

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE NECESSITY AND USE OF APPLICATION  
IN THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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## ABSTRACT

## THE NECESSITY AND USE OF APPLICATION IN THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

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**Topic**

The topic chosen for this project is “The Necessity and Use of Application in the Expository Sermon.” It is this writer’s contention that application is the least understood, least used and most abused element of the expository sermon. Application is one of the most necessary elements in the expository sermon, yet remains one of the most overlooked and ignored features of the preaching event. This project will first establish the need for application in the expository sermon, examine methods of application and give comprehensive recommendations for using application in the expository sermon.

**Goal**

The writer’s intent is clear; to point out the value of application in the context of the preaching event and to discover and discern the most valuable and practical tools available to use application in the most effective manner. This project will be of valuable use to this preacher as well as all those who desire to connect the never-changing biblical truth to the ever-changing modern world.

**Process**

The project will begin with a clear description of application in the expository sermon. Definitions will be offered and examples will be given to clearly define the meaning of application in the expository sermon. Next, the Bible will be used to support the use of

and call for application in the expository sermon. After a biblically based mandate for application, different methods of application will be studied. A broad sample of preachers from different churches, denominations, areas and levels will be studied to determine the different types of application. Finally, the writer will offer a preferred model for application and point to its value to the preacher and to the hearer.

Abstract Length: 273 words

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## THE NECESSITY AND USE OF APPLICATION IN THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

### **Introduction**

It is widely accepted by most homiletics, professors and expositors that there are three major elements within the expository sermon. These elements are as follows: the introduction, the body and the conclusion.

As its name indicates, the introduction is first within the expository sermon. The introduction provides the expositor with a unique opportunity to gain the attention of the audience, reveal the need to hear the message, introduce and read the text, and state the main idea of the sermon.

Next within the expository sermon is the body. The body of the expository sermon contains the division statements, which are garnered from the Scripture and support the main idea of the message. The division statement is a short and concise declaration that provides a basic framework for the message. It is the skeleton that undergirds the sermon. Sermon divisions elaborate and enlarge upon the main idea of the sermon and relate the pertinent concepts from the biblical author's content. In his work, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, Greg Heisler wrote, "The natural divisions of the text . . . become the sermon's division statements, with each division supporting the central proposition of the sermon."<sup>1</sup>

Contained within these division statements are four major elements that are

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 123.

necessary for a proper expository sermon: explanation, illustration, argumentation and application. This fourth element, application, will be the major focus of this project.

The third major element within the expository sermon is the conclusion. The conclusion gives the preacher the opportunity for restatement of the main idea as well as a call for response or appeal to the hearer. The conclusion also provides an opportunity for the expositor to use an illustration to drive home the main idea of the sermon.

The focus of this work will be “The Necessity and Use of Application in the Expository Sermon.” Hence, the vast majority of this paper will center upon the fourth element contained within the body of the sermon, application.

Application is absolutely essential and critical to an expository sermon. Some have said that application answers the “so what” of the sermon. In other words, when the message is delivered and the application is given, it should answer the “so what” question of the listener.<sup>2</sup> Application reveals to the listener the importance of the information conveyed within the sermon.

While the explanation of Scripture is essential for the expository sermon, it merely offers doctrine and information if application does not exist. Application in the expository sermon strives not just for information, but also for transformation. Application moves the message from the days of the prophet, preacher, or apostle to the present day. It moves the impetus and onus of the text to the modern day listener.

The expository message should not leave the listeners saying, “That was interesting,” or “I never knew that before.” Instead, sermons need to have a “Wow!” factor. Sermons need to leave the listener feeling blessed, convicted, motivated, and

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<sup>2</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 86.

challenged. Spirit-led application provides a means for consistently seeing conviction and life-change occur. Sadly, the missing ingredient in many Bible studies, sermons, and Christian lives is application.<sup>3</sup>

Application is absolutely critical to the expository sermon. Simply stated, without application there is no expository sermon. Greg Heisler wrote, “Secure your sermon to the heart through penetrating application. Expository preaching often gets a bad reputation because it stays in the biblical world and never enters into the contemporary culture. Yet the most engaging expository preaching will always move the listener into the world of application.”<sup>4</sup>

Heisler made it clear that expository preaching must be rooted in the biblical text, but through application it takes the necessary step into the modern-day world. Application reveals how the Bible is relevant to our current situation in the present day. Heisler continued: “The Word of God is relevant – we do not have to ‘make it relevant’ as some would say today! In this phase [of application], we are seeking to pin biblical truth to the heart of our listeners in conjunction with the Holy Spirit’s conviction.”<sup>5</sup>

The expositor must understand the overwhelming need for practical application, but also the mandate for messages grounded in the biblical text. A balance should be discovered between too much explanation and no application or too much application and no explanation. Warren Wiersbe explained that, “a sermon that explains Bible truth but makes no personal and practical application is only a theological lecture. At the same

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<sup>3</sup> Dave Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 123.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

time, a sermon that exhorts and encourages Christian duty, without basing that duty on doctrine, could well be only a piece of religious propaganda. Likewise, a ‘devotional sermon’ that aims only to ‘warm the heart’ will do no lasting good if it has no doctrinal foundation or practical application.”<sup>6</sup>

Hence, the job of the expositor is to mine the deep theological and doctrinal truths of Scripture, then make the necessary connection between the historical text and the contemporary hearer. Application bridges the gap between the pulpit and the pew, or in more modern churches, the stage and the seats. Application connects the message of truth to the heart of the believer.

Application seems to be the least understood, least used and most abused element of the expository sermon. The intention of this work, is to make this truth abundantly clear. In his work, *How to Apply the Bible*, Dave Veerman wrote, “As a communicator, I recognize the value of applications, and the difficulty of making appropriate ones. In fact, in many sermons I hear (and some I’ve preached), the application simply is left out.”<sup>7</sup>

Application is one of the most necessary elements in the expository sermon, yet remains one of the most overlooked and ignored features of the preaching event. This project will first establish the need for application in the expository sermon, examine methods of application and give comprehensive recommendations for using application in the expository sermon.

If application is so essential and valuable to the preacher, the sermon, and the hearer, then it is incumbent upon the expositor to discover and discern the most valuable

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<sup>6</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe and David Wiersbe, *The Elements of Preaching: The Art of Biblical Preaching Clearly and Simply Presented* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Marshall Shelley, *Changing Lives Through Preaching and Worship: Thirty Strategies for Powerful Communication* (Nashville, TN: Moorings, 1995), 60.

and practical tools available to use application in the most effective manner. This will prove to be an invaluable resource to all preachers who desire to connect the never-changing biblical truth to the ever-changing modern world.

This project will begin with a clear description of application in the expository sermon. It will offer definitions and provide examples to define clearly the meaning of application in the expository sermon. Next, the Bible will be used to support the use of and call for application in the expository sermon. After a biblically based mandate for application, different methods of application will be studied. A broad sample of preachers from different churches, denominations, areas and levels will be studied to determine the different types of application. While all of these preachers have varying approaches to and styles of preaching, each one affirms the inerrancy, authority and sufficiency of the Word of God. Finally, the writer will offer a preferred model for application and point to its value to the preacher as well as to the hearer.

## **Section I: What? A Clear Understanding of What is at Stake**

An understanding of the use and necessity of application in the expository sermon demands comprehension of the nature of the expository sermon itself. Application, in fact, is only one element that assists in exposition. Any attempt, however, to delineate the need for application in the expository sermon would be futile if the need for expository preaching were not first established.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the preacher to have a clear understanding of what is at stake. A simple question here will give a general direction for contemplation: “What?” In other words, “What is it that the preacher desires to accomplish with this sermon?” To begin, a goal or purpose for the sermon should be established. In other words, the preacher should begin with the end in mind. What is the preacher’s desire in presenting the sermon? The answer to this question will determine the direction that the sermon takes.

For instance, if the sermon is merely information or lecture, which really is no sermon at all, then application has no place. If the preacher desires to communicate the truth of the Word of God in a relevant and practical way, then a bridge must be built between the biblical text and contemporary culture. This bridge is called application.

Before a case can be made for the value of application in the expository sermon, a case must be made for the value of the expository sermon itself. Different types of preaching must be reviewed and evaluated, definitions must be provided and scrutinized and the rationale and benefits of expository preaching must be clearly presented.

### **Types of Preaching**

There are as many different styles of preaching as there are different styles of preachers. Every preacher has his own unique touch, personality and delivery. And each preacher, if he values the Holy Scripture, will be bound inextricably by Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 4:1-2. In this passage, Paul challenges his protégé, Timothy, to deal truthfully and accurately with the Word of God: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."<sup>8</sup>

Scripture records another challenge given by the faithful preacher Paul to his "son in the faith" in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."<sup>9</sup> Paul offers a significant challenge here: Timothy is not to engage in useless fables or vain teachings. Instead, he is to focus on the Word of God. He is to "do [his] best" to accurately and truthfully handle the Bible so that he will not be ashamed before God.

The challenge to "preach the word" and to "rightly [handle] the word of truth" is the burden and task of the preacher. In order to accomplish this task for the honor and glory of the Lord, one must consider what it means to preach in a way that pleases Him. If this is the preacher's desire, as it certainly should be, then the question must be asked, "What must I do to preach in such a way that pleases the Lord?"

To answer this penetrating question, it is important to first discover and define different categories and types of preaching. According to John MacArthur, "discussions

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Tim. 4:1-2. All English biblical quotations are from the Holy Bible: English Standard Version.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Tim. 2:15.

about preaching divide into three types: topical, textual, and expository.”<sup>10</sup> Certainly there are many different variations and adaptations within these three types of preaching, but virtually any sermon can be categorized under one of these three major headings.

Other authors and pastors have expanded upon this list. For instance, Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix wrote, “Traditionally, sermons have been categorized according to various forms based upon certain qualities. Delineations of these forms frequently have included the expository sermon as another sermon model. Each of the following forms, however, could and should be subjected to the expositional process.”<sup>11</sup>

The authors listed many different types of sermons. This list is more expansive than that provided by MacArthur; however, most of the forms listed below ultimately can be categorized according to his three major headings.

1. **Topical.** The *topical sermon* is built around some particular subject. The idea for the subject may be taken from the Bible or elsewhere.
2. **Textual.** A *textual sermon* is one based on one or two verses from the Bible. The main theme and the major divisions of the sermon come from the text itself.
3. **Narrative.** Traditionally, a *narrative sermon* has been considered simply one based upon a narrative text. In recent days, however, some homiletics have defined it by sermonic form instead of literary genre. Thus, contemporary narrative sermons frequently encompass those messages that, from outset to conclusion, bind the entire message to a single plot as theme.
4. **Biographical.** A *biographical sermon* presents a study of the life of a particular Bible character. The facts about that particular character form the basis for a message with contemporary application.
5. **Dramatic monologue.** A *dramatic monologue sermon* is a specialized form of a biographical sermon in which the preacher becomes the character he is seeking to present.

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<sup>10</sup> John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 29.

6. **Theological.** The *theological sermon* may be similar to a topical, doctrinal sermon in that it expounds some basic Christian belief in order to convey understanding and foster belief.
7. **Ethical discourse.** The *ethical discourse* is based upon a specific Bible motif that teaches the believer an ethical lesson. The purpose is to build Bible morality into the members of the congregation.<sup>12</sup>

While Vines and Shaddix presented a more comprehensive list than presented by MacArthur, it is important to understand their underlying point. Their desire is for the preacher to realize that any genre of preaching, such as those listed above, can and must be subjected to the process of exposition. This entire list certainly can fit into the grid of the three major types of preaching as presented by MacArthur.

MacArthur continued by describing the three major categories of sermons. Topical messages, he writes, “usually combine a series of Bible verses that loosely connect with a theme.”<sup>13</sup> For instance, if the pastor desires to preach on the topic of prayer, he has several options. He can preach an expository message based upon the model prayer of Jesus Christ. He can preach a textual sermon by using one or two verses that serve as a springboard into his message. Or, he can preach on the topic of prayer by interweaving different verses from different passages of Scripture. The third and final example is described as a “topical message.”

The second type of sermon MacArthur mentions is the textual sermon. “Textual preaching uses a short text or passage that generally serves as a gateway into whatever subject the preacher chooses to address.”<sup>14</sup> For instance, if the pastor desires to preach a sermon on a biblical case for abstinence from alcohol, he may be tempted to read one or

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<sup>12</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29-30.

<sup>13</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

two verses on the dangers of alcohol consumption according the Bible, and spend the rest of the sermon giving personal opinions, practical examples and human wisdom.

The truth is that neither the topical nor the textual methods show any serious attempt by the preacher to “preach the word” or “rightly handle the word of truth.” The truth of God’s Word is more powerful than practical examples or personal opinions. Thus, it is incumbent upon the preacher to focus the message upon the Bible. While the preacher may have be humorous, have clever points, powerful illustrations, and compelling truths, nothing can compare to the inherent power of the Bible.

MacArthur explained, “By contrast, expository preaching focuses predominantly on the text(s) under consideration along with its (their) context(s). Exposition normally concentrates on a single text of Scripture, but it is sometimes possible for a thematic/theological message or a historical/biographical discourse to be expository in nature. An exposition may treat any length of passage.”<sup>15</sup> This moves the preacher forward and necessitates a definition of expository preaching. If expository preaching is valuable and necessary, then it is essential that the expository preacher knows and understands what it is.

### **Definitions of Expository Preaching**

The word “expository” comes from the English word “expose.” According to Webster, an exposition is “a discourse to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand.”<sup>16</sup> Based upon this definition, expository preaching should be a discourse, or a sermon, that has as its purpose and intent in accurately, properly and truthfully conveying the meaning of Scripture.

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<sup>15</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1988), 438.

Many definitions of expository preaching exist and many will be examined within these pages. What must be understood is this: the preacher is compelled to communicate the very words of God as recorded in Holy Scripture. It is then incumbent upon the preacher and absolutely necessary to the sermon that the text of the Bible drive the theme and content of the sermon.

In what many expositors would consider the seminal work on expository preaching, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, John A. Broadus defined expository preaching:

An expository discourse may be defined as one, which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture. It by no means excludes argument and exhortation as to the doctrines or lessons, which this exposition develops. It may be devoted to a long passage, or to a very short one, even a part of a sentence. It may be one of a series, or may stand by itself.<sup>17</sup>

Vines and Shaddix made a clear distinction between their definition of preaching and their definition of expository preaching. They defined preaching as “the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response.”<sup>18</sup> They clearly described the task of preaching as communicating biblical truth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

They take their definition of expository preaching to another level. According to Vines and Shaddix, an expository sermon is “a discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions which issue forth from

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<sup>17</sup> John Albert Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. Edwin Charles Dargan, 23d ed., ed. Edwin Charles Dargan (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898), 322.

<sup>18</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 27.

the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.”<sup>19</sup> The authors made a clear distinction between simply preaching a sermon and preaching an expository sermon. In so doing, they offered a practical checklist for the expository sermon.

1. It must be based upon a passage from the Bible. The actual meaning of the passage must be found.
2. The meaning must be related to the immediate and general context of the passage.
3. The eternal, timeless truths in the passage must be elucidated.
4. The truths must be gathered around a compelling theme.
5. The main division of the sermon must be drawn from the structure of the passage itself.
6. Every possible method to apply the truths must be utilized.
7. The hearers must be called to obey those truths and to live them out in daily life.<sup>20</sup>

This list is helpful to the preacher who desires to represent accurately the biblical text in the form of an expository sermon. Other definitions of the expository sermon exist and several will be examined to aid in understanding the value and nature of the expository sermon.

Vines and Shaddix also offer a simple way to understand the nature and makeup of expository preaching. There are three major parts to the expository sermon: exegesis, hermeneutics and homiletics. If these three parts are viewed as steps along a journey, they assist the preacher in reaching the destination of rightly communicating God’s Holy Word.

The first step along the journey to exposition is exegesis. Exegesis is “the

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<sup>19</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

procedure one follows for the discovering the Holy Spirit's intent in a Bible passage."<sup>21</sup>

The preacher wants to rightly communicate and represent the truth of Scripture by discovering the meaning, context, and intent of the Bible passage.

The next step along the journey to exposition is hermeneutics. "Careful exegesis leads the expositor to good hermeneutics - the science of interpreting what a passage of Scripture means.... Hermeneutics enables the preacher to determine what a text *means* as opposed to just what it *says*."<sup>22</sup> This gives the preacher the ability to understand the biblical text and communicate it properly to the hearer. A proper hermeneutic is an invaluable asset to application.

The final step along the journey to exposition is homiletics. Homiletics is "the art and science of saying the same thing as the text of Scripture says. Technically, it is the study of sermon preparation, thus establishing an unbreakable link between the sermon and a right understanding of the meaning of the text on which it is based."<sup>23</sup> Proper exegesis and good hermeneutics will lead to proper homiletics. When the delivery of the sermon is added to this journey, the exposition of Scripture occurs. This is the goal of the faithful preacher of God's Word.

Other definitions aid in gaining a proper perspective concerning expository preaching. Harold Bryson wrote, "Expository preaching is the art of preaching a series of sermons, either consecutive or selective, from a Bible book."<sup>24</sup> Here, Bryson introduces

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<sup>21</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching Through a Bible Book* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 39.

the concept of an expository series in his definition of an expository sermon. This leads the preacher to ask, “Can a sermon be an expository sermon without being a part of a series through a specific book of the Bible?” Many other authors make a distinction that Bryson chooses not to make. They distinguish between the expository series, preaching through an entire book, and the expository sermon, accurately representing the text and context of Scripture in the sermon.<sup>25</sup>

Another definition will assist in clarifying the art of expository preaching.

Haddon Robinson asked the question “What Is Expository Preaching?” in his article by that same title. He answered:

At its best, expository preaching is the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation.<sup>26</sup>

Robinson sheds light on the definition of expository preaching by expanding on the understanding of context. Here, he includes a historical, grammatical and Spirit-guided study. In this definition it is evident that much is involved in determining the context of a Scripture passage. The context must be determined in order for the preacher to remain true to the text and present an expository sermon.

Robinson mentioned the Holy Spirit in his definition, but Greg Heisler greatly expanded on the Holy Spirit’s role in expository preaching in his book, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*. Heisler wrote, “Expository preaching in and of itself is no guarantee that the Holy Spirit will empower

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<sup>25</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, “What Is Expository Preaching?” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 131 (January–March 1974), 57.

the preacher's message. Like any other kind of preaching it can be mechanically flawless but completely lifeless if the Spirit does not empower it."<sup>27</sup> Heisler continued by stating that "some good definitions of expository preaching mention the Holy Spirit, but most do not capture the theological dynamic of Word and Spirit."<sup>28</sup> While many definitions mention the work and role of the Holy Spirit, Heisler's definition centers around that work and role in a powerful and impactful way.

Heisler's definition of Spirit-led expository preaching is as follows:

Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered proclamation of biblical truth derived from the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit by means of a verse-by-verse exposition of the Spirit-inspired text, with a view to applying the text by means of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, first to the preacher's own heart, and then the hearts of those who hear, culminating in an authentic and powerful witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ, and obedient, Spirit-filled living.<sup>29</sup>

Heisler's insight is powerful and illuminating. The same Spirit that inspired the biblical text through the original authors will anoint the preacher who seeks to handle correctly and communicate powerfully the message of the biblical text to the hearer. The Holy Spirit has a role in the entire process. The preacher must possess a high view of Scripture, which is confident of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Bible. Then, the belief in the inspired text necessitates the method of exposition. Through the exposition of Scripture, the Holy Spirit moves and works in the hearts of the preacher and the hearers.

In his enlightening work entitled *Preparing Expository Sermons*, Ramesh Richard

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<sup>27</sup> Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 20.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 21.

provided an interesting definition of a sermon. “The Bible” he writes, “is what God made. Sermons are what we make with what God made.”<sup>30</sup> He continued by offering his definition of expository preaching.

Expository preaching is the contemporization of the central proposition of a biblical text that is derived from proper methods of interpretation and declared through effective means of communication to inform minds, instruct hearts, and influence behavior toward godliness.

There are many levels to this definition that one must consider. First, the expository sermon is concerned with the “central proposition” of the text. The task of the preacher is to bring forth that truth from the ancient text to the modern world. The way to accomplish this daunting task, according to Ramesh Richard, is through informing minds, instructing hearts and influencing behaviors.

When one examines definitions of expository preaching, many similarities begin to emerge. Some themes arise that identify major elements which any definition must contain. While most definitions of expository preaching contain common elements there are as many definitions of expository preaching as there are books that contain the subject. Therefore, it is important and essential to provide a framework or rubric whereby a sermon must be evaluated according to the nature of the definition of the expository sermon.

MacArthur offered a summary in his book *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* that provides a basic and straightforward list of the minimal elements that must be present to identify a sermon as expository.

1. The message finds its sole source in Scripture.
2. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal

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<sup>30</sup> Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 16.

- sense and its context.
4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
  5. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.<sup>31</sup>

While this list is not exhaustive, one deficiency is the absence of the Holy Spirit's role in the inspiration of the biblical text and in leading the preacher through the process of preparation and delivery. With that being noted, this minimal list is sufficient to provide the preacher with a standard whereby the sermon can be examined and measured.

### **Rationale for Expository Preaching**

Once expository preaching is defined, one must establish a rationale or justification for expository preaching. Many of the definitions of expository preaching contain some type of rationale or validation for the method of exposition. There is, however, more that must be said when a preacher asks the question, "Why should I use the expository method in my preaching?" The definitions adequately explain what expository preaching is, but a comprehensive logic for the use of the expository method must be established. It is not enough to know the "what" of expository preaching if the "why" of expository preaching is not uncovered.

The basic and fundamental principle undergirding the proponents of expository preaching is that the Scripture text is of greater value and import than anything else the preacher might deem necessary to say. The Bible states plainly in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."<sup>32</sup> Since the very words of Scripture literally are

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<sup>31</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

breathed-out by God and the content of Scripture is profitable for man, it is paramount that the preacher actually conveys the truth and message of Scripture. To do any less would do damage to the meaning of the passage and reveal an inherent lack of respect for the Word of God.

The preacher must recognize that his authority for preaching is based solely upon the written and inspired word of God.

Ministers can proclaim anything in a stained-glass voice at 11:30 on Sunday morning following the singing of hymns. Yet when they fail to preach the Scriptures, they abandon their authority. No longer do they confront their hearers with a word from God. That is why most modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it.<sup>33</sup>

Certainly God's words hold more value than man's words; God's message has more worth than man's message; God's sermon has more merit than man's sermon. P. T. Forsyth understood this when he wrote: "The Bible is the supreme preacher to the preacher."<sup>34</sup>

It behooves the preacher to preach God's Word, not man's opinions, thoughts or presuppositions. Simply stated, expository preaching places the proper value and weight upon the Word of God. The onus for the message rests in the inspired words of the Bible, not the flawed mind of the preacher.

Ramesh Richard's definition of expository preaching offered a simple rationale for preaching in an expository manner. He stated that the purpose of expository preaching is to "inform minds, instruct hearts, and influence behaviors. The why of expository preaching primarily deals with intellectual, affective, and volitional

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<sup>33</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20.

<sup>34</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (London Independent, 1907) 11.

components of Christian experience.”<sup>35</sup>

One of the purposes of expository preaching, according to Ramesh Richard, is to inform the mind. There is certainly an intellectual component that must be considered when preparing and delivering the expository sermon. Richard wrote, “as a result of their exposure to the sermon, our hearers must *know* and *understand* something - God’s truth.”<sup>36</sup> The simple fact is, if they do not know more of the Bible, more of God’s expectations for their lives, and more of God’s will for their future because of the preacher’s proclamation, then the preacher is unnecessary and superfluous. If, however, the Holy Spirit anoints the expository sermon in such a way as to inform the mind of the hearer, the sermon has accomplished its purpose of illuminating and elucidating God’s truth. Therefore the sermon is not pointless, rather it is the instrument that God uses to draw others closer to Him.

Another purpose of expository preaching, according to Richard, is to instruct the heart. Informing the mind appeals to the rational side of an individual, their intellect. Instructing the heart appeals to the emotional side of a person: “Not all human decisions are made rationally. Emotional factors play a big part in serious decisions . . . . It is possible and necessary to address the seat of the emotions - the heart - through expository preaching.”<sup>37</sup>

Certainly the audience must know and understand something as a result the preached word; this is the intellectual component. The hearer, however, must feel and

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<sup>35</sup> Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

will something as a result of the message as well; this is the emotional component. An expository sermon that is true to Scripture will inform the mind and instruct the heart.

An expository sermon must inform the mind, instruct the heart and influence behavior. This is the third and final purpose of expository preaching listed by Ramesh Richard. “The practical test of good preaching is the fruit that it bears in life. The Bible was given for behavioral change. Works must follow faith. As a result of our preaching, our audience will *do* something.”<sup>38</sup> Hence, the expository sermon appeals to the intellect, the emotions and the actions of an individual. It informs the mind, instructs the heart and influences behavior. Simply put, through expository preaching, people must know what God expects of them and how to fulfill the mandates of Scripture by following the instructions therein.

In defense of the reason and motivation for expository preaching, Haddon Robinson wrote, “the type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching.”<sup>39</sup> He also states, “The type of preaching that most effectively lays open the Bible so that people are confronted by its truth is expository preaching.”<sup>40</sup> If preachers abandon expository preaching, then they abandon their authority for preaching altogether.

### **Benefits of Expository Preaching**

Many benefits arise as a result of systematic expository preaching. These benefits either do not exist in the same degree or do not exist at all in other forms of preaching.

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<sup>38</sup> Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Haddon W. Robinson and Scott M. Gibson, *Making a Difference in Preaching: Haddon Robinson on Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 64.

Alistair Begg, in his work *Preaching for God's Glory* reviewed several benefits of expository preaching.

First, wrote Begg, “expository preaching gives glory to God, which ought to be the ultimate end of all we do.”<sup>41</sup> Expository preaching recognizes the preacher’s complete and total dependence upon God. Since preaching in this way begins with the biblical text, it honors the nature of Scripture. In honoring the nature and character of the Bible, the preacher honors the God of the Bible.

Begg continued by adding another benefit of expository preaching; it makes the preacher study God’s Word: “Expository preaching demands that the preacher himself become a student of the Word of God.”<sup>42</sup> The sad truth is that many pastors are not students of the Bible. Instead of mining the deep truths of Scripture and praying for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, they settle for another preacher’s outline or simply throw something together that sounds reasonably sensible.

While this may sound cynical or skeptical, the fact is that many pastors have abandoned expository preaching and Bible study altogether. Begg wrote, “the first heart God’s Word needs to reach is that of the preacher. There will be no benefit to our people from expository preaching unless we ourselves are being impacted by the Scripture we are preparing to preach.”<sup>43</sup> If the preacher does not allow the Word of God to saturate his soul, it is unlikely that he will have the passion or desire to communicate the truth of God with his audience in a life-changing and spirit-filled way.

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<sup>41</sup> Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory* (Wheaton: Good News, 1999), 33.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Haddon Robinson wrote, “expository preaching also develops the preacher into a mature Christian. When an expositor studies the Bible, the Holy Spirit probes the preacher’s life. As a preacher prepares sermons, God prepares the person.”<sup>44</sup> Expository preaching requires careful and diligent study of God’s Word. The preacher cannot pretend to spend time studying the Bible and preach a sufficient expository sermon. It takes time, patience, diligence, prayer and illumination from the Spirit of God.

Begg offered another benefit of expository preaching: it helps the congregation. “Expository preaching enables the congregation to learn the Bible in the most obvious and natural way.”<sup>45</sup> By the preacher’s message, the audience is either helped or hindered in their understanding and study of God’s Word. It is the duty of the preacher to present the biblical text in such a way that it creates a hunger for the Word of God as well as a passion to discover and apply its truths. Systematic exposition helps the congregation. In his work, *Lectures to My Students*, Spurgeon wrote,

If you attend to a lecturer on astronomy or geology, during a short course you will obtain a tolerably clear view of his system; but if you listen, not only for twelve months, but for twelve years, to the common run of preachers, you will not arrive at anything like an idea of their system of theology.<sup>46</sup>

Alistair Begg offered another benefit of expository preaching: it demands treatment of the entire Bible. “Expository preaching prevents the preacher from avoiding difficult passages or from dwelling on his favorite texts.”<sup>47</sup> If a pastor chooses to avoid systematic exposition, he will most likely also avoid the difficult or controversial

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<sup>44</sup> Robinson and Gibson, *Making a Difference in Preaching*, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Begg, *Preaching for God’s Glory*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 71.

<sup>47</sup> Begg, *Preaching for God’s Glory*, 35.

passages that he has some fear of addressing. If this is not the case, another likely danger is that the pastor will default to certain passages that serve as his favorite topic or section of Scripture. In so doing, the preacher robs the congregation of the systematic study of the Bible and avoids doing the work of an expositor, which is to handle the difficult texts of Scripture.

Another advantage and benefit of expository preaching mentioned by Alistair Begg is that expository preaching provides proper spiritual nutrition. “Expository preaching assures the congregation of enjoying a balanced diet of God’s Word.”<sup>48</sup> When the preacher avoids expository preaching, he fails to offer the congregation a healthy and steady diet of God’s Word. An unhealthy diet can lead to certain imbalances in belief and theology, which in turn create great danger in a congregation. “Exposition, which constantly affirms the priority and sufficiency of the text, will prevent such an imbalance from taking place”<sup>49</sup>

The final benefit offered by Begg is a practical advantage to the preacher: it eliminates confusion and uncertainty about which text to preach. “Expository preaching liberates the preacher from the pressure of last-minute preparation on Saturday night.”<sup>50</sup> Exposition eliminates the need to search and wonder what the next sermon topic will be or what the next sermon will cover. This is advanced planning in its simplest and most practical form.

Expository preaching offers great benefits to the preacher. For one thing, it gives the preacher truth to preach. Many ministers spend a frustrating part

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<sup>48</sup> Begg, *Preaching for God’s Glory*, 36.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

of their week “starting to get underway to begin” their sermon preparation. Only a genius can think up enough original material that is fresh and stimulating and that will keep the same audience interested one hundred times a year. The person who draws topics from his own mind and experience dabbles in a puddle. The man...who expounds the Scripture does business in great waters.<sup>51</sup>

The benefits of faithful and consistent exposition are numerous. In his fabulous work, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, Greg Heisler summarized five clear benefits of exposition from R. Kent Hughes’s work, *The Anatomy of Exposition: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos*, while adding a sixth of his own.

1. When you preach expositionally, you will preach texts that you would never voluntarily preach and would, perhaps, even purposefully avoid.
2. When you preach expositionally, you never have to worry about what you are going to preach on Sunday.
3. When you preach expositionally, you will grow as a theologian because of systematic biblical exposition.
4. When you preach expositionally, you are always subject of the text. Exposition forces you to look to the Scripture for both your theme and structure.
5. When you preach expositionally, your authority is inherently derived from the text itself, not manufactured by the preacher.
6. When you preach expositionally, it serves as the harness that holds the powerful combination of the Word and Spirit together.<sup>52</sup>

Consistent and faithful exposition clearly benefits the preacher as well as the hearer. It also provides an avenue for the Holy Spirit to move and work unhindered and unencumbered through the inspired Word of God and stays true to the text and authorial intent of the Bible.

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix offered a section on the benefits of expository preaching in their work, *Power in the Pulpit*. In this portion of the book, the authors listed several advantages that “surface when the truth of God’s Word is exposed, especially through the systematic preaching of a Bible book. Many of the same benefits,

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<sup>51</sup> Robinson and Gibson, *Making a Difference in Preaching*, 65.

<sup>52</sup> Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 23.

however, apply to the general exposition of various passages.”<sup>53</sup> Their list includes topics such as those covered by Heisler and Begg. Benefits such as biblical literacy, accountability, protection, stress relief, appetite development and spiritual maturity will become evident and increase as systematic exposition occurs in the pulpit. Expository preaching will impact the preacher’s life and the lives of the congregation. Expository preaching “helps the preacher promote God’s agenda for His people.”<sup>54</sup>

One advantage to exposition may seem difficult to calculate or quantify. That is the personal and spiritual benefit to the preacher. Faithful exposition of the Word of God develops and sharpens the preacher’s heart, mind and soul: “Alexander McLaren said that everything he was, he owed to the fact that day after day he studied the Scriptures. As the expositor masters a passage, he . . . will discover that the truth of that passage is in the hand of the Spirit who masters him . . . .”<sup>55</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This section can be viewed as the foundation and justification for this entire work. The use and necessity of application in the expository sermon cannot be evaluated or analyzed if one finds no value or benefit in exposition. After establishing the “what” and “why” of expository preaching, a case can be made for the proper type of application within the sermon.

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<sup>53</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 32.

<sup>54</sup> Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Robinson and Gibson, *Making a Difference in Preaching*, 65.

## Section II: Why? Several Reasons Expository Preaching is Important

One cannot establish the use and necessity of application in the expository sermon if it is not first determined that expository preaching is of utmost importance. P. T. Forsyth once said, “it is, perhaps, an overbold beginning, but I will venture to say that with its preaching, Christianity stands or falls.”<sup>56</sup> It seems that history reveals the truth of this statement. If this is the case, it is urgent that the preacher determines the proper method with which to deliver the message of God’s Word.

Preaching appears in the Bible as a relaying of what God has said about Himself and His doings, and about men in relation to Him, plus a pressing of His commands, promises, warnings, and assurances, with a view to winning the hearer or hearers... to a positive response.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, as John MacArthur concludes, “the only logical response to inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it *expositionally*.”<sup>58</sup> The preacher is faced with an all-important choice concerning his approach to the sacred Word of God: communicate the opinion of man or convey the truth of God as revealed in Scripture. This choice rests at the foundation of the preacher’s “style of preaching.” This choice of methodology will be informed by the preacher’s theology in regard to the Bible.

According to Ramesh Richard, “The ‘why’ of expository preaching relates to purpose. What is the purpose of our preparation and delivery of an expository sermon?”<sup>59</sup> This question deals with the ontological purpose of preaching. Why does

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<sup>56</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and Modern Mind: The Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907), 3.

<sup>57</sup> James I. Packer, “Preaching As Biblical Interpretation,” in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 189.

<sup>58</sup> John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 23.

<sup>59</sup> Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons: A Seven-Step Method for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 24.

preaching exist? Is it simply for education, entertainment, excitement or encouragement? Or, at its core, is there a greater purpose of preaching that preempts and precedes all of these? While many good things will result from the proper exposition and communication of Scripture, these are benefits and not primary motivations. The primary motivation of expository preaching is that the Word of God must be conveyed to the hearer through the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit. Everything that results from that effort is a byproduct of proper exposition.

While one central motivation exists for expository preaching, many reasons for expository preaching point to its validity. In the following pages, three major reasons for expository preaching will be explored in depth. These reasons underscore and undergird the need for proper exposition of the text of Scripture. These reasons first must be examined before the process of application in the expository sermon can be examined and evaluated.

### **Biblical Reasons**

Greg Heisler communicated a clear biblical argument for expository preaching in his work, *Spirit-Led Preaching*. Heisler wrote, “First and foremost, as preachers we desire more than anything else for God to speak through our preaching. Yet in order for God to speak *through us*, we must first be convinced that God has already spoken *to us* in His Word.”<sup>60</sup> When the preacher opens the Word of God and preaches a passage expositionally, he can be sure that the people have heard from God. When people hear Scripture, they can be convinced that they have heard from God. Nothing the preacher has to say is more important than what the Spirit of God already has said in the Bible.

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<sup>60</sup> Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 22.

*In the Old Testament*

Simply stated, expository preaching is supported by biblical authority. This authority and instruction is found in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Nehemiah 8:8 says, “They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.”<sup>61</sup> The context of this verse is important. It occurred during a time of revival in the people of God. Nehemiah led the people to follow the plan and purpose of God, while Ezra was the preacher that God used to communicate His holy Word.

This text in Nehemiah demands close attention. Ezra not only read the Word of God clearly to the people, but he and the Levites revealed the truth of God’s Word as well. The Bible records that “they gave the sense.” “The Law was not only read but explained, to ensure that the people grasped the meaning.”<sup>62</sup> This is the task of the preacher, to communicate clearly the teaching of the Bible so that people can understand. Once the people were told what the Word of God meant, then the “people understood the reading.” “To understand the reading, there must be application of doctrine to duty and of principle to practice. Preaching does not accomplish its objective if it fails to change character and conduct!”<sup>63</sup> Here, we see a biblical case for expository preaching as well as clear and compelling application within the expository sermon.

*In the New Testament*

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<sup>61</sup> Neh. 8:8.

<sup>62</sup> Stephen E. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 71.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Paul wrote to the church of Corinth to remind them that his preaching was “not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”<sup>64</sup> In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul instructs Timothy in the pattern of leading and teaching the church. He writes, “Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”<sup>65</sup> By extension, Paul’s words apply to preachers today as well. The preacher is instructed to preach biblically, “preach the Word.” The preacher is instructed to preach consistently, “be ready in season and out of season.” The preacher is instructed to preach persuasively, “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” And the preacher is instructed to preach patiently, “with complete patience and teaching.” There is no doubt that the power of God rests in His Word, not in the opinion of man.<sup>66</sup>

In his first letter of instruction to Timothy, Paul wrote, “until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”<sup>67</sup> Some translations render the word “teaching” in this passage as “exposition.” In its broadest sense, the word means “doctrine that provides instruction.”

Again, as Paul instructs his protégé in the ministry, he refers to the way a preacher should handle the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 2:15 he wrote, “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”<sup>68</sup> According to Stephen Olford, Paul’s final statement “perfectly defines expository preaching.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 1 Cor. 2:4.

<sup>65</sup> 2 Tim. 4:2.

<sup>66</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 37.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Tim. 4:13.

<sup>68</sup> 2 Tim. 2:15.

Not only does the example of the Apostle Paul appear in the New Testament, but the supreme example, Jesus Christ, is revealed on more than one occasion.

On that first resurrection day, Jesus “*expounded* to [the two disciples] in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:27, emphasis ours). As the Prince of all expositors, He expounded the truth and illustrated His points. With consummate authority, He adopted the customary method of reading and exegeting the Scriptures (John 1:18). Whether in the synagogue, in the home, on the hillside, or from an anchored boat, Jesus consistently expounded the Word of God to hungry hearts.<sup>70</sup>

The examples of Paul and Jesus Christ provide more than sufficient evidence of the mandate for expository preaching from the Bible itself. There is, however, more evidence to be considered that should silence the skeptics and critics alike. On the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2:14-36, the Apostle Peter preached an expository message based upon the Old Testament book of Joel. He supported his main theme from two Old Testament psalms. Stephen’s sermon, recorded in Acts 7, was an expository treatment of Old Testament texts in Genesis and Exodus. Philip also communicated the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch by explaining and expounding upon Isaiah 53.

More than sufficient evidence exists to point to a strong biblical precedent for expository preaching. Those unwilling to admit this truth are in great danger of disregarding the clear admonition of Scripture. While critics claim that the Bible nowhere encourages the preacher to “preach expository messages,” it is intellectually dishonest to claim that the instruction for exposition does not appear in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

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<sup>69</sup> Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

## Historical Reasons

Having established clear biblical support for expository preaching, it is wise to proceed by identifying historical examples of expository preaching. In no way do these examples supersede or add to the biblical mandate that exists. But, in a small way, these historical examples serve as proof of the veracity of the Word of God and the value of expository preaching.

The history of expository preaching can be traced from the biblical era to the contemporary era. “The outstanding expository preachers past and present serve as additional rationale for the practice of exposition.... The rich heritage of expositors who followed Jesus and Paul call upon us to be faithful with this sacred trust.”<sup>71</sup> Many have traced this line clearly and plainly and that is not the intent of this section. For the purposes of this section, an overview will suffice and some more modern examples will be given.

As the New Testament era led directly into the early Christian church, expository preaching encountered some early problems and challenges: “The first four hundred years of the church produced many preachers but few true expositors.”<sup>72</sup> The most significant exception was John Chrysostom (347-407): “In sharp contrast to his contemporaries, Chrysostom preached verse-by-verse and word-by-word expositions on many books of the Bible.”<sup>73</sup> In his era, John Chrysostom stood out as a profound preacher and biblical expositor who continues to be a model for preachers.

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<sup>71</sup> Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody, 1999). 40.

<sup>72</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 44.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

Quite likely, the medieval period provides the fewest expositors of any other period in history. Known as the Dark Ages, it seems to have been somewhat dark in the realm of expository preaching as well. “As the medieval period drew to a close, several pre-Reformation leaders rekindled the fire of expository preaching. Among these was John Wyclif . . . and William Tyndale.”<sup>74</sup> Many in this era, while not expositors themselves, paved the way and provided a basis for the revival of expository preaching during the Reformation.

The Reformation was built on the supremacy and centrality of Scripture. With a high view of Scripture comes a high view of the faithful exposition of Scripture. For instance, Martin Luther said, “the Word comes first, and with the Word the Spirit breathes upon my heart so that I believe.”<sup>75</sup> In his famous reply before the Diet of Worms, Luther boldly proclaimed, “my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”<sup>76</sup> Luther’s view of Scripture drove him to be a student of the Word and a preacher of the Word.

Ulrich Zwingli also was a careful student who studied the original languages of the Bible. “His chief objective in preaching was to repeat the Word of God unabbreviated and unadulterated, clearly setting out the Law and the Prophets, vehemently calling his hearers to repentance and, with the gentleness of a shepherd, guiding the community to salvation.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 46.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>76</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1985), 111-12.

<sup>77</sup> G. R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976), 92.

John Calvin quite likely was the most significant expositor of the Reformation era. Calvin spent a lifetime expounding, explaining, exegeting and expositing God's Word. As a pastor in Geneva, he spent a year preaching through the book of Job and three years in Isaiah. Other lectures led to his commentaries on Scripture. Calvin once said, "let us not take it into our heads either to seek out God anywhere else than in his Sacred Word, or to think anything about him that is not prompted by his Word, or to speak anything that is not taken from that Word."<sup>78</sup>

No doubt expository preachers in the modern era have been and continue to be greatly influenced by the preaching of the reformers, Luther and Calvin in particular. From the Puritans to men like John Broadus and J. C. Ryle, through the centuries expository preaching made its way to the hearts of men willing to embrace it.

Men like Alexander McLaren, who spent forty-five years expounding the Scriptures in England, provide powerful examples for preachers today. G. Campbell Morgan was called the "Prince of Expositors." Donald Gray Barnhouse "was a master at using the whole of Scripture to expose the meaning of a text."<sup>79</sup> W. A. Criswell gained international recognition and notoriety as a Bible expositor. The list could continue to include many contemporary expositors. Suffice it to say, there are real, valid, and meaningful examples of expository preaching throughout the centuries. These examples give preachers the strength today to approach the Word of God with awe and proclaim its truths with accuracy and power.

Throughout history, a few well-known men in each generation representative of a larger body of faithful expositors have committed themselves to this ministry of biblical exposition.... Their voices from the

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<sup>78</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes in Christian Classics* (Gainesville: Bridge-Logos, 2005), 146.

<sup>79</sup> Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 41.

past should both encourage the contemporary expositor and challenge him to align his preaching with the biblical standard. Scripture demands nothing less than God-enabled exposition as demonstrated by those worthy saints who have dedicated their lives to this noble task.<sup>80</sup>

### **Practical Reasons**

Clearly, expository preaching has been practiced through the centuries and is deeply rooted in the soil of Scripture. Simply put, this is the only type of preaching in the church that will perpetuate biblical thinking in the lives of men. Having established a biblical and historical defense of expository preaching, it is necessary to take one more step and examine the practical reasons for expository preaching.

Expository preaching presents the power of the Word: “The fact that the power of spiritual change resides in God’s Word argues the case for *expository* preaching . . . . Biblical exposition binds the preacher and the people to the only source of true spiritual change.”<sup>81</sup> One of the most practical reasons to preach expositionally is because the power of God’s Word is most thoroughly and precisely communicated through this means. Mankind’s opinions and philosophies are least likely to enter into the equation when the sermon firmly rests on the biblical text.

The preacher must be absolutely sure about his source and method of preaching. If the source is going to be the Bible, then the method must be exposition: “Contemporary preachers may propose many popular methodological options, but we must adopt a form that will produce sermons that deliver nothing short of the ‘human utterance of God’s message.’ Expository preaching provides our best hope of attaining His desired results.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 60.

<sup>81</sup> Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 22.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2002), 14-15.

Expository preaching also affirms the authority of the Word of God: “Without the authority of the Word preaching becomes an endless search for topics, therapies, and techniques that will win approval, promote acceptance, advance a cause, or soothe a worry.”<sup>83</sup> Haddon Robinson added that, “the type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching.”<sup>84</sup> When the preacher is able to stand and say, “thus says the Lord,” the authority of the sermon no longer rests on the shoulders of a man, but instead on the written and perfect Word of God. The expositor never has to question what he has the authority to say. If the Word of God says it, it must be communicated clearly. The authority rests not in the one delivering the sermon, but the Bible, which is the sermon’s source

Expository preaching also presents the work of the Holy Spirit: “When we proclaim the Word we bring the work of the Holy Spirit to bear on others’ lives.”<sup>85</sup> Heisler wrote, “Expository preaching is the harness that holds the powerful combination of Word and Spirit together.”<sup>86</sup> The miracle of preaching is that God chooses to use finite and imperfect humans to communicate His infinite and perfect Word. “Great gifts do not necessarily make for great preaching. The technical excellence of a message may rest on your skills, but the spiritual efficacy of your message resides with God.”<sup>87</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>83</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 23.

<sup>84</sup> Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 20.

<sup>85</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 24.

<sup>86</sup> Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 23.

<sup>87</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 25.

What the preacher does is of utmost importance, but why the preacher does what he does is of great significance as well. Not only should the action be examined, but the underlying assumptions and reason for the action should be studied as well. What is the motivation of the preacher? What are his underlying assumptions? What has shaped his style of preaching and communication? What has fashioned his view of exposition? What are his convictions and commitments concerning the character of Scripture and the nature of preaching?

Once a clear understanding of expository preaching is gained, one can then make the case for the great importance of expository preaching. A clear understanding of expository preaching and the realization of its importance must be considered before the application of the message within the expository sermon can be examined.

Since the “what” and “why” have been established, the remainder of this work can deal with the major issue at hand: the use and necessity of application in the expository sermon. What is application? Does application have a biblical, historical and practical basis? Where should it be placed in the sermon if it even belongs as part of exposition? Are there contemporary preachers and expositors who have different methods of application? Is there a preferred model of application? These questions will be addressed as this work continues, and a case will be made that application is absolutely essential to the expository sermon.

### Section III: So What? Seeing Application as the “So What” of the Sermon

Having set forth an understanding and rationale for expository preaching, the importance of application within the context of the expository sermon now can be addressed. This must begin by uncovering a workable definition of expository preaching and examining several different methods of application.

A great need for application in the expository sermon exists. Haddon Robinson lamented, “many homileticians have not given application the attention it deserves.”<sup>88</sup> It seems that application is the orphaned child of expository preaching. In his book, *Twelve Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, Wayne McDill set forth four elements that should be a part of any division within the expository sermon: explanation, illustration, argumentation and application.<sup>89</sup>

Explanation involves understanding and exposing the meaning of the biblical passage. This includes studying the text in its original language, looking at the overall context and placement of the passage, examining the text in light of Scripture as a whole and analyzing the meaning of a particular passage. Many helps exist to aid the preacher in the work of explanation. Items such as commentaries, lexicons, Bible encyclopedias and books on the subject can enable the preacher to examine the meaning of the text as well as discover the content for explanation.

The use of illustrations can enhance the sermon as well. Illustrations serve to enlighten the hearer and illuminate the text in a meaningful and understandable way.

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<sup>88</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 89.

<sup>89</sup> Wayne McDill, *Twelve Essentials for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 176.

Illustrations can derive from the many volumes of books dedicated to the subject, websites devoted to providing current information, daily life and experiences, as well as personal experiences. An anecdote, personal story, historical example, newspaper headline, or powerful quote can all serve the sermon in the form of illustration.

Within the division statement of the expository sermon, the next element is argumentation. Argumentation supports the sermon's premise contained in the main idea and the division statement. Most often, argumentation will come in the form of another biblical text or story that supports the current division statement. Logical argumentation can serve to support the idea as well but biblical argumentation provides the best foundation.

The final element in the division statement of an expository sermon is application. Many have argued that application is second in importance only to explanation. Others have said, and rightfully so, that if explanation and application do not exist, then a sermon does not exist. Application is the bridge that connects the truth of Scripture to the heart of the hearer: "The jump from the 'then' of the original text to the 'now' of the modern audience has received so little attention in our evangelical training centers and pulpit practice that our best efforts are being crippled"<sup>90</sup> Without application, explanation is simply information. Application makes explanation come alive with the goal of life transformation.

Truth without application is inadequate. As J. I. Packer put it, "preaching is essentially teaching plus application . . . where the *plus* is lacking something less than

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<sup>90</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 202.

preaching takes place.’<sup>91</sup> William Klein added:

Despite the importance of application, few modern evangelical scholars have focused on this topic. In fact, most hermeneutic textbooks give it only brief coverage, and many major commentary series only mention application with passing remarks to help readers bridge the gap from the biblical world to the modern world. Perhaps many assume that sound application is more “caught than taught.” This is probably true, but sound application often seems hard to find, much less to catch!<sup>92</sup>

If application is difficult to discover but vital to the sermon, a method must be established to aid the preacher in applying the sermon. In the next section, the basis for application will be covered; biblical authority will be examined, historical examples will be given and practical reasons will be explored. Before one establishes a basis for application, however, it is important to define what application is and what methods of application are employed.

### **Definitions of Application in the Expository Sermon**

In understanding the nature of application, it is certainly of vital importance to understand what application is, but it is of equal importance to understand what application is not. Much of what preachers do in the way of application does not support the function and purpose of application.

Application does not only provide the hearer with information. Although it is important to have the right facts and information concerning the biblical text, information is simply not enough. Gathering facts is an important step, but the hearer must know how to use those facts in daily life. Most of the information transferred in the sermon will be

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<sup>91</sup> J. I. Packer in Dick Lucas, et. al. *Preaching the Living Word: Addresses from the Evangelical Ministry Assembly* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 31.

<sup>92</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 403.

done so during the phase of explanation with the sermon divisions, but the application stage instructs the hearer what to do with that information.

Application is not simply stating concepts or ideas. Beyond information, concepts and ideas of Scripture reveal not only what Scripture says but also what it means. “We need to know what the Bible means, not just what it says.”<sup>93</sup> One can know the deeper truths of Scripture and the obscure concepts of the Old Testament, but this does not equate to application in the life and heart of a believer: “Many people understand biblical truths without it changing their lives.”<sup>94</sup>

Application is not the same thing as relevance. Many parallels exist in Scripture and much of what occurred during biblical times still occurs today. People still face fear, heartache, failure and temptation. This world is still dangerous, deceptive and deadly. The Bible is certainly relevant and that is critical to understand; but relevance is not application and application is not just relevance.

When we learn that information we will be more open to application. When we see that what happened many centuries ago is similar to what is happening today, we will understand that the truths are, in fact, timeless. They are for all people, including us. This step, however, also falls short of application. It doesn't tell us what we can do about those biblical principles.<sup>95</sup>

Also, application should not be confused with illustrations. Both are vital in the expository sermon, but each element serves a different purpose: “Illustrations shed light on the meaning of a passage and show us how someone else applied a timeless truth to his or her life, as is the case with personal testimonials. But it is still removed from the

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<sup>93</sup> Dave Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993), 15.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

individual. . . .”<sup>96</sup> Application takes illustration a step further. Instead of giving an example of what someone else did, it explains how the hearer should act.

Finally, application is not fluff. It must be stated that some who would consider themselves purists in terms of exposition shun application and denounce its merit. Many say that application is not necessary and in some cases could water down the truth of the Word. On the contrary, application is not an unnecessary element added to the sermon to “connect” with the modern day hearer. Application is essential to taking the truth of the Word of God in its biblical context and directing the hearer to obey its directives.

It is important to understand what application is not before one can grasp what application is. Having established several truths regarding common misconceptions about application, it is necessary to move on to an understanding of what application is. In doing so, one can begin to use application in the expository sermon in the proper manner.

In his seminal work entitled, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, John Broadus defined application: “Application, in the strict sense, is that part, or those parts, of the discourse in which we show how the subject applies to the persons addressed, what practical instructions it offers them, what practical demands it makes upon them.”<sup>97</sup> Application brings the text to bear in the life of an individual. More than facts and figures, information or instruction, application drives the point of the sermon deep into the heart of the hearer and places the onus of action solely upon his or her shoulders.

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<sup>96</sup> Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible*, 16.

<sup>97</sup> John Albert Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 23d ed., ed. Edwin Charles Dargan (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898), 246.

The application in a sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion, or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing to be done. Spurgeon says, ‘Where the application begins, there the sermon begins.’ We are not to speak *before* the people, but *to* them, and must earnestly strive to make them take to themselves what we say.<sup>98</sup>

Application links the theological content of the sermon to the situation and need of the hearer. It connects the truth of biblical text to the daily life and circumstances of the hearer.

Application is necessary because it shows how the message applies to the listeners; it offers them practical instructions and it makes demands upon their lives based upon the authority of Scripture. Application tells the hearers why the sermon is being preached, why the content is being shared and why it is important for them to act upon what they have heard.

Stuart Briscoe defined application in this way: “There is in every sermon at least one spur on the way to the summit. I call it the so-what hump. The preacher, wrapped up in the wonder of the truth, which he has been studying all week but to which his listeners have come in cold, may overlook the fact that the people sitting out there are wondering as they listen . . . so what?”<sup>99</sup>

Dave Veerman wrote, “application focuses the truth of God’s Word to specific, life-related situations. It hopes people understand what to do or how to use what they have learned. Application persuades people to act.”<sup>100</sup> If the goal of the sermon is information, then application is not necessary at all. But if the goal of the sermon is

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<sup>98</sup> Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 245.

<sup>99</sup> Stuart Briscoe, *Dry Bones* (Wheaton: Victor, 1985), 123.

<sup>100</sup> Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible*, 15.

transformation, then application is the vehicle by which transformational truth is delivered to the heart of the follower of Jesus Christ. Application brings more than knowledge; it brings a call to action that demands the listener to answer either affirmatively or negatively to God's directives. Application will cause the listener to say either, "Yes, I will trust God and obey Him in this matter," or, "No, I will not trust God and obey Him in this matter."

Application answers the "so what" of the sermon. It gives the hearer a "handle" to hold the truth of Scripture. It reveals how the truth of God's Word deals directly with the life and daily circumstances of every individual. It answers the question that many churchgoers ask every Sunday, "Why did I just listen to this sermon?" "Simply stated, application is answering two questions: *So what?* and *Now what?* The first question asks, 'Why is this passage important to *me*?' The second asks, 'What should I do about it today?'"<sup>101</sup>

"While it is essential that you explain the truth of a passage, your task is not finished until you relate that passage to the experience of your hearers."<sup>102</sup> A sermon is not a sermon until application is present within each division statement and at the end in summary. "Ultimately the man or woman in the pew hopes that you will answer the questions, 'So what? What difference does it make?'"<sup>103</sup> "All preaching involves a 'so what?' A lecture on the archaeology of Egypt, as interesting as it might be, isn't a

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<sup>101</sup> Marshall Shelley, *Changing Lives Through Preaching and Worship: Thirty Strategies for Powerful Communication* (Nashville: Moorings, 1995), 60.

<sup>102</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 89.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

sermon. A sermon touches lives. It demands practical application.”<sup>104</sup> The simple and sad truth is painful but real; “As preachers, we are notorious for telling people *what* they should do. But few of us have mastered the art of effectively showing *how* to practice what we’re preaching.”<sup>105</sup>

A sermon without application is much like giving directions by only stating the ultimate destination. If the hearers are encouraged to “be holy,” they receive the destination or end result. If application does not exist, however, they are not given any directions to reach that destination effectively. It is a frustrating endeavor to be told to arrive at a destination without any understanding as to how to get there. Application gives the hearer simple, step-by-step directions to arrive at the desired destination.

John MacArthur stated, “Bible study is not complete until the truth discovered is applied to life situations. Application answers the question, ‘How does this truth relate to me?’”<sup>106</sup> Ultimately, this is a critical question. The Bible is relevant, it does apply, but the expositor must make known its relevance and personal application. The element of application in the expository sermon brings the truth from the text to the modern day hearer in a powerful and unique way.

Application is about life-transformation. The purpose of application in the expository sermon is to expose the need of the hearer to act upon the proclaimed Word of God. Michael Fabarez wrote:

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<sup>104</sup> Bill Hybels, D. Stuart, Briscoe and Haddon W. Robinson, *Mastering Contemporary Preaching* (Portland: Multnomah, 1990), 59.

<sup>105</sup> Christianity Today, *Fresh Ideas for Preaching, Worship & Evangelism* (Waco: Word, 1984), 38.

<sup>106</sup> John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, (Dallas: Word, 1997, c1992), 217.

Tacking on a few scant application thoughts at the end of a sermon certainly will not accomplish this goal. The transformational call of texts we preach must saturate our sermons. Application must be strategically thought out as we master the passage to be preached, and we must pray them through on the floor of our studies. It must be skillfully presented in every element of each point, and it must continue as our urgent concern in our pastoral care. Real biblical preaching brings about changes that conform a person to the image of Christ.<sup>107</sup>

In his work entitled, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell revealed how to “apply the truths of expository sermons with relevance, realism and authority.”<sup>108</sup>

Preachers make a fundamental mistake when they assume that providing churchgoers with doctrinal information will be enough to motivate them to apply the truths of the Bible to their everyday lives. Chapell described several functions of application.

First, Chapell stated that application fulfills the obligations of exposition: “Without application the preacher has no reason to preach because truth without application is useless. This means that at its heart preaching is not merely the proclamation of truth, but is truth applied.”<sup>109</sup> Hence, a sermon without application is not a sermon at all. Only when the preacher delivers explanation through the vehicle of application will a sermon strike the heart of the hearer through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Next, Chapell wrote that application justifies the exposition. In other words, why does the explanation of the text exist in the first place? Is it there for the sake of information and educational enlightenment? Or, is it there for the sake of transformation and spiritual encouragement? “Thus, ‘application is the main thing to be done.’ The

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<sup>107</sup> Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2002), xiv.

<sup>108</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 198.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

informed preacher uses every aspect of the sermon as leverage to move the message's application based on sound exposition."<sup>110</sup>

Chapell also revealed that application focuses the exposition: "Exegesis and explanation are bottomless pits of commentary possibilities if the preacher has no clear purpose in mind."<sup>111</sup> While the text only has one meaning, the applications could be numerous. Hence, application focuses the truth of the exposition to hit a certain target; otherwise, the preacher hits no target at all.

Finally, Chapell stated that application gives ultimate meaning to exposition. The preacher can teach extensively on prayer and its value. He can quote multiple sources, parse every verb and cross-reference every text. Until one actually prays, however, understanding will not be gained. "We must make the meaning of the text concrete for contemporary people in contemporary situations. If we do not place the proclamation of gospel truth in a present world it will have no continuing meaning."<sup>112</sup>

Application is a vital part of expository sermon. No one simple definition exists that captures the significance and value of application. Without it, the sermon would not exist. Without it, the preacher does not fulfill the purpose of preaching.

The purpose of preaching is not simply to discuss a subject, but to achieve an object. A true sermon involves not only explanation but also application. A preacher must not be satisfied merely to instruct the mind; he must also stir the heart and motivate the will to apply God's truth personally.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 201

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>113</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe and David Wiersbe, *The Elements of Preaching: The Art of Biblical Preaching Clearly and Simply Presented* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1986).

Simply stated, application answers the question, “so what?” “Application focuses the truth of God’s Word on specific, life-related situations. It helps people understand what to do or how to use what they have learned. Application persuades people to act.”<sup>114</sup> Through application, the truth of the Bible is revealed and the hearer is called to respond.

The preacher would do well to consider the following questions when preparing and delivering sermons: “Why should I know these facts? How can I use this information? What am I going to do about what I have just learned? What should I do about it?” Questions such as these will move the expositor closer to application.

### **Methods of Application in the Expository Sermon**

If application is so necessary and important, why is it so often lacking? What are the barriers and hindrances to application in the expository sermon? Do preachers not recognize its importance or do they ignore the need? What is the best way to apply the eternal truths of Scripture to contemporary hearers? Before methods of application are examined, it is extremely beneficial to answer these questions.

Quite possibly, the main cause of deficiency in the area of application is the fact that application is hard work. Developing and delivering clear and cogent application takes time and is a difficult part of sermon preparation. Application is so essential to the sermon but it is also unique and specific to a certain area and audience. Therefore, there is no one specific way to apply a particular truth. One truth can bring about many different applications.

Another reason that application may present difficulties to the expositor is a lack of resources. Resources abound for the purpose of explanation, illustration and even

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<sup>114</sup> Marshall Shelley, *Changing Lives Through Preaching and Worship*, 62.

argumentation. When it comes to the discipline of application, however, very few resources exist.

Another reason that application is difficult is that preachers approach it with wrong assumptions. Many think that the audience will automatically connect the truth of the Word of God to their personal lives. This faulty assumption will lead many preachers to limit their work on application or exclude it altogether. Some think that by including specific, real and simple application that they are insulting the intelligence of the audience. This, however, is not the case. The hearer must be led to understand how biblical truth connects with his or her life, and the actionable steps to take as a result.

Another reason that some face difficulty in application is uncertainty. Some are confused about the value and necessity of application, and this breeds both fear and concern. Some preachers fear being too simplistic. Others worry that by including specific application they are not allowing the Holy Spirit to accomplish His work of personal conviction. Other preachers want to sound intelligent and clever and feel that application simplifies the message. All of this, of course, is based on misinformation and misunderstanding. Applying the sermon does not make the sermon or the preacher appear simplistic or unintelligent. Instead, it allows the preacher to accomplish his primary task of connecting biblical truth to the contemporary audience. Preachers have been called to make the complex things of the Word easy to understand. Instead preachers often make the simple things far too complicated.

A final reason some preachers avoid application is that they think that they have not been properly trained in the subject. Many believe that as if they are not qualified to preach to the real needs of people. Hence, they avoid working on application because

they feel unqualified and unable to do so. “A misunderstanding of what application is can weaken preaching. If I’m unsure of my goal, I’ll definitely have trouble hitting it. So what is effective application?”<sup>115</sup>

John MacArthur lists some questions that will help the preacher apply the truths discovered in Bible study:

1. Are there examples to follow?
2. Are there commands to obey?
3. Are there errors to avoid?
4. Are there sins to forsake?
5. Are there promises to claim?
6. Are there new thoughts about God?
7. Are there principles to live by?<sup>116</sup>

These questions can serve as a launching pad for the preacher to determine a specific application for a specific audience. They also provide a guide for the preacher to walk through each time he prepares a sermon. The preacher can sift the truths of Scripture through the questions of this grid in order to find helpful application that will make the sermon come alive to the hearer.

Another way to discover areas of application and expose a congregation’s needs might be to think through Marshall Shelley’s eight areas of personal application:

1. Relationships (for example, with family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, fellow believers).
2. Conflicts (in marriage, with children, at work).
3. Personal burdens (sickness, family pressures, death, loss).
4. Difficult situations (stress, debt, hindrances).
5. Character weaknesses (dishonesty, lack of integrity, anger).
6. Lack of resources (in time, energy, money, materials, information).

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<sup>115</sup> Shelley, *Changing Lives Through Preaching and Worship*, 60.

<sup>116</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 217.

7. Responsibilities (work demands, church programs, volunteer efforts, home projects).
8. Opportunities (learning, working, serving, witnessing, etc.).<sup>117</sup>

Application involves showing the listener how biblical truth should affect his attitudes and behaviors. Its purpose is to allow the Word of God to come alive to the hearer and then serve as the standard by which their lives are gauged and measured. Application can give the listener strategies for practicing biblical truths in everyday life as well as how to trust God in specific circumstances. Hence, application must be clear, specific, understandable and actionable.

In his helpful work on applying the sermon, Dave Veerman listed several steps to application that will aid the preacher in communicating both clearly and powerfully. First, Veerman wrote that “the person (reader or listener) must receive the message.”<sup>118</sup> If the receiver of the message is not open to God’s Word, then there is no point in application. If the hearer completely understands the passage of Scripture within its context and the contemporary context, yet still has no concern for obeying its truths, then application is futile. “This first step to personal application of the Bible means *being open to God as he speaks through His Word*.”<sup>119</sup>

Second, Dave Veerman wrote, “the person should reflect on his or her life. This is simply *putting the Bible truths and principles into a personal context*.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, “Are there lessons learned in the Old or New Testament that I could learn and

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<sup>117</sup> Shelley, *Changing Lives Through Preaching and Worship*, 68.

<sup>118</sup> Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible*, 16.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

apply as well? Are there circumstances that individuals encountered that I have encountered as well? Am I able to personally connect the experience of others to my own experiences?” This means that one must consciously look for areas of application.

Third, Veerman wrote, “the person should identify with what he or she needs to change.”<sup>121</sup> Once the hearer has determined what area of his or her life the specific truth speaks to, he or she should determine what to do about it. In other words, this third truth is an extension of the second truth. After reflecting on one’s own personal life, then a determination can be made as to how to specifically apply the truth and what action to take as a result of that truth.

Finally, Veerman explained, “the person should lay out a plan to make the change.”<sup>122</sup> This is the point of application; it builds the bridge from biblical text to the contemporary hearer for the purpose of personal growth and life-change. This involves thinking through the application and laying out a plan of action. Hence, application is not just the presentation of more information, but a call to action on the part of the preacher.

It is important to build application on the basis of interpretation. Interpretation or explanation answers the question, “What does it mean?” Application answers the question, “What does it mean to me?” Application takes the eternal biblical truth and connects it to the heart of the contemporary hearer. Therefore, the preacher should make the sermon division statements as applicational as possible. This relates the biblical truth to real life.

Specific action steps can be presented and addressed throughout the sermon. This will help relate the biblical truth to real life. Highlighting specific ways that the hearer

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<sup>121</sup> Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible*, 18.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

can obey God and His truth as revealed in Scripture is essential when presenting the sermon.

In his work entitled *Biblical Preaching*, Haddon Robinson provided a list that will serve the preacher very well as he seeks to apply the truth of God's Word in a contemporary setting:

1. What was the setting in which God's Word first came? What traits do modern men and women share in common with that original audience?
2. How can we identify with biblical men and women as they heard God's Word and responded - or failed to respond in their situation?
3. What further insights have we acquired about God's dealings with His people through additional revelation?
4. When I understand an eternal truth or guiding principle, what specific, practical applications does this have for me and my congregation? What ideas, feelings, attitude, or actions should it affect? Do I myself live in obedience to this truth? Do I intend to? What obstacles keep my audience from responding as they should? What suggestions might help them respond as God wants them to respond?<sup>123</sup>

While there are different methods of application, several truths must be considered. The preacher must understand the importance and necessity of application in the expository sermon. Understanding that necessity, the preacher must be committed to applying the sermon in a clear, consistent and challenging way. This takes time and effort, but the results far outweigh the labor. Also, the preacher must answer the what, when, how, and why of the text. Answering these questions leads to the main question of application: "so what?" If the audience has to ask the question, "Why did I listen to this sermon today?" then the preacher has not effectively connected with the heart of the audience through powerful, insightful, and clear application.

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<sup>123</sup> Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 37.

#### **Section IV: Where? The Basis for Application in the Expository Sermon**

Application truly is the culmination of the sermon. The problem is, most preachers and many expositors spend very little time crafting and developing application within the sermon: “Little illustration and vague application convey that there’s been little preparation.”<sup>124</sup> The preacher’s preparation must include intentional research toward practical application: “Instructional specificity uses biblical principles to establish what contemporary people should do, but if preachers never specify where in real life these principles apply, the instructions remain irrelevant abstractions.”<sup>125</sup>

Once the nature and methods of application are understood clearly, a case must be made for the basis of application in biblical, historical, and practical terms. Simply defining application and understanding its methods are not sufficient. Is there a reason the expositor should be concerned with including application in the sermon? Is there a basis and rationale for application in the expository sermon based upon historical evidence, practical experience and most importantly biblical authority? Herein rests the crux of this thesis. If application in the expository sermon is both useful and necessary, these questions must be thoroughly examined.

#### **Biblical Authority**

The foundation of expository preaching is Scripture. The motivation of expository preaching is the glory of God. If proper preaching draws its strength and support from the Bible, it stands to reason that the use and necessity of application within the expository sermon should find its support in Scripture; indeed it does. The Bible is

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<sup>124</sup> Bill Hybels, D. Stuart Briscoe and Haddon W. Robinson, *Mastering Contemporary Preaching* (Portland, 1990), 146.

<sup>125</sup> Bryan Chappel, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 206.

filled with instructions for application and examples of application; following will be an in depth but not exhaustive list.

James' instructions in the New Testament support this need for strong and simple application:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.<sup>126</sup>

Application is a call to action. If the instruction of Scripture teaches anything here, it reveals that God is not pleased with those who “hear” the Word, but do not “do” what the Word says. Application implores the hearer to “do” what the Word says and gives practical ways that it could be accomplished.

Paul encouraged Titus to teach the things that line up with sound doctrine., providing an extensive list of practical applications:

Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. (Titus 2:2-8)<sup>127</sup>

Throughout his epistle to Titus, Paul emphasized the things that accorded with

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<sup>126</sup> James 1:22-25.

<sup>127</sup> Titus 2:2-8.

godliness and sound doctrine, but he also emphasized the truth that those who learn this sound doctrine must then be faithful to obey and follow its teachings. Paul himself seemed to follow the same pattern. In fact, “this was always Paul’s approach.”<sup>128</sup>

Virtually every epistle penned by the Apostle Paul can be divided into two major sections: doctrinal information and practical application.

His epistle to the Romans, for example, begins with eleven chapters of systematic theology—abstract doctrine. He scales incredible heights of truth, dealing with such doctrines as human depravity, justification by faith, sin, righteousness, sanctification, and the security of the believer—all culminating in 11:33-36, where he says, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” But the epistle doesn’t stop with that benediction. Paul doesn’t leave the discussion in the realm of the abstract. Beginning in chapter 12, he turns immediately to the practical consequences of the doctrine of the first eleven chapters. No passage in Scripture captures the Christian’s responsibility in the face of truth more clearly than Romans 12:1-2. Resting on eleven chapters of profound doctrine, Paul calls each believer to a supreme act of spiritual worship—giving oneself as a living sacrifice. Doctrine gives rise to dedication to Christ, the greatest practical act. And the remainder of the Book of Romans goes on to exhort the Romans to apply practically the truth he has dealt with in the early chapters.<sup>129</sup>

Not only did Paul establish this pattern in Romans, but he followed the same pattern in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians. Paul placed an emphasis on proper doctrine, but he understood that proper doctrine without practical application provided truth and information without addressing change and transformation. Paul always built upon the foundation of doctrine and then moved to the realm of duty. The doctrines of the Bible leads to changed lives. The truth leads to

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<sup>128</sup> Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2002), vii.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

transformation.

Often Paul used the word “therefore” or “then” to mark the transition between doctrine and duty, between information and application. In Romans 12:1, Galatians 5:1, Ephesians 4:1 and Philippians 2:1, Paul used the word “therefore” to denote a shift or change in the tenor of his letter. What follows is essentially practical application at its best, built upon the doctrine that previously was explained and expounded. In Colossians 3:1 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Paul used the word “then” instead of “therefore.” This is certainly a different word in the Greek, but it means the same thing to the hearer or reader. Since the truth has been explained and established, there is now a requirement to live a certain way and apply this truth to your life so it will lead to action. Doctrine provides the basis for duty, but doctrine alone does not always motivate to action. One must be careful that the proper action always follows the observed truth.

Michael Fabarez explained, “Here’s a principle all preachers would do well to remember: After you have studied and taught a doctrine, there is always a *therefore*. A major part of the preacher’s task is to highlight the *therefore* and press on his hearers their duty to obey.”<sup>130</sup> The example of Paul’s letters makes it obvious that doctrine and duty are inextricably related. Doctrine provides the foundation for Christian duty. Doctrine without duty appeals only to intellectual understanding. Duty without doctrine appeals only to the social desires. Information and explanation provide the foundation for practical application. The interpretation of the text drives the application of the sermon.

If Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, understood the need for practical application in his letters, the preacher would do well to take note as well. Just as there

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<sup>130</sup> Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, vii.

always is a “therefore” or “then” in Paul’s letters, there always must be a “therefore” or “then” in the expository sermon as well. “In other words, truly biblical preaching must be *both* didactic and practical. The two things are not opposed to one another.”<sup>131</sup> On the contrary, they go hand in hand.

An important point to note, however, is that there always must be a balance between doctrine and duty, between explanation and application: “Those who stress sound doctrine sometimes neglect the passion and pleading that are necessary parts of biblical preaching. And those who stress practical matters too often neglect to build the foundation of sound doctrine. To be lopsided in either direction is a serious mistake.”<sup>132</sup> This thesis is not a call for application only, but a call to examine the usefulness and necessity of application in the expository sermon. By definition, an expository sermon will expose the truth of the text of Scripture and make clear its meaning. Exegeting the text without practical application cannot be called true preaching: It may be the transfer of information, but it is certainly not preaching. An expository sermon must contain both explanation (doctrine) and application (duty).

Practical insights, gimmicks, and illustrations mean little if they are not attached to divine principle. There is no basis for godly behavior apart from the truth of God’s Word. Before the preacher asks anyone to perform a certain duty, he must first deal with doctrine. He must develop his message around theological themes and draw out the principles of the texts. Then the truth can be applied.

Doctrine without exhortation is lame, being deprived of the whole point. The preacher who delivers a theological lecture or an academic analysis of some passage of Scripture and then sits down without pressing the

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<sup>131</sup> Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, vii.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

practical ramifications of the truth on his hearers has not finished his task.<sup>133</sup>

Not only is the importance of application emphasized in Paul's writings, but it is evident also in the Old Testament. Nehemiah 8 records the reading of the Book of the Law before the people. Not only did Ezra read the Word of God, but the Levites and others "helped the people to understand the Law . . . . They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading."<sup>134</sup>

Not only was the Word of God read clearly and distinctly, but it also was explained so that people could understand. They could comprehend its meaning and original intent as well as its implications for their lives: "The Hebrew text was read, followed by an oral paraphrase in Aramaic so everyone would be sure to understand."<sup>135</sup> "What they read they expounded, showed the intent and meaning of it, and what use was to be made of it; they gave the sense in other words, that they might *cause the people to understand the reading*. It is requisite that those who hear the word should understand it, else it is to them but an empty sound of words."<sup>136</sup>

The fact that the people understood the Word was clear by their response. They all stood at the reading of the Scripture, and then bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord.

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<sup>133</sup> Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, vii.

<sup>134</sup> Neh. 8:4-8.

<sup>135</sup> Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1995). 132.

<sup>136</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 374.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.<sup>137</sup>

The people responded to the reading of the Word by worshiping the Lord. Verse 8 reveals the key. Not only did they read the Word, but they explained the Word and applied the Word: “That’s why we must not only read the Word; we must also seek to know what it means by what it says.”<sup>138</sup> “That is preaching—and that is expository preaching: reading the Scripture distinctly, giving the sense, and causing the people to understand the meaning to their lives.”<sup>139</sup>

The seventeenth chapter of Acts records what commonly is known as Paul’s visit to Mars Hill. Paul addressed the Areopagus and by using practical application to drive home the eternal truths of Scripture. In this masterpiece of communication, Paul started where the people were by referring to the altar with the inscription “to the unknown god.”<sup>140</sup> “Having aroused their interest, he then explained who that God is and what He is like. He concluded the message with a personal application that left each council member facing a moral decision, and some of them decided for Jesus Christ.”<sup>141</sup> Paul clearly exemplifies a communicator who has learned the value of practical application. While there were many different responses to his message in Athens, he boldly proclaimed the truth of God’s Word while providing powerful and practical application to

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<sup>137</sup> Neh. 8:5-6.

<sup>138</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Study the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 178.

<sup>139</sup> Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), xiii.

<sup>140</sup> Acts 17:23.

<sup>141</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996), 213.

the hearer.

A final example will be considered for the purposes of revealing the biblical authority for application in the expository sermon. In Romans 6:17, Paul declares, “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed. . . .”<sup>142</sup>

The words “teaching” or “doctrine” are essential to the understanding this verse: “In preaching it is impossible—leave alone irresponsible—to apply supracultural principles without the content of truth.”<sup>143</sup> Paul had dealt previously in this letter with the transformed life of the child of God. Now, he writes and encourages the believers in Rome by thanking God that they had “obeyed from the heart” the teaching with which they had been entrusted.

Ultimately, this is the goal of application: that the hearer would “obey from the heart” the eternal truth of the Word of God. The Bible provides numerous reasons why application in the expository sermon is important, but the greatest reason of all is that application moves the truth of God from the pages of Scripture into the hearts of men. When this truth is imbedded in the hearts of men, they can “obey from the heart” the truth that has been revealed.

### **Historical Examples**

Now that the biblical authority for application in the expository sermon has been examined, it is beneficial to consider a few historical examples of application in the expository sermon. Men like John A. Broadus, Charles Spurgeon, George Whitfield, A. W. Tozer, and John Stott all recognized the value of application in the expository sermon.

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<sup>142</sup> Rom. 6:17.

<sup>143</sup> Steven Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 252.

Not only did they recognize its worth, but they employed it in their practice as well. This made their preaching incredibly powerful and wonderfully practical.

John A. Broadus is the author of what is considered to be the foundational text on expository preaching, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Broadus recognized the necessity and usefulness of application in the expository sermon: “A preacher should be a living man, and strive to get hold of his contemporaries; yet nearly all of the good that preachers do is done not by new truths but by old truths, with fresh combination, illustration, application, experience, but old truths, yea, and often repeated in similar phrase, without apology and without fear.”<sup>144</sup> Broadus understood that the “old truths” of Scripture could be couched in new ways through contemporary application. This contemporary application could drive the truth of Scripture home into the hearts of the hearers.

In his seminal work on expository preaching, Broadus made it clear that he recognized the value and importance of practical relevance in preaching:

The term application is, in general, somewhat loosely employed in regard to preaching, for it includes two or three distinct things. Besides the application proper, in which we show the hearer how the truths of the sermon apply to him, and besides the frequent practical suggestions as to the best mode and means of performing the duty urged, there is also commonly included all that we denote by the terms “persuasion” and “exhortation.” But if the ideas conveyed are kept distinct, it is probably better to retain the term, with which all preachers and hearers are so familiar.<sup>145</sup>

Charles Spurgeon is another great expositor who understood the importance of application in the expository sermon. As already noted in this work, Spurgeon declared,

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<sup>144</sup> John Albert Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (New York: Sheldon, 1876), 30.

<sup>145</sup> John Albert Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 23d ed., ed Edwin Charles Dargan, (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898), 245.

“where the application begins, there the sermon begins.”<sup>146</sup> A close reading of Spurgeon’s sermons reveals that he placed a great emphasis on the Word of God. He also understood that God’s Word must be properly applied. Spurgeon believed that a sermon did not exist until the preacher moved from exposition to application.

George Whitefield also grasped the value of practical application in the expository sermon:

Whitefield was a singularly *bold and direct preacher*. He never used that indefinite expression “we,” which seems so peculiar to English pulpit oratory, and which only leaves a hearer’s mind in a state of misty confusion. He met men face to face, like one who had a message from God to them, “I have come here to speak to you about your soul.” The result was that many of his hearers used often to think that his sermons were specially meant for themselves. He was not content, as many, with sticking on a meager tail-piece of application at the end of a long discourse. On the contrary, a constant vein of application ran through all his sermons. “This is for you, and this is for you.” His hearers were never let alone.<sup>147</sup>

Haddon Robinson bluntly stated that “application is not incidental to effective expository preaching, it is crucial!”<sup>148</sup> George Whitfield understood this clearly. Not satisfied with nebulous and confusing rhetoric, he appealed directly to the will and volition of the hearer. He presented the truth of Scripture and called the people to act based upon the truth that was revealed.

John Stott also emphasized the usefulness and necessity of application in the expository sermon:

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<sup>146</sup> Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 245.

<sup>147</sup> John Charles Ryle, *The Christian Leaders of the Last Century: Or, England A Hundred Years Ago* (New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1869), 52.

<sup>148</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *We Believe in Biblical Preaching* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972), 13.

In my early days I used to think that my business was to expound and exegete the text; I am afraid I left the application to the Holy Spirit. It is amazing how you can conceal your laziness with a little pious phraseology! The Holy Spirit certainly can and does apply the Word for the people. But it is wrong to deny our own responsibility in the application of the Word. All great preachers understand this. They focus on the conclusion, on the application of the text. This is what the Puritans called ‘preaching through to the heart.’ This is how my own preaching has changed. I have learned to add application to exposition.<sup>149</sup>

Sadly, many modern preachers fall into the same trap described here by Stott.

Piously pushing away application, crouching behind a feigned fear of “watering down” the Word, many never make the essential connection between truth and practice.

Application is hard work. This is why many preachers avoid its call. But this call must be answered if preachers are to take seriously the call of God to communicate His truth to the hearer in such a way as to affect change. “In the last analysis, the whole purpose of preaching the Word is to bring people into conformity to Christ.”<sup>150</sup>

Bible teaching without moral application could be worse than no teaching at all and could result in positive injury to the hearers. What is generally overlooked is that truth as set forth in the Christian Scriptures is a moral thing; it is not addressed to the intellect only, but to the will also. It addresses itself to the total man, and its obligations cannot be discharged by grasping it mentally. Truth engages the citadel of the human heart and is not satisfied until it has conquered everything there.<sup>151</sup>

### **Practical Examples**

It is important, also, to consider some practical examples that point to the need for

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<sup>149</sup> John R. W. Stott, “*Creating the Bridge: An Interview with John R. W. Stott*,” *Preaching* 4, no. 5 (March-April 1989): 4-5.

<sup>150</sup> Stephen E. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 257.

<sup>151</sup> A. W. Tozer, *The Best of A. W. Tozer*, comp. Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 140-41.

application in the expository sermon. While practical examples are important, if not supported by biblical authority or historical examples, they would not be sufficient to make the case for the absolute necessity of applying the sermon properly. Once, however, the case is made both biblically and historically, it is proper and beneficial to consider the practical examples and implications of application in the expository sermon.

In his book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell provided an excellent treatment of the practice of application in the preparation and delivery of expository sermons. He offered offers four components of application derived from four major questions: “Expository messages require preachers to ensure that the application they make will answer four key questions: What does God now require of me? Where does He require it of me? Why must I do what He requires? and, How can I do what God requires?”<sup>152</sup>

First, the preacher must answer the simple question, “What does God require now as a result of what we have heard from His Word?” This all-important question often is overlooked in sermon preparation and delivery. The task of the preacher is to bring the principles of Scripture to bear in the practical lives of the listeners. There should be an action to take, a task to accomplish, a sin to avoid, a goal to embrace, a habit to develop, or some other type of specific application as a result of the truth revealed in Scripture. Preachers are able to answer the question, “What does God require of me?” by “providing instructions that reflect the biblical principles found in the text. [This] translates the text from ancient history to present guide.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 204.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

After the question of “what” is answered, the preacher must ask, “Where does God require me to perform this certain action or accomplish this task?” Answering the question of “what” is important, but “if preachers never specify where in real life these principles apply, the instructions remain irrelevant abstractions.”<sup>154</sup> The truth is, relevance and powerful application is one characteristic of mature and meaningful preaching. The preacher must answer the questions of “what” and “where” clearly to begin to make the application stick in the mind and heart of the hearer.

After answering the questions of “what” and “where,” the preacher must answer the third question: “why.” Simply put, the hearers should know why they must do what is required by God in His Word. Many people know the demands of God but choose not to obey them. For some, this is outright disobedience. For others, it is possible that they have not yet learned why they should obey God in a specific area of their life: “Applications must provide proper motivation as well as relevant instruction.”<sup>155</sup> The simple truth is, it is possible to do all the right things for the entirely wrong reasons. The “why” of application penetrates to the hearer’s motivations and desires. Obedience to God should not be based upon guilt, but on God’s grace.

According to Chappell, the final question that must be asked when applying the sermon is “how.” The preacher should help the listener answer the question, “How can I do what God requires?” Once “what,” “where,” and “why” have been established, it is essential to answer the “how.” This is, in fact, the goal of application in the first place: “Preachers must be careful not to fall into the same practice by telling people what they

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<sup>154</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 206.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

must do, and at the same time neglect to tell them how.”<sup>156</sup> How can a believer obey God in a particular area? How can the strongholds of sin and bondage be broken? How can God restore a marriage and put a family back together again? How can one overcome the flesh and live for Christ? These questions must be answered for application to be effective in the context of the expository sermon. “Complete application requires the preacher to spell out the practical steps and the spiritual resources that make the aims of the sermon attainable.”<sup>157</sup>

Chappell’s answers to these questions provide a practical example of a basis for application in the expository sermon. Application deals not only with what needs to be done, but walks the listener through the process of connecting a truth with his or her specific situation and circumstance. For the preacher, such application is an absolute must, critical and essential. Chappell concluded that “application focuses the impact of the entire sermon on the transformation(s) God requires in His people. This is not the time to mince words or abandon care. Direct application right between the eyes—with love.”<sup>158</sup>

The preacher who is willing to apply the sermon powerfully, practically and consistently shows genuine love and concern for the people God has entrusted into his care: “Application that remains strong and steady week after week arises from a mind fixed on God and from a heart that beats for broken people in a fallen world.”<sup>159</sup>

Applying the sermon is a must for the preacher who desires to see lives change through the power of the Word.

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<sup>156</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 209.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 209.

Some preachers protest an emphasis on application because they fear a sort of “dumbing down” or “watering down” of the truth of the Bible. The Bible makes a clear case for application within its pages. Even the teachings of Jesus make it clear that application must be a part of communicating truth. To Jesus, successful preaching was not simply disseminating truth or even bringing the congregation to an understanding of the truth. To Jesus, an effective sermon resulted in people grasping truth *and putting it into action!*<sup>160</sup>

Fabarez explained, “we have imposed an artificial meaning on the word *doctrine*. We’ve made it something abstract and threatening, unrelated to daily living. That has given rise to the disastrous idea that “doctrinal” truth and “practical” truth are polar opposites. They are not.”<sup>161</sup> Sound doctrine is incredibly practical. Application reveals the relevance of the truth of God’s Word. “All sound doctrine, when correctly understood and properly taught, is practical. The modern hard-line distinction between doctrinal and practical truth is artificial and unbiblical. Sound doctrine is the necessary foundation for godly living.”<sup>162</sup>

Fabarez continued, “regaining ground in effective application is critically important, not only for our hearers’ sake, but more importantly for Christ’s sake.”<sup>163</sup> The purpose of preaching is not to fill the listeners’ heads, but to see Christ change their hearts: “The goal of most messages is to improve receivers’ lives, deepen their faith, or enhance their relationships. Conveying Bible content as an end unto itself is not good stewardship. Our goal must be life transformation.”<sup>164</sup> As Bryan Chapell stated, “preaching without application may serve the mind,

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<sup>160</sup> Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, xi.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>164</sup> Alan Neslon, *Creating Messages that Connect* (Loveland: Permissions Group, 2004), 114.

but preaching with application requires service to Christ. Application makes Jesus the center of a sermon's exhortation as well as the focus of its explanation.<sup>165</sup>

In their book, *Communicating for a Change*, Andy Stanley and Lane Jones listed five questions that the preacher must ask before he stands to deliver the message. These questions will help the preacher determine whether or not he has prepared a message that will bring about transformation and life change. These questions also can function as a matrix for the preacher to sift out unwanted or unnecessary material in the sermon.

The first question is, "What do they need to know?"<sup>166</sup> In other words, what is the central theme, the main idea, or the major proposition that must be communicated in the sermon? To answer this question, the preacher must have a clear understanding of the passage of Scripture, as well as a clear understanding of the needs of his audience.

The second question that must be asked is, "Why do they need to know it?"<sup>167</sup> This is a question that most communicators never consider, but it is a question that certainly should be addressed. When the expositor answers this question, he gives the listeners a reason to keep listening. If the preacher fails to answer this question, he fails to consider why his message is important and meaningful. This question can be rephrased: "What will happen to the person who never discovers the truth or principle you are about to address? What is at stake for them?"<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 45.

<sup>166</sup> Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for a Change* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2006), 186.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

The third question that should be considered, according to Stanley and Jones, is “What do they need to do?”<sup>169</sup> In other words, what decision must be made or action must be taken or principle must be followed because of this particular sermon? On this point, it is important to be specific. The preacher must give the audience something specific and measurable that they can accomplish: “Something so specific they will know immediately whether or not they have done it.”<sup>170</sup>

The fourth question that should be addressed is, “Why do they need to do it?”<sup>171</sup> When the preacher answers the first “why” question, he has inspired his listeners to continue listening and connected on a personal level. This second “why” question now inspires them to action. Practical application always will lead to action. This is, after all, the purpose of sermon preparation and delivery: application that leads to transformation. Through this, God receives glory through the expounded Word and the lives of the hearers.

The fifth and final question is one of reiteration: “What can I do to help them remember?”<sup>172</sup> Here, the authors suggested providing the audience with something tangible and practical that will aid them in remembering the point of the message. The first question deals with information. The second question deals with motivation. The third question deals with application. The fourth question deals with inspiration. And the final question deals with reiteration. Ultimately, the goal of the sermon is to

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<sup>169</sup> Stanley and Jones, *Communicating for a Change*, 188.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

communicate in such a way that clearly explains the Word of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit enables the hearer to respond in humble obedience.

### **Conclusion**

Application in the expository sermon is a must. In fact, without application, there can be no sermon. Explanation alone, however, does not make a sermon, just as application alone does not make a sermon. At a minimum, when these two elements come together, the truth of God's timeless Word strikes a chord in the heart of the contemporary hearer. Exposition and interpretation reveal the truths of Scripture while application drives those truths home in the heart and mind of the hearer. The basis for application in the expository sermon is clear; its basis is seen through historical examples and practical experience, but is thoroughly undergirded by biblical authority.

## **Section V: Who? Different Methods of Application Used by Various Preachers**

When examining the use and necessity of application in the expository sermon, it is essential to look at a variety of methods of application used by different preachers. This paper will observe four preachers from various backgrounds, denominations, churches and persuasions: Andy Stanley, Chuck Swindoll, Rick Warren and John MacArthur.

Before examining sermons from each preacher for their applicational content, it is important to understand different types of application that can exist within the sermon. Each of these preachers uses application in the sermon, but employs a different method.

While different methods of application have been examined in Section III of this project, it is essential to grasp how and where application may occur in the context of an expository sermon. Each preacher that will be studied employs at least one of these methods. Some employ more than one method, while others may use some combination of the types of application that are listed below.

First, there is compact application. This type of application occurs at the end of the sermon. Typically, compact application includes several points at the end of a sermon that serve to elicit some sort of response from the hearer and cement the message in his or her heart. This extended section at the end of the sermon calls the hearer to action. It brings the sermon to a close and seeks to persuade the listener based upon the information that the preacher presents to the hearer.

Next, there is continuous application. As opposed to compact application, which occurs in a section at the end of the sermon, continuous application occurs throughout the body of the message in strategic locations. Here, the preacher shows how a particular

truth of a sermon division applies to the hearer and can be acted upon by a follower of Christ. This type of application takes individual truths that support the main idea of the sermon and applies these truths throughout the sermon.

Another type of application is descriptive application. Descriptive application shows how the truth derived from the biblical text either is or is not being lived out in the lives of people. This application can include a testimony or example of how the truth can be applied. This is a type of illustrative application that specifically describes what should or should not be done in a certain situation.

Finally, there is prescriptive application. Whereas descriptive application provides examples, stories, and testimonies, prescriptive application gives instructions for how to live out the truth presented in the sermon. Prescriptive application may include steps of action to accomplish a desired goal or strategy and a call for obedience to the revealed truth of Scripture.

Each type of application has value and may be employed with purpose and success. The important thing to understand when considering application is to ensure that some type of application always is used. There may be various types of application used with differing degrees of effectiveness, but the preacher must ensure that application always is employed.

Having examined several types of application, now it is important to observe how modern day preachers employ these various styles. The remainder of this section will be devoted to examining a specific sermon by the aforementioned preachers. Each preacher uses application, but employs a different style than the others. Not only are the application styles very different, but the preaching styles of each preacher vary greatly as

well. This examination is purposeful because it is important to understand how every preacher, regardless of his individual style, may employ application.

### **Method 1: Andy Stanley<sup>173</sup>**

When one examines Andy Stanley’s sermon based on Philippians 4:4, it is immediately clear that Stanley places a high value on application in the context of the sermon. Stanley is not considered a consistent expositor, but varies his method from time to time. While he does preach expository messages, he also preaches topically or thematically. For the purposes of this project, one of Stanley’s expository messages was examined to underscore the major thesis: the necessity and use of application in the expository sermon.

Stanley’s sermon manuscript contains 1,627 words. A conservative estimate considers 832 of these words part of the application content of the sermon. That means that over half (51.16%) of Stanley’s message was devoted to application. His division statements, which are not included in this count, are applicational in nature as well.

This is no surprise, considering Stanley’s stated purpose for preaching: to communicate the truth in a way that sticks with his hearers. He encourages the preacher to ask the question, “What are you trying to accomplish?”<sup>174</sup> In other words, the preacher must determine his goal in preaching—what is the purpose of communicating biblical truth?

Stanley answers that question in his book, *Communicate for a Change*. He emphasized ardently, that preaching is for life change. Stanley writes, “Preaching for life

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<sup>173</sup> Andy Stanley’s entire sermon, “*When the Fasten Seatbelt Sign Comes On—Pray!*” can be found in Appendix A of this work.

<sup>174</sup> Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicate for a Change* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2006), 92.

change requires far less information and more application. Less explanation and more inspiration.”<sup>175</sup> In interviews, Stanley has been quoted as saying that as much as 90% of the sermon should be applicational in nature. He believes this because the goal of sermon preparation and delivery is not relaying information, but facilitating transformation.

Stanley added this thought concerning application: “When you commit to preach for life change, your preparation is not complete until you answer the questions: So what? and Now what? Our preaching won’t make much difference if our people don’t understand what difference it is supposed to make. Our audience won’t do much with what we’ve taught until we tell ‘em what they ought to do.”<sup>176</sup>

Stanley certainly does this in his sermon. He begins his message with an illustration that describes a situation many people can relate to: the critical time during a flight when the fasten seatbelt sign comes on. One might expect this sign to come on when the airplane is taking off and when the airplane is landing, but when the sign comes on during mid-flight it means turbulence is ahead.

Immediately after this attention-capturing illustration, Stanley applies the situation to his audience. This message was preached shortly after September 11, 2001. Stanley said, “Since 9/11, for us as a nation, the captain has turned on the fasten seatbelt sign. Trouble ahead. It could be a short, small bump. Or it may be time to pull out the little bag in the seatback in front of you.” This analogy compares the turbulence of the plane and the uncertainty that it brings, to the turbulence and uncertainty of the nation during that time.

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<sup>175</sup> Stanley and Jones, *Communicate for a Change* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2006), 96.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

The next part of his sermon continues to apply the truth of this illustration, but in greater detail. He deals with the issues of the economy, terrorism and the war, issues that are no doubt on the minds of people. He simply reminds the people that they have no idea what the future holds. Why? Because they are not in control. Just as they are not in control when we are on an airplane, they are not in control in this life. Turbulent times will come.

Stanley continues his message by communicating to his audience that this is not the first time that God's people have experienced difficult times. Joseph faced a time of uncertainty when he found himself in a pit, and then in prison. David found himself in an uncertain situation when his son conspired against him to overtake his throne. Mary was perplexed when the angel of the Lord appeared with the life-changing information that she was pregnant although she was a virgin.

Here, Stanley's biblical examples make a clear point that people need to realize: uncertainty has always existed. They are not in this alone; this is not the first time God's people have encountered trouble. He continues, "this book is filled with stories of people facing uncertainty and discovering that not only is God not absent, but he is often diligently at work accomplishing his will in this world and in the lives of those he loves." Even as Stanley made a point, he offered descriptive application.

Stanley's overarching theme is for the hearer to understand that God is in control and he or she is not. Although this is not a comfortable position to be in at times, it is the best possible situation that a believer will encounter. Stanley then answers the important question that gets to the heart of his message, "So what do we do?" This question alerts his listeners that what comes next is the "now what" and "so what" of the sermon.

Stanley gives five principles from Philippians 4:4 that are prescriptive and applicational in nature. These five principles serve not only to support his main theme, but also as application within the expository message.

First, Stanley says, “Pray.” This is the first and most important thing to do in times of uncertainty. Prayer does not ensure that all the problems of life will disappear, but it does mean that the hearer must recognize his or her need for God during times of distress.

Second, Stanley instructs his audience to “Rejoice . . . the Lord is near.” Stanley emphasizes that even in the midst of adversity and uncertainty, the child of God still has a reason to rejoice. Again, a point of application is seen here: “Don’t let uncertainty impact your character. Be gracious and gentle. Don’t lose your influence.”

Third, Stanley quotes the text again and encourages his audience to “be anxious for nothing.” After this point, Stanley once more offers more application in a descriptive sense: “I’m just quoting a prisoner who knows what happens to Christians under Nero.” In other words, Stanley describes Paul’s difficult situation, and in doing so, points to the truth of his sermon and the application of his message.

Fourth, Stanley continues to follow the text and encourages his audience: “But in everything . . . let your requests be made known to God.” Here, Stanley addresses the objections of the hearer. He emphasizes that this is beyond intellectual exercise or experience. This is beyond perfunctory or emergency prayer. “This is about placing into God’s hands what only God’s hands are capable of handling.”

Fifth, Stanley introduces the result: “Peace . . . Literally: which surpasses every thought of man.” Again, Stanley immediately enters into the application of this idea. He

says, “prayer isn’t about changing things. Prayer is about being changed. Changed to trust the Father with the things only He can control.”

He concludes his message with an illustration that could be considered descriptive application. For the purposes of this examination, this section was not considered as part of the application content of his sermon. His concluding paragraph, however, certainly is a large part of his application in the message: “What is your greatest concern right now? What are you afraid will happen? Say this, ‘Lord, if \_\_\_\_\_ happens, I’m afraid \_\_\_\_\_.’” Here, Stanley once again drives home the central theme of his message to the heart of the hearer with application.

Andy Stanley uses a process to infuse application into his message. As he reviews his message before he preaches it, he asks five questions that help solidify his sermon in his heart and mind. These questions serve as a matrix or grid that ensures that proper application is part of the sermon.

The first question is, “What do they need to know?” Stanley wrote, “in light of what I’ve discovered from the text and the insights I’ve gained along the way, what is the one thing they need to know?”<sup>177</sup> Many sermons are filled with information that never impacts the life and heart of the hearer. In fact, many sermons are filled with truth but do not contain any element that connects that truth to the heart of the hearer. Pastors can walk away from the pulpit impressed with themselves, but have they relayed valuable information to the audience, or have they merely proven they know a lot of useless information? “At some point we’ve got to begin caring more for the people in the

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<sup>177</sup> Stanley and Jones, *Communicate for a Change*, 186.

audience than the person on the platform . . . . Until we do, communication is really about us.”<sup>178</sup>

The second question that Stanley asks is, “why do they need to know it?” “Here’s a question very few communicators take time to answer for their audience. And that’s too bad. Because when you answer this question you give your listeners a reason to keep listening.”<sup>179</sup> The simple truth is, many people do not accept the truths of the Bible at face value. They need to know what the Bible teaches, but also why it is important to obey the Bible. The question can be rephrased in this way: “What will happen to the person who never discovers the truth or principle you are about to address? What is at stake for them?”<sup>180</sup> When the preacher is able to answer this question and put the *why* behind the *what*, it will produce both passion and energy in the sermon.

The third question to be asked is, “what do they need to do?” In other words, what needs to be done because of what has been said? Ultimately, this is the question of application that brings the “so what” and “now what” into the sermon. To answer this question, it is important that the preacher communicates in specific and creative ways: “Give your audience something very specific to do. Something so specific they will know immediately whether or not they have done it.”<sup>181</sup> This drives the truth home to the heart and mind of the hearer and immediately points to what must be done as a result of what has been heard.

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<sup>178</sup> Stanley and Jones, *Communicate for a Change*, 92.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

The fourth question Stanley asks is, “Why do they need to do it?” “The first time you answered *why* you inspired them to keep listening. Now you’ve got to inspire them to take action. Why should they do what you have suggested?”<sup>182</sup> Even if the action is obvious, the task of the preacher is to show the hearer why it is important to act in a way that is according to the truth revealed in the Bible.

The fifth and final question that should be asked is, “What can I do to help them remember?” “What can I do to help them remember either my point or my application?”<sup>183</sup> This not only lends itself to application, but to long-term life change. When the audience clearly understands the point, knows why it is important and can remember it, it is much more likely that they will be motivated to obey the truth and to apply the principle to their lives.

Stanley concludes by reiterating the questions:

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|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. What do they need to know?    | INFORMATION |
| 2. Why do they need to know it?  | MOTIVATION  |
| 3. What do they need to do?      | APPLICATION |
| 4. Why do they need to do it?    | INSPIRATION |
| 5. How can I help them remember? | REITERATION |

Stanley’s method is certainly one that emphasizes application in the sermon. Is it possible, however, to overemphasize application to the detriment of interpretation or explanation? Some of his critics would say yes. The purpose of this project, however, is not to critique any particular method, but to show the value of application in the context of the expository sermon. Not only is application useful, but it is absolutely necessary to communicate the truth of the Word of God in a relevant and life changing way.

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<sup>182</sup> Stanley and Jones, *Communicate for a Change*, 189.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

## Method 2: Charles Swindoll

The next expository message to be examined in this study is Charles Swindoll's sermon entitled "The Gathering Storm" from the series, "Jesus, The Greatest Life of All."<sup>184</sup> In this sermon, Swindoll uses various forms of application. Swindoll typically uses both prescriptive and descriptive application, but normally provides compact application at the end of the sermon instead of a structured continuous application.

Swindoll's sermon manuscript contains 1,298 words, 563 of which can be considered applicational in nature. This means that 43.24% of the content in this sermon manuscript is presented as application in one form or another. This high percentage points to the fact that Swindoll places a great emphasis on application.

Swindoll begins with simple explanation concerning the life and ministry of Christ. He sets the stage by beginning to tell a story about the personality and behavior of Jesus: "While Jesus was indeed gentle and kind, He also took a bold stand against sin. In fact, when confronting evil dressed in the garb of religion, His formidable anger took many by surprise." This description of Jesus Christ leads directly into a prescriptive application for the hearer: "And from the example of Jesus, we learn how to stand up for the truth, even as we lose popularity and suffer persecution for doing what is right."

While Swindoll does use continuous application at some points throughout the sermon, there is no doubt that his primary method at the end of the sermon is compact application at the end of the sermon. This emphasis on compact application can be seen even from the outline of the manuscript. Swindoll begins with an introduction, moves to exposition, and then provides compact application that leads directly into his conclusion.

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<sup>184</sup> Charles Swindoll's entire sermon entitled, "The Gathering Storm" from the series, "Jesus, The Greatest Life of All" can be found in Appendix B of this work.

His application makes up a major portion of his sermon and comes at the end of the message in a concise and condensed manner.

Swindoll leaves his introduction and begins with his exposition. He begins to explain clearly the text to ensure that the audience understands the point of the sermon. Jesus was willing to stand for the truth, and this meant that He certainly would face the retribution and anger of the Jewish leaders. “Jesus was not afraid to stand for the truth,” but “the enemies of Jesus care more about pleasing others than living by the truth.” Swindoll uses Matthew 10:34 as his text: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”<sup>185</sup>

Swindoll continues by explaining the tension that existed between Jesus and his followers, and the Scribes and Pharisees. This tension erupted into full-blown hatred on the part of the Scribes and Pharisees that would eventually lead to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. These religious leaders who were so in love with the law could not understand the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Ironically, their religious zeal put them at odds with God. Not only were they motivated by a lust for power, their traditions often violated the very law they supposedly cherished.”

Swindoll then examines the dealings of Jesus with those who were zealous for the law: “At the end of His ministry, Jesus publicly condemned the religious system in Jerusalem and exposed the moral bankruptcy of the men who ran it.” Jesus was not willing to allow the abuse of the Old Testament to continue. “While [He] had a soft spot in His heart for people who had been trampled by the world’s system, He had little patience for those in religious leadership who neglected or abused others.”

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<sup>185</sup> Matt. 10:34.

Here, Swindoll offers much explanation, with little or no continuous application. He saves the application for the end and frames it with several memorable points. He establishes a tension by retelling the story of Jesus' encounter with the religious leaders of His day. Then, Swindoll moves to application to bring the story to life in the mind and heart of the believer.

Swindoll begins his application by stating that there are four principles that emerge from the example of Jesus that the believer should follow. In other words, after telling the story and revealing the example of Christ, the believer would do well to examine Christ's response and seek to emulate it.

As his first point of application, Swindoll states, "remembering your mission helps you to navigate through any storm. Stay focused." Swindoll reminds the listener that Jesus clearly understood His mission. Remembering His mission allowed Him to never waver, falter or fail. When following that example, the believer would do well to remember that he or she has been assigned a mission as well. When followers of Christ falter, stumble or fall, most of the time it is because they forget why God has placed them upon this earth. They should remember the mission and "stay focused." "Once we have determined the correct course of action, we must then keep our eyes focused on following it, even if others discourage or persecute us." No amount of discouragement or persecution could keep Christ from the mission of the Cross, and no amount of discouragement or persecution should keep believers from fulfilling the mission that they have been assigned.

In his second point of application, Swindoll states, "encountering evil requires sword-like confrontation, not peacekeeping compromise. Stay alert." In Matthew 10:34,

there is no doubt that Christ's words cut like a sword. He says, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword."<sup>186</sup> The Bible states in Hebrews 4:12, "for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."<sup>187</sup> Trying to please people often will take the follower of Christ off the path of truth and righteousness. Seeking to follow God means that Christians must stay alert and not compromise their morals and values.

In his third point of application, Swindoll states, "being bold when there's a principle worth fighting for is worth the risk, even if it offends and results in misunderstanding. Stay strong." Simply put, sometimes following Christ can be extremely controversial. Christ's call is often countercultural and revolutionary. Just as His statement in Matthew 10:34 is extremely controversial, there will be times when following Christ might lead to offense or misunderstanding. If this is the case, Christians must "stay strong." "When a clear moral issue is at stake, people-pleasing compromise will tempt us to lay aside the sword of truth. However, we must remember to keep our sword pointed at the issue." Swindoll's application is absolutely clear at this point. If Christ was able to stand against the persecution and mistreatment of the multitudes in His day, then the followers of Christ must stay strong when they face the possibility of suffering for the sake of righteousness.

In his fourth and final point of application, Swindoll states, "speaking up for what is right is no guarantee you'll win or gain respect. Stay realistic." Again, Swindoll uses the example from the life of Jesus Christ to point to the fact that the more Christ told the

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<sup>186</sup> Matt. 10:34.

<sup>187</sup> Heb. 4:12.

truth, the more hated He became by the established religious leaders of His day. “Jesus took a stand against the outrageous evil of the religious leaders in Jerusalem and a storm quickly gathered around Him.” Swindoll’s point of application is simple: if this happened to Jesus Christ, the followers of Christ can certainly expect it to happen to them as well. When following His example, they must “stay realistic” and expect the persecution that He experienced to be theirs as well. It takes sacrifice. “In fact, the fight may even require us to sacrifice everything, including our lives. But the Lord does not call us to be successful. He calls us to be faithful.”

In Swindoll’s conclusion, he employs application to make the message stick in the heart and mind of the hearer: “Like Jesus, we must stand up for the truth, even if we lose popularity and suffer persecution for doing what is right.” Here, Swindoll’s message is condensed in one simple, applicational phrase. In fact, this is the point of his entire sermon. If Christ experienced persecution, misunderstanding and pain, we can expect to experience the same. The point is, it is important for the follower of Christ to not remain neutral, but to stand for what is right.

This message demonstrates that Swindoll places a high value on application in the expository sermon. While his application is different from others, it does, nonetheless, hold a place of prominence in his sermon. Swindoll understands the importance of application and sees in the life of Christ an example of its value and merit. “Most of the images in Jesus’ teaching drew upon the common experience of the Jews living in the first century: shepherd and sheep, sower and seed, wine and wineskins, master and servants.”<sup>188</sup> Here, Swindoll reveals one of the habits of Christ in His earthly ministry

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<sup>188</sup> Charles Swindoll, *Jesus: The Greatest Life of All* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2008), 144.

and teaching. He had a way of making a teaching come alive in the heart and mind of the hearer, a way of making the idea take root. The preacher would do well to follow the example of Christ and make application in the sermon a high priority.

### **Method 3: Rick Warren**

The next sermon to be studied in this section is a message by Rick Warren entitled, “God’s Passion for You.”<sup>189</sup> This sermon was preached in the series, “Understanding the Passion.” In his message, Warren uses a variety of applicational material in a unique way. Warren uses prescriptive and descriptive application within his sermon. He follows the continual pattern of application more than the compact or condensed pattern. Although Warren offers an illustration with heavy application at the end of his message, he did not use the formal compact type of application.

Rick Warren’s sermon contains 6,807 words. This is, by far, the longest sermon studied in this thesis. Of the 6,807 words in this message, 3,359 are applicational in nature. This means that almost half of this sermon contains some type of application. The content of application in this sermon is 49.26%. Rick Warren’s sermon is second only to Andy Stanley’s for the amount of application employed, and not a distant second by any means.

From examining Warren’s sermon, it is clear that Warren places a high value on application and understands its use and necessity in sermon preparation and delivery. It also is clear that Warren employs all four tools of preaching within the division statements of the sermon: explanation, illustration, argumentation and application. There

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<sup>189</sup> Rick Warren’s entire sermon entitled, “*God’s Passion for You*” from the series, “*Understanding the Passion*” can be found in Appendix C of this work.

seems to be no rigid structure where each element is employed within the division statement, but each element exists within all the division statements.

Warren begins with an illustration from the contemporary culture to capture the attention of the hearer. This sermon was preached very soon after the movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” was released. In fact, Warren’s entire series is based upon this movie and is entitled, “Understanding the Passion.” This message is centered around “God’s Passion for You” and is based on John 3:16.

Warren has a unique way of weaving application into his message at almost every level. Application clearly is an important part of his sermons, but it seems to have no specific point at which it rests in any portion of his message. Warren employs application after an illustration. For instance, at the beginning of his message Warren tells a story about seeing John 3:16 on a large sign at a football game. Then, he moves to application: “If you were only going to memorize one verse in the entire Bible this would be the one I would recommend.” This application is specific, measurable and attainable.

Warren not only uses application after illustrations, but he uses application after argumentation as well. Warren spends a great amount of time making a biblical case of God’s love for people. He quotes many verses that support this theme. Then, he states specifically, “I believe that God brought you to Saddleback Church so He could say this to you, ‘I love you. I love you.’ God wants to say to you this morning, ‘I love you.’ That’s the starting point to understand and recognize God’s passion for you.” Warren made the case from the Bible that God’s love is open and available to all. Then, he makes it personal and says simply, “God loves you!”

Warren employs application after illustration and argumentation, but also after explanation. Almost every time Warren explains a portion of the text, he applies it as well. Warren's first point is, "You need to acknowledge God's passion." Immediately, he moves to application and asks a key question, "What do I mean by that?" Then, he makes it personal, "You need to realize how much God loves you. It all starts with you understanding how amazingly extravagantly God loves you." He continues, "A lot of people think God is mad at them. God is not mad at you. He's mad *about* you." It seems that every point of explanation and exposition Warren makes, a point of application exists as well.

Warren's second point is stated plainly: "You appreciate God's present." This is based on the portion of John 3:16 that teaches, "...that He gave His only begotten Son."<sup>190</sup> Immediately after stating this point, Warren makes a specific application, "God has a gift for you. It's a present. The gift is His very own Son." Through this application, Warren makes his explanation personal and real.

Warren's third point of explanation is, "You accept His proposal." Warren says, "God has an incredible offer for you, one like you will never ever receive anywhere else." Warren bases this point in the portion of the text that says, "... that whosoever believes in Him should not perish." Warren provides a short portion of argumentation that shows this gift is offered to everyone, and then he moves directly to application. Warren states that "it doesn't matter what your economic status is. It doesn't matter your ethnic or racial background. It doesn't matter your social prestige, whether you're famous or not. It doesn't matter what your religious background is. Jesus died for you." Each point of explanation made by Warren finds a target in the heart of the hearer

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<sup>190</sup> John 3:16.

through consistent application. He explains that this offer is available and open to all and then he spends much time dealing with objections to this truth. He applies this truth to many different circumstances and situations in order to answer every objection the hearer might have to receiving Christ as Savior.

At this point, Warren makes an all-important application. In the middle of his sermon, he gives the hearer an opportunity to receive Christ as Savior.

*Right now God is ready to welcome you into His family. Today He is ready to save you. Have you ever personally accepted what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross and told Him so? If you haven't you ought to. In fact, you ought to do it now. In fact, why don't we just pause right here and pray together. Just bow your head and talk to Jesus Christ. You say, "I don't know what to say!" I'll say some words and you follow me in your mind. You don't have to say it aloud. God knows your heart. He knows what you're thinking. Just say this. Dear Jesus, I don't understand it all, but I want to thank You for loving me. I want to thank You for coming to earth for me. And I want to thank You for giving Your life for me so I could go to Heaven. I want to accept Your free gift of forgiveness and salvation. I want You to be the savior of my life and the Lord, the manager of my life. I want to learn to trust You and to love You and to fulfill Your purpose for my life. I say to You today, Come on in to my heart. Amen.*

Warren continues his sermon after this offer of salvation. He offers a fourth point: "You anticipate God's promise." Briefly explaining his point by grounding it in the text, Warren moves to application once again. God's promise here is, "... should not perish but have everlasting life."<sup>191</sup> Warren applies this truth by saying, "Did you know that you were made to last forever? Your heart's going to stop. But that's not going to be the end of you. Oh no! God wants you to be in Heaven with Him." Warren takes the truth of Scripture and makes a direct application to the hearer once again. This drives home the eternal truth of God's Word into the heart and mind of the contemporary hearer in a powerful and memorable way.

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<sup>191</sup> John 3:16.

Warren continues to use application throughout his message after explanation, illustration and argumentation. He then offers a final application at the conclusion of his message. Warren's application could be seen as compact application but it is certainly not as formal as that of Swindoll. One of the most powerful points of application in Warren's sermon comes immediately after an illustration:

In the movie *The Passion of the Christ* one of the most graphic scenes to me is when Pilate, the governor of Judea, walks out in front of an entire mob and he asks the single most important question in history. He asks, "*What will you do with Jesus?*" I'm asking you that question right now. What will you do with Jesus? It is the most important question you will ever be asked in your life. It not only determines the rest of your life but where you'll spend eternity: What will you do with Jesus?

Once again, Warren uses application to drive home the main point and major purpose of the sermon: "What will you do with Jesus?" He then, gives each hearer the opportunity to respond to Christ by placing their faith and trust in Him as their personal Lord and Savior.

It is clear that Rick Warren places a high value on application within the sermon. From this expository message, Warren walks carefully through the text, explaining its meaning and purpose, and then applies each point with power and precision. Each point of explanation finds its root in Scripture, and each point of application reaches the heart and life of the hearer.

In his book, *The Purpose-Driven Church*, Rick Warren provided insight into his reason for his style of preaching. Warren began to examine the teaching ministry of Jesus as he considered the style of preaching that most honors God, grows the church,

and reaches the lost. Warren wrote, “Jesus attracted crowds by teaching in a practical and interesting way.”<sup>192</sup>

First, Warren explained, “Jesus began with people’s needs, hurts and interests. Jesus usually taught in response to a question or a pressing problem from someone in the crowd.”<sup>193</sup> Dealing with a contemporary issue or a pressing problem that attracts listeners and captures their attention. This is a powerful form of application.

Next, Warren wrote, “Jesus related truth to life.”<sup>194</sup> This is what application is all about: relating truth to life. The preacher is called to take the eternal truth of God’s Word and relate it to the lives of the hearers. Warren wrote, “Sermons that exhort people to change without sharing the practical steps of how to do it end up just producing more guilt and frustration.”<sup>195</sup> Warren also emphasized the need for application in preaching: “Christlike preaching is life-related and produces a changed lifestyle. It doesn’t just inform, it transforms. It changes people because the Word is applied to where people actually live.”<sup>196</sup>

After examining the teaching ministry of Jesus, Warren explained, “Jesus spoke to the crowd with an interesting style.”<sup>197</sup> Jesus was able to capture the imagination and interest of the crowds with simple, yet powerful techniques that can be employed by the

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<sup>192</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven-Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 223.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

preacher today. “He told stories to make a point. Jesus was a master storyteller.”<sup>198</sup> He used simple, everyday items or issues to connect eternal truths to the lives of listeners. Further, “Jesus used simple language, not technical or theological jargon.”<sup>199</sup> The preacher’s job is to simplify things that are complicated, not complicate the things that are simple. Once these truths are clearly revealed, we must practically and consistently apply them to the lives of our audience.

Clearly, Warren wants to communicate in a clear and compelling way that points people to Jesus. Application within the sermon utilized in a simple and systematic way has been proven to lead to life change because it builds a bridge between the timeless truth of the Bible and the timely culture of today. It connects the heart of God revealed in His Word with the heart of the hearer, which is revealed in his actions.

#### **Method 4: John MacArthur**

The final sermon to be examined as part of this study is John MacArthur’s message entitled, “Marks of a Faithful Preacher.”<sup>200</sup> This is part one of a series with the same title based on 2 Timothy 4. MacArthur uses various forms of application within this sermon. Most of his application occurs at the end of the sermon after much explanation. Although this seems to be a form of compact application, it is not as structured or ordered as that of Swindoll’s. It is also clear that MacArthur does not find it necessary to apply each expositional thought as Warren does.

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<sup>198</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 232.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> John MacArthur’s entire sermon entitled, “*Marks of a Faithful Preacher*” from the series, “*Marks of a Faithful Preacher*” can be found in Appendix D of this work.

Out of 2,032 words in this sermon, 306 were applicational in nature. This means that just 15.05% of the material in MacArthur's sermon was included for the purposes of application. The vast majority of MacArthur's sermon was exposition or explanation. Illustration and argumentation had a place as well, but it seems application held the least amount of space.

MacArthur begins by going directly to the text. He states that the passage is vital and important because "it's the last words ever penned by Paul in Scripture." MacArthur begins by examining "The Preacher's Charge." Here, he refers to the charge delivered to Timothy by the pen of Paul. This is a sacred and solemn charge from the mentor to the protégé. The text for this sermon reads: "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom . . . ." <sup>201</sup>

MacArthur next examines "The Preacher's Accountability." He reminds the preacher that he is accountable to God for the things he says, the things he does, and the way he preaches. Then, MacArthur moves into his first use of application in this sermon. He says, "Today, one of the tragedies in our nation and world is the demise of faithful, consistent, uncompromising, biblical preaching. Certainly some blame lies at the preacher's feet, but it also lies at the feet of believers who fail to hold the preacher accountable." This is a form of descriptive application. MacArthur describes the problem that points to the need for preachers to stand and boldly proclaim the truth of God's Word. A prescriptive form of application would contain an instruction specifically. This could be something as simple as, "Preachers, it is important to remember to preach

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<sup>201</sup> 2 Tim. 4:1.

the Word because one day God will hold us accountable.” Instead, MacArthur employs a descriptive method by explaining and decrying the lack of such preaching.

MacArthur also considers “The Preacher’s Portrait.” He states, “In 2 Timothy 4 the apostle Paul also paints a preacher’s portrait. Only his painting was inspired by God, so it’s more than instructive—it’s binding. And it delineates the preacher’s role in unmistakable terms.”

MacArthur then examines “The Preacher’s Faithfulness.” In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”<sup>202</sup> MacArthur emphasizes the need for the preacher to be faithful in living for Christ and in proclaiming the Word of God.

Then, MacArthur moves to a simple lesson based on the first verse of the fourth chapter in 2 Timothy. The first lesson that MacArthur wants the preacher to understand is: “The seriousness of the preacher’s commission.” He states that the preacher has a “Compelling Responsibility.” MacArthur ties this point directly to the text by referring to Paul’s language: “I charge you . . . .” “Such seriousness is a characteristic of a godly individual committed to serving Christ.”

With regard to the preacher of God’s Word, MacArthur moves from “His Compelling Responsibility” to “His Coming Evaluation.” MacArthur reminds the preacher that one day all will be judged. He reveals the “Judge’s Identity” to be God Himself. It is clear that one day all will stand before God and give an account of what was done in the flesh.

After establishing the “Judge’s Identity,” MacArthur explains “The Judge’s Duty.” This charge from Paul parallels the common court subpoenas in New Testament

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<sup>202</sup> 2 Tim. 4:7.

times. MacArthur explains, “An ancient court document commonly read something like this; ‘The case will be drawn up against you in the court at [the name of the city] in the presence of [the name of the judge].’ In using legal terminology, Paul was saying a future subpoena will be served for the preacher to appear before God.”

Next, MacArthur examines “The Judge’s Presence.” Here, there is a bit more application provided by MacArthur. He says, “The preacher’s ministry occurs in the presence of a Judge . . . . It’s a compelling thought to realize the One whom you will appear before is aware of every detail in your life. The pastor’s ministry is in full view of His watchful eye.”

MacArthur continues by looking at “The Judge’s Evaluation.” Here, he desires the believer to understand that “Christ’s evaluation will determine the believer’s reward.” In this section, MacArthur uses argumentation to support this point, but makes little or no application.

Finally, MacArthur points to “The Judge’s Coming.” Once again, a large section is dedicated to explaining the point of the biblical text, but little or no application is provided. The brief of application states that “we as Christians are to look forward to Christ’s appearing and desire His divine and eternal approval.”

MacArthur’s conclusion includes the largest portion of application in the entire sermon. The vast majority of his sermon is dedicated to explanation and exposition. There are a few supporting elements of argumentation and illustration and most of the application appears at the end. Accordingly, he employs a type of compact application at the end of the sermon.

With his concluding application, MacArthur reiterates the points of his message while making them more personal: “The preacher must realize the seriousness of his task and be consummately dedicated to it . . . . Christ will reward the faithful in a glorious way.” MacArthur concludes with the statement, “so if you teach a biblical message, the pressure is on, but having the perspective that God is Judge will help keep you on track. The teacher must answer to the Lord, and so must all those he teaches.”

While MacArthur places value on application in his teachings and writings, it is possible that application may be underutilized in his preaching. The purpose of this work is not to pass judgment on the preacher, but simply to evaluate and examine his use of application in the expository sermon. Compared to the other preachers studied, MacArthur uses much less than any other.

This is interesting, considering that MacArthur offered three basic principles for studying the Bible in his work, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*. These three principles are observation, interpretation and application. While MacArthur referred to Bible study in particular, he stated that proper study will lead to the preparation of sermons: “After observation and interpretation comes application. Bible study is not complete until the truth discovered is applied to life situations.”<sup>203</sup> MacArthur continues, “Application answers the question, ‘How does this truth relate to me?’”<sup>204</sup>

Application certainly holds a place in MacArthur’s teaching and preaching, but apparently not the same place as that of the other preachers’ studies. While application is

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<sup>203</sup> MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 217.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

a must for any sermon, especially the expository sermon, its use and operation will vary as much as the communicators who employ it.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is essential to draw several common elements out of this examination. Different preachers were studied from different generations, different styles of churches, different denominations and different persuasions. But each preacher found it useful and necessary to employ application in the sermon. While each preacher used application in a unique and different way, it is important to note that none omitted application from the expository sermon.

Stanley used application in many instances and even framed division statements with application in mind. Swindoll used compact application in a structured and ordered way. Warren used explanation through the sermon but almost always followed with application. MacArthur used application on a minimal basis throughout the sermon and in a paragraph at the end of the sermon in a form of compact application. In each case, application was used and all forms of application were seen. Continuous application, compact application, descriptive application and prescriptive application were all employed by these preachers at various times and in various ways.

The purpose of this examination is not to pass judgment on the way the preachers used application or the amount of application that was used. Instead, the purpose is to examine application in the expository sermon so that an understanding may be reached as to the importance of application in the sermon. Some employed application in great measure, others used application to a lesser extent. There is certainly no prescriptive instruction in Scripture as to how much or how little application is to be used. There is

clear instruction in Scripture, however, that application must be used. A case for this has been made in Section IV. Clearly, both application and explanation are essential to the expository sermon. In fact, a true sermon cannot be all application with no explanation or all explanation with no application. Each preacher examined in this section employed the basic essentials of preaching: explanation and application. Each explained the truth of the Word of God and then applied it to the heart and mind of the hearer.

## Section VI: How? A Preferred Model of Application in the Expository Sermon

Having established the need for application in the expository sermon, it is essential to consider one final component: a preferred model of application in the expository sermon. This work would be incomplete without a pattern or example being provided of an acceptable and meaningful form of application. Application is so vital to the sermon that it is necessary within these pages to put forth an example of application that ties the text to the heart of the hearer.

### The Method

This preferred model of application is not restricted to any certain style or type of application. It can adapt to compact or continuous application, as well as prescriptive or descriptive application. One of the benefits of this preferred model is that it is not limited to any one style. The model can be used in any style of application and any style of expository sermon as well.

According to Stephen Rummage, “Scripture can be classified in terms of three levels of applicational material.”<sup>205</sup> These three levels of material can be found in any portion of Scripture the preacher is explaining. First, “material dealing with the *person* of God.” Second, “material dealing with a theological *principle*.” Third, “material calling for a specific *practice*.”<sup>206</sup> This model provides a grid whereby the text can be examined for applicational material, and also provides a way for the preacher to mine the truths of application and connect those truths with the listeners.

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<sup>205</sup> Stephen N. Rummage, Strengthening Application in the Sermon, Class Lecture, Liberty Theological Seminary, January 12, 2007.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

Any text of Scripture can be examined through this grid. This method of application asserts that in every text there is something to be learned about God, some principle to be learned from the Word, and there is some practice that the believer should engage in or avoid as a result of the truth of the Word.

A large frustration on the part of many preachers is that it is difficult to determine the way to apply certain texts. The interpretation of the text is always the same, but the application of the text can vary from one setting to another. While there are many tools that aid the preacher in explanation, illustration and argumentation, not many tools exist to aid the preacher in application.

This model of application provides the preacher with a simple tool that will benefit the preacher in several ways. First, it encourages the preacher not to avoid application. There is no doubt that application is the hard work of the sermon. No commentary can give the preacher the ideal application for his specific audience; this is the task of the preacher. Far too often, this task is ignored or overlooked because the application is difficult to unearth. This model gives the preacher three simple steps to walk through which aid in discovering the three different levels of application in any biblical text. If nothing else, it provides the preacher with a starting point for application that leads to complete and full application within the expository sermon.

The second benefit of this model of application is that it works with Scripture text. This grid can be applied to any portion of Scripture and when done properly, the preacher can discover a truth about the person of God, a principle to learn or understand or a practice to follow or to avoid. The preacher is not required to remember a different model for every different portion of Scripture, nor is he required to develop a different

method for every genre of Scripture. The benefit of this method is that it can be used in any portion of Scripture to help the preacher discover practical application and communicate it clearly to his audience.

Another benefit of this model of application is that it actually helps the preacher discover the application of any biblical text. While numerous books or methods extol the virtues of application and may even encourage it in the sermon, many do not provide a practical way to discover or develop application in the expository sermon. Ironically, many methods or books on application lack the practical tools necessary to put their principles to use. This model provides a grid or matrix that the preacher can use on any Scripture text to help discover the applicational content of the text. This method actually helps the preacher discover application and communicate it clearly to his hearers.

Additionally, this model of application ensures application in the expository sermon is theological at its core. This method ensures that the preacher will keep application theological. The first idea to address when seeking to discover the application of a given biblical text is, "Does the material deal with the person of God?" This question ensures that while application will connect with the heart of the hearer, it does not find its foundation or basis there. Instead, application finds its basis in the heart and nature of God. In other words, the preacher communicates clearly what a text teaches about who God is and why it matters today.

Not only does this model ensure that application is theological, but it also ensures that application is scriptural. Because this method deals with the person of God and a theological principle, it is directly tied to the biblical text. The preacher's application, then, will not be ungrounded or nebulous; rather, it will be connected directly to

Scripture. This process ensures that the authority for application is not derived from the preacher's own thoughts or ideas, but from the only source of real authority: the Word of God.

Not only does this method guarantee that application is theological and scriptural, but also that application is practical. Just communicating principles is not enough when it comes to applying the text; these principles must then be translated into practical admonitions. The point of application is to show the relevance of Scripture, as well as to call for action, to motivate the hearer to respond to the goodness of God in a specific and measurable way.

It is essential when employing this method that these benefits are underscored and understood. It is also important that a few simple rules are established that will aid in understanding how to use this method. These guidelines will allow for clear comprehension about what this model is and how it is to be used.

The first guideline that must be considered is that every Scripture text can be examined by this grid. The Bible reveals the very nature of God; His Word reveals His character. Therefore, every Scripture text teaches something about God. If every Scripture text reveals something about God, there is a principle that can be learned and a practice that can be employed or avoided. A very important benefit of this model is that it can apply to any Scripture studied, in any genre, for any type of sermon.

Not only can this grid examine all Scripture, but all three steps in this model should be employed at each point of application. Each point of application in the division statement should include all three of the elements within this model. Each point of application should include something learned from the text about the person of God, a

theological principle and a practice to be followed or avoided. If any text can be examined for application within this matrix, all three of these steps can be applied to any text.

The steps within this model build upon one another. The Bible reveals something about the nature and character of God. Whatever is revealed about God's nature and character can then be translated into a theological principle, and that theological principle can be applied as a specific practice to follow or to avoid.

One step builds upon the other, but it is also important to understand that the steps do not have to be in any particular order. For instance, one Scripture text may reveal something clearly about God's nature. If this is the case, it is wise to begin with the nature and character of God, and then to a theological principle that drives a practice to avoid or follow. But in other instances, a Scripture text may give a clear instruction to engage in or avoid a specific practice. In this case, it is possible to begin with a specific practice, understand the theological principle, and then uncover the character of God. While the steps are interconnected and related, it is not essential that they always be in the same order.

At this point, some examples will provide further insight. It would not be sufficient to explain the use of this model of application without giving specific examples that serve to illustrate this point.

An entire sermon is included in Appendix E of this thesis.<sup>207</sup> The sermon provides the simple structure that has been addressed in this work. It contains an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The body of the sermon contains several division statements.

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<sup>207</sup> The sermon entitled, "*What Can Jesus Offer Me?*" (1 John 2:1-6) is from the series, "Authentic Christianity" based on the book of 1 John.

Each division statement supports the main idea of the sermon, which is derived from the main idea of the text. Each division statement also contains four major elements: explanation, argumentation, illustration, and application.

In the application section under each division statement, the application is divided into three major parts: *person, principle and practice*. These parts, of course, point to the application based upon the person of God, the application based upon a theological principle to obey, and the application based upon a specific practice to follow or avoid.

The main idea of this sermon is, “Because of who He is, Jesus offers what no one else can offer.” Each division statement supports this main idea. The first division statement is based on 1 John 2:1: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”<sup>208</sup> The first division statement explains that “Jesus offers us an advocate to God.”

In the application portion of this division statement, the sermon clearly points to the three areas in the preferred model for application. First, it points to the person of God: “*Person*—Jesus Christ can present us blameless and innocent before God because of His sacrifice on the cross.” Second, it reveals a theological principle: “*Principle*—because our price has been paid on the cross, our sins can be forgiven today.” Third, it provides a specific practice: “*Practice*—Therefore, we should continually confess our sin and seek to live righteous lives because we know that Christ pleads our case to God.”

The second division statement in the sermon also supports the main idea. It is based on 1 John 2:2: “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for

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<sup>208</sup> 1 John 2:1.

the sins of the whole world.”<sup>209</sup> The division statement explains that “Jesus offers us acceptance before God.” As a result of His sacrifice, sinful man can now be made acceptable in the sight of a holy God.

The application portion of this division statement addresses the grid provided by the preferred model. First, it reveals the person of God: “*Person*—Because of who Jesus is, He can offer what no one else can offer.” Second, it offers a theological principle: “*Principle*—We can be accepted into God’s family through the blood of Christ.” Third, it provides a specific practice to follow: “*Practice*—All we have to do is recognize and confess our sin and acknowledge that He alone can save us!”

The third and final division statement of this sermon supports the main idea that because of who Jesus is, He can offer what no one else can offer. This division statement finds its root in 1 John 2:3-6: “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”<sup>210</sup> The division statement explains that “Jesus offers us assurance from God.” The text teaches that Christ offers assurance to those who know Him and obey Him by the way they conduct their lives.

Once again, the application portion of this division statement deals with the three steps in the preferred model of application: the person of God, a theological principle and a specific practice. First, it reveals the person of God: “*Person*—Christ offers assurance

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<sup>209</sup> 1 John 2:2.

<sup>210</sup> 1 John 2:3-6.

of our relationship with God.” Second, it offers a theological principle: “*Principle*—If we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, there will be evidences in our lives that offer assurance.” Third, it provides a specific practice to follow: “*Practice*—When we resemble our Father, walk like Him and obey Him, we show others that we are a part of His family.”

The pattern is simple but powerful. Each division statement supports the main idea of the sermon, and the main idea of the sermon is rooted in the main idea of the text. Each division statement then contains four elements: explanation, illustration, argumentation and application. Complete application that connects firmly to the hearts and minds of the hearers contains three major steps: the person of God, a theological principle, or a specific practice. In the next portion of this section, these three elements will be examined in further detail.

### **The Person of God**

The Bible is a book about God. Every word in every sentence, and every line on every page tells God’s story. The Bible was written to reveal the nature and character of God. Therefore, every portion of Scripture that the preacher explains in the expository sermon can be connected with the person of God. Ultimately, this is the task of preaching: to connect the hearer with God in a real and personal way. Of course, this cannot be accomplished by the preacher alone; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The preacher, however, can facilitate this encounter by practical and personal application centered around the person of God.

According to Rummage, the preacher's challenge in this portion of application is "to show how a particular attribute of God's character affects the life of the believer."<sup>211</sup> The Bible reveals the character and nature of God, and the preacher's job is to simply uncover what the Bible makes teaches.

In the sermon provided in Appendix E, there are several truths revealed about the person of God. Rummage stated that "any aspect of God's *person* can be connected to a corresponding theological *principle*, and then can result in a specific practice for application."<sup>212</sup> This shows how each portion of application is interconnected and interdependent. Each part builds upon the other and reveals the need for deeper application.

In the first division statement, the specific application about God's person involves the nature and character of Jesus Christ. What is unique and different about Jesus? Why can He offer what no one else can offer? As recorded in this sermon, "Jesus Christ can present us blameless and innocent before God because of His sacrifice on the cross." This portion of application reveals the person of God by communicating what Christ has done for mankind. Through His sacrifice on the cross, He is now the Advocate to God. He alone can present mankind perfect, blameless and spotless before God.

The second division statement reveals another truth about the nature and character of Jesus Christ. Not only does Jesus offer an Advocate before God, but He offers acceptance before God. Jesus offers here what no one else can offer. Through His sacrifice, sinful man is made acceptable in the sight of a holy God. The portion of

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<sup>211</sup> Stephen N. Rummage, *Strengthening Application in the Sermon*, Class Lecture, Liberty Theological Seminary, January 12, 2007.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

application that pertains to the person of God in this example is simple to the point of redundancy: “Because of who Jesus is, He can offer what no one else can offer.” This simple truth, however, reveals a reality about the person of God and specifically the work of Jesus Christ. He offers grace, acceptance and salvation, which no one else can offer.

The third division statement follows the same pattern as the other two. It supports the main idea of the sermon and finds its basis in 1 John 2:3-6. This division statement shows that Jesus offers what no one else can offer because he provides “Assurance from God.” How does mankind obtain this assurance? If God is Father, Jesus provides the ability to walk as He walked and obey His commands. The specific portion of application that deals with the person of God is clear: “Christ offers assurance in our relationship with God.” This example demonstrates that the application does not have to be profound or lengthy. Instead, it can be a simple principle that builds upon other principles to connect the truth of the Word to the heart of the hearer.

Since the Bible is a book about God, it is absolutely essential that the preacher’s sermons reveal truths about God. If the preacher’s responsibility is to preach the Bible, and the Bible reveals the nature and character of God, then the preacher’s sermons must expound upon what the Bible reveals. This portion of application concerning the person of God allows the preacher to uncover the nature and character of God as revealed in Scripture.

### **A Theological Principle**

Not only does application deal with the person of God, but also with a theological principle. Here, according to Rummage, the preacher’s challenge is “to show the practical

implications of the principle.”<sup>213</sup> In other words, once a truth of God has been discovered or a principle is revealed in Scripture, it is the job of the preacher to communicate the practical implications of that principle. Rummage said, “Any theological *principle* flows from an aspect of God’s character and can be demonstrated in practice.”<sup>214</sup>

In the sermon example provided in Appendix E, each section of application in the division statements uncover a theological truth or principle that must be applied to the heart and mind of the hearer. In the first division statement, the theological principle is based upon the revealed nature and character of Jesus Christ. If Christ can present mankind blameless and innocent before God, it must be understood that He can forgive sins: “Because our price has been paid on the cross, our sins can be forgiven today.” Again, this is not a new teaching to many, but it is still profound. The principle of grace is derived from the nature and character of Jesus Christ.

The second division statement uses application in the same way. It reveals a truth about the nature and character of God, and then bases a theological principle upon that truth. In the second division statement, it is made clear that “Jesus offers us acceptance before God.” The portion of application dealing with the person of God points out that Jesus can offer what no one else can offer because of who He is and what He has done. The theological principle to be understood then, is based upon this revelation of the character and nature of God; “We can be accepted into God’s family through the blood of Christ.” The theological principle again is simple, but very profound. Because of the price paid by Jesus Christ mankind is made acceptable in the sight of God.

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<sup>213</sup> Stephen N. Rummage, Strengthening Application in the Sermon, Class Lecture, Liberty Theological Seminary, January 12, 2007.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

The third division statement follows the same pattern. The division statement supports the main idea and contains the four elements of an expository sermon: explanation, illustration, argumentation and application. In the application section of the division statement, the person of God is uncovered: “Christ offers assurance of our relationship with God.” The theological principle derived from the revelation of God’s character is that “if we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, there will be evidences in our lives of that assurance.” In other words, if the very nature of Jesus Christ is to offer assurance to those who know Him, one will experience that assurance if he or she truly knows Him. Again, these principles may not be new or original, but they are profound and practical.

Since the Bible is a book about God, it reveals the nature and character of God. While the central figure in the Bible is certainly God and the central theme is to reveal God to mankind, the Bible is also a book about God’s dealings with mankind. Therefore, the text of Scripture will reveal truths about the person and character of God, and from those truths, theological principles can be established that connect to the heart of man.

### **A Specific Practice**

The third portion of application in the expository sermon is a specific practice to follow or avoid. Not only does application deal with the person of God and a theological principle, it also very practically deals with the behavior of those who follow God. According to Rummage, the preacher’s challenge here is to “demonstrate the theological and spiritual foundations for the ethical and moral teachings of Scripture.”<sup>215</sup> Rummage continued, “Every *practice* prescribed in the Bible is connected to an underlying

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<sup>215</sup> Stephen N. Rummage, Strengthening Application in the Sermon, Class Lecture, Liberty Theological Seminary, January 12, 2007.

*principle*, and is ultimately rooted in the *person* and character of God.”<sup>216</sup> In other words, these three sections or portions of application are interconnected and linked together to form a cohesive and powerful application within the context of the expository sermon.

This third part of application is seen in each division statement in the sermon in Appendix E. In the first division statement, since Jesus offers what no one else can offer, He provides an Advocate before God. In the section dedicated to application, it is revealed that Jesus can present mankind innocent and blameless before God because He paid the price for sin. Since the price for sins has been paid, mankind can be forgiven today. The specific practice then is that “we should continually confess our sin and seek to live righteous lives because we know that Christ pleads our case to God.” In this particular instance, the practice to follow derives directly from the theological principle and the person of God. In other words, if Christ is the Advocate before God He can present mankind blameless to God through His sacrifice on the cross. If this is the case, then mankind should practice confession constantly because the nature of Christ is to plead the case of sinful man the Heavenly Father.

In the next division statement, the pattern is repeated. The division statement reveals the truth that Jesus offers us acceptance before God. In the application section of this division statement, the nature of God is revealed, a theological principle is discovered, and a practice to follow is exposed. Because of who Jesus is, He is able to offer acceptance before God, which no one else can offer. Because of this unparalleled quality of Jesus, it is understood that mankind can be made acceptable before God. This theological principle then leads to a practice on the part of the hearer: “All we have to do

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<sup>216</sup> Rummage, Strengthening Application in the Sermon.

is recognize and confess our sin and acknowledge that He alone can save us.” Again, the truth about God’s nature and character drives the revelation of the theological principle. The theological principle reveals a practice to follow. In this case, God is revealed as loving, gracious and forgiving. The practice to follow is to receive the love, grace and forgiveness of God.

The third division statement supports the main idea and thesis of the sermon: “Jesus offers us assurance from God.” Following the same pattern, it incorporates this method of application within the division statement. Here, the person of God is revealed by understanding the nature and character of Jesus Christ; Christ offers assurance in a relationship with God. The principle that must be understood as a result of this revelation is that if Christ is known as Lord and Savior, a Christian will experience the assurance that comes as a result of following Him, obeying Him and loving Him. The specific practice is simple: “When we resemble our Father, walk like Him and obey Him, we show others that we are part of His family.” The person of God leads to the theological principle that reveals the action to take and the practice to follow.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to understand that this is simply a preferred model of application in the expository sermon. This does not mean that this is the only model that exists, but it is certainly a model that drives the preacher to clearly apply the text that has been explained. While this model provides great assistance and insight, other models may exist that provide help as well.

The major benefit of this model is that it provides the preacher with a method of application for any biblical text. The model does not change based on the style of sermon

or the genre of the text. Therefore, this is a tool that will greatly aid preacher in applying the sermon. While many tools exist for explanation, argumentation, and illustration, there are few tools for application. This project presents a simple tool that is easy to use but produces powerful results. This preferred model provides a simple way to uncover the truths of Scripture and apply them in practical, meaningful, and memorable way.

**Conclusion: The Necessity and Use of Application in the Expository Sermon**

The necessity and use of application in the expository sermon is clear to see. Not only is application useful in applying the sermon, it is absolutely essential and foundational. Without it, the sermon is unfinished and incomplete. With proper application in the expository sermon, the preacher can build a bridge from the truth of the text to the heart of the hearer. This is the point of preaching: to connect biblical truth with a contemporary audience to affect change in their daily lives and eternal destinies.

This project has centered upon the importance of application in the expository sermon. Before a case could be made for application in the expository sermon, a case first was made for expository preaching. This is, in fact, the preaching that identifies most with the biblical text and reflects its meaning most genuinely. Different types of preaching were examined and definitions for expository preaching were provided. Also, the rationale and benefits of expository preaching were delineated.

In order to understand the importance of expository preaching, biblical, historical, and practical reasons were provided. It is clear from the supporting evidence that expository preaching is vital. Once the rationale was presented for expository preaching, a case could then be made for application in the expository sermon.

Application answers the questions “so what?” and “now what?” To begin the study of application, definitions of application in the expository sermon were provided and explored. Then, several different methods of application were considered and evaluated. It is important to understand that while application is necessary and vital, there is more than one acceptable form of application.

Next, the basis and rationale for application in the expository sermon was examined. A case was made for application based on biblical authority. This provides the greatest evidence for the use and necessity of application in the expository sermon for the modern-day preacher. After biblical authority was examined, both historical and practical examples were considered. It is important to understand the rationale and basis for application within the sermon before one can study the different methods of application or offer a preferred model of application.

A vital part of this project was the examination of the different methods of application used by various preachers. Four preachers were selected from different denominations, generations, and traditions. Sermons from these preachers were evaluated for their applicational content. The style of application in the sermon was observed and studied for its usefulness and effectiveness. Also, an understanding of the preacher's view of application was provided based upon his own description and writings. This section offers a major insight into the practical use of application by the modern-day preacher.

Finally, a preferred model of application was offered based upon the teaching of Dr. Stephen N. Rummage. In his lecture entitled, *Strengthening Application in the Expository Sermon*, Dr. Rummage presented a new way to think of application. He offered three major steps to consider when applying the sermon. Section VI of this project examined the steps in great detail. The method simply provides a grid or filter by which every text of Scripture can be viewed in terms of application.

This method provides the preacher with a practical way to discover and develop application in the expository sermon no matter what sermon text he may be preaching. As

the preacher examines the biblical text, he can discover a truth about the nature and character of God because God is revealed to us through His Word. Then, a theological principle can be discovered based upon the revelation of God's nature and character. Finally, a specific practice to follow or avoid can be clearly determined based upon what is learned about the person of God along with the principles that are discovered.

There is a desperate need for application in the pulpits across this country today. First, preachers must be committed to teaching the truth in a systematic and expository way. Simply teaching the truth, however, is not enough; the truth must be applied practically to the heart and life of the hearer. The purpose of this project is simple; to underscore the usefulness of application in the expository sermon by showing its benefits and advantages, as well as to reveal the absolute necessity of application in the expository sermon by pointing to its importance and value. As a point of practical application, a model of application is provided that offers a simple but powerful system for the preacher to apply properly any biblical text. Ultimately, it is clear from this project, from practical experience, from historical examples, and biblical evidence that application in the expository sermon is a must for any preacher who wants to see lives changed through the preached Word. If this is the purpose of preaching, then application cannot be ignored.

## APPENDIX A

SERMON: WHEN THE FASTEN SEATBELT SIGN COMES ON—PRAY

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:4

ANDY STANLEY

**Introduction**

When the fasten seatbelt sign comes on, it means one of three things: You are taking off, landing, or experiencing turbulence. All three are critical times during a flight. Why? Because all three are transitions. In the case of taking off, we know what to expect. Landing, we know what to expect. But in mid-flight, when the fasten seatbelt sign comes on, you just don't know. The people I know who don't like to fly have a turbulence story to tell. And when the captain turns it off . . . whew.

Since 9/11, for us as a nation, the captain has turned on the fasten seatbelt sign. Trouble ahead. It could be a short, small bump. Or it may be time to pull out the little bag in the seatback in front of you.

First quarter of next year, the economy may surge ahead, the war may end, and terrorism may be a thing of the past. Or we may be in for several quarters/years of uncertainty. It could be that the fasten seatbelt sign has come on for you personally: your daughter is pregnant; the doctor called; your job is at risk; or your marriage is at risk. Whatever the case, as is the situation in a jet, we are out of control. Actually, we have never really been in control. But it sure is fun to think we are. And when the reality of the situation is staring us in the face personally and nationally, it is frightening. The good

news is that most of what we are given in the Scriptures was written in an environment of uncertainty.

**1. This book is not filled with feel-good messages for a world we don't live in.**

Here we find God speaking directly into uncertain times. Maybe more comforting, we see God's hand in the midst of uncertainty. Joseph found himself in a pit while his brothers debated whether to sell him or kill him and we discover that God was with him.

King David was awakened one morning to the rumor that his own son was conspiring against him, but he had no proof - many of the Psalms reflect the uncertainty of those days. The apostle Paul thought God had called him, but found himself bound and dragged to prison - and with the future a blur. He writes to us about what to do when God's promises don't seem to be coming true. One afternoon an angel appeared to a teenager and announced that she . . . the Bible says Mary was perplexed. What did this mean? The future was completely different.

**2. This book is filled with stories of people facing uncertainty and discovering that not only is God not absent, but he is often diligently at work accomplishing his will in this world and in the lives of those he loves.**

**3. This book is a book about how very much God is in control and how very much we are not.**

And that is exactly why we will not like some of the answers we find here when it comes to responding to uncertainty. I want the answer to be that if I will do three things, life will be back to normal, and I will be back in control. What we find in Scripture seems much too passive. It leaves us too vulnerable and dependent. I don't want to fasten

my seatbelt. I want the turbulence to go away. I don't want to be guided through it. I want to be led around it. I want to find something in here that will guarantee my safety, the end of terrorism, a cure for smallpox, a booming economy, and a sustained rally on Wall Street. Where are those verses?

**4. As frustrating as some of the answers might be, the options are worse.**

- a) Worry?
- b) Panic?
- c) Overreact?
- d) Fear?

I've never known any of those things to be productive. They generally make things worse. Relationally nobody gets our undivided attention. We get very self-centered. Financially we make decisions based on our ability to predict the future. We shop to kill the pain.

So as we begin this series, don't underestimate what God says about times of uncertainty. This is not new to him. This is not an instruction manual about how to get back into control or how to get life back to normal. It is about learning to follow through the valleys with confidence that God is in control and that his purposes personally and nationally will not be thwarted. So what do we do? We are going to talk about four terms — four things to do.

*1. The first one is probably the most predictable: PRAY.*

Paul, from prison, instructs us to pray in times of uncertainty. After being shipwrecked in Malta, Paul arrives in Rome during the reign of Nero. Not a good time for a Christian to be in Rome. He is writing to a church 700 miles away - four months travel.

2. *"Rejoice . . . the Lord is near."*

In the midst of uncertainty, don't be sucked into the same sense of gloom and doom as everyone else. You know who is in control. God hasn't gone anywhere. Don't let uncertainty impact your character. Be gracious and gentle. Don't lose your influence.

3. *"Be anxious for nothing."*

This is where I need to step aside and let the Scriptures speak. Yes, you can look at me and say, "What does the preacher know?" I'm just quoting a prisoner who knows what happens to Christians under Nero. He is staring down the barrels of extermination along with his cause. Because if Nero has his way, there will be no church.

ANXIOUS: Be troubled by or distracted by cares or fear. The context is always concern about the future. What are we supposed to do? But, strong contrast . . .

4. *"But in everything . . . let your requests be made known to God."*

Objection: "I already did that." But I'm still anxious and stressed out. Besides, nothing happens; nothing changes."

Paul is not talking about a little, "Lord you know my needs . . ." He's not talking about emergency prayers in the car. He is not talking about the 30-second kind of prayer. Look how he describes the process: The Prayer - By prayer, by supplication, with thanksgiving and trust. "Present your requests to God." (NASV "Let your requests be made known...") Literally: reveal the mystery of your requests, something that unfolds that was not previously known. The idea is not to inform God but to discover what it is you are really after and verbalize that to God. Learn and unearth what it is you fear and what it is you desire and tell it. The focus here is on revealing what's on the inside of us. Pour out what is in you to God.

Uncertainty elicits fear. Fear, if explored, can reveal our deepest desires what we really want. When we are able to discover and give to God those deep, otherwise unknown desires, something happens.

Illustration: Lord, I need a job . . . "What are you afraid of?" Nothing. "What if you don't get a job?" I'm afraid that . . . I'm afraid for my family. I'm afraid for my reputation. He hears God whisper, "I can handle that."

In your prayers of uncertainty, pray this, "Lord, I need you to . . . "If you don't, I'm afraid . . ." This is about placing into God's hands what only God's hands are capable of handling.

5. *The result — "Peace . . ." Literally: "which surpasses every thought of man."*

It transcends human understanding in that it makes no sense to have peace when nothing has changed. Peace that precedes change. Peace grounded in the fact that God is in control. Peace stands guard/protects your heart and mind, your emotions and thoughts. When the circumstances/pressures grab your attention, there is peace. You aren't all knotted up on the inside. When things take you by surprise, there is peace. It is an inside thing that sets us apart on the outside.

Prayer isn't about changing things. Prayer is about being changed. Changed to trust the Father with the things only he can control. Changed so that we are free from decisions that will only complicate our lives. Changed because we have placed into God's hands what only God's hands are capable of handling.

## **Conclusion**

I didn't learn this from the Bible. I learned this from my dad. Some of my earliest memories are of my dad praying in the blockhouse in Miami. I learned it from a friend

whose daughter almost died in an accident. I learned it from a man who died of cancer whose wife and he maintained peace.

Early on, I found a place to pray, and I stayed until the peace came. Stayed until I had sufficiently handed off what God intended to carry anyway. When the fasten seatbelt sign comes on, PRAY. And though you go to that quiet place in hopes that the world will change, what you will find is that you will change. It is there in the lonely place that you will gain the perspective and peace you need to handle the uncertainty of life.

I would like to jump- start the process for some of you. [Andy prays] "What is your greatest concern right now? What are you afraid will happen? Say this, 'Lord, if \_\_\_\_\_ happens, I'm afraid\_\_\_\_\_.' There in your fear is the request you must make known to and hand off to God."

## APPENDIX B

SERMON: JESUS, THE GREATEST LIFE OF ALL—THE GATHERING STORM

TEXT: MATTHEW 10:34

CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

**Introduction**

While Jesus was indeed gentle and kind, He also took a bold stand against sin. In fact, when confronting evil dressed in the garb of religion, His formidable anger took many by surprise. He sharply rebuked the religious leaders in Israel for turning their privileged status into an opportunity to gain wealth and power. And from the example of Jesus, we learn how to stand up for the truth, even as we lose popularity and suffer persecution for doing what is right.

**Exposition**

Jesus Was Not Afraid to Stand for Truth (Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:40–53). Very often, people portray Jesus as the meek and mild teacher who taught His followers to love others as themselves, to avoid retaliation by turning the other cheek, to pursue peace, and to avoid judging others. While Jesus did indeed possess these qualities and teach these values, the picture is incomplete. These passages reveal that Jesus was more than the pale, languid figure often portrayed in art, on television, and in movies.

The Enemies of Jesus Cared More about Pleasing Others Than Living by the Truth (Matthew 15:1–9, 12; Luke 19:45–48). Many centuries before the earthly ministry of Jesus, the Jewish people were conquered by the Babylonians and carried off to Babylon as slaves. With their temple destroyed and their homeland colonized by other

cultures, the Jews looked to the Law of Moses to sustain their national identity and to maintain their distinctiveness as God's chosen people.

In order to help them apply the Law to everyday life in their new and unfamiliar home, teachers of the Hebrew Scriptures wrote very careful, specific instructions for the people to follow. However, what began as a practical aid for Jews became a sacred tradition that took on a life of its own. The body of sacred traditions developed by "the elders" eventually supplanted the very Law it was intended to uphold. And by the time of Jesus, failure to observe tradition was regarded as disobedience to the Law of God. Furthermore, this manmade religiosity became the means by which many Pharisees maintained the illusion of moral superiority over others.

Ironically, their religious zeal put them at odds with God. Not only were they motivated by a lust for power, their traditions often violated the very Law they supposedly cherished. During the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, worship in the Jerusalem temple had become big business for religious leaders. The chief priests refused to accept any currency except shekels minted in Israel. Moneychangers within the temple precincts gladly exchanged any currency for Jewish shekels at an inflated rate and then pocketed the difference.

Furthermore, the Law of Moses stated that any animal offered to God had to be flawless; only the best would do. So the men running the temple would inspect the animals brought for sacrifice, ostensibly to verify that the offerings were worthy. However, this was nothing more than a ruse. They arbitrarily rejected animals so that they could offer a suitable replacement in exchange for a fee. Ironically, the "suitable"

animal offered for exchange had, only moments before, been the unsuitable sacrifice of another worshipper!

At the end of His ministry, Jesus publicly condemned the religious system in Jerusalem and exposed the moral bankruptcy of the men who ran it (Read Matthew 23:1–33). Jesus punctuated each count of His indictment with a “woe,” and then He addressed the scribes and Pharisees directly. In the original language, woe is an interjection that expresses the outrage or the sorrow of the speaker upon seeing the suffering of another.

While Jesus had a soft spot in His heart for people who had been trampled by the world’s system, He had little patience for those in religious leadership who neglected or abused others. They had direct access to the truth of God, yet they used their privileged position to hoard wealth and power. Make no mistake; they knew what they were doing. And when Jesus boldly exposed their rebellion, it put Him on a collision course with evil.

Obviously, not every encounter with wrongdoing should be met with such passion. Jesus encountered evil in many different forms, and He often responded with compassion for the sinner. Nevertheless, even when Jesus took a more gentle approach, He was always fearless and direct. God is not impressed by religious fervor or hollow adherence to rules. He wants people to do what is right because they are motivated by love for Him.

### **Application**

As we determine to take our own stand against evil, four principles emerge from the example of Jesus.

*1. Remembering your mission helps you navigate through any storm. Stay focused.*

It's not enough to know what's wrong with a situation; we must also define what is right. Once we have determined the correct course of action, we must then keep our eyes focused on following it, even if others discourage or persecute us.

*2. Encountering evil requires sword-like confrontation, not peacekeeping compromise.*

*Stay alert.*

One early Christian writer likened God's Word to a two-edged sword, "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). In other words, God's truth has a way of cutting to the heart of a matter. When a clear moral issue is at stake, people-pleasing compromise will tempt us to lay aside the sword of truth. However, we must remember to keep our sword pointed at the issue.

*3. Being bold when there's a principle worth fighting for is worth the risk, even if it offends and results in misunderstanding. Stay strong.*

Misunderstanding is the occupational hazard of leadership. Others will certainly misunderstand or even deliberately misconstrue your intentions, cutting to the heart of your (and every person's) basic desire to be liked. Nevertheless, the moral stand you take will be ultimately worth the sacrifice.

*4. Speaking up for what is right is no guarantee you'll win or gain respect. Stay realistic.*

Jesus took a strong stand against the outrageous evil of the religious leaders in Jerusalem and a storm quickly gathered around Him. He understood the risk. In fact, He knew it would lead to His death. He said to the disciples on the eve of His arrest, "If I hadn't come and told [the religious leaders] all this in plain language, it wouldn't be so bad. As it is, they have no excuse. Hate me, hate my Father — it's all the same. If I

hadn't done what I have done among them, works no one has ever done, they wouldn't be to blame. But they saw the God-signs and hated anyway, both me and my Father.

Interesting — they have verified the truth of their own Scriptures where it is written, ‘They hated me for no good reason.’ (John 15:22–25 MSG) Sometimes the evil we face is so firmly entrenched that we will not see its defeat in our lifetime. In fact, the fight may even require us to sacrifice everything, including our lives. But the Lord does not call us to be successful. He calls us to be faithful. Success or failure is ultimately His responsibility. Ours is to be sure we stand on the correct side of the issue.

### **Conclusion**

When faced with taking a stand for what is right, our greatest temptation is to remain neutral, to forfeit moral leadership for sake of popularity. Certainly, we should choose our battles wisely and be sure of our motives before we take a stand. But we cannot allow the approval of others to outweigh faithfulness to God and the truth He loves so much. Like Jesus, we must stand up for the truth, even if we lose popularity and suffer persecution for doing what is right.

## APPENDIX C

## SERMON: UNDERSTANDING THE PASSION—GOD’S PASSION FOR YOU

TEXT: JOHN 3:16

RICK WARREN

**Introduction**

Welcome to our new 9:00 service. I don’t know what you think you’re at but it’s the 9:00 service. If you’ll take out one of the message notes. Everywhere this week people were talking about Jesus. *The Passion* created a lot of passion. It was in all the newspapers, all the TV shows, all the radio shows. Jesus is a cover boy all this week. I’ve got all these magazines. Jesus on the cover. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Donald Trump – no! He’s not Jesus! Entertainment Weekly, Mel Gibson as Jesus. It’s a pretty amazing thing this week all the gossip was about the gospel.

You may have heard this phrase “the gospel.” What does that mean? It’s just the old English word for “good news.” Gospel just means good news. “*By the gospel you are saved.*” In other words, by the good news you are saved.

This last week millions and millions and millions of people saw the gospel. They saw the last twelve hours of the life of Jesus Christ, His trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection. They saw *what* happened. This morning we’re going to talk about *why* it happened. We’re not talking about the making of the movie. We’re talking about the meaning of the movie. Why did God allow that? Why did Jesus go through all that suffering, the grueling, gruesome, horrendous, brutal suffering? Why did God allow it?

The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16. You've seen this verse probably at a lot of football games. Some guy usually with colored hair holds up a John 3:16 sign in the end zone. Why in the world is John 3:16? It's the verse in the Bible that says this *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* That's the most famous verse in the Bible. It's often called the gospel in a nutshell or Christianity summarized.

If you were only going to memorize one verse in the entire Bible this would be the one I would recommend – John 3:16 – because it is the gospel – the Good News – summarized. In fact, you can even see the word "gospel" spelled out. Notice the letters "God's ... only ... Son ... perished... eternal... life" – which spells "gospel."

What we're going to do today is we're going to tear this verse apart. Because it explains why God created you, put you on this earth, why Jesus Christ died for you, and how you can have a ticket to heaven. It's all there.

I want you to notice first of all there are 25 words in this verse – John 3:16. The middle word, the thirteenth word is the word "Son" talking about Jesus Christ. The first half of the verse is all about God. *"For God so love the word that He gave His only begotten."* Then there's "Son" in the middle. And the last twelve words are all about man. *"That whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* That in itself is a picture. Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth to be the bridge between God and man so we could know what God is like.

Today we're going to look at how this verse shows us God's plan for your salvation and how you can have a ticket to heaven. If you've ever wondered, and everyone does eventually, "What is going to happen to me after I die?" you picked a really good week to

come to church. Because this is the week that we're going to talk about that particular theme.

One of the greatest weaknesses of our culture is short term thinking. There's far more to life than just here and now. We act like this life is all there is. We spend our time and our money and our effort and energy acting like, "You only go around once in life. You better go it with gusto!" But we don't realize that you're going to spend far more time on the other side of death in eternity than you do on this side here on this earth. You get maybe 60, 80, 100 years here. You're going to spend trillions of years on that side. So it does make sense wisely to spend part of the time on this side getting ready for that side. That's what we're going to talk about – the four essentials for preparing for eternal life

Let's tear apart the most famous verse in the Bible. Today is Christianity 101. The first essential for you in getting to heaven is this...

1. You need to acknowledge God's passion.

What do I mean by that? You need to realize how much God loves you. It all starts with you understanding how amazingly extravagantly God loves you. God's passion for you. A lot of people think God is mad at them. God is not mad at you. He's mad *about* you. The whole issue of the cross explains that.

The Bible says in this famous verse "*God so loved the world...*" He *so loved* the world. What does that mean? First we know the Bible says, "*God is love.*" It doesn't say He has love. It says He is love. It is His nature. It is His essence. "*God is love.*" The Bible says that He created everything to be objects of His love, including you. The whole reason you are alive, the reason your heart is beating right now, there's only one

reason for it. God made you to love you. That's why you're alive. There's no other reason why you're alive. God made you to love you. He brought you into existence, obviously using the DNA of your parents, to love you. And God *so loved* the world. His love is extravagant. It is lavish. It is beyond comprehension. In fact, you will never, ever be able to understand fully how much God loves you because you don't have the brain capacity. It'd be like an ant trying to understand the Internet. You just don't have the brain capacity to understand how much God really loves you. But the Bible says He created the entire universe just so He could create humans in order to love them.

Look at these verses from the Bible. 1 John 4 says "*God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love. He sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*" God didn't just *say* He loved you. He *showed* He loved you. He *proved* He loved you in the most expensive way – by sacrificing His own Son for you. We're going to talk about that in a minute, what that means. When Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross with His arms outstretched He was saying to you, "I love you this much! I love you *this much!* So much it hurts." Even if you were the only person who had ever lived on earth and you had sinned, you'd blown it, you'd made mistakes, you needed a savior, Jesus Christ still would have come to earth and died for you. That's how much He loves you.

1 John 3 "*What an incredible quality of love the Father has shown us that we should be permitted to be called and counted as the children of God.*" God wanted a family to love. That's why He created human beings. He wanted a family to love. He wants you in it. The most amazing thing to me is that the creator of the entire universe would care about me and would want me in His family.

But God's love for you all through the Bible and through Jesus' example explains that His love is four-dimensional for you. "*May you be able to feel and understand how long, how wide, how deep and how high* [that's the four dimensions] *God's love really is and experience this love for yourself.*" God says, "I don't want you to just know I love you. I want you to feel that I love you." Most people have never felt loved by God. They've never experienced God's love. They say, "Oh, yes. I believe God loves me." But they've never *felt* it. God says, My love is long and wide and deep and high. What does that mean?

How long is God's love? Long enough to last forever. That's what makes it different from human love. Have you noticed human love wears out? That's why we have so many divorces. God's love will never stop loving you. It is long enough to last forever.

It is wide enough to be everywhere. There is no place that you could go in life that God's love is not with you. You will not always feel it. In fact, sometimes you're going to *feel alone*. But you will never *be alone*. Because God's love is everywhere. It's wide enough to be everywhere. There's no place that you can be where God isn't. It's wide enough to be everywhere.

It's deep enough to handle everything. No problem, no pressure, no stress, no difficulty. You say, "I'm in the pits right now!" God's love is there. There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.

Then it is high enough to overlook your mistakes. God loves to forgive. He loves to help you start over.

I believe that God brought you here this morning to Saddleback church so He could say this to you, “I love you. I love you.” God wants to say to you this morning “I love you.” That’s the starting point to understand and recognize and acknowledge God’s passion for you.

This is the second key. The second key to understanding how you get to heaven. First you acknowledge God’s passion. Second...

2. You appreciate God’s present.

God has a gift for you. It’s a present. The gift is His very own Son. That’s the second part of this most famous verse. “*God so loved the world...*” That’s His passion. “*...that He gave His only begotten Son...*” That’s His present. God says, I want you to appreciate it.

Notice it doesn’t say, God so loved the world that He sent an angel. It doesn’t say, God so loved the world that He sent a prophet, that He sent a godly teacher, that He sent a moral, ethical leader. No. It says He sent His only begotten Son.

What does that mean? It means God said, “I’m coming myself. I’m going to come to earth in human form.” Jesus was God in human form. God’s Son. He’s the physical representation of God here on earth.

Let’s just review this again. I know I said it last week but I want to say it again. Jesus never claimed to be a good teacher. Jesus never claimed to be a moral leader. Jesus never claimed to be a prophet. In fact, He never claimed to be anything but the Son of God. He said I am God!

That's what makes some people really nervous about Jesus. Remember I said last week if you ever meet anybody who claims to be God you've only got three options. Really only three options in response to somebody who claims to be God.

Number one is the guy's an idiot. He's a nut case. He's like the guy on the funny farm who claims he's Napoleon. He's diminished capacity. He's mentally unstable. He's whacked out. Like the guy who thinks he's a fried egg. He thinks he's God. That's one option, you can think.

Second option is I don't think he's out of touch with reality. I just think he's a fraud. He is a swindler. He's a phony. He's a crook. He's trying to be something that he claims to be that he's not most likely to get my money. And there are a lot of religious con men in the world, would you agree with that? I've met some of them in my lifetime. So that would be a legitimate response. Maybe he's a con man just trying to fake everybody out. Saying, "I'm God. You should worship me."

The only third alternative is He tells the truth. If He's telling the truth, if He really is God then what does that mean. That means I have to obey Him. I have to worship Him. I have to bow down to Him.

That's why they crucified Jesus. They couldn't get Him on any charges because He hadn't done anything wrong. So finally they asked Him, "Do you claim to be the Son of God?" and He said, "Yes. I am the Son of God." They said, "That's it! It's heresy. It's blasphemy. You're going to the cross." That's why they killed Jesus.

I know I've had some friends who've said to me, I don't think Jesus was the Son of God. I just think He was a great moral teacher. He couldn't be! In fact that's the one option He could *not* be. Because no great moral teacher would say, "I'm God. Worship

Me” unless He was. No great moral teacher would say, “I’m the only way you get to the Father except through Me.” That’s it. So that one is not available. He’s either who He claimed to be or He’s nuts or He’s the biggest fraud in history and He’s got two billion people worshipping a fake, a phony.

Right now, everybody here already believes something about Jesus. You either believe He’s the Lord who He claims to be – God in the flesh. Or He’s a liar, the biggest one in history. He conned out a lot of guys. Or He’s a lunatic. He’s either delusional or He’s deceptive or He’s deity. Those are your choices. That’s what makes a lot of people nervous. Because they don’t want to admit what He is.

Jesus says, “I am coming to earth for your sin.” Romans 3 say “*Out of sheer generosity God put us in right standing with Himself, a pure gift. [It’s a gift. It’s a present.] He got us out of the mess we’re in and restored us to where He always wanted us to be. And He did it by means of Jesus Christ. He sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the world to clear that world of sin.*” The Bible says “*When we were unable to help ourselves at the moment of our need Christ died for us although we were living against God.*”

Why did Jesus Christ have to die? Let’s review it again. In the first place, the Bible says nobody’s perfect. We’ve all made mistakes. We’ve all blown it. I don’t measure up to my own standard much less God’s. The Bible says all have sinned. That means me, you, the pope, the president, Billy Graham, everybody. I’ve really never met anybody who claims to be perfect, unless they are out of touch with reality. Because nobody bats 1000. We’ve all done things we regret.

The Bible says, “*All have sinned...*” It says if you do the crime you pay the time. In other words, if you get a ticket you’ve got to pay it. The Bible says, “*The wages of sin is death.*” Spiritual death. So that means somebody’s got to pay for all the things you’ve done wrong in life. Either you or somebody else. Somebody’s got to pay for all the things you’ve done wrong. Either you go to hell or somebody pays it for you. That’s where God steps in and says, “I’ll do it. I created you. I made you. I love you. I will pay for all the things you’ve done wrong.”

What does that mean? It means everything you’ve ever done wrong and I’ve done wrong and everything I haven’t done yet but I’m going to do that’s wrong, that I don’t even know about, and what you’re going to do a that you don’t know about, has already been paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross. That’s good news. It’s already been paid for

The Bible explains it this way. “*God took the sinless Christ and poured into Him our sins. Then in exchange He poured God’s goodness into us.*” What a deal! The word for this is called, by the way, grace. When God gives you what you need, not what you deserve. So here’s the deal. God says I’m going to take all of Rick Warren’s wrong things he has done in his life and I’m going to put them on My Son Jesus Christ, and He’s going to pay for them on the cross. Then I’m going to take all the good things Jesus has done and put them on Rick so he can get into heaven. What a deal! What a deal!

That’s what *The Passion* is all about. In fact, this is what Jesus was agonizing over. If you’ve seen the movie, in the very first scene Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane at night, the night they come and arrest him. He’s sweating this thing. He’s agonizing. He’s worried and He can’t sleep, He can’t speak. What was He going through? Not just

the physical and emotional turmoil of knowing what was coming ahead. He knew the torture He was going to go through. Obviously. He's God. He knew what He was going to go through physically. But that wasn't the real issue. The real issue is that He realized He was going to take the blame, the guilt for every evil act ever done in history on Him. Imagine the burden. That's why Jesus in the garden prays, "Father, if it is possible, if there's any other way, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from Me." In other words, I don't want to have to take all that load on Me. Nevertheless *"Thy will be done."* When Jesus symbolically looks into this cup of suffering He saw every evil sinful act ever committed. He realized He was going to take the blame for every rape, for every child molested, for every wife who was beaten. He was going to take the guilt for every murder, for every lie, for every jealousy, for every unfaithfulness and adultery, for all the pornography in the world. He was going to take the guilt for every sin, every theft. He was going to take the guilt for the holocaust, for the killing fields. For the Nazis, for every evil act done in history He was going to take it all. That's what He's struggling with. Because He knew when He'd take that it would separate Him from God because God cannot look on sin. He's holy.

I imagine when I watched that movie, I imagined Jesus in my mind in the Garden praying about me. And saying, "Father, is there any other way that Rick Warren can get into heaven except I go and die on the cross for all of his sins and pay for them?" And God says, "Son, You know that. No. There's no other way. You know that no sin can enter into heaven. Somebody's got to pay for Rick Warren's sin, either him or You." So Jesus Christ goes through all the trial and all the suffering and all the scourging and they nail Him to the cross. On the cross He says, "Ok Father. You said if I took the judgment

for Rick Warren's sin, that he could go to heaven. All right, Father. Let the judgment fall." The skies turned dark and for three and a half hours there's silence in heaven. Jesus Christ is taking the sin of the world and in that moment of agony Jesus on the cross cries out, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani. [My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me.]*" God, the Father, says, "Son, You're carrying Rick Warren's sin on You right now and I've got to turn My back."

Friends, that is love in the first degree. That is love in the first degree! And when they drove those nails through the hands of Jesus they went straight into the heart of God. By the way, did you know that the hand holding that nail was Mel Gibson's hand? He chose that because he said, "I want everybody to know it was my sin that put Jesus on the cross." Don't go blaming the Romans or the Jewish leaders or anybody else. It was my sin and your sin that put Jesus Christ on the cross.

Think about this. If there had been any other way for you to be forgiven and any other way for you to get into heaven besides Jesus dying for your sins on the cross don't you think God would have chosen that. If there had been, let's say, two ways to get to heaven – not one. Don't you think God would have said, "Let's take the more convenient way. Let's don't mess with this suffering and crucifixion stuff." Of course He would have!

Friends, there is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way you're ever going to get into heaven which is a perfect place and you're not except on the ticket that Jesus bought for you. Otherwise Jesus' sacrifice was an absolute, total, unmitigated waste if there was any other way for you to get into heaven.

The amazing thing is this. God planned the whole thing even before He created you. Because He knew what was going to happen in advance. The Bible says this in Ephesians “*Saving is all His idea and all His work.* [In other words, He does all the work] *All we do is trust Him* [circle “all we do is trust Him”] *enough to let Him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish.*” That’s the present. God’s gift to you.

Notice – this is very, very important. It’s not what you do that gets you into heaven. It’s what Jesus Christ already did. That’s the only way. It’s not what you do. It’s what Jesus Christ already did.

Let me give you a little quick history in world religions. If you go study all the different religions of the world and I have, you can summarize them all in one word – *do*. They just have different lists on their to do lists. All of them are you try to please God by doing these things. One religion has this list of things you do and another religion has this list of things you do and another religion has this list of things you do. You do these things in order to please God.

The difference between religion and Jesus Christ and what He said is this: It’s nothing you do. It’s already been done. It’s already been done, I’ve done it all for you. I’ve paid the price. That why Jesus, with His arms outstretched on the cross said, “It is accomplished. It is finished. I have already paid for all the sins of everybody. All you need to do is trust Me, to appropriate that gift.”

If somebody brings you a gift, if you don’t unwrap it, that’s dumb. If you don’t accept it, that’s dumb. God has a gift for you. How do you accept it? By believing.

This is why we should live with constant attitude of gratitude. And a constant attitude of thanksgiving to Jesus Christ and gratefulness and appreciation because He

deserves it. He earned it. He paid for my freedom with His life. He paid for my ticket to heaven with His blood and He is worthy of all of our praise. When Jesus Christ paid for your sins on the cross it split history into AD and BC. Why? It is the most significant thing that ever happened. Every time you write a date you're using Jesus Christ as the focal point. You say 2004. From what? From Jesus Christ's death for you. That was His present.

These are the essentials for getting ready for the other side of death. First, you acknowledge God's passion. He loves me more than I'll ever be able to know. God so loved the world. That's His passion. Then you appreciate His present. That He gave His only Son. He came to earth and gave His life for you. What do you do next?

3. You accept His proposal.

You accept God's great proposal. God has an incredible offer for you, one like you will never ever receive anywhere else. It's this. "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*" then here's the proposal, "*...that whosoever believes in Him should not perish.*" God says, You believe what I did for you, you will not perish.

Notice who this proposal, this offer is for. Titus 2, says "*The free gift of eternal salvation* [notice it's a free gift. That's the present] *is offered to everyone.*" Jesus is an equal opportunity Savior. It's offered to everybody. In fact, He gets more specific in the next verse "*One's nationality or race or education or social position is unimportant. Such things mean nothing. Whether a person has Christ is what matters and He is equally available to all.*" Notice it doesn't matter how much money you make – a lot or a little – rich or poor. It doesn't matter what your economic status is. It doesn't matter your ethnic or racial background. It doesn't matter your social prestige, whether you're

famous or not. It doesn't matter what your religious background is. Jesus died for you. I don't care if you're Catholic or Jewish or Buddhist or Baptist or Moslem or Hindu or no religious background, Jesus still died for you. And He wants you to have a relationship with God.

Notice how you accept God's proposal. First it's who it's for – it's everybody. How do you accept it? The Bible says this in Romans 3 “*God says He will accept us and acquit us* [in other words declare us not guilty, wipe out all the things we've done wrong. Our record is cleared] *if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. We can all be saved in this same way by coming to Christ no matter who we are or what we've been like.*” I'm grateful for the last part of that verse. No matter who we are or what we've been like. It says you trust just in Jesus Christ.

Somebody says, “I've messed up my life too much.” No, you haven't. Or you say, “I've lived my life too long without God.” No, you haven't. It doesn't matter what you've done, who you've done it with, where you've done it. What matters is what direction are your feet headed right now? Are they headed towards Jesus Christ?

There's only one condition to accepting God's proposal of eternal life for you. Only one. What is it? You trust. You trust Him. It says “*Whosoever believes in Him will not perish.*” Believing is not knowing. It's trusting. It's not just knowing about Jesus. It's not just saying, “I believe He's God.” Big deal! You say, “I believe in Jesus.” So does the devil but you're not going to find him in heaven. The devil knows Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The latest poll in *Newsweek* says 82% of America would say, “I believe Jesus is the Son of God.” So what? It means more than a head knowledge. It's a heart knowledge. The word in Greek “believe” literally is the word, *pisteuo* which means, “to

trust in, to cling to, to rely on, to commit to.” I could have a chair here and say, “I believe in that chair. I believe it will hold me up.” But until I sit down on it I don’t really believe in it. Let me explain it this way, I believe in Karl Marx. I believe he existed. I believe he’s the founder of communism. But I’m not a communist. I believe in Hitler, but I’m not a Nazi. I believe in Osama bin Laden but I’m not a member of Al Qaeda. But I believe in Jesus and I’m a Christian. Why? Because I trust Him. I’ve committed myself to Him.

Let me give you another example. It’s the difference between having a close friendship and just being acquainted. I know President Bush. I’ve met him a few times. I’ve talked with him. I’ve shaken his hand. I’ve been his guest in the Oval Office in a private meeting. He’s written me four or five letters, sent me a birthday card last month on my birthday. So I can say, I know President Bush. But I don’t *really* know him. I’m not in his inner circle. I’m not a close personal friend. I don’t have a deep relationship with him. I just know about him.

Here’s the problem. A lot of people know *about* Jesus, but they don’t *know* Him. Many people are going to miss heaven by eighteen inches because they got it in their head but they don’t have it in their heart. They know about Him. They believe He’s the Son of God. But they don’t trust Him with their lives. Jesus died for you so you could have a relationship with Him. God made you for purpose and the number one part of that purpose is to get to know and love and trust God. Right now He offers you the proposal of a lifetime.

*“Right now God is ready to welcome you into His family. Today He is ready to save you.”* Have you ever personally accepted what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross and

told Him so. If you haven't you ought to. In fact, you ought to do it now. In fact, why don't we just pause right here and pray together. Just bow your head and talk to Jesus Christ. You say, "I don't know what to say!" I'll say some words and you follow me in your mind. You don't have to say it aloud. God knows your heart. He knows what you're thinking. Just say this.

Dear Jesus, I don't understand it all, but I want to thank You for loving me. I want to thank You for coming to earth for me. And I want to thank You for giving Your life for me so I could go to heaven. I want to accept Your free gift of forgiveness and salvation. I want You to be the savior of my life and the Lord, the manager of my life. I want to learn to trust You and to love You and to fulfill Your purpose for my life. I say to You today, Come on in to my heart. Amen.

What do I do after I've accepted God's proposal? Here's the last thing you do.

4. You anticipate God's promise.

*"God so loved the world..."* That's His passion and I admit and recognize it.

*"...that He gave His only begotten Son..."* That's His present that He wants to give you.

*"...that whosoever believes in Him ..."* That's the condition, that's the proposal.

*"...should not perish but have ever lasting life."* That's the promise. *"Should not perish but have everlasting life."*

Did you know that you were made to last forever? One day you're going to die. That's going to be the end of your body. Your heart's going to stop. But that's not going to be the end of you. On no! God wants you to be in heaven with Him. Not in hell.

What is hell? Hell was made for the devil and his demons. Really it was. A lot of people have a big myth about hell. They think hell is where you go if you're really,

really, really, really bad. Like an ax murderer. But heaven is a place where you go if you're pretty good. Most of us want to be good enough to go to heaven but bad enough to be fun.

The fact is, if you could be good enough to get to heaven on your own then Jesus Christ coming to earth and dying for you was a total waste. The truth is heaven is a perfect place and you're not. And God doesn't grade on a curve. Have you ever been to Disneyland and they have those rides that says, "You've got to be so tall to ride *this* ride." And little kids are jumping up: "I'm tall enough! I'm tall enough!" I can imagine getting to heaven and God having a 1000-foot sign and saying, "You've got to be this perfect to get in here." I'm not and you're not. That's why we needed Jesus. Jesus paid for your ticket into heaven.

Notice God's promise. 1 Peter 1 "*We are now members of God's own family. And God has reserved for His children the priceless gift of eternal life. It is kept in heaven for you and [this is the good part] God will make sure that you get there safely to receive it. [In other words God makes sure you'll get there] because you are trusting Him.*"

All of God's children are guaranteed heaven. The problem is not everybody's in God's family. You need to understand the distinction. Everybody is created by God but not everybody is a child of God. Only those who choose and say, "God, I want to be in Your family." Only those who choose to believe and trust what Jesus Christ did. The fact is some people choose to live their entire lives without God. They thumb their nose to God and say, "God, I'm going to be my own god. I'm going to do my own thing." Why would they want to spend eternity with God when they spent their life without Him here? They're not going to be spending time with God in heaven. You must choose to

accept God's gift. The gift is there. Your sins have already been paid for. You just have to accept it.

The next verse shows the three benefits of being in God's family. And these are big ones. "*What a God we have! Because Jesus was raised from the dead we've been given [here are the three things] a brand new life [that takes care of my past] everything to live for [that takes care of my present] and a future in heaven [that takes care of my future].*" So God says here's what I offer you: past forgiven, purpose for living, home in heaven. Not a bad deal. Past forgiven, purpose for living, home in heaven. That's what God says I offer to you.

You say, "Wait a minute. I've already got a great life." Of course you do! You live in Orange County. I've seen the bumper sticker: Life never looked so good. Yeah, you've got a great life but it's not great enough to get you into heaven. That's why you need Jesus Christ.

Mel Gibson had a great life, if anybody did. Mega movie star worth hundreds of millions of dollars, fame, fortune, pleasure, everything he wanted. But he realized something was missing in his life. Mel Gibson: Let's face it. I've been to the pinnacle of what secular utopia has to offer. It's just this kind of *everything*. I've got money, fame, it's all been like here you go. When I was younger I dipped it into the fun and sucked it up. All right! It didn't matter. There wasn't enough. It wasn't good enough. It's not good enough. It leaves you empty. The more you eat, the bigger you get.

*How bad did it get?*

Pretty bad. I think everybody in their life gets to a point where that happens. They get to the moment of truth and go, What is this all about? Am I going to jump? Am I going to go on? I don't want to do either. I don't want to live. I don't want to die. You ask yourself all those Hamlet questions and eventually you just have to say, I'm not good enough to figure all this out. I don't know. I just don't know. Help! If there's anything out there help! If you're lucky you'll recognize the signs of that help.

*But Gibson says several times he had tried to turn his life around but kept failing and was brought to the brink of suicidal despair.* I checked into a few places and sorted myself out. I didn't make a big noise about it.

*You thought of jumping out a window?*

I really did. I was looking down thinking, Man, this is just easier this way. You have to be mad, you have to be insane to despair in that way. But that is the height of spiritual bankruptcy. There's nothing left. But what a waste! When people do that it's so sad. Whenever I hear of a suicide, someone died, I want to cry. Because there's something better if they can just hang on a little longer. It's awful.

*Did someone say something to you? Or you said it to yourself?*

I said it to myself at this point. But that was after years of people saying, "Hey bud! You've got a problem." I just hit my knees and said, "Help!" Then I began to meditate on it. That's in the gospel. I read all of those again. I read bits of them when I was younger. Pain is the precursor to change. Which is great! That's the good news.

It took pain to open Mel Gibson's eyes to all that God wanted to do in his life. I hope that doesn't happen to you. In fact, I think God brought you here today to open your eyes. The Bible says this in Psalm 34 "*Open your eyes and see how good God is.*"

In the movie *The Passion of the Christ* one of the most graphic scenes to me is when Pilate, the governor of Judea, walks out in front of an entire mob and he asks the single most important question in history. He asks, “*What will you do with Jesus?*”

I’m asking you that question right now. What will you do with Jesus? It is the most important question you will ever be asked in your life. It not only determines the rest of your life but where you’ll spend eternity: What will you do with Jesus?

Let me explain something to you. You don’t have to have all of it figured out, all your questions answered, all your doubts resolved before you begin a relationship with Jesus Christ. I didn’t and I’m sure glad I did. After forty years I still have a lot of questions. I still have a lot of things I don’t understand. I still have doubts about different things. But it hasn’t stopped me from having a forty-year relationship with God, friendship with God and enjoying that.

One day a guy came to Jesus who had a sick daughter. He said, “Lord, I want You to heal my daughter.” Jesus looked at him and said, “Do you believe I can heal her?” The guy said, “I want to believe. Yeah, I believe. Help me with my doubts.” Jesus said, “That’s good enough!” And Bam! He healed her.

You can come to Jesus Christ this morning and say, Jesus I want to believe. Help me with my doubts!

Prayer:

First, I’m going to pray for you. Then I’m going to lead you in a prayer. Father, I want to thank You for the people that You chose to bring this morning. Thank You for Your amazing love and grace for them. Lord, there are people here who know about You but they’ve never really known You. They’ve never begun a relationship

with You. I pray that You'll give them the words right now to start that relationship with You. Thank You for loving us even before we know You.

Now you pray. Say, "Dear Jesus. I don't understand it all but I want a relationship with You. I want to thank You for loving me. I want to thank You for coming to earth for me. I want to thank You for giving Your life for me so I could go to heaven. I want to accept Your free gift of forgiveness and salvation. I want You to be the Savior of my life and the Lord of my life and the manager. You call the shots from here on out. I want to learn to trust You and to love You and to fulfill Your purpose for my life. Amen.

## APPENDIX D

## SERMON: MARKS OF THE FAITHFUL PREACHER, PART 1

TEXT: 2 TIMOTHY 4:1

JOHN MACARTHUR

**Introduction****A. The Preacher's Charge**

Studying this letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy, his young son in the faith, is like treading on sacred ground, for it's the last words ever penned by Paul in Scripture. We can only imagine what was racing through his heart as he beseeched Timothy, who was going to take his place, to be faithful in the ministry. That changing of the guard would occur soon, for Paul knew he would soon lose his life in martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:6-9). Paul would pass the baton to a young man who was moral and virtuous, but possibly timid. It seems Timothy didn't have the strength of character, the conviction, or the boldness of Paul. So at this late point in Paul's life, he was compelled to give a final and solemn charge.

**B. The Preacher's Accountability**

The Bible is not nebulous, but explicit, about what God expects from the preacher. Second Timothy 4:1-5 contains nine commands. Its exhortative style presents demands, not suggestions, ideas, or points of discussion. It's the pattern Timothy and all who follow after him are responsible to fulfill. The preacher's role is vital, for God has designed that His people be taught by gifted men. Much of the believer's spiritual growth

directly relates to the effectiveness of the preaching he or she is under. So it's a serious issue with God for preachers to live by God's standards and for believers to hold them accountable. And it's vital that people respond in obedience to proper preaching. Today one of the tragedies in our nation and world is the demise of faithful, consistent, uncompromising, biblical preaching. Certainly some of the blame lies at the preacher's feet, but it also lies at the feet of believers who fail to hold the preacher accountable.

### **C. The Preacher's Portrait**

The English preacher John Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, an allegory about the Christian life. He wrote that story from Bedford Jail, where he was imprisoned for preaching. Bunyan depicted the Christian life through Pilgrim, who was embarking on a spiritual pilgrimage. Pilgrim was first taken to Interpreter's House because there were some things he needed to know to make his pilgrimage successful. Inside Interpreter's House he was shown the painting of a preacher that he might realize the importance of the preacher's office. The portrait "had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back. [He] stood as if [he] pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head" ([New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957], p. 28). In 2 Timothy 4 the apostle Paul also paints a preacher's portrait. Only his painting was inspired by God, so it's more than instructive—it's binding. And it delineates the preacher's role in unmistakable terms.

### **D. The Preacher's Faithfulness**

Paul wrote his final letter as a prisoner and recognized that his earthly ministry was near completion. He was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). He wanted Timothy to be able to say the

same thing so he exhorted him to be faithful. In doing so Paul set for us the divine standard by which faithfulness is measured. It's a running theme throughout his letter.

Second Timothy 4:1-5 summarizes Paul's hope for every Christian pastor. Timothy had a difficult task ahead of him where he was ministering. The church in Ephesus had already begun to defect spiritually. When Paul founded the church, it was in the heat of revival. But over the years sound doctrine lost its primacy and godliness was no longer a main issue. In addition a rampant, empire-wide persecution was beginning to foment, which had the potential of costing Timothy his life. Because the ministry ahead of him was not easy, it was imperative for Timothy to be faithful. So in his parting words Paul gave Timothy the marks of a faithful preacher.

### **LESSON I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION (v. 1)**

*"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom."*

#### **A. His Compelling Responsibility (v. 1a)**

"I solemnly charge you." Those words speak of the seriousness of ministry. The Greek term translated "solemnly charge" (*diamarturomai*) means "to earnestly testify." The aged warrior Paul sought to arm his young son in the faith with a keen sense of his weighty responsibility. Such seriousness is characteristic of a godly individual committed to serving Christ. Paul was like the Reformer John Knox, who said, "Give me Scotland or I die!" When compelled to preach, it is well reported that Knox locked himself in a room and wept for days because he feared the seriousness of his calling. Timothy was to take his calling just as seriously. In discussing the tongue, the apostle James said, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter

judgment" (James 3:1). The man or woman who doesn't offend with his or tongue is perfect, but alas, "no one can tame the tongue" (v. 8). Because of that, no man should rush into a preaching or teaching ministry. If he is not specially called or gifted of God, he will easily offend with his tongue and incur a greater judgment. The ministry is a serious place for those who regard its tasks in earnest. The whole tone of Paul's charge is a forward look to the second coming of Christ. Nothing will develop accountability like the pastor's realization that he is not primarily responsible to a church, denomination, or school, but to God.

### **B. His Coming Evaluation (v. 1b)**

*"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom."*

#### **1. The Judge's identity**

"Of God even of Christ Jesus" (emphasis added) is probably a better translation, meaning that Paul was charging Timothy in the presence of God, who is Christ Jesus. One cannot be dogmatic about that interpretation since the verse could be speaking of a solemn charge made in the presence of both the Father and the Son. But the former seems preferable not only for linguistic reasons, but also because of the underlying theology. John 5 clearly reveals that the One who judges the living and dead is Jesus Christ: "Not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son. . . . [God] gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (vv. 22, 27).

#### **2. The Judge's duty**

In addition to affirming Christ's deity, Paul also affirmed His duty as Judge. "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus" parallels the common

format for court subpoenas in ancient days. An ancient court document commonly read something like this: "The case will be drawn up against you in the court at [the name of the city] in the presence of [the name of the judge]." In using legal terminology, Paul was saying a future subpoena will be served for the preacher to appear before God.

### **3. The Judge's presence**

The preacher's ministry occurs in the presence of the Judge. That provides for a very unusual court setting. Typically, those subpoenaed for a trial must tell the truth so the judge will have all the facts. But as divine Judge, Christ already knows the truth! It's a compelling thought to realize the One whom you will appear before is aware of every detail in your life. The pastor's ministry is in full view of His watchful eye.

### **4. The Judge's evaluation**

The Greek term translated "judge" in 1 Timothy 4:1 (*krinô*) speaks of an evaluation, not condemnation. From *krinô* we derive the words *criteria* and *critic*. The phrase "who is to judge" carries the idea of "who is on the brink of judging" or "who any moment will judge." Paul wanted to paint a picture of immanency for Timothy. Christ's evaluation will determine the believer's reward, which will determine his or her level of service in heaven. First Corinthians 3 says that works of gold, silver, and precious stones will last, but those of wood, hay, and stubble will be burned up (vv. 12-15). Second Corinthians 5:10 says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." For the good we did in serving Christ, we will be rewarded. Our reward will be eternally manifested throughout the entire kingdom by our capacity to

serve. While our heavenly inheritance refers to the breadth of our authority, our heavenly reward speaks of the nature of our service in eternity.

### **5. The Judge's coming**

Paul based his solemn charge to Timothy not only on Christ's imminent judgment but also on His "appearing" (Gk., *epiphaneia*, 2 Tim. 4:1). That refers to Christ's second coming, when "every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7). When that happens, the church will already have been raptured—its rewards already bestowed in the secrecy of heaven. In glorious liberation, God's children will return to reign with Christ, and their rewards for service will be on full display before the whole world. In ancient days the word *epiphaneia* was used in two special ways. One referred to an obvious intervention by some god. But more often it was used in connection with a Roman emperor, particularly when he came to visit a village or town. To prepare for the emperor's coming, the people would sweep the streets and otherwise clean their town. They attempted to have everything in perfect order for his appearing. It's as if Paul were saying to Timothy, "You know what happens in a town when people are anticipating the emperor's arrival. But you are expecting the *epiphaneia* of Jesus Christ! Therefore, minister in such a way that, when Christ arrives, He will be pleased with what He sees." To the peasant villager, nothing could exceed the thrill of having the emperor see and approve his or her work. Similarly, we as Christians are to look forward to Christ's appearing and desire His divine and eternal approval. Christ's appearing will lead to the speedy establishment of "His kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1). He will come as Judge and reign as King. Sinners will be judged, and believers will be rewarded. The godly will be ushered into His millennial kingdom on earth, but the ungodly will be cast into eternal punishment. Until the Lord

returns or calls him home, the preacher is to be faithful. That way he'll receive his proper reward as he shares in the glories and joys of the coming kingdom.

### **Conclusion**

The preacher must realize the seriousness of his task and be consummately dedicated to it. The task is serious because it comes under the scrutiny of the Judge's evaluation. The perfect Judge will render perfect judgment on the nature, dedication, faithfulness, and consistency of the preacher's efforts. Then it will be seen if what he did was in fact gold, silver, and precious stones or wood, hay, and stubble. The world can push the pastor to compromise his ministry by trying to please others. But if he's mindful of the One he answers to, it will help keep him strong. Timothy needed to understand the seriousness of his commission because he was going to receive much pressure to compromise his ministry. But pleasing God is the right path, for in the day of His appearing, Christ will reward the faithful in a glorious way. So if you teach a biblical message, the pressure is on, but having the perspective that God is Judge will help keep you on track. The teacher must answer to the Lord, and so must all those he teaches.

## APPENDIX E

## SERMON: WHAT CAN JESUS OFFER ME?

TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:1-6

**Introduction/Attention**

It seems that our culture is consumed with authenticity or reality. Just look at the popularity of the latest genre of television shows, Reality TV. Shows like Survivor, American Idol, Dancing with the Stars, Fear Factor, Deal or No Deal and others show that people are enthralled by reality television. We watch these shows because we are amazed at the reality and authenticity of it all. We watch American Idol in the beginning to see all the people who CAN'T sing!

Well, this series is about Authentic Christianity. It's about being the real thing; not a fake, phony or fraud. I don't know about you, but I'm sick and tired of people who say they are Christians but don't act like it at all. I'm tired of people who are fake and phony, who act one way at church but a different way everywhere else. God has called us to a real relationship, Authentic Christianity and it's about time that it takes hold of every part of our lives.

Over the past couple of weeks we've been studying the first chapter of 1 John. In chapter 1 of 1 John, we saw who the real Jesus is and how it affects us. Last week, we saw what it means to be an authentic Christian. And this week, we're going to ask the question, "What Can Jesus Offer Me?"

This is more than a "what's in it for me?" kind of question. Building on the "real Jesus" we learned about in 1:1-4, it's essential to see how Jesus offers something better

and different than anyone else can offer. Because He is completely unique (God/Man-“the only begotten”) he can do what no one else can do and offer what no one else can offer. *In 1 John 2:1-6, we see that because of who He is, Jesus offers what no one else can offer.*

### **1. Jesus offers us an advocate to God: verse 1**

#### **Explanation**

John begins by telling us the reason he wrote this letter. He says, “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.” In other words, one reason he wrote this letter was to help believers live righteous and holy lives. John continues in chapter 2 with what he was describing in chapter 1. He was talking about walking in the light, following God and confessing sin. Then he says, the goal of all of this is to live righteous and holy lives. In 1:9 we see that we will sin and must confess those sins.

But he goes on to say, that if (and we know that it means “when” as well) we sin, we have “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...” Now don’t miss how John describes Jesus here. He says that He is our “Advocate with the Father...” This word is extremely profound and powerful. It means that Jesus is the “one who speaks in our defense.” It’s a legal term that gives the idea that Jesus has been called in to help us before the judgment bar of God. When the term is used in a legal sense today, we usually think of the work of a lawyer in defending someone on the basis of their own merit. But in this case is that the defense is not based upon the merits of the one accused but on the merits of the advocate.

#### **Argumentation**

You see, we can't think of the work of Christ that he lived and died and is now done with mankind. Instead, Christ still intercedes on our behalf. Paul says in Romans 8:34, "who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

### **Illustration**

The picture here is very powerful. Satan is the great accuser, as described in Revelation 12:10. He is the prosecuting attorney who continually reminds us and God, the righteous judge of our sin. God is the judge who cannot simply excuse sin, a penalty must be handed down and payment must be received. Christ is our defense attorney who stands and makes intercession for us to God. "Our advocate does not profess our innocence...but rather our guilt and enters the plea of His own blood." Satan is silenced as He sees that the blood has been applied to our sin. The judge hands down the sentence: innocent, because the price has already been paid, the term has been served, the debt has been cancelled.\*

### **Application**

*Person-* Jesus Christ can present us blameless and innocent before God because of His sacrifice on the cross.

*Principle-* Because our price has been paid on the cross, our sins can be forgiven today.

*Practice-* Therefore, we should continually confess our sin and seek to live righteous lives because we know that Christ pleads our case to God.

## **2. Jesus offers us acceptance before God: verse 2**

### **Explanation**

Not only does Jesus offer an Advocate to God, He also offers acceptance before God. Notice what John says in verse 2. “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”

Now this word “propitiation” is of utmost importance and significance. Even though we don’t use it in everyday language today, it’s important that we understand it’s meaning. The word can mean that Jesus is the “atoning sacrifice for our sins.” It was used extensively in ancient pagan writings of the appeasement of an angry god by offerings. Although God has nothing in common with pagan false deities, there is a sense in which God hates sin and wants nothing to do with it. This is a clear teaching in Scripture. God cannot look upon sin; He cannot associate with it because He is holy. Even though this word is used in pagan writings, it is used differently in Christian writings. In the pagan rituals the sacrifice was the means by which a man satisfied an offended deity. In Christianity it is never the man who takes the initiative or makes the sacrifice, but God himself who out of His great love for the sinner provides the way by which His own wrath against sin may be satisfied.

### **Illustration/Argumentation**

This idea of propitiation can be seen in the Old Testament sacrificial system. If anything is pictured by the system of sacrifices it is that God has himself provided the way by which a sinful person may approach him. Sin means death, but the sacrifices teach there is a way of escape from wrath and judgment. Jesus is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Remember the plagues in Egypt as the angel of death passed from house to house. But the promise was, “When I see the blood I will pass over you!” God says this to us today. This principle is even seen in the mercy seat on the Ark

of the Covenant in the tabernacle. The mercy seat is a picture of Christ and His propitiation. The mercy seat is where the blood was sprinkled during the sacrifice in atoning for sins. It is wooden with gold plating signifying Christ's humanity and deity. It sits above the Ark of the Covenant which contained Aaron's rod and manna, which represents the humanity and below the cloud of God's glory that would hover above. Notice the picture here. The mercy seat, sprinkled with blood, stands between God's perfect holy nature and man's sinful, helpless state. This is a picture of the propitiation of Christ. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

### **Application**

*Person-* Because of who Jesus is, He can offer what no one else can offer.

*Principle-* We can be accepted into God's family through the blood of Christ.

*Practice-* All we have to do is recognize and confess our sin and acknowledge that He alone can save us!

### **3. Jesus offers us assurance from God: verses 3-6**

#### **Explanation**

*a) Assurance by keeping His word: 3-5*

One of the main themes of John's letter is Christian assurance. In other words, he gives us tests that we can apply to our lives to see if we really know God. Here, he says, "we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments..."

The same principle is stated a different way in verse 4; "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him."

What does this mean? Simply stated, it means that we can have assurance that we know God by keeping His Word and following His commandments. You want to know if you're a believer? Do you have an inward compulsion to follow and obey the plan and purpose of God in your life? One test of Christian life is righteous living. The Bible is very clear that there will be a change in the way you act when you come to know Christ.

*b) Assurance by imitating His walk: 6*

Notice what verse 6 says, "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." Now remember, John is writing to refute some false teachers who said that since the flesh was evil anyway and God would forgive it didn't matter how you acted. You could sin and it didn't matter.

John says here, the one who knows Jesus will seek to walk like Jesus walked and act like Jesus acted.

**Illustration**

In other words, if you are part of God's family there will be some family resemblance. Almost everywhere I go with Jake, people say to me, "He sure does look like you!" Why? Because he resembles his father. I was at the hospital earlier this week to see Dan and Christine Barnes' new baby boy, Jake Ryan Barnes. When I saw him I told Dan and Christine both that it was clear who the dad was! He looked just like his dad. Spiritually speaking, there should be a family resemblance as well. If God is our Father, we should keep His commandments and imitate His walk.

**Argumentation**

We can have assurance from God. There are things in our life that will be evidences of our relationship with Him. 1 John 5:13 says, "These things I have written to

you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

### **Application**

*Person-* Christ offers assurance of our relationship with God.

*Principle-* If we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, there will be evidences in our lives that offer assurance.

*Practice-* When we resemble our Father, walk like Him and obey Him, we show others that we're a part of His family.

### **Conclusion**

The question is, do I bear a family resemblance? Do I act like my Father, walk like my Father, look like my Father and obey my Father? Only through Jesus Christ am I given a stake in this family. He offers acceptance before God. Have you received what only Jesus can offer?

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