapter 4, major adjustments in application took place in the majority of sermons. Question 9 of the survey asks, "I sensed the pastor frequently used material and suggestions presented by the team for the accurate and relevant in the application of God's Word." The team responded positively with an average of 8.5 out of 10. Participant 1 said the input sessions "allowed the pastor to have access to more real world examples and anecdotes." Participant 2 stated, "I heard every team member's points during the preaching." Furthermore, question 11 asks, "I periodically heard the pastor use my suggestions for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word." Again, the team wholeheartedly agreed and gave an average of 9.25 out of 10. Participant 4 said, "I regularly heard everyone's input in the sermon." Furthermore, this participant expressed the value of the team's diversity for accurate and relevant application. The journal reads, "Our diversity manifested itself as team members had different applications from the same points we studied." The value of this diversity

developed further as three of the four participants shared relevant testimonies during the seven-week project. These testimonies birthed spontaneously, in response to the goal of accurately and relevantly applying the biblical text to the local context of First Baptist Church. After comparing the first draft of all seven sermons to the final sermon manuscripts, I am convinced the whole team aided in the preaching and application of the Word of God on Sunday mornings.

Major Finding #2

The criteria for selecting the team are essential to supporting a pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The three churches examined for this study helped establish the core values for building a support team for application in preaching. These core values are nonnegotiable and include team chemistry, competency, and character.

Developing the application design team by personal invitation from the pastor is important. Because teams develop over time, starting with a healthy team dynamic is vital for the success of the input process. Setting up the criteria limited the pool of people from which to draw; however, the value of the criteria is incalculable. A unified team is an unstoppable force. Jesus prayed for unity in the church (John 17:20-23). Paul reminded the church of Ephesus to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Unity and team chemistry is essential for team members who want a healthy and effective contribution to sermon making.

The importance of settling the proper criteria for team was obvious at various times throughout this study. During the third session, one member did not understand or agree with the exegesis on a particular point. The team explored the teaching together;

however, the disagreement about the exegesis continued. This participant's journal read, "Rather than engage and press the point, I thought it prudent to concede the issue in the interest of harmony."

The humility of this team member resulted in deferral to the pastor and promoted unity in the group. Nevertheless, the journal of participant 1 presents a compelling argument for selecting the right team. It reads, "It becomes apparent that the selection of team members by the pastor is a crucial task. What if I had been a contentious member? What if a member is willing to go to the mat on an issue?" The questions of participant 1 are rhetorical. Receiving accurate and relevant application that adds value to the pastor's sermon demands a unified team working from agreement in exegesis.

Furthermore, in the questionnaire, every team member expressed concern about selecting the team. Question number eight on the survey reads, "If asked, I would recommend to other members of the body of Christ to participate in the training and team effort to support the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word." Participant 3 responded cautiously, scoring a 3 out of 10, stating, "It would depend on the individual member. There are certainly members I would recommend this process to. However, there are individuals I would not." Responding to the same question, participant 2 answered more favorably, scoring an 8 out of 10, but also expressed caution: "I do not believe this ministry team is for all members." Also, participant 1 expressed similar concern:

> The pastor must be very careful whom he selects for membership on the team. Group dynamics can be confrontational and personalities may get in the way of fruitful, harmonious production. The application design team is not for everyone. I say that humbly.

I am convinced the support for the pastor directly relates to the health of the team.

Because the goal of the team feeding into the sermon is accuracy and relevancy, the team must stay united in their journey.

Therefore, the qualities of character, chemistry, and competency remain foundational for team selection. The literature review absolutely points in this direction. The pastor interested in setting up this model is wise to practice this insight.

Major Finding #3

Training the team is essential for participants to support the accurate and relevant application of the Word of God.

One of the unique features of this dissertation project was the goal of training a team for supporting the accurate and relevant application of God's Word in preaching. According to Paul, one of the primary roles of a teaching pastor is "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:11-16). Therefore, I dedicated one month to equipping the team for the hard work of sermon application. All team members read Kuhatschek's book Applying the Bible before the input meetings started. The questionnaire asked if reading the book "contributed to my [their] ability to assist the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word." The team affirmed the value of the book rating it above average, scoring it 7.5 out of 10. One team member commented on the value of the book:

> Reading Kuhatschek's book was a very important part of the process. It helped me understand how the text can be applied and what are legitimate ways to apply the text in a sermon. It also provided some basic hermeneutical understanding that the team needed in order to accurately and relevantly apply God's Word.

Kuhatschek's book laid the foundation for the four training sessions. These equipping times aided the team in gaining a common perspective and process on the accurate and

relevant application of God's Word. In addition, I developed an application matrix that provided the team with a standard, valid approach to applying the biblical text. I am convinced the constant likenesses in application among team members corresponds directly to the in-depth training they received and our use of the application matrix. Question 6 asks, "I believe the four training sessions were essential for team members to aid the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word." The team expressed the value of training scoring 9 out of 10 on the survey. Participant 4 stated, "The four training sessions were essential. Without these modules, the team would not have been properly informed about the objective standards for application of the text." Participant 1 agreed, stating, "Training was essential. I was unclear about the method at the beginning. The facilitator must ensure each person is on the same page." Participant 2 expressed that "the training was helpful, however, a bit confusing at times."

In my research, I discovered numerous dissertations examining input to the pastor's sermon; however, I did not find a single study that placed emphasis on training the team to feed into the sermon, in an accurate and relevant way. The training addressed the primary concern of this dissertation—heresy in application. The training set up a model for congruence that consistently resulted in similar application among the team as outlined in Chapter 4. The training immersed the team in the book of Philippians and provided a theological and exegetical framework for application. The training set the stage for weekly preparation of the team that culminated in the two-hour input session. Question 16 asks, "I believe the weekly, personal preparation was an essential part of contribution to the accurate and relevant application of God's Word." Participant 3 stated, "Absolutely! There was no shooting from the hip." Regarding the training, participant 4

commented, “It definitely helped to be immersed in the book of Philippians. This big-picture perspective helped me to understand the text for accurate and relevant application.” Question 12 asks, “I regularly came prepared to contribute to the team for the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word.” Participant 1 stated, “I felt very prepared. My typical time for preparation was about 2-3 hours per week, sometimes more. I tried to immerse myself in the material.” Participant 3 suggested the process supported the “heart” always being prepared to feed into the application of the Word of God.

Training the team addressed the concern developed in Chapter 2 that accurate and relevant application of God’s Word always rests on the bedrock of legitimate biblical hermeneutics. The training filled the void of developing guidelines for applying Scripture authentically. In addition, the training set the stage for the sessions connecting the text to the audience and context of First Baptist Church. This study proves that training is essential to a team providing input to the pastor for the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. I cannot imagine what the sessions would be like without a thoroughly prepared team feeding into the sermon. Undoubtedly, some may question the value of a team feeding into the pastor’s sermon for the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. I suspect the suspicion is warranted; however, my research strongly suggests a trained team can support the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. Therefore, I conclude that a healthy first step in reducing heresy in application is to train a team to help the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word.

Major Finding #4

The diversity of the team supported contextualized application, which is essential

for accurate and relevant application in preaching.

I am convinced careful audience analysis is vital for accurate and relevant application of Scripture. As outlined in Chapter 2, the preaching ministry of Jesus and the apostles reflect contextualizing application in preaching. Like the parts on a Swiss Army knife, each team member functioned uniquely, helping me apply God's Word to various ages, interests, needs, and life issues. By virtue of the ongoing dialogue, the team expanded the menu of options for application. Similar to apostolic preaching, I sensed balance in the application of God's Word as the team provided healthy doses of rebuking, correcting, and training for righteous living. In addition, I regularly experienced the team supporting me in "warning those who are idle, encouraging the timid, helping the weak, and being patient with everyone" (1 Thess. 5:14).

Similar to the preaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, the team recognized the importance of contextualizing application in preaching. The participants' perspectives shed significant light on how the team supported contextualizing the application of the sermon. Question 10 of the survey asks, "I sensed because of the diversity of the team, the application of God's Word related to a more diverse population of the congregation." The majority of the team sensed the variety of personnel on the team supported application to a more diverse group of people. Participant 1 stated, "The team was as diverse as it possibly could be. I believe it had excellent composition of members—good mix." In addition, participant 4 stated, "I saw the importance of how different perspectives change a person's view of Scripture. I noticed how different life situations would prompt people to different applications of the same text." Finally, participant 4 stated, "Our diversity manifested itself as team members had different

applications from the same points we studied."

The value of this diversity developed further as three of the four participants shared relevant, personal testimonies during the seven-week series. Participant 3 shared a testimony that influenced the congregation to take action and offer forgiveness in relationships. The personal honesty and contextual nature of this testimony proved immediately fruitful and resulted in life change within the church. In addition, participant 2 shared a testimony regarding "healthy accountability" from Philippians 2:12. A year ago, this individual was not involved in ministry; however, God worked powerfully. Now this individual is fully integrated into the life and ministry of the church. These three testimonies birthed spontaneously in response to the goal of accurately and relevantly applying the biblical text to the local context of First Baptist Church. Contextualization in application is one of the primary reasons for the significant amount of adjustments in application between the first and second draft of the sermon. The application design team supported my ability to contextualize application in preaching, making application more relevant to the audience.

Major Finding #5

The principlization of application, coupled with a systematic approach to application, fostered accuracy and relevancy in applying God's Word.

After completing a thorough examination of preaching throughout church history, I decided that the principlization of application is an excellent and preferred model to use for accurate and relevant application. After synthesizing the literature on the principlization of application, I simplified the process for discovering principles and application from the biblical text. I chose to adopt Kuhatschek's three primary steps for

the process of principlization: understanding the original situation, finding general principles, and applying general principles today. In addition, I utilized the ladder of abstraction to discern how to transfer the ancient principle to the modern world. Furthermore, I adopted Doriani's seven categories of application. Finally, I differentiated between application and implication of the biblical text for the context at First Baptist Church.

I integrated these four components in a tool, an application design chart, to support the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. The worksheet standardized the team's approach to applying the biblical principles of a particular passage. The application matrix worked as a systematic checklist for each team member in their personal study as they prepared for the sessions. In addition, the matrix became a guide for the flow of the input sessions. The team approached the application chart systematically, beginning with understanding the original setting and concluding with the contextual implications to the congregation at First Baptist Church. In addition, the principles from the biblical text drove the application. Working through the application worksheet systematically supported overcoming Dr. Robinson's concern about heresy in application of the sermon. The application grid supported the constant congruence in application among team members. As Chapter 4 describes, the similarities in application among team members greatly outweighed the dissimilarities. Although modification of the matrix will take place for future use, it served the team well for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Major Finding #6

Preparing the exegesis for the team is vital to the accurate and relevant application

of God's Word.

The literature review developed the truth that exegesis is the foundation for accurate and relevant application. The Reformers modeled healthy exegesis precedes application. Without clarity and agreement on the team about exegesis, accurate and relevant application becomes impossible. I remain convinced application is the most difficult part of expository preaching; however, I am equally convinced about the importance of exegesis. Exegesis lays the foundation upon which application is built. Therefore, the pastor must labor to provide an exegetical outline for the team, purposing to reduce confusion as they prepare for input sessions. Of the seven sessions, the third meeting reinforced the importance of exegesis in a significant way.

I believe all team members would agree the third session was the most difficult of all our meetings. Before the meeting, participant 1 sent an e-mail regarding confusion with one exegetical point and two sub-points in the outline. The e-mail presented a view different from what I was promoting. He wrote, "I found it difficult to process the 'defense' portion in the outline." The struggle related to Philippians 1:7 where Paul teaches his imprisonment resulted in him "defending and confirming the gospel." Participant 1 wrote, "We confirm, affirm, declare, attest, proclaim the gospel; however, I do not feel comfortable saying Christians 'defend' the gospel." Furthermore, he states, "I do not understand the concept and struggle greatly with the idea we are called upon to defend the gospel." Finally, he wrote, "I am not taking a contrary stance on this issue. I am saying, 'I don't know what to think.'" After much discussion during the session, participant 1 dropped the issue and the team moved on with the outline. Nevertheless, this individual's journal provides further insight about the importance of exegesis in

preparing the team to assist in application. The journal reads, “There is great difficulty applying the Scripture when the team participant is either unclear about the meaning and interpretation or there is disagreement” in the exegesis. This situation promotes how valuable exegesis is to the team as they prepare to help the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. That particular night, the unclear exegesis limited the input and congruence for application from participant 1. When exegesis is different, application will be dissimilar as well. Although this situation will probably happen again, the pastor should work hard to clarify the exegesis and exegetical outline.

Implications

The commitment to praying together before each session focused the team on God’s will and agenda for sermon preparation. The literature review suggested prayer is essential to the success of the team. The research of Brown Barr and Mary Eakin motivated me to make prayer the first activity of the input session. The principle of Barr and Eakin’s discovery, that prayer is the keystone to keeping the team together, became my belief and normative practice. Every session began with prayer and focused our attention on God, the text of study, the needs of the team, and the wisdom needed for accurate and relevant application. I believe prayer significantly influenced the unity, healthy input, and overall dynamics of the team. The constant likenesses in application and the continual ability of the team to influence the final sermon through application is a by-product of the team praying together. I expect some changes in the way the application design team will function in the future; however, one practice will remain nonnegotiable—prayer.

Limitations of the Study

The greatest limitation of this study stemmed from an instrument I developed to evaluate the experience of members on the application design team. The questionnaire was originally designed to support a different set of research questions. After my proposal hearing, two new research questions replaced the first five questions. Unfortunately, the questionnaire did not change to reflect these two questions; however, the information from the questionnaire became extremely helpful to discover the team's value for input, for accurate and relevant application of God's Word. Undoubtedly, rewriting the questionnaire to address the two new research questions would have been profitable; nevertheless, I am satisfied the questionnaire did serve as an evaluation tool for the team members, further research, and myself.

Serendipitous Experiences

My three-month journey with these four members of First Baptist Church is a highlight of my vocational ministry of over twenty years. Five unexpected experiences stand out from our three months together as a team.

Serendipitous Experiences #1

I was delighted the application design team became a small group where spiritual transformation takes place.

The journal of participant 1 inquires, "Who is the REAL [original emphasis] beneficiary of this work? I could not help but think the beneficiary is ME [original emphasis]." The journal continued by elaborating on the benefits associated of being apart of the application design team:

> I thought the team would support your dissertation and will feed you as the Pastor, but look how much I am eating at this table. I felt like I

> was "chowing" on the Word of God and soaking up a Bible story that I might not have had occasion to review apart from this exercise. To break down the meaning and application of a passage in a roundtable discussion with other like-minded people is of great value and worth.

I sense participant 1 reflects the overall experience of the team. Participant 2 shared a similar perspective: "I found the weeks that I really could immerse myself in the book of Philippians that I grew tremendously." In addition, participant 3 stated, "In doing this study and completing the application design chart, it caused me to think so much more about how the Scriptures apply to my life." Finally, participant 4 expressed growth during the input sessions saying, "I really enjoyed the process because it forced me to meditate on each point of the sermon. The meditation gave me deeper insight into the text and helped the points of the sermon stay with me throughout the week." The nature of the dissertation project forced our team to a more intimate with God and one another.

As the team matured and members felt safe, open dialogue and transparency resulted throughout the week. On two occasions participant 3 called me to inquire regarding clarifying the exegetical outline. These dialogues provided time for mentoring and explanation of the biblical text. As pastor, I relish the privilege to share God's transforming Word with others. This individual came hungry, wanting to understand because accurate and relevant application flows from proper exegesis.

While reading the journal entries of the team, I constantly sensed God's transforming work in their lives. In fact, reading the journal of participant 1 moved me to tears one afternoon. The journal entries evidence God's Spirit at work throughout our time together.

During our study of Philippians 4 on unity, one individual experienced "reconciliation with two coworkers." In addition, this participant overcame an attitude of

grumbling and complaining because of the time demands of the dissertation project. The initial grumbling turned to praise and testimony of God's goodness and appreciation for being a part of the team. In addition, during our time together, this individual began the process of exploring a new ministry. The journal reads, "A small victory in my life. I reached out of my comfort zone directly as a result of this study." The journal entry concludes with the following words:

> This study in Philippians has truly helped me solidify the thought of joy. I do not just feel it but I see its example in Scripture. How valuable? What a treasure! Thank you for asking me to participate in your project, Pastor.

Similarly, in the final thoughts of participant 3 the journal reads, "I am already missing the comradery of our group. An open ear to discuss the gospel is an awesome experience." Therefore, anyone considering implementing such a team should realize the application design team is a small group where transformation takes place. The value of our time together extends far beyond the accurate and relevant application of God's Word in preaching. The hearts, minds, and hands of team members experienced continual transformation to the glory of God.

Serendipitous Experience #2

Team members will encounter intense spiritual warfare and discouragement by virtue of their investment in the preaching of God's Word.

In the middle of the research project, one team member wrote at length about discouragement because of involvement in the project. Participant 1 expressed the ongoing spiritual warfare in his journal:

> This week had been full, as most of mine are, however, I began to grouse at my wife about being involved in the project. I whined about the magnitude of the commitment and I was not certain that if this was an ongoing thing that I would continue to be involved because of time

> constraints.

However, as this team member began preparing for the sermon input meeting, God's Spirit countered the fiery darts of the devil. The journal entry reflects the powerful work of God's Spirit:

> I started my study session with prayer as I always do and launched into preparation, not fully realizing the heart's true attitude. Somewhere along the way, the Holy Spirit revealed my attitude to me. I had not even seen it! I was grumbling about doing God's work! I was whining because I had the privilege to serve Him in such an honored fashion.

The Spirit of God resolved the conflict as repentance and confession followed Holy Spirit conviction. The journal further reveals the brokenness toward the Lord stating, "I bowed my head and literally cried out to God for forgiveness. The sin had been so subtle." The journal closes with the victory:

> I am honored to be here, Keith. It is my privilege to serve. The joy Paul had in chains, I have in servanthood. Tonight, I am pouring Kool-Aid [a reference to his first ministry experience at First Baptist Church] to the glory of God. As silly as it might sound, I cannot wait for 7:00 p.m. [to meet with the team].

I believe the devil despises pulpits that accurately and relevantly handle the Word of truth. Therefore, team members need to realize involvement in the application design team will result in spiritual warfare. Fortunately, God's Spirit worked powerfully and participant 1 resisted the devil firm in the faith. Therefore, the pastor must remind team members to be on guard against the devils' schemes while serving on the application design team.

Serendipitous Experience #3

Through application design teams, the pastor is producing spiritual reproducers.

In Ephesians 4 Paul teaches that Christ gifted the church with pastors to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11). The spiritual growth and ministry

development that took place among team members was far-reaching. I have always purposed to produce spiritual reproducers in ministry; however, the growth among the application design team exceeded my expectations.

All four participants on the application design team currently teach at First Baptist in Aurora. Question 4 asks, “As a teacher of the Bible, I sense my ability to apply God’s Word accurately and relevantly will be enhanced by participating in this study.” Their response was overwhelmingly positive, averaging a 9.25 out of 10. This feedback inspired me to recognize the value of the application design team extends far beyond the pulpit. These team members teach the children, youth, and adults at First Baptist Church. One participant teaches a women’s class, while another facilitates a small group. Furthermore, personal development took place through involvement with the application design team. Question 13 asks, “I sense my personal ability to apply God’s Word accurately and relevantly in my own life was enhanced by participating in this study.” Again, the score registered favorably with an average of 8.5 out of 10. The pastor who recognizes the importance of producing spiritual reproducers will see value far beyond the sermon while working with an application design team.

Serendipitous Experience #4

As the pastor, I benefited in many ways from the application design team.

Benefit #1 pastoral joy in preaching. I can honestly say that preparing sermons as a team was one of my most enjoyable ministry experiences. I sensed a greater degree of excitement and confidence in preaching the Word of God because of the accountability and input of the team. I looked forward to coming together as the body of Christ and having God’s people share their perspective about sermon application.

Benefit #2 proactive and scholarly preaching. To prepare the team for each sessions, I had to take a more proactive and scholarly approach to sermon preparation. Normally, I worked on two and sometimes three sermons simultaneously. The proactive nature of sermon preparation allowed more time for personal assimilation and processing the sermon in light of current events.

One of the reasons Southeast Christian values team preaching is because it allows the pastors to receive ongoing and proactive input. Team preaching forces the pastor to work on sermons weeks before the preaching event. The sermon germinates over time in the life of the preparer. For Southeast, the result is one of the strongest pulpits in America.

Although this benefit is real, I am disheartened because once the project ended I quickly returned to my old ways of writing sermons week to week.

Benefit #3 accurate and relevant application. In my interview with B. Russell from Southeast Christian Church, he told me he dedicated two-thirds of his sermon preparation time to application. Like many preachers, B. Russell believes application is the most difficult aspect of sermon making. The application design team supported my ability to balance exegesis and application in sermon preparation. Instead of application becoming an addendum in preaching, the application design team supported prioritizing application, making it an integral part of the sermon. From start to finish, the team helped me communicate application throughout the message.

Question 15 of the survey asks, “I personally believe the team enhanced the pastor’s effort, and he became a better preacher over the past seven weeks as he more accurately and relevantly applied God’s Word to the church.” Three of the four team

members responded positively to this question averaging 9 points out of 10. Participant 2 stated, “I really believe the application design team helped to enhance our pastor’s preaching.” Participant 4 commented that “the team helped the pastor through ‘clarification’ of the exegetical outline, which led to accurate and relevant application.

However, participant 1 scored a 4 out of 10 on the survey, signaling a much lower response than the overall team. The reason for the low number was a positive affirmation for the pastor’s preaching. The journal stated, “My pastor is already ‘doing it’ and the application design team was more a fine-tuning process.” I appreciate this individual’s perspective; however, I believe because of the application design team, I am “doing it better.”

Serendipitous Experience #5

The pastor will experience numerous challenges seeking input from an application design team.

Challenge #1 more work for the pastor. One of the difficulties of this research project resulted from the vast amount of healthy input from the team about application. On average, I spent three to four hours reviewing the team’s material from each session. Digesting their suggestions required insight and much prayer. Although my time for sermon preparation increased on average five to six hours a week, I believe the quality of the sermon increased accordingly.

Challenge #2 dealing with deadlines. During the project, I experienced difficulty providing the exegesis to the team in a timely manner. The literature review suggests a proactive approach is vital to the success of the team, as they support the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. The more proactively the team engages

the exegetical material, the greater the value of the team to the pastor. During the fourth week of the project, I fell behind in the exegesis. Participant 1 expressed concern:

> It is Wednesday. I do not have your exegesis in my little pinkies. Perhaps other team members can function at the last minute. I do not sit on my thumbs much. Time is precious. You need to be sensitive to the schedules of the members. Timely submission of the outline is paramount.

I appreciate the honest feedback from participant 1. Of course, the team should function by the spirit of the law and model flexibility. However, the pastor who wishes to implement an application design team must be disciplined and proactive in sermon preparation.

Recommendations

Although I am delighted with the overall outcome of the project, some weaknesses exist. To perfect the process of gaining input for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word I am recommending five changes to the original plan.

Recommendation #1

A fourth criteria of "time" should be included to participate as a team member.

Throughout the study two members expressed disappointment with the business of life and frustration about time involved in preparing for and attending the sessions. The journal entry of participant 1 reads, "While I think the application design team would enhance a Pastor's ability to shape his sermons and better fit them to the congregation, I can't help but wonder how long volunteers would be willing to sustain their efforts." Later the same individual wrote, "To sustain such an effort would require a huge commitment, equivalent or greater than teaching a full time Sunday School class." Responding to the questionnaire, participant 2 agreed saying, "I would only commit to future involvement if I let go of another ministry." I affirm their assessment regarding the

time necessary to serve on an application design team. Individuals must view their involvement with the application design team as a primary ministry. Therefore, adding the criteria of time to engage as a team member makes sense.

Recommendation #2

I recommend modifying the application chart to simplify the process and include questions that further the relevance of the biblical text.

Participant 2 stated the application design chart was helpful but at times confusing. Although the training overcame some of the confusion, simplifying the chart will aid the process for accurate and relevant application. The adjustments include limiting the ladder of abstraction to two levels: straight across or up one rung. In addition, the seven key categories of application developed by Doriani need further clarification. Spending more time in training, providing further examples of each of the seven categories, will be helpful. Finally, I see value in adding a new section to the application grid to prompt ideas about the relevance of application. This new section will include five more categories for consideration: biography (personal and others), present-day issues (local, national, and global), church history, media (movie clips, visual aids, and metaphors), and the arts (music, drama, and dance).

Recommendation #3

I recommend developing multiple application design teams to support long-term involvement.

Participant 1 suggested developing multiple teams from the first team and rotate their involvement for sermon making. I affirm this suggestion for various reasons. First, this approach would provide margin for team members. The concern over time surfaced

throughout the study. Multiple teams would create margin for participants, thus providing continuity for lasting ministry. More teams will create more freedom for involvement.

Second, multiple teams will free participants to begin preparing in advance for their season of feeding into the sermon. The process of immersion could begin months before the meetings start. For instance, preparation of team A could begin in January to support the pastor three months later in April. While team A is supporting the pastor from April to June, team B could begin the process for their support in July.

Third, because the first four members served faithfully, creating two teams from this first group provides a solid foundation on which to build. Each new team would have one or two previous members serving as a catalyst for the team. I discussed this model with participant 2 and the response was favorable. Initially, the pastor's investment is greater; however, over time, broadening the team provides significant benefits for longevity and multiplication of ministry.

Recommendation #4

I recommend maintaining the highest standard for participating on the team.

Setting the standard at the beginning established commitment as a core value of the team. All team members affirmed, signed, and kept the covenant throughout the ten weeks. Every participant read the book of Philippians once a week for one month. In addition, each team member read Applying the Bible by Kuhatschek and completed the four training sessions. Furthermore, every member regularly prepared to give input to the sermon and turned in their application worksheets on time. Finally, the whole team committed to praying together before every session. I am convinced the quality of the input to the sermon relates directly to the commitment of the team. Accurate and relevant

application of the biblical text is predicated on the team's commitment to the highest standard of training, immersion, preparation, and prayer.

Recommendation #5

I recommend application design teams to support the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

The questionnaire reinforces my recommendation about the application design team and presents an overwhelming argument for the continuation at First Baptist Church. Two questions address continuing the work of the application design team at the church. Question three states, "I believe this type of team should continue at First Baptist Church in assisting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word." The team responded with an average of 9.25 out of 10. Participant 1 said, "I believe in the concept. It was time consuming but very worthwhile to me personally." Participant 2 wrote, "Although it was more work for the pastor, I definitely believe it enhanced and improved his preaching." Finally, participant 4 concluded that "First Baptist benefited from the application design team; it needs to continue." In addition, question 7 asks, "I would recommend this approach to other pastors who desire to be more accurate and relevant in the application of God's Word." Again, the team registered a favorable score with an average of 7.5 out of 10. Any hesitation recommending this model to other pastors relates mainly to the participants, not the idea. Team members continually expressed concern about individual participants and their ability to adhere to the team criteria. The application design team demands the highest quality of people who adhere to the four qualities of team: character, competency, chemistry, and clock.

As the teaching pastor at First Baptist Church, I anticipate renewing the

application design team once my dissertation is completed. I will begin selecting the team starting with the four original participants. The reasons for creating the new team from the existing team are many. Question 4 asks, “If asked, and time allowed, I would participate in another study sometime in the future (in the next year or two).” All team members affirmed their future participation; however, the degree of affirmation from team members was surprising. Two team members gave the highest score of 10, while the other two gave a score of 9. Participant 3 commented on the team chemistry saying, “There is a closeness that comes when a group of people dive into God’s Word.” Participant 2 said, “I really enjoyed being a part of the study and look forward to the future.” In addition, participant 1 reflected on the value of teaming for character development saying, “I would participate without hesitation. I grew significantly during this time. I think it was probably more beneficial to me than the Pastor.”

The second reason I would build the new team starting with the existing team is because the criteria of chemistry, competency, and character were exhibited in each of the team members. Throughout our ten weeks together, every team member exhibited humility, care, encouragement, and support for each other and the process.

Future Research

This research evaluated the team’s contribution to the pastor for accurate and relevant application of God’s Word. The study did not address the response of the congregation as a whole about the input of the team. Further research can build on this model and explore the value of the input for accurate and relevant application from the vantage point of the congregation.

In addition, this study focused on nonvocational members providing input for

sermon application. Two of the three churches I examined received input to the sermon from their staff team. A study of the staff-driven model may provide a resource for churches large enough to set up such a team.

Final Reflection

"We are preaching with you pastor" is a wonderful summary of my experience with the application design team. Ecclesiastes 4:9 teaches that "two are better than one." Solomon presents the reason for this truth: teams "have a good return for their work" (Eccles. 4:9b). I am grateful to the four participants who assisted me with the accurate and relevant application of God's Word. I trust our team worked diligently to overcome Dr. Robinson's concern regarding heresy in the application of the sermon. I believe the team helped me handle the Word of God more accurately. I hope this chapter reflects how enthusiastic I am about a team feeding into the sermon for accurate and relevant application.

One must remember though, developing healthy application design teams is hard work. It requires the pastor to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The pastor must assemble the right team and develop them to get the desired result. Accurate and relevant application is the by-product of a team committed to God, each other, and a systematic process for application. Because of this wonderful experience, I look forward to selecting, training, and working with application design teams in the future.

APPENDIX A

Training the Team

Session #1

A. Understanding the Original Setting.

1. A case study from Matthew 18:20. The case study involves examining the genre; book themes; preceding passage; mood; and scholarly evangelical commentary.

Understanding the Original Setting

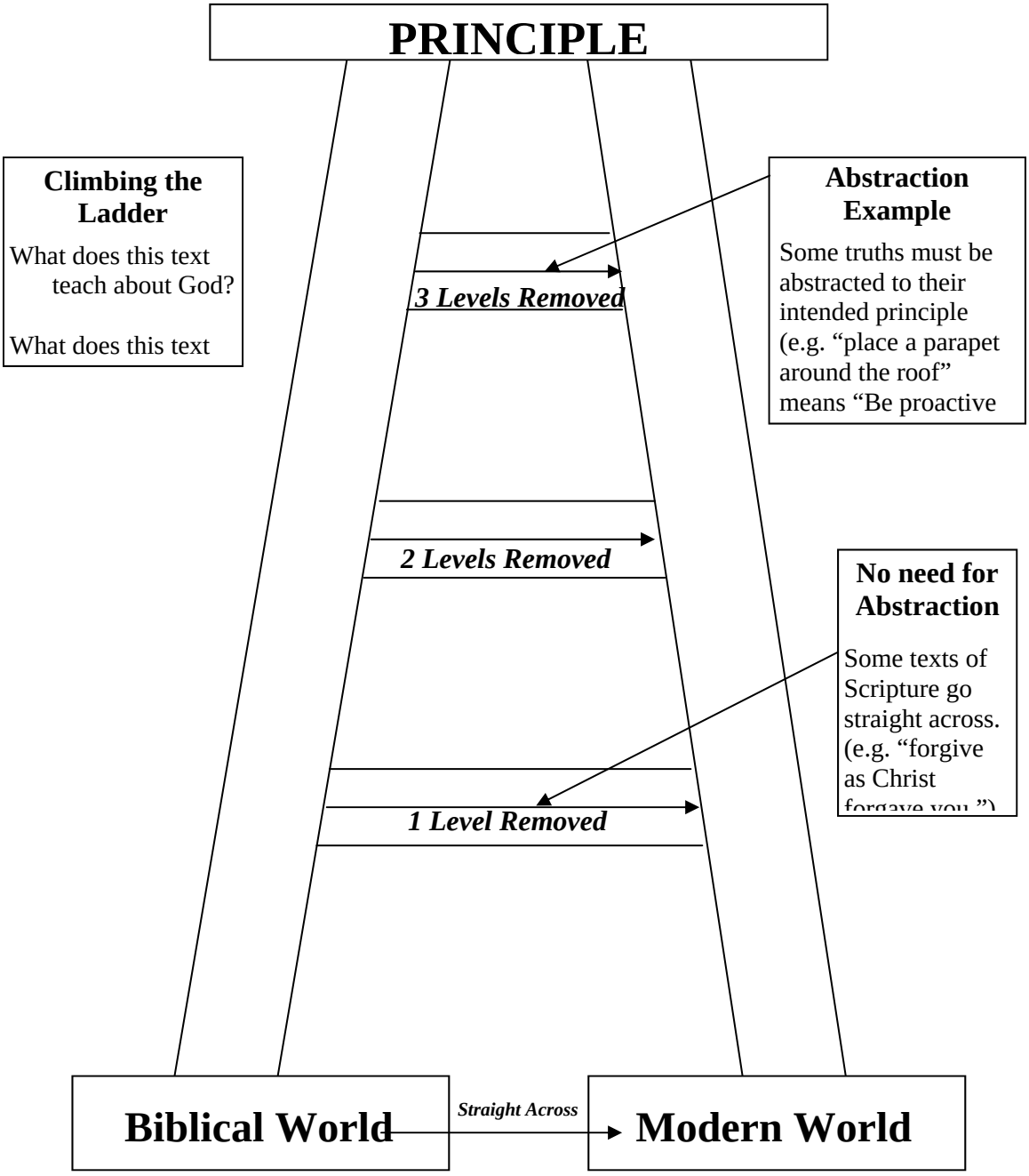
Biblical Passage - _____

Genre	Overall Themes	Flow	Mood	Evangelical Scholars

Session #2

A. Finding General Principles

1. The Ladder of Abstraction



2. Three Key Questions to Ask

Question #1: Does the author state a general principle?

Question #2: Why was this specific command or instruction given?

Question #3: Does the broader context reveal a general principle?

B. Applying General Principles Today

C. Options for Applying the Principles to Everyday Life

Option 1: Apply the principles to the identical situation.

Option 2: Applying a principle to a comparable situation.

Option 3: Applying Principles to different situations.

Session 3

Twenty-Eight Options for the Relevance of a Biblical Text

Seven Categories of Application In God's Word				
Rule				
Ideal				
Doctrine				
Narrative Redemptive Acts				
Narrative Exemplary Acts				
Image				
Song or Prayer				
Four Moral Questions	*What Should I Be?*	*What Should I Do?*	*What Should I Pursue?*	*What Do I Need To Discern Among These Competing Elements?*

Source: Doriani.

Jesus Models the Principlization of Application in the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5

Verses	**Command**	**How Not to Obey it**	**How to obey it**
Matt. 5:21-26	Don't murder.	Don't merely refrain from the act (21b,22)	Refrain from the attitude. as well as its outer expressions: a. wrong words(22) b. unreconciled condition (23,24) c. court trials (25,26)
vv.27-31	Don't commit adultery.	Don't merely refrain from the act (27). Don't divorce for sinful reasons supposing that God's command in Deut. 24 refers only to having divorce proceedings in order.	Refrain from lustful desire and from looking lustfully at another (28). Create conditions that make it hard to sin (29.30). Divorce only on grounds of fornication (32).
vv.33-37	Don't swear.	Don't swear by: a. heaven (34). b. earth (35) c. Jerusalem (35) d. your head (36) Don't swear at all (33).	Let your yes mean yes, And your no mean no (37).
vv.38-42	Do good to all men.	Don't use a civil law to justify personal revenge (38,39).	Do good by: a. turning cheek (39). b. giving coat too (40). c. going second mile (41). d. giving and lending to those in need (42).
vv.43-47	Love your enemies.	Don't love neighbors and hate enemies (43).	Love enemies by: a. praying for persecutors (44). b. being like Father, who does good to evildoers (45,48).

Source: Adams, Preaching with Purpose 127-29.

Verses	**Command**	**How Not to Obey it**	**How to obey it**
Matt. 6:1-4	Give charity.	Don't give to be seen by others: a. don't blow trumpets (2). b. don't give in synagogue (2). c. don't give on the street (2). d. don't watch your own giving (3).	Give secretly (1,4).
vv. 5,6	Pray.	Don't pray to be seen by others like hypocrites: a. in synagogues (5). b. on street corners (5).	Pray privately: a. in your room (6). b. with door shut (6).
vv.7-15	Pray.	Don't pray repetitiously like heathen: a. needlessly (7). b. with a lot of words (7).	Pray simply, briefly like the model I give you (9-13).
vv. 16-18	Fast.	Don't fast to be seen by others like hypocrites: a. by looking gloomy (16). b. by disfiguring your face (16). c. by showing your anointing (17).	Fast privately: Anoint face, then wash it (17).
vv. 19-24	Store up treasures In heaven.	Don't store treasures on earth (19). Don't try to serve both God and money (24).	Solve the problem: a. it is not in money. b. it is in you -eye Not in what it sees Serve God alone (24).
vv. 25-34	Trust God to meet needs.	Don't focus your concerns And efforts on needs like pagans: a. food (25-32). b. clothing (25-32)	Focus efforts on: a. His kingdom. b. His righteousness. Focus on today's responsibilities.

Source: Adams, Preaching with Purpose 127-29.

Verses	**Command**	**How Not to Obey it**	**How to obey it**
Matt. 7:1-6	Judge properly.	Don't judge others a. when you have a bigger problem yourself (3,4). b. when the other person is an unbeliever who won't appreciate it (6).	Judge only: a. when you judge as you want to be judged (2). b. when your own problem is solved (5). c. when the other is a brother (5,6).
vv.7-12	Ask.	Don't hesitate or doubt (implied)	Ask, seek, knock, knowing God gives as a good Father (11).
vv. 13,14	Enter the way of life.	Don't enter by the wide gate (13).	Enter by the narrow gate (14).
vv. 15-20	Watch out for false prophets.	Don't follow those a. in sheep's clothing (15) b. whose fruit is bad (16-20)	Follow those with good fruit.
vv. 21-29	Be genuine and enter the kingdom.	Enter not by empty profession (21-23). Not by hearing alone (26,27).	Enter by hearing, professing, and doing Christ's will (21,24, 25).

Source: Adams, Preaching with Purpose 127-29.

Session 4

A Model for the Principlization of Application

Discerning the meaning, significance, and implications of a text!

Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence.

Significance refers to the implications of that meaning in different situations.

Implications are the unstated but valid meanings of the text that serve as a bridge from interpretation to application.

Biblical Text	***Eternalized*** "What in this text is always true?"	***Contemporize*** "What in this text is true now?"	Life Application Sermon
	Universalize "What in this text is true for all people?"	***Personalize*** "What in this text is true for you?"	
	Principlization "Is there a principle behind the particular statement of the text?" (may need to be done)	***Particularize*** "How does this principle apply to particular situations now?" (suggestive, not prescriptive)	

Application Design Team Chart

The **Criteria** for Accurate & Relevant Application

Sermon - _____ Preaching Date: _____

	Your own personal thoughts or questions.	Rate your understanding and contribution Scale of 1 to 10 1 being low!
Session 1: Understanding the Original Setting		
Session 2: Determined Principles by **Utilizing the Ladder of Abstraction**		
Three Questions Answered!		
1. Does the author state a general principle?		
2. Why was this specific command or instruction given?		
3. Does the broader context of Scripture reveal a general principle?		
Session 3: Doriani's Chart 28 Options for Accurate and Relevant Application		
Seven Key Categories Rule, Ideal, Doctrine, Redemptive Acts, Exemplary Acts, Image, Song or Prayer		
4 Questions: Being, Doing, Pursuing, Discerning		
Session 4: Application verses **Implication**		
Application to the **context** of FBCA		
Immersion and Proactivity I interacted with the sermon text and sermon outline provided by the pastor to prepare for input during the team meeting.		

APPENDIX B

The Process of Team Sermon Making

Southeast Christian

In the fall before the New Year, the preaching team at Southeast convenes for a one-day retreat. Participants come prepared with sermon series ideas purposing to develop the following years preaching calendar. Participants promote their unique series, with reasons why the series needs preaching. The comprehensive resources are compared to previous years and delimiting takes place. Deciding on topics is easier because the leadership stays committed to addressing challenging issues such as stewardship, outreach, or dealing with life's pain. Team members vote on their favorite ideas and the next year's series is born. Once the series are determined, titles and Scriptures are attached to the individual messages. This retreat results in a macro plan on which the leadership can build in months to come.

Once the big picture is developed, the team meets weekly for three more meetings. Monday's meeting is dedicated to presenting ideas for the following Sunday's sermon. The preaching and worship team are involved getting a clearer picture for Sunday worship. In addition, research assistants provide their input for the preacher to consider, including illustrations, potential outlines, and sermon resources from books, etc. On Thursday of the same week, two more meetings transpire. The first meeting includes lunch and a roundtable discussion. The focus of this meeting is the upcoming sermon on Sunday. To prepare for the meeting, the preacher presents the first draft of the manuscript to the team before the meeting. The expectation is for team members to read it and come prepared with input for the sermon. At the meeting I attended, B. Russell presented a

wonderful manuscript that was well received by the team. Bob walked the team through the manuscript, point after point, story by story, and illustration after illustration. At times, very little input and discussion transpired. At other times, much discussion ensued regarding a particular point, story, or illustration. Most comments related to the application and relevance of the sermon. The conclusion of the ninety-minute process gave the preacher input for revising the manuscript. The next meeting focused on the upcoming series for the following month. Review of the sermon titles and Scriptures took place. The responsible preacher for the weekend message presented the first draft of the outline. Various team members came prepared with outlines already developed. Other team members fed off the group's input and created a generic outline during the meeting.

The value of team preaching at Southeast allows the pastors both to receive ongoing and proactive input but also to take a break and begin working on their sermons a few weeks before the preaching event. Not having to preach week after week allows the preacher more time for exegesis and application. B. Russell told me that application took two-thirds of his preparation time for sermon making. The sermon germinates over time in the life of the preparer and results in a powerful preaching ministry at Southeast Christian.

Community Christian

Nine to twelve months before the sermon is preached, all the staff, teaching pastors, and the New Thing Network gather (onsite and via teleconferencing) for a brainstorming session to get ideas for preaching series and potential titles. The staff brings their ideas and materials to the meeting. Tim Southerland asks this focus group the following question: "What is your leadership role telling you we should do?" This

information is gathered and collated. This team meets twice a year. Thirteen to fifteen weeks before preaching the sermon, the teaching pastors brainstorm the “Big Idea Graphs.” Thirteen to ten weeks before preaching the sermon, the teaching pastor writes and distributes the “Big Idea Graphs” to the teaching team. Ten to thirteen weeks before the Creative Arts Teams brainstorm the content of the worship service, including video, music, theatre, etc). Nine weeks before the Big Idea Creative Team plans the worship services. Five weeks before the Arts Team reviews service plans. Twenty-four days before preaching the sermon, the Teaching Team designs the message and short film. Sixteen days before preaching the sermon, the Teaching Team completes the first draft of the manuscript, version 1.0. Thirteen days before preaching the sermon, the Teaching Team submits PowerPoint presentation requests. Nine days before the production of both a short film and the PowerPoint takes place. The media team, in concert with the teaching pastor, reviews the product before the final distribution. One to three days before preaching the sermon, the final message manuscript and short film are distributed. The church tapes the first worship service on Saturday night and distributes the resource. Gathering feedback from all parties involved takes place the following week through a “Zoomerang Survey.” The average series is four weeks in length with the summer series lasting longer. Community Christian Church promotes three teaching points every week. The live, in-house preacher is supported by a movie and video-cast.

APPENDIX C

Team Covenant

As a member of this team, I covenant with God and this group to do the following:

1. To complete the reading of Jack Kuhatschek's book, Applying the Bible, before team meetings begin on June 26.
2. To attend all four training sessions that will take place Monday night June 5 and 12, from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. Alternate make-up dates include June 7 and 14.
3. To interact with the text and outline provided by the pastor and come prepared to the input session ready to contribute.
4. To read the book of Philippians once a week for four continuous weeks before the team meetings begin on June 25.
5. To make every reasonable effort to participate in all input sessions on Monday nights. The meeting dates include June 25, July 3, 10, 17, 24, August 7, 14. To make every reasonable effort to participate in worship on Sundays during this time period.
6. To provide honest and relevant input to the process of sermon-making.
7. To journal your experience on a weekly basis.
8. To grant the pastor honest feedback through a questionnaire that will be used to evaluate your experience and the perceived value of the team, contributing to the accurate and relevant application of God's Word for the sermon.

Name: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

Team Satisfaction

Thank you for committing yourself to the Lord, his church, and your pastor over the past three months. The qualitative nature of this project purposes to evaluate both the journey of each member as well as the journey of the team. To insure legitimate conclusions about the team supporting the pastor for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word, your honest and sincere response to this questionnaire is essential.

Each question allows for two types of responses. The first response is a numerical system of satisfaction. Scoring 1 signals least favorable, while scoring 10 marks a highly favorable response. In addition, each question allows space for your personal comments. Please include both the numerical and written responses. Combining these two responses will aid the evaluation.

1. I sense the team truly contributed to assisting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

2. I sense my personal input contributed to assisting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

3. I believe this type of team should continue at First Baptist Church in assisting the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

4. If asked, and time allowed, I would participate in another study sometime in the future (in the next year or two).

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

5. I believe reading Applying the Bible contributed to my ability to assist the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

6. I believe the four training sessions were essential for team members to assist the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

7. I would recommend this approach to other pastors who desire to be more accurate and relevant in the application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

8. If asked, I would recommend to other members of the body of Christ to participate in the training and team effort to support the pastor in the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

9. I sensed the pastor frequently used material and suggestions presented by team for the accurate and relevant in the application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

10. I sensed because of the diversity of the team, the application of God's Word related to a more diverse population of the congregation.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

11. I periodically heard the pastor use my suggestions for the accurate and relevant in the application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

12. I regularly came prepared to contribute to the team for the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

13. I sense my personal ability to apply God's Word accurately and relevantly in my own life was enhanced by participating in this study.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

14. As a teacher of the Bible, I sense my ability to apply God's Word accurately and relevantly will be enhanced by participating in this study.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

15. I personally believe the team enhanced the pastor's effort, and he became a better preacher over the past seven weeks as he more accurately and relevantly applied God's Word to the church.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

16. I believe the weekly, personal preparation, was an essential part of contribution to the accurate and relevant application of God's Word.

Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

_____

_____

APPENDIX E

The Epistle to the Philippians

The Birthplace of European Christianity—Acts 16:14-34

The ABCs of Philippians![5]

Authorship

1. Who wrote the book of Philippians?
2. When did Paul write it?
3. Where is the place of origin?
4. To whom did Paul write?
5. What are the unique themes of the epistle?
6. Why did Paul write this letter? What is the purpose of the letter?
7. The Old Testament in the New Testament

Background

1. The historical context of the book of Philippians.
2. The strategic work of God's Spirit in establishing a diverse church.
3. The strategic location of Philippi.
4. The controversy over the flow of the epistle to the Philippians.
5. Themes from Philippians.

Characteristics

1. Philippians resonates with joy.
2. Philippians has an innovative style represented in epistolary genre.
3. A general outline of Philippians.
4. Philippians applied.

---

[5]I provided a manual for each team member to orient them to the book of Philippians.

WORKS CITED

Achtemeier, Elizabeth Rice. Creative Preaching: Finding the Words. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.

Adams, Jay. Audience Adaptations in the Sermons and Speeches of Paul. Studies in Preaching 2. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.

---. "Preaching with Personalized How-To." The Journal of Pastoral Practice 4 (1980): 127-30.

---. Preaching with Purpose: The Urgent Task of Homiletics. Grand Rapids: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1986.

---. Truth Apparent. Stanley, NC: Timeless Texts, 1982.

---. Truth Applied: Application in Preaching. Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1990.

Barnes, Albert. Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Acts of the Apostles: Designed for Sunday-School Teachers and Bible-Classes. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1870.

Barr, Browne, and Mary Eakin. The Ministering Congregation. Philadelphia: Pilgrim's Press, 1972.

Barth, Karl. Prayer and Preaching. 1st British ed. London: SCM, 1964.

Bauer, Walter, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979. Logos Library System.

Baumann, Dan. An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972.

Bellah, Robert, N., et al. Habits of the Heart. Los Angeles: U of California P, 1996.

Berkhof, Louis. Principles of Biblical Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950.

Blackwood, Andrew Watterson. Doctrinal Preaching for Today: Case Studies of Bible Teachings. New York: Abingdon, 1956.

Bohren, Rudolph. Preaching and Community. Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1965.

Braga, James. How to Prepare Bible Messages. Rev. ed. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1981.

Broadus, John Albert, and Vernon L. Stanfield. On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons. 4th ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979.

Brown, Colin. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986. 3 vols.

Brown, H. C., Jr. A Quest for Reformation Preaching. Nashville: Broadman, 1968.

Calvin, Jean. Institutes of the Christian Religion. The Library of Christian Classics. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.

Campbell, Donald K., ed. Walvoord, a Tribute. Chicago: Moody, 1982.

Chapell, Bryan. Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.

Cladis, George. Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

Craddock, Fred B. As One without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching. Enid, OK: Phillips UP, 1971.

---. Preaching. Nashville: Abingdon, 1985.

Creswell, W. John. Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach. 2nd ed. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003.

Cross, Joseph M. “Historical and Contemporary Trends in Biblical Application.” Thesis. Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985.

Demaray, Donald E. An Introduction to Homiletics. 3rd ed. Indianapolis: Light and Life, 1990.

Doriani, Daniel M. Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001.

Dowley, Tim. The History of Christianity. Oxford, England: Lion, 1977.

Duduit, Michael, ed. Handbook of Contemporary Preaching. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.

Eggold, Henry J. Preaching Is Dialogue. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

Estes, Daniel J. Bibliotheca Sacra: 1955–1995. Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1997.

Fabarez, Michael. Preaching That Changes Lives. Nashville: Nelson, 2002.

Fee, Gordon D. “Exegesis and Spirituality: Reflections on Completing the Exegetical Circle.” Crux 31.4 (1995): 30.

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Freeman, Harold. Variety in Biblical Preaching. Waco, TX: Word, 1987.

Ford, D. W. Cleverley. The Ministry of the Word. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

Forsyth, P. T. Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind. New York: George H. Doran, 1907.

Goldingay, John. Models for Interpretation of Scripture. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Greidanus, Sidney. The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.

Guthrie, Donald. The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. 2nd ed. Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1990.

Hamilton, Edith. The Greek Way to Western Civilization. New York: MacMillan, 1925.

Henrichsen, Walter A., and Gayle Jackson. A Layman's Guide to Applying the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.

Hesselgrave, David J. Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

Heuvel, Albert van den. The Humiliation of the Church. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966.

Hostetler, Michael J. Introducing the Sermon: The Art of Compelling Beginnings. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

Houghton, S. M. Sketches from Church History. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980.

Howe, Reuel L. Partners in Preaching; Clergy and Laity in Dialogue. New York: Seabury, 1967.

Hughes, R. Kent. Acts: The Church Afire. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1996.

Hull, William. "The Contemporary World and the Preaching Task." Duduit 571-87.

Iacocca, Lee, and Williams Novak. Iacocca. New York: Bantam, 1984.

Jensen, Irving Lester. Enjoy Your Bible: Making the Most of Your Time with God's Word. Wheaton, IL: H. Shaw, 1992.

Johnson, Elliott E. Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990.

Kaiser, Walter C. Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.

Kantzer, Kenneth S. and International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. Applying the Scriptures. Grand Rapids: Academy, 1987.

Killinger, John. Fundamentals of Preaching. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

Kirkpatrick, Dow. Six Days—and Sunday. New York: Abingdon, 1968.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard. Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Dallas: Word, 1993.

Kraft, Charles H. "Interpreting in Cultural Context." Zuck 245-57.

Kuhatschek, Jack. Applying the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Larkin, William J. Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.

Larkin, William J., D. Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon W. Robinson. Acts. The Ivp New Testament Commentary Series; 5. Downers, IL: InterVarsity, 1995.

Lewis, Ralph L., and Gregg Lewis. Inductive Preaching: Helping People Listen. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983.

Logos Library System. Computer software. Vers.2.1g. CD-ROM. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1992.

Long, Thomas G. The Witness of Preaching. 2nd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster-John Knox, 2005.

Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida. Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989. Logos Library System.

MacArthur, John. Rediscovering Expository Preaching. Dallas: Word, 1992.

Marshall, I. Howard. The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary. 1st American ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Massey, James Earl. “Application in the Sermon” Duduit 209-14.

McCullough, Gerald. Man’s Faith and Freedom. New York: Abingdon, 1962.

McLaughlin, John. “Shared Preaching.” America 120 (1969): 342-43.

McManus, Erwin Raphael. An Unstoppable Force. Loveland, CO: Group, 2001.

McQuilkin, J. Robertson. Understanding and Applying the Bible. Chicago: Moody, 1983.

Miller, Calvin. “Narrative Preaching” Duduit 103-16.

Morgan, G. Campbell. Preaching. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1937.

Motz, Arnell. A Workbook on Life-Changing Preaching. San Diego: Church Leadership Library, 1992.

Newton, Joseph Fort. The New Preaching. Nashville: Cokesberry, 1930.

Ogilvie, Lloyd John. Drumbeat of Love: The Unlimited Power of the Spirit as Revealed in the Book of Acts. Waco, TX: Word, 1976.

Osborne, Grant R. The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991.

Pagitt, Doug. Preaching Re-Imagined. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Perry, Lloyd Merle. Biblical Preaching for Today’s World. Chicago: Moody, 1973.

Plummer, Alfred. A Critical Commentary and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920.

Pritchard, Raymond Clarence. “Preaching Linked with Small Groups as a Means of Increasing the Understanding and Application of Biblical Truth.” Diss. Biola U, Talbot School of Theology, 1989.

Quicke, Michael J. 360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2003.

Radmacher, Earl D., and Robert D. Preus, eds. Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: [Papers from ICBI Summit II]. Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984.

Ramm, Bernard. “The Devotional and Practical Use of the Bible.” Zuck 267-77.

---. Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics. 3rd rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970.

Randolph, David James. The Renewal of Preaching. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969.

Read, H. C. David. Preaching about the Needs of Real People. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988.

Reid, Clyde. The Empty Pulpit. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

Reinecker, Fritz. A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament. Ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976. 2 vols.

Reu, Johann Michael, and Albert Theodore William Steinhaeuser. Homiletics: A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Preaching. Chicago: Wartburg, 1922.

Richard, Ramesh. Scripture Sculpture: A Do-It-Yourself Manual for Biblical Preaching. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.

Ridderbos, Herman. The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles. London: Tyndale, 1962.

Rieu, C. H. The Acts of the Aposltes by St. Luke. Baltimore: Penguin, 1957.

Ritschl, Dietrich. A Theology of Proclamation. Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960.

Robinson, Haddon W. "Biblical Preaching." Lecture to Doctor of Ministry students. Asbury Theological Seminary. Wilmore, KY. Dec. 2003.

Robinson, Haddon W. Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

Robinson, Haddon W., and Scott M. Gibson. Making a Difference in Preaching. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

Robinson, Haddon W. "Listening to the Listeners." Leadership Journal Apr. 1983. 26 Oct. 2005 <http://www.ctlibrary.com/print.html>.

Rowell, Ed. "The Heresy of Application." Leadership Journal 1 Oct. 1997. 26 Oct. 2005 <http://www.ctlibrary.com/print.html>.

Russell, Bob. Personal interview. 15 Mar. 2006.

Russell, Bob, and Rusty Russell. When God Builds a Church: 10 Principles for Growing a Dynamic Church: The Remarkable Story of Southeast Christian Church. West Monroe, LA: Howard, 2000.

Senge, Peter M., et al. The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization. New York: Currency-Doubleday, 1994.

Shaw, R. Daniel, and Charles Edward van Engen. Communicating God's Word in a Complex World: God's Truth or Hocus Pocus? Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Shealy, Brian. "Redrawing the Line between Hermeneutic and Application." Master's Seminary Journal 1997: 85-105.

Shelley, Marshall. “From the Editor.” Leadership Journal 23.1 (Winter 2002). 26 Oct. 2005 <http://www.ctlibrary.com/print.html>.

Smart, James D. The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church; A Study in Hermeneutics. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970.

Smith, Charles W. F. Biblical Authority for Modern Preaching. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960.

Stone, Dave. Refining Your Style: Learning from Respected Communicators. Loveland, CO: Group, 2004.

Stott, John R. W. Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century. 1st American ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Sunukjian, Donald. “The Preacher as Persuader.” Campbell 289-99.

Sweazey, George. Preaching the Good News. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976.

Tan, Paul Lee. The Interpretation of Prophecy. Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1974.

Taylor, John. “Toward the Development of a Model of Application for Contemporary Preaching.” Diss. New Orleans Baptist Seminary, 2001.

Thielicke, Helmut. The Trouble with the Church. Trans. John W. Doberstein. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

Thompson, William D. A Listener’s Guide to Preaching. New York: Abingdon, 1996.

Timmons, Tim. “Why Should They Listen to Me?” Preaching to Convince. Ed. James D. Berkley. Carol Stream, IL: Word, 1986.

Veerman, David. How to Apply the Bible. Life Application Books. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993.

Vine, W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. Grand Rapids: Revell, 1981. Logos Library System.

Vines, Jerry, and Jim Shaddix. Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons. Chicago: Moody, 1999.

Wagner, Roger. Tongues Aflame. Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2004.

Wald, Oletta. The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study. Rev. ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975.

Warren, Rick. Preaching for Life Change. Purpose Driven Conference 2003. Lake Forest, CA: Saddleback Church, 2003.

Wesley, John. The Works of John Wesley. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972.

Whiteman, Darrell. "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge." International Bulletin of Missionary Research 1997: 2-7.

Whitesell, Faris D. Power in Expository Preaching. Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1963.

Whitney, Donald, S. Ten Questions To Diagnose Your Spiritual Health. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001.

Wiersbe, Warren W., and David Wiersbe. The Elements of Preaching. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986.

Wilder, Amos Niven. Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1971.

Willimon, William H. Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.

Zuck, Roy B. "Application in Biblical Hermeneutics and Exposition." Zuck, Rightly Divided 278-96.

---. ed. Rightly Divided: Readings in Biblical Hermeneutics. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996.