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TRAINING LAY LEADERS IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT
FAITH BIBLE CHURCH IN MURRIETA, CALIFORNIA

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TRAINING LAY LEADERS IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT
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To Beth,

Like a lily among the brambles, so is my love among the maidens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Goals	1
Context	2
Rationale	7
Definitions and Limitations	11
Research Methodology	14
Conclusion	15
2. A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR REDEMPTIVE PREACHING	16
Consistent Non-Redemptive Preaching Is Detrimental to the Spiritual Health of the Church	16
Neglecting Christ Confuses the Story of the Bible	16
Regular Gospel-less Preaching Cultivates a Works-Righteousness Mentality	18
Failing to Proclaim the Gospel Ignores the Existence of Unbelievers in the Church	20
The Preacher May Lack Empowerment by the Spirit who Exists to Glorify Christ	21
Cross-Centered Preaching Is a Biblical Priority	22

Chapter	Page
Cross-Centered Preaching Is Commanded by Jesus	22
The Apostles Modeled Preaching Sermons with a Redemptive Thrust	24
Salvation and Sanctification Both Require a Consistent Focus on Christ	26
Gospel-Centric Preaching Is Necessary for the Church's Vitality and Health	27
Non-Christians Must Hear the Gospel in Preaching	29
Christians Must Hear the Gospel in Order to Mature Spiritually	32
A Christocentric Thrust does not Preclude Moral Exhortation in Preaching	34
Conclusion	35
3. HOW TO CONNECT CONSISTENTLY TO THE CROSS WITHOUT VIOLATING AUTHORIAL INTENT	37
How Can the Gospel Be Relevant to Passages That Do Not Speak Explicitly about Christ and the Gospel?	38
All Scripture Points toward Jesus	39
Preaching the Relationship to Christ, Rather Than the Mention of Christ	40
A Survey of Valid Methods to Connect to the Gospel, While Being Faithful to the Original Author's Intent	41
Direct Reference to Christ or Redemption	42
Looking to the Promise and/or Fulfillment	43
Types that Point to a Greater One	45
Using Analogy to Reveal the Gospel	50
Linking through Corollary Passages	52
Using Contrast to Highlight Christ	54
Shining Light into the Shadows of the Gospel Story	56
Connecting through the Context of Redemptive History	58
A Brief Consideration of Alternative Methods	60

Chapter	Page
Conclusion	61
4. A METHODOLOGY FOR TRAINING MEN TO PREACH THE CROSS FROM THE EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURE	63
An Overview of the Process Used for Training Men to Preach	63
The Eight-Week Training Process	66
The Evaluation Process	74
A Time for Reflection	76
5. PROJECT ANALYSIS	77
Analysis of Data	77
Change among the Men Trained	77
Feedback on My Preaching and Teaching	80
Evaluation of the Goals	83
Evaluation of the Process	86
Theological Reflection	87
Personal Reflection	88
Conclusions	90
Ideas for Further Study	91
Conclusion	92
 Appendix	
1. CLASS SYLLABUS	93
2. AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE	96
3. PRE/POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE	97
4. PREACHING RESPONSE FORM	100
5. PRE/POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS	102
6. SUMMARY OF PERSONAL FEEDBACK RECEIVED	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY	106

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
A1. Pre/Post-Class Questionnaire Results	102
A2. Summary of Personal Feedback Received	104

PREFACE

I exit the Doctor of Ministry program a different man than when I entered. God worked through circumstances, people, and my studies to conform me more to the image of his Son and to fall more in love with the Gospel.

Since the time that I entered the Doctor of Ministry program, God has allowed me to witness the birth of our two children, Abby and Izzy. They have given me days of joy and been a cause for procrastination over the course of my studies. They do not yet know life without their father in school, and I hope to soon make up for that time away. In God's providence, I was also diagnosed with cancer during the D.Min. program, undergoing surgery and radiation as treatment. By His grace and strength, I was able to remain in the program and today appear to be cancer-free. Through it all, my wife, Beth, has prayed for me, cared for me, encouraged me, and pushed me to finish. I would not have gotten to the finish line without her. She is my best friend and a constant sign of God's favor towards me. I live more dependently and with right priorities because of her, our girls and the cancer.

Over the course of my studies, I learned a great deal more about expository preaching than I even hoped. The coursework, the reading, the professors, my cohort and this project all served to make me a better expository preacher. They built upon the great foundation that I received at The Master's Seminary. Now I bear the responsibility of passing on what I learned to other men who will be faithful to teach and train others also.

I thank God that Faith Bible Church is the place where I have the privilege of shepherding, preaching, teaching, leading, and training men. I do not know of a better church to serve or leadership team to minister alongside. I am particularly thankful for

Robert Dodson, Chris Mueller, Bob Richardson, and Rod Shackelford – fellow elders who have faithfully prayed for me and encouraged me as I ministered, studied, traveled, and worked on this project. They are dear brothers in Christ.

More than anything else, I stand in awe of God’s grace, mercy, and favor towards me. All that I know of myself leads me to despair in my own righteousness and trust only in Christ, for his righteousness to be imputed to me. As I read the Scriptures, I continue to be amazed that God would love and desire to be reconciled to us, who are natural-born rebels and haters of him. May I never abandon or depart from that message of reconciliation and redemption.

John Frederick Pleasnick

Murrieta, California

December 2011

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Training men to preach and teach is a major need in the church today. Christ gave particularly gifted men to the church to lead and equip his bride until he returns (Eph 4:11-13). There are often men gifted to preach and teach who sit idle in the pews of a church. Assuming that an immoral lifestyle does not preclude them from service, their gifts should not lay dormant and neglected.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train lay leaders in expository preaching through a combination of teaching, practice, and evaluation at Faith Bible Church in Murrieta, California.

Goals

This project sought to accomplish four goals, which formed the basis for evaluating the success and efficacy of this endeavor. The first goal of the project was for participants to have an increased understanding of the study methodology which expository preaching requires. Each of the men who participated in this training had aspirations to preach and teach, but none had received formal instruction in this arena. Over the span of an eight-week training session that encompassed lecture, discussion, and sermon evaluation, the core principles of exegesis, contextualization, and homiletics were practiced and reviewed.

The second goal of this project was to help these lay leaders deliver their sermons more effectively through observation and evaluation. Each week, the men

participating in the project studied, practiced and received constructive critique on a particular element of a sermon. By breaking the evaluation into its constituent elements, the men were able to receive more extended help in each area of homiletics. Each week, the men received feedback from their classmates and myself.

The third goal of this project was to help these lay leaders consistently connect their application to Jesus Christ and the gospel. Some of these men have come out of churches where the sermons focused primarily on morality – what to do and not do. Biblically, there is a priority of cross-centered preaching. The biblical basis for this priority and a survey of valid methods were covered during the eight-week training session. My ambition was for them to understand the necessity, priority, and means of connecting all preaching to Christ and the gospel.

The fourth goal was to foster my personal growth in preaching through leading these training sessions and receiving evaluative feedback from the participants. Every pastor who shepherds people experiences the temptation to save time by neglecting certain aspects of study and reflection. Leading these sessions served as a personal reminder of core priorities in sermon preparation. During the training and for four weeks afterwards, the men were responsible to observe and analyze my preaching and teaching in various contexts. Constructive feedback was sought from these men as they considered and analyzed my preaching and teaching. The objective input of these men helped measure my own growth during these weeks together.

Context

Faith Bible Church is located in Murrieta, California, in Riverside County. Riverside is the fourth most populous county in the state and estimated to become the

second largest by 2050, after Los Angeles County.¹ Murrieta and its neighboring city of Temecula are situated in the southwest corner of Riverside County and are mainly responsible for most of the county's recent population growth. The city of Murrieta is clustered around the southerly intersection of Interstate Freeway 215 with Interstate Freeway 15. Because Murrieta has affordable homes and low crime, many residents located to this community of tract homes, choosing to commute to their jobs in the business centers of San Diego, Los Angeles, and Orange County.

In 1991, the city of Murrieta was established with more than 24,000 residents. From 2000 to 2006, the population of Murrieta more than doubled from 44,282 to 92,933, making the city essentially equal in size with the adjoining town of Temecula.² This growth rate was the second highest in the state of California.³ More than 430,000 people live in a fifteen mile radius from the city, and the average household income of those living in Murrieta exceeds \$87,440.⁴ Most of that income is earned outside the city itself. Sixty-eight percent of the population commutes thirty miles or farther to work.⁵ Forty-six percent drive to Riverside (forty-five minutes without traffic), 23 percent drive to San Diego (one hour without traffic), and the rest commute to various regions of Los Angeles,

¹Jim Miller, "Riverside County population forecast to double by 2050, ranking it No. 2 in State," *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, 10 July 2007 [on-line]; accessed February 2008; available from http://www.pe.com/localnews/inland/stories/PE_News_Local_D_population10.410f243.html; Internet.

²City of Murrieta, California, *Economic Development*, "Murrieta: Demographics, Economics & Quality of Life" [on-line]; accessed February 2008; available from <http://www.murrieta.org/uploads/ecdev/deq06.pdf>; Internet.

³Ibid.

⁴City of Murrieta, California, *Economic Profile*, "Murrieta: Economic Profile Spring 2007" [on-line]; accessed February 2008; available from <http://www.murrieta.org/uploads/ecdev/EcoPro07.pdf>; Internet.

⁵City of Murrieta, California, *Demographic Summary Powerpoint*, "Murrieta: Demographics, Economics and Quality of Life" [on-line]; accessed February 2008; available from <http://www.murrieta.org/uploads/presentations/DemographicsEconomicsandQualityofLife.pdf>; Internet.

Orange County, and San Bernardino County (more than an hour without traffic).⁶ With regard to ethnicity, 57 percent of the population is Caucasian, 22 percent is Hispanic, 8 percent is Asian, 6 percent is African-American, and the remaining 7 percent is composed of Native American, multi-ethnic, and other races.⁷

Faith Bible Church reflects the demographics of its environs. The church is largely composed of families new to the area within the last ten years. They were drawn to the region by inexpensive homes and the belief that this area was a family-oriented community. Approximately 525 people, including children, regularly attend Sunday worship services, and 183 adults are active members. Ethnically, Faith Bible Church is mainly Caucasian, with Hispanics hovering around 15 percent, and all other ethnicities being confined to lesser numbers. Surveying the church directory evidences that more than 55 percent of families attending have children in the home. Approximately 15 percent are singles in their twenties, and another 5 percent are young married couples in their twenties and early thirties with no children. The remaining 25 percent of the congregation is a compilation of middle-age and elderly adults, comprising couples with older adult children, some divorced, some widowed, and a few who have never married. Of the men, a large number either commute or have jobs that require travel.

Faith Bible Church began in August 2003 in the backyard of Rod and Beth Shackelford. Four of the current elders were a part of the small group of families that formed the initial nucleus of the church. Numeric growth came by word-of-mouth and through relationships. After two weeks of meeting at the Shackelfords' home, the church was offered a vacant industrial office building for Sunday-only use while long-term

⁶Ibid.

⁷Murrieta, *Economic Development*.

tenants were sought by the lessor. From September 2003 to June 2004, Faith Bible Church met in that building and continued to grow.

In May 2004, the elders hired Marcelo Tolopilo as the first teaching pastor. In June 2004, the church learned that the city would require more than 75,000 dollars worth of improvements to continue meeting in that building. Within a week's time, the church found temporary residence in an elementary school, meeting on Sunday afternoons for three months in order to stay in compliance with the city's codes. In September 2004, Faith Bible Church was permitted to rent the newly constructed Bella Vista Middle School, which has served as its physical location to this day. Marcelo Tolopilo chose to return to his previous itinerant preaching ministry in May 2006 and six months later, the elders called Chris Mueller to serve as the teaching pastor. From the establishment of the church to today, I have served in virtually every aspect of ministry at some point. From administration to leading children's ministry to preaching to discipleship to leading elders' meetings, God has allowed me to impact the church at every level.

From the outset, Faith Bible Church has been an independent baptistic church that holds tightly to the doctrines of grace. All of the elders and many of the leaders have some relational connection to Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, where John MacArthur preaches. Theologically, Faith Bible Church is very similar to that church. Practically, the leadership has no desire to mimic the style and formality of Grace Community Church. Believing that each church should adapt to the general culture of its environs, the region's casual attire and appearance are evident in church meetings. A Sunday morning worship service is awash with shorts, jeans, slacks, dresses, and suits. These clothes are worn by clean-shaven salesmen, tattooed firemen, school teachers, self-employed contractors, and a variety of other individuals. The worship service itself involves corporate prayer, Scripture reading, weekly communion, corporate singing, and a forty-five to fifty minute exposition of the Word. The style of worship music is blended between traditional hymns and contemporary choruses.

The majority of ministries at Faith Bible Church are led by laymen. The Children's Ministry is overseen by an executive at a real estate investment company. The Junior High Ministry is led by a regional sales representative for the irrigation industry. The High School Ministry is led by a sales representative for arthroscopic equipment. The College and Career Ministry is led by an equine veterinarian. Apart from the junior high leader who had two years of seminary before ceasing his studies, none of these men has had any sort of formal training in ministry. The heart of the eldership is for ministry to be led primarily by laymen. Rather than hiring staff to fill needs as the church grows, the elders have sought men from within the church who love God, are able shepherds, and who are willing to devote significant time to make ministry happen (though not to the neglect of their families). The aforementioned ministry leaders are such men.

As Faith Bible Church has grown numerically, the shepherding and ministry load of the church has also grown. Between 2008 and 2010, the church has grown by more than 150 people. This growth has overtaken the capability and time constraints of the current echelon of ministry leaders. In September 2009, Chris Mueller and I began meeting weekly with and training a new tier of leaders to step in and fill that need. Seventeen men met the criteria and accepted the challenge we laid before them; thus, we have committed to approximately three years of investment into these men, with the stated expectation that they will either serve in leadership roles at Faith Bible Church or be sent out as church planters and missionaries. For the first year of the "training center," we have been teaching them the Bible, systematic theology, and practical theology. Our ambition for the second year is to focus primarily on exegesis, hermeneutics, teaching, and preaching. The third year concentrates on issues pertaining to church leadership and eldership. Each man is already serving at some capacity as an "undershepherd" within the church. The elders are looking to these men becoming the next corps of leaders within the church.

Rationale

My ambition was for the seventeen men currently participating in the training center to form the nucleus of my project. Only a couple of these seventeen men have had any sort of training in preaching, and that has been very limited. Most of what they know about preaching has been learned by observation as Chris and I preach and teach each week. Their understanding of the whole homiletical process was rudimentary and in need of focused attention in order to have them fulfill the roles for which we have been preparing them. This project, to give them a methodology for preaching through teaching, observational analysis, and discussion, helped to fill that void in their training.

I also expected that this extended and focused attention on the priorities of expositional preaching would sharpen and refine my preaching and teaching, making sure that I am practicing all the core foundational principles of good exposition. Past training at The Master's Seminary gave me the ability to study the text, dig into the original language, and grasp the exegetical thrust of a passage. The Doctor of Ministry program at Southern transformed my understanding of the homiletical process and drove home the need for me to contextualize the author's intended meaning for the audience today. I am grateful for how strongly The Master's Seminary communicated the need for people to understand the author's intended meaning. I came away, though, with a perspective that they surely did not intend – to tell people the meaning of the text and then, if time remains, speak a bit about its relationship to their lives.

Yet regular preaching in such a fashion is spiritually dangerous, as knowledge without application is damning (Jas 2:14-26). As Grant Osborne has written, “The sacred author's intended meaning is the critical starting point but not an end in itself. The task of hermeneutics must begin with exegesis but is not complete until one notes the

contextualization of that meaning for today.”⁸ Preaching must do more than inform; the aim of preaching must be life transformation. In order for such change to happen, the preacher must bridge the gap between then and now so that the hearers understand the relevance and demands of God’s Word for their own lives. Knowing this past tendency of mine, I expected that the observational analysis and feedback of the men involved in this project would serve to further sharpen and clarify where I need to continue to grow as a preacher.

Though the aim of preaching is life transformation, the preacher is under obligation to communicate this call as a divine enablement, rather than a call to work hard at living better. Preaching of that manner is dangerous, for “messages that contain only moral instruction imply that we are able to change our fallen condition in our own strength.”⁹ No one can change lastingly without God’s enablement and power. When a sermon from the Old or New Testament gives behavioral instruction without gospel hope, the ground of man’s justification can become murky. The result will be a tendency towards legalism in the hearers, wherein their justification hinges on their present degree of sanctification. The preacher must work hard to see that his sermon consistently communicates that people are accepted by God through Christ alone and then obey out of gratitude, rather than the false religion of obedient living with the ambition of gaining God’s acceptance. Christ must be faithfully portrayed as the only righteous one who could be acceptable to God.

Preachers, whether laymen or vocational, are called to proclaim Christ (Eph 3:8; Col 1:28). The cultural context in which Faith Bible Church is located largely

⁸Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23.

⁹Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 293.

matches the situation of Corinth in Paul's day. Thiselton has pointed out how "the city community and the city culture felt themselves to be prosperous and self-sufficient, even if there were many 'have nots' who were socially vulnerable or dependent on others."¹⁰ This illusory prosperity and self-sufficiency is similarly evident in the city of Murrieta, where increased home prices mixed with a faltering economy has revealed how dependent local commuters are on others in their pursuit of success.¹¹ After an extended analysis of the Corinthian culture and times, Thiselton concludes, "All this provides an embarrassingly close model of a postmodern context for the gospel in our own times, even given the huge historical differences and distances in so many other respects. . . . 1 Corinthians stands in a distinctive position of relevance to our own times."¹² From that standpoint, Paul's determination to faithfully preach Christ crucified requires a commensurate commitment from preachers today (1 Cor 1:23).

Preachers cannot compete with the captivating forms of rhetoric available through television and internet at all hours. They cannot compete with the wisdom of newspaper pundits and online bloggers read daily. For the same reasons, Paul consistently and faithfully preached on the person and work of Jesus Christ, which sounds like foolishness to the unsaved, but has remarkable and supernatural power to change lives (1 Cor 1:18-31). His words revolved around "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). Likewise, preaching today should consistently connect to the cross, highlighting the person and work of Jesus.

¹⁰Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 4.

¹¹Adam Geller, "As economic tide recedes, an undertow of long-simmering insecurities grows," *North County Times*, 17 February 2008 [on-line]; accessed February 2008; available from http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2008/02/18/business/news/17_30_642_17_08.txt; Internet.

¹²Thiselton, *Corinthians*, 17.

This mandate in preaching does not require altar calls or a weekly evangelistic excursus. Instead, the connection between the passage being taught and the greater story of redemption must be made clear. In some way, that passage does point to Christ and the gospel. Jesus corrected the Jews who thought that the study of Scripture in itself was sufficient: “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of me” (John 5:39). As Don Carson writes, “What is at stake is a comprehensive hermeneutical key. . . . What we call the Old Testament is understood to point to Christ, his ministry, his teaching, his death, and resurrection.”¹³ As Jesus is the hermeneutical key to the Old Testament, how much more must this be true in the New Testament? And if he is the key and center to both Testaments, then surely preaching should reflect that.

No pastor who understands the grace of God would desire to preach a sermon that makes spiritual transformation a product of purely human willpower. That error, at least in perception, is heightened when a sermon fails to explicitly connect to the cross. Though many preachers assume or imply the need and ground of faith and repentance, the likelihood exists that hearers will instead hear that doing a certain moral action will fix their relationship with God. Preaching devoid of the cross risks communicating salvation by human effort. As Arturo Azurdia has said, “We must never preach [ethical commands] in a way that would be suitable in a Jewish synagogue, an Islamic mosque, or a Mormon temple. If our message is appropriate to settings such as these we are not preaching a Christian message.”¹⁴

In all curricula that I have created in the past, this central focus on the cross in preaching has been left out. Such materials emphasize observation, meditation,

¹³D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 263.

¹⁴Arturo G. Azurdia III, *Spirit-Empowered Preaching: Involving the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Ross-Shire, UK: Mentor, 1998), 75.

hermeneutics, sermonic construction, outlines, illustrations, application, and other important aspects of homiletics, but remain virtually silent about how all of Scripture in some way points toward the person and work of Jesus. For the lasting spiritual health of the church body, these laymen were trained to have this redemptive focus as a consistent element of their preaching. Many in the body will be regularly exposed to their preaching and teaching. Foundational perceptions of the gospel and the Bible will be created in students and collegians. Young men aspiring to ministry and missions are looking to these men as role models for their future. Expository preachers are needed, who prove the continuing relevance of Scripture to life and consistently point people to Jesus as they preach.

Definitions and Limitations

Expository preaching is such an amorphous term that definition is required. “Expository preaching” is that style of preaching which is captive to the meaning of the text and communicates its meaning and relevance to the contemporary audience. The goal of such preaching is not merely knowledge, but extends to persuasion. Expository preaching calls for the hearers to respond and conform to the Word of God.

Similar to the days of Israel’s captivity, preachers today must unpack the words of Scripture and declare its contemporary meaning. In each sermon, men must preach “to give the sense so that they understand the reading” (Neh 8:7-8). History, culture, syntax, and lexical meanings are all analyzed to seek to bridge the gaps of space, time, culture, and language so that the preacher can determine what the original author meant by what he said. Having learned the author’s intent, the preacher hones in on the central thrust of the passage. That exegetical main point then becomes the homiletical focus of the sermon. The latter may be contextualized for today, but the focus and application should remain similar to the original author’s.

Though the preacher is captive to the text and the communication of its meaning, there remains a mandate for relevance. The gap between then and now must be bridged by the preacher. As Haddon Robinson says, “The preacher endeavors to bring the ancient world, the modern world, and his particular world together in the development of his sermon.”¹⁵ The culture, language, and presuppositions are sufficiently different today that help is required to bridge the gap so that the voice of God in the text is heard by all who listen. This work parallels the actions of Ezra in Nehemiah 8 as he and his helpers explained the meaning of the Word of God in order that those Jews who returned from exile would understand what was written. And when the preacher accurately, clearly, and passionately unfolds the meaning of the text, God speaks through the text to the hearers. J. I. Packer’s definition is particularly helpful:

Expository preaching is the preaching of the man who knows Holy Scripture to be the living Word of the living God, and who desires only that it should be free to speak its own message to sinful men and women; who therefore preaches from a text, and in preaching labors, as the Puritans would say, to “open” it, or, in Simeon’s phrase, to “bring out of the text what is there”; whose whole aim in preaching is to show his hearers what the text is saying to them about God and about themselves, and to lead them into what Barth called “the strange new world within the Bible” in order that they may be met by him who is the Lord of that world.¹⁶

That belief that expositional preaching aims to ground ethical imperatives in redemptive indicatives is frequently called Christocentric preaching. As this phrase has gained popularity only in recent years, that definition may prove helpful.¹⁷ The

¹⁵Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: the Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 78.

¹⁶J. I. Packer, “Expository Preaching: Charles Simeon and Ourselves,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 141.

¹⁷The writings of men like Bryan Chapell, Graeme Goldsworthy, Sidney Greidanus, and Edmund Clowney have moved this form of expositional preaching from infrequent to an increasingly popular construct. See Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); and Edmund Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003).

theological basis for Christocentric preaching is rooted in the belief that all the Scriptures point in some way to Jesus. Preaching that neglects to connect the passage to Christ is therefore unfaithful to the original textual meaning. In interpretation, the preacher must understand how a particular passage testifies to Christ. As a result, his preaching should make that same connection in the context of authorial intent and as the basis for ethical imperatives.

In the desire to contextualize meaning for one's hearers, there lurks the danger of descending to moralistic exhortations that free hearers from their need for the gospel. Whenever a sermon (from the Old Testament or New Testament) gives behavioral instruction without gospel-based hope, then the basis of one's justification can become murky. The result of a steady diet of such preaching is self-righteous Pharisees who believe that their justification hinges on their present degree of sanctification. Instead, expositional preaching aims to ground ethical imperatives in redemptive indicatives so that, as Packer has said, the hearers "may be met by him who is the Lord."¹⁸ This is the aim of Christocentric preaching. The means of drawing that line to Christ is more fully explored in chapter three.

For this project, the pool of participants was drawn from men currently enrolled in the first year of the church's ministry training center and from those who pursued other training in the bible and theology through programs that the church earlier offered. These men are considered by the elders to be the next generation of leaders for the church. Of the thirty-five men solicited, twelve participated in this training as a means of further developing their usefulness at Faith Bible Church and in preparation for a lifetime of ministry. These men have already demonstrated an aptitude of diligent study, faithful shepherding, and a strong desire for the work of ministry. This practicum

¹⁸Packer, *Preach the Word*, 141.

in preaching served as a portion of their church-based training in an area heretofore undeveloped and provided needed focus and feedback in a manner which the church had not before attempted.

Research Methodology

The primary purpose of this project was to train aspiring men in expository preaching through a combination of teaching, practice, and evaluation. That training happened during an eight-week practicum that encompassed lecture, discussion, homework assignments, and evaluation over the span of two hours each week. Rather than have the men preach a short sermon and receive brief feedback, I planned for the men to work at home each week on a particular element of exegesis and preaching, and then bring that back together to discuss and evaluate their work on that particular element. By working through word studies, diagramming, sermon outlines, illustrations and more, they practiced the various elements of sermon preparation in class together, during homework and in the homework review portion of the following class. Through this repeated exposure and practice, I sought for them to gain more experience in the various aspects of sermon preparation and receive more extended feedback than if they had simply preached a short sermon before the class. Core principles of hermeneutics, sermon development, contextualization, and homiletics were covered in lecture and discussion.

During the span of these workshops and for four weeks afterwards, these men were accountable to attend my preaching and teaching to observe, analyze, and provide feedback on my implementation of the preaching methodology in which I trained them. Growth, change, and improvement was assessed through pre-/post-project surveys given at the beginning and conclusion of the practicum as well as by means of sermon evaluation forms which were completed for me by the participants as they attended my

preaching and teaching. As I led these training sessions and was evaluated weekly by these men, I experienced personal growth and development in my own preaching.

Conclusion

A few months after the project concluded, the value of this training project was evident within the church as the men who were trained began to teach more and bear additional fruit in their ministry. As a church, we are still more committed to fulfilling 2 Timothy 2:2 by investing into men who will be faithful to teach others also.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR REDEMPTIVE PREACHING

A biblical and theological mandate exists for preaching to consistently connect to the person and work of Jesus. If Christ is the center of the Bible's story, then expositional preaching should have a Christocentric element. The regular neglect of the gospel in preaching has danger for the preacher and the congregation. Such redemptive preaching must be viewed as a biblical priority and vital for the church's long-term health. Non-Christian and Christian alike must hear Christ preached. He is the ground of both salvation and sanctification.

Consistent Non-Redemptive Preaching Is Detrimental to the Spiritual Health of the Church

If our region is representative of the nation, many preachers' sermons fail to preach Christ and subsist as a tale in morality from Scripture. Preaching of that sort inevitably lead to a decline in the spiritual vitality and health of a church. The following chapter explains the causes.

Neglecting Christ Confuses the Story of the Bible

One may imagine that a school of preaching exists in secret somewhere in this nation. Some of its graduates appear to preach topically, while others preach verse by verse, working through passages and books of the Bible. Their pace and style are different, but their commonality is found in a seemingly purposeful decision to avoid mentioning the way in which a passage bears witness to Christ. Judging by their

preaching, man seems to be at the center of every passage. Perhaps they believe that the writers of the Old Testament were ignorant of the promised and future Messiah. Other apparent graduates have become so narrowly focused on the ethical demands of Scripture that no consideration remains for the redemptive realities in which these instructions are grounded.

Surely such a school of preaching cannot actually exist, for few are the pastors who are able to keep their vitae a secret for long. Regardless, much preaching today confuses the story of the Bible by placing man at the center of that story and ignoring the place of Christ in the Scriptures. Jesus' words to the Jews in John 5:39 are apropos to the Christian milieu of today: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of me." If the Scriptures are taught without Christ as the center of the Bible's story, then the most important point has been missed.

The Jews in John 5 were not ignorant of the Scriptures. The apostle John's usage of the term, "the Jews," is not a mere racial designation of audience, but a term used consistently in the Gospel of John to identify those opposed to Jesus, his mission and the gospel.¹⁹ Jesus' audience in this context was Jewish rabbis. The life-work of these men was to study Scripture. For years, they had been searching the Scriptures, "to attempt to learn something by careful investigation or searching."²⁰ But they had been looking for the wrong thing. They had been carefully scrutinizing the Law of God, believing that Moses' words would be their means to eternal life (John 5:45). In some ways, their teachings would not have been very different from popular preaching today –

¹⁹Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 234.

²⁰Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), s.v. "27.34 ἐραυνάω."

the acceptance and pleasure of God was contingent on obedience to the moral commands which God has given. Ethical exhortation in preaching which neglects Christ and the gospel often communicates the same thing.

Jesus' words in John 5 correct such thinking and such preaching. The Scriptures testify about Christ. John states this truth using a present active participle, emphasizing the continuous, ongoing nature of that witness. Jesus Christ is the consistent, ongoing testimony of Scripture. He is the center of the plot and his story is the whole Bible's story. To preach the Old or New Testament without consideration and mention of Christ's involvement in the passage is to miss the central focus of the Scriptures.

The Old Testament traces the story of one particular people and even one particular line within that group of people. Abraham is connected to Adam, and from Abraham came Isaac, then Jacob, then Judah, then Perez and eventually Jesse and his son David. From David came Solomon and Rehoboam and Uzziah and Hezekiah, all the way to Joseph, to whom Jesus was given as a son. In the inspiration of Scripture, God chose for the stories of select people to be told with purpose and intentionality. When the Bible is read and when the Bible is preached, that singular and selective story which culminates in Jesus is the central priority to locate and preach. A sermon which fails to locate its subject in that singular story confuses the grand story of the Bible. A preacher who consistently fails to connect his sermons to that redemptive storyline will force his people to miss the most important point, which God was unveiling over thousands of years.

Regular Gospel-Less Preaching Cultivates a Works-Righteousness Mentality

The Word is clear that God's people are called to a lifestyle of obedience (John 3:36). Jesus "became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). This fact is beyond dispute within the called and elect church. Salvation is not

contingent on such obedience but rather springs from a love for the redeemer. Such obedience is the Spirit-empowered response of every believer at the time of salvation. As the days and years of a Christian's life continues, that way of thinking often begins to change:

We all automatically gravitate toward the assumption that we are justified by our level of sanctification, and when this posture is adopted it inevitably focuses our attention not on Christ but on the adequacy of our own obedience. We start each day with our personal security resting not on the accepting love of God and the sacrifice of Christ but on our present feelings or recent achievements in the Christian life. Since these arguments will not quiet the human conscience, we are inevitably moved either to discouragement and apathy or to a self-righteousness which falsifies the record to achieve a sense of peace.²¹

Preaching that consistently lacks the gospel will leave people in that very state. If a preacher has conveyed the explicit meaning of the text and communicated at least some of its significance and relevance for life today, but has left the obligation of the text and the pleasure of God to hang on the obedience of the believer, then a works-righteousness mentality will slowly develop. Preaching that regularly neglects declaring the reality and consequences of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers will compel people to think that their own obedience will somehow satisfy God's demands. As Lovelace points out, "Many areas of the church which contain a great deal of legal thunder and lightning, exposing at least the surfaces of sin, are full of desperately anxious and bitterly contentious people. Law without grace provokes sin along with exposing it and aggravates it into some of its ugliest expressions."²² A regular focus on the gospel of grace is the only means of combatting man's natural inclination towards works-righteousness. Genuine Spirit-enabled obedience cannot come from the volition of man, but is the fruit of faith (Jas 2:22, Titus 2:11-14).

²¹Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 211.

²²Ibid., 113-14.

Failing to Proclaim the Gospel Ignores the Existence of Unbelievers in the Church

A danger of preaching that consistently fails to include a redemptive element is that unbelievers will not hear the gospel at church. On any given Sunday in most churches around the world, there are likely non-Christians attending church. They may have been invited by friends or came on their own account. They may think themselves to be Christians, though lacking any real faith or knowledge of Christ, of his perfect righteousness and substitutionary death on behalf of men. Some may even have made a profession of faith at an earlier point and lived in the church for a time, experiencing the power of the Spirit of God and tasting the Word of God as Hebrews 6:4-6 describes.

These are people who need hope and to hear of the forgiveness available through Christ. They need to hear of God's demands for their life. They need to hear of his wrath towards all who violate his commands. They need to hear of the only man who lived without breaking those commands and then was put to death, bearing the full weight of God's wrath, so that those who believe in him would not have to.

In smaller churches, the preacher may look out at his congregation and genuinely believe that he knows the spiritual condition of the people who gathered. In larger churches, the preacher will not likely know the salvific status of all those attending. To both groups, the preacher must regularly proclaim the gospel. Paul recognized that unbelievers would sometimes be present in worship services (1 Cor 14:23-25). The preacher may or may not think that he knows who is saved, but he cannot be sure. There are some who live in the church but do not personally know the transforming power of the gospel (1 Cor 11:19, Rev 2:14-16).

As the congregation hears the gospel faithfully proclaimed each week, believers in the congregation will hear and learn how to share their faith. If done well, they will hear the preacher articulate, defend and present the gospel in a variety of ways over time. Such preaching will prepare them to engage with non-Christians during the

week.²³ As they hear a message of hope and redemption in the sermon each week, believers will gain confidence to evangelize personally and may also become willing to invite unbelievers to join them at church, confident that their friends will hear the message of the cross. Preaching that neglects a redemptive element will ignore the presence of unbelievers in a congregation and hinder Christians from inviting their friends to church.

The Preacher May Lack Empowerment by the Spirit who Exists to Glorify Christ

The Spirit of God baptizes, indwells, seals, gifts and fills Christians. These acts serve a purpose far greater than the joy and betterment of individual believers. The Holy Spirit is doing these things with a primary objective in view: to glorify Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God came to glorify the Son of God (John 16:13-14). The Spirit knits believers together into the church, which is the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7). The gifts he distributes result in people who look more like Jesus (Eph 4:7-16). The Spirit was sent by the Father to glorify the Son: “He will glorify me” (John 16:14).

In his last extended conversation with the disciples, Jesus told them how the Spirit would come to further declare Jesus, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about me” (John 15:26). ἐκεῖνος is used emphatically and breaks the pattern of the typical neuter by assigning the masculine gender to the Spirit. He is personalized and viewed as a replacement of the Son, sent by the Father.²⁴ His mission is to give further witness and testimony to Jesus as the Christ:

²³Timothy J. Keller, “Preaching the Gospel in a Postmodern World” (D.Min. syllabus, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2002), 135.

²⁴D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 529.

The entire revelation of Christ in the world since the day of Pentecost is here summed up in one brief expression. All that the Spirit was to do by means of inspiration, by means of the inspired Word, in and through the apostles, in and through the church, all of it is included. So the work will be carried forward by one who is as great as Jesus himself, one who is at the side of the disciples, working ceaselessly through the ages.²⁵

If then the Spirit works to glorify the Son and a preacher is gifted by the Spirit for the purpose of making the bride of Christ more conformed to the image of Christ, then surely the Spirit will give special enablement to the preacher whose message is faithful to declaring the glory of Christ and the salvation available through him. Conversely, a preacher who fails to mention Christ as he preaches God's Word should not be surprised then if he lacks the Spirit's power and enablement in his preaching. The role of the Spirit is to glorify the Son.

The central need of preachers is to be Spirit-empowered in their ministry (1 Thess 1:5; 1 Pet 1:12). This enablement comes by faithfully proclaiming the message of God's Word. That message is not devoid of Christ, but rather overflows with Christ. Preaching that regularly neglects Jesus and the message of the cross may infrequently be empowered by the Spirit of God who came to glorify the Son.

Cross-Centered Preaching Is a Biblical Priority

Clearly there is danger to the preacher and his hearers when he consistently fails to preach Christ. Yet the call to redemptive preaching should not be motivated by danger and warning, but instead by the biblical basis which undergirds such preaching.

Cross-centered Preaching Is Commanded by Jesus

In Mark 16:15, Jesus commands his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." The subject and content of preaching is summarily

²⁵R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1071.

defined here as the gospel. This command is given at the very end of Matthew as a part of the Longer Ending, of which “the virtually unanimous verdict of modern textual scholarship” is that Mark 16:9-20 is not an authentic part of the original manuscript of Mark.²⁶ Likely added by a second century editor, the Longer Ending spread into the majority of manuscripts by the fourth century and even now remains printed, in brackets, in modern Bibles.²⁷ Its longevity is attributable to the general acceptance by the early church of what was written. They believed that Jesus had commanded preaching to be centered upon the gospel. There was no misunderstanding – Jesus’ focus for preachers was redemption and righteousness by means of the cross.

Mark 16:15 appears to be a summary statement of Jesus’ more extended command in Luke 24:46-49. Speaking to the disciples, not long before his ascension to glory, Jesus tells them how the Old Testament had predicted that the Messiah would suffer, die and be resurrected, so that repentance would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations. This proclamation to repent and believe in the Messiah’s life of perfect righteousness, death for man’s sins and resurrection to new life is a wonderful summary of the good news of the gospel. The Old Testament had declared that this time of preaching would come and Jesus appoints his disciples to the task, telling them that their mission would begin once the promised Spirit had come and clothed them with power. As Spirit-empowered men, they were to go to all the nations, beginning with Jerusalem, and preach the gospel. The apostles understood Jesus’ words here and their preaching ministry would be marked by a cross-centered, gospel focus.

²⁶R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 685.

²⁷Ibid., 687-88.

The Apostles Modeled Preaching Sermons with a Redemptive Thrust

The apostles modeled such redemptive preaching to unbelievers and believers alike. The first sermon, given on the day of Pentecost, was a call to believe in Jesus, to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:14-40). Peter's next sermon was similar. Though with different form and emphases, he declares the righteousness of Jesus, his suffering and death, and the forgiveness now available through him to anyone who repents (Acts 3:12-26). This call to preaching with a redemptive thrust was a lasting hallmark of apostolic preaching in Acts. Later in Acts 10:43-44, as Peter preaches to the Gentiles in Cornelius' house, he again declares the innocent death of Jesus, his power over death and how those who repent and hope in him will receive forgiveness of their sins. Simeon notes,

It is worthy of remark, that when [the Spirit] visibly descended on the Gentiles in confirmation of the word that was delivered by Peter, he descended at the very instant that the Apostle began to speak of the fulness and excellency of Christ's salvation; as though he designed to intimate, that this was the great truth which he came to attest, and which we ought to receive with our whole hearts.²⁸

This central focus on Christ in preaching by the apostles was not exclusively fixed upon unbelievers in need of salvation. Apostolic preaching also centered upon the importance of the cross in the life of believers. In the first mention of believers regularly gathering in community after the day of Pentecost, Luke notes how the Christians were "devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). The next mention of the apostles' teaching divulges its contents as being focused on "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). And after being imprisoned and flogged for their preaching, the apostles continued to obey the command of Christ, as "every day, in the temple and from

²⁸Charles Simeon, *John XIII to Acts*, vol. 14 of *Horae Homileticae* (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1832-63; reprint, Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 92.

house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42).

Paul also maintained this same priority. His first letter to the Corinthians repeatedly declares how he had a singular redemptive thrust in his preaching: “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2, cf. 1:23). In considering the larger context of 1 Corinthians, this description is shown to be a summary for a larger body of knowledge that extended beyond the plain historical facts of the crucifixion, and also included the theological implications of Christ’s life and death on behalf of the elect.²⁹

Throughout Paul’s ministry, that same message of forgiveness and life through Jesus appears as the central theme of all his teaching. When saying farewell to the Ephesian elders on his way to Jerusalem for the last time, Paul reminds them how his public and private ministry faithfully testified to the priority of “repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” – “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:18-27). Paul viewed this message as his life’s calling in ministry: “To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). Paul and the other apostles understood that their preaching was to center on the person, nature and work of Jesus, the riches that are in him and which he shares with those who are called by him. On this passage, Lloyd-Jones remarks, “The test of all preaching is its conformity to this definition of the message, and to this standard. The business of any man who claims to have been called to be a minister of the gospel is to preach ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ.’”³⁰

²⁹Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary, vol. 18 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 73.

³⁰D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ: An Exposition of Ephesians 3* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979), 56.

Salvation and Sanctification Both Require a Consistent Focus on Christ

The message of all preaching can be reduced to two primary objectives: salvation and sanctification. Whether the message focuses on the Old or New Testament, is expositional or topical, is on the nature of God or the glory of heaven, the preacher always has one (or both) of these aims for his hearers. These objectives are the aim of the preacher because they are the aim of Scripture. Nearing the end of his life, Paul reminds Timothy as he pastors the church in Ephesus that Scripture gives “the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). He goes on to add that Scripture is to be used for “teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” with the goal that every believer become spiritually mature (2 Tim 3:16-17). Because these twin themes of salvation and sanctification are the primary uses of Scripture, so they are also the primary objectives in preaching. Both require a consistent focus on Christ by the preacher.

No one will be saved by merely observing the good works of Christians. Words are necessary. Declaration and proclamation of the gospel must happen in order for someone to be saved. Whether salvation comes by reading the Word or hearing the Word, they cannot believe in him whom they have not heard. In Romans 10:14-17, Paul makes this very point and argues that preachers must be sent in order to share the message about Christ. Clearly, in Paul’s mind, one of the ambitions of a preacher is to preach Christ so that his hearers would be saved. This ambition is demonstrated in the historical record of Paul’s ministry (Acts 13:38-39; 14:6-7, 21; 16:10; 17:2-3; 18:5; 20:20-21; 26:20; Rom 15:19).

Though God saves people by means other than preaching (e.g., the Philippian jailer in Acts 16), God is well-pleased for sermons to focus on Christ for the salvation of its hearers. In Corinth, the main content of Paul’s message was Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:23). This message, though appearing foolish to some, was used by God “to save those who believe” in it (1 Cor 1:21). If a preacher should consistently neglect the message of

the gospel in his preaching, then his sermons shall not be faithful to one of the primary goals of Scripture and one of the primary aims of apostolic preaching. A focus on Christ is necessary in preaching for the salvation of the unsaved in the audience.

A similar kerygmatic focus on Christ and the gospel is necessary for the sanctification of the elect. Writing from prison to a church he had never visited, Paul composed a letter of encouragement and warning to the Colossians. Addressed to believers, the first chapter expounds the superiority and glory of Christ. Paul believes that a consistent focus on Christ will sanctify believers: “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ” (Col 1:28). Temporarily setting aside the exact meaning of Paul’s statement that “we proclaim Him,” the core principle is patently clear – Paul’s objective for believers to be sanctified is accomplished through the proclamation of Christ.

Preaching Christ accomplishes both of the primary objectives in preaching. By consistent preaching on the person and work of Jesus, some of the unsaved will come to personally know the Savior and believers will become more like their Savior. This dual effect is wonderfully encapsulated in Acts 5 as Luke describes the life of the early church: “Every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). Ministry in the temple resulted in the salvation of souls (Acts 3:1-4:4; 5:20-21). Ministry in houses resulted in the sanctification of believers (Acts 4:32-33; 16:40). The content of the apostles’ teaching and preaching focused on Jesus and his messiahship.

Gospel-centric Preaching is Necessary for the Church’s Vitality and Health

If the proclamation of Christ is sufficient for the salvation of the lost and the sanctification of believers, then Paul’s words to the Colossians that “we proclaim Him” must be made clear. What does it mean that Christ is preached? Does Paul simply mean

that the bare facts of Jesus' life will change people or is "preaching Christ" an idiom for something greater?

Thankfully, the original language of the text provides an answer to the question. By using a relative pronoun for "Him," there is a clear link established with the antecedent passage. Paul does not mean that he simply proclaims the facts regarding Jesus. The relative pronoun looks back to the phrase, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," at the end of verse 27. The Christ whom Paul proclaims is an indwelling Savior – one whose presence in Gentiles was a mystery only recently revealed. This indwelling by Christ is not the full extent of Paul's meaning, but a symbol and promise of a greater gift that remains to be seen: "the hope of glory." When Paul declares that he proclaims Christ, he is then describing Jesus as the means of a future hope yet to come.

In verses 13-23, Jesus is portrayed as the rescuer and redeemer of men from sin. He is the one who reconciles men to God, bringing peace through his blood on the cross. Being set free from sin and death, Christians will one day be presented as holy and blameless by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. These truths are summed up in the word "gospel" (Col 1:23). That gospel is presented as the ground of all Christians' future eschatological hope. As a result, there will be a future inheritance and presentation awaiting his followers (Col 1:12, 22).

So then, when Paul says, "We proclaim him," the context demands that this phrasing be taken idiomatically and as shorthand for the whole gospel – from rescue to reconciliation to future glory. For Paul to say that he proclaims Christ is a summary statement by him, using the name of the Savior as an encapsulation of all that Paul has been proclaiming to the Colossians since verse 13. To preach Christ is to preach about man's fallen state (1:13, 21), the nature of Christ (1:15-18), the life and atoning death of Christ (1:20, 22) and the new life and future glory that awaits those who believe (1:12, 13, 22-23).

From the participles following his declaration in 1:28, Paul makes clear that his proclamation of these redemptive truths entails two components: admonishing and teaching. “Admonishing” encompasses the concept of warning people about the danger of straying from God.³¹ He would plead with people to be reconciled to God and to abide in him. “Teaching” describes the process of providing positive instruction in Christian truth.³² With these two participles, Paul addresses both unbelievers and believers. The ministry of preaching Christ is to all people; *πάντα* is used three times to emphasize the universality of his audience. Paul’s desire was that every Jew, Gentile and Christian would hear, understand and respond to the gospel so that they would all become united in Christ and mature in him.

Non-Christians Must Hear the Gospel in Preaching

There are some pastors who take Paul’s words in Ephesians 4:11-12 to mean that pastors and teachers are given by Christ to the church for the exclusive purpose of equipping the church body to do the work of ministry. Their contention is that the church laity is called to evangelize and display compassion to others, just as they are called to train and equip believers for the work which God has called them to complete (Eph 2:10). Without a doubt, “proper equipping by the evangelists and pastor–teachers leading to proper service by the congregation results inevitably in the building up of the body of Christ.”³³ Yet that mission cannot be labeled as the exclusive focus of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The book of Acts makes clear that the apostles and prophets regularly engaged in evangelism as well as equipping.

³¹Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 160.

³²Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “33.224 διδάσχω.”

³³John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 155-56.

Of particular note is Luke's account of Paul's final meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20. To these men, he recounted a brief history of his ministry among them, reminding them of his faithfulness to discharge his duty: "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20-21).³⁴ By this declaration, Paul understood his whole duty before God to encompass evangelism as well as equipping. A few sentences later, he declares himself to be innocent of the blood of all men having declared the whole counsel of God to them (Acts 20:26-27). This claim by Paul to be innocent of their blood is evocative of God's warning to Ezekiel that he would be liable for the blood of men to whom he neglected to faithfully declare God's message (Ezekiel 33:7-9). Paul's usage of *πάντων* in Acts 20:26 indicates that he felt liable for the blood of Gentile and Jew, Christian and non-Christian alike.

Paul's innocence came from the testimony of his conscience that he had preached Christ to all the peoples of Ephesus (Acts 19:10). His ministry was both public, in the synagogue and the school of Tyrannus, and from house to house (Acts 19:8-9; 20:20). At each location his audience varied, from Jews in the synagogue, to Jews and Greeks together at Tyrannus' lecture hall, and Christians in private homes.³⁵ His message was centered upon the matters of repentance and faith (Acts 20:21). The synonyms Paul uses to describe his preaching are quite interesting. In verse 24, he says that his life's ambition was "to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." In

³⁴There is no clear textual indication that the Ephesian elders of Acts 20 would have read and known Paul's letter to the Ephesians. See Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th rev. ed., (Downers Grove, IL.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 528-35.

³⁵Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, eds., *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, rev. full-color ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), s.v. "Tyrannus," by A. M. Ross.

verse 25, he says that he “went about preaching the kingdom.” In verse 27, he tells the Ephesian elders that he declared to them “the whole purpose of God.”

The proximity of these phrases and the shared audience of the verbs indicate an overlap of meaning between the terms. The gospel of the grace of God could be described as a call to repentance and faith, or as preaching the kingdom, or even as encompassing the whole counsel of God. Yet the differences among these phrases communicate how Paul’s preaching was not easily defined by one simple topic or phrase. To “solemnly testify” of repentance and faith is to declare the truth of man’s need for repentance to God and faith in Christ in such a way that the hearer is impressed with the seriousness of the issue and his need to respond.³⁶ The same verb is used in verse 24 to describe how Paul declared the extraordinary importance of the gospel of God’s grace:

The message the apostle preached and all preachers echo is called the gospel of the grace of God. The clear emphasis is on grace, the unmerited favor of God by which He forgives undeserving sinners the totality of their sins and freely, mercifully gives them the complete righteousness of Jesus Christ.³⁷

In Walvoord’s analysis of passages that describe “the kingdom” in the book of Acts, he concludes that Paul’s preaching “included (a) the invitation to enter the kingdom now by new birth and (b) the announcement that Christ would return and reign on earth in the future.”³⁸ When Paul then states that he has declared “the whole purpose of God” to the Ephesians in verse 27, he is saying that he has faithfully proclaimed the resolved plan and intention of God towards man – that God would sacrifice his Son to reconcile sinful men

³⁶Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and Frederick W. Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. “διαμαρτύρομαι.”

³⁷John MacArthur, *Acts* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 326.

³⁸John F. Walvoord, “Interpreting Prophecy Today, Part 4: The Kingdom of God in the New Testament” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 556 (1982): 307.

and women to himself.³⁹ Looking together at the four different declarations by Paul, there is a remarkable uniformity to his message. Man needs to repent, believe in Christ and, by faith, receive his righteousness in order to be reconciled to God and await the return of his Son. Said in different ways at various times, this is what Paul preached in Ephesus in order that Christian and non-Christian alike would hear the gospel and respond in faith.

As Acts 20 reveals, the message of the gospel as a means to salvation was a consistent part of Paul's preaching, no matter the audience. His audience was not singularly Christians, but also included non-Christians. He knew that in order for them to be saved, they must hear the gospel in preaching (Rom 10:14-17). Paul's varied descriptions of the same gospel truth reveal something of the multiplicity of ways in which the gospel may be communicated over the course of a sustained preaching ministry.

Christians Must Hear the Gospel in Order to Mature Spiritually

In many evangelical churches today, the priority of the gospel is understood as it relates to evangelism. Far fewer preachers realize the biblical priority of the gospel for sanctification among believers. But the very message of the cross is imperative for the life, vitality and health of believers individually and the church corporately. Keller says, "The gospel is not the first 'step' in a 'stairway' of truths, rather, it is more like the 'hub' in a 'wheel' of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but

³⁹Dietrich Müller, "Will, Purpose," "βούλομαι," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 3:1018.

the way we make all progress in the kingdom.”⁴⁰ As Paul declared in Colossians 1:28, a primary purpose of Christocentric preaching is for every person to become spiritually mature.

In order for Christians to grow, they must hear the gospel regularly: “Christian growth is rooted in the same Christ by which we are justified.”⁴¹ The charge leveled at the Galatians by Paul was that they were abandoning the gospel (Gal 1:6). He was not writing to unbelievers living in Galatia, but to Christians. His concern was that a new gospel was being taught to believers in the church.⁴² The gospel is the foundation for all Christian holiness and growth. This is evident throughout the New Testament epistles. In Ephesians 5:2, believers are called to love others just as Christ has loved them. In Ephesians 5:25, a husband’s love for his wife is modeled by, and rooted in, the love that Christ has for the church. In Philippians 2:3-8, Christians are called to pursue the humility in their lives that was displayed by Christ towards mankind. In Hebrews 12:1-3, the Christian life is called to be run with eyes fixed on Jesus who has gone on ahead. In 1 Peter 2:21, Christ is the model for how a Christian should suffer righteously. In 1 John 3:16-18, Jesus demonstrates how true, sacrificial love for others will be manifest. The writings of the apostles demonstrate how Christ, in life and death, is the ground for all appeals to holiness and sanctification. The Christian life is not empowered by will-power, but by Jesus Christ. Zaspel illustrates,

When Paul confronted problems, he traced the problems back to the gospel. If the problem is divisions in the assembly, then it is to Christ he runs: “Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you” (1:13). If the problem is an immoral man in the assembly, he runs to Christ again: “Clean out the old leaven ... for Christ our

⁴⁰Tim Keller, “The Centrality of the Gospel,” (paper prepared for the recommended resources of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, NY, May 2001), sec. 1 [on-line]; accessed 12 July 2006; available from <http://redeemer.com>, *Centrality_of_the_Gospel-Keller.pdf*; Internet.

⁴¹Mark Lauterbach, “Do You Preach Christ?,” *Reformation and Revival* 11:4 (2002): 59.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 61.

Passover also has been sacrificed” (5:7). If the problem is dealing with your own immoral temptations, still it is Christ crucified who is the answer: “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (6:11). “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?” (6:15). Or, “You are not your own, for you have been bought with a price” (6:19–20). If he is to instruct on life in the home, it is “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22), and “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (5:25), and “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1). Everywhere, there is this Christward focus. When he tells us to be forgiving of one another, he reminds us of Christ, who forgave us (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:32). When he exhorts us to be generous in our giving, he reminds us of Christ who gave so much for us (2 Cor 8:9). . . . Christ is the answer to every human problem. To the lost and to the saved, Christ is the answer. And so, Paul says, He is all I preach. He is the whole sum and substance of my ministry. He is man’s only hope, yes, but He is more. He is our highest incentive to holiness also.⁴³

A Christocentric Thrust Does Not Preclude Moral Exhortation in Preaching

Preaching is the communication of God’s Word to man (Neh 8:8, 2 Tim 4:2). As the preacher faithfully declares the meaning of the Bible, he speaks with the authority of God himself (Heb 4:12; Rom 10:14). The Word of God is designed to transform its hearers (2 Tim 3:16-17; Heb 4:12). The goal of preaching and teaching is that people would respond and obey (Matt 28:20; Acts 28:23). Though the aim of preaching is life transformation, the preacher is under obligation to communicate this call as a divine enablement, rather than a call to work hard at living better.

Moralistic preaching that neglects the gospel is dangerous, for “messages that contain only moral instruction imply that we are able to change our fallen condition in our own strength.”⁴⁴ No one can change lastingly without God’s enablement and power.

⁴³Fred G. Zaspel, “The Apostolic Model for Christian Ministry: An Analysis of 1 Corinthians 2:1-5,” *Reformation and Revival* 7, no. 1 (1998): 28-29.

⁴⁴Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 293.

When a sermon from the Old or New Testament gives behavioral instruction without gospel hope, the ground of man's justification can become murky. The result will be a tendency towards legalism in the hearers, wherein their justification hinges on their present degree of sanctification. The preacher must work hard to see that his sermon consistently communicates that people are accepted by God through Christ alone and then obey out of gratitude, rather than the false religion of obedient living with the ambition of gaining God's acceptance. Christ must be faithfully portrayed as the only righteous one who could be acceptable to God. As Edmund Clowney said,

The Scriptures are full of moral instruction and ethical exhortation, but the ground and motivation of all is found in the mercy of Jesus Christ. We are to preach all the riches of Scripture, but unless the center holds all the bits and pieces of our pulpit counseling, of our thundering at social sins, of our positive or negative thinking—all fly off into the Sunday morning air.⁴⁵

Christ-centered preaching does not obviate the necessity of moral exhortation in preaching. God's people need to understand what it means to live in such a way that unbelievers will glorify God (1 Pet 2:12). Preaching that connects to the cross enables moral exhortation to be understood as something different than works-righteousness. Preaching Christ to believer and unbeliever alike instills hope for forgiveness, change, and growth in all who hear. To do anything else will leave people with a burden of guilt and a desire for change, which they will be unable to resolve by their own power.

Conclusion

The Bible clearly portrays Jesus as the center of its storyline. Danger exists to the preacher and the church when sermons consistently fail to connect the text to the cross. Redemptive preaching is a biblical priority, being commanded by Jesus and

⁴⁵ Edmund P. Clowney, "Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures" in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 191

modeled by the apostles' sermons. As Christ is central to both salvation and sanctification, Christocentric preaching is valuable to Christian and non-Christian alike.

CHAPTER 3

HOW TO CONNECT CONSISTENTLY TO THE CROSS WITHOUT VIOLATING AUTHORIAL INTENT

For some expositional preachers, the great difficulty of Christocentric preaching is a subjective feeling that the foundations of a grammatical-literal-historical hermeneutic are being violated. Such men have been trained that the singular meaning of the text is the author's intended meaning, as understood by the original audience. As Chapell explains, "Such [Christocentric] messages are difficult to develop for two reasons: they go against the flow of so much that we are accustomed to hearing in the evangelical church, and they seem to stretch the bound of precise expository preaching."⁴⁶

To speak of connecting each sermon to Jesus and the hope of the gospel feels like a call to return to the allegorical methodology of the early Middle Ages. Could this feeling of danger be due to a combination of past abuses and a current lack of training in redemptive preaching for many preachers? God did intend for people to understand his Word literally, even to the very word choice (i.e., Gal 3:16). And, as the incarnate God, Jesus must have been accurate when he said that Scripture is about him (John 5:39). Therefore, Christocentric, redemptive preaching should be possible without violating the author's intended meaning.

Obviously, such preaching is not that difficult when the sermon passage is located in the gospels or Romans. The greater challenge comes to the preacher as his text

⁴⁶Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 297.

is located more chronologically antecedent to the cross. How can the gospel be relevant to such passages that do not speak explicitly about Christ and the gospel, and in which the hearers may have been largely ignorant of the coming Messiah?

How Can the Gospel Be Relevant to Passages That Do Not Speak Explicitly about Christ and the Gospel?

The above question is not new: “Throughout the ages Christian preachers have struggled with the question of the centrality of Christ and how this affects the way we handle the text of the Bible. It is an obvious problem for the preaching of the Old Testament, but, in a more subtle way, it also exists for the preacher of the New Testament. If a passage is not directly about the gospel events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, to what extent are we obliged to make the connection?”⁴⁷ As the previous chapter describes, the Bible places the onus on the preacher of God’s Word to connect consistently to the gospel in his proclamation of Scripture. The Spirit of God then empowers such preaching for the salvation and sanctification of those who hear.

Merely saying that a preacher must preach Christ does not provide any practical help. Some men may immediately think that the imperative to preach Christ means that every sermon must conclude with an evangelistic appeal in which the gospel is clearly articulated and a call for response is made. Others may wonder if some texts demand that some form of allegory be used, in a sort of Machiavellian the-end-justifies-the-means hermeneutic. Neither is true. The very phrase “to preach Christ” “is a synecdoche—standing not only for reference to Christ’s incarnation or death on the cross but for the entire matrix of God’s redemptive work, which finds its culminating expression in Christ’s person and work.”⁴⁸ This means that a direct connection by the

⁴⁷Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 2.

⁴⁸Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 15.

text to the person of Jesus will not be found in every text. Instead, any number of connections to the greater story of the gospel may exist.

All Scripture Points toward Jesus

Believing that all Scripture points toward Jesus, but unable to find any evident connection, some pastors have felt compelled to be quite creative in their preaching. While teaching some pastors in Uganda about how to study and interpret the Bible, I gave a short synopsis of 2 Kings 6, wherein Elisha raises the axe head. Without announcing my discourse as bad interpretation, I related how, like the woodcutters, we work and sweat under the curse of sin. And as the axe handle could not hold the axe head, so the Old Testament Law cannot keep us from falling. And once lost, that axe head was irretrievable and beyond the ability of the student to save. Now that sunken axe head was a debt to the man, a heavy one that he would not be able to repay, just like our sins. But Elisha threw a stick in the water to save that which was lost. The stick is made of wood to remind us of the means by which Christ suffered and died. The stick is a representation of Christ as the axe head was resurrected to new life.

After telling this story, I asked them never to preach that as such an interpretation ignores context and the intended meaning. To my surprise, some of the men spoke up saying that they had taken notes and were ready to preach that on Sunday if I had not stopped them! Motivated by a genuine desire to proclaim the gospel and a clear belief that all Scripture points to Jesus, some preaching today lacks any clear basis in literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics. Even Christocentric preachers agree: “we need to dispense with attempts to make Jesus magically, figuratively or allegorically appear in every biblical account by insisting that a text somehow refers to the incarnate Christ even when there is no evidence in the text (e.g., seeing aspects of Christ’s

triumphal entry in the account of Balaam’s donkey because both “prophets” rode the same kind of animal).”⁴⁹

Preachers need to know how to get to Jesus from the text without violating authorial intent and doing violence to the original meaning. If the Scriptures testify about Jesus as thoroughly as John 5:39 and Luke 24:27 depict, then there must be valid hermeneutical methods that do not require spiritualizing the clear and historical meaning. John MacArthur is known for decades of faithful Bible exposition, teaching the plain, literal meaning of the text. While not typically thought of as a proponent of Christocentric preaching, MacArthur stated the following in a 2009 interview, after more than forty years of studying, preaching and writing:

The entire Old Testament points to Christ of course. The sacrifices, ceremonies, feast days, and even the furniture of the Tabernacle all have Christological significance. Although these ceremonial aspects of Old Testament law pertain to the Old Covenant and are not to be practiced today, they are still applicable to us in terms of what they signified and what they taught. They are symbols that have been fulfilled in Christ and therefore the practice of such things belongs to Old Testament Judaism, not New Covenant Christianity—they still teach us principles about sin, atonement, righteousness, and God’s way of salvation—and those principles still apply to us. Again, those ceremonies and symbols all point us to Christ.⁵⁰

Preaching the Relationship to Christ, Rather Than the Mention of Christ

When Jesus spoke of the Scriptures speaking of him in John 5:39, he did not say that they merely “mentioned” him. Rather than such a mere casual mention, Jesus consciously uses *μαρτυρέω* (testify) as a present participle to convey the ongoing, continuous testimony of Scripture about the Son. A short throw-away comment or two by the preacher will not satisfy and match what Jesus is describing here. Even a more durative remark about some aspect of Jesus’ life or death cannot be sufficient, for that

⁴⁹Ibid., 300.

⁵⁰Karen Jones, “John MacArthur: Unleashing God’s Truth – One Verse At A Time,” *Bible Study Magazine*, November-December 2009, 13-14.

will remain an aside that is obliterated by the magnitude of the greater body of the sermon.

For preaching to be considered cross-centered and redemptive, a significant and tangible connection from the text to the gospel story of redemption must be made. Some aspect of God's plan for redemption should be made evident in the text and then demonstrated as "ultimately understood, fulfilled, and/or accomplished in Christ."⁵¹ The remainder of this chapter will suggest a variety of methods to achieve this end.

A Survey of Valid Methods to Connect to the Gospel, While Being Faithful to the Original Author's Intent

Bryan Chapell describes the dangers of preaching the cross in a way that is disconnected from the text:

[An] authority vacuum exists for textual sermons that include redemptive truth through analogy, illustration, or addition. An analogy or illustration may well bring to mind an aspect of the redeeming work of God, which gives entry to a redemptive focus. Unfortunately, the redemptive focus results from a preacher's words rather than from the Word. Devising a redemptive focus by adding material not exegeted from a text invites homiletical moves and conceptual developments without clear biblical warrant.⁵²

The challenge of Christocentric preaching for faithful expositors is to tie the center of their message to Christ without abandoning the author's original meaning. If a sermon is to derive its warp and woof from the text, then care must be taken to find the existing connection to Christ rather than invent something new and foreign that better fits the preacher's homiletical structure. For certain passages where there is an obvious link, this connection will be self-evident (e.g., 2 Thess 1:6-8 mentions the Lord's return to judge those who do not obey the gospel). For other passages, there may be multiple possibilities that exist to show the text's relationship to Jesus (e.g., Isa 10:6 offers the

⁵¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 15.

⁵²Ibid., 280.

option of preaching on the return of Christ to judge and rule, or preaching Christ as the peacemaker who resolves all conflict).

There remain many texts, especially in the Old Testament, and even in the New Testament, for which no immediate connection to Christ is visible. In cases like this, a preacher may be tempted to do one or more of the following: (a) ignore Christ and the gospel in the storyline of the sermon, (b) reduce the message to an exhortation on imitation, being like the godly and avoiding the ungodly, or (c) tack on an evangelistic appeal at the end. What follows are eight different methods of connecting a non-explicit text to the redemptive story of the cross. While not every method will apply to every text, the various methods should allow for any Scripture to be preached with a Christocentric thrust. Having such variety of means is good, for “something is very wrong if the preacher’s way of relating the text to Jesus is felt to be boring and predictable.”⁵³

Direct Reference to Christ or Redemption

While this category is so obvious as to almost be left off the list, some preaching today provides good warrant to restate the obvious. A sermon from Matthew 14:13-21 about the feeding of the five thousand which centers upon how Jesus provides for man’s needs, while true, misses the point of the passage and neglects the message of the cross. There is a greater story of the God-man having compassion on his creation, evident through his provision of their food and the miracle which pointed to him as the long-awaited Messiah who would lastingly sustain them (see Matt 16:9-10, John 6:14). Even worse would be to preach on the same event in John 6 as a lesson in sharing, in the manner in which some children’s ministry curriculum does!

⁵³Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, xii.

If Christ is the center of the story of the Bible, then preaching should not focus on third-string players. Sermons must not miss Scripture's intended and primary focus. When Jesus is directly referenced by an author, whatever the genre, one should assume that the mention is not casual, but intentional. The author's intention is Scripture's intention, which is God's intention, that the readers and hearers would know Jesus more clearly and love him more dearly. Preaching today should have that same target, especially when Jesus is directly mentioned in the text. There is no accidental mention of him to be found in the Scriptures.

Looking to the Promise and/or Fulfillment

When the author of Hebrews says that many "died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them," what can he mean but that there were promises made in the Old Testament which look forward to a future fulfillment. For them, the timing of those promises was not known; they only knew that those future events had not yet occurred in their lifetime. The fulfillment of those promises would not be constituted by the formal possession of land or the inauguration of the nation of Israel. The author of Hebrews indicates that the fulfillment of their hope was still future. They sought "a heavenly [country]," an eternal "reward" and "a better resurrection" (Heb 11:16, 25, 35). They looked ahead to a future heavenly kingdom, where Jesus is and which he bought.

If they lived in awareness of those promises and looked to their fulfillment, then surely when Christians read the Old Testament today, they should see indicators of those earlier promises. When God makes a promise to one of his children, one should consider what place in the redemptive saga its fulfillment will take place. Has the promise already occurred, or must the prophecy still come to pass? Will there be multiple fulfillments of that promise? Such promises and their fulfillments provide a clear path to Christ and the gospel for the preacher. This method of connecting a text to

the story of the cross has been in use since the days of the apostles (e.g., Luke 4:16-30, Acts 2:14-36).

Greidanus summarizes John Calvin's method of looking for the progressive fulfillment of prophecy by saying, "The main possibilities of fulfillment are: first, fulfillment in Old Testament times; second, in the coming of Christ; third, in the contemporary church; and finally, in Christ's second coming. This does not mean that every prophecy has multiple fulfillments."⁵⁴ For example, in Daniel 12:1-3, Daniel prophesies of a future time of great distress, wherein the elect of Israel will be rescued, the dead will rise and rewards will be given to men for their good deeds. While some incredible hardships have hit the Jewish people (e.g., the holocaust), this particular distress will be more severe than any other and in that same rough timeframe, there will be a resurrection of the dead – to both judgment and reward. Christians can be sure that the fulfillment of this promise has not yet occurred as Jesus "picks up and enlarges on this prediction" in Matthew 24:21, associating its timeframe with the Great Tribulation in the last days as the Son of Man returns.⁵⁵

In preaching Daniel 12:1-3, there are multiple promises which await fulfillment and allow a redemptive thrust. The first verse promises great distress and rescue, looking ahead to the events surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus. The second verse promises a future resurrection for all who die, and 1 Corinthians 15:20ff indicates that Jesus was the first to be raised as a guarantee of what awaits the elect. The third verse describes rewards that will be distributed to the faithful, whose future fulfillment is described in Revelation 7 wherein these elect Jews stand before the throne of God and the

⁵⁴Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 143.

¹⁰Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *Daniel*, in vol. 7 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and James D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 149.

Lamb and declare, “Salvation belongs to him!,” having been made pure by the blood of the Lamb.

If God’s ambition is to bring himself glory through the redemption of man by the life, death and return of his Son, then each promise that God makes should fit into the storyline of redemption. The culmination of a promise may not have been fully understood by the original hearers or even known by the author, yet God intended his promises to cause the hearers to respond in faith, trusting that God was at work for good (e.g., Hab 3:16-18). So the preacher must not assume or assign understanding of God’s ultimate plan to the original author or hearers. He must preach the passage in its near context, telling how a passage would have been originally understood. He must also preach the passage in its far context, describing how that promise would be (or has been) fulfilled. In so doing, the preacher should find himself led inexorably to the cross.

Types that Point to a Greater One

A type is an “Old Testament person, animal, object, event, or institution which first has its place and design in an actual historical situation itself but at the same time is specifically intended by God to pre-figure some greater future reality. This [representation] is usually and most prominently with regard to Christ in His person and/or work.”⁵⁶ Though there is great debate over what exactly constitutes a biblical type, there is little dispute over their existence as the New Testament authors themselves use them. Paul states that Adam was “a type of him who was to come” (Rom 5:14), the holy place of the tabernacle was a copy of the true one in heaven (Heb 9:24), and Isaac is declared to prefigure Christ (Heb 11:19). Disagreement arises in discussion over what can be validly described as a type. Must typology be confined exclusively to what

¹¹James E. Rosscup, “BI 505 – Hermeneutics” (M.Div. syllabus, The Master’s Seminary, 1997), 108.

Scripture itself declares as a type, or can the criteria by which the New Testament authors saw types be assessed and extended to include other people, objects and areas of correspondence?

The danger of a more expansive view of types is the possibility of moving towards an eisegetical typologizing wherein types are identified wherever they suit the preacher's needs. As such, the rock mentioned in Numbers 24:21 by Balaam could become a type of Christ, for such a stronghold could prefigure the strength and safety that would be found in Jesus. However, typologizing of that sort is merely allegory with a new label. More broadly, some take the whole of the Old Testament to be implicitly typological. Goldsworthy explains, "Implicit typology is the recognition that the whole of the Old Testament is the testimony to Christ. While some texts may be more peripheral to the main message, no text is totally irrelevant. . . . Typology simply means that this event or person functions as part of the larger foreshadowing of the later theological function as it comes to have its fuller significance in Christ."⁵⁷ With such a definition, then any parallel that the reader sees as a connection to Christ can become a type. Greidanus rightly critiques such a hermeneutic: "When every parallel and allusion is typology, nothing is typology. . . . We cannot use every one of these parallels and allusions as a bridge to preaching Christ. . . . Not every parallel presented in the New Testament is a type; a type is more than a parallel."⁵⁸ For that reason, many grammatical-

⁵⁷Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 256.

⁵⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 215.

literal hermeneutic books provide objective criteria as a means of determining what is a biblical type.⁵⁹

First, a type may be lexically identifiable. When *τύπος*, *ἀντίτυπος*, *δείγμα*, *ὑπόδειγμα*, *σκιά*, and *παραβολή* are used, each may contain an idea of correspondence. That is not to say that every occurrence of any of these words suggests a prefiguration, but that the usage of these words by the biblical authors generally serves to indicate typological figures. Additional criteria should be used to determine if a particular usage stands as a genuine type.

Second, a genuine type is historical. The type occurs as a genuine person, animal, object, event, or institution located in time. Ideas, words and concepts do not appear as types. Types are grounded in historical facts and do not require looking for hidden or deeper meanings.

Third, a type will have real and significant correspondence with its antitype. The original author and people may not have known that certain people and things were functioning as types. Melchizedek surely would not have known that he was acting as a type of the future Messiah. The makers of the bronze serpent did not likely picture their future Redeemer as they raised up the pole in the wilderness. Yet each biblical type has real, substantial, significant correspondence with its antitype. The type foreshadowed the later and greater antitype. The mere fact that both Joseph and Jesus went to Shechem is trivial, as the detail fails to provide any substantial analogy between type and antitype. Greidanus warns, “Typological interpretation faces the danger of degenerating into

⁵⁹Works consulted include Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1991); Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970), Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Ann Arbor, MI: Cushing Malloy, Inc., 1974); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); J. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983) and Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1994).

typologizing, that is, overextending the use of typology by searching for types in rather incidental details in the text.”⁶⁰

Fourth, a biblical type will be marked by escalation to its antitype. Zuck explains, “Christ’s redemptive work is greater than that of the Passover, of which he is the antitype answering to the Passover, the type. Many aspects of the Old Testament illustrate truths in the New Testament, but without the heightening (as well as prefiguring) they are not types.”⁶¹ Some form of escalation should be evident.

Fifth, a type must be theocentric. Typology exists because all people and events are under God’s control and are advancing according to his plans. A type is not just any character or object which has some degree of correspondence with a New Testament entity. A true biblical type is designed by God to foreshadow the further revelation of himself, his son and/or the gospel. As a general rule, “Where New Testament writers specifically cite or unmistakably echo how an Old Testament person or feature prefigures the person and work of Christ—as with Adam, David, Melchizedek, the Passover, and the temple—a preacher may safely use typological exposition.”⁶²

These five guidelines provide generally accepted criteria as to what should be considered a viable type. When valid, types are wonderful means of connecting a passage to the redemptive story of the Bible. At the same time, one should “not prove doctrine from types unless there is clear New Testament authority. Hebrews plainly proves some theological points from typological considerations, but we may not do the same because we are not inspired by the Holy Spirit like the apostles were. Types may be used to illustrate New Testament truth.”⁶³ Types function with one primary purpose –

⁶⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 97.

⁶¹Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 174.

⁶²Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 281.

⁶³Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 231. Cf., Tan, *Interpretation of Prophecy*, 172.

they look back from their New Testament antitype/fulfillment to their Old Testament representation in order to provide a more rich and full picture of God's redemptive plan and purposes. The practice of typology should not result in reading meaning and significance back into the Old Testament, but rather to result in a more full appreciation for God's revelation of redemption.

In preaching Exodus 12:1-14, there should be consideration given to Isaiah 53:7 and John 1:29. The lamb to be sacrificed on Passover was to be perfect and without blemish. The lamb was to live among men for a while until the appointed hour, at which time the lamb would be put to death for the sins of the household. Its blood was to be used as a sign to God that his judgment should not fall on that household as he smote Egypt with its final plague. By the time of Jesus, the Jews were uncertain of the meaning of Isaiah 53:7, whether the prophet meant the future Messiah or national Israel. Acts 8:32-35 reveals how the early disciples clearly understood Isaiah to be describing the future Messiah who would come and die. This Messiah is later pictured in Revelation 4-7 as the once-slain, now-resurrected Lamb. Likewise, Paul directly declares Jesus to be the Passover in 1 Corinthians 5:7. The Passover lamb is the type; Jesus is the antitype. The type is historical; there is real and significant correspondence; there is escalation; the focus of the type/antitype relationship is theocentric and redemptive. Therefore, John the Baptist, under divine inspiration, can cry out in John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus is the one to whom the Passover lamb was to point.

But a preacher who describes these connections is not, by that act, proclaiming a message about the cross and the gospel. The connection of an antitype to a type is the mere pathway by which the gospel can be preached. In preaching then, the Passover is not the end of the story or the sermon, but functions as an object by which God was pointing ahead towards a greater plan for redemption in Christ. Types are inherently Christocentric. The preacher must be careful to do more than show the connections, as

redemptive preaching is not defined by the presentation of the facts about the person and work of Christ. Preaching Christ means calling for a response. There must be a completion of the story.

As the Israelites had the opportunity to choose whether they would listen to God's revelation and respond in faith and action so that the blood of the Passover lamb would be applied to them, so today every person who hears God's Word about the greater Lamb must decide whether they need a Savior, and if they will respond, by faith, so that his blood will be applied to them. God desired Israelites who would later hear or read the Exodus account to be confronted with this choice and see their need for atonement. To preach this and then carry that significance forward to the true Paschal Lamb does not violate authorial intent, but rather transfers and magnifies the author's meaning from ancient Israel to today.

Using Analogy to Reveal the Gospel

This method typically looks for parallel situations between how God dealt with Israel in the Old Testament and how God in Christ deals with the church today.

Greidanus argues that analogy is less controversial as a method of preaching Christ than typology or promise-fulfillment, asserting that analogy is not, "strictly speaking, exegesis or interpretation of a text but is a popular method of applying the message of the Old Testament to the church today."⁶⁴ Analogy, as Greidanus describes, is rooted in a covenantal hermeneutic of continuity, seeing Israel and the church as the same people of God. In this manner, the unity of redemptive history is stressed in the continuity of God's dealings with his people between then and now.

For example, as the nation of Israel was to be separate and distinct from its neighboring nations (Lev 18:3), so the church now is called to live differently than the

⁶⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 261.

non-Christians who surround them (Eph 4:17). Just as the Lord was the Shepherd of Israel (Ps 23), so now Christ exists as the Shepherd of all Christians (John 10:11). And there is analogy between God's desire to transform Canaan by means of Abraham and Israel, and his desire to see the church transform the surrounding world (Matt 5:13-16). The method of analogy is clear and broad in its application for those who see continuity between Israel and the church.

Many preachers struggle with the use of analogy due to the perceived and stated hermeneutical underpinnings of covenantal theology. Biblical authority for the connection to Christ is also somewhat removed as analogy can appear to be rooted in the preacher's insights rather than derived from the text by means of exegesis or hermeneutics. Taking these concerns into account, the method of analogy, as articulated by Greidanus, can remain a valid tool for those who see both continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. More palatable though is Chapell's "fallen condition focus" which provides a means of analogy that is available to all preachers, regardless of their views on Israel and the church: "The Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) is the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him."⁶⁵ This analogy of man's fallen condition and the biblical solutions that God provides will always have continuity from biblical times to today, regardless of one's theological system.

In Genesis 4, Cain offers a sacrifice to God that is unacceptable. There is no clear statement by God as to what precisely made the offering inadequate; perhaps the textual contrast between Abel bringing the first and best with the more general statement about Cain's offering indicates that he did not offer God his best. Regardless of the

⁶⁵Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 50.

cause, one thing is clear. God will only be worshipped on his terms. Cain's heart was wrong. Cain's offering was wrong. God would not accept worship on Cain's terms. Still today, men are inclined to worship God according to what seems right to their own eyes. They want to worship God on their terms, rather than his. Has God mandated a specific church architecture, a certain Bible translation, a Wednesday prayer meeting, or a particular style of music? So often worship is made into something other than what God intended. The situation has not changed. The same issue arose with Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10). The same problem occurred again later with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). But whereas God reacted swiftly to Nadab, Abihu, Ananias and Sapphira, God offers opportunity for change to Cain. God speaks to him, pleading with Cain to change and be accepted. Likewise today, God provides men with an opportunity to hear and change. He wants to be worshipped on his terms, and now rather than by sacrifice or offering, men are to come to him through Jesus Christ.

The fallen condition and God's invitation to redemption in Genesis 4 provide an analogous connection in preaching to mankind's story today and God's invitation to redemption that is being offered through Jesus. By using an analogy of man's fallen condition, the preacher can remain faithful to the biblical author's original intended meaning and carry the significance of the text forward to today and into a redemptive context. Chapell suggests, "A preacher who asks the following basic questions takes no inappropriate liberties with a text: What does this text reveal of God's nature that provides redemption? What does this text reflect of human nature that requires redemption?"⁶⁶

Linking through Corollary Passages

In considering the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, prophecy

⁶⁶Ibid., 284.

and typology are the most commonly occurring forms. Less frequently, a New Testament author will reference or allude to an Old Testament passage that does not function in such a way. Instead that passage will serve as a corollary support to the message of the New Testament writer. Sometimes through the judicious use of the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* or some other tool that specializes in cross-references, a preacher will find a link to Christ by means of a passage's New Testament corollary, of which he was previously unaware.

When a corollary passage is found, the exegete should remember that “the New Testament authors do not intend to give us a definitive interpretation of [these] Old Testament passages but use the Old Testament to support their own particular messages.”⁶⁷ Preachers should consider such allusions and casual references as a God-ordained means by which they can move legitimately toward the gospel in their sermons. However, effective preaching demands cohesive thought and unified structure. Locating a corollary passage does not mean that the reference must be thrust and fit into the sermon at any cost. Not every New Testament reference or allusion will be a suitable match to the big idea of the sermon being prepared. Caution must be exercised by the preacher so that only corollary passages are used which do not diminish the original author's intended meaning nor appear as a tack-on in order to somehow squeeze the gospel into the sermon as an evangelistic plea.

For instance, in preaching on Psalm 14, Romans 3:10ff is a clear corollary passage. In Paul's quotation of Psalm 14, he is arguing that all men, Jew and Gentile alike, stand guilty before God and are in need of a Savior. He goes on in both the chapter and the book to describe how Jesus' righteousness can be imputed to men who are so full

⁶⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 269.

of sin. Likewise, in preaching on Jonah 4, Matthew 12:41 functions as a corollary passage. The responsiveness of Nineveh to Jonah's preaching was so strong that Jesus later declared how Nineveh would stand and condemn Jerusalem at the judgment for their rejection of the Messiah. In describing the genuine repentance of Nineveh and the lack of repentance by the Jews later, the question of one's response to the gospel is natural, unforced and fitting with the context. In preaching on Psalm 31, Luke 23:46 serves as a wonderful corollary link. The trust which David expressed in verse 5, as he committed his spirit to the Lord's hand in daily life, would later be cried out by Jesus as he committed his spirit to the Lord in his final words before death. The key to the usage of corollary passages is to ensure that they do not subtly change the nuance of one's preaching of the original author's meaning, but instead serve to enhance the homiletical aim of one's preaching.

Using Contrast to Highlight Christ

As mentioned earlier, there is both continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. The preaching of contrast focuses upon the discontinuity as the bridge to the gospel message. As Christ fulfilled the law and made a full and complete sacrifice for sin, so certain practices in the Old Testament have been fulfilled or transformed in Christ. As the nation of Israel began as a theocracy and is no more, so there is contrast between those days and now. These areas of contrast, in principle and practice, are not due to the disintegration of the nation of Israel or its rejection of the Messiah. Neither is the contrast due to a change in God's economy nor dispensation.

Greidanus explains how, "The way of contrast clearly centers in Christ, for he is primarily responsible for any change between the messages of the Old Testament and those of the New. . . . In short, the person, the work, and the teaching of Jesus Christ are

the main reasons for the contrasts we observe.”⁶⁸ The key to preaching contrast is to highlight redemption rather than difference. A sermon that contrasts ungodly Saul with godly David, the man after God’s own heart, is a sermon about differences. Preachers must do more than preach exemplar messages: “The message of the Old Testament is too easily reduced to the imitation of godly example and the avoidance of the ungodly example.”⁶⁹ A sermon that contrasts David’s imprecations about his enemies to Christ’s commands to love one’s enemies can be about more than morality if the preacher highlights the redemptive ground which forms the basis of a Christian’s submission in suffering (see 1 Pet 2:21-25).

To speak of the contrast between the kosher dietary laws in Leviticus 11 and the freedom of diet given by God in Acts 10 cannot be limited to preaching about what one is to eat. The freedom of diet that New Testament saints now have is the result of Christ’s comprehensive sacrifice for sin that was sufficient to bring unity between Jew and Gentile in the church, so much so that they could even now share the same food. In preaching from Leviticus 18 about God’s laws for sexual relations, there is clear contrast. Each of the acts listed remain an abomination to God and detestable to him, so that even now people who commit such acts remain at enmity with God. Whereas Israel was commanded to cut off any of their people who committed such immorality, now in Christ the sexually immoral can find redemption and transformation. First Corinthians 6:9-11 declares how people who had violated God’s law, as described in Leviticus 18, have been washed, sanctified and justified by Christ. The contrast exists in the opportunity that now exists for those who have committed sexual sin. An opportunity for redemption is now available to them through Christ.

⁶⁸Ibid., 272.

⁶⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 5.

Greidanus explains, “In searching for contrast we look for the discontinuities between the message of the text for Israel and the message of the sermon for the church – discontinuities created by progression in the histories of redemption and revelation, especially because of the coming of Christ.”⁷⁰ Though certain contrasts will highlight the failure of a person or people, the greater focus of preaching contrasts should be on the difference between then and now, as enabled by the blood of the Son. Effectively, the preacher is placing the contrast into its location in the stream of redemptive history and shining light onto how Christ’s death has changed man’s approach to God and relationship with him.

Shining Light into the Shadows of the Gospel Story

There are dark spots spread across the fabric of the gospel story. The chosen people of God are not sinless, but have marks on their character and decisions that God has preserved for all generations to read and learn from. These dark shadows can be illuminated by the preacher to connect to the gospel and heighten one’s appreciation of God’s grace through all of time. Other biblical accounts will reveal how the paths of salvation which man builds will result in a dead end. Preaching of this kind will demonstrate the sad reality of man’s fallenness, the requirement of a divine solution (or the inability of man to save himself) and then proceed to identify God’s solution in Christ to that problem.

The story of Rahab in Joshua 2 often derails into commentary on the significance of the scarlet cord which she hung in the window, or a discourse on the ethical dilemma of lying to cover murder. While interesting, those issues do not fit into the grand significance of Rahab in the Joshua account. Rather than creating allegory in

⁷⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 343.

order to get to the gospel, Rahab herself provides a ready opportunity by the darkness of her own life. Joshua sends two God-fearing spies out to survey the land before its conquest. They lodge in the house of a harlot for cover and, in so doing, learn that she knows of the Lord and believes that he is supreme over all. This is a woman who lives by selling her body, plus she is a Gentile and an Amorite! Her character is known, even by the king, and she has no problem lying. Yet into this dark life, God shines grace. By the time that the spies arrive, she appears to already fear the one true God. After the conquest of Jericho, she begins to live among the Jews and worship their God alone. She would go on to marry Salmon and give birth to Boaz (who would marry Ruth), the great-grandfather of King David. In God's grace, an Amorite prostitute is implanted into the line of the Messiah (Matt 1:5). Salvation is open to anyone who hears and responds in faith: "Rahab does not represent the work of Christ because her cloth is blood red but because God demonstrates through her that he delivers the despicable (her) and the destitute (the Israelites) through means neither naturally possess or deserves."⁷¹

There are dark shadows throughout much of the Old Testament narrative and histories. The Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, Jacob's deception of Esau in Genesis 27, the story of the concubine in Judges 19, and the late repentance of Manasseh in 2 Chronicles 33 are just examples of all the opportunities that exist to highlight the darkness of man's soul, his inability to save himself and God's provision of grace which culminates in Jesus Christ. Chapell asks, "Why does all Scripture reveal an aspect of our fallen condition? The clear answer is: to supply the warrant for (and to define) the character of the redemptive elements in Scripture that we can, in turn, apply to our fallenness. The Bible's ultimate aim is beautifully positive. Scripture addresses features of our incompleteness only because such a focus concurrently signals the work of God

⁷¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 301.

that makes us whole.”⁷² These dark shadows form an easy platform for sermonic development, as the preacher builds the need to hear, presents the predicament in the text and then moves forward to the Bible’s answer in Christ Jesus.

Connecting Through the Context of Redemptive History

When prophecy, typology, analogy, corollary passages, contrast, and even shadows cannot be found in a particular passage, there usually remains the opportunity to connect a text to the cross by locating the passage in the larger framework of redemptive history. If the Bible has one story, then each book of the Bible fits into that one story. Each chapter then plays an integral role in the message of that particular book. Whether law, history, wisdom, lament, or another genre, each particular passage has a message that fits into the chapter’s focus that fits into the book’s message, which fits into the Bible’s one story. As Greidanus explains, “Since Old Testament redemptive history steadily progresses to its center of God’s climactic acts in Christ, Christian preachers need only locate their preaching-text in the sweep of redemptive history to sense its movement to Christ.”⁷³

An obvious candidate for preaching Christ by redemptive history is 2 Kings 11:1-17. Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, is hungry to rule after the death of her son, Ahaziah. His brothers and relatives were already dead, so that Athaliah must only dispatch her grandchildren to remove all competition for the crown. Apart from the tremendous malevolence of her actions, these murders would be all the more horrific for a believing Old Testament Jew. Athaliah, in one night, had decimated the Davidic line which God had promised would rule Israel and Judah for all time. Hope is found in the little boy, Joash, who was taken and hidden from his cruel grandmother. After six years

⁷²Ibid., 273.

⁷³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 237-38.

of hiding and danger, the high priest Jehoiada acts with faith in the promise of God. He reveals to the leaders of the palace guards that a son of David still lives and is ready to take the throne. According to God's plans, these men also desired the return of the Davidic line and, on a crowded Sabbath day, Joash is revealed to all and crowned as king, spurring a revival in worship and a defeat for those who followed Baal. The whole story is full of evidences of God's grace, but also fits into the larger vein of redemptive history. Through all of recorded time, there have been repeated attempts by Satan to sabotage God's plans for redemption. Often that battle is conveyed by the seed of the Serpent seeking to destroy the Messianic seed line. From Cain and Abel to this point and forward to the temptations of Christ and even his eventual death, Satan works to destroy the one promised in Genesis 3:15, but he cannot. God's plans will not be thwarted, and they culminate in Jesus' resurrection, three days after Satan's apparent victory.

Preaching in this manner does not rush to the gospel: "Redemptive-historical interpretation seeks to understand an Old Testament passage first in its own historical-cultural context. Only after we have heard a passage the way Israel heard it can we move on to understand this message in the broad contexts of the whole canon and the whole of redemptive history. It is at this point that the questions concerning Jesus Christ, the center, emerge."⁷⁴ Preaching that is faithful to the author's intended meaning must convey that message. The gospel enters into the message as the passage is later located into its larger place in redemptive history. If all of Scripture points to Christ as the previous chapter sought to demonstrate, then once the original author's meaning has been preached, a pastor remains under obligation to show how his text fits into the greater whole of God's plan for salvation.

⁷⁴Ibid., 228.

Preaching of this sort is incredibly necessary in local churches today. Whether preaching in the Christianity-as-culture South or a post-Christian urban center in the West, many Christians now lack an understanding of how the Bible fits together. Each week's exposition is viewed as an independent unit, rather than as a cohesive part of a larger whole. A church's understanding of Scripture as a whole will be richer the more that they comprehend how the various passages fit together into one big story: "The progression of salvation history remains a key consideration in the way we understand texts and relate them to Christians."⁷⁵ By localizing one's preaching in the timeline of redemptive history, congregations of believers will grow to better understand how God has been at work throughout all of time and will then understand that the gospel is more than something which happened during the thirty-four years of Jesus' lifespan.

A Brief Consideration of Alternative Methods

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is known for preaching Christ as he preached a text. He once wrote,

"You remember the story of the old minister who heard a sermon by a young man, and when he was asked by the preacher what he thought of it he was rather slow to answer, but at last he said, "If I must tell you, I did not like it at all; there was no Christ in your sermon." "No," answered the young man, "because I did not see that Christ was in the text." "Oh!" said the old minister, "but do you not know, young man, that from every little town and village and tiny hamlet in England there is a road leading to London? Whenever I get hold of a text, I say to myself, 'There is a road from here to Christ, and I mean to keep on His track till I get to Him.'" "Well," said the young man, "but suppose you are preaching from a text that says nothing about Christ?" "Then I will go over hedge and ditch but I will get at Him." So must we do, brethren; we must have Christ in all our discourses, whatever else is in or not in them."⁷⁶

Spurgeon was full of wit and wisdom and his words on preaching Christ are no different.

⁷⁵Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 138.

⁷⁶Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963; reprint, 1991), 106-07.

There is a danger to what he says though. While every passage should somehow lead to the message of the cross, the preacher is encumbered to preach the Word as written. He must not go over “hedge and ditch” to get to Christ, but find a method which does not violate the meaning of the original text: “In reading [Spurgeon’s] sermons from the Old Testament, however, it soon becomes evident that he often has another agenda than passing on the message revealed by the literal sense. Frequently Spurgeon does not ask about the author’s message for Israel but hurries on to a spiritual sense.”⁷⁷

The choice to allegorize Scripture for the purpose of preaching Christ is often done with the best of intentions. Seeing no clear way forward to Christ, the preacher will move quickly beyond the literal meaning of a text to the ‘spiritual,’ allegorical sense. But that movement and the subsequent allegorical interpretation will be arbitrary and without solid foundation. Ramm explains how, “The curse of the allegorical method is that it obscures the true meaning of the Word of God. . . . The Bible treated allegorically becomes putty in the hand of the exegete. Different doctrinal systems could emerge within the framework of allegorical hermeneutics and no way would exist to determine which were the true.”⁷⁸ Allegorical interpretation is untethered from the inspired author’s meaning and places the preacher in authority over the text. Yet, 2 Timothy 2:15 challenges preachers to “handle accurately the word of truth” and 1 Peter 2:2 declares that the pure, unaltered, original Word of God will work to sanctify God’s people. God desires that all men, preachers included, would submit themselves to his Word, rather than place themselves in authority as master over the meaning of the text.

Conclusion

Just as the Levites worked with Ezra in Nehemiah 8 to explain the Word of

⁷⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ*, 155-56.

⁷⁸Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 30-31.

God to the Israelites helping people to understand the original meaning, so also the preacher today must be committed to faithfully delivering the inspired author's intended meaning. Because "God's redemptive work is integral to every biblical passage's proper exposition," the preacher cannot be content with simply stopping his sermon when his hearers are aware of what the biblical text's original audience would have understood.⁷⁹ The preacher must press on and display how his text fits into the greater unity of the Bible and its singular message of redemption. The goal of preaching is not novelty, but faithfulness: "The preacher must ask the question of every sermon, 'Did the sermon show how the text testifies to Christ?'"⁸⁰

⁷⁹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 277.

⁸⁰Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 138.

CHAPTER 4

A METHODOLOGY FOR TRAINING MEN TO PREACH THE CROSS FROM THE EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURE

This chapter focuses on the methodology used for training men at Faith Bible Church to teach the Bible expositively while retaining a redemptive focus that does not violate authorial intent. The project consisted of teaching a class on exegesis, hermeneutics, and homiletics, allowing every student to practice an element of study and preaching each week. Additional to the personal benefit of studying and teaching on preaching, the men in the class and selected members of the church evaluated my own personal preaching and teaching in order to strengthen my personal practice of expository preaching.

An Overview of the Process Used for Training Men to Preach

The teaching process spanned eight weeks of class time, requiring six weeks of preparation to develop the syllabus. I drew the content of the syllabus from my doctoral studies and a study of a broad variety of evangelical authors who have made substantial contributions to the fields of exegesis and homiletics. The eighty-page syllabus served as class notes, and the pupils received each section weekly. I divided the content into two parts, with three weeks dedicated to exegesis and five weeks focused upon homiletics. Rather than provide a full manuscript, the syllabus provided an outline of content for each class, complete with pertinent quotations, examples, in-class assignments, and homework to be completed for the following week. I then taught from the syllabus, supplementing what was written with additional material that I learned from my own

studies, reading, and experience. A survey of the eight weeks' content is found in Appendix 1.

Before scheduling the dates for classes and securing a location to meet, I began to seek out suitable men who would be interested in being trained. I offered the class to those men who had pursued training in the Bible and theology through programs that the church already offered. The class was promoted to approximately 35 men. Those who expressed interest served in a wide variety of ministries, including children, junior high, senior high, college, and adults. Originally, my idea had been to hold classes during one of the Sunday services, but as I considered the men who were interested, virtually all of them had commitments during one of the two worship services. Additionally, those who served in youth had some Saturday ministry commitments and those who served in college ministry regularly meet on Sunday evenings.

After surveying interest and availability, I determined to vary the meeting day and time, which would inconvenience everyone a bit, but would not prohibit someone from attending by overlapping with their ministry commitments for the full eight weeks. Consequently, the class met for two hours at the same day and time for two weeks, and then a new day and time would begin. Since Faith Bible Church is a portable church that meets in a middle school on Sundays, the preaching class was held in a conference room of a business center owned by one of the elders of the church. The eight class sessions were held on Sunday, January 2 and 9 (from 6:00-8:00 AM), Sunday, January 23 and 30 (from 1:00-3:00 PM), Saturday, February 5 and 12 (from 7:00-9:00 AM), and Sunday, February 20 and 27 (from 3:00-5:00 PM). The total class time was sixteen hours.

Once the class calendar had been set, I emailed those who had expressed interest and asked for them to confirm to me their commitment to attend the scheduled eight weeks of training. Twelve men responded in the affirmative and attended the first week of class. Each student is an adult male member of Faith Bible Church in Murrieta, CA. Some had previous experience in teaching and preaching and others had aspiration

to preach, but no prior record of having done so. The class started with these 12 men, 10 of whom attended 75 percent of the sessions, and 7 men completed the entire coursework.

In personal interaction, by email, and at the beginning of the first class, I reminded the men of the purpose of the class, the schedule, and the requirements to be completed. Prior to the start of the first class time, I gave the men a printed copy of the schedule and expectations, the “Agreement to Participate” form (Appendix 2), and the “Pre-Class Questionnaire” (Appendix 3). Each student signed the form and completed the questionnaire which contained 12 statements for the individual to indicate his agreement or disagreement (on a scale of 1 to 5), such as “The primary goal of preaching is to explain the text,” “I am confident that I can interpret the Bible accurately,” and “Expository preaching requires verse-by-verse explanation of the text.” Three multiple-choice questions were about their current preaching experience, such as, “How long have you been preaching?,” and 5 essay questions about their perceptions of preaching, such as, “Define expository preaching” and “If running short of time while preaching, are you more likely to cut content or application? Please explain why.” One of the 12 men arrived thirty minutes late and I failed to have him complete a “Pre-Class Questionnaire” afterwards.

Instruction was a mixture of lecture, in-class assignment, Socratic discussion, and question and answer. The content level of each class approximated a Bible college level. In church-based preaching classes that I participated in some years ago, students typically sat and listened to lectures about preaching and were sometimes afforded the opportunity to preach once for twenty to thirty minutes and receive brief feedback on their sermon. While there is great value in the study and development of a whole sermon, I tried a different approach for this preaching class. Each week, the goal for the men was to work hard on a particular element of exegesis and preaching, and then to discuss and evaluate their work on that element as a group. They made observations on a passage, compared translations to identify words and issues for study, diagrammed a passage, used

and compared ten commentaries, tried to clearly write out the author's main proposition, and from that develop a message proposition. They then put together sermon outlines, sought to connect Christ to their text, and wrote introductions, conclusions, outlines, and application from the text. They practiced many of these elements multiple times, doing them in class together, during take-home assignments, and in the homework review section of the following class. My hope was that they would gain more experience in sermon preparation and receive more constructive feedback than if they had simply prepared and delivered a single message for class. The goal for these men was that they would understand how to study a passage to find the original author's main point, how to transition from the exegetical main point to a homiletical thesis statement, and how to advance that homiletical thesis into a fully developed expositional sermon, while receiving feedback all along the way.

The Eight-Week Training Process

The two main emphases of the class were exegesis and homiletics. The first three weeks focused on the foundations of hermeneutics and exegesis. Week 1 began with a review of how great preaching is rooted in a strong theology of God's Word. After discussion about who determines what the Bible means, we progressed into basic hermeneutical rules to derive a singular meaning for the text, consistent with authorial intent while being cognizant of language, culture, space, and time gaps between now and the time of the text. Exegesis is the work of filling in those gaps to determine what the original author intended for the original audience to understand. From experience, observation, and study, I have learned that great preaching is often the result of the discipline of observing and meditating on the text of Scripture. The latter two-thirds of the class-time was devoted to the art and practice of observation. After working through a variety of examples, I assigned the men to study Colossians 1:28 in class and determine what is said, what is not said, and what questions they have. After about six minutes

time, we spent time sharing and discussing what was observed. Though our time in the text was brief, I pressed them to go beyond the obvious and look more carefully.

Together we examined Matthew 18:15-17 and discussed again what was said, what was not said, and what questions would require further study. For homework, I assigned them to spend an hour making observations on Ephesians 5:18.

Week 2 began with a discussion about their homework and then progressed to the practice of comparing translations to highlight textual issues. As none of the men have studied Hebrew or Greek, their ability to work with the original languages is virtually non-existent. The breadth of translations available today provides a great aid to students of the Word as they compare versions. When they significantly diverge from one another in translation, a textual issue is often at the core and becomes evident to the student in a way that would be impossible were only one translation used. Additionally, comparing translations guards the student of the text from allowing his initial reading of a translational interpretation to become his de facto understanding of the text's meaning. Together we compared and contrasted various translations of Ephesians 5:18-21, Matthew 6:9-13, and Matthew 18:15-17. From the resultant discussion of these texts, we moved into the fields of word studies and grammar. Though I originally learned how to study using tools like *Nave's Topical Bible* and *Strong's Concordance*, I have used Logos Bible Software for more than fifteen years to do word and grammar studies. Since these men own none of the above tools and I no longer had them available personally, I searched online and found web-based study tools that permit them to investigate word meaning and Greek grammar.⁸¹ Using these tools and in-class examples, we talked about the lexical range of a word's meaning and how context informs an author's singular, intended meaning for a word. After a further discussion on parts of speech and basic

⁸¹Of particular note was <http://www.biblewebapp.com/reader>, which is the work of John Dyer, a web developer employed by Dallas Theological Seminary.

grammar, we proceeded to analyze Matthew 28:18-20 together, using the principles taught.

Week 3 began with the application of grammar to the practice of block diagramming. A discussion of the benefits of diagramming was followed by an explanation of diagramming with corresponding examples. Approximately 25 minutes was dedicated to outlining 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9, and Matthew 7:13-14 in class together, comparing and discussing each attempt before moving on to the next one. Commentaries were one of the final steps of study, used to confirm what has been discovered by observation, to provide additional information, and to point out additional resources related to the text. In discussing the differing styles of commentaries (devotional, expositional, and exegetical), I distributed copies of twelve different commentaries on 1 Timothy 2:15 for each man to examine and compare differences. After being given time to read through an assigned commentary, each man presented how the commentator tackled the issue of women being “saved through child-bearing” and comparisons were made with what was learned from other commentaries. In the last thirty minutes of class time, I walked the men through a process for determining the author’s main point from a block outline and advocated the usefulness of writing a short synthesis paragraph or two to confirm that each piece of the passage fits into one’s understanding of the author’s main point. After this week, the focus shifted from exegesis to homiletics.

Week 4 opened with a discussion on what differences there are between the author’s main point and the preacher’s homiletical proposition. Drawing on principles from Haddon Robinson and Bryan Chapell, I taught on the necessity of developing a single, lucid sentence that contains and describes the big idea of the sermon. Using good and bad examples drawn from my early years of preaching as a college pastor, we discussed the essential qualities of a good sermon proposition and four basic forms of a sermon proposition: plural noun proposition, declarative statement, general overview, and

purpose-drive statement. The next twenty minutes were dedicated to the men attempting to write out a basic, clear sermon proposition for Ephesians 5:18-21, 1 Peter 5:5-7, and Matthew 17:14-21. Though a violation of the general study process, this in-class activity reinforced the difficulty of having one single, clear, and easily understandable main point. Following this exercise, the remainder of the class time was spent examining how to build an outline that supports the sermon's main idea. After I taught on the principles and process of basic sermon outlining, the men spent the remaining thirty minutes of class working on a basic sermon outline for each of the aforementioned passages. Critique and discussion followed each man's explanation of his sermon outline. For homework, they were assigned to block diagram Romans 12:1-2, write out the author's main point, develop a sermon proposition, and then put together a basic sermon outline.

Week 5 began with a discussion of the preceding week's homework. After hearing and evaluating each man's efforts, I led an unplanned discussion on the reasons for the great variation of approaches to the same text that we had just heard. Too often, men can feel that a text is off-limits for preaching when someone else has preached that same passage in the last year or two. By embracing the unique ways which God has gifted and made each man, a preacher should never feel that a passage has been preached so thoroughly that there is nothing left to say. From the homework review, we then turned our attention to the place of the gospel in preaching. Drawing from the study I had done for chapter two of this project, I taught on the biblical priority and value of cross-centered preaching for both salvation and sanctification. Some preaching tacks on Jesus as an after-thought or ignores the gospel because the textual connection is not explicit. I argued to the men that Scripture consistently testifies about Jesus (John 5:39), even when the connection is not immediately clear and visible. I then led the men through eight possible methods of connecting a passage to Christ in preaching without violating authorial intent. Those eight methods are described in chapter 3 of this project. At the conclusion of teaching on each method, I provided the men with a sample Scripture in

which to apply that method. For example, after teaching how the gospel may be found by looking to the fulfillment of a promise made earlier, the men were given Daniel 12:1-3 to read and determine how they would connect this passage to the gospel. The men were given about five minutes to brainstorm, after which I led a group discussion on the gospel connections available through this passage. At the conclusion of class, the men were assigned Isaiah 10:5-11 to study during the week and determine a viable gospel connection.

Week 6 focused on introductions and conclusions in preaching. We began with a review of the homework from the week prior and then walked through an overview of the entire sermon development process. After ensuring that the men understood the flow of sermon preparation, I focused on sermon introductions and their purposes. The men learned and heard examples of how a good introduction will capture attention, clarify the subject of the sermon, demonstrate the need of the audience to hear the sermon, connect the introduction to the Word, state the central idea, and transition into the body of the message. Due to questions by the men, we then discussed and compared the introduction styles of various popular preachers and listened to the opening introduction of John Piper that one of the men had available on his laptop. The beginning of Piper's sermon provided further discussion as I prodded the men to identify how his introduction captured attention, demonstrated the need to hear, clarified and stated the central idea of the sermon, and transitioned into the main substance of his preaching. I then asked the men to write introductions for three passages which they had been working on intermittently, Isaiah 10:5-11, Matthew 28:18-20, and 1 Peter 5:5-7.

After reviewing and critiquing their introductions, the remainder of the time delved into conclusions and the qualities of a good ending to a sermon. I taught how a good conclusion will summarize the argument of the sermon, persuasively restate the big idea, and call for response. A bad sermon ending, on the other hand, will wander aimlessly in circles, while promising an end through words like "finally" and "in

conclusion” and by references to time. I assigned the men to write an introduction and a conclusion to Romans 12:1-2 as homework and then fielded a few questions, which led into a discussion about altar calls and evangelistic appeals as a form of conclusion. I guided the men to understand how an appeal to an unbeliever to repent is entirely appropriate and helpful when that plea fits within the text’s natural gospel connection. Evangelistic appeals that are tacked onto the conclusion of a message without any visible connection to the text do not typically prove as compelling or else they function as a miniature sermon, given after the main sermon.

Week 7 began with a review of the men’s work on Romans 12:1-2. Rather than hear each man present his work, I had them pair off and present to one another, then provide feedback to each other on the strengths and weaknesses of the introductions and conclusions that were shared. A brief round of large group discussion followed as I transitioned their focus to their hearers by illustrating how a more technical sermon introduction that one of the men shared was suitable for the men gathered, but would not work in certain other contexts. This conversation led into teaching on the importance of knowing one’s audience and the impact of that knowledge on a sermon introduction, application, illustrations, biblical content, and even one’s personal passion in preaching. While a preacher is to study for his own heart, his preaching is to be centered upon the significance of God’s Word for his hearers. While preaching is not to tickle ears, the preacher does bear responsibility that his audience understand the gravity of the eternal issues which the Scripture addresses.

After spending so many weeks focused on how to study the Scriptures and communicate the author’s intended meaning, the need and place for illustrations became the focus and challenge for the men. Illustrations are necessary to the process of explaining, validating, and applying biblical truth but often left out due to a lack of time, either in the sermon preparation process or in the act of preaching. They may take the form of analogy, metaphor, parable, shared experience, historical allusion, biographical

incident, personal experience or simple anecdote. The more familiar and experienced one's audience is with the illustration, the higher the degree of connection they will feel to that illustration. The danger of illustrations is that they may distract, overwhelm or confuse what is being taught, but as Jesus demonstrated, effective illustrations are compelling tools in the process of teaching biblical truth. To practice illustrating biblical truth, the men were given an in-class assignment of illustrating a biblical truth from Romans 12:1-2, then Matthew 28:18-20, and then 1 Peter 5:5-7. After time was given for preparation, selected men shared a biblical truth from the text and then illustrated that truth. This practice and the ensuing discussion provided further reinforcement to the principles of illustration I had just taught.

After illustrations, we transitioned to the related issue of application. Both illustration and application share the common goal of making biblical truth concrete and are most effective when the preacher knows his audience well. Bryan Chapell's warnings against the "Deadly Be's" should be taken to heart.⁸² The preacher is not to exhort his people to be something in order to gain God's acceptance. Yet Paul did not shrink back from exhorting the believers to whom he wrote to live differently in light of the gospel. Good preaching should naturally move from 'what did it mean?' to 'what does it mean today?' Applying the text moves from the original meaning of the text through a ladder of abstraction, girded by principles of truth, to contemporary application of that truth.

God sanctifies his children, but behavioral change is not the goal of preaching. God's Word continually goes after the heart and so likewise good preaching moves from the text through behavior to heart motives. The better that a preacher knows his people, the more effective he will be at preaching truth co-mingled with grace for their present life situation. The teaching on application concluded with another in-class assignment to

⁸²Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 289-95.

provide specific, achievable, measurable application for Romans 12:1-2 and Matthew 28:18-20. The men took time to reflect and prepare examples, after which each man gave a brief application from the text to which I provided constructive critique. Their homework was to illustrate and apply 1 Peter 5:6, returning next week ready to present their work to the class.

Week 8 began with the men sharing the illustrations and application they had developed at home. These provided fodder for discussion and further instruction on principles that had been overlooked. As this class was the conclusion of our time, we focused on effective communication and practical homiletical issues. After our conversation about the homework, I revisited the broad overview of how to structure a sermon. This content drew from past weeks and aimed to synthesize all that had been covered into a comprehensive whole that would not be too daunting. Using a small chart I created, we spent time discussing and graphing out how the time allocated to introductions, conclusions, and each point in the body of the sermon should be distributed differently according to the varying time one is given to preach. Too often young preachers do not develop one central idea throughout their sermon because they are preparing so much for the introduction and first points that the latter stages are neglected, not receiving the necessary attention, either in study or in preaching. To correct this tendency, I taught how a preacher budgets his time in both study and preaching, even becoming able to forecast and adjust the length of his sermon based on his preaching notes.

We then moved from talking about the priorities for time in preaching into the use of sermon notes. The form and usage of notes in preaching is an area of great diversity and often strong opinion among preachers. For that reason, after talking about the differences between spoken and written style and the different forms of notes that are

used, I then distributed copies of actual sermon notes used by ten different pastors – three from pastors in Faith Bible Church and seven from nationally known preachers.⁸³ In discussion, I led the men to compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of each note style observed. From sermon notes, I transitioned into teaching on basic communication skills. From eye contact to posture to attire to vocal energy, I pushed them to be excellent in their diction and delivery. We concluded with a brief look at how to develop a preaching calendar. I had debated about the value of this final discussion, but as the men would often be planning out Sunday classes and preaching short series, they embraced this topic and asked a surprising number of questions about planning ahead and the pace to adopt in preaching week by week.

We concluded the class time with my expressing thanks for their faithfulness and asking that they remember to attend the upcoming class I would be teaching. Finally, I had the men complete the “Post-Class Questionnaire” to assess change and growth in their understanding of preaching. The “Post-Class Questionnaire” was an identical copy of the “Pre-Class Questionnaire” (Appendix 3), which they had received before the first class began, and was designed to measure changes in their understanding of expository preaching as a result of the class time together.

The Evaluation Process

One of the goals of this project was to foster my own personal growth in preaching. Challenge and change to my preaching was accomplished by means of the study for and preparation of the class syllabus, by leading those classroom-training sessions, and by having my own preaching and teaching observed and evaluated by men in the class and some key members of Faith Bible Church. As I function as the executive

⁸³Scouring the Internet allowed me to procure scanned copies of actual sermon notes by Mark Dever, Mark Driscoll, Josh Harris, Tim Keller, John MacArthur, James MacDonald, and C. J. Mahaney.

pastor at Faith Bible Church, I am not in the pulpit every week. Therefore I arranged with Chris Mueller, the teaching pastor, to preach twice during the time that I was leading the class and then arranged to teach a Sunday morning equipping class for four weeks, following the conclusion of the preaching class. Evaluation forms were completed by the men from the class and by some core church members whom I selected.

I preached the first sermon on January 9, 2011 from Proverbs 24:30-34 on the sluggard. I preached the second sermon on January 30, 2011 from Matthew 28:16-17 on doubt. The equipping class was focused on decision-making and the will of God. The class occurred on March 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2011. The first week, I did topical exposition on the two wills of God, sovereign and commanded. The second week, I topically expounded various unbiblical methods of decision-making, such as having peace, impressions and internal voices, and looking for signs. The third week, I worked through selected passages of the Old Testament, considering the progressive nature of how God revealed His will to Israel over time, and the means by which He did so. On the fourth week, I analyzed the shift in method that came with the giving of the Holy Spirit, expounding Acts 15 as an example of New Testament decision-making and providing basic principles of how to make decisions biblically.

As I am in the pulpit intermittently and also teach equipping classes, the evaluations I received from these different venues proved helpful in refining my preaching and teaching. Additionally, most of the men in the preaching class have greater opportunity to teach equipping classes than to preach from the pulpit, so they gained a clearer picture of how the principles that were discussed in class are manifest similarly and differently, according to the setting and audience.

To receive helpful feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of my preaching, I utilized a “Preaching Response Form” (Appendix 4). This form provided six points of evaluation on homiletical delivery concerning posture, appearance, eye contact, mannerisms, gestures, and voice, along with an overall rating for delivery being assigned

(on a scale from 1 to 10). The form also collected six points of evaluation on the sermon's content concerning introduction, exposition, illustration, application, redemptive-focus, and conclusion, along with an overall rating for content being assigned (on a scale from 1 to 10). A place for additional comments and observations was also provided on the form. At the close of each sermon and teaching opportunity, I then had twelve points of constructive feedback and two overall ratings from each individual evaluator.

A Time for Reflection

The last week of my project was spent reviewing and reflecting on lessons learned. Over the last fourteen weeks, I gave concerted attention to the core principles of hermeneutics, the foundations of exegesis, what makes a good homiletical proposition, and the development of an expositional sermon, with significant study and consideration given to introductions, conclusions, illustrations, and application. Apart from the rigor and impact of personally studying, teaching, and dialoging on those topics, the men I was teaching and a select core of church members reviewed and provided feedback on my own preaching and teaching. There was much to consider.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROJECT ANALYSIS

This final chapter is an analysis, evaluation, and reflection on the project of training lay leaders in expository preaching through a combination of teaching, practice, and evaluation at Faith Bible Church.

Analysis of Data

The data can be classified into two sets. The first data set measures what growth and change occurred among the men who took the training class. The second data set considers the strengths and weaknesses of my own preaching and teaching.

Change among the Men Trained

There are both objective and subjective criteria to consider in measuring change among the men trained. Though change and growth can be tricky to substantiate, certain indicators suggest development in their attitude and capacities in preaching.

Objectively, the questionnaires can be examined for variance before and after the eight-week seminar on preaching. As detailed in Table A1 in Appendix 5, there were three areas where the questionnaire noted significant change. Each response could be graded from 1 for “Strongly Disagree” to 5 for “Strongly Agree,” with a 3 indicating “Not Sure.” To the declaration that “I believe that every passage of Scripture should be interpreted literally,” the men averaged a 3.27 in response before the seminar began, with a deviation of 1.02. After our time together, the men’s response had changed from unsure to strong agreement. Their post-project responses averaged 4.71, with a deviation of 0.41. This unified shift from uncertainty to strong agreement on one’s approach to

Scripture was encouraging. While the declaration itself lacks nuance and some of their uncertainty could be attributable to that, the time spent on hermeneutics definitely affected change to the foundational commitments by which the men approach Scripture.

The second questionnaire statement to see substantial shift was that “the main objective of sermon preparation is to determine practical application.” The initial survey revealed a general ambiguity about the place of application in preaching, with an average response of 2.91, and a deviation of 0.99. After the preaching seminar, the men’s responses averaged 3.71 with a deviation of 0.49. Personally, I would not be comfortable with declaring this to be the singular goal of sermon preparation, but rather an aspect of that process. I believe that the men shifted to view that priority similarly by their end response not being closer to the strong agreement of a 5. This view appears to be confirmed by their response to a similar but different statement, “the primary goal of preaching is to explain the meaning of the text.” To that declaration, the men averaged a 4.0 of general agreement. These two results, taken together, appear to indicate that the men now feel an equal demand in preaching to explain the meaning of the text and its relevance to life. That change in commitment to the priority of application was commensurate with the emphasis that I placed in lecturing and discussion to always move from biblical content to life application.

The third questionnaire statement, which evidenced change in the men’s attitudes and capacities, was “I am confident that I can interpret the Bible accurately.” While this question focuses on a subjective element, an increase in agreement does objectively convey a change in the men’s belief that they can accurately interpret Scripture. Prior to commencing the project, the men averaged a 3.50, with a deviation of 0.55, communicating internal doubt about their ability to accurately interpret the Word. After eight weeks of time together, the men’s average response had shifted to 4.29 with a lesser deviation of 0.41. While only time will tell whether they have learned to handle

the Word of God accurately, the positive change in their response indicates that they personally believe that our time together helped them to grow in this area.

Another objective means of assessing growth, apart from the questionnaire results, can be determined by a change in their involvement in preaching and teaching. Out of the twelve men to participate, only three indicated that they had a year or more of experience preaching or teaching in some manner. At the time of the seminar, none of the men were regularly involved in preaching. As I write this analysis a few months later, 75% of the men are now regularly teaching or preaching. Dojo A. is teaching a midweek group of about thirty adults. Jimmy A. preaches in the high school ministry almost as often as the high school pastor. Christopher C. is preaching in junior high ministry and on a high school campus once a week. Steve C. is teaching a midweek group of eighty adults and kids. Tony M. is leading and preaching at the ministry to young marrieds. Daniel N. is teaching a midweek group of around sixty-five adults. Jeff P. is preaching regularly to youth on a high school campus. Wayne S. is teaching a midweek group of about thirty-five adults and regularly teaches a Sunday morning adult class as well. The scope and change of their involvement in preaching God's Word is a substantial positive indicator of the success of the training seminar.

Subjectively, I received positive feedback from the ministry leaders under whom these men serve, as they casually let me know of changes that they were seeing in the men as a result of our time together. I also heard similar statements from the men in the class as they began to put what they had learned into practice. More tellingly, I have since been asked to provide similar training to other men in high school ministry and to those in the children's ministry who teach the older ages. While the weight of complimentary feedback should be taken lightly, the stated desire and subsequent scheduling by ministry leaders for me to work similarly with other men provides significant correlation to the perceived change and growth among the men who participated.

Negatively, the dropout rate for this group was high. Of the twelve who began, only seven completed all eight weeks. Interestingly, two of those seven men are still not involved in preaching and teaching.

Feedback on My Preaching and Teaching

Utilizing the sermon evaluation form found in Appendix 4, I received a variety of feedback on my preaching and teaching at Faith Bible Church. All together, I received 29 evaluations back out of 44 requested and distributed. The students of my preaching class provided 100% of the feedback on my preaching and 59% of the feedback on my teaching. The remainder came from some core church members who were attending the class. A summary of their comments, observations and ratings are found in Table A2 in Appendix 6. Ratings followed a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “Poor,” 4 being “Average,” 7 being “Good,” and 10 being “Outstanding.”

My preaching was graded for delivery and content. The average rating for my delivery in preaching was 8.43, with a standard deviation of 0.57. Evaluators wrote their comments into fields of various headings. There were three areas where their comments suggested that improvement was necessary. Under “posture,” there were multiple comments to the effect that I “moved around the podium, but never more than a few feet away.”⁸⁴ For “clothing and appearance,” remarks were all positive, but I noticed that 50% of them included the word “casual” in some regard. I take this to mean that I could dress up slightly more. I tend to wear business casual, which is de rigueur for leadership at Faith Bible Church, but must be on the casual side of that style. For “eye contact and facial expressions,” more than half of the commentators said that I had great eye contact, being “constantly engaged with all of the audience.” However, I also noticed that three

⁸⁴Direct quotes are from completed sermon evaluation forms, of which a sample copy is displayed in Appendix 4.

commentators remarked, on different days, that I tended “to squint/close eyes when emphasizing something.” This habit was something of which I was completely unaware.

Their evaluation of the content in my preaching garnered an average score of 8.79, with a standard deviation of 0.58. In the area for written evaluation, four of the six areas provided some recurring trends in their feedback. For my sermon’s introduction, their feedback varied week to week. Some weeks, they remarked how I effectively built the audience’s need to hear the sermon. Other weeks, there was no mention of building the need, instead they commented on how I captured the congregation’s attention. Ideally, I would like to see my preaching do both effectively. More conclusively, in evaluating my use of illustrations, I received multiple comments that suggested my “illustrations were mostly biblical. They were all relatable and all served to shine light on points of message.” Though I desire for my illustrations to be relatable and to illuminate the Word, I also believe that illustrations drawn from personal and common experience can connect with people in a different way than biblical stories do. Illustrating biblical truth is an area I can improve in. For “redemptive focus,” I was tasked with topical messages, which I found to be more difficult than expected to weave in a Christocentric focus. A few of my evaluators recognized this deficiency, commenting, the gospel “was there, maybe could have been more?” And for my conclusions, the two words that were most used to evaluate them were “great” and “short.” Their feedback reveals that while I can wrap up a message effectively, I should probably linger more at the end in pressing for response and action by my hearers.

Positively, the feedback I received on sermon delivery regarding my mannerisms, gestures and voice were all positive. In fact, I was surprised to see how many positive comments there were about my tendency to talk with my hands. Likewise, the evaluations of my preaching content gave solid marks for my exposition and application. The sermons brought out the meaning of the text and expanded on its relevance and application to life.

As I reviewed the scores and comments on my teaching, I saw general confirmation of the trends that were observed in my preaching. For delivery, I received an average score of 8.86 with a standard deviation of 0.78. Remarks again were made about my tendency to stay rooted near to one spot and about how my attire was casual but “appropriate” and “nice.” My hand gestures and the strength of my voice were both diminished, as compared to preaching, but still active in teaching the class. Interestingly, only the feedback for one week’s class had comments written about my habit to close my eyes: “When collecting his thoughts, [John] looks outside and at the roof, and at times closing his eyes while speaking.” The class in which this feedback came was on a date for which I also had three other significant events scheduled, that I had been preparing for over the week prior. As I reflected on these comments, I realized that I tend to stop looking at people and became unconscious of my focus when searching for the right words to say.

The summary feedback of my delivery in teaching gave me an average score of 9.2 with a standard deviation of 0.75. Similar to my preaching style, my illustrations were more frequently grounded in biblical example than in personal anecdote and my conclusions were wrapped up cleanly but without much force of appeal brought to bear. My teaching style also effectively communicated the meaning of the text and its significance for life. However, in teaching I learned that I paid even less attention to the value of introductions, frequently defaulting to a review of what had already been covered and where the class was headed. This was sufficiently the norm that one of the evaluators wrote under “introduction” on the last day’s class that I “always reviewed what we talked about in previous weeks.” While fluctuating attendance in the class compelled me to linger a bit longer on review each week, a survey of my notes confirmed that I placed less attention on introductions in teaching than I do in preaching.

Positively, I received praise for asking questions and interacting with the class in a manner that generated self-analysis and application of biblical truths by those

attending. My exposition also generated many positive comments for being “clear,” “understandable,” and “well explained.” This feedback correlates with the positives heard from my preaching, that I am strongest in exposition and application.

Evaluation of the Goals

This project sought to accomplish four goals overall. These goals provide the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was for participants to have an increased understanding of the study methodology which expository preaching requires. The eight-week training session used lecture, discussion, homework and in-class projects to impart the core principles of exegesis, hermeneutics and sermon preparation. This was an appropriate goal for the men based on their general lack of prior training in studying and preaching. Eight weeks cannot possibly communicate all that there is to learn about studying God’s Word, but the time together established foundations and set them on a trajectory for continued learning. The men heard about how to study the Bible and prepare a sermon, they discussed the process together, and they did the actual work. The questionnaires given before and after the class confirmed the achievement of this goal by registering a perceived growth in their ability to study the Word.

The second goal of this project was to help these lay leaders deliver their sermons more effectively through observation and evaluation. Though my initial plan had been for them to preach one time during class, the more time I spent preparing the eight-week curriculum, the more I realized the benefits of having them work each week on a single constituent part of a sermon. This approach spread the workload out more evenly than preparing one sermon in the span of a week or two. Additionally, as the men’s work was corporately reviewed each week, they received more specific and extended constructive feedback than they would have if they had been preaching a whole sermon. The discussions that flowed from these review sessions also worked to enhance

their understanding of the sermon preparation and delivery process. In hindsight though, I believe that this goal could have been more completely realized had I extended the class beyond eight weeks and dedicated another two weeks to having them deliver sermons in full. By trading away this element of the class, the men did not have to work hard at coherently synthesizing all the parts into one fluid sermon. This change also hindered my ability to adequately judge and provide feedback on the delivery of their sermons. Nevertheless, the men did receive practice and extended feedback in most elements of preaching.

The third goal of this project was to help these lay leaders consistently connect their application to Jesus Christ and the gospel. To that end, one full day's class time was spent discussing the need for a redemptive thrust in preaching, considering various methodologies that would allow a preacher to connect a passage to the person and work of Christ without violating authorial intent, and then practicing those methodologies. Additional homework was assigned to further reinforce this aspect of preaching. Due to the limited time with these men and the lack of hearing them preach a full sermon, I have difficulty in assessing the degree to which the project helped develop a Christocentric focus in the men. Perhaps the most compelling evidence that this goal was, at least partially, accomplished is that the feedback forms on my preaching and teaching showed variance between men in my class and those core church members who also provided critique. In the "redemptive focus" box, the men's comments accurately described my sermon's gospel focus (or lack thereof) in a way that was not evidenced by general church members. One of my students would say, "pointed the purpose to God's glory, but not to the gospel," while the church members simply left that area blank. For this goal, I am hopeful that they understand the necessity, priority, and means of connecting all preaching to Christ and the gospel.

The fourth goal was to foster my personal growth in preaching through leading these training sessions and receiving evaluative feedback from the participants as I

practiced what I had taught them. Preparing and leading the training sessions was an excellent personal review of the various aspects of Bible study and sermon preparation. In that process, I realized that I had come to rely too heavily on books and was not spending enough time simply observing the text. That crucial phase of personal observation, meditation and reflection is important for my own heart and life, is the ground of my passion in preaching, and is the underpinning for any substantial application I provide while preaching. I heard the fruit of that change in the six weeks of feedback that I received. There were many comments about being “engaged” and “connected with the audience,” while also giving “a great exposition of the Scripture” which was “highly applicable.” While being reviewed, I was also encouraged to see my sermon conclusions grow stronger and more developed, so that by the midpoint, I was hearing, “great arc, from outline to conclusion.”

Two areas that the sermon evaluations revealed for growth did not see significant change during the project. Illustrating truth and the redemptive focus of my preaching were both weaker areas that continued to receive similar comments over the span of six weeks. As I reflected on why these comments went unchanged, in reviewing my sermon notes, I realized my sermon illustrations included both personal and biblical examples, but that I tended to linger longer on the biblical examples, causing them to stand out and be more memorable. Having recognized this tendency, I am seeking to balance the two forms. Additionally, as I have had opportunity to preach a few times since the conclusion of this project, I have lately received verbal feedback that my redemptive focus has significantly improved.

At the end of the project, as I surveyed the evaluations as a collective, I identified a few areas for change of which I had been ignorant. Seeing the pattern of comments regarding my “casual, but appropriate” attire, I am striving to dress up a bit more. Additionally, amidst many comments about my great eye contact, I learned that I

tend to look away or close my eyes when searching for words, and so I have begun to work to break that habit.

In summary, these four goals were beneficial to me personally and helpful in the life of the church. While I would do some things differently, I believe that the overall project was a success and achieved all the goals, in varying measures.

Evaluation of the Process

Overall, the project appeared to meet its goals. That is not to say that things could not have been done better, were the process to be repeated at a later date.

The great challenge of training men in a church environment is the limited time available. The men most worth pouring time into are, most frequently, the ones who are already serving in significant capacities. That involvement in ministry, coupled with the demands of work and family, significantly curtails the amount of time available each week for extended training. Meeting for two hours a week for two months, with additional homework assigned each week, was the maximum that I felt I could reasonably expect from these men. Now, having completed the project, I wish I had pushed for another two meetings, in order for each man to have the experience of putting together a full sermon. This change would have prepared them more adequately for the time when a ministry leader schedules them to preach or teach. This could easily be remedied in future training sessions.⁸⁵

The eight-week seminar experienced a high dropout rate (42%). The two most likely options to rectify participants dropping would be to either move the class time to Sunday mornings during a worship service, or to simply not switch days and times in the

⁸⁵This change would result in a training program very similar to the “preaching workshop” concept advocated by David Helm in “Few Are Not Enough: Training a Generation of Pastors,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching in Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 248.

manner the project did. Realistically, the Sunday morning option would only be viable for men who are not serving on Sundays or if the training times were more irregular, perhaps once a month, rather than weekly. My initial survey of the men's availability confirmed that I would not have been able to start with as large a group had I locked into one day and time. So this change would also result in a smaller pool of men available for training. Yet there is some evidence that the men who did not attend all sessions still benefited from what they received. Apart from informally hearing what they had learned, a couple of them did go on to serve in ministry roles that have occasional teaching responsibilities and they have been commended for their initial abilities.

Positively, the current process allowed the men to observe me in different settings, in order to observe how communication style and sermon structure changes according to the context in which I was placed. Most frequently, when I hear about church-based training, the focus is on training men to preach. Without diminishing the value of that need, a quick survey of the church calendar reveals that far more men are involved in teaching small groups of children, students, young marrieds, and other adults than those who have a regular preaching opportunity. There is strength in providing an example to men of both preaching and teaching in the context of the church, as teaching fifteen to fifty is much more common than preaching to hundreds.

Theological Reflection

From the beginning stages of this project, the opportunity to further study Christocentric preaching was a strong desire for me personally. Prior to my training at Southern, preaching with a redemptive thrust was something that I had thought little about and which did not fit into my understanding of homiletics. As I read Chapell, Greidanus, Goldsworthy and others over the course of my studies, I began to understand the theological basis for such cross-centered preaching but remained unclear how such preaching could be consistently compatible with a commitment to preach authorial intent.

When I eventually came to Greidanus' *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, that book proved instrumental in providing me with a hermeneutical framework from which to connect a passage to the gospel. Studying for and writing chapters two and three further refined my thinking in this area as I sought to clearly write out what I had learned. Later, as the time approached to train the men in preaching, I was again pressed to articulate the theological underpinnings of redemptive preaching and its methodology in an even simpler and more concise manner. Working through this aspect of preaching has caused a noticeable shift in my preaching, to the degree that I now regularly hear comments about how the gospel impacted someone's heart as I preached.

Having now concluded the work of training men in preaching, I now further understand the value of Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:2. The things (both old and new) that I learned from the Word about preaching and the priority of the Gospel were entrusted to other men and they have begun to teach others. I have already begun to see the impact on the church of having these men equipped to preach. I am hearing from them how their study of the Word has been changed and given them a more clear understanding of what God is saying and a greater confidence to preach that with authority. Since the project, I have witnessed their preaching has not been simple exhortation with a loose connection to the Bible but rather they are striving to explain, illustrate and apply the Word to their hearers. They recognize the need for the gospel in preaching and are striving to be faithful in preaching Christ. Their personal growth and ministry within the church has established a desire in others for equipping to learn how to study, preach, and teach.

Personal Reflection

My studies on Christ-centered preaching produced a conviction in me for the priority of the gospel in preaching. The difficulty came as I began striving to implement what I was learning. I discovered that the real challenge of preaching the cross, after

sorting out the theological foundation and hermeneutical issues, is putting those commitments into practice. When preaching on the sinfulness of man from Romans 2-3, one can easily move from wrath to rescue. When preaching on the church from Ephesians 4, one can move from the Bride to the Groom. But when I began to preach on the sluggard from Proverbs, I hit a wall. I saw no connection in the text to the gospel. I prayed, I searched commentaries for ideas, I talked to others and I kept reading the Proverbs. The best I could do felt contrived, using the command to the sluggard to observe the ant in Proverbs 6:6-8 to move from God's design for work to the idolatry of laziness to the cure for idolatry in Jesus.⁸⁶ As I taught the seminar and personally struggled to apply what I had learned about preaching, I better understood the challenge of preaching Christ.

Another area where I saw personal growth came in the practice of meditation and reflection during sermon preparation. As I prepared the curriculum and then taught the men, I was reminded of the priority of meditating upon the Word of God and its great value in preaching. Though I was not delving straight into commentaries, I did not feel that my time with the raw text was providing me with much additional insight for preaching. By reviewing the core principles of observation and having to teach others how to linger over a passage and see beyond what is casually read, I noticed that my own observations on Scripture became more thorough and consumed more of my study time. This change was positive in that I began to preach more from what I had learned personally from the Word, rather than what I had learned from reference tools. The outcome of that change was more interesting preaching and more relevant application of each text to life.

⁸⁶Later, after preaching the sermon, I realized that a more natural connection existed in Prov 21:25-26, where the desire of the sluggard brings death and he is contrasted with the righteous.

My heightened awareness of the Scripture's import for life came across in the sermon evaluations to a greater extent than I had expected. I was encouraged by the consistent feedback I received regarding how my messages were unswervingly strong in explaining the meaning of the passage and communicating its relevance to life. I remember Hershael York evaluating twenty minutes of my preaching in my first semester of the doctoral program at Southern. Full of anxiety, I had prepared a sermon that was significantly longer than the allotted time, so I cut material beforehand and even as I preached. During the evaluation afterwards, I was rightly taken to task for eliminating most illustration and application in favor of talking almost exclusively about the text. His feedback changed my priorities in preaching. Not until receiving evaluation from my church during the project did I realize the extent to which application is now an integral part of how I preach.

Conclusions

Training men to preach and teach is a major need in the church today. If Paul's words in Ephesians 4:16 are taken seriously, then the health of the whole church depends on each member using their gifts for the maturation of the body. There is surely more than one man gifted to teach in most churches. Yet those gifts may languish and a church's health may be stunted if capable men are not trained and then set free to minister. Having seen this project to fruition at Faith Bible Church, the leadership is now beginning to reap the benefits of the men's ministry to others. Equipping and modeling both preaching and teaching demonstrated to them how the principles we discussed in class are manifest similarly and differently, according to the setting and audience. The task now remains to further develop them in their strengths through additional training in tandem with personal observation and feedback of their teaching. The elders of Faith Bible Church are committed to pursuing and investing into even more men who will be faithful to teach others also. The benefits are worth the time.

In the last few years, there has been a renewed emphasis on Christocentric preaching. Even the thrust of the 2011 National Conference for The Gospel Coalition was *They Testify about Me: Preaching Jesus and the Gospel from the Old Testament*.⁸⁷ In completing this project, the validity and necessity of sustained, consistent cross-centered preaching has been etched into my consciousness, but the move from belief to practice has been the real challenge. As I work to personally model redemptive preaching, I am realizing that the various methods for connecting a passage to the gospel have not yet become second nature in my own practice. Lord willing, further development of my own abilities will allow me to better train others to do the same.

Ideas for Further Study

This project has clearly pushed me to study the field of homiletics, especially in what is meant by preaching the cross. I plan to continue to read and practice in this area so that this project becomes the beginning pathway to a lifetime of growth in preaching Christ. I have already ordered a few recently released books on the topic, which I plan to work through in 2012.

In time, I desire to write a short booklet on various methods of preaching the cross and their compatibility with the demand of communicating authorial intent. Whether due to the measurable thickness of current books on the topic or an observational association between Christocentric preaching and covenantal theology, a number of my former classmates from The Master's Seminary have expressed a strong interest to me in hearing and reading more about the hermeneutics and practice of cross-

⁸⁷The 2011 National Conference featured nine main sessions and many workshops devoted to the topic of preaching Christ. Audio and additional information is available from The Gospel Coalition website [on-line]; accessed September 2011; available from <http://thegospelcoalition.org/conferences/2011>; Internet.

centered preaching. Putting pen to paper will provide more lasting help to them than an extended conversation.

Furthermore, I plan to work through and further revise my training plan. My ambition is to add two more training sessions to the schedule, incorporating time for the men to preach for twenty minutes each and to give commensurate feedback.

Conclusion

As a result of this project, the men who were trained became better preachers and I personally grew in my understanding and practice of preaching. Christocentric preaching is much easier talked about than done. The training of men in, and my personal practice of, redemptive preaching will be a lifetime of work. By God's grace, this project will be among the first steps of a lifetime dedicated to faithfully preaching Christ and training men who will teach others also.

APPENDIX 1

CLASS SYLLABUS

1. Seeing What Others Miss
 - A. Great Preaching is Grounded in Good Theology
 - B. Who Determines What the Bible Means?
 - C. Four Basic Rules for Interpretation
 - D. Why Not Just Read the Bible and Write a Sermon?
 - E. A Basic Process for Studying the Word
 - F. 40% Time = Observation
 - G. How Do I See What Others Miss?
 - H. Guidelines in Making Observations
 - I. Let's Practice

2. Getting at the Language
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. Why Bother With Other Translations?
 - C. What Should a Thorough Cross-Examination Accomplish?
 - D. How Should I Interrogate the Text?
 - E. Test Cases
 - F. Figuring Out What Words Mean
 - G. A Brief Warning
 - H. Syntax Matters
 - I. Syntax » What to Look For

3. Finding the Main Point
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. Diagramming » Why Do Something We Hated in Eighth Grade?
 - C. What are my Goals in Diagramming?
 - D. How Do I Diagram a Passage?
 - E. Let's Practice
 - F. Our Diagrams Don't Look the Same » Who's Right?
 - G. What's Next? » Check Your Work!
 - H. How Do I Evaluate a Commentary?
 - I. Practice
 - J. Finding the Main Point
 - K. Synthesis » Test Your Main Idea

4. Preaching the Main Point
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. Moving from the Author's Main Point to Your Main Point
 - C. Writing a Good Sermon Proposition is Harder Than You Think
 - D. Foundations of a Sermon Proposition
 - E. Different Ways that Preachers Write Main Points
 - F. Practice
 - G. Outlining Your Sermon is Mandatory
 - H. How to Outline
 - I. Let's Practice

5. Preaching Jesus
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. What is the Place of the Gospel in Preaching?
 - C. The Challenge of Preaching the Gospel
 - D. But Not All Passages Speak About Christ and the Gospel?!
 - E. Eight Methods for Connecting Your Passage to Christ
 - F. Let's Practice

6. Starting and Finishing Well
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. Overview of Sermon Development Process
 - C. Introductions Build the Need to Hear
 - D. Can You Introduce It?
 - E. Conclusions Do More Than End
 - F. Conclusions Conclude!

7. Keeping Attention
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. Always Remember Your Audience
 - C. Boredom is Not Their Responsibility, But Yours!
 - D. Illustrations Help People Understand Truth
 - E. Illustrations are Hard and I'm Not Creative
 - F. Can You Illustrate It?
 - G. Applications Bring Truth to Bear on Life
 - H. Again... Know Your Audience!
 - I. Can You Apply It?

8. Undistracted Excellence
 - A. Homework Review
 - B. Putting Everything Together
 - C. Budget Your Time
 - D. On the Use of Sermon Notes

- E. Basic Communication Skills
- F. Calendaring Your Preaching
- G. Questions?

APPENDIX 2

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to train laymen in expository preaching through a combination of teaching, practice and evaluation. This research is being conducted by John Pleasnick for the purpose of the Doctorate of Ministry project paper. In this research, you will be asked to give and evaluate sermons, and be tested on the degree of your understanding of hermeneutics, exegesis, and homiletics. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name be identified with your responses.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1
Strongly
Disagree

2
Disagree

3
Not Sure

4
Agree

5
Strongly
Agree

APPENDIX 3

PRE/POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE

How Do You Understand Preaching?

1. Expository preaching requires verse by verse explanation of the Bible.

2. I am confident that I can interpret the Bible accurately.

3. The primary goal of preaching is to explain the meaning of the text.

4. The person and work of Jesus are the central thrust of ALL Scripture.

5. I preach from the Old Testament as often as from the New Testament.

1
Strongly
Disagree

2
Disagree

3
Not Sure

4
Agree

5
Strongly
Agree

6. The main objective of sermon prep is to determine practical application.

7. I believe that every passage of Scripture should be interpreted literally.

8. I spend more time in commentaries than in reflecting on the passage itself.

9. I have difficulty preaching larger passages (12+ verses) in a single sermon.

10. I have difficulty preaching on smaller passages (1-3 verses).

11. I believe that sermon delivery matters just as much as sermon content.

1
Strongly
disagree

2
Disagree
month or so

3
Neutral
About half
the time

4
Most of
the time

5
Strongly
Agree

12. An expositional sermon can always somehow speak of Christ without violating authorial intent.

13. How often do I speak of the gospel as I preach?

14. I spend this many hours preparing to preach each week:

- 0-2 hrs 3-5 hrs 6-10 hrs 11-15 hrs 15-20 hrs 20+ hrs

15. I usually preach for about this long:

- under 30 min 30-40 min 40-50 min 50-60 min 60+ min

16. How long have you been preaching?

- Never have 0-12 months 1-3 yrs 4-6 yrs 7-9 yrs 10+ yrs

17. Define expository preaching.

18. Do you consistently feel rushed in putting sermons together? If so, please describe why.

19. If running short on time while preaching, are you more likely to cut content or application? Please describe why.

20. What is the most difficult aspect of preaching for you personally?

APPENDIX 4

PREACHING RESPONSE FORM

Preacher's Name: _____ Your Name: _____

Date: _____ Place Preached: _____ Biblical Text Preached: _____

Preaching and Delivery (please note what you observe & its correlation with what you heard)

Posture	Clothing and Appearance
Eye Contact & Facial Expressions	Mannerisms
Gestures	Voice

Delivery Rating

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Poor Average Good Outstanding

The Message & Its Content (please assess the sermon based on criteria covered during training)

Introduction	Exposition
--------------	------------

Illustrations	Relevance & Application
Redemptive-Focus	Conclusion
Summary Comments & Observations	

Content Rating

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Poor Average Good Outstanding

APPENDIX 5

PRE/POST-CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Table A1. Pre/post-class questionnaire results

Question	Pre-Class		Post-Class		Difference	
	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev
1. Expository preaching requires verse-by-verse explanation of the Bible.	4.45	0.50	4.71	0.41	0.26	-0.09
2. I am confident that I can interpret the Bible accurately.	3.50	0.55	4.29	0.41	0.79	-0.14
3. The primary goal of preaching is to explain the meaning of the text.	3.55	0.86	4.00	1.14	0.45	0.28
4. The person and work of Jesus are the central thrust of ALL Scripture.	4.50	0.64	4.43	0.82	-0.07	0.18
5. I preach from the Old Testament as often as from the New Testament.	2.77	0.89	2.71	0.61	-0.06	-0.28
6. The main objective of sermon preparation is to determine practical application.	2.91	0.99	3.71	0.49	0.81	-0.50
7. I believe that every passage of Scripture should be interpreted literally.	3.27	1.02	4.71	0.41	1.44	-0.62
8. I spend more time in commentaries than in reflecting on the passage itself.	1.82	0.50	1.71	0.61	-0.10	0.11

Table A1—Continued. Pre/post-class questionnaire results

Question	Pre-Class		Post-Class		Difference	
	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev
9. I have difficulty preaching larger passages (12+ verses) in a single sermon.	3.55	0.86	3.43	0.82	-0.12	-0.04
10. I have difficulty preaching on smaller passages (1-3 verses).	2.82	0.78	2.43	0.90	-0.39	0.12
11. I believe that sermon delivery matters just as much as sermon content.	4.09	0.66	4.29	0.82	0.19	0.16
12. An expositional sermon can always somehow speak of Christ without violating authorial intent.	4.18	0.45	4.29	1.02	0.10	0.57
13. How often do I speak of the gospel as I preach?	4.45	0.55	4.43	0.65	-0.02	0.10

APPENDIX 6

SUMMARY OF PERSONAL FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Table A2. Summary of personal feedback received

	Preaching		Teaching		Overall	
Posture	Tends to stay in 5' radius from pulpit		Tends to stay in one place; good posture		I should move further a few times during my message	
Clothing and Appearance	"Casual" was used frequently		Casual, comfortable but appropriate		I tend to dress on the casual side of business casual	
Eye Contact and Facial Expressions	Good eye contact; tend to squint when thinking		Strong eye contact		Good eye contact; I close my eyes when considering my words	
Mannerisms	Keep hands out of pockets		Nothing pronounced		Be careful of hands in pockets	
Gestures	Purposeful use of hands		Good use of hands		I use my hands effectively	
Voice	Clear, good inflection and projection		Quieter in class, but appropriate		Strong when preaching; less range when teaching	
Delivery Rating	8.43	0.57	8.86	0.78	8.66	0.73
	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev

Introduction	I capture attention, but need to make sure I build the need to hear	Tended to review rather than build need to hear	Need to work harder at effective illustrations
Exposition	Good exposition	Outlines were clear and built on Scripture	Faithful to Scripture and clear exposition

Table A2—Continued. Summary of personal feedback received

	Preaching		Teaching		Overall	
Illustrations	Great when used, tended towards biblical examples		Relied too heavily on biblical example		Prone to using biblical examples in place of personal illustrations	
Relevance and Application	Very relevant and applicable		Lots of application, questions to class helped		What I teach is consistently connected to life	
Redemptive-Focus	More practical than Gospel-focused		More theocentric than Christocentric		Work harder at Gospel connections	
Conclusion	Conclusions tend to be short		Clear and wrapped up cleanly		Conclusions tend to be short and a call to action	
Content Rating	8.79	0.58	9.2	0.75	9.02	0.65
	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev	Mean	Dev
Summary Comments and Observations	Preached specifically to issues in our local church		Good content; needed more time to interact with people's questions		Content is good and connected with hearers	

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING LAY LEADERS IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT FAITH BIBLE CHURCH IN MURRIETA, CALIFORNIA

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This project was designed to train laymen in expository preaching through a combination of teaching, practice, and evaluation. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to Faith Bible Church and the community in which the church is located. The demographics of the region and church are described, along with the history of the church. As many ministry leaders have occasion to preach regularly and have not had formal training in preaching, a preaching workshop is suggested as a means of improving their sermon preparation and delivery.

Chapter 2 discusses the biblical and theological mandate for preaching to consistently connect to the person and work of Jesus. If Christ is the center of the Bible's story, then expositional preaching should have a Christocentric element. The regular neglect of the gospel in preaching has danger for the preacher and the congregation. Such redemptive preaching is a biblical priority and vital for the church's long-term health.

Chapter 3 addresses the variety of hermeneutically legitimate methods by which the gospel may be linked to a biblical passage which lacks explicit reference to the person and work of Jesus. A number of viable methods are examined. These methods do not diminish the need for and value of moral exhortation in preaching.

Chapter 4 explains the actual implementation of the training process.

Questionnaires and sermon evaluation forms are used to assess the value of the preaching workshop for the instructor and the participants.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis and evaluation of the ministry project. Goals are evaluated and the strengths and weaknesses of the training methodology are reflected upon. Feedback from participants and personal reflections are shared, with implications for further study.

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