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IMPROVING APPLICATION IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT
NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH OXFORD MISSISSIPPI

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Kendall Joe White

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IMPROVING APPLICATION IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT

NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

2009-2012

Kendall Joe White

Read and Approved by:

Terry J. Betts (Faculty Supervisor)

Russell T. Fuller

Date _____

To Angie,
my partner, my best friend,
and to
Jontyler, Kendall, Maryanna, Joseph
and to
Don and Kara White
and to
Marilyn Bowders

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PREFACE

Working through this ministry project has reminded me of how much I should appreciate the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ. God called me into his ministry and with that call came the challenge to study the Bible. I could not have completed this task without the help of the Holy Spirit. I appreciate my advisors, Dr. Chuck Lawless and Dr. Terry Betts, who challenged me to improve application in my preaching.

Many others have supported me throughout this project. My parents have always given my encouragement to walk with the Lord. They have provided a gracious example of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am especially grateful to Marilyn Bowders, who graciously endured three years of hearing how to improve application of the Bible. I am thankful to New Prospect Baptist Church who has been gracious and supportive of this project.

I am thankful for the support of my wife and best friend, Angie. I love her today more than ever and I am blessed to have her as a partner in life. Four special people inspired me to give my best: JonTyler, Kendall, Maryanna, and Joseph. To God be the glory.

Kendall Joe White

Oxford, Mississippi

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to improve application in expository preaching at New Prospect Baptist Church in Oxford, Mississippi.

Goals

New Prospect Baptist Church is growing consistently in church attendance. Church members need to know how to apply Scripture to life in order to grow spiritually. As a result of this seminary program, I have recognized the necessity of improving application in my preaching. This project intended to address a greater need for application in expository preaching by discovering the principles of application and developing skills of applying Scripture.

Church members may also lack the necessary skills for applying Scripture to life due to poor examples. Sermons that are not balanced with accurate exposition of Scripture and clear application can send the wrong message to Christians. People who gather information from the Bible but do not apply the principles of the Bible to their lives become weak in their faith. The pastor must model specific and accurate application Scripture in his preaching in order to develop mature followers of Christ. Chapter 1 defines the purpose, goals, historical context, definitions and limitations, rationale,

and research methodology for this project. This project sought to improve the application of the New Testament in my preaching. Three specific goals served as the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to explore principles of proper application of Scripture. This goal sought to discover the proper way to bridge the gap from the ancient audience to the modern listeners. Scriptures can be interpreted accurately but applied inappropriately. Research of conservative resources examined the proper way to apply Scripture.

The second goal was to use the principles of application in a sermon series. The key principles of application discovered in the research were applied to a series of six sermons. The sermon series surveyed four major categories of the New Testament: Gospel, Acts, Epistle, and Revelation. Principles of application were used in each major category of the New Testament that discovered how to apply the principles in the New Testament. This goal improved my skills of application of the New Testament by providing an overview of the various methods of application.

The third goal was to teach a focus group of adult Bible teachers how to apply the New Testament by teaching the principles discovered in the research. A focus group of twenty-four people were recruited. Current adult Bible teachers and 12 prospective teachers were encouraged to meet for fifteen consecutive weeks. The group was challenged to develop skills in order to apply Scripture properly.

Furthermore, six sermons from the New Testament provided a model of exposition and application for the focus group. The focus group offered insights of strengths and weaknesses of each sermon. The final class evaluated the overall effectiveness of the ministry project and improvement of application in the sermon series.

Personal reflection and assessment determined the effectiveness of this project. As a result of this project, my skills of application were improved, the adult Bible teachers became more effective teachers, and the church members grew spiritually.

Historical and Contextual Background

New Prospect Baptist Church is located eight miles east of Oxford, Mississippi, on Highway 334 in a community called Yocona. Oxford is eighty miles south of Memphis, Tennessee and one hundred and seventy miles north of Jackson, Mississippi. The University of Mississippi is located in Oxford, which is known for its small town charm. Oxford also attracts retired persons. Oxford boasts of being one of the top retirement communities in the nation. With this combination, many college students as well as retired couples are moving into the area. Land that once was used for farming has been developed into subdivisions as a small town grows into the rural areas. Large subdivisions are being built within a few minutes drive of the Yocona community.

Oxford has several manufacturing industries in the area. Members of New Prospect work in one of the local factories, the local school districts, the University of Mississippi, or some aspect of the construction industry. In addition, many families with school age children live in the Yocona community. Therefore, New Prospect faces the challenge of ministering to the middle class working families, professionals, retired couples as well as college students. New Prospect has had a history of reaching a diverse group of people for Christ.

The demographics of the church community demonstrate the potential for growth. Over the last fifteen years, Oxford has been overwhelmed with growth. In 2000, the population within a seven mile radius was 7,888. In 2006, the same area had a

population of 9,019, a gain of 14.3 percent. The median age of people living within the area is 34. The median household income is \$38,366. Twenty-five percent of families are married with children, 27.2 percent are married without children, 9.5 percent are single parent families, and 32.5 percent are non-family households. Of the 9,019 people living within seven miles of New Prospect, 76.8 percent are white, 21.1 percent are black and 2.1 percent are some other race.¹ New Prospect Baptist Church is made up of predominantly middle class white people. A balance of retired persons and working families form the core of New Prospect members. However, people of other races and backgrounds worship at New Prospect Baptist Church.

The New Prospect Baptist Church was founded on Tuesday, April 26, 1910, in a small rural community eight miles east of Oxford, Mississippi. Twelve men and eighteen women met in a small school building known as Kingdom School for the purpose of organizing a Missionary Baptist church. Reverend H. L. Johnson was elected pastor for the balance of the year of 1910. Twenty-eight men served New Prospect as pastor since the beginning of the church. During the early years, pastors were elected on a yearly basis. Pastors changed frequently until 1953, when the church went to full-time services. Over the last twenty years, three men served as pastor until I was called in March of 2006.

The first church building was built about one mile east of the present building. In 1936, the church moved to its present site and built a sanctuary. An educational building was added. In 1988, the church responded to growth and built an additional

¹All statistics provided by Mississippi Baptist Convention, NAMB Center for Missional Research, On-demand reports and maps from Business Analyst Online; accessed 12 December 2010; available from <http://www.esri.com/boa>; Internet.

educational building. Over the last twenty years, the church has experienced steady growth. Pastor Everett Childers had a successful ministry of fifteen years, and the church grew consistently. Baptisms averaged 20 per year, and Sunday school attendance grew from 86 in 1993 to 195 in 1998. Pastor Childers developed into a community pastor and was a soul winner and expository preacher.

Responding to church growth in 1991, the members launched a “Together We Build” campaign that included a new activities building, additional educational space, and a 350 seat sanctuary. In 1995, services were moved into the new debt free gymnasium while the new sanctuary was built. Church members enjoyed a debt-free facility until they launched a \$650,000 building program for the new sanctuary. On the last Sunday of 1997, the new sanctuary was completed, and Pastor Childers resigned in order to relocate.

Jerry Moore and Doug Jones ministered at New Prospect from 1999 to 2005, each having a three-year ministry. With a large debt on the new sanctuary, the church had reached a plateau. Mission trips and a new style of music became the focus of the church. The International Mission Board appointed Doug Jones to Thailand in 2005. Mo Baker, Director of the Baptist Student Union at the University of Mississippi, was interim pastor for New Prospect for a year. In 2006, New Prospect Baptist Church had a debt of \$250,000, the average for worship service attendance was 140, and Sunday school attendance averaged 94.

New Prospect Baptist Church called me to become pastor in March, 2006. New Prospect is not my home church, but I was raised in Lafayette County and attended the church. New Prospect Baptist Church has blessed me and my family over the years.

Since becoming pastor, my approach has been to preach the Word of God, care for the people of God, and lead people to a personal relationship with Christ. Based on the mission of Jesus to preach, teach, and heal (Matt 4:23), my heartbeat is preaching the Bible and demonstrating the compassion that Jesus had for people. New Prospect is debt free and the church has experienced steady growth during the last two years. The church averages 195 in worship services and 140 in small group Bible study.

The New Prospect Baptist Church has experienced growth in recent years through some new programming. Fifty-four members launched the G.R.O.W. outreach program which targets families in the community who do not go to church. Phone calls, letters, and personal visits by the people drive the program to reach people for Christ. The G.R.O.W program guides the church to focus on reaching people with the gospel.

Activities for children and youth provide ways to reach teenagers and young families. However, the church has focused on activities to the point that little attention has been given to making disciples for Christ. The focus of an activity driven ministry has been refocused toward training new followers of Christ. Children and youth Bible drills expose our young people to the Word of God and teach the children of the importance of Bible study. A passionate youth leader has strengthened the youth program. In addition, the worldview of the church has changed from remembering the glory days to anticipation for the future. People viewed ministry as something done by the pastor. In recent months, however, the church has become proactive in ministry.

The deacons of New Prospect launched a Deacon Family Ministry Plan. This ministry plan assures the members that each member is important to the church and the deacons will care for them. Jesus had compassion on the multitude, and the deacons have

demonstrated the compassion of Christ to the members. One could consider New Prospect an evangelistic church because of its commitment to care for people, to reach people with the gospel, and to teach people how to follow Christ. The Great Commission is taken seriously and motivates the members toward spiritual growth.

My desire in this project was to learn how to apply the New Testament properly. Due to a strong commitment to Scripture, I wanted to avoid misusing the Bible. Furthermore, my desire was to learn models and methods of application in order to grow as a follower of Christ and be able to teach others also. Adult Bible study leaders need to know how to apply Scripture properly. By teaching basic principles of application and demonstrating how it works, adult Bible teachers were trained to apply the New Testament.

Rationale

Second Timothy provided the basis for this project. Paul encouraged Timothy to learn from his model and teach others to do the same. He said, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2:2). Paul taught Timothy how to be a strong follower of Christ by instructing Timothy to follow his example. I wanted to develop better skills of application in my preaching. As my skills improved, adult Bible teachers developed skills of application in order to prepare more effective lessons.

Timothy was instructed to learn from the example of Paul and then pass what he learned along to others. John McArthur said, “He is directing Timothy to invest in the

lives of spiritually devout men who are gifted to teach potential pastors and evangelists.”² Paul admonished Timothy to seek out faithful men and train them in the things he had been taught. As Paul faced hardships, the mission work was in danger of decline. New workers were needed for the advancement of the gospel.

This command to Timothy was primarily to continue the mission work of the church by applying the Scriptures properly and instructing others to do the same. Phillip Towner asserted, “Entrusting the gospel was not simply a matter of a tap on the shoulder; it would require Timothy to teach and model the faith.”³ Two important qualities of new teachers were important for training. One quality had to do with character. Paul said to commit to faithful men, or reliable, trustworthy men. Towner said, “soundness of faith is assumed.”⁴ Lenski added, “the apostles did not expect future teachers of the church to produce new or different teachings.”⁵ The teachers were instructed to teach what they had been taught.

Another important quality was the ability to apply what they had learned to others. Timothy had to learn how to apply the things he learned from Paul. Furthermore, the followers of Timothy were instructed to follow the example of Timothy. Paul set the

²John MacArthur, *2 Timothy, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 491.

³Phillip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus, The New International Critical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 491.

⁴Ibid.

⁵R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon, Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 779.

example for Timothy. Timothy modeled Paul and developed other followers. This process involved applying the Scriptures to life.

The Apostle Paul was an evangelist, church planter and missionary. His mission, however, was not complete until he trained Timothy to apply the Scriptures. Timothy should teach and train others in the church. A local church provided a place for soul-winning, spiritual care and training in Bible doctrines. The Apostle Paul was interested in teaching others to be students of the Word (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Tim 4:10-12; 1 Tim 6:1-2; Titus 2:1).

This project was important because I have witnessed this principle in 2 Timothy 2:2 in my life. Pastors have challenged me to read and apply the New Testament accurately. David Ard, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Oxford, Mississippi, for twelve years, taught me the Bible through his verse by verse expository preaching. Ronnie Mayes personally helped me to become a disciplined student of the Bible. These men challenged me to handle the word of God accurately and helped me develop as a disciple of Christ.

As I have grown as a follower of Christ, I have seen God call out followers. During the ten years of my ministry, four men have been called into the gospel ministry. Two men are pastors today in Southern Baptist Churches. These men shared my convictions of the benefits of applying the Word of God. I personally challenged them with the same challenge my pastor had given me to preach the Bible. Improving my skills of application of Scripture will continue to help me to become a more effective preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Due to the growth of New Prospect Baptist Church, additional classes were added. A small group Bible study began in 2007 for young people. Young couples, college students, and singles were encouraged to study the Bible. After teaching through the gospel of Mark, God raised up a teacher for the class. One year later, the class averages eighteen people, and we will consider starting an additional class in the near future. Additional teachers will be needed as more classes develop. Trained Bible teachers that know how to apply the Word of God and are committed to personal soul-winning will be needed.

Definitions and Limitations

The definition of expository preaching from *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson was used in this project:

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.⁶

This definition summarized what biblical preaching and teaching should be. The meaning of the passage should engulf the pastor as the Holy Spirit applies it to his life. The Holy Spirit speaks through the preacher and applies the passage to the hearers. This basic principle is true of preaching and teaching. The preacher or teacher should experience the text through the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the principles of expository preaching taught in this project benefited teachers also.

A limitation of this project was the length of the fifteen-week schedule. A pre-seminar survey measured the knowledge, attitude and needs of the focus group. Eight

⁶Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 21.

sessions taught the focus group the basics of New Testament interpretation with a special emphasis on application. Six sermons from the four major categories of the New Testament were evaluated by the focus group each week. The focus group offered insights into the project one the last session in the post-project survey. Because the project was limited to fifteen weeks, not all of the long term results were seen.

Another limitation of this project was participated in the twenty-four member focus group. The eight-week seminar was exclusively for current adult Bible study leaders and new recruits. New Prospect had twelve adult Bible study teachers. With much prayer, an additional twelve new teachers that God calls were recruited.

A final limitation was the study of the New Testament. The principles of application discovered were used exclusively in the New Testament, but they may be used in the study of the Old Testament literature also.

Research Methodology

The primary goal of this project was to develop better skills of application of Scripture in my preaching. I researched various methods to apply a text. Conservative resources served as models for preaching. Methods that apply Scripture accurately provided the guidelines for the research. These principles of application discovered in the research were used in the six sermons.

A secondary purpose was to develop skills of applying Scripture in the lives of church members. Although New Prospect Baptist Church has 400 members, less than 25 percent are involved in small group Bible study. The first step in the research evaluated how the members of New Prospect applied the principles of the Bible. Using the survey

in this proposal, the level of knowledge, appreciation, and application of the New Testament were measured with the pre-project survey.

Another purpose of this project was to challenge a focus group to understand the importance of clear application of Scripture. The focus group was taught the necessary resources for proper application of a text. The six sermons served as an example of how to use the principles of application in order to motivate teachers to use these biblical principles for lesson preparation.

A focus group consisting of current Bible teachers and prospective Bible teachers participated in an eight-week class. The group discussed the need for biblical exposition and application in teaching and preaching. The principles of application were taught in the sessions. This class was taught prior to the sermon series and surveyed the four major divisions of the New Testament. The discussion questions listed in this project proposal were used in order to evaluate the level of knowledge of application by the focus group.

A series of six sermons will be preached during the Sunday night services from the New Testament. Sermons from Matthew 16:21-28 and John 20: 30-31 provided a model from the Gospels. The sermon from Acts 9:1-23 taught the focus group how to apply narrative literature from the book of Acts. First Timothy 1:1-20 identified the perversion of biblical teaching. Second Timothy 2:1-9 defined the purpose of biblical teaching and demonstrated how to apply the epistles. A sermon from Revelation 2:1-7 used the model of purpose driven preaching by Jay Adams to develop proper application.

The focus group evaluated each sermon according to the strengths and weakness taught in the sessions. The focus group discussed the models and the methods

used in the sermons by the pastor. The sermon critique forms were used as the tool that evaluated the structure and level of application in the sermons.

Furthermore, group discussions evaluated the effectiveness of the specific application of each sermon. Principles of correct application served as the criteria for judging the effectiveness of the improvement of the sermons. Personal reflections and a post-seminar questionnaire from the focus group evaluated the knowledge, attitudes, and application of the seminar content.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE OF APPLICATION IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Chapter 1 provided the groundwork for this project by recording the history of New Prospect Baptist Church and by establishing the need for church members to apply Scripture properly. If this church makes improvements in applying the Word of God for spiritual growth, it will require a biblical foundation for proper application in expository preaching. This chapter identifies the biblical evidence which necessitates proper application in expository preaching. That evidence can be summarized in the letter to the Hebrews and how the apostle Peter described proper application.

This chapter also reveals the desire of God to overcome the barriers of proper application. These barriers will be highlighted by a brief discussion of the ways Israel failed to apply Scripture properly. Furthermore, a survey of the ways Jesus applied Scripture will demonstrate how to overcome barriers. A discussion of the preaching ministry of the apostle Paul will provide an example of proper application.

God's Purpose for Application

The author of Hebrews wrote to Jewish readers concerning spiritual rest. The story originates when Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years. Israel came out of Egypt as slaves, but they were not able to enter the land of Canaan. According to

Hebrews 3:19, “So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”¹ A lack of faith caused the nation to fall short of the rest.

This picture of rest served as a warning to the Jewish readers of falling short of rest with Christ. To the Jewish readers, rest illustrated the abundant life one can enjoy in a relationship with God. For instance, the text says, “Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it” (Heb 4:1). According to John MacArthur, “It is the rest pictured and illustrated in the Canaan rest that Israel never understood and never entered into because of unbelief.”² Due to a lack of faith, the nation of Israel failed to apply the Word of God properly. According to Deuteronomy 6:12-13 they ignored the warning from God: “then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by his name.” Moses gave specific instructions from the Lord for the people but they did not apply the word properly.

This story illustrates the importance of applying Scripture correctly. The readers of Hebrews were about to fall back into Judaism, and they needed to apply the teachings of Scripture. MacArthur adds, “To enter into God’s rest means that for the remainder of our lives and for all eternity we can lean on God.”³ This example of

¹All Scripture texts throughout this project are New American Standard Version.

²John MacArthur, *Hebrews, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 97.

³Ibid.

unbelief serves as a warning for believers to apply the Word of God correctly. Believers should seek to apply Scripture properly in order to enter this rest just as the Israelites should have entered the promised land.

The true preacher does not seek to impart information to a church. He persuades the hearers to obey Scripture. According to James 1:22, Christians should be doers of the word and not hearers only. Hearing the Word of God alone is insufficient. The hearers must be lead to obey what they have heard. Michael Fabarez said, “True biblical preaching ought to be a life-changing endeavor.”⁴ Preaching failing to highlight practical application becomes nothing more than a lecture. The metaphors of a sword, milk, and strong meat illustrate the power of applying Scripture properly.

Hebrews 4:12 summarizes the power of proper application: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Proper application of Scripture penetrates the believer like a sword that pierces the heart.

Within the context of proper application of the word, the apostle Peter said: “Putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet 2:2). Peter used a metaphor of a baby being nursed by his mother. Like a newborn in need of nourishment, Christians need the nourishment of a proper diet of word. Proper application in expository preaching will fulfill the hunger for spiritual

⁴Michael Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), vii.

growth in the believer.

Furthermore, when Christians apply Scripture properly, they can make wise decisions in life. The writer of Hebrews describes a growing Christian as one who moves from milk to strong meat: “For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Heb 5:13-14). Like a newborn baby who moves from milk to baby food, then from baby food to regular food, a maturing Christian moves from the milk of the word to the meat of the word. Babies depend upon someone for food. As a baby develops, it begins to feed himself and matures because of a proper diet. By developing skills of interpretation and putting the Scriptures into practice, a believer can grow properly.

Anointed expository preaching provides a balanced diet with exposition and practical application. This project will survey the biblical basis for proper application. The Old Testament provides examples of application in 1 Samuel, Ezra, and Psalm 119. The barriers, benefits, and ways to overcome the barriers of application is found in the teaching of Jesus. Practical ways Scripture should be applied are found in the teachings of Paul.

Application in the Old Testament

The Bible records the spiritual growth of the prophet Samuel. Samuel grew when he listened and applied what God said. His spiritual growth was attributed to the proper application of listening to what God said. The story of the prophet Samuel is an illustration of what God can do when one applies the Word of God properly. His life was

changed when he did what God told him to do.

Hearing the Word

Samuel was an answer to the prayer of a young woman praying for a child. Hannah poured out her soul before God praying for a child. She made a vow to the Lord saying, “O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life” (1 Sam 1:11). The Lord honored Hannah’s prayer with the birth of Samuel. Hannah honored the Lord by dedicating Samuel to the Lord.

Samuel grew up in the temple with Eli the priest, ministering in the temple even as a child (1 Sam 2:18). Even when Eli’s son did evil in the sight of God, Samuel continued to please God. “Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men” (1 Sam 2:26). Samuel learned how to apply the word of God.

One night when Samuel was asleep the Lord called to him. Samuel thought Eli the priest had called his name, so he ran to Eli. But Eli had not called him. The Lord called Samuel three times. The second time, Eli told Samuel to answer the Lord. When the Lord called the third time, Samuel replied, “Speak Lord for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:10). The Lord spoke to Samuel in the night. Samuel listened and obeyed the Lord.

This story illustrates how the Old Testament teaches the importance of applying Scripture. When Samuel was willing to listen to the word of the Lord, he was

ready to obey the Lord. When he heard and applied what God said, it brought a change to his life. Believers must be willing to listen to the Lord speak. Simply reading the Bible or listening to sermons is inadequate. One must be willing to hear God speak in order to apply Scripture to life. Therefore, hearing the Word of the Lord is a necessary element in application because hearing the word is a prerequisite to obedience.

Heeding the Word

Furthermore, one must prepare his heart in order to receive the Word of God. Ezra is an illustration of how one should prepare one's heart. According to Ezra 7:10, "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." He is also described as one who "was a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (7:6). According to Strong, the word "ready" meant "skillful."⁵ Ezra was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses. Because he was skillful in the Scriptures, he had prepared his heart, or literally set his heart toward God. Ezra devoted himself firmly to the Scriptures. He was determined not only to hear, but to heed the Word.

Ezra was described as the teacher "who had prepared his heart to seek and do the law of Jahve, i.e., to make the law of God his rule of action."⁶ Walvoord and Zuck add, "The word [teacher] also referred to a learned man who could read and write and

⁵James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 62.

⁶C. F. Keil, *Ezra*, Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 4: 61-62.

learned man who could teach what he read in God's law."⁷ Ezra was determined to hear the word, obey the word, and teach the word to others. His determination to hear and apply the word to his personal walk with God was his major concern. A true expositor must apply the Scriptures to his personal walk with the Lord before he preaches to others.

Ezra led the people on a journey back to their homeland "according to the good hand of his God upon him" (Ezra 7:9). Scripture records their journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. Ezra led the people according to what he applied to his own life. Just as Ezra led the people where he was willing to go, preachers today must lead the people by applying the Scriptures.

Application in expository preaching begins when the expositor submits to the principles he is preparing to teach others. Ezra's example emphasizes the importance of the preacher preparing his heart to obey the Word. Michael Fabarez highlights this saying, "An effective teaching ministry cannot be realized until the teacher is committed to practice the lessons he attempts to teach."⁸ Fabarez strengthens this point with three practical questions,

Do you ever find yourself preaching principles you yourself have not even attempted to put into practice? Have you taught the importance of spiritual growth through personal Bible study, knowing that most of your Bible study is obligatory preparation for your next sermon? Have you preached a sermon on experiencing joy in trials after grumbling and complaining all week about your own ecclesiastical headaches?⁹

⁷John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 666.

⁸Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 77.

⁹Ibid.

Fabarez reminds the preacher of the importance of truly practicing what he preaches. Sermons that are not bathed in much prayer and preparation in the heart of the preacher become lifeless lectures.

Holiness

The Old Testament teaches the importance of applying Scripture which requires hearing, heeding, and also pursuing holiness. Psalm 119:9-11 says, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.” According to R. Laird Harris, the word “keeping” meant “to seek with care.”¹⁰ Furthermore, God had commanded Israel to seek him wholeheartedly (Deut 4:29).

The Psalmist mentioned the need to hear the Word, and to heed the Word, and he takes a step further by hiding the word in his heart for the purpose of holiness. When the Psalmist sought the Word of God carefully, the result was holiness in his heart. By applying Scripture properly, he would not sin against God. Charles Spurgeon described the Psalm,

Had he not sought the Lord he would never had been so anxious to cleanse his way. The more a man’s heart is set upon holiness, the more he dreads falling into sin. We are to be such whole-hearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with our whole-heartedness we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we would wander from the path of holiness.¹¹

¹⁰R. Laird Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. and trans. Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:199.

¹¹Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 3:158.

The Psalmist explained the effect of accurately applying Scripture to life in order to bring change. The heart of the believer will be marked by pursuing a life of holiness.

Application from Christ

The most important place to look for proper application is in the teachings of Christ. Jesus warned the disciples about the dangers of misapplying Scripture. He applied the Old Testament to the situation of two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Furthermore, Jesus provided a summary of application in expository preaching in John 5:39. Jesus described the barriers to proper application and provided ways to overcome these barriers.

Barriers to Proper Application

Jesus spoke strongly to the Pharisees about their hypocrisy in Matthew 23. Their hypocrisy started with the way they applied Scripture. The Pharisees prided themselves with preaching eloquent sermons, doing good works, and putting themselves first. Their pride led them to speak down to the people. Jesus exposed their hypocrisy: “Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying: The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them”(Matt 23:1-3). Jesus scolded the Pharisees for not practicing what they preached.

Profitless preaching. Like a doctor who prescribes a healthy diet for a patient but is unwilling to follow that diet himself, the Pharisees applied their sermons to everyone but themselves. Jesus summarized their faults: “For they say things and do not do them.” By not applying their teaching to their own hearts first, the Pharisees missed

the point of preaching. Their hypocrisy led to heavy burdens on the listeners. Jesus noted the results of the false teachers: “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men” (Matt 23:4). R. T. Frances says, “By saying and not doing they impose rules on other people but gave them no help in coping with them.”¹² The Pharisees could quickly identify problems in other people, but they saw no fault of their own. Furthermore, they offered no solution for people to help with their problems. Frances asserts,

So in contrast to experiencing the ‘kind yoke’ and ‘light burden’ of following Jesus (Matt 11:30) those who follow the scribes and Pharisees find themselves ‘foiling and heavily loaded’, struggling under the weight of a hugely expanded legal code which enslaves rather than liberates those who follow it. They are not willing to help those whose troubles they have themselves caused.¹³

Though the Pharisees spent countless hours in study, their teaching profited no one because they lacked integrity of living what they taught.

Pride. Furthermore, the Pharisees sought the praise of men and approval of others rather than the approval of God. Jesus said, “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men” (Matt 23:5). The preaching ministry of the Pharisees fell under this pronouncement. Fabarez asserts,

Much like today’s preachers, they worked hard to attain their teaching posts. They put countless hours in schools and took great pains in their studies. They paid their dues at the feet of their professors. And labored underneath the tutelage of demanding instructors. Certainly it’s appropriate for people to recognize their

¹²R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 861.

¹³Ibid.

achievements. What was the harm in enjoying the plaudits given them, or seeking what was rightly theirs? According to Jesus, everything was wrong with it. Why? Because the love of man's approval quickly degenerates into something far worse, fueling the teacher's hypocrisy on every level.¹⁴

When reputation becomes more important than the purpose of the message, the preacher has exchanged the glory of God for something else. Nothing will remove the hand of God from a preacher more quickly than pride (Judg 16:20). The pronouncement by Jesus on the Pharisees proves this point.

An example of a young preacher also demonstrates this point. The young man was short and could not see over the pulpit. God called him to preach as a teenage boy and he was a gifted speaker. Churches would call him to fill the pulpit in the absence of a pastor. The young boy would stand on a stool in order to see over the pulpit. People were blessed, and decisions were made when he preached. As the young boy grew, he did not need the stool anymore. He preached behind the pulpit without the stool, but also without the Lord. As he grew in physical strength, he also grew intellectually. As people praised the young man for his eloquent sermons, he became full of pride. God no longer used the preacher as he did before.

The wrong kind of praise can lead to God's hand being removed from the preacher. Proper application in expository preaching must begin in the heart of the preacher. Jay Adams said, "First, the preacher searches for and discovers the *telos* in his preaching portion and makes it his own."¹⁵ When the preacher fails to preach to himself first, he puts himself above the people and a prime candidate for the devil to tempt with

¹⁴Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 28.

¹⁵Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 44.

pride.

Preachers need reminding that we must thirst for righteousness and keep a humble spirit. God will oppose the proud, but give grace to the humble according to James 4:6. Fabarez asserts, “When we face the temptation to touch His glory we must recall Jesus’ words to the Pharisees: “Whoever exalts himself will be abased, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”¹⁶ God will not share his glory. The responsibility of the preacher is to preach to himself and then apply the truth of his message to others. This practice will keep his heart in tune with God and avoid pride.

Powerless preaching. Jesus not only warned of the dangers of profitless preaching and pride, he explained the need of the power of the Holy Spirit. The most important ingredient in expository preaching is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix say, “the anointing is the spiritual fervor that flows through a man in the preaching event.”¹⁷ As the preacher grows in the integrity of living under the authority of the word of God, he builds upon strong a strong foundation by practicing personal holiness. The preacher must depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to do what no man can do in preaching.

Acts demonstrates a strong illustration of the effects of the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until for he promise of the Father. The promise of the Father was the power of the Holy Spirit: “but you shall receive power

¹⁶Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 28.

¹⁷Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 64.

when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Before the day of Pentecost, the disciples had little power in their preaching. After the anointing of the Holy Spirit came upon them, their preaching was powerful according to Acts 4:33, “and with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”

Modern technology can present a danger for the modern preacher. By relying on power-point presentations, skits, or other multimedia ways to draw attention, preachers may lack power in the pulpit. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix explain,

In the area of speech communication, the gospel preacher has an advantage that separates him from all other public communicators. Even secular public speakers can be passionate about their subject matter, but one particular ingredient is reserved solely for the one who speaks the words of God. This ingredient enables the preacher’s words to be pointed, sharp and powerful. This ingredient has been called the anointing. Anointed preaching places God into the sermon and on the preacher. When a preacher preaches in the power of God, the results are remarkable.¹⁸

Paul gives evidence that he depended on the anointing in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, “and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” The primary ingredient for effective application in expository preaching is the anointing of Holy Spirit.

How to Overcome Barriers

When Jesus applied the Scriptures to the situation of two disciples, he presented the way to overcome these barriers. After the death of Christ, most of the

¹⁸Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 64.

disciples scattered. By the third day, word spread that Jesus was alive. This news was too much for two men, so they decided to go back home. They were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, which was about seven miles. As the two men talked about the events of the week, Jesus appeared with them and began a conversation with them. They did not recognize the stranger. Jesus asked them why they were sad. The unknown disciples explained to Jesus how their hopes had been lost because the chief priests sentenced their Christ to death by crucifixion. Luke summarized their disappointment,

But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. (Luke 24:21-24)

Jesus was unwilling to accept their false conclusion. He alerted them of their failure to apply Old Testament Scripture to news of the resurrection. Jesus responded to their misunderstanding in Luke 24:25 saying, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” The teaching of the prophets should have enlightened the two disciples of the resurrection. If these men had applied the message of the prophets to the situation, they would have understood the resurrection.

The Gospel perspective. This story reveals the central focus of Scripture.

These two disciples should have known that Christ would suffer at the cross and rise again. Jesus asked the question: “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26). Jesus gave these disciples an Old Testament survey. Luke summarized the conversation in 24:27: “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the

Scriptures.” According to Cleon L. Rogers, the word “explained” meant “to interpret.”¹⁹ During this seven mile walk, Jesus interpreted the gospel from the Old Testament.

Luke does not record the specific Scripture Jesus used, which leads one to believe all Scripture refers to Christ. Lenski asserts, “Jesus finds himself in ‘all’ the prophets.”²⁰ Jesus revealed the proper perspective for exposition and application. He said all Scripture is about him. Bryan Chapell explains, “this does not mean that every phrase, punctuation mark, or verse directly reveal Christ, but rather that all passages in their context disclose his nature and/or necessity”²¹ When the preacher fails to apply a passage in light of the person and work of Christ, he has missed a major point in preaching. Chapell adds, “The goal of the preacher is not to find novel ways of identifying Christ in every text (or naming Jesus in every sermon) but to show how each text manifest God’s grace in order to prepare and enable his people to embrace the hope provided by Christ.”²² Proper application, therefore, should focus on a personal relationship with Christ. Jesus spoke from the Old Testament which revealed the gospel perspective. Christ-centered preaching overcomes the barriers of powerless preaching by keeping the focus on the gospel.

¹⁹Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 173.

²⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *Luke, Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 1190.

²¹Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 279.

²²*Ibid.*

The Gospel authority. Jesus stated his authority when he informed the Pharisees to “search the scriptures” in John 5:39. The present tense verb form for the word “search” in the original language is the same form as the imperative. Some scholars suggest that Jesus meant the imperative: “You Search the Scriptures.” Cleon Rogers, however, suggests the present tense which carries the idea of a continual search. Rogers said, “The customary present suggests their long-standing habit of searching the Scriptures.”²³ John MacArthur adds, “Jesus was not commanding them to search the Scriptures, but noting that they were already doing so in a desperate and futile search for the key to eternal life.”²⁴ Basically, Jesus told the Pharisees to go back and take a better look at the Scriptures.

The Jews did indeed study the Scriptures. Although they hoped to find eternal life through their studies, they missed the gospel. John Phillips states,

Their zeal was such that they counted every letter, weighed every word, scrutinized every sentence. The Lord had already said that they did not have God’s word abiding in them. All their study was in vain. They subjected each verse and word by taking painstaking investigation and come up with incorrect conclusions. They thought that because they had an intellectual knowledge of what they considered to be truth, they did not need anything more.²⁵

One can conclude that their preaching profited no one because they did not preach the

²³Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 195.

²⁴John MacArthur, *John 1-11*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 213.

²⁵John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of John*, The John Phillips Commentary (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 114.

gospel message. Jesus said their study and preaching was in vain without Him: “because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me” (John 5:39).

Merril C. Tenney explains,

After the destruction of the temple of Solomon in 586 B.C., the Jewish scholars of the Exile substituted the study of the Law for the observance of the temple ritual and sacrifices. They poured over the OT, endeavoring to extract the fullest possible meaning from its words, because they believed that the very study itself would bring them life. By so doing they missed the chief subject of the OT revelation. Jesus claimed the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Writings) as witnesses to his person and claims (Luke 24:44). He rebuked his hearers for their inconsistency in studying the Scriptures so diligently while rejecting his claims, which were founded on those same Scriptures.²⁶

Jesus said the Pharisees thought they had eternal life because they studied the minute details of Scripture.

However, the Pharisees were wrong because they had missed Jesus in the Old Testament. Lenski notes the importance of the prepositional phrase “about me.” He says, “*peri emou* means far more than that the Scriptures only say this or that about Jesus; ‘concerning me’ means that all their testimony centers in Jesus, centers in Him so that only by and through Him men are declared to have eternal life.”²⁷ This point by Jesus emphasizes the need for gospel preaching. Therefore, it is imperative that proper application in expository preaching highlights the gospel of Christ.

²⁶Merril C. Tenney, *John*, in vol. 9 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 68.

²⁷R. C. H. Lenski, *John*, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 415.

Application from the Apostle Paul

The priority of the gospel message becomes clear when one examines the preaching ministry of the Apostle Paul. His primary purpose was to make the gospel of Christ known to all the world. He summarized the basis of his preaching in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8,

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, but which also you are saved, if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all as to one untimely born, He appeared to me.

The content of the preaching by Paul was the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said, Jesus died for our sins which means he died on behalf of all sinners. A. T. Robertson said the key phrase is “for our sins.” The preposition is *hyper*, which literally meant over, on behalf of, or instead of.²⁸ Second, Jesus was buried which destroys any theory of swoon. Third, Paul said Jesus has been raised which provides the life of the gospel. Christians serve a risen savior who lives today. Robertson asserts, “Paul emphasizes the permanence of the resurrection of Christ”²⁹ Fourth, the fact that Jesus appeared to the disciples strengthens the argument for the gospel of Christ.

These four basic facts of the gospel provide the biblical foundation of

²⁸A. T. Robertson, *Epistles of Paul in Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1931), 4:186.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 187.

preaching. Paul said the purpose of his preaching was to make known the gospel of Jesus which he “preached.” The word for preached is the verb form of the word gospel, which meant “to proclaim good news.”³⁰

The key to interpreting what Paul meant is the aorist tense of this verb. The word for preach is a verb form of the word gospel. The word meant to proclaim good news. Cleon Rogers says the aorist tense views the total preaching ministry of Paul.³¹ Dana and Mantey say the constative aorist refers to action as a whole. “It takes an occurrence and regardless of its extent of duration, gathers it into a single whole.”³² Therefore, this verb gives a signal to the reader that Paul referred to his entire preaching ministry as preaching the Gospel of Christ.

Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians Paul said, “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). The primary purpose of his preaching was to make the gospel of Jesus Christ known. Cleon Rogers said the word for make known “draws attention to something important.”³³ The most important aspect of Paul’s preaching was confronting people with the claims of the gospel.

³⁰Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 384.

³¹Ibid.

³²H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1955), 196.

³³Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 384.

This point raises the question, how can expository sermons be true to the text and keep a gospel-centered focus? A solid biblical theology provides the answer to this question. Bryan Chapell argues, “No text exists in isolation from other texts or from the overarching biblical message”³⁴ Proper application in expository preaching must be faithful to the original intent of a specific text and keep the overall message of the Bible in mind. Chapel asserts,

Paul’s commitment to make his ministry reflect ‘nothing but Jesus and Him crucified’ may strike us as not only infeasible but also not genuine. After all, we could reason that Paul addressed church worship standards, biblical discipline, stewardship, family relationships, governmental responsibilities, and the history of Israel. He even quoted Greek poets. Doesn’t this prove that the apostle did more than talk about Jesus and the crucifixion? Apparently not to Paul. In Paul’s mind, every subject, every address, and every epistle had a focus. Everything he did centered on making the cross and its implications evident.³⁵

Therefore, a biblical theology must be the basis for practical application in expository preaching. This basis leads one to consider the correct approach to practical application.

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Paul encouraged Timothy to grow in his faith by continuing to apply the Scriptures he had learned as a child.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Practical application helped Timothy grow spiritually. Paul said Timothy could be thoroughly furnished for every good work by properly applying Scripture. This raises

³⁴Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 275.

³⁵Ibid.

another question of how to apply a text specifically and with a view toward the gospel of Christ. This focus does not mean, however that every text must mention Christ. This type of practical application should relate to the person or work of Christ.

Proper application of Scripture in expository preaching motivates the hearers to obey Scripture. By applying Scripture properly, “The man of God becomes thoroughly furnished for every good work.” The word for “thoroughly furnished” described something ready to be used. Rogers said, “The word [thoroughly furnished] was used of documents-or a wagon-or a rescue boat-which were completely outfitted, or of a machine sold in good condition; i.e., capable of performing the service expected of it.”³⁶ God enables believers to perform the things he requires from His word.

The challenges faced by Christians can be overcome by applying Scripture properly with a gospel focus. Paul said the man of God will be complete because the Scriptures are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). Proper application in expository preaching must instruct believers to obey the principles in Scripture and encourage them to depend upon God to enable them to perform what he requires. Sidney Greidanus says, “Every properly selected preaching text seeks to accomplish a specific goal among the hearers: answer a question, comfort, encourage, correct, teach, motivate to obedience, praise, trust, etc.”³⁷

The preaching pattern of Paul was to explain and apply the Scriptures in the

³⁶Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 506.

³⁷Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and The Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 173.

synagogues. Paul preached Christ-centered sermon with practical application as evidenced in his mission work in Thessalonica. According to Acts 17:1-3,

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying this Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.

The apostle Paul traveled through many towns on his mission trips. He would find the local synagogue. It was the custom of the rabbi to invite a visitor to speak on the Sabbath. Possibly Paul was invited to address the congregation, and he reasoned with them from the Scriptures. Paul preached Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures. F. F. Bruce adds, "He brought forth as evidence of their fulfillment the historical facts recently accomplished in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus."³⁸

Paul led many to respond in faith at Thessalonica. Later, Paul wrote to the church and explained their conversion: "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess 1:5-6). They became imitators of Paul and Jesus by putting in to practice what they had heard. Therefore, a biblical theology of proper application in expository preaching grounds a sermon in the gospel of Christ and makes personal application a specific the text as well.

³⁸F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, The New International Critical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 323.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES: EVALUATION AND IMPLEMENTING MODELS OF APPLICATION

Chapter 2 provided the theological foundation of expository preaching. The Bible teaches that proper application of Scripture will effect change in the life of the believer. Secondly, men of God in the Old Testament exemplify the importance of proper application. Third, Jesus Christ said the proper application of Scripture will be beneficial. The Apostle Paul modeled how to properly apply Scripture. Although applying the Bible can be difficult, God's people can overcome barriers that hinder them from properly applying Scripture to life.

Because it is God's desire that people apply Scripture properly, the preacher has the responsibility to help people obey God. However, Christians may get discouraged when they fail to understand Scripture. Therefore, some Christians do not apply truths from God's Word to their lives. It will be helpful for church leaders to understand the principles of application used in expository preaching in order to help others apply Scripture properly.

This chapter discusses a definition and description of proper application, and present principles of application in expository preaching. The results of the research of this chapter was the material for the teaching plan for the focus group.

Definition of Expository Preaching

Defining expository preaching is like trying to define someone running a marathon. Running involves a person in action who is moving toward a specific goal. Several elements are involved in running. One must take into consideration the person running. Who is the person running? How fast is he or she running? One must also consider the course of the marathon. What is the terrain like? Are there any obstacles to overcome? How long is the marathon? One must also take into consideration the start and finish line of a marathon. Other elements may also be considered in running a marathon. However, the person running, the course, and the runner's goal must be considered.

Expository preaching involves a man with a message moving toward a specific goal that will impact the listeners. Expository preaching has challenges to face also. The character of the preacher, the truth of the message and impact of the listeners must all be considered. Haddon Robinson said that defining expository preaching is like trying to capture the wind. He said, "Preaching is a living interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation, and no definition can pretend to capture that dynamic."¹ Several definitions will be considered in order to evaluate the components of an expository sermon.

The Apostle Paul summarized preaching when he charged Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). Timothy was instructed to be like a herald which meant "to

¹Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1980), 21.

preach as your first priority.”² Jay Adams stated a herald was someone who went about the streets of a city calling people to gather together in order to hear the word from the King. He explained, “The called out ones might gather to transact the business of the city.”³ The people of God are called out of the world in order to assemble together and to hear from the King. Adams added, “God’s heralds of the gospel go about preaching the good news, and those persons who respond in faith assemble as God’s called out ones.”⁴ Like the herald who had orders from the king to speak his words, God commanded his preachers to proclaim his word accurately. Expository preaching seeks to expound the word of God clearly and to apply the truths accurately in order to meet the needs of the people.

Phillips Brooks defined expository preaching with two essential elements. Brooks summarized preaching as presenting a biblical truth through the personality of the preacher. He said, “Preaching is the bringing of truth through personality. It must have both elements.”⁵ Brooks believed these two elements must be balanced for the sermon to be a true expository sermon. “It is the absence of one or the other element that a discourse ceases to be a sermon, and a man ceases to be a preacher altogether.”⁶

²Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 506.

³Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 6.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1877), 5.

⁶*Ibid.*, 6.

Brooks noted the words “message” and “witness” that describes this idea in the Bible. First John 1:5 said, “This is the message that we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Brooks argued that God gives the message to the preacher, but one cannot speak until is has become his own experience. The Apostle Peter spoke out of his experience with Jesus, “We were witnesses of these things” (2 Pet 1:16). According to Brooks, “In these two words, message and witness, we have the fundamental conception of the matter of all Christian preaching.”⁷

From this foundation of Christian preaching, a definition of expository preaching can be developed. Depending on the author, however, definitions of expository preaching may vary. Some authors consider the components of the sermon, the structure of the sermon, and length of the text as key components for a sermon to qualify as an expository sermon. While other authors consider the methods of interpretation and application as essential elements of an expository sermon.

John Broadus focused on three basic elements, the message, the preacher and the needs of human beings. He stated, “Preaching is the proclamation of God’s message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity.”⁸ Both Brooks and Broadus considered the message and the preacher. Broadus, however, said an expository sermon must take into consideration the needs of the congregation. Although he primarily

⁷Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching*, 14.

⁸John A. Broadus and Vernon Stanfield, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 3.

focused on the explanation of Scripture in his book, he also considered application necessary in expository preaching.

Jay Adams, however rejected Phillips Brooks definition of expository preaching altogether. Adams argued, “As elegant as Brook’s definition may be, it surely must be rejected as inadequate.”⁹ He summarized expository preaching by the content of the message, the character of the preacher, and the impact of the listeners. However, Adams also noted the work of the Holy Spirit as a necessary element in expository preaching. He said, “Whenever any one or more of these elements are ignored, or is otherwise out of sync with the rest, problems arise.”¹⁰

Some define expository preaching by not only the content, but also the form of the sermon. Micheal Fabarez said the Bible should determine not only the content of the message, but also the structure and impact of the message. He mentioned three key components to expository preaching. One, it clearly derives its content from the Bible. Second, it accurately explains what the Bible is saying. Third, it effects change that God intends for the believer. He explained, “The Bible is what we are attempting to communicate. We should look to it for the source of our message, the substance of our message, and the structure of our message.”¹¹

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix provided a specific definition of an expository sermon by adding the structure of the sermon must be consistent with the structure of the

⁹Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 7.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Micheal Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 77.

text. They stated, “An expository sermon is a discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.”¹² This detailed definition of expository preaching expanded in more detail the summary of “truth through personality” proposed by Phillips Brooks.

Expository preaching is as much a commitment to Scripture as a method. Harold Bryson contrasted a topical or textual sermon to an expository sermon. Bryson noted that a topical sermon is built around an idea that may be taken from the Bible or a subject outside the Bible. Scripture references are used to support the preacher’s points. He stated that a textual sermon is based on one or two verses from the Bible, but an expository sermon is based on a text longer than two verses. According to Bryson, “Preaching a connected series of sermons from a Bible book developed as another idea associated with expository preaching.”¹³

Expository preaching may be defined as an art or a science. Ramesh Richard expanded the definition to include specific application. According to Richard, “Expository preaching is the contemporization of the central proposition of a biblical text that is derived from proper methods of interpretation and declared through effective means of communication to inform minds, instruct hearts, and influence behavior toward

¹²Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 29.

¹³Harold Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 20.

godliness.”¹⁴ Modern authors focused more on application than exegesis in their definitions of expository preaching. Hershel York added, “Sermons are not about just imparting information. They should be custom built to change lives.”¹⁵

Haddon Robinson provided an extensive definition of expository preaching. His definition was a balance of on the accurate explanation and application of a text. According to Robinson, the preacher applies the messages to his own experience and then the Holy Spirit applies the message to the hearts of the listeners. Robinson stated,

Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the listeners.¹⁶

According to this definition by Robinson, proper application is a key component of expository preaching.

Without proper application of Scripture, a sermon ceases to be an expository sermon. No one can properly apply Scripture without the Holy Spirit. Vines and Shaddix described the work of the Holy Spirit as the “anointing of God.”¹⁷ The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the most important component of expository preaching. Public speakers may deliver a speech, but the anointing of the Holy Spirit allows the gospel preacher to speak with power and proper application. They asserted, “When a preacher preaches in

¹⁴Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 19.

¹⁵Hershael York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 11.

¹⁶Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 21.

¹⁷Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 64.

the power of God, the results are remarkable. He preaches with inspiration and fullness of thought. He has both freedom and simplicity of utterance. This element of the divine in preaching must be foremost in the preacher's preparation and delivery if he is to be lastingly effective."¹⁸

The Need for Proper Application

A great need exists for proper application in preaching today. Micheal Fabarez stated correctly, "God's Word always demands a human response. If [the preacher] fails to boldly call people to respond to the Bible; it is not true expository preaching."¹⁹

Through proper exegesis and application of Scripture, God deepens the convictions of the hearers, guards the church from false teaching, and matures followers of Christ.

Proper application confronts church members who have low moral convictions. Vines and Shaddix state, "A great deal of concern has been expressed about the lack of moral convictions on the part of the average churchgoer."²⁰ Church members struggle with teen pregnancy, divorce, and extra-marital affairs. Proper application is needed for godliness in the lives of believers. "Somewhere along the way, multitudes of regular church attenders have failed to make the connection between the truths of the Bible and their moral implications for life."²¹ Proper application will develop moral convictions in the hearts of God's people in order to meet this need.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 19.

²⁰Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 181.

²¹Ibid., 182.

The dangers of false teaching raises another need for proper application. Jay Adams asserted, “Effective preaching is necessary today because of the other gospels being proclaimed in today’s world.”²² The true expositor seeks to be a mouthpiece for God. He does not use the Bible to fit his own agenda. Vines and Shaddix described application as “The functional element that tells the listeners how to know God, how specific problems can be solved, how to grow spiritually, how to perform Christian service, or how to live a better life.” When the preacher exegetes and applies the Scriptures properly, it guards the church from heretical teaching.

Proper application strengthens the body of Christ. Vines and Shaddix stated, “As the pastor faithfully preaches the Word of God, the people receive strength.”²³ Church members who are fed a proper diet of God’s word will become a strong church. Jay Adams said, “The pastoral preacher must be prepared at each gathering of the saints to use the Word in some way in order to ‘equip’ them for the work of the ministry.”²⁴

John Broadus affirmed the link of proper application to the life of the strong church. The church was brought into existence due to preaching. He states, “The strength of the church is directly related to the strength of the pulpit.”²⁵ Adams added, “The purpose of preaching, then, is to effect changes among the member’s of God’s church that

²²Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 8.

²³Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 36.

²⁴Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 12.

²⁵Broadus and Stanfield, *One the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 9.

build them up individually and that build up the body as a whole.”²⁶ The spiritual maturity of believers depends upon proper application of Scripture.

The Nature of Application

Not all sermons are expository sermons. Some people have reservations about expository preaching. Problems do not arise with expository preaching. Problems arise with bad preaching. Robinson asserted, “Expository preaching has suffered severely in the pulpits of those claiming to be its friends.”²⁷ Key ingredients must be present for a sermon to be an expository sermon.

Preachers must help their listeners see the relevancy of Scripture. Chickens eat corn, but a farmer may scatter the chickens if he throws the corn at them. Vines and Shaddix stated, “Just because the preacher explains the text clearly and makes convincing argument does not necessarily mean the listeners will make the connections between the biblical text and their lives.”²⁸

The nature of proper application allows the preacher to communicate effectively by giving him authority which demands a human response. With access to the internet and the copy and paste methods of sermon preparation, application of biblical truths may be secondary in preaching. Robinson stated, “Ministers can proclaim anything

²⁶Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 13.

²⁷Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

²⁸Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 181.

in a stain-glassed voice, yet when they fail to preach the Scriptures, they abandon their authority.”²⁹

Through proper exegesis and application, however, the preacher has God’s authority to call people to make a response. Vines and Shaddix said, “When you stand to preach an expository sermon, you can stand with a sense that you speak from the authority of the Bible, not your own.”³⁰ Preachers have the responsibility to help people grow in the knowledge of God’s word. Proper application will allow the preacher to preach with authority and call people to respond to the truth.

Descriptions of Proper Application

A great gulf exists between the modern audience and the culture and conditions of the Bible. A passage can be properly explained in context, but improperly applied. If the application of the sermon is inconsistent with the original intent of the author, the preacher weakens the authority of the Bible. Haddon Robinson said, “More heresy is preached in application than Bible exegesis.”³¹ In other words, a preacher can be accurate in exegesis, but inaccurate in application. Vines and Shaddix added, “The expositor does not have the right to make a passage mean something today that it did not mean in principle in the biblical world.”³² If the preacher makes a mistake in applying the passage, he weakens the authority of the sermon. Furthermore, York asserted,

²⁹Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 20.

³⁰Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 34.

³¹Haddon Robinson, “The Heresy of Application,” *Leadership* (Fall 1997): 27.

³²Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 185.

When we preach with an intent foreign to the original author, we fail to enjoy the maximum flow, even though everything we say may indeed be true. We preach with a solid theological background and conviction that keeps us from saying things that are overtly false, but we stop short of reaching the torrential force that the passage offers.

The effective expositor must balance solid exegesis with proper application in order to have the authority God intended in the message.

This balance is difficult to maintain. John R. Stott illustrated this process as “bridge-building.”³³ Just as a bridge is a way to connect two things that would otherwise be disconnected, the preacher bridges the gap from the ancient truths of Scripture to the modern listeners. Stott said, “Our task is to enable God’s revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today.”³⁴ The metaphor of building a bridge seeks to keep a balance between the modern listeners and the ancient text.

A danger exists in sermon preparation. Because conservative preachers have a high view of Scripture, there is a tendency to spend much time on exposition and fail to prepare for the application of the sermon. On the other hand, modern preachers may focus more on application than exposition. Stott noted, “A lecture has been wittily defined as the transfer of information from the lecturer’s notes to the student’s, without it passing through the mind of either; but a sermon should not be equally dismal examples of non-communication.”³⁵ Stott challenged the preacher to make a commitment to maintain a balance between proper exegesis and application. He asserted, “Our bridges too must be

³³John R. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 137.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 132.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 144.

firmly anchored on both sides of the chasm, by refusing either to compromise the divine content of the message or to ignore the human context in which it has been spoken.”³⁶

Haddon Robinson challenged preachers to maintain balance and he provided a model for proper application. He stated,

I picture a ladder of abstraction that comes up from the biblical world and crosses over and down to the modern setting. I have to be conscious how I cross this ‘abstraction ladder.’ I want to make sure the biblical situation and the current situation are analogous at the points I am making them connect. I must be sure the center of the analogy connects, not the extremes.³⁷

The ladder of abstraction begins in the ancient world and moves up the ladder by asking simple questions: What does the text say about God and what does the text say about man? As the preacher answers these questions from the text, he then moves down the other side of the ladder in the world of the modern audience. York and Decker said, “Using Robinson’s ladder as a means to move from culturally specific commands to contemporary principles, we are able to make application that is relevant and specific.”³⁸ Vines and Shaddix added, “Sometimes the connection between biblical and modern worlds will be specific and concrete, at other times the connection will be more abstract in principle.”³⁹ As the preacher moves up and across the ladder, he can make specific application that is consistent with the original intent of Scripture.

³⁶Ibid., 145.

³⁷Haddon Robinson, “The Heresy of Application” *Leadership* (Fall 1997): 27.

³⁸York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 80.

³⁹Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 186.

Ramesh Richard called this process the most critical part of the entire sermon building process. He described this process as a purpose bridge. Richard said, “When you cross this bridge, you will have gone from studying the Scriptures a hermeneutical exercise - toward preaching the Scriptures the homilectical exercise.”⁴⁰ This process of climbing a ladder or crossing a bridge may be the most important part of sermon building, but also be the most neglected in sermon preparation. This action makes the sermon relevant to the listeners. At this point in sermon preparation, the exegesis and sermon outline have been prepared. The effective preacher must consider how to make proper application.

Guidelines for Application

The effective expositor must consider the text and the audience in sermon preparation. No shortcuts exist in the process. After the work of exegesis, it is easy to move into sermon building. However Fabarez said, “You cannot truly begin to craft your sermon until you discover God’s intended impact of the passage on people’s lives.”⁴¹

Preparing the specific application of a sermon must not be overlooked. Jay Adams said,

Just as we have no right using a preaching portion for purposes other than that which God intended it to serve, neither do we have the option to “apply” it, as many do, to any and all circumstances that we may choose. Therefore, to preach the Bible faithfully in our time, we must find the equivalent to the original circumstance or situation to which God then (and now) applied the warning, promise, the principle, or the command.⁴²

⁴⁰Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*. 77.

⁴¹Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 39.

⁴²Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 133.

Therefore, the application of the sermon must be consistent with the application God intended for the original audience.

Components of Application

Key questions may be answered in order to transfer the application to the audience. Dave Veerman defined application as, “very simply stated, answering the question ‘so what.’”⁴³ Richard added,

How does one go about finding and articulating the purpose of the sermon. We find the purpose of the sermon (construct the purpose bridge) by asking and answering the following question: On the basis of the central proposition of this text, what does God want my people to understand and obey? Of course, the purpose of the sermon will be compatible with the expectations of the biblical authors original audiences.⁴⁴

As the preacher answers these questions, he will be developing application consistent with the original intent of the author. Effective preaching changes the heart not only on Sunday, but during the week also.

Certain practices will enhance the skill of the expositor. One must be constantly preparing to make application by simply asking, how are these truths relevant to my audience? Richard stated, “Boil it down to these questions, Why did the Holy Spirit put this text here? What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit? What was this text intended to

⁴³Dave Veerman. *How to Apply the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 1993), 14.

⁴⁴Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 78.

change in their lives and What should this text change in my life and my congregants lives?”⁴⁵

One must have the proper approach to application. According to Vines and Shaddix, three important issues are involved. One, you must be ready to work application. Secondly, you must determine what biblical material can be applied. Third, you must apply the material with integrity. Chapel added, “Expository messages require preachers to ensure that the applications they make answer four key questions: What does God now require of me? Where does he require it of me? Why must I do what he requires? How can I do what he requires?”⁴⁶ These questions allows the expositor to focus the sermon on specific application.

Certain components of application must be highlighted by answering these questions from the text. Application may be directly transferred from the text to the audience, but some passages limit the transferability. Fabarez stated, “Several factors need to be considered to determine whether the direct transfer of an original application is appropriate.”⁴⁷ For example, some passages such as “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” may be transferred directly from ancient text to the modern listeners. Because God calls all people at all times to love him with all their hearts, this text has direct transferability.

⁴⁵Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 39.

⁴⁶Bryan Chapel, *Christ Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 214.

⁴⁷Fabrez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 46.

The first component of application considers what the text says about God. In Leviticus 11:45 and 1 Peter 1:16, God said, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” The application can be directly transferred from the original audience to the contemporary listeners. The application is based on the nature of God. Peter speaks to women of the early church to have a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pet 3:3-4). He admires them because such beauty is very precious in the sight of God. This application transfers directly because God admires character in all women at all times.

Another component considers what the text says about man. Vines and Shaddix recommended, “Look for the depravity factor, that element of humanity that rebels against the glimpse of God.”⁴⁸ Fabarez stated, “The effective preacher must continually consider how a given application addresses the universal need for all Christians to put to death whatever belongs to their earthly nature (Col 3:5) and lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness.”⁴⁹

One must consider the standards that God requires for mankind also. The effective preacher will find some passages that reflect the order of creation. Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24 in defense of marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. Fabarez stated, “This argument is based on the foundation of God’s created order and therefore proves to be an applicable standard for every age.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸Vines and Shadidx, *Power in the Pulpit*, 187.

⁴⁹Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 47.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

A third component of application considers the negative aspect of a text. If a text has certain restrictions or counter-cultural applications, the expositor must apply the passage appropriately. “If the application was originally counter-cultural, then it often calls us to make a relevant transfer to our audience regardless of its cultural stance.”⁵¹ Vines and Shaddix recommended the expositor to do thorough exegesis in order to apply the passage properly. The effective expositor will consider these components for proper application. If the application does not transfer directly, then principles of application can be used to determine the degree of transferability.

Principles for Application

One principle for application is to the context of the original audience. The effective expositor will consider the context of the original audience to look for ways to apply the passage properly. When Jesus sent a letter to the church at Laodicea, the original recipients may have received the message with a tone of sarcasm. The Bible says,

I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent (Rev 3:18-19).

Laodecia was a wealthy city which prided itself in the gold and pharmacy business.

Lenski said, “These Laodiceans were great businessmen who handled much money and

⁵¹Ibid.

lived in fine estates because Laodecia is regarded as having been a wealthy city.”⁵² These wealthy men may have thought they had need of nothing.

The fact that Jesus told these wealthy men that they needed something from him would have a tremendous impact on how the original audience received the message. Fabarez said,

Carefully noting that author’s intentions will prevent us from short-changing the power of the text and keep us faithful to the reason for the text’s placement in Scripture. This discovery will then govern the direction and parameters of the application we eventually will tailor for our own audience.⁵³

The effective expositor will look for these factors that would effect how the original audience will receive the message.

Another way to discover the context of the original application is to study the imperative verbs in a passage. Fabarez said,

Here is something they were told to do, or in many cases, not do. ‘Love your enemies and bless those who hate you’ (Matt 5:44), ‘Do not lie to each other’ (Col 3:9), ‘Be diligent to come to me quickly’ (2 Tim 4:9) all clearly prompt the original readers to action. These imperatives provide the handle for working our way toward an appropriate application of the text to our modern hearers.⁵⁴

Most of the time, especially in didactic passages, the application can be directly transferred from the original audience to the modern listeners by considering the imperative verbs.

⁵²R. C. H. Lenski, *Revelation, Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 159.

⁵³Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 40.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 42.

Another way to study the context of the original listeners is to determine if the passage serves as an example for them to follow. Determine if a passage simply explains a situation or if the original listeners would have followed an example. Jesus told a parable of two men who went to the temple to pray. One man was a pharisee who prided himself in his work. The other man was unwilling to lift his eyes to heaven, but cried out to God for mercy. Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14). The point was to follow the example of the humble man in worship.

Another principle of application is to observe the limitations of application between the original audience and the contemporary listeners. Fabarez recorded four important questions to ask about the text:

Is there anything in the context of the passage that might show why this application is limited to a particular target audience? Does any other part of the Bible limit the target of the application? Does a cultural condition limit the target of the application? Does a unique historical condition limit the target of the application?⁵⁵

Once the expositor discovers how the original audience would have applied a text, he must also consider these questions that will help transfer the application appropriately.

A third principle of application is to observe the context of the contemporary audience. The effective expositor must know his people. Fabarez said, “Thus far, the attention has been on the ancient application in its historical and cultural context.”⁵⁶ At

⁵⁵Ibid., 44.

⁵⁶Ibid., 48.

some point in the sermon building process, the expositor must turn his attention to his listeners. York and Decker stated, “When I’m preaching or teaching, I first want to be focused and sure of what I’m trying to accomplish, but then I want to know who I’m talking to, and where they are coming from.”⁵⁷ Vines and Shaddix added, “As you seek to determine the contemporary equivalents to the shared human conditions, try visualizing specific members of your congregation.”⁵⁸ This practice will help the preacher target the application of his message.

How to Define the Target of Application

Once the preacher has discovered the original application of a text and he observes the modern audience, he can apply the passage to specific life-situations by answering questions of the text. First, the preacher must observe the conditions of the audiences. Second, he should observe common ground between the original audience and modern listeners. Similar conditions of Bible times will help identify situations and connect them for today.

The preacher must also observe uncommon ground. What were the differences between the modern and original audience. By observing dissimilarities, the preacher will avoid parts of the text that have little application for the modern audience. The expositor must also consider if his listeners are already doing what the text says. Once these

⁵⁷York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 109.

⁵⁸Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 187.

observations are made, the preacher can focus on the needs, actions and attitudes of the listeners.

In light of these observations, the preacher will consider the needs of the audience in order to define the target application. Once the common ground of the application is discovered, the preacher must consider what the pressing need is of the audience. Wayne McDill said, “Preaching to people where they live will have to begin in the thinking of the preacher. This entire approach rests on your assumption as a preacher that man’s fallen nature means wrong thinking, but right thinking is in the truth of Scripture.”⁵⁹ When a new truth is applied, real change takes place in the lives of listeners.

Another way to define the target is to consider what the listeners need to know about the text. Fabarez stated, “My goal at this stage is to state their intellectual need in light of the intended application.”⁶⁰ Once the needs are explained, the listener’s heart will be open to answers from Scripture. McDill asserted, “Touch me at the point of my pain by describing my discouragement and weariness with life and I am ready to hear about the grace of God.”⁶¹

A third way to define the target is to call the listeners to action. This step considers what the listeners should do with what they know. York and Decker stated, “Usually if I’m just talking I don’t automatically think of an action step for my listeners.

⁵⁹Wayne McDill. *The Twelve Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 108.

⁶⁰Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 52.

⁶¹McDill, *The Twelve Essential Skills*, 107.

But if I'm preaching rather than chatting and I feel compassionate about the subject and have a point of view, shouldn't I want them to do something."⁶² The effective preacher will consider how to help his listeners act upon the truth.

Another consideration when defining the target of application is how the listeners will feel about the subject. This process calls for more than generalities. The expositor should not only call for action, but motivate the hearers. York and Decker said the expositor should help the listeners see the benefits of putting Scripture into practice. "If the listeners don't see the benefits for them, they will be very unlikely to take my action step."⁶³ The effective expositor seeks to apply the passage with specific action steps for the listeners.

How to Hit the Target of Application

Once the appropriate application is determined, the preacher can focus sermon on specific application. Haddon Robinson described this process as hitting a target. It is easier to develop an exegetical outline than an outline based on the application. However, the expositor must form his preaching outline with present tense words. Fabarez said to develop sentences with second person pronouns and imperative verbs when developing the sermon outline.⁶⁴

⁶²York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 110.

⁶³Ibid., 111.

⁶⁴Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 63.

Secondly, York and Decker encouraged the preacher to make the points of application drive the sermon. By outlining the application of the text, the sermon will be centered on the target, or purpose of the sermon. Fabarez offered guidelines for outlining, “One should avoid complicated phrases, make the main points clear as possible, and not create too many points, and not try to communicate too much material.”⁶⁵ The effective expositor must focus on the purpose of the sermon and drive home the main point of the sermon to the audience.

Pitfalls to Avoid

The effective expositor must be careful about developing the application of the sermon by avoiding certain pitfalls. Avoid people-centered sermons that may focus too much on the problem of mankind. By trying to be relevant and answering questions, the preacher may lead people to focus on problems more than God. The main goal of preaching is the glory of God. Secondly, avoid unrealistic goals, such as we should love all people at all time. Chapel said, “These applications will convince listeners either that they cannot do what Scripture requires or that the preacher lives in a make believe world.”⁶⁶

The preacher must also avoid moralizing stories. Caution must be taken when preaching what everyone should be. Preachers must not put unbiblical demands on people such as, everyone should have a two hour devotion every morning. House and Garland

⁶⁵Ibid., 67.

⁶⁶Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 230.

stated, “Application must accurately represent the actual claims of Scripture.”⁶⁷ Simply avoid inaccurate application. Preaching with spiritual integrity requires trustworthiness. Chapel added, “Even when it hurts, people will listen to application from a preacher whom they perceive possesses spiritual integrity.”⁶⁸ The effective preacher must make a commitment to apply what Scripture teaches and not his own ideas.

Models of Application

Every sermon must have proper application. Proper application gives the sermon purpose. Chapell asserted, “Application is the present, personal consequence of scriptural truth. Without application a preacher has no reason to preach, because truth without actual or potential application fulfills no redemptive purpose.”⁶⁹ Effective expositors must ground their sermon in solid exegesis with targeted application. The effective preacher will have a specific purpose in mind.

Models of proper application will help the expositor preach with purpose. Michael Fabarez challenges the preacher to focus on the life-change Scripture demands. He stated, “In the end, the preacher does not use the Bible to preach his own message, instead; it is the Bible that uses the preacher to preach its message.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷H. Wayne House and Daniel G. Garland, *God’s Message, Your Sermon*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 88.

⁶⁸Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 233.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 210.

⁷⁰Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 16.

Bryan Chapel challenged the preacher to let Christ answer the fallen condition focus. Chapel explains the FCF that reveals the purpose of each text. He stated,

All Scripture is redemptive revelation that is inspired to address humanity's fallen condition (or incompleteness) with divine provision. Preachers who recognize this pervasive scriptural dynamic have discovered the means for uncovering the positive focus in all Christ-centered preaching. The discovery occurs when they see that a text's FCF defines God's mercy at the same time that it reveals human need. As Christ is put on display in every sermon, the people will be enabled to apply Scripture properly.⁷¹

This model provides a redemptive focus for each sermon for proper application.

⁷¹Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 277.

CHAPTER 4

A MINISTRY PROJECT

This chapter reports the implementation of the ministry project used at New Prospect Baptist Church. The strategy for the project grew from careful consideration of principles of application from the research in chapter three and from the context of New Prospect Baptist Church. By using these sources, a strategy for improving application in expository preaching was put into practice.

The Initial Study

The initial study began as a need arose at New Prospect Baptist Church to improve application of Scripture. This ministry project was developed in order to improve application in my preaching and to teach a focus group the principles of application of Scripture. Expository preaching has been important to me since God called me into the ministry. My training in sermon building has been in developing sermons that are consistent with original intent of the text. My skills of preparing sermons have focused on developing the exegesis which left my skills of developing application weak.

Through the research and development of this ministry project, my purpose was to use the principles of application in order to meet this need in my preaching. The principles of application discovered in chapter 3 helped me develop skills in order to improve the application of the sermon. These principles served as the foundation of this

ministry project. Due to consistent growth of New Prospect Baptist Church the need for additional teachers was to be expected.¹ The church leadership, however, took no responsibility in training new teachers. Small group bible studies were increasing in attendance, but there was no increase in volunteers to teach the Bible.

This shortage of teachers prompted the questions, “How are we training new Christians to apply Scripture? What members are currently serving as leaders of small groups, and what members are not?” Also, “What members would serve as leaders if they felt properly trained?” It became clear that if church growth continued, proper application in my preaching must improve and more people would need to be trained to teach the Bible properly.

A further review of the church’s membership revealed that many members were not involved in small group Bible study. Less than half of the members that attended worship were involved in small group Bible study. Worship attendance on Sunday morning may average 225, but only 100 people attended small group bible study. All adult bible study groups were large and had little room for growth. The answer to the need of improving application at New Prospect Baptist Church was training more members how to apply Scripture properly. By teaching biblical principles of application and modeling these principles in expository preaching, more members would be trained to teach and my skills of application would be improved in my preaching.

A pre-project survey was given to small group members in order to identify reasons members were not involved in teaching (Appendix 1). This survey measured the spiritual background, beliefs and practices of the Bible, and level of commitment to the

¹ See chapt. 1 in this project.

church. A major component of the survey was to understand what the members believed about application in expository preaching. Furthermore, a review of the survey revealed sixty-seven adults were actively involved in Bible study. Of the sixty-seven active members, thirty-one said they would be willing to be trained to lead a small group Bible study. The answer to the need for more leaders was in the seats of the classrooms.

Developing the Ministry Project

The first step in the development of the ministry project was to interpret the results of the survey. The surveys and the interviews of existing Bible study leaders gave much insight into the development and implementation of this project. The surveys were separated into three categories.

The first category analyzed the demographics and spiritual background of members. The second category reflected the beliefs and practices of those involved in Bible study. The third category addressed the level of commitment of members.

Demographic Analysis

The initial survey (Appendix 1) revealed the spiritual background of those members who attend Bible study. The results were positive due to identifying key factors of the spiritual background of the members. A majority of those surveyed had a solid biblical background that would benefit the church leadership.

Positive Results

The survey (Appendix 1) first revealed that 59 percent of adults were over the age of 50, and that 90 percent of adult members had been Christians involved in Bible

study for over ten years. A positive result of those surveyed revealed the majority of the members are spiritually mature Christians with a commitment to Bible study.

Another positive result of the analysis was that 62 percent had a Baptist background. Also 48 percent said they would be available to lead a Bible study group if they received the proper training. The beliefs and practices revealed in all of the surveys were positive. Since the majority of the members surveyed were Christians who had been members for over ten years, the survey reflected a strong commitment to the Bible.

Problem Issues

Nevertheless, the survey (Appendix 1) also showed some issues that kept members from becoming leaders. First, the surveys indicated 2 people did not believe the Bible to be the Word of God without contradiction. Secondly, the level of commitment measured how members perceived the importance of church attendance. Although 98 percent said they attend Bible study, only 4 people said there were no reasons they would not feel comfortable leading. The most compelling reason members did not want to lead was that 29 percent said teaching was not their spiritual gift.

Attitudes toward Application

The pre-project survey revealed attitudes those surveyed had toward proper application of the Bible. While 98 percent said they strongly agree the Bible is the Word of God, only 72 percent said proper application was necessary for spiritual growth. Furthermore, 61 percent said they consult Scripture when making decisions in life. This survey revealed the need for proper application in expository preaching. Struggling with spiritual issues kept members from becoming leaders. Fifty-one percent said they were

not willing to be trained to be a leader, which reveals that forty nine percent were willing to lead, but other factors hindered them from teaching. Forty eight percent said either they had things to straighten up, unable to give 100 percent, or did not have the self-discipline it took to be a leader. Improving application of Scripture in expository preaching should enable more members to lead. The church today must show its members how to apply Scripture properly.

Establishing the Structure

After analyzing the data from the survey, the next step was to set the project in place. If a project that improves my preaching and trains others how to apply scripture properly is successful, then a structure must be set in place. This ministry project has three areas of ministry. The first area was enlisting members of the focus group. The second area was an eight week series of meetings that taught the principles of application to the focus group. The third area was a series of six sermons preached from the New Testament which was critiqued and discussed by the focus group. A final session with the focus group analyzed the entire project with discussion of strengths and weaknesses. These three areas of ministry comprised the 15-week ministry project.

Enlisting a Focus Group

After developing the 15 week ministry project, the first step was recruiting a focus group. Insight from the survey revealed 51 percent of those who attended small group bible study would be willing to be trained to interpret and apply Scripture properly. The approach taken was to inform church members of the need to be involved in teaching a small group Bible study. By making announcements from the pulpit, church members

were encouraged to participate in this ministry. This process took place during the month of December 2010.

Personal interviews were made with each teacher. Specific details of the project were explained and I personally asked each teacher to pray about their involvement in this 15-week ministry project. All adult Bible study teachers were willing to participate and recruit people from their classes. All teachers said they would welcome help developing skills of preparing a lesson and improving application.

After sharing the vision for this ministry project with the teachers, each teacher was willing to become involved in this ministry project. The teachers accepted the invitation with enthusiasm and said that a ministry such as this was much needed in the church. Based on the responses from the pre-project survey, 12 prospective teachers were asked to participate in this ministry also. The 12 current teachers and 12 prospects formed the focus group for this project.

Implementation of Sessions

After the focus group had been enlisted, the next step was to begin the process of training teacher and potential teacher. Eight sessions taught at 9 a.m. Sunday covered the basics of biblical interpretation and application. The research from chapter two and chapter three served as the basis for this project. The focus group began meeting January 2011 and met for 15 consecutive weeks. The group did not meet on Easter Sunday.

The Nature of Scripture

Session 1 (Appendix 3) covered the nature of Scripture and biblical exposition. After a brief time of prayer, we looked at the illustration of proper application in Hebrews 4:12. The writer of Hebrews described the Scriptures as a sword. Like a sword that penetrates, the Scriptures will penetrate the heart when applied properly. The focus group discussed the point by Haddon Robinson, “Scripture can be properly explained but applied improperly.” The ways to put the proper tools in our toolbox to apply Scripture properly were discussed.

The handout provided an overview of the nature of Scripture (Appendix 3). The Scripture references from chapter 2 served as the foundation of the session. The focus group was given time to identify the construction of the Bible. Scripture references were used to discover the name used to describe the Bible and ways to use the Bible. The focus group discussed how to study the Bible in order to discover the full force of application of a passage. An illustration of a water hose was used to describe proper application. Like using a spray handle of a water hose, the application can be a light stream with little force. On the other hand, Scripture must be applied with the full force God intended.

The Devotional life of the Preacher

Session 2 (Appendix 4) discussed the devotional life of the preacher as it relates to expository preaching. Definitions of expository preaching from chapter 3 were used in order to identify the components of an expository sermon. These definitions revealed that the devotional life of a teacher is directly related to proper application of expository preaching. Phillips Brook’s definition, “truth through personality,” helped the

focus group see the importance of the teacher's walk with God. The focus group discovered how lessons or sermons are not delivered just to impart information. The main intention of expository teaching and preaching should be to allow Scripture to change lives. Therefore, proper application is an important component of expository preaching.

These definitions of expository preaching enhanced the importance of the devotional life of the teacher. The focus group discussed the point statement by Wayne McDill, "You cannot be one kind of person and another of preacher."² When asked the greatest challenge of Bible study, one reviewer said, "to practice what we preach." Another person agreed, "To challenge people to an authentic faith while we model an authentic faith is the most difficult part of teaching the Bible." It was concluded that a teacher or preacher must have an authentic walk with God in order to apply Scripture properly.

Bridging the Communication Gap

The objective of session 3 (Appendix 5) was to describe the methods of bridging the communication gap between the original audience and the modern listeners. A great need exists in expository preaching for proper application. Church members may have low moral convictions, may be faced with false teachers, or may simply be immature believers. Proper application is a key ingredient that God uses in expository preaching to meet these needs. True expository sermons apply the text that allows the preacher to have God's authority by connecting the gap of the original intended application and the specific application of today.

² Wayne V. McDill, *The Twelve Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 27.

Two word pictures from chapter 3 of this project were used to describe this process of bridging the communication gap. John R. Stott described this process as building a bridge. Hadden Robinson provided a “ladder of abstraction” as a tool for this process. By answering certain questions, the expositor begins in the ancient world and moves up the ladder and across to the modern listeners. The original application of the text transfers to the modern listener through this method. By using these tools, the expositor can build a bridge from the ancient text to the modern audience.

Discussion with the focus group considered ways the expositor must learn how to bridge the communication gap in order to make proper application. The group found the handout (appendix 5) to be helpful. One person said, “I have heard of this communication gap, but the picture of the ladder really helps me understand how to connect the class with the text.” Another reviewer said that she had never “thought of the importance of studying the way people would connect to the text.”

Key Questions of Application

Pastors may spend much time in preparing the exegesis and outline of a passage, but little time preparing the application. This process of bridging the gap may be the most important part yet the most neglected part of preparation. Session 4 (Appendix 6) discussed four key factors in preparing the application of the sermon.

One factor of the text that may be considered is the intended audience. In order to prepare proper application, the expositor must determine if the passage was written to lost people, the church or both. The application may seem confusing if the intended audience is not identified.

The development of a single purpose statement is another factor that will help the expositor as he prepares the application. Summarizing the text into one purpose statement may be the most difficult part of the sermon building process, but it may be the most rewarding. The focus group discussed the illustration of the difference between a single shot rifle and a shotgun that may have many pellets.

Furthermore, the third factor discussed was how to develop a sermon outline with present or future tense words. Avoiding past tense outlines will help the expositor move from the biblical world to the modern audience. The focus group discussed how small group Bible studies can easily focus on the text and working in the past. One person responded, “The lesson often focuses on the past tense, and it takes much study time to discover the theme the bible intended.” The group discussed the benefits of making the theme of the passage a present tense sentence that will apply the scripture.

Components of Application

No shortcuts exist in preparing the application of a sermon. Application simply answers the question “so what?” As the effective expositor seeks to answer this question, he will be preparing application that not only impact the beliefs, but also change the heart and behavior of the listeners. The objective of session 5 (Appendix 7) identified four key components by asking simple questions of the text.

The focus group discussed four key questions that reveal the key components of application. One question asks, “Why did the Holy Spirit put this text here?” This question determines the context of the application. Secondly, one may ask, “What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit?” Third, “What was this text intended to change in the lives of the original audience?” Four, “What should this text change in my life and my

congregation?” By answering these key questions, the expositor discovers how the original application can transfer to the modern audience. By taking time to answer these questions, the expositor moves toward answering the question “so what?”

Principles for Application

In the previous session, the focus group discovered and discussed ways to define the target of the original application. In session 6 (Appendix 8) the focus group discussed principles of hitting the target of application properly. Once the teacher examines the big picture of the text, he can narrow the focus of the application by following certain principles.

One principle of application is to study the context of the original audience. Three ways to identify the original audience were discussed: “Look for factors that will determine how the original audience heard the message. Observe the limits between the ancient text and modern audience, and study the context of the modern listeners.” By studying the historical context of a passage, the expositor can narrow the focus of what the Holy Spirit intended for the original audience.

Pitfalls to Avoid

In session 7 (Appendix 9), the focus group learned how to avoid the errors of application. The effective expositor must be careful when developing the application. The focus group discussed possible ways to apply a passage improperly. It is easier to develop an exegetical outline than an outline based on application.

The expositor must take time when outlining the application of a text in order to be certain the outline is consistent with the original intention of the Holy Spirit. The

group discussed how to develop the points of a sermon based on the application of the text. Guidelines were identified on how to make the points clear as possible. Two models were discussed from Jay Adam and Bryan Chapel that will help the expositor avoid the pitfalls of inaccurate application. These models discussed in chapter three helped the focus group avoid common errors.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

In session 8 (Appendix 10), the focus group examined the role of the Holy Spirit. The focus group discussed the question, “Where do we look for help.” Drawing from the theological foundation from chapter 2, and from Charles Spurgeon’s *Lectures to My Students*, the group discussed four truths of the work of the Holy Spirit. We are not putting on display our skills or abilities. Our objective is to allow the Holy Spirit to penetrate the hearts of people. This effect should always be the expositor’s aim.

Furthermore, two ingredients by Michael Fabarez in chapter three provided ways to hit the specific application of a text. Sermons or lessons should always call people to appropriate Christ’s work. This point challenges people to put the principles from the word into actions. The focus group identified the three major emphasis of any expository sermon. A sermon or lesson may be an evangelistic appeal to lost people to trust Christ as personal Lord and Savior. A sermon may have an edifying appeal that builds up the Christian in his or her faith. Sermons may also equip believers to put a spiritual truth into action. Sermon or lesson must answer the question, “What do you want your listeners to do?”

Sermon Series

Once the eight-week sessions were completed, the focus group evaluated my sermons. Six sermons were preached on Sunday night beginning March 6, 2011, and ended April 10, 2011. The focus group evaluated the sermons during the service and offered insights during the meeting the following Sunday morning. The series of six sermons provided an overview of each type of major New Testament genre. Two sermons provided a model of specific application from the gospels. One sermon provided a specific application of narrative literature. Two sermons provided ways to apply the epistles. One sermon provided a model of application from the book of Revelation. The focus group used an instrument provided by the pastor to critique each sermon. The series was preached on Sunday night, in six consecutive weeks. The following Sunday morning, the focus group met at the allotted time and discussed the previous week's sermon. The following section provides a summary of the sermon series. Evaluation of the sermons will be discussed in chapter 5.

Denying Self

The first expository sermon (Appendix 11) provided a model of specific application from Matt 16:21-28. In this passage, Jesus challenged his followers to deny themselves and by embrace true discipleship. The purpose of this sermon was to challenge the church to become followers of Christ that will embrace true discipleship. Embrace means to accept willingly. Jesus called the disciples to follow him willingly and totally depend on him.

One way to embrace true discipleship is to pay the price of becoming a disciple of Christ. Jesus said there was a cost to true discipleship. Whoever gives up his

life will save it, whoever desires to save his own life will lose it. Discipleship begins with a simple desire to follow Jesus at all costs. In order to pay the price, a follower must be willing to deny self. A conscience decision to follow Christ at all cost must be made in order to become a true disciple. A true follower must be determined to follow Christ. Jesus said to deny self, take up one's cross and follow him.

Another way to embrace true discipleship is to prepare for the promises. Jesus promised life for the true disciple. He also promised eternity and rewards according to the disciple's works. A third way to embrace true discipleship is to practice his presence. Jesus told the disciples some were standing there that would experience his heavenly presence. True disciples enjoy the present reality of the risen Christ. Jesus told the disciples some would not taste death. True disciples have a permanent release of the penalty of sin. Jesus told the disciples some would see Jesus coming again. True disciples have the power to rest in him.

This sermon used the ladder of abstraction to make the connection between the ancient text and the modern audience. The application of the text has direct transferability which allows the preacher to directly apply the text to the audience of today. Jesus wanted his disciples to deny self and follow him, which is what he wants all believers at all times to do.

Keys to Victorious Faith

The second sermon (Appendix 12) identified keys of proper application from John 20: 30-31. This passage is the key to interpreting the book of John. The evangelist John challenged the people in Ephesus to have victorious faith in Christ. The purpose of this sermon was to challenge people to experience victorious faith in Jesus Christ. John

described victorious faith and how to have it. The key word in this passage is believe, which meant to place confidence in, be persuaded of, or to have full reliance upon.

John records three keys of victorious faith. One key is by believing victorious faith begins with grace. The word for sign was used interchangeably with miracles in the gospel of John. Seven miracles were recorded as signs so the readers would have faith in Jesus. Another key to victorious faith is by putting your faith in the right place. John said to the readers that they must believe that Jesus was the Messiah. The readers must know the content of the content of their faith. It must be in the right place. The third key to victorious faith is staying in the race. John said that by believing you might have life. Feelings may come and go with the wind, but victorious faith will give you strength for the race of life. Hebrews 12:1-2 challenges believers to run the race with endurance.

This sermon also discovered ways to bridge the communication gap. The application was directly transferred from the text to the listeners today. God wants all believers to have victorious faith. The three points illustrated the key factors of application by using present tense verbs. The intended audience of the book of John was probably the church at Ephesus. He wrote to the church in order to strengthen their faith in Jesus. However, there is a direct call for lost believers to trust Jesus as personal Lord and Savior in 20:30-31. This sermon was intended to use the key factors of application from session four.

Marks of a Christian Testimony

Sermon 3 (Appendix 13) demonstrated how to use the second step of the ladder of abstraction. Since the book of Acts is mostly narrative, the application was not directly transferable. This sermon considered how the Holy Spirit intended the original

audience to respond to this story. Acts 9 records the conversion experience of the apostle Paul. Therefore, the application of the sermon was primarily evangelistic. Christians however, would also benefit by identifying marks of a Christian's testimony.

The objective of this sermon was for the hearers to respond to Jesus Christ in faith and follow him obediently. The foundation of the sermon was an important question Saul asked Jesus, "Who are you Lord?" The application of the sermon was drawn from this question because Jesus wants people to follow him.

The story unfolded in three scenes. The place of Jerusalem is identified in Acts 9:1-2. This scene demonstrates what life is like before a person meets Christ. The specific application is "What was your life like before you met Christ?" In scene two, Acts 9:3-9, Saul is on the road to Damascus in order to persecute Christians. A light appears which is Jesus as Saul is converted to Paul. This scene demonstrates how a person can come to Christ by faith. When Saul called Jesus Lord, a change in his heart had taken place. The specific application is "How did you come to faith in Christ?" In Acts 9:11-20, Jesus told Saul to go to Damascus and find a man called Ananias who was a disciple of the Lord. He would give Saul instructions. Instead of going to persecute Christians, Saul was going to Damascus to fellowship with Christians. The specific application was "how has your life changed since you met Christ?"

How to Avoid the Perversion of Scripture

The fourth sermon examined 1 Timothy 1:1-20 in order to demonstrate proper application of the epistles (Appendix 14). The objective of this sermon was to challenge the church to avoid the perversion of scripture. The first chapter of First Timothy marks the root problem of the perversion of scripture which is a distortion of true faith.

Scripture is never perverted. The devil's scheme from the beginning has been to deceive people with a lie in order to cause them to doubt the truth. This scheme causes people to pervert scripture and believe a lie.

Paul challenged the church at Ephesus to avoid the perversion of Scripture by examining true faith. The chapter falls into three divisions. These three divisions form the outline for the sermon. The structure of the text relates directly to the structure of the sermon. By using the techniques provided by Stott and Robinson, this sermon bridged the gap by asking three questions concerning faith.

One question is: "Is my faith genuine?" First Timothy 1:1-2 explains genuine faith. Genuine faith fulfills one's duty to Christ, takes dedication to Christ, and takes discipleship seriously. In verses 3-10, Paul warns of false teachers and the importance of guarding the faith. The second question is: "Is my faith guarded?" Paul gave three warnings; foolish faith, fruitless faith, and false faith. In verses 11-20, Paul opened his heart with a personal appeal. Although he spoke of the terrible sins of the false teachers, he was gracious. A final question applied the text, "Is my faith gracious toward others?" Paul had experienced grace and wanted others to experience the same grace that enabled him to serve and was exceeding in abundance. By asking these three questions, the listeners were driven to apply the text just as the listeners at Ephesus applied the text.

The Purpose of Scripture

Second Timothy 2:1-9 provided the basis for discovering the purpose of Scripture in sermon 5 (Appendix 15). This sermon demonstrated the principle of moving up the ladder of abstraction to understand the specific application for today. Paul assured Timothy that Scripture was not "imprisoned" or that it has no limits in verse 9. This verse

formed the propositional sentence of the sermon. Paul encouraged Timothy to remain faithful to the Scriptures by discovering the purpose of Scripture.

One can see that Timothy was challenged to “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” in 2:1, which is one of seven challenges in the epistle. This challenge led Timothy to understand, appreciate, and apply the Scriptures properly. Three illustrations in verses 3-9 demonstrate the purpose Scripture by illustrating how it strengthens a believer when applied. One picture of a Christian is a soldier that endures hardness, avoids unnecessary fights, and fights wisely in spiritual battles in order to please his master. Another picture is an athlete that practices regularly, and disciplines himself in order to master his sport. A third picture is a farmer who works hard to plant a crop but waits patiently on God for it to grow. These pictures demonstrated how a God can strengthen the faith of believers when applied properly.

Another purpose of Scripture is to reveal our Savior Jesus Christ. Three needs of a Christian arise from this verse 7. The believer must understand that he has a need to know God. Secondly, the Holy Spirit provides the believer understanding. Third, the reader must believe the Scriptures are inspired by God.

A third purpose of Scripture is to encourage the believer in suffering. Paul was encouraged by Jesus Christ as he suffered hardship. In 2 Timothy 2:8-10, Paul reminded the readers of important facts that should encourage their faith in Jesus. The Bible has fulfilled prophecy. Secondly, the Bible witnesses the power of the resurrection of Christ. Paul, bound in a Roman prison challenged Timothy to understand, apply, and appreciate the Scripture. The purpose of Scripture is to strengthen the faith of a believer in Christ by

applying Scripture, to reveal the Savior, and to encourage the believer to appreciate Scripture.

The Priorities of the Church

Sermon 6 provided an example of how to preach a sermon from the book of Revelation and apply the truths properly (Appendix 16). This sermon provided an example of how to take a passage and make proper application that is consistent with the original intent of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos around 95 A.D. He received a vision from God. He recorded the content of the message from God in order for the church to know the things that have been, the things that are, and the things that are yet to come. Revelation records seven letters that Jesus sent with a specific message to seven different churches. The first church was Ephesus. Jesus had words of commendation, but also words of correction for this church.

First, Jesus commended the church as a spiritual church. The church at Ephesus took pride in a great past. The church had labored hard for the Lord. Jesus said the church had experienced the presence of God as one that “walks among the seven golden lampstands” (Rev 2:1). This church was solid in their devotion, determination, and doctrine. However, the church was in danger of leaving their first love. At one time in their past, they had a great passion for Christ. Jesus sent a word of correction because they were working for him out of obligation instead of opportunity. This sermon identified the priorities of a church; the freedom of the Holy Spirit, the authority of Scripture, and a pure heart of love for Jesus.

Personal Concern

Teaching principles of application to a focus group is a secondary focus of this ministry project. The primary interest of this ministry project is improving skills of application in my preaching. Due to the feedback and insights from the focus group, my skills in preparing proper application have been improved. The focus group provided insights into how some techniques connected with the audience and others did not connect. Chapter 5 will provide details of the evaluation of this ministry project.

CHAPTER 5

THE EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The purpose of this ministry project was to improve application in expository preaching at New Prospect Baptist Church in Oxford, Mississippi. The discovery of principles of proper application from chapter three were taught to a focus group in eight sessions. Six sermons from the New Testament were preached in six consecutive Sunday night services following the eight-week sessions. The focus group evaluated the sermon series and offered feedback each week. An evaluation of the project by the focus group concluded the fifteen week ministry project.

The project began in January 2011 and concluded in May of the same year. Throughout the course of this project, lessons were learned that improved the application in my preaching. This project did not study the principles of exegesis. Instead, the focus was on how to connect the exegesis of a passage to the application that would be consistent with the application of the original intent of the author. Important issues were discussed with the focus group that confirmed the need of this project. The following is an evaluation of the project in light of its goals.

Evaluation of the Project Goals and Rationale

Three specific goals served as the criteria for measuring the overall effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to research conservative scholars in order to discover principles of proper application. This goal was accomplished in chapter three.

The principle of interpreting Scripture properly but making improper application in preaching served as the foundation of this research. This research discovered principles that would improve proper application of Scripture and how to avoid inaccurate application.

This research discovered the summary of preaching by Phillip Brooks that true expository preaching can be defined as “truth through personality.” This concise definition provided a key for preparing the application of a sermon. John Broadus, Jay Adams, and Jerry Vines defined expository preaching which included exposition and specific application of the text to the contemporary audience. While some scholars define expository preaching with the emphasis on the explanation of the text, these definitions balanced the exegesis and application of the sermon.

The second goal was to use the principles of application in a sermon series. This goal was accomplished by preparing and preaching six sermons from the New Testament. After discovering these principles in the research in chapter three, the sermons implemented these guidelines as examples for the focus group. Further evaluation of these sermons will be considered in chapter five.

A third goal of this project was to recruit a focus group of adult Bible teachers and teach them the principles of this research. The goal was to enlist the current small group Bible study teachers at New Prospect Baptist Church and recruit twelve additional potential teachers. The group evaluated the sermon series which demonstrated how to use the principles of proper application. Although this goal was partially fulfilled, the results will be evaluated in chapter five.

The focus group met for fifteen consecutive weeks on Sunday morning. These meetings benefited the focus group by challenging them to apply Scripture properly. The first eight weeks surveyed the principles of application from chapter three of this project. During the next six weeks the group discussed the sermons and offered insights into the strengths and weaknesses of my preaching. A final meeting evaluated the overall success of the project and the focus group was given the post-seminar questionnaire. As a result of this project, God was glorified, my skills of proper application were improved, and Bible study teachers were given the tools in order to apply Scripture properly.

Evaluation of the Project

An evaluation of this project has produced both confirmation and criticism. The increase in Sunday school attendance from an average of 140 to an average of 171 confirmed the project was partially successful. Two additional classes have been started by trained teachers from the focus group. Based on the results of the surveys and personal evaluation, my skills of developing proper application have been improved.

The first two goals of this project were fulfilled. The third goal was partially fulfilled. Parts of this project, therefore, could have been more effective. The following section will examine what worked and what needed to be improved.

Strengths of the Project

This ministry project produced benefits that improved application of Scripture at New Prospect Baptist Church. The first benefit was the communication of the need in the church for proper application. Based on the responses in the post-seminar survey, the focus group understood the importance of developing application that is consistent with

the original intent of the author. Seventy-two percent of the focus group said they did not feel adequately prepared to prepare a lesson.

One hundred percent of the focus group said in the post-project survey that their awareness of proper application had increased. One man said in his review, “Now, the first thing I consider in my preparation is the ‘so what’ of the text.” Another man added, “The idea of a purpose-bridge and the ladder of abstraction were very helpful.” In the review of the project, one lady stated, “The ladder of abstraction made me realize that I had always looked for what this text meant to me, now I consider the meaning of the text first, then consider how it applies.” These examples show the general benefit of this project for the focus group.

Principles of Application

Discovering principles of proper application has improved my skills of developing application in my sermons. My skills continue to develop by using the principles of this research in weekly sermon preparation. The intent was to use the guidelines and principles of proper application in a sermon series which would serve as examples for the focus group to see how to use the components of proper application. By using these principles, practices have been developed in sermon building that will improve application in my preaching. The focus group offered valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of application in my preaching.

The concept of a ladder of abstraction which bridged the gap from the original intention to the modern listeners served as the main tool in this process of improving application. Through discussing this concept of crossing a bridge or climbing a ladder from the “then” to the “now,” the focus group learned methods to apply Scripture

properly. The sermon series demonstrated the methods of proper application for the focus group, which when reviewed, improved the application in my preaching. The discovery and implementation of these methods in the sermon series are the strengths of this ministry project.

The first method was making the connection from the original audience to the modern audience based on the degree of transferability. In the sermon from Matthew, the degree of transferability moved straight across the bridge. Jesus calls all believers at all times to follow Him. The context of the original audience was similar to audiences today. Present tense imperative verbs formed the outline for the sermon. The focus group agreed with the application of the text and offered insights.

One reviewer stated, “The sermon encouraged us to be “true disciples,” while making sure we understood the cost of doing so. Even though the passage is familiar, you explained it well. The points were valid, just not exceptional, nothing we hadn’t heard before.” This observation provided confirmation of preparing the application of familiar texts. The outline transferred the application directly from the original intent to the modern audience. The sermon made specific application of the text.

Another method of developing proper application considers if the text served as an example for the original readers. The sermon from Acts demonstrated this principle of application because in the narrative of the conversion of Saul the original readers would see an example of a definite salvation experience. The original reader would see three distinctive marks of a Christian testimony. The sermon outline consisted of three major divisions: the background of the life of Saul, the story of the conversion of Saul, and the three questions that applied the story to the modern listeners. Each major division

of the sermon had three sub-divisions. Three simple questions in the last division formed the application of the sermon: “What was your life like before salvation? What brought you to the point of conviction of sin? How has your life changed since salvation?”

During the discussion of the sermon, the focus group said the content of the sermon was good but the delivery was confusing. One reviewer said, “You had us writing two different outlines at the same time; three marks of a Christian testimony and the outline of the Scripture, which was kind of confusing.” This insight taught me that application clarifies the message when it appears throughout the sermon instead of the end. The application of the sermon would have been more effective if the questions of application would have appeared after each major division.

Another discovery was the method of developing the application by considering what the text says about God and His requirements of man. This process was the heart using the ladder of abstraction as a guide for proper application. The sermon from John 20:30-31 served as the example on how to use these principles. These two verses summarized the purpose of the gospel of John. The text explained what God expected of people and it called people to believe the gospel. The present tense verbs provided the key that unlocked the application. The principles of faith became relevant in the application by developing keys to victorious faith. The discussion of the focus group confirmed the application crossed the purpose bridge from the original audience to the modern listeners.

This sermon became an evangelistic sermon, but also challenged believers to examine their faith in Christ. The focus group offered positive feedback concerning the simple outline of victorious faith. However, one reviewer offered insight to the balance of

the sermon: “The third point seemed out of balance, you seemed rushed to finish.” Another person said, “The sermon was great, but the last point seemed more of an indirect reference instead of drawn from the text.”

These insights challenged me to consider how the last point connected with the audience. The present tense verbs challenged the readers of the gospel of John to continue in their faith. Therefore, my application for the third point consisted of challenging the listeners to “stay in the race” and “fight the good fight of faith.” The cross-references may have been misleading because at least two people did not connect with the application of the text. The original application of the text, however, connected with the focus group.

The sermon from 1 Timothy 1:1-20 used the method of developing application from Michael Fabarez that considers the context of the original audience. Fabarez challenged the preacher to note how the original audience would have received the message. While preparing the application of this sermon, the context of the church at Ephesus was considered. The factors that influenced how Timothy would have received this message were studied.

Some false teachers were distorting the importance of simple faith in Jesus. Instead of attacking the false teachers, Paul challenged the church in three areas that would examine true faith. This discovery led me to develop the sermon with three questions about the perversion of Scripture and the relationship of authentic faith.

By discovering the way the church at Ephesus received the Scripture, it allowed the sermon to transfer the application with a greater impact on the modern audience. The focus group benefited from the sermon by discovering insights in applying

the Scripture according to the context of the original audience. One reviewer said, “This was not what I would call an inspiring sermon. The Scripture was more of a reproof for saints who are not standing strong in their faith. We felt the rebuke just as the church at Ephesus did.” This observation confirmed the application of the sermon was consistent with the original intent.

This sermon drew some negative feedback in the reviews. The focus group said the sermon outline did not connect with the title. One reviewer said, “The outline started with the title of the sermon, “How to avoid the perversion of Scripture” and there were some excellent points made, especially the three questions, but the sermon title did not fit in the explanation of the Scripture.” Another person said, “I got lost in the sermon outline, were you talking about faith or Scripture?”

The intent of this sermon was to connect the importance of faith and the proper application of Scripture. The proposition stated, “The Bible challenges believers to avoid the perversion of Scripture by examining true faith.” The goal of the sermon was for the hearers to see that true biblical faith is rooted in the proper understanding and application of Scripture. According to the discussion of the focus group, the sermon missed the connection that true faith helps the Christian avoid the perversion of Scripture. This insight challenged my preparation of application in order to prepare clear insights of the text and how to close the communication gap.

I sought to develop the application within the limits of the original audience in the sermon from 2 Timothy 2. This sermon method used the principle of discovering the original application and also noted the limitations of the application. The focus group discussed the context of the paragraph in light of the chapter and book. The cultural

conditions were similar to the modern listeners. The church at Ephesus and Pastor Timothy needed to understand, appreciate, and apply scripture. These insights of the text were limited to the believers.

The feedback of this sermon challenged the proper use of illustrations when making application. A personal illustration of my wife preparing my favorite casserole drew negative feedback. The intent of the story was to illustrate the importance of obeying Scripture. One reviewer said, “The illustration about your love for green pea casserole, how your grandmother passed her recipe down to Angie, was too lengthy. Since you’re trying to get the point of the text across, perhaps it would help to spend more time on explaining the text instead of illustrating it.”

In the sermon from Revelation 2:1-7, the focus group noted the pitfalls to avoid while making proper application. This sermon used the principles of application discussed earlier and the group offered insights into what to avoid. This process improved application by knowing what to avoid in preaching. The focus group discussed the difference in a shot-gun approach to application verses a single barrel rifle that will shoot one bullet to hit the target of application as discussed in chapter three. The point of this sermon was to demonstrate that a church can be committed to Scripture but at the same time lose its love for the Savior. The focus group had no negative feedback to this sermon.

These practices improved my skills in developing proper application in sermon building. Once the exegesis is discovered, the principles used in these sermons provided tools that will help the preacher develop proper application. The insights from the focus group improved my skills to discover, develop, and implement application that is

consistent with the original application. The long term benefits of this project may not be realized over the course of this project.

Weaknesses of the Project

Evaluating the project exposed some missing elements that may have strengthened the overall effectiveness of the project. One missing element was the development of ongoing training for current and potential Bible study teachers. It was established in chapter three that certain principles of application were needed in order to develop proper application. The post-project survey revealed that some members of the focus group appreciated the training and would be open to more training.

As mentioned in chapter two, the need for additional Bible study teachers presents a problem each year. The nominating committee prayerfully selects church members who are willing to teach a small group Bible study class. While this project met the need for additional teachers this year, another missing element of this project was a process for training additional teachers. The post-seminar survey revealed the meeting time, the amount of material, and the method of recruiting the focus group were the weaknesses of this project.

The meeting time, Sunday morning before church, was found to be a weakness. Due to the additional activities in the church, it appeared that adding another night of Bible study would not benefit the teachers. No one wanted to stay after church for a meeting. The group agreed to this time at the first meeting. In the post-seminar survey, eighty-five percent of the focus group said Sunday morning before church was not a good time for a meeting.

Due to the limited time of the meeting, the focus group did not think there was enough time for discussion. Since New Prospect Baptist Church is considered a small church, the only meeting room was the church sanctuary or a classroom. People who came to church early disrupted the class. Four members of the focus group said the disruptions were a major weakness in their survey.

Another weakness in this project was the goal to recruit 12 additional small group Bible study leaders. My goal was to recruit the existing 12 teachers and also recruit 12 prospective teachers to form a group of 24 persons. By sending letters, making phone calls and personal interviews, the current Bible study leaders agreed to this project. Additionally, twelve potential teachers were recruited. Since the focus of the project was the proper application of Scripture, the focus group needed some knowledge of how to study the Bible. Therefore, after much prayer and help from the focus group, 12 potential people were selected to participate in this project.

The commitment of the focus group proved to be a weak link in the project. Although all 12 Bible study leaders agreed to participate, only 8 finished the project. Twelve potential teachers agreed to participate, but only 2 finished the project. As noted earlier, the 2 potential teachers that finished the project have begun teaching new classes. This fact highlights the success of this ministry project.

The first class meeting had 24 people who agreed to participate in this project. The average attendance was 18. At the end of the project, only 9 people critiqued the sermons. Two members of the focus group refused to participate in the sermon critiques. Although the expectations were explained in the first session, 2 men would not agree to

critique a sermon due to personal reservations. Their argument was, “Preaching is a work of God in a man to deliver His message and man should not interfere with the message.”

More specifically, the project neglected to put into place a way to evaluate the current Bible study teachers. Although New Prospect Baptist Church is a conservative Baptist Church, each Sunday school class is free to use whatever curriculum they choose. Instead of being held accountable for the lessons they teach by the Sunday School Superintendent or a leadership council, each teacher is free to choose the material for their lessons. A plan to evaluate the lessons of the adult Bible study teachers would have strengthened this project.

The project failed to fulfill the mission statement of New Prospect Baptist Church. Part of their mission statement confirms the need to become an active witness for Jesus Christ. If expository preaching accomplishes anything, it should motivate people to obey the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Not challenging the focus group to have a more outward focus had a negative impact on this project. Members of the focus group should have been motivated to confront the members of their class with the claims of the gospel.

Personal Reflections

Working through this ministry project has improved my skills of application in expository preaching. Members of New Prospect Baptist Church benefited because the awareness has been raised concerning the responsibility of a Christian to apply Scripture properly. A greater awareness of proper application of Scripture has challenged the focus group to become more effective in applying Scripture properly. Most of the adults that volunteered for this project, however, did so because they were helping the pastor.

The intent of this project was to develop a curriculum of “How to apply the Bible” that would improve application in my preaching and benefit teachers. The increase in worship attendance from 195 to 225 may be indirectly related to this project. The main focus of my preaching should be to develop dedicated followers of Christ who can apply Scripture properly for the purpose of spiritual growth.

From a personal perspective, the project has helped me as a pastor to be more equipped when preparing proper application in my sermons. In years past, I have felt the need to become a better expositor of Scripture. This project has deepened my commitment. Making disciples has not always been the focus of my ministry. At times, I become distracted with having a full sanctuary. The result has been a larger congregation, but not a spiritual congregation. This project has challenged me to refocus my commitment to preach expository sermons with the help of the Holy Spirit that glorifies God and is practical to the listeners.

Working through this ministry project improved my use of application in expository preaching at New Prospect Baptist Church. My skills in sermon preparation have developed in order to become more focused on the specific application of the original audience. By discovering and implementing the components of proper application from this research, it has helped me develop skills of preparing the application of a sermon that will be more effective for the modern audience. Application that is driven from the original application of the text should have a greater impact on the listeners. This project has provided me with practices that will help me develop expository sermons that will consistently feed the church a proper diet of Scripture.

Working through this ministry project allowed me to gain new insights into how people in the church listen to preaching. As a result of the discussion of the focus group, some weaknesses in my preaching were improved. Observations made by the focus group challenged me to make the points of the sermon clear, concise and action driven. The focus group agreed the most effective sermons had bullet points with action verbs. Listeners were more likely to grasp the content of the sermon from simple statements or questions from the text.

Another valuable insight from the group was the use of the original language. The group said a preacher who uses a Greek or Hebrew word and then tries to explain it to the church causes a distraction. With the exception of one or two retired pastors, no one in the church is familiar with the original language. To quote Greek words may give the preacher an ego boost, but will not benefit the audience. As a result of this point, I have developed a practice to use insights and word pictures from the original language, but avoid quoting any Greek or Hebrew words in the sermon.

Conclusion

As a result of this project, my focus has moved from just preaching a sermon to helping church members connect with the application of the text. By challenging the focus group to become more effective in proper application, the church should benefit with a deeper understanding of spiritual growth.

The project also helped me to learn about the people in this church. As stated earlier, 24 of the most dedicated people in the church were recruited, but only 8 finished the project. As a result of this project, I learned that many of the people in the church are afraid of committing to teach a small group Bible study. Some people who became part

of the focus group did not feel comfortable in becoming a teacher. These people benefited from the project by identifying principles of application that will improve their Bible study skills.

Finally, others who read this project should benefit. The project presents scriptural evidence that God requires his people to apply Scripture properly for the purpose of spiritual growth. The evidence presented in this research will provide a foundation for other readers who can present these principles to their congregations. This project also provides ideas for how a church may train disciples how to apply scripture properly. These principles of application can be implemented in many settings and is not limited to the New Prospect Baptist Church. Also, the project shows principles of application which can be used in expository preaching and teaching.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY OF BIBLICAL APPLICATION

Agreement to Participate:

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to analyze how well church members apply Scripture. The research is being conducted by Ken White for purposes of improving application in expository preaching. In this research, you will be asked about your spiritual background, your understanding of expository preaching, and your beliefs, practices and commitment to the Bible. Any information you provide will be *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey of Biblical application by church members, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in research.

Demographic Analysis: Please check the appropriate blank.

1. Age 19-22 _____ 23-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 41-49 _____
50-59 _____ 60-69 _____ 70+ _____

2. Male _____ Female _____

3. Married _____ Single _____

4. How far do you drive to church?
1-2 miles _____ 3-5 miles _____ 5-10 miles _____ 20+ _____

5. How long have you been a Christian?
1-2 years _____ 3-4 years _____ 5-6 years _____ 7-9 years _____ 10+ _____

6. How long have you been a member of New Prospect Baptist Church?
1-2 years _____ 3-4 years _____ 5-6 years _____ 7-9 years _____ 10+ _____

7. How long have you been a member of a Baptist church?
1-2 years _____ 3-4 years _____ 5-6 years _____ 7-9 years _____ 10+ _____

8. To what church did you belong when you were growing up?

- Baptist _____ Catholic _____ Church of Christ _____
- Christian Missionary Alliance _____ Evangelical _____ Pentecostal _____
- Methodist _____ Presbyterian _____ Nazarene _____ Church of Christ _____
- No church background _____
- Other church beside what is on this list: _____

9. What type of preaching applies Scripture properly? (Check one)

_____ Topical: where the focus of the sermon was on a topic. Scripture supports, explains or provides insights to the topic.

_____ Textual: The focus of the sermon is a text and topics are explained in light of the text.

_____ Expository: where the focus of the sermon explains a passage and the main points of application are derived from the text. This process is often highlighted by the preacher preaching through books of the Bible verse -by- verse.

Analysis

Using the following scale, please write the number that corresponds to your feelings in response to the following statements.

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| strongly disagree | disagree | uncertain | agree | strongly agree |

Beliefs

1. The Bible is the perfect Word of God with no errors or contradictions. _____
2. Proper application of the Bible is important for spiritual growth. _____
3. The main responsibility of the pastor is to preach the Bible accurately. _____
4. Preachers should skip difficult passages. _____
5. A Bible passage may have different interpretations and applications depending on the reader. _____

Practices

6. I consult Scripture when I make decisions. _____
7. I witness for Jesus Christ consistently. _____
8. I give to the Lord's church consistently. _____
9. I have a daily devotion time of prayer and Bible reading. _____
10. By developing certain practices, I can improve in applying the Bible. _____

Commitment

11. Do you attend church services:
 - (1) once a week
 - (2) twice a week
 - (3) once a month
 - (4) every opportunity

12. Do you attend (Sunday School) small group Bible study?
 - (1) yes
 - (2) no
 - (3) sometimes

13. Does New Prospect Baptist Church offer proper training on how to apply the Bible?
 - (1) yes
 - (2) no

14. If the church offered the proper training for leaders, would you be willing to become a small group Bible study leader?
 - (1) yes
 - (2) no

15. Are there reasons in your life that cause you not to feel comfortable leading a small group Bible Study?
 - (1) There are things in my life that I need to straighten up personally.
 - (2) I would not be able to give 100% (lack of time, etc)
 - (3) There are spiritual practices that I need to work on. (Spiritual disciplines, etc)
 - (4) Teaching is not my spiritual gift.

APPENDIX 2
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is the Bible a special book?
2. What is the greatest challenge in Bible study?
3. How would you rank your skills to study the Bible?
4. Do you feel adequate to interpret the Bible?
5. What is “application” of the Bible?
6. What is the communication gap, and why does it exist?
7. What is the value of considering the context of the original audience?
8. How will a purpose statement improve the application of a sermon?
9. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? “Summarizing the text into one purpose statement may be the most difficult part of preparation, but also the most beneficial part of the sermon.”
10. Do you know how to apply the Bible properly?
11. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in Bible study?
12. Is there a wrong way to apply the lesson?
13. Can a teacher have a good lesson, but apply the passage incorrectly?
14. If you are a current teacher, how well do you know your audience?
15. If you are a current teacher, what are your strengths and weaknesses?

APPENDIX 3

THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE

Introduction

The objective of this session is to recognize the nature of Scripture and how Jesus Christ is the central figure of the Bible. Read Hebrews 4 and discuss why the Scriptures did not profit the people of Israel?

God's Men and The Word of God

“The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts...I have read the Bible through 100 times, and always with increasing delight. Each time it seems like a new book to me. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when have not had a good time over the Word of God.” George Mueller

“I prayed for faith, and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, ‘Now faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ I had closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened by Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since.”

D.L. Moody

“I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.” Abraham Lincoln

“In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.”

Robert E. Lee

“If there is anything in my thought or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me early love for the Scriptures.” Daniel Webster

List the names of the Bible according these verses: 1 Cor 15:3 - 4, Eph 6:17

Christ is central in the Bible

Christ is central in the Old Testament.

What did Christ say about himself in the Old Testament in John 5:39?

What part of the Old Testament did Jesus say referred to Him in Luke 24:44-45?

How did the Apostle Paul use the Old Testament to show that it contained the “good news” of Christ according to Acts 17:3?

Christ is central in the New Testament.

In what ways did the disciples know Jesus in 1 John 1:3?

Why were the historical facts and teachings of Jesus written according to John 20:31?

What was the major problem with the Pharisees in Matthew 21:41-46?

How will recognizing Jesus as the central figure of the Bible affect your reading?

Discuss what Scripture does according to these verses: Hebrews 4:12, Romans 10:17

Why is proper application of the Bible important according to 1 Corinthians 15:1-8?

Describe the ways Bible study profits Christians in 2 Timothy 3:12-17

Conclusion

In what ways is the Bible a special book?

What insights have you gained about the nature of the Bible?

What is the greatest challenge in Bible study?

APPENDIX 4

THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE OF THE PREACHER

Introduction

The objective of this session is to describe expository teaching and preaching and how it relates to the spiritual growth of the teacher. Describing teaching is like describing someone running a marathon. Running consists of a runner, a designated path, and a goal. Haddon Robinson said that defining expository preaching is like trying to capture the wind. He said, "Preaching is a living interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation, and no definition can pretend to capture that dynamic."¹

Expository Preaching

Definitions will be considered in order to evaluate the components of an expository lesson or sermon that will impact the devotional life of the preacher.

Preach

The word for preach in 2 Timothy 4:2 is the Greek word *herald*. Jay Adams says a herald was someone who went about the streets of a city calling people to gather together in order to hear the word from the King."² The people of God are called out of the world in order to assemble together and to hear from the King. Like the herald who had orders from the king to speak the message of the king, God calls his preachers to proclaim his word accurately. Expository preaching seeks to expound the word of God clearly and to apply the truths accurately in order to meet the needs of the people.

Describe the responsibilities of a herald in 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

¹Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

²Jay Adams, *Preaching With Purpose*, 6.

Phillips Brooks

Brooks summarized preaching as presenting a biblical truth through the personality of the preacher. He asserts, “Preaching is the bringing of truth through personality. It must have both elements.”³ Brooks believed these two elements must be balanced for the sermon to be a true expository sermon. “It is the absence of one or the other element that a discourse ceases to be a sermon, and a man ceases to be a preacher altogether.”

What two words describe these concepts in 1 John 1:5? _____

John A. Broadus

John Broadus focused on three basic elements, the message, the preacher and the needs of human beings. He states, “preaching is the proclamation of God’s message by a chosen personality to meet the needs of humanity.”⁴ Both Brooks and Broadus consider the message and the preacher. Broadus, however, says an expository sermon must take into consideration the needs of the congregation. Although he primarily focused on the explanation of Scripture, he also considered application necessary in expository preaching.

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix provide a specific definition of an expository sermon by adding the structure of the sermon must be consistent with the structure of the text. “An expository sermon is a discourse that expounds a passage of Scripture, organizes it around a central theme and main divisions issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners.”⁵ This detailed definition of expository preaching expands the summary of “truth through personality” proposed by Phillips Brooks.

How does your devotional life relate to the lesson you prepare each week?

Our personal devotional life is a key component of expository teaching. Lessons or Sermons are not delivered just to impart information. Lessons should be prepared and delivered in order to change lives. Before we must speak to people, we must have time with the Lord. Through proper methods of study, the teacher applies the

³Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching*, 5.

⁴John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 3.

⁵Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 29.

message to his own experience and then the Holy Spirit applies the message to the hearts of the listeners.

Conclusion

Why is it important for the preacher to experience the message before he preaches?

Do you agree that you can only impact people *up close* and *personal*?

What are some ways we can improve our devotional life?

How would you rate your devotional life?

What is the greatest challenge in Bible study preparation?

APPENDIX 5

BRIDGING THE COMMUNICATION GAP

Introduction

The objective of this session is to raise the need of proper application and describe the method of connecting the principles of the ancient text to the modern audience..

The Need of Application

A great need for proper application exists in preaching today. Micheal Fabarez states, “God’s Word always demands a human response. If [the preacher] fails to boldly call people to respond to the Bible - it is not true expository preaching.”¹ God meets at least three needs through proper exegesis and application

God deepens the convictions of the hearers.

Proper application confronts church members who have low moral convictions. Vines and Shaddix state, “a great deal of concern has been expressed about the lack of moral convictions on the part of the average churchgoer.”² Church members struggle with teen pregnancy, divorce, and extra-marital affairs. Proper application is needed for godliness in the lives of believers.

God guards the church from false teaching.

Jay Adams asserts, “effective preaching is necessary today because of the other gospels being proclaimed in today’s world.”³ The true expositor seeks to be a mouthpiece for God. He does not use the Bible to fit his own agenda. Vines describes application as

¹Micheal Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 19.

²Jerry Vines, *Power in the Pulpit*, 181.

³Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 8.

“the functional element that tells the listeners how to know God, how specific problems can be solved, how to grow spiritually, how to perform Christian service, or how to live a better life.” When the preacher exegetes and applies the Scriptures properly, it guards the church from heretical teaching.

God matures believers.

John Broadus affirms the link of proper application to the life of the strong church. The church was brought into existence due to preaching. He states, “the strength of the church is directly related to the strength of the pulpit.”⁴ Adams adds, “the purpose of preaching, then, is to effect changes among the member’s of God’s church that build them up individually and that build up the body as a whole.”⁵

Methods of Application

Building a Bridge

John R. Stott illustrates the process as “bridge-building.”⁶ Just as a bridge is a way to connect two things that would otherwise be disconnected, the preacher bridges the gap from the ancient truths of Scripture to the modern listeners. Stott says, “our task is to enable God’s revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today.”⁷

Ladder of Abstraction

Haddon Robinson not only challenges preachers to maintain balance, but provides a model for proper application. He describes this process as a ladder of abstraction:

I picture a ladder of abstraction that comes up from the biblical world and crosses over and down to the modern setting. I have to be conscious how I cross this ‘abstraction ladder.’ I want to make sure the biblical situation and the current situation are analogous at the points I am making them connect. I must be sure the

⁴John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 9.

⁵Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 13.

⁶John R. Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 137.

⁷*Ibid.*, 132

center of the analogy connects, not the extremes.⁸

The ladder of abstraction begins in the ancient world and moves up the ladder by asking simple questions: What does the text say about God and what does the text say about man?

As the preacher answers these questions from the text, he then moves down the other side of the ladder in the world of the modern audience. York says, “Using Robinson’s ladder as a means to move from culturally specific commands to contemporary principles, we are able to make application that is relevant and specific.”⁹ Vines adds, “sometimes the connection between biblical and modern worlds will be specific and concrete, at other times the connection will be more abstract in principle.”¹⁰

As the preacher moves up and across the ladder, he can make specific application that is consistent with the original intent of Scripture. Ramesh Richard calls this process the most critical part of the entire sermon building process. He describes this process as a purpose bridge. The effective preacher must consider how to make proper application.

Conclusion

What is the greatest need in teaching?

As different kinds of expository communication of Scripture, explain differences between preaching and teaching?

What is the *communication gap*, and why does it exist?

⁸Haddon Robinson, “The Heresy of Application” *Leadership* (Fall, 1997); 27.

⁹Hershael York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 80.

¹⁰Jerry Vines, *Power in the Pulpit*, 186.

APPENDIX 6

COMPONENTS OF PROPER APPLICATION

Introduction

The objective of this session is to examine key components of proper application in sermon building. Ramesh Richard says, “when you cross this bridge, you will have gone from studying the Scriptures - a hermeneutical exercise - toward preaching the Scriptures - the homiletical exercise.”¹ This process of climbing a ladder or crossing a bridge which may be the most important part of sermon building, may also be the most neglected. This action makes the sermon relevant to the listeners.

The Intended Audience

Vines and Shaddix state, “The first step in moving from text to sermon is to identify the primary audience in the passage.”² In order to apply the passage properly, the teacher should determine if the passage was written to lost people or believers. Failure to identify the intended audience has led to confusion in the church. Some have identified the major objective of the text in three categories: Salvation, Fellowship, or General. Consider the context of the original audience. For example, in Rev 3:18-19 Jesus sent a letter to the church at Laodicea, the original audience would have received the message with a tone of sarcasm. Laodicea was a wealthy city which prided itself in the gold and pharmacy business. These wealthy business men thought they had need of nothing. The fact that Jesus told these men they needed to be clothed because of their nakedness would have had a tremendous on the original audience. Effective application of Scripture must take these factors in consideration.

The Purpose Statement

Summarizing the text into one purpose statement may be the most difficult part of preparation, but also the most beneficial part of the sermon. Vines and Shaddix

¹Ramesh Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons*, 77.

²Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 128.

say, “a good sermon must be given a one sentence statement that summarizes the central idea of the Scripture passage.”³ Haddon Robinson adds,

“The purpose states what you expect to happen in your hearers as a result of your sermon. A purpose differs from the idea, therefore, in the same way that a target differs from an arrow; as taking a trip, differs from studying a map; as baking a pie differs from reading a recipe. Whereas the idea states the truth, the purpose defines what the truth should accomplish.”⁴

Taking the time to discover the purpose of the author and to summarize the text in one present tense sentence statement makes the application of the text the central focus of the sermon.

How do we discover the purpose of the sermon? By asking the simple question, “what effect did the author expect to have on the original audience? According to 2 Tim 3:17, Scripture was give to us by the inspiration of God so that we could be adequate, equipped for every good work.”⁵

According to 1 Tim 3:15, why did Paul write to Timothy?

In Jude 3, what was the purpose of the book?

According to John 20:30-31, what action did John expect from his readers?

As a brief exercise, develop a purpose statement for the following verses:

James 1:1-8 _____

1 Peter 1:13-16 _____

Develop the Outline with present tense or future wording

Avoid past tense outlines as much as possible. Present tense outlines will help you move from the biblical world to the modern audience. The outline of the sermon or lesson should make specific application to hearers. It maybe easier to develop the outline in a descriptive way, but the application will be more effective if the points of the outline are in the present tense instead of past tense. Hershael York says, “By moving from descriptive points to applicational points, you make the outline itself have content *and*

³Ibid., 129.

⁴Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 107.

⁵Ibid., 108.

interpretive impact, not merely structural value.”⁶

Develop a present tense outline from 1 John 1:1-10.

Conclusion

What is the *communication gap*, and why does it exist?

What is the value of considering the original audience?

How will a purpose statement improve the application of a sermon?

Do you agree or disagree with the statement, “Summarizing the text into one purpose statement may be the most difficult part of preparation, but also the most beneficial part of the sermon.”

What insights have you discovered from this session?

⁶Hershael York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 143.

APPENDIX 7

KEY QUESTIONS FOR PROPER APPLICATION

Introduction

The objective in this session is to identify key questions for making specific application. Once the specific application is determined, the expositor must ask questions concerning the application in order to help the listener see the benefits of putting the application into practice. The effective expositor will consider these key questions for proper application.

What are the differences between the original readers and the modern audience?

By observing the dissimilarities, the preacher will avoid parts of the text that have little application for the modern audience. The expositor must also consider if the listeners are already doing what the text commands. Once these observations are made, the expositor can focus on the needs, actions, and attitudes of the listeners.

What are the needs of the audience?

Once the common ground of application is discovered the preacher must consider the pressing need of the audience. Wayne McDill says, “preaching to people where they live will have to begin in the thinking of the preacher. This entire approach rests upon your assumptions as a preacher that man’s fallen nature means wrong thinking.”¹ When a new truth is applied that meets the need of the audience, real change takes place in the lives of the listeners.

What do the listeners need to know about the text?

Once the needs are identified, the audience will be open to the solution from Scripture. Fabarez notes, “my goal at this stage is to state their intellectual need in light of

¹Wayne McDill, *The Twelve Essential Skills for Great Preaching*, 40.

the intended application.”² McDill says, “touch me at the point of my pain by describing my discouragement and weariness with life and I am ready to hear about the grace of God.”³

How can I call the listeners to action?

This step considers what the listeners should do with what they know. York states, “If I’m just talking I don’t automatically think of an action step, but if I’m preaching rather than chatting and I feel compassionate about the subject and have a point of view, shouldn’t I want them to do something.”⁴ The effective expositor must call his listeners to act upon the truth.

How will the modern listeners feel about this subject?

This process calls for more than generalities. The expositor should not only call for action, but also motivate the hearers to put the action into practice. If the listeners do not see the benefits, they will be unlikely to put the truth into action. The effective expositor seeks to apply the passage with specific actions steps for the listeners.

Conclusion

Is there a wrong way to apply the lesson?

Can a teacher have a good lesson, but apply the Scripture inappropriately?

Do you know how apply a passage?

What is the greatest need in biblical application today?

²Micheal Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 52.

³Wayne McDill, *Twelve Essentials Skills*, 107.

⁴Hershael York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 110.

APPENDIX 8

PRINCIPLES OF APPLICATION

Introduction

The objective in this session is to survey principles of specific application. Some writers call this process hitting the target of the original intention of application. The effective expositor will consider these components for proper application.

The Context of the Original Audience

Discovering the context of the original audience provides the expositor insights into how the listeners received the message. Fabarez notes, “Carefully noting the author’s intentions will prevent us from short-changing the power of the text and keep us faithful to the reason for the text’s placement in Scripture. The discovery will then govern the direction and parameters of the application we eventually will tailor for our own audience.”¹

Study the Imperative Verbs of a passage

Most of the time, especially in didactic passages, the application can be directly transferred from the original audience to the modern listeners by considering the imperative verbs. Fabarez notes,

“Here is something they were told to do, or in many cases, not to do. ‘Love your enemies and bless those who hate you’ (Matt 5:44), ‘Do not lie to each other’ (Col 3:9), ‘Be diligent to come to me quickly’ (2 Tim 4:9) all clearly prompt the original readers to actions. These imperative verbs provide the handle for working our way toward and appropriate application of the text to our modern listeners.”²

Read Hebrews 10:19-25 and note the imperative verbs.

¹Micheal Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 40.

²Ibid.

Determine if the passage serves as an example to follow

Another way to study the context of the original listeners is to determine if the passage serves as an example to follow. Determine if the passage simply explains a situation or if the original listeners would have followed the example.

Read Luke 18:9-14 and discuss how the original readers would have applied this story.

Study the Context of the Contemporary Audience

The effective teacher will know his or her people. At some point during this process, the expositor must turn his attention to his listeners. Hershael York says, “When I’m preaching or teaching, I first want to be focused and sure of what I’m trying to accomplish, but then I want to know who I’m talking to and where they are coming from.”³

Conclusion

What are some practices for the teacher to know his audience?

Why is it important for the teacher to know his or her audience?

If you are a current teacher, how well do you know your audience?

If you are a current teacher, what are your strengths and weaknesses?

³Hershael York, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 109.

APPENDIX 9

PITFALLS TO AVOID IN APPLICATION

Introduction

The objective of this session is to identify pitfall to avoid in proper application and provide two models for application. The effective teacher must consider application that is relevant, realistic, and achievable. Once the appropriate application is determined, the preacher can focus on preparing specific application.

Pitfalls to Avoid

The preacher must be cautious while developing specific application. Some applications distort the truth of the text and weaken the sermon. The effective expositor will develop practices that will avoid inaccurate application. Consider these pitfalls to avoid.

Avoid too many problem-solution sermons

Sermons that focus too much on the problems of mankind may weaken the application of the text. There is a time for the method of problem-solution development, but even then the focus of the sermon should be on how to solve the problems. By trying too hard to be relevant, the preacher may lead people to focus on their problems more than on God. Personal illustrations of experiences before salvation may weaken the application of the text. Keep in mind the main goal of preaching and teaching is the glory of God.

Avoid unrealistic goals.

Specific applications that put unbiblical demands on people may distort the original application of the author. Preachers that demand people to “designate thirty minutes a day to prayer and Bible study” can weaken the message. Bryan Chapel says, “avoid pie in the sky principles, ‘Smile every hour’ or ‘Love your neighbors with all your heart’ or ‘Work so that no one will ever go hungry,’ and ‘Resolve to never fear again’ that

exemplify applications that live only in pastoral idealism and spiritual hyperbole.”¹

Avoid inaccurate application

Specific application requires integrity on the part of the preacher. The preacher must make a commitment to preach what Scripture says and not his own ideas. The preacher must allow the listeners to have freedom to apply Scripture properly. The tone of voice in delivery can affect how the audience accepts or rejects the application. Chapell says, “A preacher whose application compels love must speak in love. A preacher who says, ‘If we really understood the resurrection, we would not struggle with grief,’ should realize that the worlds will more likely condemn than comfort.”²

Every sermon or lesson must be driven with proper application. Proper application gives the sermon purpose and direction. The preacher must prepare his message with the purpose that God has in mind for the listeners. Jay Adams states “Pastoral preaching seeks to build up the body of believers.”³ Application can fall into two categories; direct and indirect. Application can be direct, but application can also allow the listeners to take responsibility for their actions and come their own conclusions. Chapell argues, “Prudence and discretion may indicate that it is better to help listeners build up their own faith resources by giving them information needed to correct decisions than by confronting them with the decisions they must make.”⁴

Consider these biblical examples and discuss how the Holy Spirit allowed the original audience to apply the Scriptures:

2 Cor 1:23-24

2 Tim 2:24-26

Philemon 8-9

¹Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 230.

²Ibid., 231.

³Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 15.

⁴Ibid.

Models of Application

These models will help the preacher hit the target for proper application.

Purpose-Driven preaching

Jay Adams provides a model of proper application by challenging the preacher to develop the application according to the purposes of God. The expositor speaks with the authority of God as long as the application of the sermon is consistent with application of the passage. Adams argues, “the most fundamental purpose in preaching from a Scripture portion to obey Jesus and follow his example.”⁵ Consider these examples:

1 Tim 4:3

2 Thess 2:15

2 Tim 4:2

Fallen Condition Focus

Bryan Chapell challenges the preacher to put Christ on display in every sermon. He argues that Christ is the answer to the fallen condition of every sermon. When the fallen condition of the text is discovered, Christ will meet that need. Chapel states,

“All Scripture is redemptive revelation that is inspired to address humanity’s fallen condition (or incompleteness) with divine provision. Preachers who recognize this pervasive scriptural dynamic have discovered the means for uncovering the positive focus in all Christ-centered preaching. This discovery occurs when they see that a text’s FCF defines God’s mercy at the same time that it reveals human need. As Christ is put on display in every sermon, the people will be enabled to apply Scripture properly”⁶

Application that is consistent with the original intent of Scripture will be consider the Fallen Condition Focus. This practice guards the preacher from falling into legalism. Chapel says, “The application points to the FCF, saying ‘This is what you must do about the problem, need, or fault on the basis of what the passage means.’”⁷

⁵Ibid., 19.

⁶Chapell, 277.

⁷Ibid.

Explain how the FCF in the following passages:

1 Thess 2:7-12

2 Tim 2:25-26

2 Tim 4:1-4

Titus 1:10-13

Conclusion

Do you know how to apply a passage properly?

Is there a wrong way to apply a passage?

What insights have you gained from this session?

APPENDIX 10

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction

The objective of this session is to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in proper application by discovering ways to hit the target of proper application. Without careful consideration and prayer, the role of the Holy Spirit may be taken for granted in Bible study. We have no purpose to preach or teach without the aid of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the most vital component of the lesson. Charles Spurgeon said, “Our hope of success, and our strength for continuing the service, lie in our belief that the Spirit of our Lord resteth upon us.”¹ If we have not been taught by the Holy Spirit, we have no right to speak to others.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of knowledge

How is the Holy Spirit described in John 16:12-15? “*He is the Spirit of Truth.*”

The Holy Spirit applies the truths of Scripture.. The main point of our preaching and teaching is the instruction of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. “If you wait upon the Holy Ghost in simple dependence upon His teaching, you will lay hold of very much of the divine meaning. He holds the key of Heavenly treasure. He holds the key of doctrine and can enrich us beyond any point of conception; He has the way of truth.”²

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom

What will the Holy Spirit do for you according to John 16:13? “*He will guide you*”

¹Charles Spurgeon, Charles *Lectures to My Students*, 185.

²*Ibid.*, 188.

The Holy Spirit gives his teachers and preachers wisdom and discernment. He is not only the Spirit of truth, he gives us wisdom of how to apply the truth. We need the wisdom to speak the things of God in a way that will build up believers.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Freedom

What was the result of the Holy Spirit touching Isaiah? 6:6-7 “*touched my mouth*”

The prophet Isaiah taught the importance of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.. When Isaiah was touched by the Spirit of God, he had freedom to answer the call. “Oh, how gloriously a man speaks when his lips are blistered with the live coal from the altar - feeling the burning power of the truth, not only in his inmost soul, but on the very lip with which he is speaking.”³ There is a vast difference in having to say something, and having something to say. Isaiah had been touched by God and had a message to proclaim.

The Holy Spirit produces change

What happens to the believer according to 2 Cor 3:16-17? “*being transformed*”

The effect the Holy Spirit intended should be the aim of the teacher and preacher. We are not putting on display our skills or abilities, our objective is to allow the Holy Spirit to penetrate the hearts of people. Charles Spurgeon claimed, “Convert a soul without the Spirit of God! Why, you cannot even make a fly, much less create a new heart and a right spirit. Lead the children to a higher life without the Holy Ghost! You are more likely to conduct them into carnal security, if you attempt their elevation, by any method of your own. Our ends can never be gained if we miss the co-operation of the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, with strong crying and tears, wait upon Him from day to day.”⁴

Conclusion

How would you rank your skills to apply the Bible properly?

Do you feel adequately prepared to study and apply the Bible properly?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching?

³Ibid., 191.

⁴Ibid., 195.

APPENDIX 11

“DENYING SELF”

Matthew 16:21-28

March 3, 2011

INTRODUCTION

God calls us to embrace Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior. The word “embrace” means to accept willingly, or embrace an offer. Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience that had accepted the claims of the gospel. He challenges them to embrace Christ and follow him wholeheartedly.

This gospel of Matthew is a gospel for the church. Matthew records the confession of Simon Peter in 16:18 “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*” Matthew was written to a Jewish audience but also written for all to know Christ.

The verses for our consideration follow the confession of Peter. Jesus began to teach them of His suffering, His death, and His resurrection. Peter rebukes the Lord (v. 22). Jesus rebukes Satan. In verse twenty-three, the Bible says that Jesus turned. The word implies that He turned away from Peter and said, you are not thinking of the interests of God, but the interests of man. Following this rebuke, Jesus turned to His disciples and spoke these words. Jesus presented three challenges for his followers to embrace true discipleship. Let us consider three challenges of denying self and embrace true discipleship.

I. ONE CHALLENGE OF DISCIPLESHIP IS TO BE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE.

Discipleship begins with the desire to follow Jesus (v. 24). If any man will come is a present tense verb that implies “wish.” The word expresses the desire of the heart of a person. First Tim 2:4 says that God “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” The desire of the heart of God is that all people would come to him by faith and accept Christ. Not all people desire to follow him.

When God speaks, He gives you the desire to receive Him. But it doesn’t stop with simply a desire. Discipleship involves a decision to follow him. Jesus said one must make a decisive point to deny self and selfish ambitions. Self-denial does not mean self abuse

or even lack of self esteem. Taking up cross involved a determination on the part of the disciples. This phrase refers to submission to God's will. Jesus is my first priority. We should seek first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33). Some people have desire and may even make decision, but they lack determination. Discipleship involves determination. The cross was a symbol of death. Are we determined to follow Jesus at any cost?

II. THE SECOND CHALLENGE IS TO PREPARE FOR THE PROMISE.

A true disciple prepares for eternity by preparing for the promises. A series of the connector "for" indicates these verses are an explanation of verse twenty-four. If one denies himself, takes his cross and follows Jesus, can claim certain promises from God.

There is a promise of finding true life. The Bible says, If you seek to try to save your life, you lose it. In other words, there is absolutely no work you can do to save yourself. If you think a good work gains favor with God, good works gains no favor with God. Only if you surrender your life to Christ you can claim promise of eternal life (Gal 2:20-21).

There is a promise of a life of value. Notice verse twenty-six, the key word is exchange. It means to give up this world for eternity or hold on to this world and lose it all for eternity. Calculate: put everything you are in one column and put Christ in the other column. The apostle Paul said, "*whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ*"(Phil 3:7). Paul said that he chose Jesus. Your preparation will be rewarded. When? Heaven is not a reward. We only get to heaven by grace. Heaven is the benefit of knowing God. We are saved to glorify Christ.

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?"(Rom 8:28-31)

Illustration: A little girl asked her dad to build her a dollhouse and the dad agreed. The next day she was found moving all her baby dolls to the backyard. The father asked her mom what the little girl was doing. She replied that the little girl was acting on his promise. Because of her simple, child-like faith in his promise, she was moved to action. We need to believe God's promises, claim them, and prepare for them by the way we live.

III. A THIRD CHALLENGE IS TO PRACTICE HIS PRESENCE.

Jesus said some standing there would see the kingdom of God. He gave the disciples a glimpse of his glory. This encouragement motivated the disciples to truly follow him. He said "*some are standing here shall see*" (v. 28).

One question is to what does Jesus refer? His resurrection? Or the Day of Pentacost? Destruction of Jerusalem? Some say Jesus was mistaken that He prophesied of His return during life of disciples. Others say the context reveals his purpose because the next chapter records the transfiguration of Christ. (17:1-3) Three disciples saw the Messiah in His glory.

Another question is what is the kingdom? It's where the King rules. Christ is our King. "This (rule) of his grace is the hearts of all his believers and the rule of His power is the world protecting his believers"

Another question how do we practice his presence? Jesus said, "*when the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels' and will then recompense every man according to their deeds*" (v. 27). The common word for deeds the New Testament implies energy or labor. This word "*deeds*" refers to conduct, or an action that is stay in progress. It implies a lifestyle change. We practice the presence of God by our lifestyle. Our lives should be a reflection of Christ (Acts 19:18).

Conclusion

Jesus presents a challenge of Discipleship and it involves denying self. Be willing to pay price, prepare for the promises, practice his presence. Jesus challenges his followers today to embrace true discipleship. I want to challenge the followers of Christ to embrace true discipleship.

APPENDIX 12

“KEYS TO VICTORIOUS FAITH”

John 20:30-31

March 10, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Faith is a dominant word in the New Testament. It appears ninety-nine times in the gospel of John. In Matthew and Mark, faith appears ten times, and in the gospel of Luke, faith appears nine times. The gospel of John was written to exhort the readers to have faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Faith means to be persuaded of, to place confidence in, or to fully rely upon something. The chief significance of faith refers to a conviction in the heart of the believer that recognizes Jesus as Lord. In the Bible, we are exhorted to fully rely upon Jesus Christ for salvation.

Have you ever considered what sin actually sends people to Hell? Is it lying, cheating on spouse, rape, murder, pride? It is the sin of unbelief that sends people to hell. Do you know what you have to do to go to hell? Absolutely nothing! The Bible says, *“he who believes in him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because He has not believed.”* Unbelief shuts the door of heaven. Faith in Christ unlocks the door of heaven. I want to exhort your to trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. I want us to consider three keys to victorious faith in Jesus.

I. VICTORIOUS FAITH BEGINS WITH THE GRACE OF GOD. v.20

Many things that Jesus did while on earth are not recorded in the Bible. John said *“these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.”* John wrote in order for his readers to see who Jesus really is.

This principle teaches the grace of God. The Scriptures have been written for your benefit. It is only because of the grace of God that we can know God. The word “miracle” is the word for a “sign” which is used interchangeably. The word implies a signal or marker. Luke 2:12 *“this shall be a sign for you, you will find a baby wrapped in clothes lying in a manger.”* Because of the grace of God, he has given us the sign of his Son, Jesus Christ. His grace draws us to trust him. (Rom 2:1-4)

John recorded seven “signs” in this gospel so the people would believe in Christ. Jesus turned the water into wine (2:1-11) He healed the son of a nobleman (4:54-55). A lame man at the pool of Bethesda was healed (5:1-13). Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish and fed five thousand people (6:1-13). John records that Jesus healed a man born

blind in chapter nine. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (11). John records the most important sign in the final chapters, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. These signs are given for your benefit. The most important miracle is the resurrection of Christ. Do you believe in the grace of God?

II. THE SECOND KEY IS FAITH MUST BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE. (v. 31)

The bible says these things are written that you might believe that Jesus the Christ. The word Christ means the one anointed by God, and the long expected one. When Jesus asked Peter *“who do you say that I am?”* his reply was, *“you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”* Jesus answered Peter, *“flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”* When Jesus was on trial, the High Priest said, *“I adjure you by the living god, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.”*, and Jesus said to him, *you have said it yourself, nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven”* (Matt 26:63-64). This statement explains the content of Faith. Faith means believing in something. Jesus said, *“have faith in God”*(Mark 11:22). Romans 10:9-10 says, *“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved, for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”*

Misplaced faith is dangerous. Faith is not better than its object. If all you have is positive thinking, you will get discouraged. There will be times you try to think positively, but you cannot. Victorious faith is not positive thinking. It is faith in the right place. Place your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

III. THE THIRD KEY IS FAITH GIVES YOU PURPOSE IN THE RACE OF LIFE.

The word *“believing”* in verse thirty one is a present active participle, which implies progress. The present tense means continual action of something already in progress. In other words, the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ, God gives that person eternal life. He possesses life and all it contains for all eternity. Jesus said, *“He who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life”*(John 5:24). The verb *“is passed”* is in the perfect tense, which implies an action that started at a point in the past, with present and abiding results.

Faith is an ongoing action in the heart of a Christian with present and abiding results. In order to discover your purpose in life, you lay aside your preferences and keep your faith in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:1-2 says, *“Let us lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.”* Not according to your fame, your fortune, or your feelings, but according to your faith will you receive eternal life. Faith is like breathing. God give you air, lungs in your body, but you can smother yourself. We must place our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and savior.

APPENDIX 13

“THREE MARKS OF A TESTIMONY”

Acts 9:1-19

March 17, 2011

INTRODUCTION

A young man went to sea to become a sailor. He lived a life of rebellion and for years he worked on slave ships, capturing people to sell to plantation owners of the New World. Eventually, he became the captain of the slave ship. Two events planted the seed of the gospel in his heart. He survived a terrible storm at sea, and also read the book *Imitation of Christ*. He was gloriously converted and became a leader in the revivals that swept America nineteenth century. After his death, this was written on his tombstone, “John Newton, clerk, once an infidel, a servant of slaves in Africa, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”¹

You are probably familiar with the wonderful song *Amazing Grace* written by John Newton. He knew the sweet truths the song proclaims. This story illustrates the salvation experience. Church history is filled with stories such as the experience of salvation like John Newton. No story has had such far reaching implication as the conversion experience of Saul. Saul was a key character in the Bible. After his salvation, God changed his name to Paul. The Bible records his conversion in three different chapters in the book of Acts (9, 22, 26).

This text identifies three marks of the testimony of a Christian. Many people may not have such a dramatic experience like the apostle Paul, but every Christian has a story to share. Let’s look at three scenes of the story.

SCENE I. SAUL IN JERUSALEM. (vv. 1-2)

Jerusalem introduces the story. The hatred of Saul expresses his attitude. Still threatening believers from the time of the stoning of Stephen, Saul heard of Jewish Christians who were spreading the gospel at Damascus. He asked the High Priest for papers to arrest anyone who followed Christ. Saul took the initiative to oppose Christ and his followers.

¹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1982), 28.

SCENE II SAUL ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS. (vv 3-9)

Damascus was two hundred miles to the north of Jerusalem. Saul left Jerusalem and walked north until he saw a light from heaven. Blinded by the light, he fell to the ground and heard a voice calling his name, “*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?*”(v.4). Saul trembling asked, “*Who are you Lord?*” Jesus answered, “*I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.*”(v. 5). The light of Jesus blinded Saul, and his friends led him by the hand to Damascus. Instead of searching for Christians to persecute, Saul had a change of heart and obeyed the command of the Lord to wait in Damascus and he would be told what to do.

SCENE III SAUL IN DAMASCUS. (vv. 10-19)

Having stayed at the house of Judas for three days, God sent a man by the name of Ananias, the leader of the Christian church. Ironically, the person Saul would have arrested came to Saul in order to pray for him and encourage Saul to follow Christ. When Ananias prayed for Saul, something like scales fell off his eyes and he regained his sight. Saul was baptized in Damascus and he became one of the greatest missionaries of the Christian church.

Lets look at three marks of a Christians testimony from this story.

I. WHAT YOUR LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE YOU MET CHRIST?

Two verses summarize the lost condition of Saul. Saul was at the stoning of Stephen and the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of this man, Saul. But that incident was not enough for Saul. Saul had a restless spirit in him. He took upon himself to rebel against God. Life before Christ is a life of restlessness, confusion, and conviction. The wilderness wanderings of Israel in Deuteronomy illustrate this principle.

II. HOW DID YOU COME TO FAITH IN CHRIST?

The conversion of Saul unfolds in three phases. Saul was confronted with the person of Christ. Notice, this story records two verses of the life of Saul before Christ, and six verses of how Saul met Christ, and nine verses of what Saul was like after he met Christ. Oftentimes people will share their testimony in the opposite way by talking about their terrible life of sin, and then making mention that they have been saved. Our testimony should bear witness to the grace of God first.

III. WHAT IS GOD DOING IN YOUR LIFE SINCE YOUR CONVERSION?

How has God worked in your life since you believed? Just as Saul went to Damascus with a new purpose in life, you can experience new direction in life when you come to faith in Jesus Christ. You may not have had an experience like Saul, but you can identify three marks of a salvation experience. Have you had a definite salvation experience?

APPENDIX 14

“HOW TO AVOID THE PERVERSION OF SCRIPTURE”

1 Timothy 1:1-20

March 24, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Why do some Christians who have served God faithfully for years suddenly fall away from God? For example, A pastor has served faithfully for years, all of a sudden leaves family, resigns church, and leads an ungodly lifestyle. A Sunday School teacher has taught the same class for twenty years admits to a gambling addiction, then leaves the church. A missionary couple in Germany becomes discouraged because of little or no fruit. After three years, they return to the states, get discouraged, divorce and are no longer in Church. What happened to these people?

Such illustrations show crisis of belief which should be periods of development. The crisis of faith will either “make us or break us.” The root problem is the perversion of Scripture. The devil had rather us believe an half truth, rather that lie. Because its so much easier to believe a lie.

This text answers three questions for us to consider: Only you know the answers. At the end of the service, we will have an invitation to come forward and trust Christ as Lord and Savior. Also, invitation for each person to make a faith commitment to Christ. Read First Timothy 1:1-20 and mark the six references to faith.

Three questions that will help you avoid the perversion of Scripture.

I. IS MY FAITH GENUINE? (vv. 1-2)

Apostle or an eyewitness of Christ was the signature of Paul in this letter. Paul called himself “one who is sent.” His faith was genuine. Genuine faith fulfills ones duty to Christ. His earlier epistle often said “*the servant of Jesus Christ,*” but now he added, “*by the will of God.*” Maybe this change was because this letter was written toward the end of his life. Here there is a sense of Paul fulfilling his mission in life.

Are you fulfilling your duty to Christ? Genuine faith takes dedication seriously.(1:2) Paul said the commandment is according to God our Savior. His answer to Gentile readers who believed Zues is Savior. The Temple of Diana was in Ephesus. Paul reminded the

readers that God is our Savior, Jesus is Lord.

Do we take dedication to Christ seriously? Genuine faith takes discipleship seriously. (1:2) Paul called Timothy his “*true child in the faith.*” No other person did Paul describe in this way. This term is one of endearment. Paul could count on Timothy. He described Timothy as “*like-minded*” (Phil 2:18). Can God count on you? I want Christ there when I need Him. Is my faith genuine? In order to avoid the perversion of Scripture, we must have genuine faith that fulfills the duty to Christ, dedicated to Christ, and a true disciple of Christ.

II. IS MY FAITH GUARDED? (vv 3-7; 19-20)

Paul gave two charges in this chapter. One charge is recorded in verse three. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus. He had given elders a charge in Acts 20. He has written an entire letter to the church, we know as the book of Ephesians. Paul still sent a man to guard the faith of the church. He provided three warnings of the perversion of Scripture by distorting faith.

One warning is to avoid foolish faith. (v. 4) Paul discounted “*myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculations.*” The Jews prided themselves in tracing their genealogy. Another warning is to avoid fruitless faith. (v.6-7) He called false teachers full of vain or empty chatter. Jesus said, “*Beware of wolves in sheep clothing*” (Matt 7:15). Another warning is to avoid false faith. Paul gave two examples of false faith: Hymeneus and Alexander (19-20). Two guys left the faith. There is a danger of being self-deceived. Guard your faith.

III. IS MY FAITH GRACIOUS? (v. 9-14).

Paul wrote of these terrible sins that false faith and false teachers promoted (9-10). Then he opens his heart with a personal appeal. (11-14). Paul had experienced grace and he wanted others to know Him. Paul knew what he was before Christ and how Jesus had changed him. The only difference in heaven and hell is GRACE. Paul trusted Christ for enabling grace (Rom 7:14, 24-25). Paul had trusted Christ for his Exceeding Abundant Grace. (14) The grace of God is always enough. No one has gone too far, and no one is too good that doesn't need grace. Grace should spill out of our lives into others. (2 Cor 12:8)

Conclusion

Avoid the perversion of Scripture with a genuine, guarded, and gracious faith by being grounded in your faith. Three questions diagnose the depth of our faith. Is our faith genuine? Is our faith guarded? Is our faith gracious?

APPENDIX 15

“THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE”

2 Timothy 2:1-10

April 3, 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Bible has been a part of my life as long as I can remember. Having been raised in a Christian home, I was naturally open to the gospel as a child. As a child, I made my first step toward Christ. My pastor his Bible and shared with me the plan of salvation. God used his Word to confirm my relationship with him. One of my precious memories is the day a Gideon came to my fifth grad class room and gave me a red copy of the New Testament. Through the years, the Bible become a special book to me.

The apostle Paul wrote to a young pastor in order to encourage him to remain faithful to the Scriptures. Paul was near his death. He was ready to be offered up. The time of his departure was at hand. Timothy was challenged, “Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (1:8) “Hold fast the form of sound words” (1:13) “Be strong” (2:2) “Flee youthful lusts” (2:22) “to continue in the things he had learned” (3:14) “Preach the Word” (4:2) and “Watch, endure the afflictions, and do the work of an evangelist” (4:5).

In this passage, Paul challenged Timothy to understand, appreciate, and apply the Scripture. A key phrase in verse nine, “the word of God is not bound.” Although Paul was bound by chains in prison, he discovered there were no limits to the Word of God. My objective is to challenge the listeners to understand, appreciate and apply Scripture. Three timeless truths:

I. SCRIPTURE STRENGTHENS A CHRISTIAN WHEN APPLIED (vv.1-6)

Paul challenged Timothy to be strong. He provided three pictures of how Scripture strengthens one that applies Scripture. One example of strength is a soldier. A soldier of Christ endures, hardness, avoid unnecessary fights by fighting wisely, and works to please his master. Another example in an athlete who disciplines himself by mastering his sport. A third example is a farmer that labors diligently. He plants the crop and patiently waits for his crop to bring fruit at the harvest. These pictures demonstrate how God strengthens the faith of believers when Scripture is applied properly.

II. SCRIPTURE REVEALS THE SAVIOR WHEN UNDERSTOOD. (v. 7).

The Lord will give a Christ understanding in everything. Christians must consider three needs in order to understand Scripture. The Bible says, “*a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*” (1 Cor 2:14). First the believer must consider his need for the Spirit. Second, the believer must trust the Holy Spirit for illumination. Third, one must believe the Scriptures are inspired by God in the original language.

The Bible records two disciples walking with Jesus after the resurrection. Their eyes were closed to the meaning of the crucifixion of Christ until Jesus opened their hearts and explained the Scripture. “*Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures*” (Luke 24:27). God will open our hearts in order to help us understand all truth.

III. SCRIPTURE ENCOURAGES THE BELIEVER. (vv. 8-10)

Paul was encouraged by Jesus Christ in order to be able to suffer hardship. Three promises the believer should remember: Remember the prophecies fulfilled. “*Jesus Christ, of the seed of David*” (2:8) Remember the power of the resurrection. “*risen from the dead*” (8b) Remember the power of the gospel. (2:8c-10) Although Paul was in prison facing death, he said the word of God is never bound or in prison.

The Word of God has no limits. This principle should motivate the Christian to appreciate his Bible. Do you appreciate the Bible? Many homes have several copies of the Bible lying around the house. Do we take the Bible for granted. We should read the Bible, heed the Bible, and love the Bible.

The Scriptures do not need to be defended as much as it needs to be believed and applied. C.H. Spurgeon said “defending the Bible is like defending a lion.” Just turn it loose and it defends itself.

Conclusion

Paul, bound in a Roman prison, challenged Timothy to understand, appreciate, and apply Scripture. Christians must appreciate, understand, and apply Scripture. The purpose of Scripture is to strengthen the faith of a believer, reveal the Savior to the believer more fully, and to encourage the believer. Would you consider these three truths of Scripture as motivation to apply, appreciate and understand the Word of God?

APPENDIX 16

“THE PRIORITIES OF THE CHURCH” Revelation 2:1-7

April 10, 2011

INTRODUCTION

Jesus told the church at Ephesus “*I know your deeds, and your toil, and your perseverance*” (2:3). The word “know” emphasizes “the absolute clearness of mental vision which photographs all the facts of life.” Jesus wrote to the church at Ephesus because he knew them. He had great things to say about the church. The church was at a major metropolitan city. Ephesus was a coastal town with a large temple to the Greek goddess Diana. People would come to worship this idol. The church stood strong in the midst of paganism. Even in the midst of all the idolatry of their society, Jesus had words of commendation to say to them.

However, Jesus also had words of correction for them. Jesus gave them three tests to see if he had first priority in the church. The church passed the first two but they were on the verge of failing the final test. Jesus should have priority in the church. I want to encourage you to let Jesus have first place in the church.

Let’s look at the three questions to see if Jesus has first priority in this church. If we want to be the church where Jesus has priority, we must first be:

I. DOES THE SPIRIT HAVE FREEDOM IN THIS CHURCH? (v.1)

The church at Ephesus was a spiritual church. Why was it spiritual? The Church had a Good Past. The word angel means messenger. Many believe Jesus wrote to the pastors of the church. The church at Ephesus had great pastors in the past. The Apostle Paul did mission work there. He spent three years there and saw many people come to faith in Christ. He spoke to the Elders in Acts 20 and said that he served with tears. Aquilla and Priscilla ministered there, along with Timothy and by the end of the century, the beloved Apostle John served there. They had a good past, but that was not supposed to take place of the present. A church should never think the “glory days” are over. God is still at work today!

The church at Ephesus was a powerful church because he “*holdeth the seven stars in his right hand.*” This refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church. The word “holdeth” refers to His power. He has control over the church, as long as we stay in His hands. If Jesus has first place in the church, there will be the power of God that changes lives.

The Church had the presence of God because Jesus is the one who “*walks among*” them. (1b). Jesus said that He moves among His people in the church. He walks in the midst of them. There are around two hundred people here this morning. But there is one more person that we can’t see with our human eyes. Jesus said that He would be here, when we come to worship Him.

II. DO THE SCRIPTURES HAVE AUTHORITY IN THIS CHURCH? (vv. 2-3, 6)

The church was solid in its devotion to Christ because they followed the Scriptures. Jesus began his X-ray of the church in verse two. He liked what he saw for the most part. When he looked inside, he saw a solid church devoted to Him. They were a hard-working church. The word works and labor refer to the energy they had for the church. They were a busy church. They had all the latest programs. And they had a lot of activities at the church. However, we must be careful of exchanging religious activity for a relationship with Christ. Be careful about being so busy working for God, that you lose that close walk with God. Luke 10 records this happening to Mary and Martha.

They were solid in their determination. Notice the word “*patience*” in verse two. Jesus expanded that in verse three because he said the church had not “fainted.” This word “faint” means “to grow weary.” The church had not grown weary. They were determined to bear the load and go the distance.

They Were Solid in Their Doctrine (2b, 6) Look in verse six. Jesus commended them for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Apparently, some people with wacky doctrine and weird beliefs had surfaced in the church, possibly after Paul had left the church. Some people believe the Nicolaitans were followers of one of the first deacons in Acts. The church based its beliefs on scripture and was sound in their doctrine, determination and devotion.

III. IS THE CHURCH SICK? (vv. 5,7)

The church had a great reputation, they worked hard. They had solid devotion and didn’t tolerate heresy, but they became a sick church. Jesus had one word of correction for the church, they had left their first love. They lost their passion for Christ.

At the beginning, the church had such a passion for Christ they sacrificed an enormous price of their worldly goods. They were so in love with Jesus, they were willing to give anything to Him. However, that was years ago and the fire had gone out. They remained scripturally sound, but lost their passion.

Has your passion for Christ gone? Do you love him as much as you did when you first met him? Church members were going through the motions, but had no passion. Do you simply go through the motions every week of coming to church, singing-praying, and listening to God’s word with little or no passion?

Vance Havner said, "Church services start at 11 am sharp and end at 12 o'clock dull." Where is the passion? The loss of passion and love for Jesus is the fallen condition focus of this passage. What is the remedy for the church? First, REMEMBER. Second, RETURN – "*from whence you are fallen*" Third, REPENT- "*repent, or else*" If you have lost your passion for Christ and left your first love, it means that Jesus no longer has first place in your life. Simply repent.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus had words of commendation and he also had words of correction for the church. Jesus gave them three tests to see if he had first priority in the church. The church passed the first two, they were a spiritual church, they were a scriptural church, but they were also a sick church. They were on the verge of failing the final test. The church was about to lose their passion, because they left their first love and they were about to lose the fellowship with the Son.

Jesus tests the church today to see if he has priority in the church. Jesus should have priority in the church. The church should love Jesus more today than ever before. My wife and I have been married for 20 years. I love her more now than I did 20 years ago. She is my best friend. We have spent a lot of time together and know each other better now than 20 years ago. We should love Jesus more today than ever before. Can I encourage you today to let Christ have first place in the church? Can I encourage you today, let Jesus have first place in your life?

APPENDIX 17
SERMON CRITIQUE

Reviewer: _____

Your Church Position: _____

Sermon Text: _____

Sermon Title: _____

Preacher: _____

Please review the sermon and respond to each statement with the level of agreement or disagreement using the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Strongly Disagree |

1. ____ The sermon explained the biblical text.
2. ____ The sermon outline followed the outline of the text.
3. ____ The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.
4. ____ The sermon used at least one illustration as a "window" into the text.
5. ____ The sermon was interesting.
6. ____ The sermon was inspiring.
7. ____ I have a much better understanding of the passage after hearing the sermon.
8. ____ I have a much better understanding of how the passage applies to my life.
9. ____ The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to the congregation.
10. ____ The sermon was practical.

What advice, correction and or encouragement do you have for the preacher?

APPENDIX 18

POST-SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the project?

Was the purpose of the project a worthy one?

Has this seminar helped improve your ability to study the Bible? If so, in what ways?

Has this seminar helped improve your ability to teach the Bible? If so, in what ways?

Has this seminar helped improve your ability to interpret the Bible? If so, in what ways?

Is there anything the church could do to help you become a bible study teacher?

Is there a particular area of ministry that you would feel comfortable in teaching?

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ABSTRACT

IMPROVING APPLICATION IN EXPOSITORY PREACHING AT NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

2009-2012

Kendall Joe White, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Terry J. Betts

This ministry project implements principles of proper application in order to improve application in expository preaching. Chapter 1 introduces objectives of this project and shares the context and community of New Prospect Baptist Church. Chapter 2 addresses theological issues concerning the application of Scripture in the local church. Examples from the Old Testament and an examination of how Jesus applied Scripture form the theological foundation for proper application.

Chapter 3 examines the practical issues of proper application. A definition that provides a balance of exposition and application is developed from five scholars. This chapter describes the need, nature, and guidelines of application in relation to expository preaching along with pitfalls to avoid.

Chapter 4 is a presentation of the ministry project. Chapter 5 is an evaluation of the project which is evaluated on the basis of the goals set forth in chapter one. Strengths and weaknesses are identified, along with recommendations for improvement. This project improved application of Scripture in expository preaching.

VITA

Kendall Joe White

PERSONAL

Born: October 8, 1972, Oxford, Mississippi

Parents: Donald and Kara White

Married: Angela Dawn Russell, May 18, 1991

EDUCATION

Diploma, Lafayette High School, Oxford, Mississippi

B.A. Blue Mountain College, 2001

M.Div., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary

MINISTERIAL

Pastor, Beulah Baptist Church, Myrtle, Mississippi, 1999-2006

Pastor, New Prospect Baptist Church, Oxford, Mississippi, 2006

