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Responsible Freedom: How Pastors Make Application from

Redemptive Historical Old Testament Narrative Sermons

A Dissertation Submitted to

the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

Steven Van Noort

2016

HOW PASTORS MAKE APPLICATION FROM OLD TESTAMENT
REDEMPTIVE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE SERMONS

By

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
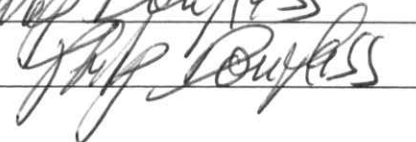DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Graduation Date   MAY 13, 2016

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Abstract

Many pastors find application difficult, especially in redemptive historical Old Testament narrative sermons where there are a variety of practical and hermeneutical issues to consider. Homiletics literature teaches many practical principles for making application, and hermeneutics literature teaches pastors to treat the text in a redemptive historical way. However, very little literature addresses how to make application in a redemptive historical way from Old Testament narrative texts. Treating the text in a redemptive historical way and focusing the sermon on Christ should affect the application. A redemptive historical hermeneutic affects how pastors use characters, when and if characters point to Christ, and how pastors connect the text to practical life situations. Therefore, this study was designed to explore how pastors make application in redemptive historical Old Testament narrative sermons.

Four research questions guided this study.

1. What resources do pastors use to design sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

2. What principles guide pastors when designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives.

3. What challenges do pastors face in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

4. How do pastors overcome challenges in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

The study used a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with four pastors from the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition who were very dedicated to preaching Christ and making good application. The critical incidents they recounted from practice situations along with one sermon manuscript each pastor submitted comprised the data, which was analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The study found that pastors who preach Christ and make application well regularly nourish their application skills by taking deliberate time out of the week to read or listen to other pastors. Pastors also treat the entire sermon as application. Pastors also follow several principles when determining whether or not Old Testament characters point to Christ or if they can be used as examples.

The study provided several conclusions about making application from redemptive historical Old Testament narrative sermons. First, pastors should take regular time to nourish their sermon application skills. Second, pastors should treat the entire sermon as application. Third, though pastors struggle with finding illustrations to help in their sermon application, pastors can use characters in the text as the main illustration and tell the story so that the congregation identifies with the characters. Fourth, there were six principles gleaned from the study that pastors follow in order to let Christ influence the application. Fifth, pastors should use responsible freedom when using Old Testament characters as examples for application. Making application from Old Testament narratives is more of an art than science. Despite the ambiguity, this responsible freedom enables pastors to avoid moralistic sermons or giving sermons that do not have application.

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Chapter One

Introduction

"Sermon application frightens me," writes Daniel Overdorf, professor of preaching at Johnson University. He continues, "No other aspect of the preaching process leaves me shaking with such intensity in my homiletical boots."[1] Application frightens Overdorf because in application pastors dare to tread on people's lives. Pastors expose and challenge the listener's attitudes, decisions, and actions, and they do so with the authority of "thus says the Lord." Nonetheless, according to Bryan Chapell, former president and professor of practical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary:

> Application fulfills the obligations of exposition. Application is the present personal consequence of scriptural truth. Without application, a preacher has no reason to preach, because truth without actual or potential application fulfills no redemptive purpose. This means that at its heart preaching is not merely the proclamation of the truth but truth applied.[2]

If application is as terrifying as Overdorf claims and if application is as important as Chapell claims, then pastors ought to work hard at making faithful applications in sermons. Problems occur, however, especially when handling Old Testament narrative texts. Pastors wrestle with how to be faithful and relevant, impacting their listeners' souls

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[1] Daniel Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon: How to Balance Biblical Integrity and Cultural Relevance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2009), 13.

[2] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 210.

in a transformational way while also drawing application from the narrative text. To accomplish these goals, pastors must navigate many hermeneutical issues. As Goldsworthy, former lecturer in Old Testament, biblical theology and hermeneutics at Moore Theological College in Sydney, Australia, describes, "It has to do with whether historical texts should be treated mainly for their exemplary value or for their contribution to and place in salvation history."[3] For redemptive historical preaching, much has been written on how Old Testament narrative texts connect to Christ, but how do pastors then connect to their audience? Not much research has been conducted on how to go from Christ to application in Old Testament narratives. The following section outlines these practical challenges.

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The Problem Statement

Drawing Application from the Narrative Text

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Two prominent pastors, applying the same passage, illustrate how difficult it is to make life application from redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament Narratives. Charles Swindoll and M.B. Van't Veer both address the narrative of Elijah by the brook but apply it very differently. Likewise, a recent *Banner* article, the official magazine of the Christian Reformed Church, and professor Edmund Clowney, professor emeritus of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia both exegete Jacob's vision of the ladder to heaven, but draw contrasting applications.

Charles Swindoll explains that the narrative of Elijah by the brook of Cherith Ravine is about God trying to cut Elijah down to size, just like a drill sergeant in boot

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[3] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2000), 141.

camp.[4] Elijah at the brook would be taught that the Lord uses that "uncomfortable situation to force him to trust Him for each day's needs."[5] Just like a drill instructor commands his recruits on how to survive, so God commanded Elijah to go to the brook. One purpose of the brook was to hide Elijah from persecution, and a second purpose was to train him to become a man of God. There, God provided daily for Elijah, and he trusted God every single day. One morning, Elijah noticed that the brook wasn't gushing over the rocks or bubbling as freely as it had. Slowly but surely the brook dried up. God's provision seemed to run out.

Swindoll then applies the passage, asking what his listeners' "brooks" might be. He says, "At one time you knew the joy of a full bank account, a booming business, an exciting, ever-expanding career, a magnificent ministry. But…the brook has dried up."[6] Elijah learned through this that the God who gives is also the God who takes away. Elijah prayed to God that it would not rain for three years, and Elijah received this request. Swindoll then says, "Have you ever had that happen? Lord make me a godly man…Meanwhile in your heart you are thinking but don't let it hurt too much…God's spiritual boot camp doesn't work that way. It is designed toward maturity not for our comfort."[7] Swindoll goes on to explain how God always trains us and shaves our head, strips away the things we have, so our pride can be destroyed.[8]

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[4] Charles Swindoll, *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 22.

[5] Ibid., 23.

[6] Ibid., 29.

[7] Ibid., 34.

[8] Ibid., 35.

For Swindoll, many of the text's key details become symbols that parallel his audience's experiences. For example, the brook is a symbol for life situations that run dry. Swindoll almost treats the text as a metaphor for life today. Also, Jesus Christ is not mentioned once. The text is not explained in a way that connects it with redemptive history. Still, the application is relevant as it touches people's experiences.

Van't Veer treats this narrative quite differently. Van't Veer writes in the redemptive historical tradition of preaching. As explained by Dr. C. Trimp, who was a professor of Ministerial Studies at Theological University of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, for Van't Veer, the Old Testament narrative aims not primarily to give a spiritual portrait of people engaged in a faith struggle that can be emulated; rather, such narratives aim to present the one history of Christ coming into the world.[9] With this strict redemptive historical approach, Van't Veer opposed using religious experience of Old Testament narrative characters as homiletical points of contact. Under this approach, Van't Veer looks at the text in a different way and arrives at completely different applications.

For Van't Veer, God sends Elijah to Cherith Ravine to show him that revelation had gone into hiding as part of God's judgment upon Israel for their unbelief and for following wicked King Ahaz.[10] Elijah was God's chosen prophet and as such he was the embodiment of revelation. When Elijah went to the brook, outside Israel's borders, he signaled that God's revelation has departed from Israel. God's people were already

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[9] C. J. Trimp, *Preaching and The History of Salvation: Continuing and Unfinished Discussion*, trans. Nelson Kloosterman (Dyer, IN: Mid-America Reformed Seminary, 1996), 90.

[10] M. B. Van't Veer, *My God Is Yahweh*, trans. Theodore Plantinga (St. Catherine, ON: Paideia Press, 1980), 63.

placed under the curse of the famine, which was severe punishment, but now God's word would not be present. There would be no guidance, no hope offered of the famine being lifted—the people would endure punishment without direction from God. The withholding of food is part of God's covenant curse he promised to place upon Israel if they broke the covenant. God's silence, therefore, becomes a means of revelation, calling the people to repent and turn back to him.

Van't Veer disposes of the idea that Elijah is a type who stands for all believers in general. Instead, Elijah holds the special office of prophet of God.[11] Therefore, Elijah going by the brook is not about how God provides for believers in unfortunate circumstances. Van't Veer is well acquainted with the application that asks about personal ravens and how God provides for personally in unexpected ways. For Van't Veer, this cannot be proper application because the rest of the prophets of God—the 7,000—were dying under the famine and under persecution from Jezebel.[12] Van't Veer writes, "when we recognize in Elijah's preservation at the brook Cherith that the office of prophet is being maintained…the office calls out for the people. When the Lord sustains the office-bearer, he thereby seeks His people and makes it known to them that he still wants to work with His church by way of the office, by way of the service of the Word."[13]

However, Elijah cannot perform this duty well. His work as an officer points to the perfect work of the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ. The one greater than Elijah had to

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[11] Ibid., 65.

[12] Ibid., 74.

[13] Ibid., 80.

leave the people, become judged, descend to hell, and pay the penalty for sin. Elijah enjoyed covenant blessings because he is separated from God's sinful people. Elijah could not pass on the blessing he received. But Jesus Christ endures the penalty so God's people can receive blessing. The church enjoys the blessings of God's grace through the work of Christ.

Two completely different hermeneutics illustrate the difficulty of applying Old Testament narrative. Charles Swindoll directly applies the text, comparing Elijah's experience to his audience's. Van't Veer connects Elijah's experiences with the coming work of Jesus Christ, and once he proclaims Christ, he then draws the application. Swindoll's application is much easier to understand, and he addresses pastoral needs. Van't Veer's application is much more complicated as the audience first has to see how the text relates to Christ, and his application lacks detail.

Given these two, contrasting applications, how many congregation members would rather here Swindoll's application? Swindoll connects to his listeners' daily life better than Van't Veer. Redemptive historical preachers have a problem: making life-changing, pastoral application. Redemptive historical preachers can proclaim Christ, but then they often shortchange application. Once they have proclaimed Christ, their application usually exhorts listeners, "Christ saves us from our sins so believe in him." When this application is the only application for listeners, preachers have a problem. Redemptive historical preaching may prevent the preacher from making the application Swindoll makes, but they must ensure their application meets the true spiritual needs of the listener.

Edmund Clowney's sermon illustrates the deficiency of pastoral application. Clowney emphasized preaching Christ from all of scripture, and he published a book of his sermons to show students and pastors how to proclaim Christ.[14] In his sermon on Genesis 28.10-22, Clowney preaches that God comes down to his people. After giving a wealth of wonderful exegetical nuggets on the passage, Clowney writes, "The Lord who came down from the stairway of Jacob's dream is the Lord who came down to be born of Mary. Here on earth he could tell Nathanael that he knew him…he could also tell him of the glory of his second coming. The angels of the Jacob's dream will come with him then. They had come to the shepherd's to announce his birth. They will come with him when he comes in glory."[15] Clowney concludes the sermon by exhorting his listeners to trust Jesus whom they encounter through the preaching of the word.[16] The application is underdeveloped and disconnected from the details of listeners' lives. Clowney spends most of the sermon exegeting the passage and proclaiming Christ. Once he proclaims Christ, the application seems to be an afterthought. Most of the sermons Clowney shares in his book follow this pattern.

Reverend Cecil van Niejenhuis, a consultant with the Pastor-Church Relations Office of the CRCNA (Christian Reformed Church in North America), represents a completely different approach to this Old Testament Narrative.[17] In a recent *Banner* article, Rev. Cecil writes on a very pastoral matter: struggling to handle transitions in life. Transitions include: changing from one pastor to another in a church, going from Sunday

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[14] Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003).

[15] Ibid., 84.

[16] Ibid., 85.

[17] Cecil van Niejenhuis, "A Theology of Transition," *Banner* (February 2012): 7.

worship to the workweek, and looking at a hymn book verses words on a screen. These are real-life situations, and people are learning how to cope with transitions like these. Cecil writes that the story of Jacob, seeing the vision of the ladder to heaven offers a lovely paradigm of how to handle transition. He writes, "Utterly alone, Jacob is at an in-between place. And God there makes himself known powerfully and gracefully."[18] The way God worked in Jacob's life during transition is often how he works in other people's lives during difficult transitions, by making himself known. van Niejenhuis does not mention Jesus Christ at all in this article.

Two very different approaches to the narrative again illustrate two very different applications. van Niejenhuis' application is more pastoral and addresses major spiritual needs. These are the kinds of applications that benefit the heavy-laden soul sitting in the pew. However, questions arise over van Niejenhuis' exegesis of the text. Yet, with the two examples of redemptive historical preaching, Clowney and Van't Veer, either redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives does not lend itself to life changing application, or it is very difficult to apply Old Testament narratives to God's struggling people. Ideally, preachers could have the pastoral sensitivity of the exemplaristic/moralistic schools combined with the faithfulness to scripture in the redemptive historical preaching school. Certainly, applications made from preaching redemptive historical sermons on Old Testament narratives need to be life changing and pastorally sensitive.

Books on Redemptive Historical Preaching

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[18] Ibid.

Key pastors who advocate redemptive historical preaching illustrate the difficulty in applying Old Testament narrative. Popular hermeneutics books used to teach pastors how to preach Christ from scripture also offer little help. For example, Sidney Greidanus, in his book *Preaching Christ from The Old Testament*, does an excellent job of explaining the necessity of preaching Christ (all of scripture is about Christ) and how to preach Christ through the Old Testament, especially through Old Testament narratives. Greidanus gives ten steps from moving from the Old Testament text to a Christocentric sermon.[19] While he gives rich hermeneutical insight throughout the book, Greidanus only carries his hermeneutical principles to the point where Christ is preached; they are not carried on into the application.

Greidanus gives a bit more direction in making application from Old Testament narrative texts in his book, *Preaching Christ From Genesis*. Greidanus spends most of the book in exposition, showing the reader how to proclaim Christ. Again, he gives little direction for application. Greidanus gives a few points for application, which will be addressed in the literature review section, but he essentially negates them when he writes, "I will try to show the current direction for current application, but, not knowing the situation in the local church I cannot go in detail. Preachers using this book for preparing sermons should expand on applications with personal observations and powerful illustration to meet the needs of the local church."[20] This is fine advice; however, how is the preacher supposed to do this?

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[19] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from The Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneuitical Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 280-318.

[20] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2007), 40.

Graeme Goldsworthy, lecturer on Old Testament, biblical theology, and
hermeneutics, in a similar way as Greidanus, shows how all of scripture is about Christ,
and therefore every sermon must be about Christ.[21] By showing how biblical theology
impacts sermons, the reader is cautioned against moralism. Goldsworthy devotes an
entire chapter to how biblical theology impacts the preaching of Old Testament narratives
in particular, but there is no mention of making the next step to application.[22]

Seminaries use certain authors to teach homiletics, and these authors are strong in
avoiding moralism and in teaching others to proclaim Christ from Old Testament
narratives. Yet, they are weak in application. Since Christ is the way, the truth, and the
life, any sermon that preaches Christ should have faithful application. The battles fought
in the past couple of decades were against moralism, and the solution was to preach
Christ. Nonetheless, one can preach Christ and still be unfaithful to the application.
Potentially, Christ can be proclaimed, and as Van't Veer exhorts, the point of contact still
can be made between the experiences of the Old Testament characters and the audience's
experiences today. In contrast, one can preach Christ and not apply the passage at all,
ignoring Hebrews 11 where certain characters are held up as examples of faith.

Questions that these homiletics books neglect include: how do preachers go from
the text to Christ and then to application for Old Testament narratives? How does
preaching Christ affect the application? Can the characters of these narratives function in
any way as an example or does the biblical theology always take center stage? Much of
the debate centers on how to preach Christ. A plethora of material shows preachers how

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[21] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the While Bible as Christian Scripture.*

[22] Ibid., 140-151.

biblical theology impacts a sermon. In the next stage of the debate, redemptive historical advocates must show how to faithfully make powerful, life-changing applications from their preaching.

Many key theologians in the Netherlands wrestled with these questions a few decades ago. Dr. C. Trimp documents the battles Van't Veer and Holwerda waged against the moralistic trend of the day. Trimp warns that as the redemptive historical preachers reacted to moralism, they tended to ignore valid ways to make application. Trimp writes that Hebrews 11, "does teach us that we may and must aim our signs along the perspectival path of the struggle and faith of God's children, to the congregation today."[23] He warns that the redemptive historical approach can over exaggerate progress in redemptive history while ignoring God's concourse in history with people. Trimp writes, "James 5 directs New Testament believers to the example of the prophets, of Job and Elijah. At the level of ordinary humanness, Elijah and we are related to each, the Bible declares emphatically."[24] The alleged overreaction by Holwerda and Van't Veer is possibly the same overreaction in homiletics book about redemptive historical preaching that many seminaries use.

Preachers today have a dilemma: how will they make application? How do they explain the progress of redemptive history and point to Christ while at the same time emphasize that God has concourse with humans? The Bible uses characters from Old Testament narratives as examples, how can preachers do the same? Even homiletics

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[23] Trimp, *Preaching And The History of Salvation*, 117.

[24] Ibid., 123.

books that have large sections on application do not address some of these issues.[25] The redemptive historical debate needs to move onto the next level and show how to move from Christ to the text's proper application.

On the other hand, some seminaries use books that explain the mechanics of taking the listener's needs into consideration, but these do not show how application relates to a redemptive-historical interpretation of the passage. In other words, these books focus upon application without factoring in biblical theology. In his book, *Preaching with Relevance*, Keith Willhite,[26] professor of Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary, explains how to relate the text's world to the congregation's world, yet he does not proclaim Christ like redemptive historical sermons. Similarly, in, *The Four Pages of the Sermon,*[27] a book used at Calvin Theological Seminary, Wilson, who is Professor of Homiletics at Emmanuel College, seeks to make sermons relevant or more applicable by giving a four step method that resembles different acts of a play or scenes in a movie. Wilson great helps pastors by giving them another tool in which to structure their sermons, but without the Christ-centered, biblical historical perspective, sermons on Old Testament narratives that only follow this structure can easily fall into moralism.

On the one hand, some homiletics books emphasize how to preach Christ but rarely mention application principles; while on the other hand, some homiletics books focus on how to make application without a Christ-centered focus. There is a gap in much

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[25] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*.

[26] Keith Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance: Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001).

[27] Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

of the relevant literature on making applications in redemptive historical sermons, especially in redemptive sermons from Old Testament, historical narratives.

Designing Application that Connects

Pastors face the aforementioned hermeneutical challenges when working with Old Testament narratives, but other problems also make application arduous: discerning their audience. Very little has been written on how preachers can connect biblical truth with the questions and struggles of their congregation members. Pastor receive little guidance on how to take the scalpel of scripture and cure souls by making application from redemptive historical preaching. Not only do preachers need the skill of making the hermeneutical connections between text and application, but they also need to the skill of a surgeon. Overdorf writes, "We do not preach to empty pews (at least we hope not!). We do not preach to a faceless mass. We preach to people—people banged up and confused by life, people who need to know how God's Word makes a difference."[28] Preachers, when applying the text, need skills taught in public speaking literature, "Skilled communicators have an incredible ability…to bring hope and light into even the darkest places. Effective communicators also have the ability to reassure people during times of crisis and to motivate people toward greatness."[29]

A study is needed as to how pastors make application from redemptive historical preaching. This study would help pastors who wrestle with application share knowledge with other pastors who also care deeply about preaching Christ and who care deeply about the spiritual needs of their congregation. And so this study was conducted to

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[28] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon*, 31.

[29] Richard Zeoli, *The 7 Principles of Public Speaking: Proven Methods Froma PR Professional* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Pub, 2008), 5.

understand pastors' experiences in making application from redemptive historical preaching.

Chapter Two surveys important literature on this area to see what others have said. Chapter Three explains the methodology of the research. Chapter Four examines six pastor interviews and their experiences with making application. Because most of the homiletical literature does not address concerns about making application from Old Testament narratives, the interviews explore pastors' experiences in making application. Chapter Five analyzes, critiques, and draws conclusions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors design sermon applications for Old Testament narratives from a redemptive historical perspective.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research.

1. What resources to pastors use to design sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

2. What principles guide pastors when designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

3. What challenges do pastors face in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

4. How do pastors overcome challenges in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

Significance of the Study

The primary beneficiaries of this study will be pastors who preach regularly from Sunday to Sunday. These pastors pull out their Greek and Hebrew Bibles, their lexicons,

and they do the hard work of sermon preparation. As Bryan Chapell explains, the exposition of a Bible passage should be aimed at the application like an arrow pointed at the bull's-eye.[30] Proper application can only arise out of fruitful study in the office. These pastors will benefit in that their applications will become faithful to the text, and as application become more faithful to the text, pastors can grow in their confidence. Pastors should no longer have to dread the application section of the sermon. Application should no longer be an add-on to what might be considered the "meat" of scripture.

Overdorf asks several pastors, at what point do they start thinking of application in terms of their overall sermon preparation? One pastor responds, "Before you open your Bible on Monday morning, you bring to consciousness your context—your people. Application is already in the mix."[31] As Chapell writes, "Application is an aspect of exposition that grants present significance to a text's enduring meaning."[32] Pastors, through this research, should become more skilled in life changing application—they should become better surgeons of the soul.

Congregation members will also benefit from this study both indirectly and directly. Indirectly, congregation members should grow spiritually because they are hearing what God says to them. The preaching of the word is the word of God.[33] If application is faithful to the text, then the application is the word of God they must listen to and follow. The application is not some crazy ideal the pastor wants the congregation to put into practice; rather, the application is God's word for them today. This should lead

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[30] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 212.

[31] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon*, 32.

[32] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 214.

[33] James Daane, *Preaching With Confidence* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1980), 17-31.

the congregation member to listen more carefully to both the exposition and application

of the text. Directly, this study can enable any Christian to understand better how to make

application from the text. This naturally would lead to more fruitful Bible studies,

personal devotions, and Sunday school lessons, as interpretation methods between Bible

study and preaching are essentially the same. Christians, with the knowledge of

application they gain by reading this research, can better engage the practice Thabiti

Anyabwile calls, "expositional listening." This pastor and council member of the Gospel

Coalition writes, "Just as the pastor's preaching agenda should be determined by the

meaning of Scripture, so too should the Christian's listening agenda be driven by the

meaning of Scripture…We should listen to hear what he has written, in his omniscient

love, for his glory and for our blessing."[34] The congregation member should also gain an

appreciation of the rigors of study necessary to produce sermons faithful to the text and

rich in application.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, terms are defined as follows.

Application — a portion of the sermon that answers, based upon the exegesis of the

passage, the following questions: What does God now require of me? Where does he

require of it me? Why must I do what he requires? How can I do what God requires?[35]

Application can be one distinct section of a sermon or it can be in several parts of the

sermon. Jay Adams defines application as "the process by which preachers make

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[34] Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What Is A Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 19-20.

[35] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 214. Chapell poses these questions, and I took these questions into my own definition of application.

scriptural truths so pertinent to members of their congregations that they not only

understand how these truths should effect changes in their lives but also feel obligated

and perhaps even eager to implement those changes."[36]

Biblical Theology — According to Vos, a former professor of Princeton Theological

Seminary, "Biblical theology is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the

process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible."[37] In other words, biblical

theology deals with the progress of the one story of redemption being accomplished by

God through Jesus Christ in history as it unfolds. Biblical theology looks at each epoch of

redemptive history and the features it contains in connection with the whole story of

redemption.[38]

 Old Testament Narrative — the genre of Old Testament narrative contains two major

history works. Genesis to 2 Kings covers the period of creation of the exile of Judah.

Second Chronicles to Nehemiah spans the period from Adam to the return from the exile.

There are narrative sections found in other genres of the Old Testament such as Isaiah

and Jeremiah, which are considered the genre of Prophets.[39] Some distinguishing

characteristics of the narrative in general include: a scene, characterization, dialogue,

plot, and a narrator.[40] Klein, former professor at Denver Seminary, Blomberg, professor

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[36] Jay Edward Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1990), 17.

[37] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1948), 5.

[38] For further discussion on Biblical Theology and the difference and unity between "epochs" see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ Of The Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980); Willem Vangemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988).

[39] For further discussion see, Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher And The Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1988), 188.

[40] Ibid., 197-208.

at Denver Seminary, and Hubbard, professor at North Park Theological Seminary, break the genre of Old Testament narrative into further genres: reports, prophet story, comedy, and farewell speech.[41] More specifically, what makes Old Testament narratives distinct from other narratives in the New Testmanet is that the Old Testament narrative anticipate redemption in Christ.

Exemplarism — the use of Old Testament characters purely as examples to emulate or not emulate. C. Bouwman, pastor of a Free Reformed Church in Australia, states, this kind of preaching "puts an equal sign between the Bible figures of long ago and us today…For example, As Joseph was patient in the dungeons of Egypt, so we need to be patient in our adversity."[42] A term related to exemplarism is moralism. Moralism shares the same characteristics as exemplarism only exemplarism deals specifically with characters as examples.

Redemptive Historical Preaching — Redemptive Historical preaching unfolds the text in expository fashion and sees it in light of what God is doing in the history of redemption. Redemptive historical preaching connects what God is doing in a particular text to the work of Jesus Christ. Redemptive historical preaching is where biblical theology is applied to the sermon. Thus, the text becomes unfolded in a way that Christ is proclaimed, and the application is determined by the redemptive principles in the text in light of common characteristics the listener shares with the original audience.[43]

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[41] William W. Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. & updated (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 326-336.

[42] C. Bouwman, "Christocentric Preaching," July 10, 2002, frckelmscott.org, accessed May 2, 2014, frckelmscott.org/resources/doc_download/407-christocentric-preaching.

[43] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 308.

A synonym for redemptive historical preaching is "Christ centered preaching."[44] For the purposes of this paper, the term redemptive historical preaching will be preferred because it betters captures the interpretative method of looking at Old Testament narratives in light of their redemptive historical context. Throughout the dissertation, redemptive historical will be abbreviate as RH.

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[44] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors design application from RH preaching in Old Testament narratives. In order to understand how pastors design application in the context of their ministries, four areas of literature were reviewed: the Bible, homiletics, hermeneutics, and humanities.

Biblical Literature

This section explores how the Bible applies Old Testament narratives and looks at several key passages, including Psalm 95, which applies Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 14:29-30; Matthew 24:36-51, which applies Genesis 6-7; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11,which also applies Exodus 17:1-7; and Hebrews 11, which applies many Old Testament narratives. Though this sampling is small, it adequately illustrates how biblical writers apply earlier biblical texts that were written for different audiences to their own audiences—a task similar to that of today's pastor. This sampling also has the advantage of sampling major categories of biblical literature—Psalms, Gospels, Pauline Epistles, and general Epistles.

While many other texts could have been used, these were chosen for several reasons. Both Psalm 95 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 refer to the same Old Testament events. Since the interest of this section is to see what kinds of applications the authors

are drawing from the text, it will be beneficial to see how different biblical authors handle the same text. Hebrews 11 contains many narrative references, and Hebrews 11 seems to be a controversial passage regarding application.[45] Looking at Hebrews 11 provides an opportunity to examine how examples might be used and whether or not pastors can legitimately use narrative characters as examples. Matthew 24:36-51 was chosen because it shows how application is made in a redemptive historical way. Jesus applies an Old Testament narrative to his audience and foreshadows an event that will take place when he returns at the end of ages. Jesus takes significant hermeneutical steps in this passage, and pastors can learn from his exegesis.

Although the purpose of the section is to survey the biblical literature, the researcher gleans from other scholarly voices as necessary support for claims and exegetical analysis. Fully exploring the hermeneutics that various Old Testament and New Testament passages employ is a topic far beyond the scope of this dissertation.[46] However, the researcher can gain some principles about sermon application in Old Testament narratives from this brief survey.

Psalm 95

To understand how Psalm 95 applies Exodus 17:1-7, Exodus 17:1-7 first needs to be explored. In that passage, the Israelites are traveling through the wilderness. They are

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[45] Trimp, *Preaching And The History of Salvation*.

[46] The following sources show there is much debate to be had on this issue. James W. Scott, "The Inspiration and Interpretation of God's Word, with Special Reference to Peter Enns. Part 1, Inspiration and Its Implications," *Westminster Theological Journal* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 129-183; James W. Scott, "The Inspiration and Interpretation of God's Word, with Special Reference to Peter Enns. Part II, The Interpretation of Representative Passages," *Westminster Theological Journal* 71, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 247-279; Peter Enns, "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving beyond a Modernist Impasse," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 263-287; Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985).

hungry and thirsty with no food or water. They grumble against Moses, accusing him of

bringing them out of Egypt to die. When the people complained, they possibly thought

Moses was keeping supplies from them, but as Victor Hamilton, professor of Bible and

theology at Asbury University, points out, this grumbling is not against man but against

God because God sovereignly provides for his people.[47] Moses inquires of the LORD

about his response to these grumbling people. God tells him to gather the elders and

strike a rock with the same staff Moses struck the Nile River. After Moses struck the

rock, water flowed from it, and the people had enough to drink. The passage ends with an

explanation that the people tested God.

Fretheim, professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul explains why

this testing was sinful,

> It is to set God up, to try to force God's hand in order to determine concretely
> whether God is really present or not. Israel's test of God consisted in this: if we
> are to believe that God is really present, then God must show us in a concrete way
> by making water materialize. It is to make one's belief in God contingent upon
> such a demonstration. It is in essence, an attempt to turn faith into sight.[48]

Thus, testing God was an act of unbelief. The Israelites did not trust that God was

sovereignly present with them in the wilderness.

The audience of Psalm 95 also wrestled with God's presence. W. Dennis Tucker,

associate professor of Christian scriptures at George Truett Theological Seminary,

explains that Psalm 95 very likely was written in a time of exile that challenged the

Israelites' conviction that they were God's people.[49] Even if Psalm 94 was not written

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[47] Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 263.

[48] Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus,* Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 189.

[49] W. Dennis Tucker, "Psalm 95: Text, Context, and Intertext," *Biblica* 81, no. 4 (2000): 541.

during exile, the context shows that the worshipping community needs a reminder of God's presence.

Psalm 95 also quotes Numbers 14. In Numbers 14, the Israelites grumble against God as well. Then, the spies report that Jericho is too strong, and the people despair as if God is not present with power to deliver them. God punishes them by making them wander in the wilderness for forty years. God swore an oath to not let them experience the "rest" of the promised land. A whole generation would die before the younger ones would enter the promised land. The Psalm uses "rest" as to convey the idea of enjoying God's presence forever.[50]

Psalm 95 quotes Numbers 14 as part of its application. If people harden their hearts, grumble, and complain against God, they miss out on experiencing rest in God's presence. Numbers 14 then serves as a gracious invitation to experience the "rest" of enjoying God's presence forever. The author uses the Israelites in Numbers 14 as an example of what not to do. Because of their hardness of heart, they missed out on the "rest" in God.

Based on this brief analysis of Psalm 95, the following observations can be made about the application. First, there is continuity in Exodus 17's and Numbers 14's contexts and the audience's situation where the passage is applied. The people in Exodus and Numbers struggled with faith in God's presence; the people in Psalm 95 struggled with faith in God's presence.

Second, there is continuity in the message of the Exodus/Numbers passages with Psalm 95. Exodus and Numbers are about trusting in God's presence and the

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[50] Psalm 95.

consequences of unbelief. Psalm 95 exhorts the audience to trust in God and not harden their hearts. Third, the actions of characters in the Old Testament narratives of Exodus 17 and Numbers 14 serve as models of what not to do. The audience of Psalm 95 can learn from the behaviors of those who have gone before them.

Fourth, there are a number of exhortations made and truths expressed that relate to the main theme of God's presence. Psalm 95 directly addresses worship based on Exodus 17 and Numbers 14, even though those two passages do not directly address worship. In the same verse where Exodus 17 is referenced, God is compared to a shepherd even though Exodus 17 mentions nothing of God being a shepherd. The Psalmist takes the principles of Exodus 17 and Numbers 14 and applies them in very specific situations that the audience faced. God's presence certainly relates to worship. God's presence in the wilderness certainly relates to the idea of God being a shepherd for his people.

Matthew 24:36-51

In Genesis 6, God sees that all the thoughts of man were only wicked all the time. God being a holy, he must punish sinners for their sin. In contrast to the wicked, writes John Hartley, professor of Old Testament at the C.P. Haggard Graduate School of Theology, Noah finds favor with God and follow his word in faith by building the ark.[51] Therefore, a theme found in Genesis 6-9 is that God punishes the wicked. Jesus takes that theme and says a worse judgment is coming at his return. The wicked will be punished; only those who have found favor with God will survive. Just as the floodwaters swept people away in Noah's days while they were eating and drinking, so Christ will come

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[51] John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 98.

again without warning while people indulge in their regular activities.[52] Even though

nobody can know the day or the hour of his return, Jesus calls his audience to a time of

preparation for his return, encouraging them to ensure their conduct is right.[53]

A few observations can made about the application in Matthew 24. First,

application is done by way of analogy. There is continuity in the experiences that people

went through during the flood and what people will go through when Christ returns. The

principle that God judges the world on account of its wickedness crosses time. Second,

typology is used. Greidanus writes, "the flood too, is a type of God's judgment of human

sin—a judgment that forms a pattern in redemptive history and culminates in God's final

judgment."[54] Third, the text is interpreted in a christological way. By way of typology,

the flood of Noah's day points ahead to the coming judgment when Christ returns. The

application is not, "prepare because God might judge you," but rather "prepare because

Christ will return, and there will be a final judgment." The christological focus makes a

difference as to how the text is applied.

Fourth, Jesus uses people in Old Testament narratives as examples. Those outside

of Noah's family seemed to not care. They were caught off guard. They were not

prepared. In contrast, Noah and his family seemed prepared by having been found

righteous in God's eyes and by following God's word to build the ark. Jesus does not

specifically use Noah as an example or those outside Noah's family as a counter

example, but Jesus does say, be prepared. In other words, do not be like the rest of the

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[52] Curtis Mitch, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 314; Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 8:13 .

[53] Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1:906.

[54] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 109.

world, caught off guard. Jesus draws a parallel between Noah working with his hands to build the ark and admonishing his followers to stay busy in preparation. In subtle ways, Jesus uses Noah as an example. Fifth, exhortations are made in Matthew 24—based on Genesis 6-9—that fit the needs of Jesus' audience. The audience includes the twelve disciples. Jesus charged them with the great commission, to make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28. When Jesus exhorts them to be prepared, like a servant who must prepare food for guests in his master house in Matthew 24:45-46, he likely means for them to busy with the disciple-making work he entrusted them with.[55]

1 Corinthians 10:1-11

This passage is like a sermon that exposits Old Testament narrative passages concerning the wanderings in the wilderness.[56] The first story Paul explores is the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Paul says that the Old Testament Israelites were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. The use of this baptism language enables Paul to connect the Old Testament Israelite experience of deliverance from Egypt to the experience of the Corinthians who have been delivered by Christ from sin.[57] Hays writes, "Just as the Corinthians have left behind their pagan past through baptism into Christ, so the also the Israelites after leaving Egypt were baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea."[58] Deliverance from Egypt through crossing the Red Sea is a type that points ahead to deliverance from sin through Christ.

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[55] Crossway Bibles, *ESV Study Bible*, 1875.

[56] Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 7:199.

[57] Ibid., 201.

[58] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 160.

Paul also expounds upon the food and drink God provided the Israelites throughout their wanderings in Exodus 16-17 and Numbers 20-21. Paul says that the ancient Israelites ate the same spiritual food and drink that the Corinthians eat in the Lord's Supper—Jesus Christ. The rock that Moses struck is called Christ, suggesting that Christ was present when they drank the water. In describing the Israelite's experience in christological terms, Paul makes the point that God's saving presence was among the Israelites in a similar way God's saving presence was among the Corinthian church. Thus, in talking about Christ's saving presence for the ancient Israelites, Paul connects the Corinthians' experience to the Israelites' experience through what Hays calls "typological analogy."[59] The situation between the Israelites and Corinthians are analogous in a typological way—what one went through the other went through just in a different context.

Paul makes the application to the Corinthians in verse five. Paul directly connects the Corinthians' application to the Israelites' application. Even though God's saving presence was among them, they still grumbled and complained, and God scattered them over the desert. Likewise, the Corinthians were prone to grumbling against God. The application then becomes: do not take God's presence for granted or else there is judgment. Hays explains, "Paul begins to develop the hortatory application of Israel's story to the situation of his Corinthian readers: Just because you have received spiritual blessings, he says, do not suppose that you are exempt from God's judgment."[60]

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[59] Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 202.

[60] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 162.

The these Old Testament events serve as types patterns to instruct all on how to live a Godly life. This idea of type presented in this passage is more than an example as the New International Version translates. Rather,

> Paul is claiming that the biblical events happened as pre-figurations of the situation in which he and his Christian readers now find themselves…Paul reads scripture in the conviction that its narratives and prophecies all point to his own time; the church lives in the exhilarating moment in which all of God's past dealings with Israelites and the world have come to their climactic point.[61]

In 1 Corinthians 10:6-10, Paul gives more Old Testament narratives as foundations for his application to not take God's saving presence for granted. Paul mentions the golden calf in verse six. There, God's presence should be clearly perceived with all the events happening at Mount Sinai. The Israelites want to make God into a tangible object, so they fashion a golden calf. This desire turns into drunken revelry and idolatry. God punished the people. Paul then makes application based on the Christian experience in verses seven and eight. Christ and his presence are among his people, and Paul exhorts Christ's people, saying, do not return to the former way of life they were saved from—idolatry and sexual immorality. The Corinthian church struggled with the sins of sexual immorality and idolatry. Paul finds an OT text that addresses their sins, and he applies the Old Testament passage's meaning to the contemporary situation by way of typological analogy. Israelites' needs in the Old Testament text were similar to the spiritual needs of the Corinthians.[62] Verses nine and ten give the exhortation, do not grumble, and again theme is related to judgment.

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[61] Ibid.

[62] 1 Corinthians 5–6; 1 Corinthians 8; 1 Corinthians 10:14–11:1.

The following observations can be made about how the text makes application. First, there is continuity in experience between the generations: the struggle to live according to the truth of God's presence. Second, Paul uses typology. Third, the Israelites' past actions, in Exodus 16-17 and Numbers 20-21, serve as examples of what to do or not to do in the Corinthian church. Fourth, Paul draws application from the original meaning of the preaching passage. The Corinthian passage presupposes that the narrative's purpose was to hold the rebelliousness up as an example of what not to do. Therefore, the intent of the original passage is related to the goal of Paul's application. Paul employs a redemptive historical hermeneutic, and he uses characters as examples.

Hebrews 11

Hebrews 10:32-11 chronicles how Christians were exposed to public reproach and affliction. They had been put in prison and had their possession plundered. As verse thirty-six says, they had need of endurance. In order to encourage suffering Christians to persevere, several Old Testament characters are held up as examples of living by faith.

Cockerill, Research Professor of New Testament at Wesley Biblical Seminary, details this faith exemplified, "Faith is oriented toward both the future, hoped-for realization of God's promised reward (vv. 9, 11, 13, 26, 39-40) and the present, but unseen, reality of God's existence, providence (v.6) fidelity (vs.11) and power (vs. 19)…faith is living as if the things hoped for are real."[63]

Each Old Testament character placed faith in something unseen. For example, by faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. In what did Able have faith? S.M. Baugh , professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary in Escondido

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[63] Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 520-521.

California, explains that the object of Abel's faith was what his sacrifice pointed to—the blood of Christ.[64] The unseen reality where Abel placed faith was the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was prefigured in Abel's sacrifice. The rest of the chapter gives many more examples about how certain Old Testament characters lived by faith in a greater future reality yet to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews' audience finds themselves in an analogous situation to these Old Testament characters. The Old Testament characters lived by faith in a reality not yet seen, a reality that would be fulfilled in the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. The audience of Hebrews finds themselves also needing to live by faith. While Christ has now come, the audience in Hebrews also looked forward to the fullness of God's kingdom. They too anticipated things not seen: Christ's second coming and the resurrection of their bodies.

Based on this brief analysis, Hebrews 11 makes application using certain principles. First, Hebrews 11 uses Old Testament characters as examples. Second, application is made by way of analogy. Third, Hebrews 11 connects the application to redemptive history. The author of Hebrews does not simply exhort the audience to have faith like Abel, as if faith was some vague hope grounded in imaginary and wishful thinking. Rather faith was belief in things that have been accomplished by Jesus and in things yet to be accomplished by Jesus Christ. The faith of the Old Testament characters in Hebrews 11 find fulfillment ultimately in Jesus Christ. Abel's faith was not simply faith in God; Abel's faith was in a greater unseen reality yet to be experienced in Christ.

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[64] Steven M. Baugh, "The Cloud of Witnesses in Hebrews 11," *Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 149.

Conclusions

This section asked, "how does the Bible apply Old Testament narrative texts?" Based on the passaged surveyed, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, Old Testament characters and their actions serve as examples of what to do or what not to do. Second, the biblical authors who apply Old Testament narratives to their current situations use analogy; the needs addressed in the Old Testament narrative are similar to the needs of the later audience. The purpose of the passage seems to be related to the purpose of addressing contemporary needs. Third, biblical authors make application in a way that connects the audience to Jesus Christ's redeeming work. Fourth, typology is used to make application from the Old Testament text to contemporary audience. Fifth, when biblical authors make application, they maintain their vision of what God has done and is doing in redemptive history.

Homiletics Literature

This section explores what recent literature on homiletics offers about making faithful application from Old Testament narrative texts. Not all of the literature employs a redemptive historical focus, but they offer helpful principles that apply to redemptive historical preaching nonetheless. Any application made from Old Testament narratives can benefit from sound homiletical principles.

While many helpful topics can be explored in regards to application,[65] the chapter focuses upon the topics that relate to the dissertation's problem statement. The chapter

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[65] For example, see Donald Robert Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth With Clarity and Relevance*, Invitation to Theological Studies Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2007), 2:165; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*; David P Murray, *How Sermons Work* (Carlisle, PA: EP Books, 2011), 119-133. Sunukjian discusses placement of application. Chapell discusses what length the application should be based on the audience. Murray gives 20 helpful basic principles of application: declaration, exclamation, interrogation, obligations, exhortations, motivation, imitation,

explores the passage's "Big Idea"[66] because the literature shows that the central idea of

the passage should control the application. The chapter explores the fallen condition

focus (FCF) because grace speaks to every human problem. The passage's FCF shows

the need for application and how the passage will speak to that need. The chapter also

explores how application relates to sermon points. When the sermon's development

relates to application, pastors strengthen their application. The chapter explores

developing powerful illustrations so that application hits the heart and makes a large

impact. The kind of application that hits the heart and is effective is application directed

toward a specific audience; so the chapter explores how application connects to the

congregation. Last, the chapter explores application and a call to action, since application

is about the audience doing something. Each of these topics gives some insight into the

research questions.

Application and "The Big Idea"

One common theme in many homiletics books is "The Big Idea."[67] While each

author uses slightly different terminology and develops the concept in different ways,

they agree that each passage has a central theme or idea that should guide the exegesis

and application.[68] Each sermon should have one main idea presented and developed, and

that one main idea is rooted in the purpose of the passage.

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illustration, quotations, examination, conversation, condemnation, demonstration, adoration, admonition, consolation, examination, reconciliation, anticipation, and modernization of the story being applied.

[66] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 33.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Adams, *Truth Applied*; J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons That Go Beyond the Superficial* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009); Walter C. Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003); Michael J. Quicke, *360-*

Haddon Robinson, Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological

Seminary, writes, "The purpose of the sermon must flow out of the purpose of the

historical narrative."[69] After selecting a pericope and exegeting that pericope, the

preacher discerns the main subject of the passage. That subject can be stated in what

Robinson calls, the exegetical idea.[70] The exegetical idea should tie in all the pericope's

elements. Therefore, the way the passage is developed in the sermon should relate to the

exegetical idea as well. The exegetical statement then needs to be submitted to several

developmental questions, one of them being, "what difference does it make?"[71]

Submitting the exegetical idea to relevance questions is essential for faithful and

meaningful application. Sunukjian, professor of Homiletics at Talbot School of

Theology, mentions that weeks later after the sermon, the listener might not remember

the passage, but hopefully the essential truth sticks with them and works godliness in

them.[72] If the preacher does not have a single sentence as the take home truth, the listener

will do one of two things. First, they might create a sentence of their own, based upon a

small part of the sermon. This truth might only be partial, or the listener twists the

exegetical idea into a different truth from the speaker's intention. Second, the listener

might leave the service in a fog. Edwards, professor of Preaching and Leadership at

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Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press, 2003); Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*; Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*; Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson, eds., *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

[69] Haddon W. Robinson, *Making a Difference in Preaching: Haddon Robinson on Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 80.

[70] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 67.

[71] Ibid., 86.

[72] Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 67; Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament,* 51.

Talbot School of Theology, underscores the importance of the exegetical idea in relation

to application with a powerful story:

> You need to ask what you want the truth of your passage to accomplish in the lives of your listeners and the world in which they live. This enormous power is at your disposal. As a preacher, you will hold the Bible in one hand and the tiller of people's lives in the other. Your words will help plot the direction of people's lives. This is the place to dream dreams and envision a better and brighter tomorrow. What would it look like of the people you preach were to complement fully the idea of your passage? What deference would it make in the lives of your listener's next Tuesday morning if this ideal were to become fully operational?[73]

As the "Big Idea" guides application, it prevents many application "heresies."[74]

Three common application heresies in the literature include: allegorizing, preaching on

Old Testament passages only to illustrate New Testament doctrine, and moralizing. None

of these heresies connect the application to the exegetical idea. Application can call for

action and even talk about a character as an example, but whatever application pastors

make, they must connect it to the passage's purpose.

Mathewson, former teacher at Montana Bible College, illustrates how the

exegetical idea can prevent application heresies and lead to faithful application from the

text.[75] A sermon that moralizes 2 Samuel 11-12 might extract the principle of how

idleness leads to sin. If King David went out with his army instead of staying at home, he

would never have succumbed to temptation, so likewise, in Christians' down time, they

are most susceptible to temptation. Another moralistic approach uses this passage to talk

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[73] Edwards, *Deep Preaching*, 155.

[74] Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster, 2002), 54-88.

[75] Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster, 2002), 55-88.

about the evils of adultery. According to Mathewson, even though the passage clearly

addresses adultery is clearly, the purpose of the passage does not address adultery.[76]

According to Mathewson, the details lead readers to an entirely different theme.

God identified a bigger sin in David's life that was behind adultery, murder, and

deception. When Nathan came to David with his message, Nathan first rehearsed all the

gifts God gave to David; these gifts could be called grace. Nathan then asks why David

despised the Lord. The child's death then teaches David to accept what God gives by his

grace and what he does not give. Therefore, sermons on avoiding adultery or sermons

about honesty based on that passage fall short of the author's intent; rather, the sermon

must deal with the theme of rejecting God's grace.

The author's original intent controls the "Big Idea." But how do pastor arrive at

truth and relate it to the lives of congregation members? While authors again might differ

on terminology and exact steps taken, they generally present the same principles

generally.[77] From the exegetical idea, a broad, pastors develop a generalized theological

statement, and from the theological statement, the pastors develop a more specific

preaching idea, using terms relatable to the audience. With the preaching idea, pastors

can address any number of real-life situations.

Mathewson,a former teacher at Montana Bible College, illustrates the process: the

exegetical idea develops into the preaching idea and impacts application by surveying a

theme. Matthewson uses Robinson's sermons on the 2 Samuel 11-12 for the illustration.

Robinson's exegetical idea is: when David failed to walk with God, he put his life,

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[76]Ibid.

[77] Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 85-86; Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 107; Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*, 64.

family, and career in jeopardy.[78] From the exegetical statement, the preacher develops a universal theological statement that will enable the preacher to apply the text to the contemporary situation. From Robinson's exegetical statement, the following theological statement can be developed, "When believers fail to walk with God, they put their lives, families, and careers in jeopardy." From the theological statement, the preaching idea is developed. The preaching idea captures the theological statement's relevance for the congregation. Robinson's preaching idea is, "When you fail to walk with God, you walk on the edge of the abyss."[79]

Preachers may also craft preaching ideas that reflect application to a particular life situation or particular people group. In this case, the preaching idea must harmonize with the passage's theological idea. Only the preaching idea will be the theological idea in a very specific case. For example, if Genesis 22:1-19 was preached on Father's Day, here are the possible steps a preacher might take to make it applicable for such an occasion.[80] The exegetical idea is, "Abraham put obedience to God first even though he faced the prospect of sacrificing his son Isaac." The theological idea is, "Faithful worshippers of God will put obedience to God first even when there is great cost involved." The preaching idea for Father's day is, "The greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids!"

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[78] Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*, 85-86.

[79] Ibid., 106.

[80] Ibid., 107.

Application and the Fallen Condition Focus

Faithful and impactful application addresses the sinful condition humans have or the sinful conditions humans are experiencing in this fallen and broken world with the grace that the passage presents. Each biblical passage addresses a certain need in the audience. Therefore, each sermon should address needs that the passage exposes with the grace of God the passage reveals. While many authors use different terms or schemes to talk about this concept,[81] Chapel's term, FCF (Fallen Condition Focus), will be used in this dissertation. The FCF is, "the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him."[82]

Developing the FCF in the sermon introduction leads to powerful application. Chapell writes, "Ultimately a sermon is about how a text says we are to respond biblically to the FCF as it is experienced in our lives."[83] Doing this type of pre-application work in the introduction of the sermon shows listeners why they need to listen. These issues are real problems that people face, so the pastor grabs their attention, and they listen to how the gospel addresses the FCF. The FCF in the introduction, "sets the tone, determines the approach, and organizes the information in the sermon to reveal this divine provisions and our direct response to it."[84]

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[81] Abraham Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology: An Intermediary Between Text and Application," *Trinity Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 265–283; Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*.

[82] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48.

[83] Ibid., 50.

[84] Ibid., 51.

Zack Eswine, an author who helps preachers develop the FCF in their sermons, expands on Chapel's FCF. He explains, there are four varieties of the FCF: the Fallen Condition Focus, a Finite Condition Focus, a Fragile Condition Focus, and a Faltering Condition Focus.[85] The following summarizes these distinctions.

The fallen in FCF refers to human's propensity towards temptation and sin. The preacher looks at the text for man's fallen nature, including spiritual hardness, warring desires, and fleshly fruit. Man's finite condition is not due to a moral deficiency but to limits of knowledge, understanding, emotional capacity, or physical ability. Namaan, not knowing if there was a prophet of God who could care for his sickness, is an example. The fragile condition factor is the condition people are in when they experience the effects of a sin cursed world—the circumstances of living in this world. Some examples include Naomi and Ruth needing bread and Mephibosheth crippled in both feet. The last category is faltering condition, which highlights the tension that dwells in each person. For example, people falter between what they professes is true and how they live the truth professed.

Once pastors identify the type of FCF in the passage, they expound upon it. Using Joshua 1 as an example, FCF appears in verse 9: the tendency to fear. This is a condition with which every human being, regardless of age, generation, or culture, identifies. Joshua's fear is not due to warring desires; it seems Joshua is both finite and fragile. He is finite because Moses' death devastates him, and he is fragile because the circumstances make him vulnerable to misuse or mistake. He might also falter when considering the monumental task ahead of him. Eswine summarizes the FCF with a couple of sentences

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[85] Zack Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World: Crafting Biblical Sermons That Connect with Our Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 45-48.

that relate to the congregation member, "Like Joshua, even with a track record of courage, a convergence of challenges can arouse fear within us. It is no wonder that in Joshua 1:9 God must encourage him not to be afraid."[86]

To find a pericope's FCF and apply it to their audience, preachers must identify how the biblical text addresses the "under the sun features"[87] of reality. Therefore, when working with any biblical text, the key question is to ask, what under the sun seasons of life are evidenced in the text? The seasons of life under the sun in Ecclesiastes include: towns, angels, health, art, law, weather, cities, demons, love, technology, justice, feasting, families, languages, relationships, wealth, injustice, celebration, traditions, sickness, governments, poverty, nature, and institutions. Keeping these categories in mind while working on the text helps preachers to connect the biblical truths to their current situations, since there are similarities between what people today face under the sun and what the biblical audience faced.

Eswine looks at Joshua 1:1-4 to illustrate the under-the-sun seasons of life found in bible passages. These verses include a time of death and of mourning, a time to break down and to build up, and a time for peace and for war. Eswine introduces another term at this point, "COR" or Context of Reality.[88] When preachers determine the under-the-sun realties, they look for the COR. He defines COR as, "the mutual life environment that contemporary believers and unbelievers share in common to or about whom the biblical text was written that teaches us about the nature of reality."[89] In the Joshua passage,

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[86] Ibid., 49.

[87] Ibid., 26-27.

[88] Ibid., 29.

[89] Ibid., 28.

people today share times of transition with the original audience. In times of transitions, people say goodbye to the former way of life; these transitions can be death of a beloved, grief, leadership transitions, and warring nations.

Sermons that utilize COR explore the depth of reality. Eswine exhorts preacher to engage the "Challenger Deep."[90] Challenger deep refers to the deepest part of an ocean. Oceanographers have mapped less than five percent of oceans. Likewise, preachers have many regions in people's experiences left to explore. The preacher, therefore, needs to explore the text in a way that probes the deepest parts of human experience. For example, the Joshua 1 reaches its climax with the words, "be strong and courageous."[91] Ewsine observes that sermons generally apply this verse by talking about success in life. However, Joshua's season of life includes preparation for death, transition, and war. Joshua will find courage and succeed in killing the Canaanites if he meditation God's word.

The gospel always addresses the FCF. Preachers can thoroughly describe life's challenges and excellently probe the challenger deep but neglect to preach redemption. To avoid the pitfall, preachers need to examine the text needs using the following categories: echoes of creation, echoes of the fall, echoes of redemption, and echoes of heaven.[92] The FCF must lead to a divine solution. The FCF reveals the holes of the human condition, and redemption shows God's provisions to fill in those holes. Eswine identifies nine types of redemption to look for in a passage.[93] First, redemption can be

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[90] Ibid., 29.

[91] Joshua 1:7.

[92] Eswine, *Preaching to a Post-Everything World*, 43-47.

[93] Ibid., 50.

divine armor such as truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word

of God, and prayer. Second, redemption can be divine promises such as grace bestowed

on those persecuted. Third, redemption can be divine fruit. God produces fruit in his

people's lives, such as the fruit of the Spirit. Fourth, redemption can be divine gifts.

Divine gifts, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, can be God's provision to to his people.

Fifth, redemption can relieve physical needs. Sometimes God's healing brings mercy

oriented towards physical needs, like in Ruth 1:6 where the Lord visited his people and

gave them food. Sixth, through redemption, God often provided miracles as signs.

Seventh, God provides community and support in redemption. Eighth, divine silence can

be a provision of grace as in Paul's thorn in the flesh. Ninth, God's provision can be his

presence, and the salvation he offers.

Application and Sermon Points

Exegetical sermon points can be reworded as application points. Rewording the

exegetical points in terms of application strengthens application by tying it closely to the

biblical text.

John R. Bisagno, doing ministry for over fifty years in the Baptist tradition, calls

this approach to application, "principle preaching." Bisagno defines principle preaching

as, "drawing life application principles from the Bible and preaching them as the outline

of the sermon."[94] While most sermons contain life application principles, principle

preaching turns the main points of the sermons into the application principles. Bisagno

explains, "The hearer has an instant connection and virtually never forgets what he or she

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[94] John R Bisagno, *Principle Preaching: How to Create and Deliver Sermons for Life Applications* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 3. He claims to be drawing this "new" principle from Rick Warren.

has heard. A sermon outline with three or four principles will cause listeners to write them down, magnet them to the refrigerator door and say, 'Now I can do that when I get to work tomorrow.'"[95] Principle preaching enables people to remember the sermon, practice it, and grow in their everyday lives.

To illustrate principle preaching, Bisagno walks through Joshua 1:1-7.[96] An average sermon outline on this passage might be: The Call of Joshua, The Command of Joshua,The Conquest of Joshua, and The Courage of Joshua. Drawing solid application that connects listeners' lives to these sermon points would be difficult. Under principle preaching, however, the sermon points look different. Point one becomes "Don't Get Stuck in Life's Passageways."[97] God says to Joshua that Moses is dead so lead the people. God allows people's hearts to break, but not indefinitely. God eventually provides a way forward in life. This application addresses fear of tomorrow. Point number two becomes "God's Already Been There, Where You Are Going."[98] Joshua 1:3 says, "Everywhere your foot shall trod I have given you." In other words, God has already done it. Bisagno says, "Tomorrow is already today with God. Don't be afraid to walk into it."[99]Based on Joshua 1:4 the third point becomes, "God Has a Wonderful Blueprint for Your Life." [100]God is a sovereign God who has planned every detail of people's lives. God is never surprised. He works all things for his glory. Based on Joshua

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid., 5-7.

[97] Ibid., 6.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., 6.

[100] Ibid.

1:5-7, the fourth point becomes, "Yesterday's Faithfulness Guarantees Tomorrow's Courage."[101] Just as God was with Moses, he will be Joshua and all who follow him. What God has done, he will do, so be strong and courageous.

So how do preacher develop these points? Are there any strategies that might help a preacher in this area? Bisagno explains what preachers have to do, and Sunukjian shows how to come up with those application points. Sunukjian explains that the key to develop points based on application is to move up the ladder of abstraction from the textual outline.[102]

Preachers move up the ladder of abstraction to timeless truth by taking the details of a narrative that apply to people throughout time. For example, historical declaration on Exodus 13 says, "God didn't take Israel on a direct route to Canaan because some situation of war along that route would prevent them from reaching their destination."[103] Moving up the ladder of abstraction to timeless truth, preachers might conclude: "sometimes God does not take people on a direct route to the good plans he has for them because some obstacle along that route would prevent them from reaching that goal."[104] This explanation addresses Exodus 13 but also obstacles like a corporate vice president in a career path, a premature monetary windfall, or past hurt that prevents people from

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 51-52.

[103] Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson, eds., *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 51-52.

[104] Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 53.

working at their marriages. The following is an example of how an outline on paper might look based Exodus 13.[105]

Textual Outline

1. God purposefully takes Israel from Goshen to Canaan by an indirect route.
2. God lead Israel to an indirect route because they would have encountered war on the straight-line path and would have never reach their destination.
3. As Israel embarks on this uncharted journey in the opposite direction, God encourages them in two ways.
   a. Joseph's coffin speaks of their eventual arrival in Canaan.
   b. The column of cloud is a symbol of God's constant presence.

Outline After Moving Up Abstraction Ladder to Timeless truths

1. God sometimes deliberately takes his people on a zigzag path to good plans he has for them.
2. The reason for this zigzag path is because some obstacle on the straight-line path would keep them from reaching the goal.
3. As people proceed along a zigzag path, God encourages them in two ways.
   a. He encourages people with continual reminders of his good intentions.
   b. He encourages people with a tangible sense of his presence.

Connecting with the Congregation

Speaking in ways that reach the audience in their unique situations makes application more effective, even in redemption historical sermons on Old Testament narratives. Preachers can move up the ladder of abstraction, but then they need to take the next steps to reach the listeners' hearts.

One of the most basic things a preacher can do is keep the audience in mind with relevant examples or illustrations. Patrick Collins, professor of Communications at John Jay College, recommends that examples should be contemporary. Collins writes,

> Without being patronizing, be aware of the language and concerns of your audience that may be related to age. You may wish to make references to popular music or literature of your audience, but do so only when it's relevant and

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[105] Ibid., 52-53.

appropriate. Also…avoid intergenerational temptations to make the kind of critical or humorous comment that will needlessly offend.[106]

Another way connect application to the congregation is to take the "Big Idea" and run it through the grid of specific situations congregation members face. Sunukjian gives some examples of how this works if the main topic is about persecution.[107] A seventy-eight year-old widow's family could persecute her for wanting to give a large sum of money to the church when that money could go to family causes. A woman in a retirement wants to marry but fears that the government will take away health benefits. A mom at a Parent-Teacher Association meeting speaks against curriculum that promotes "alternative living units," and she becomes ostracized by the other moms. A young girl's friends tease her because her mother would not allow her attend a sleep-over where an inappropriate movie would be viewed.

As pastors think about specific congregation members, they can leaf through the church's pictorial directory and think about what people are experiencing. Pastors can see the faces and remember the conversations. They can recall sessions, weddings, births, and hospital visitations. While sitting at their desks, pastors can survey listeners' struggles, joys, and fears. Overdorf writes,

> Instead of making a generic application about death, consider the anguish of parents whose seven-year-old daughter is killed by a drunk driver; or a soon to be widow struggling at the bed side of her cancer ridden husband of sixty years. Develop a grid and sift the truth of the Bible's teaching through it. Think of a man, then get specific married man, and married man in second marriage, etc.…[108]

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[106] Patrick Collins, *Speak With Power and Confidence: Tested Ideas For Becoming A More Powerful Communicator* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 2009), 84.

[107] Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 112-127.

[108] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon*, 132.

When going through the church directory, Murray suggests pastors place categories on each name they read. Examples of broad categories include: Christian/non-Christian, old/young, rich/poor, parents/children/singles, employer/employee, government/citizen, male/female, and atheist/agnostic/persecutor.[109] Examples of narrow categories include: sick, dying, afflicted, tempted, backslidden, hypocritical, anxious, immoral, lonely, discouraged, worried, tired, seeking, doubting, proud, bereaved, broken-hearted, and convicted.[110] Michael Quicke, professor of Preaching and Communication at Northern Seminary in Lombard, IL, suggests that, since forty-seven percent of church goers say the sermon is irrelevant to their daily lives, pastors can research areas they know where congregation members work.[111]

To deepen understanding of how a text applies to people and to gain rich illustrations to bolster application, many preachers have found sermon discussion groups helpful. These groups discuss the upcoming sermon text. Preachers can share the text and asks for input. Quicke gives his own testimony about the value of such groups,

> In my last pastorate, I worked with a group in this way and marveled at members' eager responsiveness to my exegesis and interpretation and their creativity. Eventually drama, testimony, song, recitations, and pictures were interwoven with the spoken word. The group's purpose was not primarily to provide illustrations and applications (though they often did). Rather, the members offered a richer variety of responses than I was capable of as a solo preacher. My own listening to scripture became much more sensitive through listening with them.[112]

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[109] Murray, *How Sermons Work*, 112.

[110] Ibid., 113.

[111] Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching*, 160. He also cites a poll he took that shows 75 percent of church goers say they never heard a sermon on the biblical view of work or vocation.

[112] Ibid.

Quicke gives examples of how some preachers structure these meetings.[113] For

John McClure, a group of ten people meet with him once a week for an hour and a half.

During that time, they give feedback/feedforward for ten mintues; they engage the

biblical text for twenty minutes; they engage one another for sixty minutes. The group

members commit for a set period and then allow people to take their place. Anybody who

wants to participate can join the group at some point.

Another example Quicke gives is that of what Michael Slaughter does.[114] On

Wednesday morning at 8:00 AM, the celebration team meets, including the creative

coordinator, technical coordinator, communications direction, multimedia director, band

leader, and lead pastor. From 8 AM to 8:30 AM, they review the previous week's

worship experience. From 8:30 AM to 10 AM, the preacher introduces the seed idea,

which the team works with to develop seeker themes.

During sessions like these, the pastor can ask various questions to stimulate

discussion and maximize the impact of the sermon, including,

> Does this idea attract or repel you? Excite or scare you? Why? Does this idea
> seem like nonsense or common sense? Imminently practical or hopelessly
> idealistic? Why? If you could tell God to His face what you thought of this idea,
> what would you say? What would you be afraid to say? If you could talk to
> people in the pew about this idea, what would you say? To whom would you say
> it? Why? Who is the secular community desperately needs to her this truth? Why?
> Who in the secular community would react violently either for or against this
> idea? Why? If you made a decision today to take this truth very seriously, what
> difference would it make in your life? Why? This is where you get to dream big!
> What would happen if this idea were to be adopted outside of your community of
> faith? What difference would this idea make if it were adopted on mass in your
> community, count, state, and country? How would individual and corporate
> destinies be changed for the better? If you were to film a documentary showing

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[113] Ibid., 137-138.

[114] Ibid.

the world the wonderful benefits of living this truth what would the plot of your movie be?[115]

Doug Paggitt, an author associated with the emerging church movement and founding pastor of Solomon's Porch ins South Minneapolis, goes one step further than having a committee help him with application. Paggitt does not like to call the sermon a sermon. He does read through a Bible passage, offering commentary, clarification, and reflections on what might be of consequence to the community. Paggitt bases these reflections on his sermon planning and discussion group. He says, "I don't lay out a three-point thesis or make a great effort to apply what we're reading to life today. Instead we want to know the story of God and see our lives in relationship to what God is doing, has done, and promises to do."[116] The application comes out in the discussion after the sermon.

<center>*Application as a Call To Do Something*</center>

If application is about relevance, the application will at some point call Christians to do something. Kaiser writes, "There must be a call for God to change us in light of the purity of his Word. But there must also be a caution here: I must call for specific actions that are based uniquely on what is precisely taught in this passage."[117] Sermons can also call people to believe, accept, know, and desire. Application can be cognitive, behavioral, or affective.

Application does not have to call congregants to do something after the service. There can be actions done during the worship service. There may be times when a

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[115] Edwards, *Deep Preaching*, 156-158.

[116] Doug Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation: A Week in the Life of an Experimental Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 59.

[117] Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament*, 58-59.

response to the sermon is to declare one's faith. Many traditions have a creed recital built into their service every week. Worship can be called, "defiant proclamation," where the "congregation declares its allegiance to God as a deliberate act of defiant protest."[118] When the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the sermon has the potential to make this celebration more personal and specific for each person, emphasizing Christ's death or the unity among congregation members.[119] Pastors can use symbolic actions during or after a sermon to help the listener practice or experience the sermon's truth. One preacher ended the sermon with a time of prayer, but he invited people to stand if God has spoken to them. This action fixes the sermon in congregants' minds. A church can also use a prayer tree. Large outlines of a tree are displayed in front. The congregation writes out prayers on paper with sticky backs and they post them up on the tree

Application and Illustrations

Numerous scholars and pastors have written on illustrations.[120] Whillhite summarizes what many scholars teach, saying,

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[118] David Day, *Preaching with All You've Got: Embodying the Word* (Peabody, MA: Henderickson Publishers, 2006), 169.

[119] Ibid., 170.

[120] Bryan Chapell, *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001); Bryan Chapell, *The Effective Use and Development of "Life-Situation" Illustrations in Contemporary Preaching: Analysis and Application of Interpersonal Hermeneutics for a Rhetoricalmodel of Homiletical Communication* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1987); James F Coakley and Covenant Theological Seminary, *The Process of Finding and Implementing Sermon Illustrations*, 1998; Richard L. Eslinger, "Story and Image in Sermon Illustration," *Journal for Preachers* 9, no. 2 (Lent 1986): 19-23; Al Fasol, "Illustration in Preaching," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 27-31; Leslie B. Flynn, *Come Alive with Illustrations: How to Find, Use, and File Good Stories for Sermons and Speeches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987); Michael J. Hostetler, *Illustrating the Sermon*, The Craft of Preaching Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1989); Craig Brian Larson and Andrew Zahn, *Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching: 101 Clips to Show or Tell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003); Craig Brian Larson and Lori Quicke, *More Movie-Based Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching: 101 Clips to Show or Tell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004); John S. McClure, "The Other Side of Sermon Illustration," *Journal for Preachers* 12, no. 2 (Lent 1989): 2-4; Edward P. Myers, "The Art of Sermon Illustration," *Restoration Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1979): 203-211; W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Illustration*, The Westminster Source Books (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950);

Illustrations that apply usually have the most value in terms of impact or feeling. Granted, you need to choose illustrations according to purpose. There's no use applying something if people need explanation. If they lack understanding, or don't believe something is true, there's no use trying to apply it for them. But far too many preachers seek explanation when they really need to aim for application. I think this is especially true of expository preachers because of the natural bent of exposition toward explanation. Moreover, illustrations that apply also often explain or validate. What makes an illustration applicational is that it relates truth to concrete experience…it visualizes for people what the application look like in their lives or the lives of others.[121]

Authors agree that pastors should be on the look out for stories that may become an illustration. Many situations can be sources, including a conversation at the checkout counter, a story told while getting a haircut, or an insight from devotions. Newspapers, magazines, books, television, movies, and plays are also sources for illustration ideas.

Many of the authors also agree that pastors should organize the illustrations they glean. Pastors can record their observations in a succession of notebooks. Whenever something strikes pastors, they can record it. Pastors can store these notebooks chronologically and should occasionally throw out ones that seem to be irrelevant. In addition to personal collections of preaching material, there are ready-made resources, compilations of sermons and illustrations found on-line.

Hermeneutics

Making application from Old Testament narratives involves the field of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics asks and answers the questions: how do readers get from the text to the contemporary situation? How does the larger context lead to faithful interpretations? If the Bible is about Christ, how does Christ impact how the passage is

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Christopher Colby Smith, "Humor in Preaching: Who Needs Jokes?" *Word & World* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 186-318.

[121] Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*, 111.

interpreted and applied? To what extent can Old Testament characters be used as examples and if so, what justifies their use as examples? The following section addresses these questions.

Metanarrative/Biblical Theology and Application

The literature shows that pastors cannot directly link the text to the contemporary situation without first situating the text in its canonical context.[122] The Bible claims to be God's true story of the world, and Christians find their meaning and purpose in so far as they connect with God's revealed story about the world and how Christ redeems the world. While viewing the text as timeless truths in a vacuum is tempting, pastors must consider the passage's literary and canonical context. How the passage fits into the overarching story—the metanarrative—of the Bible must be taken into consideration.

Steinmetz, Professor Emeritus of the History of Christianity at The Divinity School of Duke University, gives a helpful analogy to understand the importance of metanarrative. Steinmetz argues that reading parts of the story in light of its conclusion is not strange when compared to other literature forms, such as a mystery novel.[123] A mystery is a giant puzzle that the author puts together bit by bit until all the puzzle pieces

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[122] Craig Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Perry, Christopher Seitzer, and Al Wolters, eds., *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006); Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 21-22; John C. Peckham, "The Analogy of Scripture Revisited: A Final Form Canonical Approach to Systematic Theology," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 22 (2011): 41-53; Walter Brueggemann, *A Pathway of Interpretation: The Old Testament for Pastors and Students* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 34-36; Carol M Kaminski, "Preaching From the Historical Books," in *Preaching the Old Testament,* ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006); Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity For New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 180; Turner Laurence A., "Preaching Narrative: Plot," in *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).

[123] David Steinmetz, "Uncovering a Second Narrative," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 54-65.

fit together into an intelligible pattern. There are two story patterns in this kind of literature.

First, there is the "ramshackle" narrative that does not seem to be leading any place in particular. It is filled with clues, false leads, and characters who must try to outsmart the criminal minds. While Sherlock Holmes might never be as baffled as Watson, the investigators are always in mystery as they investigate the different puzzle pieces. The investigators, at each moment, give their own interpretation of the pieces. There also is a second narrative, usually unfolded at the end of the story that explains all the different puzzle pieces with profound clarity. This second narrative confirms the fact that the investigators had, and the second narrative gives them a clear picture of the whole story. Paul Kissling, professor of Old Testament at the Wesley Institute in Sydney Australia, explains,

> It is important to understand that this second narrative is not a subplot, even though it is short. It is the disclosure of the architectonic structure of the whole story. Therefore, the second narrative is identical in substance to the first and therefore replaces it, not as extraneous addition superimposed on the story or read back into it, but as a compelling and persuasive disclosure of what the story was about all along.[124]

How might viewing passages in light of the metanarrative impact application? Here is how Kissling looks at Genesis 32:22-32 in light of the metanarrative of the New Testament.[125] Through wrestling with God, Jacob is given the name Israel, which means either Israel fights with God or God fights for Israel. The name probably has both meanings in mind because both are truth. Jacob wrestling with God led to the Israelite

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[124] Ibid., 55.

[125] Paul J. Kissling, "Preaching Narrative: Characters," in *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), 34-36.

practice of not tearing the tendon of the hip socket. This dietary prohibition reminded the people of a very holy truth: the man who gave the nation its name was a cripple. Only in Jacob's humbled condition can he reconcile with Esau. This is not a story of origins meant to bolster a nations' ethnic pride. Rather, in the Bible's metanarrative, Israel is the deaf, blind, crippled servant through whom God blessed the entire world. God's grace is magnified in Israel's weakness. God uses sinful Israel for his sovereign purposes. Looking at the New Testament, Christians see how the perfect servant of the Lord, the remnant of Israel, the new Israel himself, Jesus Christ did his greatest work in a broken state. By Jesus' humiliation, God saves his people. By Jesus' crippling, Christians are healed. And as followers of that humble and broken servant, Christians know that sometimes they must be crippled in order to be healed.

The metanarrative is important for proper application. However, pastors must be careful not to stifle the individual voices of the Old Testament narrative by only using them as illustrations for biblical theology. Rather, the overarching story of the entire Bible enriches each unique narrative. For example, a sermon on Genesis 12:1-3 needs to keep in mind how the New Testament views Christ as Abraham's ultimate seed and those who accept Christ are true descendants of Abraham who also receive his covenant promises. Genesis' bleak beginning reaches its fulfillment with a blessing for all the nations of the world through Jesus Christ. The passage's theme addresses blessing for all nations, but the language of Abraham's descendants should be kept throughout the sermon.[126]

The Author's Intent for Application

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[126] Turner, "Preaching Narrative: Plot," 25.

A common theme in the literature is that the author's original intent is necessary for discovering meaning in a text. The review of homiletics literature in the above "metanarrative" section addressed much of this content, but a few more remarks are in order.

Kevin Vanhoozer, research professor of systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, writes, "A proper fear…of the author is the real beginning of literary knowledge."[127] Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard write, "the author-encoded historical meaning of these texts remains the central objective of hermeneutics…we must desist from affirming other levels of meaning without objective evidence."[128] In other words, the text cannot be applied any way the interpreter sees fit. Application or meaning is derived from understanding what truth the authors intended to communicate.

But how do pastors make the connection between the author's intent and application to the audience? Duvall, professor of New Testament at Outachita Baptist University, gives pastors four steps: grasp the text in the author's town, measure the width of the river to cross, cross the "principlizing" bridge, and grasp the text in the interpreter's town.[129] The first step addresses the text's historical context. The second step is to discern the differences between the text's context and the pastor's context. Not everything is directly applicable. For example, Paul is an apostle, while Christians today are not. However, Christians are members of the body of Christ. In step three, the

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[127] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and The Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 187.

[128] Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 185.

[129] J. Scott Duvall, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 213-216.

preacher should find principles of the text that carry over to the contemporary context. And the fourth step, pastors should discover parallel situations.

Preaching Christ for Faithful Application

The text must be aligned in a christocentric way. Goldsworthy explains, "the gospel is the hermeneutical norm for the whole of reality."[130] All of reality is created by, through, and in Christ.[131] In Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and understanding.[132] As a consequence, the meaning of all reality can be summed up in biblical, gospel terms. The atoning work of Christ has ramifications for the whole universe. The atoning work of redemption is God's means of renewing the world to a perfect new creation that was foreshadowed in creation before the fall. Goldsworthy writes, "Hence, ultimate interpretation of the meaning of everything is found only in Christ. This includes every text of the Bible."[133]

The key to Christ-centered interpretation is biblical theology. By interpreting the text in light of biblical theology, "the pietistic tendency of many preachers and Bible readers to go straight from text to personal application is thus curtailed…Biblical theology, provides the context for textual exegesis and the grounds for the hermeneutic application of any biblical text to the contemporary believer."[134] The biblical theological dimension if hermeneutics thus addresses the gap between text and the reader.

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[130] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 63.

[131] Colossians 1:15-16.

[132] Colossians 2:2-3.

[133] Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 63.

[134] Ibid., 257.

There is hermeneutical chaos when going directly from text to the reader. Goldworthy explains,

> The kind of piety that primarily focuses on questions concerned with what the text says about us and our Christian living lacks Christological depth. This premature desire for immediate guidance ignore the relationship of the text to Christ…if we are truly to understand what a text says about ourselves, we must follow the biblical path that leads first to Christ, for he defines who and what we are in him.[135]

Without biblical theology, the passage's unity comes from the interpreter rather than the text in relationship to the whole of scripture. Biblical theology helps each pastors view each text in light of the entire structural matrix of revelation. Goldworthy explains, "Any sermon, then, that aims to apply the biblical text to the congregation and does so without making it crystal clear that it is in Christ alone that the application is realized, is not a Christian sermon. It is at best an exercise in wishful and pietistic thinking. It is at its worst demonic in its Christ-denying legalism."[136]

There is a christological depth that pervades each passage. Preaching Christ is not, of course, merely mentioning the name of Jesus or Christ in the sermon. Preaching Christ involves more than identifying Christ with Yahweh in the Old Testament, or the Angel of Yahweh, or the commander of the Lord's army, or the wisdom of God. Pastors must go beyond pointing to Christ from a distance or drawing lines to Christ by way of typology. Preaching Christ is as broad as preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. Pastors only have to look at a concordance to see how often the New Testament speaks of the "gospel of the kingdom," the "gospel of the Christ," the "gospel of Jesus Christ," the "gospel of

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[135] Ibid., 263.

[136] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 124.

the grace of God," and the "gospel of peace." In these terms, two characteristics stand out. Preaching Christ is good news for people, and preaching Christ is as broad as the gospel of the kingdom—as long as this kingdom is related to its king, Jesus. More specifically, to preach Christ is to proclaim some facet of the person, work, or teaching of Jesus of Nazareth so that that people may believe him, trust him, love him, and obey him.[137]

Preaching Christ is not a superimposed structure on the sermon because Christ pervades everything in the Bible. Larsen, Professor Emeritus of Preaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, gives three ways Christ pervades the Old Testament.[138] First, the Old Testament abounds with several hundred predictive prophecies concerning the Messiah. God knows all things, and he is pleased to reveal some of the future events to his people in different periods throughout the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. Second, the Old Testament is replete with types of Old Testament events and people that correspond to Christ. Third, the Old Testament sets forth a pathway of preparation for the Messiah. For Larsen, the Bible is one story in two main acts: preparation in the Old Testament and fulfillment in the New Testament. Therefore, to preach the Old Testament text the way Rabbis would is a "betrayal of the Gospel."[139]

The special emphasis on christocentric interpretation does not ignore the historical context. Geidanus explains, "The original, historical meaning is important for preachers

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[137] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from The Old Testament*, 8.

[138] David L Larsen, "Preaching the Old Testament Today," in *Preaching the Old Testament*, ed. Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 255-257.

[139] Ibid., 176.

because it offers the only objective point of control against deriving from the text all kinds of subjective and arbitrary message…In addition…the original meaning can also prevent a Christomonistic reduction of its meaning, for the original message of the Old Testament is clearly God-centered."[140]

There are seven ways in which the preacher can preach Christ.[141] Frist, there is the way of redemptive-historical progression. Every Old Testament text is seen in light of God's redemptive history, the progressive unfolding of his plan of salvation. How redemptive history is fulfilled in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and how it reaches its climax in the new creation provide a lens through which readers can see Old Testament narrative. For instance, the story of David and Goliath is not about slaying personal giants, but when looked at in its redemptive historical context, readers see how God is winning victory over enemies, which seeks fulfillment of Christ's victory on the cross and second coming.

A second way to preach Christ from the Old Testament is the way of promise-fulfillment, where a prophecy is given and the fulfillment takes place in Christ and his work and/or his second coming. Third, there is the way of typology. Fourth, there is the way of analogy that relates how God dealt with Old Testament Israel to how, through Jesus, God deals with his church. Another example of analogy can be from the story of Jacob and Bethel. Here preachers can use analogy to talk about how God protected Jacob and then how Christ promises to be with his people on their dangerous journeys. Fifth, there is the way of longitudinal themes, where pastors connect Old Testament themes

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[140] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from The Old Testament*, 228.

[141] Ibid., 234-274.

with New Testament themes. For example, the tithe in Old Testament connects with principles of giving in the New Testament. Sixth, there is the way of New Testament references. Old Testament texts can be seen in light of their New Testament counterpart as the New Testament quotes from, refers to, or alludes to them. Seventh, there is the way of contrast. For example, in the Old Testament, Joshua was to annihilate the inhabitants of Canaan; however, because of Christ, no nation has the right to commit genocide.[142]

The work of Goldsworthy and Greidanus shows a deeper sense, the sensus plenior, to Old Testament narratives than the grammatical historical sense.[143] The original context and historical meaning are important, but New Testament believers cannot stop there since the Holy Spirit has intended a much fuller meaning through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament authors often understand the meaning without understanding all of the implications God intended. Therefore, the pastor must interpret each passage in light of how it points the listener to Christ.

Developing Application From Old Testament Characters

While Old Testament characters can be used to preach morals, since the passage was written to address real needs, pastors must not treat the characters or the narratives as only containing morals for today's audience to follow. Rather, each passage needs to be explained in light of what God is doing. Characters can be examples and give insight into

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[142] For more examples of how Christ can be preached from the Old Testament see the following: Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*; Sidney Greidanus, "Detecting Plot Lines: The Key to Preaching the Genesis Narratives," *Calvin Theological Journal* 43, no. 1 (April, 2008): 64-77; Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Cain and Abel Narrative," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 644 (2004): 387-397; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010); Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Narrative of the Fall," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 643 (July-September, 2004): 259-273; Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching Christ from the Creation Narrative," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 642 (April-June, 2004): 131-141.

[143] For further discussion see, Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New versus the Old* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 252-254; Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 167-192.

how people today should respond or not respond, but the use of examples are always situated in the purpose of the passage and what God is doing in redemptive history. According to Gordon Fee, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at Regent College, Old Testament narratives are not allegories with hidden meanings. Nor are Old Testament narratives intended to teach moral lessons. Fee writes, "The purpose of various individual narratives it to tell what God did in the history of Israel, not to offer moral examples of right or wrong behavior. Very often you will hear people say, 'what can we learn from this story is that we are not to do...' but unless the biblical narrator makes that point, on what grounds do we make it?"[144] Fee further explains that the fallacy of moralism "ignores the fact that the narratives were written to show the progress of God's history of redemption, not to illustrate principles. They are historical narratives, not illustrative narratives.[145]

There are several fundamentals pastors can keep in mind.[146] The first fundamental is that a teacher should expound narratives in a way that the listener discovers the way God accomplishes salvation and reveals himself. Doriani, former Professor of New Testament and Dean of Faculty at Covenant Theological Seminary, writes, "That is they must dethrone the demigods of innovation and novelty and never weary of proclaiming the main thing—God's love, grace, and holiness, retold with freshness and

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[144] Gordon D. Fee, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 105.

[145] Ibid.

[146] For a good introduction to hermeneutics see, Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 196-200.

conviction."[147] The second step is to account for the uniqueness of the passage. There is a diversity of responses to God in narrative texts. Men and women in the passage show doubt, denial, anger, and faithfulness. Third, teachers can look for a variety of applications by viewing the narrative event through each character's eyes. While this might sound the same as moralism, Doriani cautions, "but we must be patient and establish the main God-centered point first. Then we can determine whether proposed secondary ideas, drawn from the way human characters respond to God, truly develop the main idea or take flight from it. When teachers focus on the human characters themselves in themselves, they inevitably shift toward moralistic lessons."[148]

Doriani exemplifies how application is developed out of the God-centered main idea in the story of David and Goliath. He says that, sadly, scores of sermons reduce that story to David being the moral exemplar of fighting giants or that with God's help, people can do big things too.[149] But what does the passage convey as its main theme? David is God's warrior king to whom God grants victory over his enemies. A main theme is how God gives victory, and David recognizes this in 1 Samuel 17:47, at the climax of the battle when David is about to slay Goliath, he says "The battle is the LORD's." In 1 Samuel 17, the Philistines invade Judah, and they send Goliath to resolve the conflict. Goliath stands before the Israelite army and heaps insult after insult upon the people and God. The Israelites do nothing while the true and living God is shamed. In a discussion

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[147] Daniel M Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub, 2001), 168.

[148] Ibid., 169.

[149] Ibid.

with King Saul, David expresses his horror at this shame.[150] Given these details, the

overall theme seems to be God's honor. And this is further underscored in David's

remarks to Goliath in verses 45-47. Dorinai summarizes these verses, "Now we know

that the context between David and Goliath is a contest between the gods. If David strikes

down Goliath, his Lord is vindicated. If not…"[151] Thus, the narrative is theocentric: God

defends his honor. There is a human element too as this passage calls people to trust in

the God who defeats his enemies.

      Based upon this main idea experienced through David, Dorinai develops five

application points.[152] The first is to expect God to defend his honor. Here the words of 1

Samuel 2:30 apply, "Those who honor I will honor, but those who despise me will be

disdained." The second application is to know that God protects his people. David's

defeat of Goliath foreshadows Jesus' defeat of Satan. The third application focuses on the

responses of the characters to God's redemptive work. Eliab demonstrates skepticism;

Saul expresses frustration; David shows his faith. Doriani's fourth application takes

application three further and exposes the unbelief of Saul and Eliab. Doriani's fifth

application is the examination of the audience's lives in light of the character's responses.

He says, "David's zeal to guard God's dignity probes us. What stirs our passions? What

makes us angry? We become offended at minor snubs or acts of disrespect. We rage at

people who cut us off in traffic…We are quick to anger at personal offenses, but calm

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[150] 1 Samuel 17:10, 26, 36.

[151] Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 170.

[152] Ibid., 172-176.

over offenses to God's name and holiness. We say 'what do you expect of sinners?' But there is a place for indignation over sin."[153]

Old Testament narrative texts can illustrate what is taught explicitly and categorically elsewhere. For example, in the narrative of David's adultery with Bathsheba there is no statement about how committing adultery is wrong. Readers are expected to already know adultery is wrong because it is taught elsewhere in scripture. Therefore, this passage cannot be used as the sole basis for teaching about adultery, but it can be used to illustrate the negative effects of adultery in a way that categorical teaching might not do. Sill, as Fee writes, "Narratives are precious to us because they so vividly *demonstrate* God's involvement with the world and *illustrate* his principles and calling. They thus teach us a lot—but what they directly teach us does not systematically include personal ethics. For this area of life, we must turn elsewhere in the Scriptures."[154]

One of the features of the biblical stories is that they invite their hearers to identify their life and circumstances with those presupposed by the story.[155] In Chronicles, the author pictures priests and people of previous centuries behaving in ways they would in the chronicler's day. Thus, the author encourages readers to see the story about the people as their own story. Preachers can look at a story as seen through the eyes of various characters. Preachers must be wary of psychologizing the characters since this imposes modern interests upon the text. Preacher must also beware of biographizing characters if the biblical stories lack details as to how characters develop over time. Yet,

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[153] Ibid., 175.

[154] Fee, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 105-106.

[155] John Goldingay, *Key Questions about Christian Faith: Old Testament Answers* (Peabody, MA: Baker Academic, 2010), 181.

pastors can ask about what an event would mean for such a character, and certainly they can learn from their feelings and actions. Goldingay says, "Our task as preachers is to open up as much as possible of the resources that lie in these various character proposals, all of which can disclose for people aspects of the gospel. It is to help people get into the story identifying with characters and situations as if hearing it for the first time, so that in doing so they can respond to the Gospel in the way they must."[156]

Application in the Humanities

Many Scholars within the humanities are in agreement that lessons or application can be drawn from stories, whether fiction or nonfiction.[157] Bobby and Sherry Norfolk, author of many fiction books for children, write, "If we want children to hear and understand and practice the truth, then we need to tell stories, not preach the truth!"[158] Historian and lecturer at St Mary's University College Mark Donnelly writes that history is never written just for the sake of history; rather, history, reflecting the author's political and ideological positions, is written to empower people to action.[159] Therefore, what

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[156] Ibid., 182.

[157] Mark Donnelly, *Doing History*, Doing Series (New York: Routledge, 2011); Henry T. Edmondson, "Introduction: Literature and Public Ethics," in *The Moral of the Story: Literature and Public Ethics*, ed. Henry T. Edmondson (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 1-13; Robert Vincent Daniels, *Studying History: How and Why*, 3d ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981); Bobby Norfolk and Sherry Norfolk, *The Moral of the Story* (Little Rock, AR: August House Publishers, Inc., 2006); Nina Rosenstand, *The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Ethics*, 7th ed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2013); Jonathan Gottschall, *The Story Telling Animal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012); Jennifer Holberg, "Why Stories Matter More Than Ever: A Letter to a Friend Just Beginning College," in *Practically Human: College Professors Speak from the Heart of Humanities Education*, ed. Gary D. Schmidt and Matthew Walhout (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin College Press, 2012), 97-108; John Fea, *Why Study History? Reflecting on the Importance of the Past* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

[158] Norfolk and Norfolk, *The Moral of the Story*, 14.

[159] Donnelly, *Doing History*, 166-167.

other scholars have said in the fields of literature and history about application can benefit pastors who make application from Old Testament historical narratives.

Make the Story Come Alive

According to Norfolk and Norfolk, literature exists for the purpose of reading and also for telling.[160] Norfolk and Norfolk explain that when people tell a story, they should avoid telling about the story, and instead, tell the story. Telling a story enables the story to come alive in a way that connects the audience to the characters. When telling the story, authors should bring in their own images and emotions to elaborate on the story. The way the story is told is application.

Character Virtues and Vices

According to Edmonson, educating people in morals through moral philosophy is not enough.[161] People learn behavior through characters in stories. When the audience reads or hears a story, they participate in the story and see their own flaws or virtues in the characters. There is a connection between characters and the audience. The actions, thoughts, and words of characters make the audience examine their own lives. Edmonson uses the example of Oedipus Rex.[162] One of Oedipus' character flaws is his curiosity. Oedipus is not an overtly evil character, much like any other human. People may easily perceive how curiosity has led them astray at times and would be encouraged to improve their lives. While Edmonson does not directly prescribe a method, his method is clear: from the personal actions of the characters in the story, a moral principle can be

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[160] Norfolk and Norfolk, *The Moral of the Story*, 25.

[161] Edmondson, "Introduction: Literature and Public Ethics," 2.

[162] Ibid.

abstracted. The audience is encouraged to see their own lives in light of that moral

principle.

Stories Create Identity

When pastors think of application and stories, perhaps they often think of moral

lessons. Stories can apply in ways far beyond simple dos and do nots. Stories apply to

people's lives by shaping their identity in the community they live. Story unites people

beyond kinship ties. Gottschall, Distinguished Fellow in the English Department at

Washington and Jefferson College, writes,

> Story, in other words, continues to fulfill its ancient function of binding society by
> reinforcing a set of common values and strengthening the ties of common culture.
> Story enculturates the youth. It defines the people…Story is the grease and glue of
> society: by encouraging us to behave well, story reduces social friction while
> uniting people around common values, g us to behave well, story homogenizes us;
> it makes us one.[163]

Donnelly, writing about the use of history, argues that history always has a

political agenda.[164] History shapes citizens by uniting readers around a common story,

giving them as sense of identity, common values, and purpose. Therefore, stories of

history have the power to shape cultures.

Metanarrative's Importance

Daniels, former teacher of Russian History at Indiana University, poses the

question, "is history relevant?"[165] He unequivocally answers, "yes." Still people must pay

attention to the overall context of the historical event studied. This is what other

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[163] Gottschall, *The Story Telling Animal*, 138.

[164] Donnelly, *Doing History*, 117.

[165] Daniels, *Studying History*, 7-8.

historians call, "metanarrative."[166] No historical event can be isolated from its context. Daniels writes,

> History never repeats itself exactly…no historical situation is the same as any other…the process of history is unique, but nonetheless intelligible. Each event is distinct, but each is connected to all the forgoing and succeeding ones by a complex web of cause and effect, probability and accident…The unique present, just as unique point in the past, is utterly unintelligible unless we understand the history of how it came to be.[167]

In other words, for Daniels, the historian cannot jump from historical event to modern day situations. People can learn from the past, but they need to see the past as how it came to be. People need to see how the historical event fits into the big picture.

Summary and Implications for Sermons

The secular literature reviewed here contributes many helpful principles regarding how to make application from Old Testament narrative sermons. First, the literature shows that the way the story is told can be a major part of application. The way a story is told can draw listeners into the story, where they can identify with the characters. This principle impacts application from Old Testament narratives by turning the exposition into application. The preacher "tells" the text rather than merely explains the text.

Second, the literature shows the importance of relating character virtues and vices to the audience. Stories are written to teach the listener morals from the character's words, actions, and thoughts. This principle relates to application from Old Testament narrative sermons because Old Testament narratives have characters with virtues and vices. Pastors can draw morals from narratives as well as imperatives. There is power in

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[166] Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and Its Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 122-152; John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 94-109.

[167] Daniels, *Studying History*, 7-8.

stories, and telling a Bible story with this principle in mind has the power to expose sin or lead people to more holy living.

Third, the literature shows that stories have the power to shape identity within a community. This principle can impact application from Old Testament narrative sermons as well. This principle suggests that application can be more than just moral principles; there is a fundamental identity change that can take place, and listeners then embody that new identity. Application happens in a sermon when listeners understand their identity in Christ.

Fourth, the literature shows that application must be made with the metanarrative kept in mind. This principle aligns with the sections on metanarrative in the redemptive historical and biblical theology context.

Conclusion

The survey of biblical literature reveals several principles that pastors can use when making application from Old Testament narratives: treat the Old Testament text on its own terms and apply it in a way consistent with its original intent; address current needs based on the Old Testament needs addressed by way of analogy; make application based on how the Old Testament points to Christ; and make application in a grace-centered way. While these principles are easily perceived, they are difficult to put into practice. A lingering question is what do these biblical principles look like in actual pastoral practice? More study is needed.

The survey of homiletical literature gave practical advice on how to make application meaningful. However, much of the literature on homiletics is not specifically Christ-centered and instead shows the preacher how to go directly from to application

through grammatical/historical exegesis. Therefore, it would be very beneficial to see what pastors are doing to make application strong when preaching from Old Testament narratives in a redemptive historical way. More study is needed.

The survey of hermeneutics literature gave insight as to how Old Testament characters can be used as examples and how characters or events within narratives point to Jesus Christ. This body of literature shows that Christ must be preached in order for application to be faithful. However, giants of redemptive historical preaching such as Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Clowney, whose works are used in numerous seminary curriculums for homiletics and hermeneutics, seem lacking in application. The big question remains: how are pastors making application from redemptive historical Old Testament narrative sermons? Once a pastor connects the Old Testament passage to Christ, how is the application affected? More study is needed.

The survey of how other fields in the humanities make application is helpful to pastors trying to make application from historical narratives. Application can be made by how a story is told. Application can be made by way of analogy between characters and the contemporary audience. Stories apply by shaping identity. And in order to make application, pastors must keep the metanarrative in mind, since there are ways history applies and ways a historical event does not apply. While these methods or approaches can be helpful to a pastor, they still do not directly answer the question: how do pastors make application from historical narratives? More study is needed.

This study was designed to explore how pastors make application from redemptive historical Old Testament narrative sermons. An original study was conducted of six pastors who were interviewed and who provided two Old Testament narrative

sermons that were analyzed and used as part of the interview. The next chapter explains

in detail the methodology of this study; chapter four reports the data in a synthesized

way; and chapter five analyzes the data in light of the literature surveyed.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors design sermon applications for

the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives. The study was designed

to understand the experiences of pastors who make application from Old Testament

narratives. The project focused on interviewing six pastors who have had significant

experience in this area of preaching. This chapter discusses the study's design, the

study's interview participants , the data collection, the data analysis, the position of the

researcher, and the limitations of this study.

Design of the Study

This study utilized the qualitative method of research. While other research

methods might focus on determining the causes and effects of certain phenomena,

qualitative research focuses on uncovering the meaning of phenomena for particular

individuals. Sharan Merriam, professor emerita of adult education at the University of

Georgia, explains, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people

interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they

attribute to their experiences."[168] This research encourages the researcher to achieve an

understanding of how the research participants interpret their experiences. Under

qualitative research, the context of the data is considered heavily rather than just the raw

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[168] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 5.

data collected. From the data collected, the researcher draws conclusions as to what this data may imply.

Merriam explains the process, saying, "Qualitative researchers build toward theory form observations and intuitive understandings gleamed from being in the field. Bits and pieces of information from interviews, observations, or documents are combined and ordered into larger themes as the researcher works from the particular to the general."[169] Qualitative research may take fewer samplings than quantitative research, but the qualitative research goes far deeper into a subject, understanding the situational needs and perspectives involved. Therefore, qualitative research has several main characteristics that distinguish it as its own type of research: it seeks to focus on the meaning of the phenomena for the individual involved; it seeks to understand the context the individual operates in; it seeks to build general theory from specific situations.

According to Merriam, "A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds. Constructionism thus underlies what I am calling a basic qualitative study."[170] The constructivist approach is to describe, understand, and interpret. In contrast, a positivist approach predicts, controls, and generalizes, and the postmodern approach deconstructs.[171] Therefore, qualitative research assumes, "there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple

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[169]Ibid., 16.

[170] Ibid., 22.

[171] Ibid., 11.

realities, or interpretations, of a single event. Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it."[172]

The qualitative method emphasizes an inductive process. Often researchers undertake qualitative research because the theory lags behind the practice, or the existing literature theory inadequately explains people's experiences. In qualitative research, researches "build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gleaned from being on the field. Bits of pieces of information form interviews, observations, or documents are combined and ordered into larger themes as the researcher works form the particular to the general."[173]

Qualitative research benefits this study because it allows for research that accounts for specific situations in which pastors find themselves. Pastors find themselves in different ministry settings, with different congregational needs, and under different expectations. These factors could influence how pastors make application. In addition, each pastor comes from a different hermeneutical background, and they approach the text differently. Different sources will help different pastors make application. Different pastors will have their own struggles either in handling the text or in understanding how to apply it to the congregation. Therefore, in order capture the unique situations of each pastor, a qualitative study was designed and conducted.

Merriam's "basic qualitative research" was conducted. Merriam explains, "qualitative researchers conducted a basic qualitative study would be interested in 1) how people interpret their experiences, 2) how they construct their worlds, and 3) what

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[172] Ibid., 8-9.

[173] Ibid., 16.

meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how

people make sense of their lives and experiences."[174] A basic qualitative research

methodology was chosen over a case study for the purposes of going beyond what

Merriam calls a "bounded system."[175] More than just specific cases need to be explored to

answer the research questions. With a general qualitative study, there are no bounds on

the people or their circumstances the researcher selects, and the researcher establishes the

criteria to meet the study's needs. For example, many churches have one primary

preaching pastor. Even in churches where several pastors preach, one pastor generally

preaches the majority of services. Therefore, a case study would not effectively yield rich

data.

<div align="center">**Participant Sample Selection**</div>

The main type of sampling associated with qualitative research is purposeful or

criterion-based sampling.[176] In this type of sampling, the researcher defines a list of

essential attributes in the people or objects of study and then finds the people or objects

that meet the criteria. Merriam lists several types of purposeful sampling: typical sample,

unique sample, maximum variation, convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and

ongoing sample selection.[177] Typical and convenience samples were used. A typical

sample is the average person of interest for the topic at hand. Interviewing the typical

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[174] Ibid., 23.

[175] Ibid., 40-41.

[176] Ibid., 77. Both purposeful and criterion sampling are examples of what Merriam calls non probability sampling. This differs from probability sampling which is often used for quantitative research. Probability sampling is a random sample. It is used to answer how much or how often rather than solving qualitative problems.

[177] Ibid., 78-80.

pastor that meets the criteria will benefit the study. Convenience sampling is a sample selected based on time, location, and availability of the respondents. While convenience sampling alone is likely to produce poor data, it factors into any sampling.

The criteria of participants interviewed for data collection included the following. First, they were pastors in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition because many pastors in this tradition preach redemptive historical sermons or at least have been taught how to do so. Also, pastors in this tradition are from the same tradition as the researcher, so they will be more easily accessed. Second, the pastors interviewed were those in the ministry over five years in one particular setting because they have been applying biblical text for some time, and they know their congregation well. Being in the ministry for this length may enable pastors to be more thoughtful at application. Third, the pastors interviewed were those who have preached a sermon series either through an entire book of the Old Testament narrative genre or a portion of it, like the Abraham narratives or a series on the different Judges. Fourth, the pastors interviewed have preached sermons from Old Testament narratives within the past year. These pastors had fresh memories of their experiences handling this genre.

These criteria ensure the interview subjects have conducted substantial work in the Old Testament narrative genre and greater data can be obtained. Pastors often preach a series and the hermeneutics they employ can be more easily seen when an entire series is examined. The participants were selected based upon the researcher's knowledge of who is preaching redemptive historical sermons and recommendations from others. Also, each pastor interviewed was given a definition of redemptive historical and was asked if they identify themselves as RH preachers. Only pastors who said, "yes" were

interviewed. The definition given was the same as chapter one's definition. A total of six

pastors were selected for this study. Six pastors allows for variety in data and also

provides a manageable set of data.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

The interviews were based upon a semi-structured interview protocol. Merriam

explains, "the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be

explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is determined ahead of

time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the

emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[178] The research

questions listed in chapter one were set in advance, and a list of interview questions was

developed in order to gain data relevant to the research questions. This advanced

preparation allowed the researcher to direct the conversation toward the research goals.

With any interview, the interviewee can run off topic, spend too much time on

information not relevant to the topic, or not answer in a way that allows the interviewer to

answer the research questions. Though the interview is structured, the researcher can ask

follow-up questions that were not prepared in advanced. This semi-structured protocol

allows the interviewer freedom to ask more questions as they arise and probe deeper into

what the interviewer deems important for the research topic. This protocol proved useful

for this study due to the complexity of making application from Old Testament

narratives. A semi-structured protocol is also more conducive to qualitative research and

its inductive process that requires flexibility. The interviews were generally scheduled for

an hour and a half. Some interviews ended early, but the time limit allowed the researcher

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[178] Ibid., 90.

to address the subject matter directly and in a timely a manner. The first few minutes of

the interview were used as an icebreaker. The following protocol was used to guide the

interviews.

Research Question 1: What resources do pastors use to design sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

1. What have you found helpful in designing sermon application for RH sermons on Old Testament narratives?

2. What types of things influence your application?

Research Question 2: What principles guide pastors when designing sermon applications for the RH preaching of Old Testament narratives?

1. Can you explain your method for drawing application from the text?

2. How does preaching Christ from that text influence the application?

3. What were you taught in seminary?

4. How well do you follow that now?

Research Question 3: What challenges do pastors face in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

1.   Can you describe a time where you were having trouble designing application? What happened? What helped? What hindered?

2. What kinds of pressures does the congregation place, if any, on trying to make the sermon relevant?

3. Can you describe an application that you thought was weak?

4. What did you do to remedy that weak application?

Research Question 4: How do pastors overcome challenges in designing sermon applications for the RH preaching of Old Testament narratives?

1. How has your practice of application changed over the years?

2. What insights have you learned about making application that have been very helpful?

This interview protocol was field tested. Interviews were conducted with this protocol with pastors. And after field tested the following changes were made…

All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed for analysis on Microsoft Word. Data deemed irrelevant to the purpose statement and research questions was not transcribed. An example of irrelevant data included when the pastors talk about side subjects, unrelated to the questions asked in the interview. Irrelevant data also includes small talk and friendly chatter about issues related to the research questions but not pertaining to them directly. A form of confidentiality was handed out to each pastor, promising that their identity would be concealed and that the data would be presented in such a way that nobody could trace who they are. The interviewer and interviewee signed the confidentiality statement. In the data analysis chapter, the names of the pastors and people talked about have been changed for confidentiality. They were given the pseudonyms to hide their identity.

In addition to interviews, sermon manuscripts of the pastors were collected and analyzed. These manuscripts were requested before the interview so that they could be analyzed and appropriate questions could be designed. This was helpful in determining the principles that guided pastors in making application. Special attention was given to how Christ was preached from the text, and how application came from the text.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected and transcribed, and the sermon manuscripts were read and analyzed, the constant comparative method of analysis was used to evaluate and draw conclusions from the results. About this method of analysis Merriam writes, "The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document

and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These

comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other

instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of

conceptualization until a theory can be formulated."[179] After the first interview was

conducted, it was immediately transcribed and analyzed. Initial categories were placed.

After the second interview was conducted, it was immediately transcribed and categories

were placed. By this time, common categories were discernable. The third interview was

immediately transcribed, and the data was analyzed for the categories already discovered.

The researcher revised some former categories. And this process continued until all

interviews and documents were compared to each other. Eventually, the categories given

in chapter four were discerned. Before categories were formed, the analysis started with,

what Merriam calls, "open coding."[180] This is where the researcher starts analyzing the

transcribed interview or document and jots down words or phrases in the margins. This

enables the researcher to see common patterns form from which categories may be

constructed.

Researcher Position

In qualitative research, the primary instrument for collecting data is the

researcher. Researchers have their own worldview and biases that might affect the

research, and they should identify these potential biases.[181] Every researcher operates on

what Merriam calls a "theoretical framework," which is "the underlying structure, the

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[179] Ibid., 200.

[180] Ibid., 178.

[181] Ibid., 15.

scaffolding or frame of your study…The theoretical framework is derived from the orientation or stance that you bring to your study, and every study has one."[182] One's theoretical framework influences the literature that is reviewed, the purpose of the research, how the data is analyzed, and the conclusions drawn. Therefore, it is important for researchers to recognize and share with the reader their theoretical framework

I am an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church. My worldview can best be described as a "reformational worldview."[183] I believe the in the one story of the Bible presented in four acts: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. I view the world in the context of what God is doing in redemptive history. Because of my reformational worldview, I look at Bible texts in the context of what God is doing in redemptive history. I also have been taught RH homiletics, so I am predisposed to that. I automatically rule out exemplarism/moralism as a legitimate way to apply the text.

My position affects this research in that biblical theology becomes central. I presuppose that all of history is one story of God's redemption unfolding. This affects how Old Testament narratives are interpreted which affects how application is made. My worldview supports the RH preaching that I believe is the best way to handle the text. If the Bible is chiefly about the redemption accomplished through Christ, then each text becomes interpreted in how it points to Christ. Again, this influences application. So my worldview affects this whole project and what I am seeking to achieve.

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[182] Ibid., 66.

[183] Albert M Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics For A Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1985), 10.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. This research focuses on pastors making application from RH preaching, which is a narrow focus. Application from exemplaristic or topical approaches to preaching, such as some of the examples mentioned in the introduction, are not considered. The pastors selected are from the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition who are familiar with RH preaching. Even though this tradition is the focus, pastors from other denominations certainly will benefit from this study. Another limitation is that the participants in the study were all male. Women often have different experiences than men, and some women may look at the world differently through the lenses of their experiences and thus make different applications. This study does not explore how women make application. While some denominations in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition ordain women, most pastors are male, and finding male pastors to interview was easier. Several pastors were known who preached from sermons where a RH hermeneutic was used, and they were all male. A final limitation that can be mentioned is that the focus is on application from RH sermons. Certainly the RH hermeneutic touches on many other aspects of sermons. On account of these limitations, readers must determine how much is applicable to their own situation.

Chapter Four

Report of Data

This study was designed to explore how pastors make application from Old

Testament redemptive-historical sermons. Four research questions were framed to guide

this study. The research questions were,

1. What resources do pastors use to design sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

2. What principles guide pastors when designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

3. What challenges do pastors face in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives.

4. How do pastors overcome challenges in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of OT narratives?

Four pastors were interviewed according to the methodology and criteria

described in chapter three. In order to protect the pastors' identities, pseudonyms were

used. The pastors interviewed were Henry, Drake, Colin, and Kyle. Each of these pastors

is either the sole or senior pastor of a church within the Christian Reformed Church

denomination and has been serving for a number of years in their position. They preach

almost every Sunday, sometimes both morning and evening services. According to these

pastors, their sermons are well received by the congregation, and their congregations are

enjoying their ministries. Each pastor also gave a sermon to be reviewed. Henry' sermon

was on Ruth 1; Drake's on 1 Kings 19:1-9; Collin's on 1 Samuel 18; and Kyle's on 1 Kings 19:1-9.

What follows is a presentation of the data. Each main heading reflects the subject matter of a research question. Subheadings were developed using the constant comparative method of analyzing data. The section headings for research questions three and four—challenges and solutions in designing application—correspond to each other so readers can see how the pastors overcame the problems they mentioned. Sometimes, one of the other pastors answers the dilemma of another pastor

Resources for Designing Sermon Applications

Other Pastors and Authors

Every pastor interviewed did not primarily listen to pastors who only give heart-warming application in order to develop their own application. They listen to preachers who preach Christ well and do application well. Preaching Christ well was the most important part of making application for these pastors. Their main concern was listening to pastors and reading authors who preach Christ and draw gospel-saturated application. Unless the gospel was preached, there was no true application, only moralism for these pastors. In order to make the best application, pastors must know how to preach Christ. A statement by Henry typifies the sentiments of all those interviewed, "Once you find how the text points to Christ, then you really find how the application works because you fully understand the text and what it's trying to say, and once you understand the text you can draw out the application."

Henry appreciated Tim Keller and Edmund Clowney's series, "Preaching to Christ in a Postmodern World." He said Keller and Clowney give valuable material on

preaching the gospel message, the cross, and resurrection but not many directives for application. Tim Keller, according to Henry, takes Greidanus a step further. Henry finds Greidanus to be too much about interpretation and not enough on application. In contrast, Keller, moving beyond Greidanus, takes the listeners to the cross and applies it so well. Henry also finds Mark Driscoll as an excellent example of how to use the text in a Christ-centered way to address the real needs of the congregation.

Drake mentioned that Keller was somewhat helpful but found him too dry for application in Drake's congregation. Drake listens to a few other Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) pastors. Pastors at First Presbyterian in Jackson Mississippi have a data base of sermons, which are more technical, but there is good, Christ-centered preaching and application. Drake also appreciates material on John Piper's website. He says Piper does not really apply the text, but he preaches Christ, what preaching is about. Drake's statement on Piper reflects Drake's own main goals for preaching, "you get done with the sermon and have no idea what I am supposed to do, but I love Jesus more than I did when I first came in." Preaching Christ becomes application because the listener hears about Jesus and is inspired to love and glorify Jesus.

Collin also appreciates many pastors from the PCA and Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) tradition such as Alistair Beg, who has good application while being Christo-centric.

Kyle was the only pastor who does not regularly listen to other pastors' sermons. He praises the book, *Promise and Deliverance* by S.G. Degraff, a volume set put out Padeia press. Degraff addresses preaching Christ in the Old Testament. This was one of

the most influential books for making application in Kyle's sermons because he says it helped him preach Christ. Preaching Christ is application.

The Congregation

All pastors said knowing the congregation's struggles or being involved in key pastoral situations are keys to making good application. When preaching on David's flight to the cave in Adullam, Collin's ministry to a family struggling with alcoholism, made the text come alive. For Collin, the family's struggle gave flesh and blood to how people can be like David and flee from their problems. Collin did not mention this family in the sermon, but this family's struggle helped Collin think about application in general to the congregation. Collin was very adamant that pastors must know their congregation to apply the sermon well. He said his application skills grew from living with the congregation. He has been in his church for over ten years. Collin's kids grew up with the church's kids. He has had to bury many of his best friends. Some good friends have become old and unable to function well. Living with the congregation and sharing in their struggles provides fertile ground for good application.

Henry mentioned that a pastoral awareness of the congregation is necessary to make application that meets the congregation's needs. When probed about how specifically knowing the congregation affects his application, Henry responded that preaching is more of an art than science.

Of all the pastors interviewed, Drake specified how the congregation functions as a source of application. He explained how members' life experiences form how he words the application. For example, a lot of church members hunt. In making application about

heaven, Drake said, "Think of the best thought you can think of. Maybe it's being out in the woods hunting. Heaven is better than that."

Kyle said that many pastoral situations inform his application, such as where church members struggle, go through difficult circumstances, or have questions about their faith. These scenarios forced Kyle to think about how to address his congregation's situation with biblical text. These situations often form "parallel" stories with the biblical text. According to Kyle, people are facing trials that illustrate the biblical text.

The Bible

All pastors are in agreement that the Bible is a source of application material. Hebrews 10, they said, gives pastors the authority to use characters as examples or illustrations. Pastors regularly draw from biblical characters beyond the ones in the sermons text to illustrate a point they are making. Kyle demonstrated how to use a biblical character in application. The sermon texts were 2 Samuel 17:29-29 and 1 Kings 19:1-9. The sermon most directly deals with 1 Kings 19:1-19, while 2 Samuel 17:27-29 supplements. Kyle used David to illustrate Elijah's situation. Both characters, Kyle said, are on the ropes, high achievers, afraid, and facing serious threats to their lives. Both Elijah and David are in need of spiritual food. Other biblical characters and their situations can illustrate circumstances the congregation might face, even if the illustration does not part come from the sermon text.

Real Life

Pastors are drawing from things in real life to which the congregation can relate. Drawing from real life stories, pastors can make their application hit home or enable the congregation to see themselves in the character's shoes. Drake mentioned how Elijah

running away is not his finest moment. Drake called attention to Lindsay Lohan's recent

mugshot. Her mug shot was not the glamorous Lindsay Lohan people see in the

movies—it is Lindsay in her brokenness. Elijah running away is like his mug shot. Then

later in the sermon, Drake mentions how people all have their mug shot moments, and

God gives them spiritual food, like he did for Elijah. Using real life stories, pastors can

start the sermon with a fallen condition focus apply the sermon in the beginning.

Kyle uses a story from his childhood about his step-mother. She demonstrated

powerful love to him. Sometimes people are called to show love, but their love tank is

empty. With spiritual food, Christ gives his people renewed energy to love others.

Collin's sermon criticizes Hollywood's notion of love, and how the Christian's love for

Jesus must be deeper. Henry begins his sermon with a story of his grandpa from World

War II to illustrate being desperate and the need to be filled.

Guiding Principles for Designing Applications

Hope, Encouragement, and Instruction

All the pastors talked about how Jesus makes a difference in application. Kyle

specified that he starts off thinking about application with this question, "where is the

hope and encouragement and instruction in the text?" Romans 15;4 is a flagship verse for

Kyle. This passage, in Kyle's understanding, teaches how the Old Testament is written

for the purpose of encouragement, hope, and instruction. Kyle says, "that particular

passage very directly comments on the Old Testament and has been for me a verse that

continually comes to mind as I think an Old Testament sermon." In his sermon, Kyle

explains the text of 1 Kings 19 and then asks the congregation, "why did I spend so much

time explaining this?" He answers, saying that there is hope, encouragement, and

instruction in the text. For Kyle, there are three categories he thinks through: hope, encouragement, and instruction. He tries to bring out each somewhere in the sermon.

Root the Application in Christ

All the pastors interviewed universally agreed that Christ is essential in making application from the Old Testament narrative. This statement by Kyle summarizes their sentiments, "To see a link with Christ is to give us the real power it [the application] has." Collin mentioned that if the application is not rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the sermon is moralism. Henry says, "once you understand the author's intent and the fuller intent of the Holy Spirit [how the narrative is fulfilled in Christ] only then can you start the process of looking for application and drawing from application based on the text and author's intent and the needs of the congregation." There are several ways that Christ influences the application.

First, Christ influences the application by intensifying the gracious actions of God shown in the Old Testament narrative. In many OT narratives, there is a parallel to the grace God shows to the characters and the grace he shows to his people today. However, the church today receives a much fuller manifestation. Kyle gives an example in his sermon on 1 Kings 19. God shows Elijah grace by giving him food, which strengthened Elijah for the journey. Elijah did not deserve this food. Yet here is Elijah's moment of despair, out in the middle of the wilderness, up in a mountain, and God prepares a feast for Elijah. The feast gives Elijah more than physical strength. His faith is reinvigorated. Elijah is able to endure Jezebel's persecution and bravely stand against the idolatry in the land. God prepares a table for his church too. He still gives the church a feast by which he strengthens them spiritually—the Lord's supper. And the grace offered in the Lord's

supper is far greater than anything Elijah ever experienced. The food at the table is the body and blood of the promised Messiah.

Drake takes a very similar approach to Kyle in his sermon. Drake portrays Elijah as one who, "goes AWOL. He abandons his post. He loses his faith." Elijah essentially said, "I've had enough Lord. I can't do it anymore. I'm not up for the task. I'm insufficient." Then Drake explains how God showed Elijah that God's grace was sufficient. Drake does not get into the communion aspect but focuses on how God supplies what Elijah needs and how God strengthens Elijah. Then Drake talks about how God shows the same pattern to the church, only to a much greater degree in Christ. Christ has sought the church out and given the church what they need.[184] Christ strengthens the church.[185] For application, Drake encourages the congregation to take their insufficiencies to Jesus, trusting in his all sufficient grace. By God's grace in Christ God will provide.

Secondly, it is important to root the application in Christ because Christ changes people so they can respond to the exhortation of application in the sermon. Christ makes his people new and allows them to embody a new position in life. Kyle said that a sermon on Genesis 3 might deal with Adam and Eve's testing and how they failed. Kyle said Jesus connects because he went through forty days of testing and succeeds. Since Christ lives in his people, Christ strengthens them against temptation. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken to you that is not common to man. God is faithful,

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[184] Matthew 11:28.

[185] Philippians 3:11; 1 Timothy 1:12.

and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will

also provide the way of escape." Kyle said he should,

> show how humanity without Christ living in us is doomed to fail because born in
> Adam, we will fail, but being born in Christ, having seen his power, and because
> he was able to resist, and his presence in us, there is hope. The whole idea here is
> that Christ is the link between the Old Testament story and our life. We don't go
> to the Old Testament passage and say, "be like him who resisted temptation." We
> go deeper. We say, "we are baptized in Christ. Therefore, by the power of one
> himself who overcame sin, we can begin to overcome."

Collin warns that the sermon can be oppressive if moral exhortations are given in

a non-Christ-centered way. For example, pastors can preach on David and Bathsheba and

tell the congregation not to let their eyes wander. That is fine, but if pastors stop there, the

sermon will cause listeners to despair because they are not measuring up or the sermon

will offer a false grace, implying that if people's eyes do not wander, they are pretty good

people. A better application would be, as Collin says, "as those who are the saved ones,

those redeemed by Christ, don't you think your lives should be different?" Pastors can

give an exhortation, but then they have to drive people to Psalm 51, where they can

experience the grace of Christ after a repentant heart. Based on forgiveness in Christ,

Christians want to live for him by avoiding lustful glances at other people.

Third, the application rooted in Christ can answer an Old Testament character's

dilemma. Collin talks about his sermon on David when he was in Gath and feigns

insanity. Collin explains, David seeks help from everyone except God. David went to the

Philistine king and priest. Trouble comes as David runs from God. Then David finally

arrives at the cave of Adullam and has alone time with God. David is going through

desperate times in his life. The cave of Adullam serves as an escape for David. Christ, a

perfect sympathizing high priest, understands, redeems, and gives his people power over

sin and death. The application then is about trusting in Jesus the high priest. Nothing in the story is a type of Christ. Rather, the character has a problem, and Christ is the answer to the problem.

Henry's sermon follows a similar methodology, looking at Naomi's hopelessness. The audience can identify with Naomi's hopelessness; everyone experiences hopelessness in life when troubles come. The answer for which Naomi looked is fulfilled in Christ. Because of what Christ has done for the church, Christians become "filled."

Fourth, pastors can look for ways to highlight aspects of Christ's grace that apply to Christians based on the text. Collin says,

> It doesn't always come down to confession, believe in Jesus. We know that every Old Testament narrative points to Christ, and we know that not every text says the same thing. I think it's important when doing Old Testament narrative sermons, you get into the real life of it. It's easy to look at these stories as flannel graph stories and not get into the nitty gritty details of real life. The real life is God preparing us to understand his son. So looking at the type of Christ and how he is made manifest in these different aspects is important. The gospel has a core, but it spreads out form the door to cover different aspects of Jesus, like Jesus the sympathizing high priest or Jesus the carting brother or Jesus the sovereign God who crushes the head of the serpent. Narrative is good at bringing out different facts of who Christ is.

Fifth, the application is rooted in Christ when a character is a type of Christ. Collin talks about the time when he preached on David and Elimelech. Elimelech and the priests of Nob help David, and he is not forthright with them about the situation. Collin suggests David lies. Collin exhorted the congregation not to lie, but he also shows how Elimelech is a type of Christ. Elimelech helped a sinner so Christ helps sinners by saving them. Christ is the hope of those who have trouble lying. The application came from the audience identifying with one of the character's problems, but at the same time, the application also highlights how another character is a type of Christ.

Collin's sermon on 1 Samuel 18 also illustrates application drawn from a type of Christ. Collin explains how three people or people groups show love to David. David is held up as a type of Christ whom people are called to love. The application is, love Christ. Jonathan loved David. Their love was a close friendship. They were like brothers, even though Jonathan was the crown prince. When Jonathan made a covenant with David, Jonathan stripped off all his royal garments, abdicating his right to the throne in favor of David. Christ is king of kings and lord of lords, and Christians show love to Christ by abdicating their own wills and their own thrones in life. The Israelites also love David. They are praising David in this passage for killing Goliath. The people were oppressed under the Philistines and now they are liberated. Their love for David was a response to his saving work. Christians' love for Jesus is also a response to his saving work. Collin challenges the congregation to think and mediate on the cross. Christ's love draws people's love. Michal also shows love to David, an unexpected love. Saul hated the love Michal had for David. Saul throws a spear at David, even though Saul knew the Lord protected David. Saul also knew he would not stay on the throne. Michal's love for David frightened Saul. Christians' love for Jesus can frighten the Devil. So again, Collin calls the church to identify with the characters, but in a way that responds to how David is a type of Christ.

Sixth, application is rooted in Christ when a character's virtue worth emulating is powerfully and perfectly demonstrated by Christ. Collin mentions the friendship between David and Jonathan. He said the bulk of a sermon on 1 Samuel 18 could focus on friendship because people can relate. Then the pastor has to show the ultimate goal of friendship: having a relationship that illustrates the love of Christ. Collin says, "And even

though we can enjoy human friendships on earth, the ultimate goal is not human

relationships. We are going to be in heaven, and our relationships will be vastly different

in glory. The end goal is not friendship here." Collin explains how Christ ultimately

fulfills the human need for relationships. Collin also explains how, through Christ,

friendships will be perfect in the world to come. Neither David or Jonathan are

functioning as a type, but their love for each other, a love worth emulating, takes on new

meaning because of Jesus. Jesus makes a covenant with his people and shows them

perfect love from a perfect savior, who is a friend and brother.

For all the pastors, a sermon can tell people what to do. A sermon can hit on real

moral issues, but the sermon always connects the application to Christ. Henry

summarized,

> I believe preaching the gospel is the heart of preaching, because if you are not
> preaching the gospel you are not preaching, just talking. It's so cliché, and I
> almost can't stand it, and hesitate to bring it up, but it's the old story of the pastor
> who preached on the Old Testament. He did a wonderful job of expositing the text
> and opening it up. Afterward, an elder said, "it's a great sermon but could have
> been preached in a synagogue."

Collin agrees saying, "Christianity is a very practical religion; it is meant to affect

every motive and action. There has to be some "dos" in the sermon; you have to talk

about morality what is right and wrong. But we know the pattern: here is the gospel and

this is how you respond."

Explicit Gospel Proclamation

These pastors agreed, the application loses power if the gospel is not proclaimed.

Even though every sermon application must be rooted in Christ, a sermon can be Christ-

centered without actually mentioning Jesus according to Bryan Chapell. According to this

view, pastors do not have to mention Jesus' name or explain how his work on the cross

applies. Drake disagrees. He says, "I talk about the precious blood of Jesus in every sermon. Sometimes I mention it fifty times, other times I mention it once. Chapell says you can veil it. I'm going to mention it in my sermon; it's my goal. If I don't talk about the precious blood of Jesus, I have not done my job."

Characters As Examples

Every interviewee draws guiding principle for application from Hebrews 11, in particular, the license to use characters as a moral example or as a situational example. In each sermon reviewed, the pastors held up some biblical character as someone with whom the audience could identify. In Henry's sermon, he called listeners to identify with Naomi, who needed to find hope. Collin called listeners to love their Messiah Jesus in a similar way to how Michal, Jonathan, and the Israelites loved their messiah, king David. Drake calls listeners to identify with Elijah, who needed to experience God's all sufficient grace. Kyle calls listeners to do the same.

Kyle, Henry, and Drake use the passage's characters as people with whom listeners can identify. The characters' needs mirror listeners' needs, needs that Christ fulfills. Drake stated he considers this use of Old Testament characters as examples. Drake said, "I guess Elijah is an example in the way he learns, because God gives him strength when he wanted to die." Collin was the only pastor who used characters as direct examples of what to do.

Even though Old Testament characters can be used as examples of what listeners should do or as people with whom listeners can identify, there are guidelines pastors follow when they use characters. Drake says, "We identify with characters only in so far as we see what God has done through them and we identify with them in so far as they

respond to God's grace. You can draw that line; it is a response to what God has done for them."

Henry mentions that the Bible teaches morals and that sermons can teach on these morals, because God calls all people to live holy lives before him. The congregation has to be taught a holy life. Characters can be avenues by which these morals are taught because characters are examples of law and grace. Still, pastors must be careful, Henry warns. As much as a character might be a great example on how to live a holy life before God, the congregation must hear that Christ is the perfect example. For instance, says Henry, a character might show the virtue of love, and the congregation can learn from how that character shows love. However, the character's love points to the ultimate love of Christ. Henry said, "Another thing is to be honest with the congregations, saying, 'we are all fallen but I want you to see the example in this person, and it's just an example. It's not like if you do the same thing the character does or live like the character does, God will somehow favor you with grace, bless you, and grant salvation.'"

Collin also said that Hebrews 11 gives pastors a license to use any character as positive or negative examples. Hebrews 11 and other New Testament passages do not limit how pastors use a character as an example. If a New Testament passage does not use a character as an example, pastors can use them as an example. Collin and Henry, in particular, said preachers have a lot of freedom as to whom can be an example, so long as they root the application in Christ.

Collin also encourages pastors to look at the full scope of the character's flaws. Too easily, he says, pastors settle for the Sunday school version of Old Testament narratives, painting every character in shining virtue. David is often portrayed only as a

hero who slays the giant Goliath, and listeners all need to be like him and slay their giants. Collins says David is a mixed bag, but even characters who are mixed bags can speak into listeners' lives because they are mixed bags.

Just as there is freedom in using Old Testament characters as examples, there is freedom when using characters to point to Christ. Of all the pastors, Kyle emphasized this freedom. Kyle mentions that Mordecai is a type of Christ. Saying, be like Mordecai and encourage others how Mordecai encouraged Esther, is not enough. Instead, pastors should point listeners to another Mordecai, Jesus Christ who is their advocate and encourager. Kyles go on to say how pastors can have this approach with just about any character. He says, look at

> both the character and activity—what the person was and what he did. Then ask if you can see Christ who is that way. Make the connection from the character to Christ without stretching it too far…each character may have a little shaft of Christ's beauty in them that is worthy and linking to Jesus that enhances the person's role and gives strength to our connection with Christ so we end up with Jesus not the character.

When asked if pastors can connect a wicked character to Christ, Kyle replied, "I don't know. Probably not."

Guided by Intent

Every pastor mentioned the author's intent was critical in determining application from an Old Testament narrative. As Drake said, "I try to identify the theme—what the author is saying and then go from there, making sure that I draw application with the theme. The theme is the part where it all begins, and I draw application from there."

Henry alone stressed both the author's intent and the Holy Spirit's intent. Henry admits that when using characters to point to Christ, there is a lot of judgment involved. He says, "one of the things I try to do is to sneak Christ into different aspects when it is

intended and when sometimes it's not." For Henry, there is a lot of freedom as well, but each pastor must wrestle with the author's intent and what the Spirit intended. A connection to Christ might not be apparent, but one must always interpret scripture within scripture. And looking at the entire New Testament, according to Henry, allows pastors to connect to Christ and make application in Christ-centered ways.

Henry, Drake, and Collin also said that a pastor can go beyond the theme of the text and make application "sub-points" if they are related to the main theme. Collin said it would be possible, when preaching on 1 Samuel 18, to make a sub-point about the friendship between David and Jonathan. Collin would suggest that pastors highlight how Christ is closer to listeners than a brother and a better friend than any other friend. Collin admitted, pastors might serve their listeners better by splitting the sermon into two—one focusing on loving Christ, and the other focusing on the friendship aspect.

When asked if pastors can use an Old Testament character as an example, even if the passage or the author do not intend the character to be an example, Henry said,

> yes, but let me make some points. You have to be honest with the church that it's not the main point. You cannot make it the main thrust of the sermon. So if there is an Old Testament character who is an example of something and not the theme the text I believe it is unwise to make it the main theme of the sermon, but you can you come to it as a sub-point and say, "hey, the theme of the text is this but I want to you to see this, here is an example, we can learn from it." Be honest and have integrity, being true to the text.

Henry emphasized informing the congregation and acknowledging how the character is used.

Drake adds that other characters from other narratives can illustrate a point from the sermon text. While the other passage may not use the character as an example, Drake believes that pastor may use the character as an illustration.

Method

All the pastors interviewed use a certain sermon structure to bring application throughout the entire sermon. Each pastor's methodology is similar, leading to a very common sermon structure. Both the sermons and the interviews revealed the common sermon structure. Each pastor confirmed that he employs this methodology when preaching an Old Testament narrative.

Each pastor begins with a contemporary problem that shows why listeners should hear the sermon. Collin begins by asking if listeners love Jesus, emphasizing how this is the most important thing they can do in their lives. Love for Jesus is what makes them Christian. He repeats over and over the question, "do you love Jesus?" Henry opens up with a World War II story about the hopelessness people experienced. Drake talks about the mugshot of Lindsey Lohan, and how 1 Kings 19 is a like a mug shot of Elijah. Drake says that all people have had their mug shot moments where they just need grace and mercy. Kyle opens the sermon with some moments of crisis that show how listeners might feel the journey is too much for them. The pastors touch on real life problems immediately in each of these sermons.

Next, each pastor addresses the issue with the narrative text. Collin uses three points to show what it means to love Jesus. Each of these three points are how one of the characters or character groups responded with love to David. Henry spends most of the sermon explaining the hopelessness of Esther and how they are looking for answers. Drake talks about Elijah's desperation and what God does to remedy Elijah's desperation. Kyle exegetes the text in a very similar way to Drake.

After the pastors address the character's problems, a shift happens in the sermon. Christ is proclaimed. And then each pastor shows how, through Christ, listeners can face their own problems or how, through Christ, their needs are met in a much fuller way. Collin shifts to Christ three times for each of his three points, showing how listeners can love Jesus for something he has done for them. Henry shows how Christ fills listeners. Drake shows how Christ has all sufficient grace for insufficient people. Kyle explains that Christ prepares a much fuller meal for listeners, a meal that gives them strength for the journey.

Finally, each pastor concludes his sermon with a call to action. Collin asks, "do you love him?" He then ends, quoting Jesus, "if you love me you will keep my commandments." Henry calls the church to rest in the grace of Christ. Drake invited the church to "give up the need, the burden of always trying to be sufficient. Sufficient for God. Sufficient for others, sufficient for yourself. That life, that journey, it's too much for you. You can't do it. Accept that this morning. Trust in the one whose done it for you. Trust in Christ. He is sufficient for you!" Kyle concludes, asking what do listeners need today?

> Patience? Come and eat. Hope for your personal future? Come and eat. A spirit of forgiveness? Come and eat. Joy in life again? Come and drink. Power to overcome an in surmountable problem? Come and drink. Love for a porcupine person in your life (whenever you try to get close to them they puncture you? Come, and drink. This is a serious offer: Get up and eat for the journey is too much for you.

Real Life

The final principle that this section raises is that each pastor tries to touch on real life problems in the sermon. Each pastor tries to address the problems in gospel centered ways that touch on real life. Even the text can be exposited in ways that touch on real life.

For example, when expositing how Elijah needed strength for the journey, Kyle described Elijah's in four main points: he is a "spiritual leader;" he is a "higher achiever;" he faces "serious threats" to his life; and he is on "the ropes." Drake invites the congregation to think of areas of their life where they feel insufficient. Drake says he takes his ministry to God. He says, "take your grief, take your discouragement and depression. Maybe you are feeling the burn of raising a young family. Take that to God and trust that is grace is sufficient for your parenting and your children."

Of the four sermons reviewed, only Kyle's sermon used an illustration. This illustration helped the congregation think of how grace helps them to love. Kyle read a sermon by another pastor, whom the dissertation will call Fred. Fred's father did not want much in life. His father was hard working and provided for the family. Fred's grandma died, and his grandpa got remarried. Then, his grandfather died. The new grandmother took all the inheritance and left Fred's dad with nothing. Things went from bad to worse. Soon, the grandmother squandered all the wealth she inherited. Finally, she was left destitute and alone, living in a rundown trailer. She hurt Fred's father terribly. In college, Fred's dad got a call, saying his stepmother died. Fred's dad made arrangements and gave the grandmother a proper burial. How could Fred's dad love like this? Fred's dad could love because he received love, eating at the table of the Lord.

Challenges In Designing Applications

How to Use Characters

Drake, Collin, and Henry struggled to discern when characters can be used as examples, as types of Christ, or not be used at all. When preaching through the Elijah narratives, Drake said there were times when Elijah was used as a type of Christ and then

there were times where he was used so that the congregation could identify with him as an example. When asked how he made the decision, Drake simply said, it was part of study.

Collin says that the book of Hebrews allows pastors to use characters as examples, but when asked how pastors know if characters can be an example or not, Collin responded, "there are positive examples and negatives examples…there is all that stuff." When asked why he used David as a type of Christ rather than an example of developing friendship, Collin responded that he could possibly envision another sermon on the passage that treated David and an example.

In Henry's sermon, he used Elimelech as a type of Christ when he explained that Elimelech's name means God dies. Jesus Christ, who is God, dies as the basis for all hope for which Naomi and the audience await. Henry also mentioned how, in other sermons in his series, he used Ruth's kindness to point to Jesus' loving kindness. Ruth appears in the story where Henry held Elimelech up as a type, yet Henry did not use Ruth as a type. When asked what hermeneutical considerations he used in determining who functioned as a type and when, Henry responded, "There is a lot of judgment there, but you know one of the things I try to do, sneak Christ into different aspects when it is intended and sometimes when it is not. Sometimes you wonder how Christ fits and you run stuck and you wonder if I looked at the wrong angle."

Neglecting Application

Drake had trouble on at least one occasion where the story was so interesting that he spent most of his time on the story. There was no room for application in the sermon. He told the story and ended the sermon. Drake was preaching on the story where Elijah

squared off against the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel. Drake said he could not think of a way to apply the passage, because the story was so good. He wanted simply to tell the story. Drake said the application called the congregation to root out the idolatry in their hearts, and he just tacked it on at the end. He said what hindered him, "was that the story was long and the story was exciting, and I love stories. I was so excited to preach it, and all I did was retell it. I got animated but I didn't give the congregation anything to live by." Drake tried to apply the passage, but he had trouble thinking about it because he was so caught up in the story. The explanation of the story took up so much time, there was little room for application.

Collin admitted that he loves his job as a pastor because he loves to study Bible passages. They fascinate him, he said. He very easily becomes satisfied with just the text, the Hebrew, and the grammar, so he struggles to apply it. Collin recounted that he preached sermons where there was no application. The congregation learned something about the passage and maybe something about God, but they did not learn how the passage applied to their lives.

Specific Application

For Collin, he struggles to determine how specific to get whey applying the text. He easily use his own struggles as specific application, but Collin has feared that if his own personal struggles become the only struggle that the application addresses, his sermons will become repetitive and not help others Collin also warned that if pastors use application that is too specific, nobody gleans anything from the sermon, and if pastors apply the text too generally, then nobody gleans anything from the sermon either.

Henry illustrated Collin's sentiments, "It's like shooting quail, and I think I heard this from Greidanus. When you aim at the whole group, you don't bring any quail down, but when you aim at one, you probably bring down a couple." However, pastors want their sermon to apply to more than a couple of listeners.

Kyle describes a time where he was too general, but he did not know how specific to get at the time. He was preaching on the tower of Babel and applied the text by exhorting the congregation to not build their own empires. He said the sermon did not apply it to anybody, and after receiving some, feedback nobody was challenged to live their lives differently. The application was too general, and Kyle did not develop it well. The application was irrelevant to the needs of his listeners.

Henry also shared his struggle with finding a proper balance between explanation of the text, how the gospel fulfills the text, and how to apply the text. In every sermon, he says all three of those balls are up in the air and need balance. This is difficult, says Henry, because one congregation needs more gospel while the church down the road needs more application. Henry recalled how he followed a Rick Warren sermon series in the church, and the church members did not like it because there was too much application and not enough text explanation and gospel.

When Henry applies a text, he finds that his desire to preach the gospel sometimes keeps application at a general level. He said, "The issue here, and one of the reasons I don't get overly specific in application, is that you have a heart changed by grace. I can apply it all day long—you can do this or that—but I always stick to the gospel because when people's hearts are changed, they start running in the Spirit. You know, they do

what they should be doing, and that is why I focus on the gospel, because if their hearts are changed, they go out and do those things."

Texts that Do Not Point to Christ

For all of these pastors, preaching Christ is central to any application that is made. But what if pastors encounter a difficult passage, where Christ is not portrayed clearly? Kyle encountered such a text on one occasion. He was preaching on the Joseph narrative, where his brothers come to Egypt, looking for food. Joseph puts them through rigors and rough treatment. Kyle was in a "quandary" about what to do. Nothing about Joseph's actions resembled the forgiveness Christ shows. On the cross, Jesus shows gentleness, grace, and mercy when he says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." These oppressors of Jesus were not repentant; at least, it seemed that way to Kyle. Yet, Jesus forgives them. However, Joseph harshly has his brothers detained. Joseph puts expensive items in their sacks, causing immense psychological trauma to the brothers and to the father, Jacob. The brothers think Joseph is going to kill them and take their possessions. Forgiveness comes in the end, but the process toward forgiveness seems to be the opposite of what Christ has done. Kyle did not know how to preach this passage or apply it. He did not want to tell his congregation to forgive like Joseph, since Joseph's actions seem to go against the Gospel.

Overcoming Challenges in Designing Applications

Ask Certain Questions

Drake explained how he thinks through passages to determine how to use a narrative's characters. There were times when he would use Elijah as a type of Christ and other times as an example. To know when characters, such as Elijah, are an example,

Drake asks three questions: what is God doing through them? Can the congregation identify with the character? Is there some correlation between the character's dependence on God and the audience's dependence on God? If there is some connection to the audience, then the character is most likely used as an example. Whether or not a character is a type or an example, pastors' textual study will reveal how the character is used.

Henry asks questions as well. He says, "there is some wrestling with how much of Christ is there, how much did the author intend. Maybe it's just a foreshadowing…would I build a sermon it?" Henry admits, it is possible that Naomi could be used to point to Christ because Christ too was forsaken and felt "desolate" as a man of sorrows. However, Henry identified the congregation with Noami because the brunt of the text leads readers to conclude that Naomi represents God's people. God's people, as a whole, are going through a tough time, and what happens to Naomi is one glimpse of that larger struggle. Based upon exegesis and understanding the themes woven throughout the entire book, Henry concluded that Noami is someone with whom the congregation can identify. She is an example of hopelessness.

Asking questions of the text helped Collin determine that David in 1 Samuel 18 was a type of Christ and not an example for listeners to follow. Collin said David could be used as an example of friendship because the text talks about this very special friendship with Jonathan. However, when studying the text as a whole, Collin found that not only does Jonathan love David, but everybody loves David. The way others, such as the Israelites and Michal, show love to David reminds listeners of ways they can show love to their anointed one, Jesus Christ. Asking questions of the text helped Collin determine when a character is an example or not.

Know the Congregation's Needs

For Henry, the matter of how to use characters is much simpler. As already shown, just about any character points to Christ when the text intends. When the text does not intend a character as a type of Christ, and Henry suggests understanding the audience. Henry said he uses the analogy of a diamond where the light reflects in different ways. Some application pastors use and other they do not. Either way, pastors should look for opportunities to intersect themes in the text with what the congregation is experiencing. Henry also summarized a quote by Neil Plantinga, a former professor of Calvin Theological Seminary: "application is like spraying a mister of perfumes. Only some will stick. In a twenty minute sermon, pastors should use only what they know will stick."

Henry preached a four part sermon series through the book of Ruth, one sermon per chapter. Ruth's kindness is mentioned in the first chapter, and Henry does not use Ruth as an example. When asked why, Henry responded that this sermon series was an advent series. Because of the season and what the congregation needed to hear at the time, he did not use Ruth as an example. Rather, Naomi and her struggles became his focus. Later in the sermon series, Henry said he used Ruth as an example.

Collin also says that knowing the congregation's needs is important for determining if a character can be used as an example. He mentioned how his congregation hears all the time about how David is an example through the books they read and the radio broadcasts to which they listen. Collin felt the congregation had enough teaching on David as an example. He saw a connection to Christ because David is God's anointed and Christ is the ultimate king.

Persevere in Study

When a text does not appear to point to Christ, Kyle's advice is to keep digging. Kyle struggled with the Joseph narrative, where he seems to act contrary to the gospel. Is Joseph an example or not? Kyle said he persevered in study. He kept thinking about the passage where Jesus Christ is on the cross and says, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." As Kyle wrestled with this passage, it dawned on him that Christ is praying that the Father "would" forgive them, if they choose to repent. Jesus prayed that the Father would bring the crowds to understand their sins and to repentance. Kyle goes said that God answered Jesus' prayer fifty days later on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descends on the disciples, and Peter preaches his first sermon. The people listening, some of whom called out for Christ to be crucified, were cut to the heart, and they believed in Jesus Christ. They asked, "what can we do?" Peter replies, "repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins." God brought a spirit of repentance, the crowds confessed their sins, and they were indeed forgiven. Forgiveness took place in the context of repentance. There was no forgiveness without repentance. Repentance is part of faith, and salvation comes through faith.

With this story in mind, Kyle understood what Joseph was doing and how Joseph acted as a Christ-like example. The common assumption, according to Kyle, is that people think Christ just forgives without showing their faith. But Christ forgives, and people receive forgiveness through faith, demonstrated by repentance. The reason Joseph puts his brother's through such rigorous trials was to see if their hearts were broken. Joseph wanted to know if the brothers were sorry for their sins. Throughout the narratives, Joseph comes to see that his brothers are indeed repentant of their past sins.

Once Joseph's brothers demonstrate a spirit of repentance, then Joseph reveals himself and forgives his brothers.

Kyle's understanding of how Joseph's forgiveness points to the forgiveness listeners have in Christ influenced his application. Kyle said that forgiveness is often extended on an assumption of "cheap grace." By cheap grace, Kyle means that people are expected to forgive without any repentance shown. Kyle told a story where a victim goes to a rapist in jail and simply declares forgiveness to the criminal. However, the victim does not have to go through that ordeal. Any victims of sin can expect the offender to demonstrate repentance. Wanting justice is a good desire. Some people can never forgive because they want the person to experience the consequences of the crime committed. Kyle says, it is unrealistic to expect these victims to forgive. If the criminal is repentant, the victim should forgive, but if there is no repentance, then victims do not have to grant forgiveness.

Kyle's application came from persevering in the text when he did not know how the characters in the story pointed to Jesus. Kyle kept asking the questions, "how does this point to Christ?" and "how is this quality fulfilled in Christ?" Kyle kept asking and digging, and how to preach Christ and how to apply the passage became clear to him.

Tell the Story Well

Drake preached a sermon on when Elijah was on Mount Carmel facing off against the Baal prophets, and there was no application. Drake enjoyed telling the story and forgot to apply it. He said it was one of the worst sermons he preached. Yet, the congregation seemed to like the sermon. When asked why, Drake believed the details of the story drew the congregation's attention, and they were able to see themselves

somehow in the story. Drake mentioned how he told the story dramatically, building to a climax. Drake was not consciously trying to apply the passage. He struggled finding good application but loved the story; he at least wanted to tell the story well. The end result surprised him; the congregation drew application because of the way he told the story.

Collin reported something similar. He remembered what he calls a "bummer" sermon when he was preaching through the Joseph narratives. He became entangled in the story, the psychological nuances, and the Hebrew text, but he did not prepare any personal application. Collin said the text fascinated the congregation too, and they drew application from it. The way Collin told the story led the congregation to find application. Collin said he still does not know how he would apply the text. He was confused, but he told the story well.

Glorify Christ

Collin, Drake, and Henry all said that as long as they proclaimed Christ, they have done their jobs. They prioritize proclaiming Christ in every narrative. If the congregation sees aspects of Jesus and knows their need for him, they can glorify him all the more. Sometimes application is not always clear, and these pastors are content to tell the story and proclaim Christ. Ultimately, what matters most is preaching Christ.

Collin and Drake both recognize that, ideally, they give the congregation some direction with application in the sermon. Pastors should direct their congregations into application. The congregation can understand grace, but they need to be guided in what they do.

Henry differs from Drake and Collin in that he does not think much about application. Application, for Henry, is usually something tacked onto the sermon. Henry

focuses his sermons on telling the story and proclaiming Christ. Henry believes that if the

congregation understands grace, then their behavior naturally follows. Henry says few

people in his 700 member church ever asked for more application because he believes

they are getting enough of Christ. Henry said,

> Sometimes, you get to application, and it is so straightforward and simplistic, there is not much more to say. It's like, "ok people, we have looked at the passage, how it points to Christ, how Christ is the fulfillment and there is not much more to say." You get to the application and it's already developed. I used to focus more on application. Now I focus much more on the gospel and how I can bring out the gospel, and application naturally follows. I don't spend a lot of time with application in my sermons. You only have twenty-five minutes. By the time the text is exposited, stores and shared, side trips are made, or whatever, it's time to get down to business—here's the application now let's go.

Think of a Broad Congregation

Henry says he makes general application because, in his church, there are not a lot

of members who have been Christians for a long time. Because his church is a very broad

audience, Henry focuses on preaching to a fifth grade level. Sometimes, Henry focuses

on different people groups, like men or women, but overall, he keeps application general,

based on the makeup of his congregation.

Keep Application Broad Yet Powerful

Even though Henry's application is more general, the application can still be

powerful. Henry was preaching on reconciliation and called the congregation to live out

Christ's example of forgiveness and reconciliation. A couple walked out of church in

protest. General application does not have to be tame. Pastors have to be bold, even with

a general application. Henry exhorted, "remember you are preaching for the glory of

Christ." When he preaches, Henry does so, standing on the word of God. What Christ

thinks of him matters more than what any congregation member thinks.

Specific Situations Illustrate Broad Application

Collin summarizes the approach that he, Drake, and Kyle take when it comes to the dilemma of being too broad or too specific, saying, "the trouble with being too general always does sound the same as in always called to be more holy. We have to ask what does being called to be holy mean? If I get specific I try to be specific but not on one thing, like add four specific areas and fit different ages or economic groups." Pastors can introduce a broad principle and call the congregation to apply it in their lives. The pastor can specify situations for the congregation to apply that broad principle.

For example, Drake's application principle is that the congregation should give to Jesus the things about which they feel inadequate. He then lists how he has to give his ministry to Jesus, how parents can give their parenting to Jesus, and other situations.

Collin initially keeps the application broad for each of his three points in his sermon on 1 Samuel 18. Jonathan loves David by surrendering his identity, so Christians are called to do that as well. All of Israel pledges their love to David. Will Christians love Jesus too? Michal loves David, even though her love angers Saul. Can Christians love Jesus in such a powerful way that the Devil cringes? Collin does not specify the application any more specific in each of his three points. Collin, instead, uses the points of the story to illustrate people's behavior until the end of the sermon, where he specifies more. Collin talks about following God's commands, and he ends with a series of questions that ask the congregation to reflect on their own love. Even though Collin does not mention different situations, he uses questions to lead the congregation to specific situations in their own lives.

For Kyle, in his sermon on 1 Kings 19 the general application principle is to eat from the Lord's table. He then lists different specific situations: crippling loss, at wit's end, bills piling up, and difficulties making decisions.

Henry's sermon differed from the others by keeping application more general. Henry uses a World War II story to talk about how hopes can be shattered, but he does not list specifics like the other three pastors. Henry keeps the focus on what Jesus has done for the listeners and how Jesus gives them hope. The application, therefore, is what Jesus has done.

This chapter presented data on how the four pastors answered the research questions. The data was presented according to the methodology of chapter three. The next chapter discusses this data.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors make application from Old Testament Redemptive Historical narrative sermons. This study was undertaken for three main reasons. First, designing sermon application from Old Testament RH narrative is a difficult task. The differences between Swindoll and Van't Veer illustrate the difficulty. Swindoll makes heartwarming application from the Elijah narratives, but he does not preach Christ. In fact, Christ has nothing to do with Swindoll's application. Van't Veer preaches Christ, but he makes no application. When preaching Christ from an Old Testament narrative, preachers often have difficulty moving beyond Christ to what is relevant for the congregation's day-to-day lives. Treating the text in a moralistic way lends itself to heartwarming application while treating the text in a Christ-centered way leaves little for listeners to put into practice.

Second, popular seminary homiletics books that promote Christ-centered preaching rarely address application. Clowney and Greidanus do great jobs and teaching pastors how to proclaim Christ from Old Testament narratives, but they offer little guidance on application. Chapell devotes considerable time in *Christ-Centered Preaching* to application, but the book itself does not focus on application. There are notable contributions to the practice of application from Old Testament RH sermons, such as Overdorf's and Dorinai's writings, but this material seems to be rare. A lot of material talks about preaching Christ; a lot of material deals with application, but rarely will a

book address application in sermons where Christ is preached. If preaching Christ affects the application, like some of these authors maintain, how does Christ affect the application? Much of the literature treats preaching Christ and application as two separate categories, even though some of the literature on RH sermons say, Christ makes a difference.

Third, designing application that connects to the audience is difficult. This problem is not limited to Old Testament RH sermons. Pastors universally face this problem. Nonetheless, anyone who preaches Old Testament RH narrative sermons wants to connect well to the congregation.

Chapter two reviewed a number of works of literature. Scholars shared their wisdom concerning application that contributed toward the purpose of this dissertation. However, few scholars specifically address how to make application from Old Testament narratives from a redemptive historical perspective. There seems to be two kinds of literature within the homiletics and hermeneutics categories—literature that talks about application and then literature that talks about preaching Christ. But if Christ influences the application, as authors suggest, then how is application different in in a redemptive historical sermon?

Therefore, a study was designed to explore how pastors design sermon applications for the Old Testament narratives from a redemptive historical perspective. The following questions guided the research.

1. What resources do pastors use to design sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

2. What principles guide pastors when designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

3. What challenges do pastors face in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

4. How do pastors overcome challenges in designing sermon applications for the redemptive historical preaching of Old Testament narratives?

Summary of Findings

Resources for Sermon Application

Pastors use a variety of sources, namely other preachers in the Presbyterian tradition, books, and congregation/pastoral experiences. These pastors regularly listen to other pastors or read from other pastors who both preach Christ and make great application. Living in and with the congregation enables the pastor to think how the passage might apply. Living in and with the congregation also helps the pastor make a variety of application from a text. Making cultural references, like hunting or a reference to Lindsay Lohan, helps pastors connect with the audience.

Principles for Sermon Application

A key guiding principle when making application from Old Testament narratives is "root the application in Christ." This happens in six ways. First, Christ intensifies the actions of God's grace demonstrated in the Old Testament narrative.

Second, pastors can exhort the congregation to live based on their new position in Christ.

Third, the gospel of Jesus Christ may answer a character's dilemma, especially a

character with whom listeners can identify. Fourth, the text highlights an aspect of who

Christ is and what he does, such as Christ's friendship. Fifth, pastors can root the

application in Christ when a character is a type of Christ. Sixth, hen a character's virtue

may be worthy of emulating, but Jesus perfectly demonstrates.

Based on Hebrews 11, pastors can use characters as examples of moral actions.

Old Testament characters can also serve as examples of life circumstances that today's

church may face. The pastors follow four main principles when using characters as

examples. First, characters are examples only in so far as pastors highlight what God has

done through them. Second, listeners can identify with characters only in so far as they

either respond to or reject God's grace. Third, characters as examples always point to the

perfect example Jesus. Fourth, Characters are examples of the life experiences that

contemporary audiences face, and the audience is supposed to identify with the

characters.

The pastors also try to understand the author's intent when making application.

The author's intent, however, does not stop pastors from making "application sub points"

or from using characters from other stories to illustrate a point.

The pastors follow a common sermon structure that allows for good application.

The pastors start with an FCF. They then address the FCF with the text, often identifying

the congregation with a character or group of characters. The pastors show how the text is

fulfilled in Christ, and the pastors call the congregation to action in a way that is rooted in

Christ, according to one of the six ways previously mentioned. The pastors regularly use real life situations and examples throughout these sermons.

Challenges in Sermon Application

The pastors struggle with how to use characters, getting caught up so much in the story they neglect application, how specific to get when applying the text, and aspects of the text that does not seem to point to Christ.

Overcoming Challenges in Sermon Application

Pastors overcome the difficulty of how to use characters by asking the text certain questions and by understanding the congregation's needs. When pastors get stuck in the story and do not know how to apply the narrative, they tell the story so well the congregation members can see themselves in the story. Also, pastors have found that by glorifying Jesus in the story, congregation members always glean something. When determining how to make specific application from Old Testament narratives, the pastors thing of a broad audience and make a broad application point. Pastors then list specific situations in which the application principle can be followed. Pastors overcome challenging texts that do not seem to point to Christ by persevering in study.

Discussion of Findings

The overarching question that governs all the research questions is, how do pastors make application from Old Testament redemptive historical narrative sermons? The follow section discusses the findings. Each subsection directly answers the overarching question.

Nourish Application Skills

Three of the four pastors interviewed regularly listen to or read other pastors who

preach Christ and make good application from Old Testament narratives. Learning feeds

their application skills. In a sense, they could not do application all on their own, so they

constantly immerse themselves in excellent sermons. None of the pastors said they

thought they make application well, and from the data presented in chapter four, they

struggle with knowing exactly how to make application. Yet, in each of their sermons,

listeners hear the pastors make meaningful application that was rooted in Christ. The

regular listening to or reading of other pastors nourished the meaningful application.

If pastors want to improve their application in this genre of sermons, then they

need to read and listen to sermons. If pastors want to grow in their sermon application

skills, they should seek out other preachers who make excellent application and preach

Christ. A good place to start, according to Henry, Drake, and Kyle, are sermons by Piper,

Keller, and other key pastors in the Presbyterian tradition. Henry shows how important

reading or listening to other pastors who preach Christ and make good application is,

saying, "once you find how the text points to Christ, then you really find how the

application works because you fully understand the text and what it's trying to say, and

once you understand the text you can draw out the application."

The pastors also nourish their application skills by spending time with

congregation members. Visiting and knowing the congregation are central to making

application. These pastors practice many of the principles mentioned in the literature.[186]

They are specifically thinking about individual members, how they might perceive the

text and how the text specifically addresses their issues. Life situations of congregational

members help pastors draw out meaningful application from the text. These pastors

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[186] Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 112-127.

regularly connect with their parishioners—they spend time, make visits, and keep mental notes. Thinking about their congregation members and the specific situations they face came quite naturally for these pastors.

These pastors are doing what Overdorf suggested when he wrote, "Instead of making a generic application about death, consider the anguish of parents whose seven-year-old daughter is killed by a drunk driver; or a soon to be widow struggling at the bed side of her cancer ridden husband of sixty years. Develop a grid and sift the truth of the Bible's teaching through it. Think of a man, then get specific married man, and married man in second marriage, etc…"[187] To put this into practice, Kyle suggested thinking of congregation members whose stories are "parallel" with the biblical text. In other words, think of specific situations that illustrate what is going on in the Bible.

The dedication these pastors showed to knowing their congregation is very encouraging. Reading in the literature or hearing in a seminary class to know the congregation can feel impersonal, but seeing these pastors live the command illustrates how these visits influence sermon application. In today's culture, pastors are specializing more and more—pastor of preaching or pastor of congregational life. For the introverted pastors who love preaching and study, they may need to push themselves to be in and among the congregation. To make strong and meaningful application on a consistent basis, pastors need to nourish their application skills by knowing their congregation members.

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[187] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon*, 132.

In the literature review, Quicke, Mclure, and Paggitt have discussion groups to help them think about application.[188] None of the pastors interviewed in this study have discussion groups, but certainly this is a great way to nourish application. Pastors should seriously consider forming discussion groups if they want to improve sermon applications. The groups may provide concrete stories that can be shared and that illustrate what text looks like lived out. While writing sermon application based on a collaborative approach does not seem to be a common approach, pastors might capture Quicke, Mclure, and Paggit's intent by thinking of "parallel" situations about which Kyle spoke and then asking permission from those individuals to use those stories in the sermon.

The literature also encouraged illustrations and suggested several ways to cultivate a database for bolstering application with illustrations. Whillhite shows how important illustrations are to making good application, "What makes an illustration applicational is that it relates truth to concrete experience…it visualizes for people what the application look like in their lives or the lives of others."[189] Therefore, a pastor can nourish application skills by developing a database for illustrations.

The literature is very clear about the importance of illustrations, but the pastors differ in their practice. Kyle used an illustration in direct connection with application, but the other pastors did not. The pastors all said their congregation enjoys their sermons and takes away meaningful application. This suggests that either illustrations are not as important as the literature says or that the Old Testament narrative illustrates the biblical

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[188] Pagitt, *Reimagining Spiritual Formation*; Quicke, *360-Degree Preaching*, 137-138.

[189] Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*, 111.

truth sufficiently, since the congregation can see real people live and struggle. None of the pastors indicated that illustrations were that necessary to make good application. The pastors prioritized preaching Christ when making application.

While illustrations may not be crucial in an Old Testament narrative sermon, illustrations can help. Kyle, for example, shared the story of Fred and how Fred received encouragement to love form eating at the table of the Lord. What a wonderful way to illustrate how Christians can love each other better by coming to the table of the Lord. This illustration was powerful and caught listeners' attention. This illustration drove home the significance of the Lord's supper. The illustration also served to inspire the congregation to action. The congregation, already identifying with David and Elijah, caught how the Lord's supper transforms them. Henry, Drake, and Collin's sermons would be so much stronger if there was at least one illustration in connection with application.

Characters in the Text as the Main Illustration

Only Kyle used an illustration in connection with application. The rest recognize the importance of illustration, but they do not prioritize illustration. In an Old Testament sermon, pastors perhaps do not feel burdened as much as other genres to find an illustration. As Goldingay argues, "Our task as preachers is to open up as much as possible of the resources that lie in these various character proposals, all of which can disclose for people aspects of the gospel. It is to help people get into the story identifying with characters and situations as if hearing it for the first time, so that in doing so they can respond to the Gospel in the way they must."[190]

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[190] Goldingay, *Key Questions about Christian Faith*, 181.

The pastors related the characters in the narrative to the congregation. Kyle

mentioned how Elijah and David were at the end of their ropes, and listeners could all

probably recount times where they were at the end of their ropes. Drake mentions how

Elijah had his mug shot—listeners can all recall moments where they were not their best

in their faith. Talking about the story in this way makes the story come alive for the

church member. The story itself illustrates how to live life or how to experience the grace

offered to listeners in Jesus Christ. Collin used the different characters who respond to

David as illustrations of the unloving ways people can respond to Christ being their

savior. In Old Testament sermon application, suggestions or exhortations sufficiently

apply the text because the congregation members already see themselves in the story.

Henry summarizes, "sometimes you get to application and it is so straightforward and

simplistic there is not much more to say. It's like, 'ok people we have looked at the

passage, how it points to Christ, how Christ is the fulfillment and there is not much more

to say.' You get to the application and it's already developed."

Treat the Entire Sermon as Application

Application is often treated as a separate category amongst the categories of

introduction, exposition, and conclusion, as many sources in the literature review do. As

Henry mentioned, when pastors focus upon exposition for most of the sermon, when

pastors come to application, there is not much more to be said. Henry's statement

suggests that application is a distinctly different category than other parts of the sermon.

Even though the literature treats application as a separate category, the data in

chapter four shows that application is not as distinct as the literature treats it. The pastors'

sermon structure illustrates the difference. As chapter four details, the pastors all had a

similar structure. They started with the FCF; they exposited the text in a way that addresses the FCF while using the characters to relate to the congregation; they showed how Christ is the answer; they concluded with general exhortations to the congregation. Looking at their structure, they weave application throughout the sermon. The entire sermon is application.

The sermon's FCF introduces concepts necessary for application., "The FCF in the introduction as Chapell wrote, "sets the tone, determines the approach, and organizes the information in the sermon to reveal this divine provisions and our direct response to it."[191] While this is true, the FCF does much more. The FCF acts as application, even in the introduction. With the FCF, congregation members see themselves in connection to the passage and thus they see the relevance of the text for their lives. The pastors used the FCF with some basic remarks in an introductory way to address the needs of the church. This is application. It fits well with the definition of application from chapter one, "the process by which preachers make scriptural truths so pertinent to members of their congregations that they not only understand how these truths should effect changes in their lives but also feel obligated and perhaps even eager to implement those changes."[192]

The pastors also exposited the text with application. Elijah was at the end of his rope. Naomi desperately looked for hope. The pastors tied the character's desires into the congregation's longings. Collin explained how the different characters in 1 Samuel 18 were very much like listeners in how they respond to Christ's love. Collin was in the text, doing solid exegesis in the sermon, while at the same time pointing to the audience's life.

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[191] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48.

[192] Adams, *Truth Applied*, 17.

The pastors conflate the homiletic categories of exposition and application with great success.

Preaching Christ is application as well. The literature does not address how preaching Christ is application, but the pastors did. The literature, typified in the work of Greidanus, seems to stop at preaching Christ. The pastors, in their sermons, show how preaching Christ itself is application. Christ is the answer to those without hope; Christ prepares a banquet that nourishes people when they are famished. Preaching Christ is preaching how his saving benefits affect listeners' lives. Collin explained, "The gospel has a core, but it spreads out from the door to cover different aspects of Jesus, like Jesus the sympathizing high priest or Jesus the caring brother or Jesus the sovereign God who crushes the head of the serpent. Narrative is good at bringing out different facts of who Christ is."

The pastors preached a unified theme, from the FCF to exposition. At the sermon's end, listeners hear one message that rings loud and clear, helping the sermon apply to life. Henry, Drake, and Kyle follow a four page method—problem in text, problem in the world, grace in the text, and grace in the world. Collin's sermon follows a theme and point structure. Whether the sermon was theme and points or four page structure, the pastors tied the sermons together. The FCF was announced; the exposition addressed the FCF; Christ was the ultimate answer; and then there were exhortations. The FCF points ahead, and every part of the sermon points back to the FCF.

Collin, the only one who used the theme and point structure stated his points as application. Collin used each of the character's responses to David's victory as a way to

relate to listeners. Basgno, in the literature review, addresses abstracting application.[193]

Collin, with or without realizing, went up the ladder of abstraction, transitioning from a

biblical point to a pastoral point. For example, one point of Collin's sermon addresses

how Michal loves David, a theological point, but Collin words the sermon point, focusing

upon how listeners respond with love and commitment to Jesus, a pastoral point.

Pastors can be encouraged to treat the entire sermon as application. Every aspect

of the sermon can address the congregation's needs. Perhaps treating the text this way is

easier in Old Testament narratives because the audience can identify with the characters.

The pastors had a sermon structure that works well with Old Testament narratives and

that focuses the entire sermon upon application. Following a similar structure can be

greatly encouraging to pastors. As pastors know their congregations, they must decide

how much exposition, application, and illustration to use. Pastors have to make all parts

of the sermon engaging. Treating the entire sermon as application might make these tasks

a little bit easier.

Let Christ Influence the Application

The literature reviewed tends to either show pastors how to preach Christ or

simply how to make application in general. Pastors receive very little guidance on how to

make application from a redemptive historical perspective. If Christ is preached,

application has to be different than if Christ was not preached. Van't Veer and Swindoll's

applications differ because Van't Veeer preaches Christ and Swindoll does not. Van't

Veer goes down an entirely different path because he is preaching Christ. Looking at the

Old Testament narrative under the redemptive historical framework or under the lens of

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[193] Bisagno, *Principle Preaching*.

biblical theology pastors go from text to Christ to audience. Christ influences the

application. How is the application influenced by Christ? Greidanus and Goldsworthy do

not answer this question. Greidanus gives seven ways a preacher can preach Christ.[194]

The next step needs to explain how to apply the passage. The pastors in the study

explained how they preach Christ and apply the passage. The following principles have

been gleaned from the interviews and sermons reviewed in this study.

The first principle in drawing application is to see how Christ intensifies the grace

God demonstrates in the Old Testament narrative. This principle is very similar to

Greidanus' point about preaching Christ by way of analogy.[195] The sermons on Elijah

highlight how God strengthens Elijah with food. Looking at the redemptive historical

context, pastors can see how God strengthens his church today through the Lord's supper,

whereby Christ's body and blood nourishes his people. The application, therefore,

focuses upon how Jesus specifically provides strength through his table.

The second principle exhorts the congregation to live based on their new position

in Christ. This is similar to Greidanus' point on preaching Christ by way of redemptive

historical progression. For example, Greidanus preaches Christ in the David and Goliath

story by way of redemptive historical progression.[196] David defeats Israel's enemies, so

Christ ultimately defeats the greatest enemies through his death on the cross. By way of

redemptive historical progression, today's listeners are in a different position than Old

Testament characters. Instead of going directly from the Old Testament text to

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[194] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament,* 228.

[195] Ibid., 228.

[196] Ibid., 234-274.

application, pastors can make application based on Christ's work. Kyle illustrates how Christ affects application, saying, "We don't go to the Old Testament passage and say be like him who resisted temptation. We go deeper. We say we are baptized in Christ therefore by the power of one himself who overcame sin we can begin to overcome."

The third principle is that aspects of the gospel answer Old Testament character's dilemma and dilemmas the audience faces. In Collin's example of David in the cave at Adullam, no character acts as a type of Christ. Collin does not develop an analogy of how God deals with his people. David has a problem: trying to flee his problems. Listeners too try to flee their problems, and Christ is the answer. Greidanus categories of preaching Christ do not match this principle. This is a step beyond Greidanus. The preacher can ask how Christ answers the need presented in the Old Testament text. Often, the characters have a dilemma that relates to the listeners' life situation. The gospel addresses their common dilemma. What aspect of Christ's accomplishment on the cross applies to the dilemma?

The fourth principle is to highlight aspects of Christ's grace in a way that is rooted in the passage. This is similar to the previous point except that Christ's grace has some direct connection to the passage. The previous principle searches New Testament texts for answers. Under this principle, one-to-one connections are made based on the text. While none of the pastors interviewed gave an example of this principle, Collin said that there might be events in the text or actions of characters that make pastors think about what Christ has done for his people. For example, Jesus is a caring brother. A pastor developing the application then would show the congregation the implications how Jesus is a caring brother. Under this principle, pastors ask questions about how Jesus

makes a difference. If Jesus is a caring brother, what difference does Jesus make as a caring brother—how does that aspect of the gospel influence daily lives.

The fifth principle is to make application when a character is a type. Greidanus similarly talks about preaching Christ by way of typology, but the principle goes a step beyond Greidanus' teaching. Collin gives the example of Elimelech being a type of Christ. Elimelech saved the lying sinner, David, and likewise, Christ saves liars. After identifies Jesus as savior, he traces how Jesus saves those who lie—the difference Christ makes to those who struggle with lying. Collin uses the character, David, as an example of someone who struggles with lying while using the character of Elimelech to show how the gospel of Christ helps liars. Certainly, Collin is preaching Christ by way of typology in a Greidanus fashion. Yet, he goes beyond RH exegesis to application when he applies the gospel in a very text focused way. The text's Christ-type answers the text's FCF.

The sixth principle is to make application based on a virtue of Christ that relates to the characters of the passage. Collin shows that Jesus makes a difference in friendships. There are principles of friendship that listeners can learn from David and Jonathan, but their friendship points to how Jesus is a friend and how good friendships are modeled after Christ's friendship. Jesus changes friendships. Christ can be found in just about any character or any place, although Kyle mentioned that Christ cannot be related to an evil character.

There is a lot of freedom in finding Christ in the passage and making application from Christ. Kyle says, look at "both the character and activity—what the person was and what he did. Then ask if you can see Christ who is that way. Make the connection from the character to Christ without stretching it too far…each character may have a little shaft

of Christ's beauty in them that is worthy and linking to Jesus that enhances the person's role and gives strength to our connection with Christ so we end up with Jesus not the character." Henry said Naomi can point to Christ in one sermon, while in another sermon Noami is an example. There is freedom for pastors. Henry said, "one of the things I try to do is to sneak Christ into different aspects when it is intended and when sometimes it's not." Given the way these pastors operate, could they stretch the text too far? Just about anything can relate to a virtue of Christ. The pastors do not gives guidelines. These principles take Greidanus to the next level, but at the same time, they risk finding Christ everywhere. And if Christ can be found everywhere in the passage, does that take away the meaning?

In making application in Christ centered ways, the pastors also preach Christ in ways that that are different form the seven categories Greidanus gives. The categories of Greidanus give pretty tight control on how pastors arrive at Christ from the text. These pastors who participated in the study make application in other ways than what Greidanus prescribes, and therefore, they risk doing what Kyle warns against, stretching things. Therefore, as pastors seek to make application from Old Testament narratives in Christ-centered ways, they would do well to keep in mind the redemptive historical context, biblical theology, and author's intent.

When making application in Christ-centered ways, there may be danger in treating the text as if it is not primarily about Jesus. In those sermons where Christ answers the character's dilemma, it is possible that the pastor ignored the redemptive historical context. RH sermons tend to focus on how Christ fulfills the Old Testament narrative event or character. Fee explains, "The purpose of various individual narratives it

to tell what God did in the history of Israel, not to offer moral examples of right or wrong behavior. Very often you will hear people say, 'what can we learn from this story is that we are not to do...' but unless the biblical narrator makes that point, on what grounds do we make it?" Fee goes to explain that the fallacy of moralism "ignores the fact that the narratives were written to show the progress of God's history of redemption, not to illustrate principles. They are historical narratives, not illustrative narratives."[197] With some of the examples given by the pastors the character's and their FCF seem to be the center of the sermon. The pastors treat the passage as if it is primarily about the character, not primarily about Jesus. Jesus is tacked on at the end. When treating the text as a way to identify with the character and then see how Christ applies, these pastors may be treating the text as an illustrative narrative.

Is Fee wrong? Can OT narratives be preached as illustrative narratives as long as Christ is preached? The pastors who use characters to address real dilemmas and who offer Christ as the solution do not see their sermons as simply illustrative. They are preaching Christ. They are also preaching what God is doing in history by pointing listeners to Christ's work on the cross. In a sermon on David and Jonathan's friendship, the original author may not make a biblical theology or redemptive historical point in the story—what is God doing in the history of redemption between David and Jonathan. However, pastors can still preach Christ and the cross, and preaching Christ affects the application. Even though those stories are more illustrative, the pastors kept the work of Jesus central to the sermon. Even with this more illustrative style, these pastors do what Doriani and Ramm advocate: expound narratives in a way that the listener discovers the

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[197] Fee, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 105.

way God accomplishes salvation and reveals himself.[198] A more illustrative style sermon is acceptable because, as Henry mentioned, Old Testament narratives teach morals, they do teach how to have faith.

Collin disagrees with Fee. Collin said, when preaching on 1 Samuel 18, pastors could make a sub-point about the friendship between David and Jonathan. Collin urges pastors to explore how Christ is closer to his people than a brother and a better friend than any other friend. Either way, Collins sees a possible detour. Collin also admitted that it might be better to split to the sermon into two—one focusing on loving Christ, and the other focusing on friendship. If a pastor splits the sermon into two the, one focusing on friendship is very much aligns with the illustrative style about which Fee warns. Therefore, certain principles guide pastors when using characters to point to Christ or using characters as examples, but these principles can be stretched.

Use Responsible Freedom

Notably, the pastors used a character as an example in every sermon they gave for review and every example of other Old Testament narratives they had preached. Even though there are characters as examples there is always something in the narrative, possibly even the character himself, that points to Christ. It could be the character's dilemma or the character as a type. The key is to keep it Christ-centered. If a character's behavior is an example for the audience to follow, then pastors should remind the audience of Christ's perfect example. If characters' behavior models a virtual, they do so in so far as the characters respond to what God has done for them in Jesus Christ.

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[198] Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 196-200; Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work,* 168.

Characters can be used as examples. Pastors wisely use characters as examples when they preach an Old Testament narrative.

Doriani's example of a sermon on David and Goliath wonderfully shows how characters can be used as examples while at the same having application rooted in Christ. David is the example of zeal. His zeal for God's honor is example of the type of indignation people can have over sin. Saul and Eliab are negative examples—people not living by faith. God's actions of defeating Goliath become the point of connection with Christ.

There is a better way than the redemptive historical preaching of Clowney and Van't veer and the moralistic preaching of Swindoll and Neeijhuise. Doriani was redemptive historical while using characters as examples. The pastors interviewed do similar things. The pastors are putting into practice much of what the literature says. They also are putting into practice principles gleaned from Bible passages such 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 11. A pastor can use characters and their situations to expose the pastoral needs like Swindoll does while at the same time preach Christ.

There is so much freedom four pastors demonstrated in using characters as examples. Pretty much anything can be an example, just as much as many things about a character or event could point to Christ so long as pastors find the hope and encouragement in the passage, as Kyle suggests. The pastors talk about author's intent to help guide when they could examples, but at the same time, they indicate there is a lot of freedom. Henry exemplifies this freedom, saying,

> yes, but let me make some points. You have to be honest with the church that it's not the main point. You cannot make it the main thrust of the sermon. So if there is an Old Testament character who is an example of something and not the theme the text, I believe it is unwise to make it the main theme of the sermon, but you

can you come to it as a sub-point and say hey, the theme of the text is this but I want to you to see this, here is an example, we can learn from it. Be honest and have integrity, being true to the text.

None of the pastors explained how they know the author's intent, although they say it is important. Drake summarizes, saying, "I try to identify the theme—what the author is saying and then go from there, making sure that I draw application with the theme. The theme is the part where it all begins, and I draw application from there." At the same time, the pastors said they can go beyond the theme of the passage, and sub themes can be separated into a separate sermon as the main point. The literature review subsection, "author's intent," provides a healthy balance.[199] Pastors may find examples when they are not really in the text. Pastors should ask two good questions: what is God doing in and through the characters that relates to listeners? And what are the characters doing or not doing to live out their faith?

One of the principles gleaned from the study is that pastors can identify with characters only in so far as they either receive or reject God's grace. The participants' sermons use characters in this way, but applying the principle to other narratives may become harder. From example, Collin mentions how David and Jonathan's friendship has aspects worth emulating. How is this friendship a response to God's grace? By God's grace the friendship was established. The friendship likely added something to do David being God's anointed. The text is not always as clear cut as the four principles these pastors follow when using characters as examples. The pastors admitted so as they discussed some narrative examples in the interviews. Pastors struggle with knowing how

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[199] Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?* 187; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*; Duvall, *Grasping God's Word*, 213-216.

exactly to use characters. Answers come through persevering in study, knowing what God is doing in the text, and relating the congregation to the characters. Pastors can use freedom and creativity while being cautious as they should always try as best as possible to discern the original author's intent.

Using characters is more of an art than science. There are some very helpful principles that guide pastors, but there are plenty of times where those principles are difficult to follow. When using those principles, there are a variety of ways congregation members can relate to the characters in Christ centered ways. Author's intent is not always easy to discern. And that means there is more than one way to preach a text. Therefore, pastors should use their freedom but this freedom should be a responsible freedom.

In chapter one, Swindoll and Niejenhuis were criticized for their moralistic use of Old Testament narratives.[200] Given the discussion about the use of Old Testament characters as examples, certainly pastors have permission to use Elijah as an example of how God humbles people or use Jacob as an example of tough life transitions. But pastors cannot stop there. After applying other principles learned from the study, Swindoll's sermon could become redemptive historical if he made the move to sanctification—how the Spirit makes Christians more and more like Jesus Christ. Stronger application could be made based on listeners' new position in Christ—they are people with the Spirit. They are people who already are perfectly holy in Christ and who are conforming their lives to that status. Niejenhuis's sermon could be redemptive historical as well. Christians can make any transition in life because God has made the ultimate transition by taking on full

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[200] Swindoll, *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility*; van Niejenhuis, "A Theology of Transition."

human nature. And through all his transitions, Christ lived the perfect life, trusting in God and relying on his grace. Similarly, listeners can persevere through transitions because in Christ, they are more than conquerors. Listeners have a savior who has walked in their shoes and can help them in their time of need.

Also in chapter one, Clowney and Van't Veer were criticized for their lack of application when the text portrays rich characters with whom the audience can identify.[201] Using a responsible freedom, Clowney could have talked about Jacob's faith struggles. Using responsible freedom, Van't Veeer could have done more with the characters of Elijah. Van't Veer uses Elijah as the type of Christ in this passage while using the Israelites as people with whom listeners can identify. But Van't Veer could have done more with the Israelites. What is it like to wonder if the office of the word is effective? Do listeners ever wonder if God is present or his word effective? There are no easy answers. The same character can even be a type of Christ in one passage and an example in another passage. The text is not always clear. Pastors should use responsible freedom in their use of characters.

Regardless of the decisions they make about characters in a narrative, pastors must preach Christ. The four pastors' commitment to preaching Christ is inspiring and worthy of imitation. The pastors were not always sure if they used characters correctly, but they always ensured that they proclaimed the gospel in every sermon and showed how the gospel relates to everyday life. The pastors were concerned, above all else, that their congregation knew Jesus because Jesus is the one who truly transforms people for

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[201] Van't Veer, *My God Is Yahweh*; Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*.

right living. This is probably the best yet also simplest wisdom gleaned from the study: preach Christ and make application in a Christ-centered way.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations can be made for practice.

First, pastors should spend regular time reading or listening to other pastors who preach Christ and make excellent application. Because pastors need to nourish their application skills on a regular basis, pastors can study other pastoral works in their regular, sermon preparation time. Pastors can communicate to their elders how important this time is. Pastors can say that their sermons will likely be better if they spend this time on nourishing application.

Second, when designing the sermon, pastors are encouraged to think about the entire sermon as application. Think about how the introduction, the exposition, and redemptive history all apply to listeners. In this way, the sermon really becomes one point even though it may have several sub points. The main point is introduced with the big idea and FCF, and everything else relates to that one main point.

Third, root the application in Christ. Trace out the implications of the gospel that address the church's needs based on the text. Do not delve into moralism and make application directly from the Old Testament narrative. Likewise, do not settle for arriving at Christ without making application. Do both. Get to Christ in the text and then make application in a Christ-centered way. It is possible to use characters in the story as examples and preach Christ at the same time.

Fourth, exercise responsible freedom with how characters are used. It is not always clear how characters can be used. The congregation can relate to characters in a variety of way. Pastors can use characters as examples and as types of Christ. In one passage, characters can be a type, and in another, they function as an example. Doing the best to keep the author's intent in mind along with the character's actions and God's actions in the text, responsible freedom can be used.

Fifth, when struggling to make application, preach Christ and root the application in Christ. As long as the gospel influences the application, there is an opportunity for life change. All the pastors viewed preaching Christ as application because when people encounter Jesus and his grace, they can never be the same again.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study on how pastors make application from RH Old Testament narrative sermons has been very broad because it explores both the hermeneutical side of application and the practical side of application. A lot of topics related to application arose that deserve to be treated in much fuller detail. Further studies can be done on these topics.

Future scholars could study narrative style sermons. Telling the story in certain ways draws the listeners into the story. Listeners can better see their life experiences in light of what the character or characters face. Sermon styles that include more story telling could enable stronger application.

Another suggestion is to study the hermeneutics behind using characters as examples or types. Pastors are not always confident that they are using characters

correctly. Studying characters as types or examples and how they relates to application could benefit pastors.

Conclusion

This study explored how pastors make application from RH Old Testament narrative sermons. The literature review and the pastor interviews provided many principles that can help pastors make stronger application. These principles ranged from practical matters, such as listening to pastors who preach Christ, to hermeneutical matters that concern how and when pastors can use characters. Many answers were given, and many more questions were raised. The pastors in the study often did not know exactly how to use characters and admitted there might be more than one way to use characters, depending on the congregation's needs. This study began with some ambiguity, and it ends with some ambiguity.

A couple of things are clear. Pastors must make application in a Christ-centered way and characters can be used in ways that relate to the congregation's needs. There are clear principles that help pastors; these principles have been summarized in chapter four and discussed in chapter five.

At the same time, questions remain regarding the extent of characters being used as examples and whether or not an entire sermon can be built off of a narrative's sub-point. The pastors in the interview wrestled with those issues. And the person reading this dissertation possibly is wrestling with those issues too, hoping to find answers. Pastors should use responsible freedom when using characters as examples for application points in the sermon. This responsible freedom could potentially lead one pastor in a sermon on 1 Kings 16 to make Christ-centered application that connects with the audience's

sanctification. In doing so, Elijah would be their example of how God cuts them down to size. This responsible freedom could also potentially lead another pastor to make Christ-centered application, saying God's word is alive even when the situation looks bleak. Elijah then would not be an example.

Though responsible freedom allows some ambiguity to remain, it perhaps is the only way to avoid moralistic pitfalls or application-less redemptive historical preaching. This responsible freedom seeks to practice the principles gleaned from Hebrews 11 and 1 Corinthians 10. These passages used characters as examples while remaining Christ-centered.

This responsible freedom forces pastors to struggle with the text. The pastors in the study often were uncertain in how to relate a character to the congregation. But through persevering in study, paying attention to how the narrative shows Christ, or focusing on how the narrative relates to real life, the pastors moved forward. In some way, they made application based on the characters, and they made application in a Christ-centered. Despite all ambiguity, the two greatest concerns regarding application were how can the congregation sees themselves in the story and how application is made in Christ-centered way. As long as those concerns are met, the pastor has a lot of freedom.

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