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APPLYING OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE AT ANGEL FIRE

BAPTIST CHURCH, ANGEL FIRE, NEW MEXICO

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APPLYING OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE AT ANGEL FIRE
BAPTIST CHURCH, ANGEL FIRE, NEW MEXICO

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I dedicate this project to my wife Gay, for all of the prayer, support, and encouragement she faithfully provided throughout its duration. I also dedicate this project to the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church, for their financial assistance, prayer support, encouragement, and participation, all of which allowed this project to be completed.

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PREFACE

May the name of my Lord and Savior, the one Triune God, be forever praised and declared among the nations. He has given us his word as a repository of his truth and a revelation of his person and work. He has chosen that his word should be preached to the world as the light of his salvation. Only because of these truths does this project have any usefulness or merit. May his name be forever praised.

My wife, Gay, has been a constant source of encouragement and support during the completion of this project. She encouraged me as I considered the pursuit of a doctoral degree, she patiently endured the years of study, travel, and writing, and she gently exhorted me when I grew weary. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the support, love, and encouragement of our three children: Gaelen Dye, Annie Nystrom, and Tim Nystrom. They are a constant source of joy.

My parents, Warren and Ina Nystrom, have always been examples of faith, perseverance, and the long steady road of discipleship. Their long hours spent in God's word and prayer on my behalf have always been a great strength and encouragement to me.

I am grateful to Southern Seminary, its president and faculty, for giving me the opportunity to study and grow in my understanding of and my ability to preach God's word. May this institution continue to stand on the truth and authority of God's word until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

I am also thankful for my supervisor, Dr. Terry J. Betts. When I first proposed my project to him, he immediately offered himself as my supervisor. He has been a constant source of direction, encouragement and patience.

I am truly grateful for the assistance of my editing team: Pastor Terry Enns,

Lydia Erin Leggett, Dr. Zandree Stidham, and Gaelen Dye. They challenged my thinking and helped the technical quality of my writing.

My earnest desire and prayer is that this project will encourage the church to mature in its faith as it understands the Old Testament in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope that the church will think differently when they read or hear teaching from Old Testament narrative, and that pastors will preach differently from these texts as they consider the argument of this project. May God use this project as he sees fit for his glory and his kingdom.

Brian Kurt Nystrom

Angel Fire, New Mexico

May 2016

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to facilitate members of Angel Fire Baptist Church in Angel Fire, New Mexico, to apply Old Testament narrative properly.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to assist the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church to increase their awareness of how they apply Old Testament narrative. A pre-project questionnaire was used with a representative number of 20 adult and youth members to assess their current method of application of Old Testament narrative (see appendix 1). The questionnaire was limited to a relatively small number of members due to the fluctuating nature of Angel Fire as a resort community which is paralleled in the church. The questionnaire presented participants with various Old Testament narratives followed by questions regarding application of the narratives to their current life and ministry context. The goal was deemed successful when all of the participants completed the questionnaire and the results were analyzed and reported.

The second goal of this project was to equip the project participants to properly apply Old Testament narrative using the method of application developed through research and described in chapter 2. This method was taught to the project participants in a one-day seminar prior to the preaching series. A final seminar was held

at the end of the series with the participants to receive final feedback on the use of and benefit of the method of application. The goal was deemed successful when 80 percent of the participants indicated that the method of application was beneficial and clearly modeled in the sermons preached.

The third goal of the project was to model the method of application taught to project participants by preaching a sermon series from Genesis 37-50. Each of the sermons was prepared utilizing the method for application described in chapter 2. The same pre-project questionnaire was used with the participants post-project to measure the knowledge gained in the application Old Testament narrative from the sermons preached. A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires. This goal was deemed successful when the t-test showed a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires.

Ministry Context

Angel Fire Baptist Church was established in 1985 as a mission of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. The longest serving pastor served from 1986 to 2002. While his ministry was characterized by faithfulness to God's word, the emphasis of ministry was on programs designed to draw the community into the church rather than expository preaching. As a result, while the church experienced significant numerical growth during this period, the biblical literacy and spiritual maturity of the membership did not keep pace.

This pattern continued over the next six years. The church was served from 2002-2008 by two interim pastors and one pastor who served for three years. Each of

these pastors, while generally faithful to God's word, emphasized short, positive, non-expository sermons. Thus, by the end of its first twenty-three years of existence, the membership of Angel Fire Baptist Church had a broad but shallow understanding of the scriptures and how they applied to their lives. Much of the blame for this can be contributed to the historical lack of expository preaching in the church noted above.

During the past several years, within Angel Fire and the surrounding communities there has been a growth of competing faiths including Eastern Religions, Mormonism, and Native American Religion. As these groups have become more active in the community, confusion has arisen in the membership of Angel Fire Baptist Church regarding responding to and interacting with these faiths.

The most significant example is a group of "messianic Jews" who are calling the local churches to return to the observance of the Law, especially the feasts and festivals. This group has also advocated restoring some of the sacrifices from the Old Testament. Some of the members of this group have held Bible studies, some attended by members of Angel Fire Baptist Church. A few of these Messianic Jews have also occasionally attended Bible studies at the church with the intent of engaging members in discussion about the Old Testament and its application.

The above synopsis lays out the particular challenges that faced Angel Fire Baptist Church at the beginning of this project: (1) a lack of historical foundation of expository preaching; (2) a lack of understanding of proper application of the Scriptures, particularly the Old Testament; (3) strong, varied and competing religious influences in the community and surrounding area.

Rationale for the Project

Angel Fire Baptist Church needs to grow in an understanding of how the Scriptures apply to the Christian life; to see how what was written down in the past, especially the Old Testament, is applicable for salvation and sanctification across time and culture today. In addition, Angel Fire Baptist Church needs to be able to confidently dialog about the Scriptures with others in the community who have differing worldviews.

During the last five years of ministry at Angel Fire Baptist Church, a foundation of expository preaching was laid. This project provided a crucial step in helping to bring the membership of Angel Fire Baptist Church to maturity in Christ. The project focused on the Old Testament which was the weakest area for the church in terms of understanding meaning. The project also focused on application which was the weakest area with relation to the Old Testament. By helping the membership of Angel Fire Baptist Church grow in their understanding of the Old Testament and how it applies to their lives, this project also gave them confidence to discuss the Scriptures with others, to proclaim Christ and to make the word of God fully known in the community.

Definitions, Limitations and Delimitations

Narrative. In his book *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Sydney Greidanus, quoting Gabriel Fackre, defines “narrative” as an account of events and participants moving over time and space, a recital with beginning and ending patterned by the narrator's principle of selection.”¹

¹Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 189.

Literacy. This term refers to competence or knowledge in a specified area (*Oxford Dictionary*, online ed.).

Expository preaching. The following definition is based on an understanding of Nehemiah 8:7-8, 2 Timothy 4:2, Acts 20:27. This term is defined as the declaration of God's word involving the reading, explanation and application of biblical texts, including their place in the larger redemptive context, with the goal of an understanding of the text leading to life reorientation by the listener.

This project had no significant limitations.

This project had two delimitations. The first delimitation is that the scope of the project was limited to Old Testament narrative. The second delimitation is that the scope of the participants was limited to 20 church members.

Research Methodology

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assist the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church to increase their awareness of how they apply Old Testament narrative. A pre-project questionnaire was used with a representative number of 20 adult and youth members to assess the current method of application of Old Testament narrative (see appendix 1). The questionnaire was limited to a relatively small number of members due to the fluctuating nature of Angel Fire as a resort community which is paralleled in the church. I developed the questionnaire which consisted of four Old Testament narrative texts. Each of the texts was followed by the same five questions regarding the application of the narratives to the participant's current life and ministry context. The participants identified themselves on the questionnaire by providing a personal code of their choice. I reviewed the pre-project questionnaire; my

pastoral assistant compiled the results. The goal was deemed successful when all of the participants completed the questionnaire and the results were analyzed and reported.

The second goal of this project was to equip the project participants to properly apply Old Testament narrative using the method of application developed through research and described in chapter 2. This method was taught to the project participants in a one-day seminar prior to the preaching series. The participants were also asked to prepare a brief one-page reflection on the application used in each of the sermons in the preaching series. A final seminar was held at the end of the series with the participants to receive final feedback on the use of and benefit of the method of application. At this final seminar the written reflections were collected from each of the participants. I reviewed the reflections and my pastoral assistant compiled the results. The goal was deemed successful when 80 percent of the participants indicated that the method of application was beneficial and clearly modeled in the sermons preached.

The third goal of the project was to model the method of application taught to project participants by preaching a sermon series from Genesis 37-50. Each of the sermons was prepared utilizing the method for application described in chapter 2. The same pre-project questionnaire was used with the participants post-project to measure the knowledge gained in the application of Old Testament narrative from the sermons preached. The post-project questionnaire was completed only by participants who completed the pre-project questionnaire, and by those who heard each of the sermons of the preaching series, either by being present or by listening to an audio recording. The participants identified themselves on the questionnaire by providing the same personal

code that they indicated on the pre-project questionnaire. A t-test for dependent samples was used to determine whether there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires. I reviewed the questionnaires and my pastoral assistant compiled the results. This goal was deemed successful when the t-test showed a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS MODELS FOR APPLYING OT NARRATIVE

Many authors have heralded the need for more faithful preaching from the OT. Greidanus calls the OT “a lost treasure in the church today.”¹ Kaiser cautions that the OT “is all too often neglected in our teaching and preaching.”² Haddon Robinson, in his foreword to Gibson’s *Preaching the Old Testament*, laments, “Ministers who would defend to the death the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures ignore huge sections of the First Testament in their preaching.”³ Duncan agrees when he writes, “But I have also noted in the midst of this general revival of expository preaching a neglect of the Old Testament.”⁴ Mathewson challenges preachers “whose preaching diet does not yet include Old Testament stories” to take the leap.⁵ Goldsworthy states that an intention of his book is to “help [preachers] preach from the Old Testament with confidence and

¹Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 15.

²Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 9.

³Haddon Robinson, Introduction to *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 13.

⁴J. Ligon Duncan III, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” in *Preaching the Cross*, ed. Mark Dever et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 40.

⁵Stephen D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 14.

accuracy.”⁶ In their introduction, Kent, Kissling and Turner state, “We hope this book will encourage [the busy pastor] to use the Bible’s often-neglected 78%, and to demonstrate its usefulness and relevance to the life of faith today.”⁷

The preacher faces many difficulties in this regard, both perceived and real. While many of these difficulties relate to interpretive issues, one of the greatest challenges of effective preaching from the OT is making proper application to the church, especially with OT narrative. This project addresses the specific issue of application of OT narratives in preaching and works from the following assumption: the variety of models for applying OT narrative that exist in the conservative evangelical tradition provide an adequate basis for developing a model for the application of OT narrative that will meet the needs of Angel Fire Baptist Church.

Is it proper even to consider the subject of application in preaching? Does the preacher’s role include not only interpretation and explanation but also application? Many would answer these questions with a resounding “Yes!” However, does this sentiment rest on personal or cultural bias? Are there any biblical guidelines which would support this affirmation and which would help the preacher in making proper application of OT narrative to the church?

⁶Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), vii.

⁷J. R. Kent Grenville, Paul J. Kissling, and Laurence A. Turner, Introduction to *Reclaiming the Old Testament for Christian Preaching*, ed. Grenville J. R. Kent, Paul J. Kissling, and Laurence A. Turner (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 11.

Biblical Guidelines

Moses and Ezra provide two helpful examples. Moses was the first great teacher in the Bible. Deuteronomy 4:1-10 states,

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, . . . Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, . . . Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life . . . Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me.⁸

Moses was the one through whom God revealed the law to Israel. Mohler states that, “Israel lived by God’s Word, and the Word became to them health, life, blessing, and even identity.”⁹ When Moses gave the law to the people, his intention was not simply external obedience but heart-directed life-reorientation to God. He exhorted them to put the law of the Lord on their heart and to keep their soul diligently so the law would not depart from their heart that they might live. Adam points out that Moses applied the law to Israel when he told them “in detail what it would mean for them to continue to keep the covenant in the land.”¹⁰ Application of the law was life for Israel. In the context of Deuteronomy 4, “fearing the Lord” could be defined as a life reorientation based on putting the Law of God on the heart; or alternately, the application of God’s Law from

⁸Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

⁹R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 62.

¹⁰Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1996), 39. Adam notes other examples of Moses the preacher from Deuteronomy, including 1:5, 4:1, 5:1-21, 6:13, 8:1, 10:12-13, 18:14-22, and chap. 29.

the heart to the life. The example of Moses supports the affirmation that OT narrative was meant for application.

Ezra is another great teacher from Israel's history. In Ezra 7:10, the life purpose of Ezra is set in sharp relief: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." This verse offers helpful insight into the heart of Ezra which he set or prepared or devoted to a specific task. "Set" comes from the Hebrew word *הִכִּין* (*kun*) meaning "a reigning desire leading to love and zeal and thus devotion. He made this task the business of his life."¹¹ Ryken explains that this was Ezra's "heart commitment, the direction of his life, the settled intention of his soul."¹² What was this task which he made the business of his life? The task consisted of three parts: to study the law of the Lord, to do it, to teach it. Ezra sought to become "an expert in his understanding of the law, to exercise himself in it so that it might become habitual for him, and by instruction and example teach the people of God."¹³ Ezra did not proceed directly from studying to teaching. Between these two crucial activities was the setting of his heart to do the law of the Lord. Ezra understood that doing the Law was a necessary prerequisite to teaching the Law. Examples of Ezra's "doing" the law can be found in the ensuing chapters of Ezra. In chapter 8 he remembers to bring priests along for the journey to Jerusalem and he calls for a time of fasting and praying for God's safety

¹¹Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1979), accessed April 17, 2014, <http://classic.studylight.org/com/jfb/view.cgi?book=eZR&chapter=007>.

¹²Philip Graham Ryken, "Ezra, According to the Gospel: Ezra 7:10," *Themelios* 33, no. 3 (December 2008), accessed April 17, 2014, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/ezra-according-to-the-gospel-ezra-710>.

¹³John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible*, accessed April 17, 2014, <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=14&ch=7>.

on the journey rather than relying on the king's protection. In chapters 9 and 10 he responds to the intermarrying of the Israelites with the surrounding nations with prayer, confession and repentance, and covenant renewal. Ezra thus considered application of the Scripture a necessity for his and the nation's life with God. The "for" at the beginning of the verse points back to verse 9 and makes clear that because of Ezra's devotion the "good hand of God was with him" (Ezra 7:9). In this way Ezra imperfectly points to Jesus who perfectly modeled Ezra's devotion and teaching, and Ezra serves as a model for all future preachers of God's word. It would only be natural then to see this emphasis in his teaching.

In Nehemiah 8 one sees the emphasis on application in Ezra's teaching. The people asked Ezra to teach them the law. Those who gathered to hear him were those who were capable of understanding God's Law and the men helping Ezra assisted the people in understanding the law. Mohler makes this point when he says, "'Giving the sense' is not merely the act of translating from one language to another. It has to do with explaining a text, breaking it down, and making its meaning clear."¹⁴ Ezra and the others read the law carefully and "gave the sense" in order that the people would understand so they could do the law, and then apply the law to their lives. Though application is not explicitly stated, it is implied in light of Ezra's view of the Scripture for study, application and teaching. For example, in his discussion of the Hebrew participle מפרש (*mephorash*) translated "clearly" in verse 8, Davis notes that the intent of the word is "to make the Word of God clear, to highlight the insight it holds, and to make its application

¹⁴Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 52.

obvious.”¹⁵ The implication of application in Ezra’s teaching can also be seen later in the chapter. The progression of thought from verses 13-16 is as follows: the leaders joined Ezra on the following day for further study of the Scripture, they found commands in the law that they were not following related to the Feast of Tabernacles, they went out and obeyed the commands. The example and teaching of Ezra support the affirmation that OT narrative was meant for application.

These two great teachers from the OT show us that the teacher of God’s Word studies with a view to application in his own life and teaches with a view to application in the lives of God’s people. Application driven study and teaching produces a people who understand the Scripture which leads them to fear the Lord, a quality that is evidenced by life-reorientation to God’s law from the heart. From these two men then one sees the first biblical guideline from the OT for the application of OT narrative: OT narrative was meant for application.

This biblical guideline is supported from the NT. Near the end of his life and ministry, Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Paul’s teaching about the Scripture in his letter to Timothy confirms the applicatory nature of Scripture and is consistent with the examples of Moses and Ezra. When Paul says “all Scripture” he was referring at the time to the OT, including OT narrative.¹⁶ So, all of OT narrative is inspired by God and all of OT narrative is

¹⁵Dale Ralph Davis, "Ezra-Nehemiah, Part 6: The Strong Hand (Ezra 7-8)," *IIM Magazine Online* 2, no. 48 (2000), accessed April 17, 2014, <http://www.davidcox.com.mx/library/D/Davis%20-%20Ezra-Nehemiah%20%28b%29.pdf>.

¹⁶Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 263-65. Referring to v.15, Collins comments that “among

profitable for the church to apply to her life. The profitability of OT narrative for the Christian is in its application: teaching, rebuke, correction and training. The simple illustration of God's path is helpful here. "Teaching" shows the location of God's path for the Christian. "Rebuke" shows the location of the Christian relative to God's path. "Correction" shows the Christian how to return to God's path. Finally, "training" shows the Christian how to stay on God's path. These four qualities provide a useful understanding of application. It is correct to say then that a purpose of all OT narrative is application; and this statement is supported by both the Old and NTs.

These words in 2 Timothy also identify the second biblical guideline as an extension of the first: OT narrative was meant for instruction of the church. In 2 Timothy 3:16, instruction is one of four uses given by Paul for the OT in the life of the Christian. Collins concludes that "the person who truly belongs to God gives evidence of a theocentric relationship in the life he or she lives. To that end the inspired Scriptures [including OT narrative] are eminently useful."¹⁷ In Romans 15:4, Paul's states that "whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction." As in 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul is referring here at least to the OT.¹⁸ Paul intended to show the place of the

Hellenistic Jews, 'sacred writings' . . . were the Jewish Scriptures." He then comments in reference to v16, "The (Jewish) Scriptures are 'inspired by God.'" Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 175-76. Guthrie concludes that "*graphē* could mean any writing, but the uniform NT use of it with reference to Scripture (i.e. the OT) determines its meaning here." William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 563-68. Mounce argues that Paul's use of *graphē* includes the gospel message he preached, but notes that "*graphē* must refer at least to the OT. This is the case with every other occurrence of *graphē* in the NT." He concludes that "Paul is thinking of the OT in light of the gospel."

¹⁷Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 265.

¹⁸James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 839. Dunn notes that *osa* ["as much as" or "whatever things"] "of course denotes

OT in the life of the Christian.¹⁹ Thus, the role of the OT for the church is not simply as a repository of revelation and knowledge. The OT, including OT narrative, functions as an active teacher of the church.²⁰

Clearly, the Bible provides support for the affirmation regarding application in preaching from OT narrative. All of OT narrative was meant for application, and all of OT narrative was meant for the instruction of the church. Is there any more guidance given in the Scripture regarding the nature of this application?

Paul provides clarity at this point from his letter to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul is using Israel as an example when instructing the Corinthians on temptation and sin. In verse 6 he says that key events in the history of Israel “took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.” Continuing this thought in verse 11, he adds, “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” In both verses 6 and 11, Paul uses the word ταῦτα (“these things”). In verse 6, Paul is referring to the specific historical events he has just mentioned in verses 1-4. But in verse 11, Paul broadens out the meaning of “these things” to refer to the sin categories of idolatry,

all Scripture.” Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 499. Morris adds, “*Everything that was written in the past* means ‘all that was written in Scripture.’”

¹⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 748. Schreiner concludes, “Once again the immensely practical role of the OT in the lives of Christians is unfolded.” Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 869. Moo comments, “The Old Testament...continues to play a central role in helping Christians to understand the climax of salvation history and their responsibilities as the New Covenant people of God.”

²⁰Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 500.

sexual immorality and grumbling which were illustrated in the historical examples enumerated. Thus it is the sins which serve as negative examples for the church. From Paul's teaching one sees a third biblical guideline: the application of OT narrative is exemplary in nature, especially when the narrative illustrates the sins of Israel.

A fourth biblical guideline can be found in the teaching of Jesus and Paul: the application of OT narrative is found in its testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Early in his ministry, in a confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus challenges them in John 5:39, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me." Jesus makes a broad and sweeping statement referring to the fact that the OT bears witness to him. One may still ask the question, is Jesus referring to specific references to himself in the OT or to a more general application of the OT in light of the person and work of Jesus?

After the resurrection, Jesus encounters two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The encounter concludes with these words of Jesus from Luke 24:25-27: "And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." A key phrase is found in verse 27, "things concerning himself." Was Jesus referring to explicit references to himself in the OT and interpreting these references to his disciples, or was Jesus referring to a much broader category that included the entire OT? Certainly the first idea is true since there are specific messianic prophecies and promises of the Messiah found throughout the OT. However, it is not necessary to restrict the meaning of the Greek to specific references. It is also possible,

either in lieu of or in addition to specific references, Jesus refers here to the grand theme(s) of the OT, εν πασαις ταϊς γραφαις (“in all the Scriptures”). Thus the second is likely true as well. Morris comments,

The picture we get is of the Old Testament as pointing to Jesus in all its parts. Luke gives no indication of which passages the Lord chose, but he makes it clear that the whole Old Testament is involved. We should perhaps understand this not as the selection of a number of proof-texts, but rather as showing that throughout the Old Testament a consistent divine purpose is worked out, a purpose that in the end meant and must mean the cross.²¹

The verses are not clear as to Jesus’ purpose of teaching beyond a greater understanding on the part of these two disciples of the OT’s connection with Jesus.

In a subsequent post-resurrection encounter with other disciples, Jesus says in Luke 24:44-47,

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Jesus uses the three categories of Law, Prophets and Psalms to refer to the OT in all of its parts. These words of Jesus support the ideas that there are specific references to Christ in the OT as well as an overall fulfillment of the OT found in him. Jesus’ purpose for the disciples is clearer in this encounter than in the previous. In addition to understanding the OT in the light of Jesus and the gospel, Jesus intends for the disciples to proclaim this understanding as witnesses.

²¹Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 370.

These teachings of Jesus support the fourth biblical guideline that the application of OT narrative is found in its testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This guideline is clarified in the teaching of Paul. Two different statements made by Paul, though made in specific historical situations, speak to a pattern in Paul's preaching. The first occurs when Paul is addressing the Ephesian elders. He says to them in Acts 20:26-27, "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." This broad statement refers to the gospel message in its entirety. Paul mentions the specifics of repentance and faith in Jesus in verse 21. He also refers to his teaching in verse 24 as "the gospel of the grace of God" and in verse 25 as "proclaiming the kingdom." As an apostle Paul received his understanding of the gospel directly from Jesus (Acts 22:14-15), as did the other apostles, including the understanding of the connection between the OT and Jesus. Paul refers to this message in his letter to the Ephesians in Ephesians 1:3-14. Therefore, when Paul uses the phrase *πασαν την βουλην του θεου* ("the whole counsel of God") in Acts 20:27, he is speaking of the complete plan of God as revealed in the Scripture with specific reference to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second statement of Paul occurs in his writing to the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, he maintains, "I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The specific focus of Paul's teaching was Jesus Christ and the gospel of the cross. However, when one looks at Luke's recording of Paul's time in Corinth in Acts 18, one learns that Paul was

teaching from the OT during his time there.²² Jesus and the gospel provided for Paul, and thus the church, the key for understanding and declaring the whole counsel of God as found in the entirety of the OT. Paul as the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles preached the OT to the church through the fulfillment found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. These statements of Paul agree with and expand on Jesus' teaching. The combined teaching of Jesus and Paul support the biblical guideline that the application of OT narrative is found in its testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Four biblical guidelines have been established regarding the application of OT narrative: OT narrative was meant for application; OT narrative was meant for the instruction of the church; the application of OT narrative is at least partially exemplary in nature; and the application of OT narrative is found in its testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The task now moves to developing an appropriate model for application which is consistent with these biblical guidelines.

Models for Applying OT Narrative

Many models have been used in the history of the church for applying OT narrative. This project considers three such models from the conservative evangelical tradition which all subscribe to the inerrancy, authority, and perspicuity of Scripture. The models considered are the Theocentric, the Christological, and the Redemptive-Historical Christocentric.²³ Many who hold to these various models would agree about the nature

²²Acts 18:5 says, "Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus." Acts 18:11 adds, "And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Both of these verses indicate Paul's use of the OT during his time in Corinth.

²³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 111-50, 227-33. The models referred to are technical names used by Greidanus. For this project, the names also refer to broader categories that encompass those who might not embrace the terminology.

of Scripture and the nature of preaching. All of these models start with proper interpretation and the need to understand the meaning of the text. However, the focus of this project is on the application that results, and in this respect clear differences between the models exist.²⁴

Theocentric Model

As the name implies, the Theocentric (TH) model holds that the primary purpose of the OT is to reveal God through his words, character, promises and works. Man is then revealed in the light of this revelation of God. Stephen Mathewson notes this dual purpose of the OT when he encourages preachers to “look for the story’s vision of God and depravity factor.”²⁵ Kaminski agrees in her chapter on preaching from the historical books of the OT when she concludes that the “historical books reveal the character of God and our sinful nature.”²⁶ The TH model also evidences a strong concern for maintaining the integrity of historical interpretation. All of the elements of good exegesis must be considered: grammar, literary context and structure, historical setting, and previous theology that has informed the writer and the characters. Kaiser warns that “the Scripture cannot be understood theologically until it is understood grammatically.”²⁷

²⁴All of the models noted speak to application though the primary emphasis of each is interpretation. Because the emphasis of this project is on application, the models will be referred to throughout as models for application of OT narrative.

²⁵Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching*, 101.

²⁶Carol M. Kaminski, “Preaching from the Historical Books,” in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 64.

²⁷Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Towards an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 27.

In calling for the necessity of historical interpretation as the basis for proper application, Kaiser maintains that “preparation for preaching is always a movement which must begin with the text of Scripture and have as its goal the proclamation of that Word in such a way that it can be heard with all its poignancy and relevancy to the modern situation without dismissing one iota of its original normativeness.”²⁸ Kaiser’s concern for the controlling nature of authorial intent is clear in his use of the phrase “original normativeness.” Kaiser later cautions against reading the NT back into the OT: “In no case should a later doctrine be used as an exegetical tool to unlock an earlier passage.”²⁹ His meaning is clarified in *The Majesty of God* when he says, “But I must not prematurely infuse New Testament values and meanings back into the Old Testament in order to sanctify it before I independently establish on purely Old Testament grounds the legitimate meaning of the Old Testament text.”³⁰ The emphasis of historical interpretation based on authorial intent as the basis for proper application is again clear in Kaiser from the phrases he chooses: “purely Old Testament grounds” and “legitimate meaning”.

According to the TH model, when one discovers the author’s meaning from sound exegesis of the text, he or she can make direct application from the principles revealed. Osborne states the idea in this way:

Study the original situation behind the message . . . determine the underlying theological principle . . . meditate on this [principle] . . . discern parallels between the original situation addressed by the sacred writer and the contemporary experiences of the Christian and the church. Application built on the significance of

²⁸Kaiser, *Towards and Exegetical Theology*, 48.

²⁹Ibid., 161.

³⁰Kaiser, *The Majesty of God*, 19.

the text will occur at this level . . . base the application/contextualization on the intended meaning of the text.”³¹

Kaiser essentially agrees when he states,

We propose that preaching on narrative passages will again become effective if: (1) it is contextually limited or narrowed in its focus, and careful attention is paid to the sequence of the passage within the book or sections of the book; (2) it is strictly developed according to the syntactical relationships observed within the statements of the limited passage being examined; (3) it discloses the part that the theology which historically preceded had in ‘informing’ this text within the historical-redemptive plan of God; and (4) it is composed of timeless principles drawn solely from the Biblical author’s single truth-intention.³²

Kaiser’s comments illustrate how the TH model often takes a direct line approach to application. “Direct line approach” means that the path to application is a direct line from God’s people in the OT to God’s people in the NT without explicitly making the connection to Christ and the gospel. One might ask how timeless principles for Israel have any relation to Gentiles. What is the connection? This question is left unanswered by the TH model.

A hazard in application which is more common to the TH model than to other models is moralizing. Moralizing may be defined as “extracting from the Bible what we pretentiously call ‘spiritual principles’ or ‘moral guidelines’ or ‘theological truths.’”³³ Moralizing is more of a hazard when application is attempted from the text without considering Christ. Moralizing can occur when OT narrative is viewed “as if a mere succession of events from which we draw little moral lessons or examples for life . . .

³¹Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 440.

³²Kaiser, *Towards and Exegetical Theology*, 209 (emphasis mine).

³³Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching*, 99.

observing behavior of the godly or godless and exhorting people to learn from them.”³⁴

As Mathewson describes it, the problem is not the preacher taking examples from the text. The problem is that many times these examples “are peripheral to the author's intent,” and he argues that “applications must flow from the author's intent.”³⁵ Kaminski agrees when discussing a story of Rehoboam. She states that the danger of moralizing is in assuming that the main point of the story is to teach a moral principle. She goes on to show that rather than a moral principle, the story shows the judgment, providence, and mercy of God.³⁶

Much can be said for the TH model related to its strong commitment to the authority of God’s Word and to the primacy of authorial intent. However, with regard to the application that results from this model, the model does not satisfy the fourth of the biblical guidelines, that application of OT narrative is found in the testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Application which follows from a strict adherence to this model might fail to exalt Christ and the gospel as the power of God for salvation and Christian living. Adherents of this model would readily acknowledge that reference should be made to Christ when the OT text is obviously Messianic, or Christological interpretation is given in the NT. Good examples of this acknowledgement can be found in Kaiser’s *The Majesty of God*.³⁷ However, it is necessary to challenge Kaiser. The

³⁴Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching*, 99.

³⁵Ibid., 100.

³⁶Kaminski, “Preaching from the Historical Books,” 62-63.

³⁷Kaiser, *Majesty of God*. In a sermon on Num 20:1-13, Kaiser notes that Paul used similar contexts in 1 Corinthians as warnings for the church and allusion to Christ (56). When writing on Jer 32:1-44, he notes that the name “Wonderful Counselor” is given to Jesus (73). In his exposition of Mic 7:11-20 he notes that Jesus picks up the imagery of shepherding as the

modern reader must ask, regarding the majestic God displayed in *The Majesty of God*: How am I able to call this God my God? The answer is Jesus Christ who demonstrates the power of God, who is the very person of God, and who fulfills the plan of God. In his sermon on Isaiah 40, Kaiser calls the reader to join Paul in the hymn recorded in 1 Timothy 1:17, “To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”³⁸ Why should the reader join with Paul in his benediction? He should because of the redemption found in Jesus Christ and his grace and love and patience for those who believe which inspired Paul to write the hymn (cf. 1 Tim 1:12-16). How does the reader today relate to the power and the work of the Holy Spirit so magnificently described by Kaiser in his sermon on Zechariah 4?³⁹ The issue at stake is not so much rushing to the NT as it is rushing to Christ in whom the church finds its inclusion in the people of God by the Spirit of God. The TH model is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough in showing how the principles and promises of the OT, and God himself as revealed in the OT are available to the person living after the resurrection.

Christological Model

The Christological (CH) model is built on the conviction that at its heart the OT is about Christ and that, therefore, the main point of OT exegesis must be Christ. This conviction refers to more than how the OT explicitly promises, prefigures, and

Good Shepherd (86), and finally, in his sermon on Isa 6:1-13, he notes that a connection of the passage to Jesus is made in the NT (152).

³⁸Kaiser, *Majesty of God*, 35-36.

³⁹Ibid., 91-104.

foreshadows Christ. In the CH model Christ is historically present in the OT and the task of the preacher is to find him. Because of its emphasis on Christ, the CH model takes the fourth biblical guideline seriously: that the application of OT narrative is found in its testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The CH model was common among the early church fathers. Dockery states, “There existed a general consensus that Scripture should be interpreted Christologically.”⁴⁰ Perhaps the clearest example of using the CH model is Martin Luther. Luther was trained in the medieval hermeneutic of allegory for interpretation and application. However, soon after his conversion he became convinced that allegory was useless and embraced a single, literal sense of the OT based on grammatical and historical exegesis of the text. While Luther felt that the text was controlling for interpretation and application, he continued to believe that the overriding sense of Scripture was a “*sensus Christi*.”⁴¹

This tension between the text and *sensus Christi* makes Luther a good spokesman for the CH model and illustrates a key hazard inherent in this model: the tendency towards allegory. Allegory is a temptation because the historical context and authorial intent, though valued and emphasized, are not always given their proper controlling merit. Allegorizing can occur when attempting to make connections to Christ not explicitly found in the OT text. Allegory looks for a “deeper sense” or hidden meaning beyond the historical meaning, and is willing to identify any object, incident,

⁴⁰David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992), 157.

⁴¹James S. Preus, “Old Testament *Promissio* and Luther’s New Hermeneutic,” *Harvard Theological Review* 60 (1967): 146-47.

word, phrase or allusion found in the text as referring to Christ.⁴² Examples of allegory abound in modern preaching and teaching of OT narrative.⁴³

Another hazard common to the CH model is personalizing which arises from a man-centered approach to application. In his discussion of the story of Jericho, Gibson notes that personalizing occurs in “assuming the main point of the story is its application to us . . . [which may lead the church to] assume that God is promising us something when he is not . . . ultimately [the] main point of story [of Jericho] is God and his faithfulness . . . and we can affirm that this is our God.”⁴⁴ This hazard is more common to the CH model precisely because of the tendency to allegorize and to wander from the control of authorial intent.

The goal of the CH model is admirable and attempts to be consistent with the biblical guidelines noted earlier. Though it strives for textual integrity, and thus has much in common with the TH model, the historical “normativeness” and authorial intent are often depreciated in favor of an emphasis on hidden meanings and false connections to Christ. These weaknesses make the CH model worthy in theory but problematic in practice.

⁴²Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 70, 75.

⁴³Examples include the scarlet rope hung by Rahab in Jericho referring to the blood of Christ; the lost dull axe head from 2 Kgs 6 referring to the church needing to have its ministry edge sharp; the ten donkeys provided to Jacob in Gen 45 as a sign of God’s blessing of wealth and abundance for the church.

⁴⁴Kaminski, “Preaching from the Historical Books,” 61.

Redemptive-Historical Christocentric Model

The Redemptive Historical Christocentric (RHC) model seeks to address the weakness of the TH model of not going far enough in explicitly including Christ in application. The RHC model also seeks to avoid the problems of the CH model by avoiding allegorical connections to Christ. Graeme Goldsworthy does an admirable job of stating the basics of this model. He argues that “there is no direct application [of the OT to the Christian] apart from the mediation of Christ.”⁴⁵ Later he clarifies that the “correct approach [of applying the OT to the modern hearer] proceeds through the biblical structures that inevitably lead us to Christ before they lead to the hearer.”⁴⁶ Goldsworthy echoes the concerns of those who follow the TH model by insisting that the preacher must “understand what was being said” through “a responsible job at the level of exegesis.” He maintains that there is “no doubt that we have to explore as fully as possible what the author was wanting to say to his contemporaries.”⁴⁷ Goldsworthy goes on to charge that those who follow the TH model, taking the direct line approach to application mentioned earlier, are implicitly assuming the very structures that Goldsworthy seeks to make explicit in application.⁴⁸ He asks, “Can a Christian relate to God in any other way than through faith in Jesus Christ?” Goldsworthy concludes that “when Christian preachers apply the OT to their Christian hearers without mentioning

⁴⁵Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 116.

⁴⁶Ibid., 117.

⁴⁷Ibid., 125.

⁴⁸Ibid., 120.

Jesus” they are making the connection by “implication and assumption.”⁴⁹ An example of this kind of assumption can be found in the writing of Douglas Stuart when he states, “If you are a Christian, the Old Testament is *your* spiritual history. The promises and calling of God to Israel are *your* historical promises and calling (Gal. 3:29).”⁵⁰ Stuart must be asked why these statements are true. The answer is because of Jesus and the gospel. The RHC model argues that this connection to Jesus must be made explicit before application can be made to the church.

The RHC model seeks to maintain as valid and necessary all of the proper hermeneutical methods espoused by the TH model. It then seeks to move beyond the TH model by discovering how the OT author’s meaning is correctly applied to the church through Jesus Christ, thus fulfilling the fourth biblical guideline. Greidanus clearly shows how this move is accomplished without stumbling over the hazard of allegory prevalent in the CH model.

Greidanus proposes a method that begins with understanding the passage in its own historical context to provide an “objective point of control” for application.⁵¹ This understanding is achieved through literary, historical and theological interpretation.⁵² He

⁴⁹Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 126.

⁵⁰Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 82.

⁵¹Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 228.

⁵²In his introduction to *Majesty of God*, 17-19, Kaiser offers a critique of Greidanus. He quotes from Greidanus’ *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* to support his critique. Kaiser must be taken to task. His implication that Greidanus means “exegete” when he says “understand” is not supported by Greidanus’ insistence on using the author’s intended meaning as an objective point of control. When Greidanus makes the comment quoted by Kaiser, “redemptive-historical preaching does not ask, ‘What was the author’s intended meaning for his original hearers?’ but, ‘how does the redemptive-historical context from creation to new creation inform the contemporary significance of the text?’”, Greidanus has already advocated the

then includes three categories of interpretation to help find the application through Christ: canonical, redemptive-historical and Christocentric. The goal of canonical interpretation is discovering what the passage means in the context of the whole Bible. In redemptive-historical interpretation, the question asked is how the context from creation to new creation informs the contemporary significance of the text. Finally, Christocentric interpretation involves two steps: first, asking what the passage reveals about Christ; second, asking what the passage means in light of Christ.⁵³

In the project thus far, four biblical guidelines have been established regarding the application of OT narrative: (1) OT narrative was meant for application; (2) OT narrative was meant for instruction of the church; (3) the application of OT narrative is at least partially exemplary in nature; and (4) the application of OT narrative is found in its testimony to and fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In addition, three models of application have been considered: Theocentric, Christological, Redemptive-Historical Christocentric. All three models are consistent with the first three biblical guidelines. The TH model is not consistent with the fourth guideline in that it fails to go far enough in explicitly showing how Christ is the basis for application. This failing is more pronounced in current times due to the prevalence of biblical illiteracy in the church. The CH model is not consistent with the fourth guideline because of the tendency to find connections to Christ not supported by the original meaning of the OT text. The RHC model succeeds in

discovery of the authors intended meaning as an objective point of control for both interpretation and application. Kaiser's argument is a straw man and is not consistent with Greidanus' overall teaching. When Kaiser concludes, "But I must not prematurely infuse New Testament values and meanings back into the Old Testament in order to sanctify it before I independently establish on purely Old Testament grounds the legitimate meaning of the Old Testament text," Greidanus would say, "Amen."

⁵³Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227-77.

maintaining consistency with the fourth guideline by upholding the original meaning as the control for application and then moving on to how that meaning has significance for the church only through Jesus Christ. The project continues by developing a model for application of OT narrative based on the RHC model.

**Proposed Project Model:
Text-Driven, Gospel-Driven Model**

Though this project does not specifically address interpretation and exegesis of OT narrative, some comment should be made at this point as a precursor to the model for application proposed. Consistent with the admonitions of proponents of all three models, before application of OT narrative can be considered, thorough work must be done to discover the author's original meaning and purpose using valid methods of grammatical historical exegesis including answering the appropriate questions of literary and theological interpretation.⁵⁴ To assist in this process the uniqueness of narrative genre needs to be considered. J. Kent Edwards is helpful at this point in his book *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching*.⁵⁵ Edwards provides six helpful steps: understanding the larger context of the narrative (including the areas of canonical and redemptive-historical interpretation advocated by Greidanus); determining the structure of the narrative through scene analysis; analyzing the characters in the narrative; discovering the setting of the narrative when pertinent to meaning; stating the big idea of

⁵⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 229-30.

⁵⁵J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Narrative to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29-74. This project does not endorse Edwards' method of first-person narrative preaching, nor is his method considered effective or biblical. However, Edwards' method of narrative analysis is endorsed as helpful for determining the author's meaning and purpose of OT narrative.

the narrative; and double checking the big idea with all parts of the narrative including context and theology.

Only at this point when the author's meaning and purpose have been determined by the text is the preacher able to consider application. The issue at this point is making proper application to the church which is driven by the text and which accounts for the person and work of Jesus Christ. In his book *The Word Became Fresh*, Davis gives some timely cautions regarding the application of OT narrative. He cautions the preacher against assuming that application from narrative is obvious.⁵⁶ He warns the preacher to distinguish between what the Bible says and what the Bible supports when presented with moral difficulties in the text.⁵⁷ Finally he cautions against the tendency to have to identify with a biblical character.⁵⁸ Davis goes on to suggest "handles" for application which exist in the narrative and which may lead to text-driven application for the church.

The first of the handles is Procedure and refers to the pattern a lead character or characters follow in the narrative. This "pattern" could include action steps, behavior, and the overall approach of the character in the narrative whether godly or unrighteous. The application that may result from this handle lies in the correspondence of the pattern in the narrative to modern patterns of behavior. The second handle is Conceptual which refers to how the author of the narrative wants the reader to think about the issue at stake in the narrative. In this handle, the application lies in altering the church's thinking about

⁵⁶Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2006), 94.

⁵⁷Ibid., 72.

⁵⁸Ibid., 116.

modern corresponding issues. The third handle is Situational, implying that what the character is facing in the narrative may provide a bridge to contemporary application for the church. The fourth handle is Judicial. In this case a judgment is rendered in the narrative about a certain action or issue calling for the church to agree with and submit to this judgment as authoritative. This handle is related to Conceptual but more definite in the response demanded. The final handle suggested by Davis is Doxological and refers to how the narrative wants us to respond with praise to God. Davis admits that these are only five possible ways to find application in a given narrative. However, looking for these handles causes the preacher to take the narrative seriously through careful reading, thinking and meditation. As Greidanus suggested earlier, these handles help the preacher to use the text as the objective point of control for application.

While Davis' handles are helpful for making text-driven application, more is required to make sure the application accounts for the person and work of Jesus Christ. The application must be gospel-driven as well as text-driven. There are times when the narrative makes specific messianic prophecies or promises. There are times when the NT explicitly states that an OT narrative is referring to Jesus Christ. As Greidanus and others conclude, there are OT narratives in which Christ is revealed, but as Kaiser and others suggest, these occurrences are relatively few compared to the wealth of narrative in the OT. How does a preacher make gospel driven application from an OT narrative in which Jesus is not explicitly revealed?

Clowney suggests that if Christ is not considered (if application is not gospel-driven), "Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac will be only the supreme testing of a great man's faith. Or, in avoiding that error, we may seize upon an artificial connection and introduce

Christ into the passage by sheer force of allegory.”⁵⁹ Duncan captures the issue when he writes, “But we ought to be able to preach Christ naturally and exegetically from all of the Old Testament. That does not mean that we force Christ in an odd way into places where he is not found in the Old Testament, but that we realize that there is always a way to Christ and to his cross from every passage in the Old Testament.”⁶⁰

This project proposes that the answer lies in asking more questions of the narrative. These questions can be tied to Davis’ handles. For instance, the handle for application in the narrative might be Doxological and the author’s point is to illicit praise to God from his people. Rather than concluding that the church should therefore praise God as Israel did, additional questions should be asked. For example, why can the church call the God of the OT their God? The answer to this question is Jesus and the gospel. If this connection is made explicitly, then God is praised, Jesus is magnified, the gospel is declared, and text-driven, gospel-driven application is made.

Consider another example. The handle for application in a narrative might be Procedure or Conceptual or Judgmental. The author’s point might be to highlight a sinful behavior or way of thinking to be avoided. Or he might want to highlight a righteous action or mindset. Rather than immediately concluding that the church should avoid this sinful behavior or adopt this righteous mindset, additional questions should be asked. How can the church avoid this particular sinful behavior or attitude and not repeat the pattern of Israel or the sin of a pagan? Conversely, how can the church adopt and embrace this particular righteous action or attitude contrary to Israel’s example or

⁵⁹Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1979), 74.

⁶⁰Duncan, “Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,” 47.

consistent with the faithful remnant? The answer is Jesus and the gospel. If this connection is made explicitly, then Jesus is magnified, the gospel is declared, and the exhortations regarding behavior are rooted in the gospel, avoiding moralism, legalism, and works-based righteousness.

Perhaps the author's point is to highlight a promise which God has made to Israel and in which Israel is called to live. One must ask, "how can the church stand in the promises made to Israel and claim them as her own?" If they are ongoing promises and not historically or geographically bound, the answer is Jesus and the gospel. If all of the law is fulfilled in "love God and love your neighbor" (Matthew 22:37, 39), the question should be asked, how can the church love God and love its neighbor? The answer is Jesus and the gospel.

Asking these questions does not force the NT into the OT, nor does it make false connections to Christ not found in the text. Asking these questions makes application of the author's point in the light of the person and work of Jesus, in the light of the gospel. The OT narrative is held up as the authoritative word of God with all of its timeless normativeness. Rather than assumed, the connection to Jesus is made explicit, holding up the mystery of the gospel as the only proper connection between God and man.

The model presented in this project for making application of OT narrative can be summarized in three steps. First, proper exegesis of the text must be done using grammatical historical hermeneutics, giving specific consideration to the unique features of narrative genre. The goal of this step is to ensure a proper understanding of the author's point in the narrative, the meaning of the narrative in the canon, and the meaning

in redemptive history. Second, handles for application should be identified in the narrative and harmonized with the main point understood from step one. Finally, proper questions should be asked of the narrative to explicitly make the connection to the church through Jesus and the gospel. Following this model will help the preacher to ensure that his application of OT narrative to the church is both text-driven and gospel-driven.

CHAPTER 3

TEXT-DRIVEN, GOSPEL-DRIVEN MODEL OF APPLICATION APPLIED THROUGH SERMON SERIES FROM GENESIS 37-50

This chapter demonstrates the thesis that the proper application of OT narrative can be modeled for the church through expository preaching. An exposition of Genesis 37-50 will support this thesis by modeling the Text-driven, Gospel-driven method for applying OT narrative developed in chapter 2. The essence of the model is as follows. First, proper exposition of the narrative using grammatical historical hermeneutics, giving specific consideration to the unique features of the narrative genre, ensures a proper understanding of the author's intent. Second, identification of handles for application from the narrative harmonizes application with authorial intent. Finally, asking proper questions of the application makes explicit the connection to the church through Jesus and the gospel.

The series was introduced with two sermons. The first sermon addressed the difficulty of applying the OT to the church today. Much of the OT challenges the credulity of the modern mind leading to confusion, frustration, apathy; or leading to the conclusion that the OT is irrelevant. Part of the answer to this dilemma is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where Paul speaks to Scripture's nature, role, and purpose. Two of man's highest ideals are presented here: destiny or potential, and doing significant good

for the benefit of others. According to Paul, the OT is necessary in order to achieve either.

However, agreement with Paul's bibliology expressed in these verses does not remove the difficulty of understanding and applying the OT. The church has shown the tendency to fall into one of two errors. The first is to moralize, to look for moral lessons in the narrative that can be followed today. The OT is treated in a manner similar to Aesop's Fables. For example, the preacher concludes from the story of David and Goliath that the church must be brave and courageous. Or, he concludes from the story of Elijah running from Jezebel that the church must not be afraid. Following this approach leaves the church with nothing more than a collection of moral lessons and nothing more. The second error is the tendency to allegorize, to look for hidden meanings in the narrative. As in the movie *The DaVinci Code*, every character, name or number is a possible clue leading the reader to discover the mysterious treasure hidden in the text. Following this approach, the OT becomes a theological *Where's Waldo?* with the reader looking behind every object for the hidden Christ.

The answer offered in the sermon was to heed the words of Jesus from John 5:39 where Jesus makes a broad sweeping statement about the witness borne to him by the OT. In Luke 24, Jesus makes clear that this witness was not limited to specific Messianic promises and prophecies, but also included general fulfillment of the OT. The sermon concluded that Jesus Christ is the point of the OT and that the church's connection to the OT is through the gospel. The narrative text provides the parameters for meaning; the gospel provides the parameters for application. By working to make

this connection to Christ and the gospel explicit in the preaching of the OT, the preacher can avoid the twin dangers of moralizing and allegorizing.

The second sermon narrowed the focus of the series down from Genesis to Joseph and the purpose of the Joseph narrative. The basic structure of Genesis was given in two ways. First, the two general divisions of chapters 1-11 and 12-50 were identified. Second the *toledoths* were identified as depicting alternating generations of unbelief and faith in the light of God's promises.

Joseph was introduced in the light of his mention in Scriptures outside of Genesis. He was a man of faith who believed, lived, and died in the promises of God (Heb 11:22). He was a man used by God to preserve Israel (Ps 105:12-24; Acts 7:8-16). Finally, he was a man who faced evil from his own family (Acts 7:9).

The purpose of the Joseph narrative was stated from Genesis 50:20, namely that God is a sovereign God.¹ He has plans that he will accomplish and promises that he will fulfill. God in his sovereignty allows evil and uses evil to accomplish His good. Though God uses the evil in men's hearts, they are not automatons. Men make real choices with real consequences. The Christian life is life with this God. For those who

¹Gordon Wenham comments that 50:20 is one of two passages where "we have expressed the key idea that informs the whole Joseph story, that through sinful men God works out his saving purposes." (Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 490). Kenneth Mathews concludes that 50:19-20 "crystalizes the theology of the Joseph narrative as a whole." (K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 927). In his introduction to Gen 37-50, though not specifically mentioning 50:20, Derek Kidner claims that the Joseph narrative is a *locus classicus* of providence. (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 179). Sidney Greidanus concludes that 50:20 presents the "overarching theme" of the Joseph narrative. (Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 336). In his preface, David Kingdon concludes that the Joseph narrative "is recorded in Holy Scripture so that we may draw from it much insight into the workings of God's providence." (David Kingdon, *Mysterious Ways* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), xiii. See also Bruce Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 492.

love God, he works all things together for his good, weaving a tapestry of grace and providence, using light threads as well as dark threads to accomplish his good plan. The church can trust, love, know, and worship this God because of Jesus and the gospel.

The Love of God in the Face of Unbelief – Genesis 37

The narrative in Genesis 37 reveals the heart of unbelief that exists in the sons of Jacob. Their unbelief is seen clearly against the backdrop of their existing theology; specifically, the portion of God’s truth that Jacob’s family had available to them.² At a minimum they understood three things: that there was a great and powerful creator God (Gen 1, 2); that this God had promised a Savior (Gen 3:15); and that this God had made a covenant promise to their father Abraham consisting of a nation, a land, and a blessing (Gen 12:1-3; 15:5, 13-16; 17:1-8).

The lives of the sons of Jacob revealed a callous disregard for these truths. The elder sons of Jacob set the example. Prior to Genesis 37, Reuben, the eldest son, slept with one of his father’s wives (Gen 35:22). Simeon and Levi, the next eldest sons, slaughtered and plundered a city to avenge the rape of their sister (Gen 34). In Genesis

²Most commentators point to the normalcy in Joseph’s day of identifying dreams with divine revelation (Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 691; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995], 410; and Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 359, 382). Several commentators also rightly conclude that the brothers’ plots against Joseph were really against God (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 417; John Calvin, *Genesis*, The Crossway Classic Commentaries [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001], 298; and Liam Goligher, *Joseph* [Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2008], 20). Waltke says regarding the brothers, “indirectly they oppose the sovereign God who has given the revelation. They do not trust his program for them.” (Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 501). Greidanus adds that the brothers’ plots are “an attempt to kill God’s plan” (Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 342). Some commentators connect the prophetic content of the dreams with the fulfillment of previous promises made by God (Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 343; and Kingdon, *Mysterious Ways*, 3). My statement is built upon these insights, a development of Waltke’s “faithless hatred” (Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 498).

37, the family is characterized by jealousy, deception and rivalry. Their dysfunction is only compounded by their perception of Joseph.³ Joseph's "evil report" on his brothers, his wearing of the special coat from his father, and his recounting of his dreams to his family fueled his brothers' developing hatred towards him.⁴

The brothers' words reveal their hearts. When they hear of Joseph's first dream, they respond, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" (Gen 37:8). Later, when they see him approaching them from a distance, they conclude, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams" (Gen 37:19-20).

In contrast to the brothers, Joseph's dreams reveal Joseph as the focal point of God's plans for Abraham's family. Joseph is meant to be seen as the protagonist in the narrative, a man of faith.⁵ There is nothing in the story that highlights his sin. At worst he is naïve or unwise in how he communicates with his family, but even this suggestion is debatable.⁶

³Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 359; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 494-95, 498; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 682, 685.

⁴Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 686; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 412.

⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 406, 712ff.; Voddie Baucham Jr., *Joseph and the Gospel of Many Colors* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 28, 45-46. Waltke calls Joseph the "central character" and the "leading character" (Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 497, 499).

⁶My conclusion is not shared by many commentators who prefer to see in the young Joseph evidences of pride and self-aggrandizement. For conclusions in general agreement with my own, see Baucham, *Joseph*, 45; David C. Searle, *Joseph* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 2; Goligher, *Joseph*, 15; and Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 596. For contrasting opinions, see Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 498; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350, 359; Iain M. Duguid and Matthew P. Harmon, *Living in the Light* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 4; Kingdon, *Mysterious Ways*, 6-7); and Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 338). Kidner (*Genesis*, 180), Hamilton (*The Book of Genesis*,

The conclusion from this contrast is that the brothers' pattern of anger and rejection reveals rebellious hearts of unbelief. Their rejection of Joseph and his dreams is a rejection of God's truth, God's plans, and God himself.

The brothers' patterns provide two handles for application. First is the pattern of unresolved hurt and anger. The brothers are hurt and angered by Joseph's report on them, so much so that "they could not speak peacefully to him" (37:4). Rather than seeking reconciliation or resolution, the brothers interpret each additional action by Joseph in the light of their hurt until it turns into hate. In the field, their hate boils over in action resulting in the loss of their brother. For the Christian, Jesus and Paul speak frequently of the proper way to respond to the sin of another.⁷ The key elements of their teaching are seeking quick resolution and granting forgiveness. How can the church follow the teaching of Jesus and the NT and not the example of Joseph's brothers? The reason and resources to do so are found in the gospel. Christians have been forgiven and are thus called to and capable of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The second pattern is the unbelief revealed in the brothers' rejection of Joseph and his dreams. Their refusal to be led by God's chosen one proved to be a fatal sin in the heart of the nation of Israel culminating in their rejection of Jesus. This rejection is characteristic of the larger scope of unbelief in the hearts of all men. As the author of this narrative, Moses intended Israel to see the unbelieving heart for all of its ugliness and rebellion, and the church must see this also. Contrary to what some may feel, the church

406, 410), and Mathews (*Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 691) are content to mention that the narrative does not reveal Joseph's motivations. Though they are correct, the tone of the narrative comes much closer to upholding the character of Joseph than maligning it.

⁷Matt 5:23, 18:15; Luke 17:3-10; 1 Cor 6:1-8; Col 3:12-13.

is meant to identify in this story with the brothers rather than with Joseph. Without Christ, all men are in fact the brothers as Paul clearly describes in Romans 3:9-18. The only solution is in the salvation found in Christ alone.

The final handle of application is found in what the narrative reveals about God and this plan of redemption. God is working out this plan in the face of extreme unbelief even among the people he is planning to save.⁸ This conclusion reveals the nature of God's love, grace and mercy. The church can participate in this plan, worship this God, and experience this love, grace and mercy only through Jesus Christ and the gospel.

Dark Threads in the Tapestry of God's Grace – Genesis 38

The temptation when preaching the Joseph narrative is to ignore Genesis 38 as disconnected from or irrelevant to the overall narrative. Thoughtful consideration shows this to be untrue.⁹

The narrative breaks down into two scenes. In verses 1-11, Moses writes an abrupt, staccato introduction to highlight the wickedness of Judah. Judah lives according to his passions (38:2), and his sons follow his example (38:7-10). Despising the covenant with his fathers and ignoring their concerns, Judah dwells with Canaanites (38:5), marries a Canaanite (38:12), and marries his sons to Canaanites (38:6, 8). Judah has turned his back on God, and this is the backdrop for the narrative that follows.

⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 345; Kidner, *Genesis*, 179.

⁹Kidner, *Genesis*, 187; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 431; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 363; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 506; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 357.

Scene 2 covers verses 12-30 with the climax of the story coming in verse 26.¹⁰ Tamar is pregnant, and the father is Judah. The key phrase is "she is more righteous than I"; or more literally, "She is righteous, I am not [righteous]." This phrase hints at a change in the heart of Judah: recognition of sin, acknowledgement of sin as sin, and turning from sin. Judah's thinking seems to be "Here am I, a son of the covenant; a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; a son in the line of promise – and I am acting wickedly. And here is Tamar, a Canaanite, a pagan, a stranger to the covenant – and she is acting righteously." This change in Judah is further revealed as the Joseph narrative unfolds.

When preaching Genesis 38, one must ask why this narrative is included at this time in the Joseph narratives, or even included at all. There are several possibilities: (1) chapters 37-50 are an account of the generations of Jacob, not Joseph, necessitating the inclusion of the Judah narrative to complete the family picture; (2) Genesis 38 helps to explain the length of Joseph's time as a slave (though less important due to the time markers in the succeeding chapters); (3) the separation of Judah from his brothers for unrighteousness ironically foreshadows that (a) the ten tribes will later separate from the tribe of Judah for unrighteousness and (b) Judah's descendants will be noted for faith and Joseph's (Ephraim) for idolatry; (4) Genesis 38 hints at the spiritual journey of Judah to help account for his change from the beginning of the Joseph narrative to the end; (5) Genesis 38 highlights Judah's (and thus Israel's) need for a Savior; and (6) Genesis 38 emphasizes God's sovereignty in the midst of Judah's sin.¹¹

¹⁰Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 363; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 508; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 368.

¹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 432; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 704; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 363-364.

The last two of these were used as handles for application in the sermon. Regarding God's sovereignty, God weaves the dark threads of Judah's sin into the tapestry of his providence, highlighting both his gospel and his grace. In spite of Judah's sin, God preserves the line of Judah as the line of the Messiah. Neither time nor evil will keep God from preserving the chosen line through Judah, or from sending his son Jesus in the fullness of time to accomplish man's salvation, or from sending Jesus again in the future to restore all things. Because of this gospel, the church can believe, hope, and worship this God.

The narrative's highlighting of Judah's sin points to God's grace. Judah is not worth saving. Judah is not worth being the chosen line of promise. As the storyline moves forward in the Scriptures, Israel is not worth saving or worth being the people of promise. Finally, the church is not worth saving. And yet, God saves Judah, God saves Israel and God saves the church. Time and again the NT writers call the church to remember who they were before God saved them.¹² This call leads the church to a clearer understanding of the greatness of God's grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's gospel and God's grace are seen in this narrative displayed against the dark threads of Judah's sin.

God's Providential Presence – Genesis 39

Genesis 39 reveals God's providential presence in the lives of his people. The narrative breaks down into three scenes. In verses 1-6a, Potiphar sees the Lord's presence in Joseph's success and God blesses Potiphar for this recognition. In verses 6b-

¹² Eph 2, 4, 5; 1 Cor 6:9-11.

20, Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph, sounding much like the early Judah as the heart of sin speaks. Joseph refuses her temptations; however, verse 11 signals a change that comes in verses 11-20. Though Joseph continues to refuse the advances of Potiphar's wife, he is falsely accused, slandered, and thrown into prison.

Perhaps the most common handle for application used from this story is the need to resist temptation. Potiphar's wife is certainly an example of an adulterous woman and Joseph does provide an excellent example of resisting persistent temptation. However, while this theme is present, resisting temptation is not the main point of the narrative.¹³

Four times the narrative states that "the Lord was with Joseph,"¹⁴ revealing the main point to be God's providential presence.¹⁵ God's providential presence may be distinguished from what might be called God's covenant presence. God's covenant presence means that God is always with his people and desires to be with his people. For example, God creates Adam and Eve and puts them in the garden where he walks with them (Gen 2, 3). God commands the building of a tabernacle in the wilderness and a temple in Jerusalem in order to be with his people (Exod 25:8, 1 Kgs 6:11-13). God sends Jesus, Immanuel, meaning "God with us" (Matt 1:23). The life of faith is a life in God's presence (Ps 16:11, John 14:3, 16, 23), and eternity will be life with God (Rev 21:1-4). One of the enduring themes of the Bible is God's presence with his people. When

¹³Kidner, *Genesis*, 192; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 378; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 379.

¹⁴Gen 39:2, "The LORD was with Joseph . . ."; 39:3, "the LORD was with him . . ."; 39:21, "the LORD was with Joseph . . ."; 39:23, "the LORD was with him."

¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 373, 377; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 384.

Genesis 39 states that “the Lord was with Joseph”, there is an acknowledgment of the ongoing covenant presence of God with Joseph. God’s presence did not leave Joseph when he was sold into slavery, return when he prospered as a slave, leave again when he was falsely accused, and return again when he prospered in prison. God was with Joseph during all of that time.¹⁶

However, the primary emphasis of Genesis 39 is God's providential presence. In the context of this narrative, God’s providential presence means Joseph’s success in the midst of his circumstances.¹⁷ This point is stated both at the beginning of the narrative (39:2, 3) and at the end (39:21, 23). Understanding the significance of this success requires some reflection. It would be a misreading of the story to conclude that God's primary goal for his people is to bring them material reward and position. Joseph's success needs to be understood in the light of God's providence.

God chose to accomplish redemptive purposes through the life of Joseph, requiring Abraham's offspring to be in Egypt. God sent Joseph dreams of ruling over his family knowing that this would begin a series of events culminating with Joseph’s arrival in Egypt. The logic of the narrative is as follows. Joseph was a slave to Potiphar and God wanted Joseph to be raised up in the eyes of Potiphar (39:4). So "God was with him" (providential presence) and caused everything that Joseph did to succeed. God raised Joseph to this position in Potiphar's house so that Joseph would be noticed by Potiphar's wife (39:7). God knew that she would tempt him and that Joseph would remain faithful leading her to falsely accuse him and forcing Potiphar to put him into

¹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 459.

¹⁷Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 726.

prison, but not just any prison. Joseph was imprisoned in "the place where the king's prisoners were confined" (39:20). God's purpose required Joseph to rise up in the eyes of the keeper of this prison, "so God was with him" (providential presence) and caused everything that Joseph did to succeed (39:23). God was accomplishing his redemptive purposes through the circumstances in Joseph's life: to be noticed by his brothers, to be noticed by Potiphar, to be noticed by Potiphar's wife, and to be noticed by the keeper of the prison.

The handle for application from this understanding of God's providential presence is found in the need for God's people to include this truth in their thinking. God sovereignly rules the universe and he providentially accomplishes his purposes in the midst of history. Surely Moses meant for this truth to comfort Israel and give them hope. As God was with Joseph, so God would be with Israel in both a covenantal sense and a providential sense. Though the church is not Joseph, God is also working out his redemptive purposes in the lives of Christians. God positions his people in certain places at certain times with certain sets of experiences in order to accomplish his purposes. Because of the gospel, the church experiences great comfort and hope through the providential presence of God.

Does Life Kill the Gospel? – Genesis 40

Following the flow detailed in the previous chapters, Genesis 40 continues the theme of God providentially raising up Joseph.¹⁸ In the early portion of this chapter, Joseph's position in prison allows him to relate to the cupbearer and the baker (40:1-4).

¹⁸Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 739-40; Charles F. Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 92; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 397-98; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 385.

God gave each of them dreams and Joseph's interpretation of their dreams raised Joseph in their eyes (40:16). This eventually allowed the cupbearer to draw the proper conclusion of Joseph as a man connected with God (41:9-13). However, at the end of this narrative Joseph remained in prison, forgotten. He did not know the end of the story and waited for two years knowing that he had been imprisoned unjustly (40:14-15). The feelings of Joseph revealed in these two verses are new to the narrative and provide a key handle for application.

Joseph is meant to be seen as a righteous man of faith whose interpretation of and understanding of events is correct.¹⁹ In other words, Joseph's conclusion in Genesis 50:20 that God is working by his providence to accomplish his good purposes is *the* interpretation which the reader is meant to accept.

However, within the Joseph narrative people are also making real choices and decisions. Several questions can be asked in this regard. Why did Joseph tell his dreams to his brothers? Why did his brothers sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites? Why did Potiphar raise Joseph up in his house? Why did Potiphar's wife attempt to seduce Joseph and then falsely accuse him? Why did the keeper of the prison raise up Joseph? The answer to all of these questions on a human level is that they chose to do these things either based on their feelings or their logic. So, in the Joseph narrative divine sovereignty and human responsibility are presented as complementary truths.²⁰

¹⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 479.

²⁰Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 740, 927; Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis*, 84; Kingdon, *Mysterious Ways*, 2; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 357.

Joseph was an imprisoned slave but he was not a slave to his circumstance; he did not allow his circumstance to dictate his response or his faith. In the words of Paul, Joseph was afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down (2 Cor 4:8ff.), and these circumstances caused real feelings in Joseph (40:14-15). Joseph had a limited but true understanding of God and the gospel and Joseph chose to live in the light of this gospel in the midst of his circumstances to the glory of his sovereign God. The circumstances of his life did not kill the gospel. Rather, they provided the context in which he lived out his faith in God.

This pattern in the life of Joseph is where another handle of application can be found. In the musical *Les Misérables*, Fantine sings the following words, “But there are dreams that cannot be, and there are storms we cannot weather, . . . I had a dream my life would be so different from this hell I'm living, so different now from what it seemed. Now life has killed the dream I dreamed.” Paul’s alternative to Fantine is: “afflicted . . . but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed (2 Cor 4:8ff.). How can a Christian avoid Fantine’s conclusion and instead, as Joseph and Paul, live out their faith in the midst of the difficult circumstances of life? The answer is the gospel and the change, power and resources that God provides.

The Sovereignty and Love of God – Genesis 41

Chapter 41 provides an initial climax to the overall Joseph narrative.²¹ The main point of this narrative is the sovereignty of God.²² He reveals his sovereignty over the religious beliefs of Egypt when neither Pharaoh nor his wise men are able to interpret the dreams; only God's servant Joseph is able to understand them (41:8, 16). He reveals his sovereignty over the nations as he protects Egypt (41:36) in order to prepare a place for Israel to grow into a nation, from which the Savior of the world would be born.²³ God's sovereignty allows him to accomplish the gospel and restore a relationship with those from any nation who believe.

Leading up to this chapter, God has been raising Joseph in the eyes of various characters. In scene one of this narrative, verses 1-13, Joseph is finally raised up in the eyes of Pharaoh in the context of God-given dreams. When the cupbearer remembers Joseph to Pharaoh, he points to Joseph as the one man who can interpret Pharaoh's dreams (41:9-13). Pharaoh recounts his dreams to Joseph and Joseph interprets the dreams along with a commentary of wisdom on how to respond to the dreams (41:33-36). At the end, Joseph is in his raised position in the kingdom of Egypt and the last of the connections is made (41:55-57). Joseph's dreams from Genesis 37 are fulfilled and the Hebrew shepherd becomes a ruler of Egypt.

²¹Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 400; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 744; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 528; Baucham, *Joseph*, 73,75; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 636.

²²Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 399; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 637.

²³Baucham, *Joseph*, 83.

Joseph's résumé was not impressive: shepherd, slave, felon, and prisoner.²⁴ Why then did Pharaoh raise Joseph up to this position? Pharaoh recognized Joseph's connection to God (41:39).²⁵ The fruit of Joseph's life with God was visible in Joseph's life. This reveals the first handle of application. In evaluating its own leadership, the church can learn from Pharaoh. Qualified candidates for church leadership are those whose lives bear fruit of life with God; fruit of the gospel they claim to believe.

Several other handles for application appear in this narrative from the life of Joseph. Joseph demonstrates humble boldness when talking with Pharaoh, giving all of the glory to God (41:16). Joseph is raised up by Pharaoh because his life with God bears visible fruit (41:38). Finally, Joseph names his sons to speak to the faithfulness of God (41:50-52). The church's connection to all of these is the gospel. Because of Jesus and belief in him, the church can speak with humble boldness while giving glory to God. Examples from the NT include Peter, John and Paul. Also, the church is connected to God through the gospel leading to visible fruit of that relationship. Joseph's naming of his sons demonstrates worship. Through the gospel, the church can worship Joseph's God who can also make the church forget all of her hardship (Manasseh), and who can make the church fruitful in the place of her hardship (Ephraim).

²⁴Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 399; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 493.

²⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 503; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 394; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 755; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 533; Calvin, *Genesis*, 320.

God's Sovereignty: My Life – Genesis 42:1-45:15

This narrative runs from Genesis 42:1 through 45:15. Though this narrative could be divided, it can also be viewed as a single narrative. As such, it represents the climax of the Joseph narrative as Joseph and his brothers are reconciled.²⁶

Preaching from such a long narrative can be difficult, even to the point of deciding what portions to read during the service.²⁷ The following represents the decisions made in this regard: (1) explained 42:1-5 as the introduction; (2) read 42:6-9 detailing the first encounter of Joseph with his brothers; (3) explained 42:9-25 as Joseph's initial test of his brothers; (4) read 42:21-24 where Joseph overheard his brothers' thinking and confession; (5) explained 42:26-44:17 as the drama of the brothers returning to Jacob and eventually returning to Egypt and passing Joseph's tests; (6) read 44:18-34 revealing Judah's changed life and tying back to chapter 38; (7) read 45:1-11 revealing insights into Joseph's theology; and (8) read 45:14-15 as the climax of the story showing the brother's reconciliation evidenced by their talking with one another (contrasted with 37:4 where the brothers were unable to talk with Joseph.)

God's sovereignty is the main point of this narrative.²⁸ He accomplishes his purposes in a variety of contexts: Jacob's fear for Benjamin based on what he thinks happened to Joseph, the change in Judah's character, and the fulfillment of dreams given to Joseph. The handle for application here is worship. Moses intended that Israel see,

²⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 410; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 419; Baucham, *Joseph*, 111.

²⁷Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 411.

²⁸Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 417; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 539.

embrace, and worship God for his sovereignty. For the church, this is possible because of what Jesus did and does for believers.

Two corollary handles of application flow from God's sovereignty, the first relating to Judah and the second to Joseph. The change in Judah's character represents the very essence of the gospel.²⁹ At the beginning of the Joseph narrative, Judah betrays Joseph and is pictured as a godless immoral man. He is confronted with his lack of righteousness, confesses and repents (38:26), and begins to bear fruit consistent with his repentance (44:33-34). Moses used this change to encourage Israel. There was a forgiving God who was ready for reconciliation if they would repent and believe. In the NT, this same forgiveness is extended to all men through the gospel (Acts 2:22-24, 36-39). Paul uses the same idea of forgiveness and reconciliation to encourage Christians to persevere in sanctification, maturity, and ongoing growth in their life with God (Col 1:21-23). Based on the life of Judah, man is never too far from God to be saved, and Christians are never too far off-track not to return. This is true because of the gospel that reveals God as sovereign, loving, saving, and forgiving.

The second corollary handle of application is seen in the character of Joseph. Joseph's attitude towards his brothers in this narrative is forgiveness and compassion rather than bitterness. Joseph knows God and how God works (45:5, 7, and 8). This knowledge allows Joseph to see his brothers' sins against the backdrop of God's sovereignty and to show them grace and forgiveness as a result.³⁰ For Joseph, right

²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 552, 562; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 570; Baucham, *Joseph*, 104; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 667.

³⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 565; Kidner, *Genesis*, 206; Baucham, *Joseph*, 126; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 672.

theology allowed him to navigate his brothers' betrayal and rejection with character that reflected his life with God. How can the church respond with the same forgiveness and grace as Joseph? Through the gospel which provides the resources to understand God and his ways and the encouragement to see others' sins against the backdrop of God's sovereignty. Understanding God's sovereignty allows the Christian to entrust others to a God who can bring final justice. Understanding the hope of the gospel allows the Christian to entrust others to a God who can also create the circumstances in their lives to bring them to repentance and faith as he did with Judah.

Keeper of Promises – Genesis 45:16-47:27

This sermon covered another extensive narrative that provided an appropriate conclusion to the climax from the previous narrative.³¹ The choices regarding the presentation of the narrative were as follows: (1) read 45:16-20, 26-28, noting the favorable attitude of the Egyptians towards Joseph and his family and Jacob's response; (2) read 46:2-4, 28, recounting Jacob's trip to Egypt and God's presence; (3) read 46:31-34, 47:7-10, discussing Joseph's provision for his family; (4) read 47:14, 17, 20, 25, 27, as an epilogue on Joseph's leadership.

There are two main themes in the narrative providing handles for application. First, God is again revealed as sovereign over people and nations. This is seen in the attitude of Pharaoh and the Egyptians towards Joseph and his family.³² They freely chose to bless Joseph (45:16-20), just like his brothers freely chose to sell him. However, this

³¹Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 676; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 450; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 434.

³²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 568, 571.

attitude of the Egyptians also speaks to the sovereignty of God in how he used Joseph and Egypt to accomplish his purposes for Israel. God creates contexts in which men will act. Man is naturally evil and sinful, and God can arrange contexts in which man's sinful acts are on display. Also, because men are sinners they are self-centered. When they get what they want men tend to heap praise on those who satisfy their desires. So, God created a context in which the Egyptians would bless Joseph because they had received what they wanted, namely food, safety and security. Real human choices exist without diminishing God's sovereignty.

God's sovereignty is also seen in the epilogue which highlights Joseph's management of the famine.³³ The power of Pharaoh grows immensely as the money (47:14), livestock (47:19), land (47:20), and people (47:25) of Egypt all end up as possessions of Pharaoh. This increase in power foreshadows Exodus and an all-powerful-Pharaoh who did not know Joseph and who was not favorably inclined towards Israel (Exod 1:8ff.).³⁴ At that point God's purposes would require Pharaoh to be an enemy to provide the context for the Exodus. In the present narrative, God used the power of Pharaoh for good to preserve Egypt and Israel. In both cases the sovereignty of God is revealed. God's people need to see this truth about God and worship Him. This worship is possible for the church because of the gospel.

Second, Jacob left Canaan for Egypt. Before crossing into Egypt, he stopped to worship God because he had seen the hand of God at work (46:1).³⁵ Jacob was not the

³³Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 687.

³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 449; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 589.

³⁵Baucham, *Joseph*, 124.

most confident of men and struggled with fear his entire life. Examples include: when traveling to live with his uncle Laban (Gen 27:42), while living with Laban (Gen 31:1-2), when returning to confront Esau (Gen 32:7), and when faced with losing Benjamin (Gen 42:4)). Because of this fear, God consistently reassured Jacob of his presence.³⁶ In the present narrative God reassured Jacob when he affirmed that his presence and promises would continue in Egypt. God extended the promise of his presence to Jacob's death, confirming that God is a keeper of promises (46:3-4). Jacob had fear, but he was not controlled by his fear. He made life decisions in the light of God's promised presence. As with Jacob, God is present with the church and he is leading the church. The gospel empowers the church to boldly follow him even when she is tempted to be afraid, looking to God as a keeper of promises.

Walking with God – Genesis 47:29-48:22

The main point of this narrative is that walking with God is the only way to live, the only way to die, and the only significant inheritance to pass on to children.³⁷

The narrative is structured as an extended conversation between Jacob and Joseph, taking

³⁶Gen 28:13-15, "Behold, I am with you . . . "; Gen 31:3, "I will be with you . . . "; Gen 35:3, "[He] has been with me wherever I have gone." Also see Calvin, *Genesis*, 344; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 592; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 442; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 573; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 434-35, 439.

³⁷Searle, *Joseph*, 161; Duguid and Harmon, *Living in the Light*, 157-58; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 689-90; and Goligher, *Joseph*, 213. Commentators were split on the inclusion of the last verses of chap. 47 with the previous or subsequent narratives. For the sermon series, I chose to include these verses with the subsequent narrative. Commentators in disagreement with this choice included Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 599; Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 455; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 449; and Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 860 and 879. However, there was general agreement among the commentators regarding the theme of the narrative in chap. 48. Ross mentions the reference from Heb 11:21 to show that this narrative highlights Jacob's "greatest act of faith." My wording seeks to capture this idea by equating faith and walking with God.

place on at least two different occasions. For the sermon this was treated as one conversation in four parts.

At the end of his life Jacob continued to make decisions based upon God's promises.³⁸ A window into Jacob's faith opens in Genesis 48:15-16a providing insight into Jacob's life with God. There are four key elements to this statement: (1) life with God is historical; (2) life with God is generational; (3) life with God is personal and relational; (4) life with God is transformational, involving: (a) God's shepherding and (b) God's redemption.

The presence and the promise of God were Jacob's legacy for Joseph.³⁹ One might imagine Jacob saying to Joseph, "The God upon whom I rely is also the God upon whom you can rely; he has been with me, he will be with you; the promise upon which I have relied is also the promise upon which you can rely; he is bringing me to the land of my fathers, and he will bring you there also." At the end of his life, Jacob's focus was on God and what God will do for Joseph.

Two handles of application were emphasized in the sermon in the form of two questions: (1) What should a Christian be thinking about when he comes to die? and (2) What is the primary inheritance that a Christian should leave to her children and grandchildren? Jacob was ordering his final moments around the presence and promises of God and it was this faith that he desired to pass on to Joseph (48:3-4). The gospel allows the church to live and die like Jacob. Through the gospel the church experiences

³⁸Calvin, *Genesis*, 357; Pfeiffer, *The Book of Genesis*, 100; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 590; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 864-65; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 493.

³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 637, 642; Calvin, *Genesis*, 358; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 599; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 882.

the redemption of God, the shepherding of God, and the presence of God both presently and eternally. Because of the gospel the church walks with God; the only way to live, the only way to die, the only significant heritage to pass on to children and grandchildren.

God of Blessing – Genesis 49:1-27

The narrative that occupies the majority of chapter 49 involves specific prophecies concerning the sons, tribes, and nation of Israel (49:1-2). The sermon looked at these twelve prophecies in three groups.⁴⁰ The first group discussed consisted of the prophecies to those brothers whose place in the Joseph narrative was relatively minor (49:13-21, 27). This division was entitled The Seven. The second group included the three negative brothers in the Joseph narrative: Reuben, Simeon and Levi (49:3-7). This division was entitled The Three. The final group consisted of the two major brothers in the Joseph narrative, Judah and Joseph (49:8-12, 22-26). This final division was entitled The Two.

The prophecies given to The Seven consisted of general blessings for victory and prosperity.⁴¹ This section set the tone for all of the prophecies by emphasizing Jacob's words as inspired prophecy.⁴² Jacob declared the very word of God to the brothers (49:1) showing that God was sovereign over all aspects of Israel as a nation:

⁴⁰Several commentators noted the structure of this text in relation to the mothers of Jacob's wives: sons of Leah, son of Rachel's maid, sons of Leah's maid, sons of Rachel (Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 603; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 469; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 698). Ross also noted the distinctive grouping of the seven relatively minor sons. My structure is meant as an alternative homiletical structure to this emphasis.

⁴¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 674. Examples of victory include vv. 17 and 19. Examples of prosperity include vv. 13, 15, 20, and 21.

⁴²Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 698; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 646; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 604.

birth, destiny, purpose, discipline, and redemption. This truth reveals a handle for application. God is not just sovereign over Israel but also over the church in all aspects: birth, destiny, purpose, discipline, and redemption. Through the gospel anyone can become a part of God's people and worship this God.

Also in this first division, the two biggest external issues that Israel would face were identified: living in the land and to their enemies. God's blessings to them of prosperity and victory provided the solutions to these dilemmas. This truth reveals another handle for application. The church faces the same two dilemmas: living the Christian life and responding to the enemies of the Christian faith. Through the gospel God gives us the same blessings: prosperity (not in a physical sense but in the spiritual sense of completing the work of redemption by progressively bringing the church into conformity to Christ); and victory (not always immediate victory but certainly eschatological victory).

Though living in the land and responding to their enemies were real problems, these did not represent Israel's greatest threat, which was highlighted in the prophecies given to The Three. Rather than blessings, these prophecies represent anti-blessings for Reuben, Simeon and Levi⁴³. God's sovereignty was highlighted in the taking away of blessing. Reuben was stripped of any honor or dignity that might belong to the firstborn son because of his unrepentant pride and lust (49:4). Simeon and Levi were addressed together as brothers (49:5) characterized by fierce violence, cruel anger, and senseless wrath, unrestrained and unrepentant (49:6-7). For The Three, their sins were life defining. These internal sins, and others like them, represented the greatest threat to

⁴³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 605.

Israel. God showed his grace by diluting the effect of these three brothers on Israel, removing Reuben's leadership and scattering the tribes of Simeon and Levi.⁴⁴ Ultimately, however, the internal threat of sin proved to be Israel's downfall. This truth reveals another handle of application then emerged. The church is often tempted to look outside of itself at the threats in the land, both secular and religious. However, like Israel, the greatest threat to the church is her sin. This truth highlights the need for the gospel for both salvation and for living.

The first of The Two was Judah. The blessings promised to Judah were extraordinary. They included prosperity and victory, as with the seven, but also elevation to the primary place among the tribes, leadership and honor, power, kingship, and the Messiah.⁴⁵ One might be tempted to call foul after an entire chapter was devoted to the sins of Judah. The clear difference between Judah and The Three was the evidence of Judah's repentance. By God's grace he overcame his sin and stepped into God's blessings. God was revealed as gracious and merciful, ready to welcome the repentant. The same grace and mercy and repentance are available to the church in Jesus Christ, revealing another handle for application. Judah becomes the picture of how the church is to respond to God.

The final prophecy of The Two related to Joseph. While there were similarities with the other prophecies, two features stood out. The first was an overabundance of the word blessing, occurring six times in verses 25 and 26.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁴Ibid., 603, 606-7.

⁴⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 608; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 890.

⁴⁶Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 907; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 614; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 708.

blessings did not speak to the worthiness of Joseph or his brothers. None of them were worthy of blessing and all of them deserved to be singled out and cursed for their sin. Rather, the frequent reference to blessing revealed God as one who blesses because he is gracious and loving.

The second feature of the prophecy to Joseph was the overabundance of names for God.⁴⁷ These names highlighted three specific attributes of God: his power operating to bless his people; his shepherding of his people (leading them, providing for them, and protecting them); and his being the stone for his people (their foundation, their security, their refuge). These attributes provided handles for application as they are all true for the church through the gospel. Through the gospel the church is united with Jesus who is: the one through whom the power of God is displayed and active to bless his church; the good shepherd, the great shepherd, and the chief shepherd; and the stone, the rejected stone, the stumbling stone, the cornerstone, and the living stone.

Bones, Promises, and Sovereignty – Genesis 49:28-50:26

The final sermon includes the deaths of Jacob and Joseph and Joseph's assessment of his life and trials. This assessment in 50:20 is the main point of the text and of the whole series.⁴⁸ God is a sovereign God. He has plans that he will accomplish and promises that he will fulfill. There is evil in the world - not an impersonal evil force but evil in the hearts of men who intend evil against each other. God allows and uses evil

⁴⁷Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 905; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 685. The names include: "the Mighty One of Jacob," "the Shepherd," and "the Stone of Israel" (24); "the God of your father," and "the Almighty" (25).

⁴⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 623. See also n. 1 of this chapter.

to accomplish his good. Men are not puppets but make real choices with real consequences. However, no human agenda, no situation or circumstance can thwart God and his plans, his promises, his salvation, his redemption. This is not an optional idea about God, but God's revelation of himself to man found in Scripture and specifically in the Joseph narrative. The church can understand, embrace, and worship this God through the gospel.

The deaths of Jacob and Joseph provide examples of how to live and die in the hope of this revelation of God. Why did Jacob give commands concerning his burial? Why was he concerned that he be buried in Canaan rather than Egypt? Because he was trusting in God's promise, made first to his father Abraham and later to him (46:3-4).⁴⁹ Jacob lived and died in the promises of God. In Joseph's last words, he spoke of the future Exodus and asked to be carried up from Egypt. Joseph lived and died with the same faith as his father in the same promise from God (50:24-25).⁵⁰ The examples of Jacob and Joseph in their deaths provide a handle of application. How can the church live and die in the manner of Jacob and Joseph? Those who have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ can live and die in this way. Though not yet having received the things promised, yet having seen them and greeted them from afar, they can live and die as strangers and exiles on the earth, as those desiring a better country, a heavenly one (Heb 11:13-16). This conclusion provides a fitting summary of the theology and the application of the Joseph narrative.

⁴⁹Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 487.

⁵⁰Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 491; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 711; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 627; Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 930.

CHAPTER 4

THE METHODOLOGY USED TO COMPLETE THIS PROJECT

This chapter describes the methodology used to complete the project and provides conclusions concerning the project's effectiveness in modeling application of OT narrative through expository preaching.

The first goal of the project was to assist the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church in increasing their awareness of how they apply OT narrative. This goal was accomplished through the use of a pre-project questionnaire (see appendix 1) that assessed the participants' current method of applying OT narrative. The initial intent of the project was to involve thirty project participants. The actual result was twenty participants: three elders and their wives, the pastor's wife, four deacons, two youths, and seven additional adults. While twenty participants were less than the original goal of thirty, twenty was a necessary number to achieve consistency in involvement over the course of the project and was an acceptable representation of the church membership.

As stated under "Research Methodology" in chapter 1, the pre-project questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section asked five general questions about OT narratives. The purpose of these questions was twofold: first, to gauge the participants' appreciation of context, authorial intent, and biblical theology; second, to determine the participants' tendency towards the direct-line approach to application of OT narrative as defined in chapter 2. The second section of the questionnaire gave four

OT narrative texts, each one followed by the same five specific questions regarding the application of the narratives to the participants' lives. The purpose of this second set of questions was to understand how the participants' put their thoughts regarding the application of OT narrative into practice.

In general, the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participants evidenced a God-centered application that was drawn from the OT text. However, many of the participants' applications moralized the text with almost no reference to Christ or the gospel. In chapter 2, moralizing was defined as "drawing little moral lessons or examples for life,"¹ The initial assessment of the participants' method of applying OT narrative revealed that the vast majority of participants made direct-line application of the OT narratives. That is, they moved directly from the OT to the church without explicitly considering the gospel.

All twenty participants completed the pre-project questionnaire. Therefore, according to the criteria established in the research methodology, the first goal was met.

The second goal of the project was to train the project participants to properly apply OT narrative using the method of application developed in chapter 2. The method of training utilized was a one-day seminar conducted prior to the beginning of the preaching series. This seminar was divided into three sections: introduction to the Text-driven, Gospel-driven model; discussion of handles for application; recognition of the gospel in making application.

The introduction to the Text-driven, Gospel-driven model was accomplished using primary texts from the NT. Second Timothy 3:16-17 was used to emphasize the

¹Stephen D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 99.

text-driven portion of the method. The ideas of teaching, reproof, correction, and training were discussed with the participants in the broad scope of all of Scripture. The training taught that authorial intent was necessary to properly understand the teaching, reproof, correction, or training of a specific OT text. Authorial intent was then developed in the seminar as it related to narrative by emphasizing the need to understand the main idea of a specific story. The general elements of narrative were introduced including context, scenes, and characters. The training helped the participants understand that these narrative elements assist in understanding the author's big idea in the story and that the big idea gives the textual parameters for making application.² Thus, the process emphasized was: authorial intent » big idea » parameters for application. At this point the training highlighted the danger of moralizing to warn against trivializing the biblical message into self-righteous application.

The Gospel portion of the method focused on Luke 24:25-27 and 44-47, as well as John 5:39, where Jesus shows that the point of the OT, including OT narrative, is himself. Connections to Christ were discussed in terms of both specific messianic references and general application. At this point the training highlighted the danger of allegory to warn against searching for secret and hidden connections to Christ.

The next section of the training involved a discussion of Davis' handles of application as the next step in making application (see chapter 2).³ The training keyed on several comments by Davis, including the need to distinguish between what the Bible

²J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Narrative to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 29-74.

³Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Fresh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2006), 93-119.

says and what it supports⁴, and the need to resist the desire to identify with the main character when application may lay elsewhere.⁵ The training focused on 4 of these handles under the headings of pattern, think, circumstance, and worship. “Pattern” refers to actions or behaviors of OT narrative characters which correspond to the reader’s actions and behaviors. “Think” refers to the authorial intent of a narrative to change the way the reader thinks. “Circumstance” refers to the circumstance of an OT narrative character which corresponds to the reader’s circumstance. And the final pattern, “worship,” refers to the authorial intent of a narrative to elicit from the reader a proper response of praise to God.

Specific OT narratives brought illustrated each of these handles. First Kings 14:1-18 showed Jeroboam’s evil pattern of ignoring God except in times of trouble. Discussion involved recognition of this pattern as a human tendency.⁶ The handle of “think” was taught from 1 Kings 20:23-30 which illustrated the bad theology of the Syrians in limiting God to certain realms of authority.⁷ Discussion involved the tendency of Christians to accept God’s rule in general terms (i.e., over the nations), but not in specific circumstances (i.e., health of a family member), or vice versa. First Kings 17:8-18 addressed the circumstance of suffering and the need to remain faithful.⁸ Discussion involved modern parallels and the idea that God does not always heal but always remains

⁴Davis, *The Word Became Fresh*, 72.

⁵Ibid., 116.

⁶Ibid., 96-98.

⁷Ibid., 102-5.

⁸Ibid., 105.

present. Second Kings 4:8-17 demonstrated the final handle of “worship” by showing that God gave the baby to the mother with no stated “larger” purpose other than to simply bless the mother.⁹ Discussion involved seeing this God as the believer’s God and worthy of praise.

The final section of the training addressed recognition of the gospel in making application. The training pointed out that the handles for application discussed were helpful but insufficient. The student of OT narrative needs to continue to ask questions of the text in order to move to the gospel in application (see table A1 in appendix 2). Therefore, the training asked the question, “How can the church avoid the sinful pattern of Jeroboam or the sinful thinking of the Syrians?” The answer is that through the gospel, Jesus transforms and empowers the believer for change from sinful patterns and thinking to righteous patterns and thinking. Regarding “circumstance,” the training asked the questions, “How does the church know that the God who was present for the widow will be present for the believer today?,” and “How does the church know that the resources necessary to respond righteously to similar circumstances are present for the believer today?” The answer is that through the gospel, Jesus is always present and Jesus provides all the resources needed by the church for all circumstances. Finally, with regards to “worship,” the training raised the question, “How can the believer today call the God of 2 Kings 4:8ff. his God?” The answer is because of Jesus and the gospel.

The seminar concluded by emphasizing movement to the gospel in application. The training encouraged the participants to see the gospel as the only proper connection between God and man, to understand the author’s intent in the light of the person and

⁹Davis, *The Word Became Flesh*, 114-15.

work of Jesus Christ, and to utilize the Text-driven, Gospel-driven method of applying OT narrative.

The training provided the basis for the participants' involvement in the preaching series. Each week they prepared a one-page guided reflection and evaluation of the sermon's application in terms of the method taught in the training (see appendix 3). The principles of application discussed in the training were reinforced throughout the preaching series through post-sermon informal discussions and question/answer times. The participants reviewed the information taught during the training session and used this information as the basis for making sermon evaluations. The sermon evaluations indicated that 80 percent of the participants answered the reflection questions "AS" or above according to the Likert scale (see appendix 3). Therefore, according to the criteria established in the research methodology, the second goal was achieved.

The third goal of the project was to model the Text-driven, Gospel-driven model of application by preaching a sermon series from Genesis 37-50. All twenty of the participants who completed the pre-project questionnaire were able to listen to all of the sermons in the series and complete the post-project questionnaire. Audio recordings of the delivered sermons were made available through the church website to those participants who were not present for some portion of the sermon series. As discussed earlier, the original goal for the number of participants was thirty, with a minimum of twenty completing the post-project questionnaire. Even though the sample size was smaller than projected, 100 percent of the participants completed the post-project questionnaire.

A t-test for dependent samples helped to determine whether there was a positive statistical difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires. According to Neil Salkind, a t-test for dependent samples examines the differences between groups of one or more variables where the same group of participants is tested more than once.¹⁰ The scores from both the pre-project and post-project questionnaires were tabulated and a mean score was calculated for each participant for each of the questionnaires. The t-test was applied to this set of mean scores. The results from the t-test are included in the Appendix (see appendix 4).

The application of the t-test to the mean scores produced the following results. The collective mean scores increased from a pre-project questionnaire collective mean score of 54.078 to a post-project questionnaire collective mean score of 69.274 (see table A2 in appendix 4), thus establishing that a positive change occurred. A t Stat of -8.896560024 (or an absolute value of 8.896560024) was calculated. A t Critical two tail value was calculated of 2.093024054. Since the t Stat value was larger than the t Critical two tail value, the modeling of application through expository sermons made a positive difference in the project participants' understanding of the application of OT narrative texts. A p value ($P(T \leq t)$ two tail) was calculated of .00334181. The calculated p value was less than $p = .05$; therefore, the positive difference achieved was not due to chance but represented a statistically significant difference (see table A3 in appendix 4). Since the t-test resulted in a positive statistically significant difference between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires, according to criteria established in the research methodology, the third goal was also met.

¹⁰Neil Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (think They) Hate Statistics* 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2010), 207-9.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE
PROJECT'S EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

The final chapter of this project summarizes some of the previous analysis, provides evaluation as to the project's effectiveness, and offers some final reflections and conclusions.

The Doctor of Ministry degree should provide needed tools for the student that will enhance his ministry skills and effectiveness and will build up the church and equip her for the work of ministry. Within the concentration of Expository Preaching, the student should be challenged, encouraged, and humbled with regards to his preaching through interaction with professors, classmates, and scholars. For the preaching pastor, there is no greater call from God upon his life than to unfold, clarify and apply God's Word to God's people. Success in this calling is not determined by the response to the preaching as much as by the pastor's faithfulness and clarity to say what God says. When faithfulness to the Word and clarity in the delivery are placed as the highest priorities, God will provide the results that he desires. All of these qualities were present during the completion of this project.

The origins of this project were several and varied. During my childhood, many Sunday mornings in church were filled with reading OT stories rather than listening to the preaching. During the initial years of my ministry on the mission field, I

taught these same Bible stories to cultures which were unfamiliar with the Bible or the gospel. One multi-year project involved the recording of twenty-six OT narratives learned and retold by two tribal men in their native tongue. Through these years, the method of teaching emphasized the telling of the stories rather than the application of them, an emphasis which ultimately proved dissatisfying. Also during this time, Geerhardus Vos' *Biblical Theology* greatly impacted my thinking and view of Scripture. This book is more of an OT biblical theology than a whole Bible biblical theology and so my thinking about the OT was challenged. I spent many hours considering Vos' words concerning the purpose of the OT in the flow of redemptive history and the OT's connection with the gospel. After beginning pastoral ministry in New Mexico, I soon became familiar with some of the preaching of my peers. After listening to sermons on Elisha and the axe head from 2 Kings 6 and on Pharaoh's wagons sent to Jacob from Genesis 45, I recognized the difficulty of making proper application of OT narratives. These influences and experiences, combined with the ministry context of Angel Fire Baptist Church described in chapter 1, formed the roots from which this project grew.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to facilitate members of Angel Fire Baptist Church to apply Old Testament narrative properly. The project accomplished this facilitation through: (1) discussion of biblical mandates for application; (2) discussion of dangers in application; (3) introduction to and training in a Text-driven, Gospel-driven method of application; (4) modeling of this method for application through expository preaching.

The church's understanding of God's word grows as they see: (1) how the OT and NT are unified; (2) how the metanarrative of the gospel unfolds throughout the Scriptures; (3) how a particular OT story fits in the flow of redemptive history; and (4) how that story prepares God's people for Christ. When the above truths are impacting God's people the church talks and thinks differently, incorporating biblical language and ideas into their discussions of life, relationships, circumstances and difficulties. Angel Fire Baptist Church experienced the first fruits of this growth during the project and the effects continue. The project was successful in fulfilling its purpose.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Several goals established the methodology of the project. The first goal was to assist the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church to increase their awareness of how they apply OT narrative. Growth in the application of God's word requires a good understanding of the believer's current views and practices of application. This understanding reveals both strengths and weaknesses in application which need to be addressed to facilitate growth. The participant's engagement with the questionnaire used in the fulfillment of this goal allowed them to begin to articulate their views and practices of applying OT narrative; thus, providing a proper starting point for the project. Through the first goal, this project effectively provided a context for personal reflection and understanding for the project participants.

The second goal was to equip the project participants to properly apply OT narrative using the method of application developed through research: a Text-driven, Gospel-driven method. God calls the pastor/teacher to equip believers and to move them forward in maturity, including the proper application of OT narrative. The training

seminar on the Text-driven, Gospel-driven method provoked the project participants to consider dangers in application not previously considered. In addition, the seminar provided a context in which the participants could wrestle with what the Scriptures say about Christ-centered application of the OT. If the first goal provided the starting point for growth, the second goal pointed the way forward and helped with the first steps along that way. The sermon evaluations helped the participants to consistently think about proper application for twelve weeks, enough time to develop proper habits of application leading to maturity.

The third goal of the project was to model the method of application taught to project participants by preaching a sermon series from Genesis 37-50. The Joseph narrative was selected for the preaching series for several reasons. First, the stories in the Joseph narrative provided a relatively familiar Biblical context for project participants. Second, the stories compose a single narrative. The key conflict introduced in the first story in Genesis 37 finally resolves during the penultimate story in Genesis 50. Finally, the Joseph narrative presents many redemptive themes which are developed throughout Scripture. Some examples of these themes include: sovereignty, repentance, providence, faith, and promises.

The sermon series provided an appropriate context for the participants to begin to grow in their ability to properly apply OT narrative. From a technical standpoint, the sermons effectively modeled how to use the Text-driven, Gospel-driven method. The length of the series allowed time for the participants to grow in their understanding during the project. Many participants commented mid-way through the series that the concepts introduced in the training and even the OT were making more

sense. Perhaps the greater value of the sermon series was the spiritual dynamic of the preaching event that is not always present during training. Participants grew in the context of worship, and thus grew in their worship. As previously outlined in chapter 4, all of the project goals were met.

Strengths of the Project

The project possessed a number of strengths beginning with the subject matter of the project, applying OT narrative. Through questioning, training, and modeling, the project matured the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church in two ways. First, they grew in their understanding of how to apply OT narrative to their lives. Second, they gained confidence to dialog about OT narrative with others. Reaching the world for Christ requires that the church continue to mature in its skill with the Scripture, both devotionally and apologetically. Assisting Angel Fire Baptist Church in this twofold maturation was a key strength of the project.

Additionally, the project provided a forum for Angel Fire Baptist Church to engage in serious reflection upon the appropriate method for applying OT narrative. The teaching during the project identified, challenged, and critiqued several dangerous and erroneous methods of application. Furthermore, the training introduced, discussed and modeled a Text-driven, Gospel-driven model of application. Finally, the preaching series consistently challenged church members over a three-month period to consider the gospel when making application of OT narrative, whether during personal reading or while listening to sermons. This reflection on method has continued within the church through ongoing modeling and discussion and is considered an important strength of the project.

The practical nature of the project, dealing with the application of the Scripture to all of life, was another strength. Much erroneous application of the OT occurs in the Church today both in the pulpit and in the pew. Because the OT accounts for approximately seventy-five percent of the Scriptures, this is a grave concern. The project provided practical guidelines and suggestions for Angel Fire Baptist Church which will assist the church members in the use of the OT in their daily life with God.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project also manifested some weaknesses. Due to scheduling difficulties, an interim meeting with project participants did not occur. The inability to meet with participants a second time limited some of the participants' opportunity for feedback in a group setting. One-to-one discussion provided the participants additional opportunities for feedback and questions. However, while the feedback was adequate for the completion of the project, the resulting reduction in group involvement was a weakness of the project.

Some of the questions on both the pre-project and post-project questionnaires, as well as the sermon reflections, were not well written. The questions were confusing to the participants and did not elicit the appropriate information for analysis. In addition, the poorly worded questions yielded answers which required more subjective analysis to interpret. As a result, the conclusions regarding the participants' views of application of OT narrative were more difficult and less objective than desired.

The name "Text-driven, Gospel-driven method" was more functional than eloquent or memorable. More thought could have been given to the name of the method proposed to encourage use and memory.

What I Would Do Differently

I was pleased with the subject matter of the project, the general methodology utilized, the biblical content chosen for the sermon series, and the model developed from the research involved in the project. If I were to do anything differently, it would be to address the weaknesses described above. First, I would spend more time considering the personal schedules of the participants to ensure the inclusion of the training follow-up initially desired; thus increasing group involvement of the participants. Second, I would have tested all of the questions on various non-participants before the beginning of the project to ensure that they were communicating to the participants what was intended. This step would have increased the accuracy and objectivity of the information received from both the pre- and post-project questionnaires.

Theological Reflections

Studying and preaching through the Joseph narratives yielded much reflection on the character of God. Sovereignty surfaced from the text again and again as a singular quality of God. The biblical text consistently revealed God's oversight of events and persons, both good and evil, to accomplish his purposes. This truth enlightened, challenged and encouraged the church. The participants' reflections support this conclusion. Some examples include "The sovereignty and providence of God are revealed through this text"; "God is sovereignly working his plan to have Joseph where he wants him"; "We should never fear the sovereignty of God"; "I really could see and understand God's sovereignty in the stories, and looking back I can see His sovereignty in previous sermons"; "I believe the church body today would do well to emphasize the stories of the OT so we can see how God's love and sovereignty were constants to people

who trusted and believed and walked with God throughout OT times”; “I’ve really questioned God’s sovereignty, but through this series of sermons it’s become abundantly clear just how true it is that God uses all circumstances to fulfill his plans . . . An amazing series.”

God desires the church to know the OT and to understand it in the light of Christ and the gospel. New Testament passages such as 2 Timothy 3 and Luke 24 clearly teach this truth. Several scholars highlighted the same truth as indicated in the research for chapters 2 and 3. Some scholars are quick to warn of the danger of reading the NT back into the OT and the misunderstanding that may result. However, the project helped me realize once again that the gospel must be considered when the church makes application of OT narrative.

The project reminded Angel Fire Baptist Church that the OT is an important part of God’s revelation to his people. Several participants and non-participating members and visitors expressed during the preaching series their lack of understanding of the OT and their great desire to understand it. Consider these comments from participants’ sermon reflections: “This sermon helped me to better understand the OT”; “I was able to see why the story of Judah is in the Bible”; “The more we hear these applications the more we will be able to think this way when we read Old Testament narrative”; “I’m beginning to get the hang of it”; “I’m so amazed at what I’m learning”; “I’m starting to see how the pieces fit together”; “These biblical passages I’ve read my whole life and it seems like the first time I’ve read them . . . It’s not just about the history.”

During the project, the word of God, and specifically the OT, proved itself to be all that it claims. In 2 Timothy 3, the Bible claims to be useful and applicable to the man of God. Project participants experienced the truth of this scripture as they explored the Joseph narratives in the training and in the preaching. They saw that through the gospel: God can work in the midst of dysfunctional families, like Jacob's; man is never too far gone to be redeemed by God, like Judah; God can use all the circumstances of our lives to accomplish his purposes, like Joseph's; the church can live and die in her faith, like Jacob and Joseph; and many other useful applications.

Personal Reflections

This project contends that proper application of OT narrative is controlled by the text of Scripture and by the truth of the gospel; that the text and the gospel provide the valid parameters for and the appropriate paths to proper application. In addition, this project stands firmly within the conservative, evangelical tradition which holds to a high view of Scripture, the importance of authorial intent, and the centrality of the gospel. Two questions may be asked here at the end of the project: (1) how does the thesis of this project compare with others who stand in the same theological traditions and who have written on the application of Scripture, specifically addressing OT narrative? and (2) is the method of this project valid with other genres of the OT?

Michael Fabarez in his book *Preaching that Changes Lives* writes extensively on the subject of application. He addresses many themes which are echoed in this project, including: authorial intent of a passage as a parameter for modern application,

and life change of the hearer as a primary goal of sermon development.¹ Within this discussion, Fabarez highlights four aspects of Scripture which call for direct application to the modern believer: (1) the application is rooted in the character of God; (2) the application addresses man's depravity; (3) the application reflects God's created order; (4) the application is delivered as counter-cultural.² Later in the book, Fabarez considers the place of Christ in applicational sermons. He favorably quotes from authors such as Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy and Edmund Clowney, authors who influenced this project. He also notes the same dangers in application which were highlighted in this project; namely, moralizing, allegorizing, and personalizing.³ Fabarez concludes this discussion by exhorting pastors, "As we edify and equip the body of Christ we need to be sure that our directives include a clear call for continued reliance on the work of Christ . . . [the work of Christ as] the reason, the rationale, the motive, the power, and the goal of all obedience must always be crystal clear."⁴

Another author who has written on application and who stands in the same theological tradition as this project is Daniel Doriani. In his book *Putting the Truth to Work*, Doriani highlights the dangers of moralizing and allegorizing as well as the need to take the text and the genre of Scripture seriously.⁵ Similar to Fabarez, Doriani chooses to

¹Michael Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), 37-54.

²Ibid., 46-47.

³Ibid., 111-25.

⁴Ibid., 124-25.

⁵Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 161-69.

include a chapter on Christ-centered application near the end of his book. Doriani mentions Vos, Greidanus and Clowney and indicates that he is like minded with these authors. He states that “our goal, then, is to preach Christ in ways that honor the vision, the genius, of each [biblical] author, instead of making leaps to Paul that annul that vision.”⁶

One critique of both authors is that they do not include their discussions of Christ-centered application within their general discussion on application. Neither author consistently makes the explicit connection to Christ and the gospel when making application of the OT to the modern believer. However, both Fabarez and Doriani embrace the text of Scripture and the gospel as proper parameters for application when their books are considered in their entirety. Thus, the thesis of this project compares favorably with other authors within a similar theological tradition.

As stated in chapter 2, the method of application proposed in this project is based upon the Redemptive-Historical Christocentric model. Doriani notes that redemptive-historical preaching focuses on narrative and has not “sufficiently developed its method for other genres, such as psalms of wisdom or lament, proverbs, prophetic oracles, or the ethical codes of Moses.”⁷ This observation leads to the question of whether the project model is valid with other OT genres. Unfortunately, the answer to this question lies outside of the scope of the project. As stated in chapter 1, the scope of the project is limited to the genre of OT narrative. However, answering this question will be an ongoing project at Angel Fire Baptist Church. During a recent preaching

⁶Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 286.

⁷Ibid., 296.

conference, the project model was applied to the application of the Psalms during small group discussion with favorable results. In addition, Angel Fire Baptist Church is currently working through the book of Exodus. The project model was effective in the first chapters of Exodus which are narrative. As the preaching moves into the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant, the Text-driven, Gospel-driven model will be applied to the genres of law and ethical codes. The provisional conclusion is that the project model is valid with other OT genres. When the uniqueness of a particular genre is accounted for and proper exegetical method is utilized to arrive at the authorial intent of a passage, similar gospel questions can be asked of the text to make explicit the connection to Christ before application is made to the church. The final answer regarding the validity of the project model to all OT genres awaits future preaching series.

Conclusion

Why choose the subject matter of applying OT narrative? We live in a world where the inerrancy, inspiration, sufficiency, perspicuity, and relevance of God's Word is being challenged daily at every level of society, both from without and from within the Church. Many pulpits or stages in churches today are filled by preachers who seem embarrassed by what God's Word says and who are content to give God's Word second place to worldly wisdom and "relevant" eloquence. Perhaps there is not a more appropriate time to take God's people back to an understanding of the OT, to walk with them through a process of rediscovery of the relevance of the Bible stories of their youth, and to show them with renewed clarity the gospel as it unfolds in biblical history. This has been the goal and intent of this project, and happily the result.

APPENDIX 1

PRE/POST PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure how you apply Old Testament narrative. This research is being conducted by Brian Nystrom for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions at the beginning of the project and then you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving consent for the uses of your responses in this project.

Personal code word _____

Date: _____

Section I. General Questions

Directions: The following questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Please circle your response.

1. Understanding the historical setting of an Old Testament story is necessary to understand the meaning of the story.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

2. Understanding the original intent of the biblical author of an Old Testament story is necessary to understand the meaning of the story.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

3. Understanding the place of an Old Testament story in the overall biblical story is necessary to understand the meaning of the story.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

4. The church today is free to make direct application of any truth learned from an Old Testament story.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

5. Individual Christians are free to make personal application of any truth learned from an Old Testament story.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

Section II – Specific Old Testament Narratives

Directions: Please read the following Old Testament narratives and answer the questions which follow each narrative. The more complete your answers the more helpful your answers will be for the project results.

Numbers 21:4-9

1. What would you say is the historical setting for this story?
2. What do you think was the essential meaning of this story to the people of Israel when it was written?
3. Why do you think that God wanted this story in the Bible?
4. What do you think is the meaning of this story for the church today?
5. What do you think is the meaning of this story for your own life?

Joshua 6:1-27

1. What would you say is the historical setting for this story?
2. What do you think was the essential meaning of this story to the people of Israel when it was written?
3. Why do you think that God wanted this story in the Bible?
4. What do you think is the meaning of this story for the church today?
5. What do you think is the meaning of this story for your own life?

1 Samuel 17:1-54

1. What would you say is the historical setting for this story?
2. What do you think was the essential meaning of this story to the people of Israel when it was written?
3. Why do you think that God wanted this story in the Bible?
4. What do you think is the meaning of this story for the church today?
5. What do you think is the meaning of this story for your own life?

Jonah 1:1-17

1. What would you say is the historical setting for this story?
2. What do you think was the essential meaning of this story to the people of Israel when it was written?
3. Why do you think that God wanted this story in the Bible?

4. What do you think is the meaning of this story for the church today?

5. What do you think is the meaning of this story for your own life?

APPENDIX 2

MOVING TO THE GOSPEL IN APPLICATION

Table A1. Asking gospel questions of narrative texts

	Pattern	Think	Circumstance	Worship
OT Narrative Text	1 Kgs 14:1-18	1 Kgs 20:23-30	1 Kgs 17:8-18	2 Kgs 4:8-17
Application	Avoid the evil pattern of ignoring God except in times of difficulty.	Avoid the evil thinking that God is somehow limited in his ability accomplish his purposes.	Respond in faith to the circumstance of “unjust” suffering.	Worship the God who graciously and lovingly provides.
Gospel Question	How can the church avoid this evil pattern? Jesus and the gospel.	How can the church avoid this evil thinking? Jesus and the gospel.	How can the church respond in faith during suffering? Jesus and the gospel.	How can the church worship this God as her God? Jesus and the gospel.

APPENDIX 3

GUIDE FOR SERMON REFLECTION

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure how you apply Old Testament narrative. This research is being conducted by Brian Nystrom for the purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions and give personal comments regarding the effectiveness of application made in a sermon series. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this questionnaire, you are giving consent for the uses of your responses in this project.

Personal code word _____

Date of Sermon: _____

Title of Sermon:

Directions: The following questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Please circle your response.

1. The application made in the sermon was consistent with the method of application previously taught.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

2. After listening to the sermon, I understood more clearly how to apply Old Testament narrative.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comments:

3. Modeling application through preaching is an effective tool to equip the church to properly apply Old Testament narrative.

SD D DS AS A SA

Comment:

Additional Comments:

APPENDIX 4

RESULTS OF T-TEST FOR DEPENDENT SAMPLES

Table A2. Summary of mean scores

Mean Scores		
Participant	Pre-Project	Post-Project
1	46.96	56.92
2	55.28	73.88
3	49.16	81.28
4	58.48	72.20
5	53.00	75.84
6	58.28	77.64
7	60.52	70.60
8	44.76	64.52
9	47.28	55.08
10	47.68	70.60
11	58.72	61.60
12	66.24	69.16
13	52.60	72.96
14	63.48	71.24
15	59.48	64.12
16	60.68	75.36
17	54.20	71.92
18	45.72	62.92
19	51.08	71.76
20	47.96	65.88
Mean Scores	54.08	69.27

Note: The above figures represent the actual scores of the project participants on the pre-project and post-project questionnaires.

APPENDIX 4

RESULTS OF T-TEST FOR DEPENDENT SAMPLES

Table A3. Results of t-test

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Project	Post-Project
Mean	54.0780000000	69.2740000000
Variance	41.0035326300	45.9085900000
Observations	20.0000000000	20.0000000000
Pearson Correlation	0.0329151472	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.0000000000	
df	19.0000000000	
t Stat	-8.8965600240	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.6709E-0800	
t Critical one-tail	1.7291328120	
P(T<=t) two-tail	3.34181E-080	
t Critical two-tail	2.0930245054	

Note: The mean increased between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires, establishing a positive change. The absolute value of the t Stat value obtained is greater than the t critical two-tail value obtained; thus, the teaching intervention made a difference. Furthermore, the value obtained for the p value two-tail is less than $p = .05$; thus, the difference was not due to chance and the teaching intervention made a statistically significant difference

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ABSTRACT

APPLYING OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE AT ANGEL FIRE BAPTIST CHURCH, ANGEL FIRE, NEW MEXICO

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This project facilitates the members of Angel Fire Baptist Church in Angel Fire, New Mexico, to apply Old Testament narrative properly. The project consisted of three goals: to assist church members to increase their awareness of how they apply Old Testament narrative; to equip project participants using the method of application developed in the project; and to model application of Old Testament narrative through an expository preaching series from Genesis 37-50. The goals of the project were accomplished through the use of questionnaires, training, preaching, and guided sermon reflections.

Chapter 1 introduces the project by establishing the project's purpose and goals in light of the ministry context of Angel Fire Baptist Church. The research methodology for the project is presented within the definitions, limitations and delimitations of the project.

Chapter 2 analyzes various existing models of applying Old Testament narrative. The chapter begins by establishing biblical guidelines for application and then analyzes the models in light of these guidelines. The models evaluated were the Theocentric model, the Christological model, and the Redemptive-Historical Christocentric model. The chapter closes by proposing a Text-driven, Gospel-driven model for application of Old Testament narrative based on the Redemptive-Historical

Christocentric model.

Chapter 3 models the Text-driven, Gospel-driven model through a sermon series preached from the Joseph narrative of Genesis 37-50. The series consisted of twelve sermons; two introductory sermons and ten sermons on the Joseph narrative. For each of the ten sermons, the main point is summarized, handles for application are identified, and questions are asked which move to the gospel in application.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology used to complete the project, and provides conclusions concerning the project's effectiveness in modeling application of Old Testament narrative through expository preaching.

Chapter 5 evaluates the project's effectiveness and offers some reflections and conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses of the project are identified and discussed in terms of their effect on the project's overall effectiveness. The reflections interact with some established writings on application and conclude that the project is harmonious with the call to apply the Old Testament in the light of the gospel. The Text-driven, Gospel-driven model for the application of Old Testament narrative is an effective tool for helping God's people mature in their understanding of the Scripture and for applying the Scripture to their lives in the light of the gospel.

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