PASTORAL PREACHING: A REFORMATION AND REDEFINITION

OF A PASTOR'S CALL TO PREACH FOR THE

PURPOSE OF SANCTIFICATION

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by

Dustin Boe Nelson
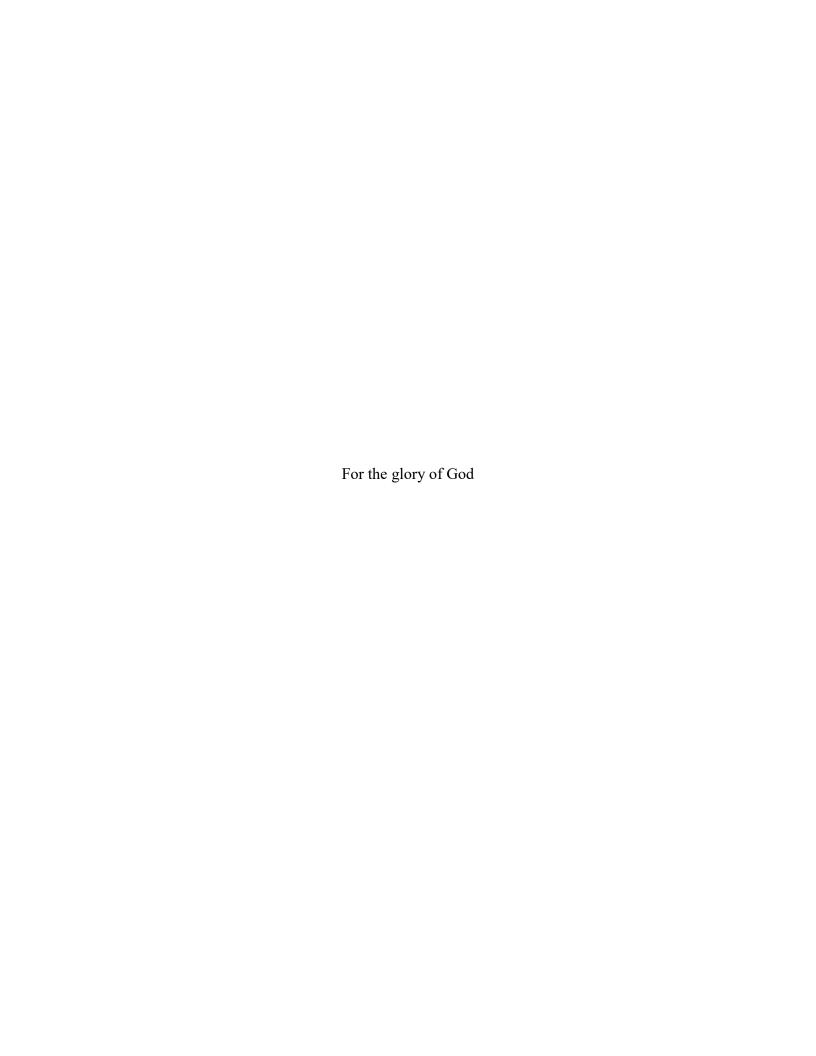
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APPROVAL SHEET

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Dustin Boe Nelson

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For the glory of God

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PREFACE

       The production of a dissertation does not happen in a vacuum. Throughout the last several years of seminars and papers, life has continued with both its ups and downs. Since starting the doctoral program in 2013, my family and I have experienced the great joys of beginning a new role in ministry at Fellowship of Champions Church and welcoming our son Barry Reed into our family of five. During this same time, we have experienced great sadness in the death of our baby Charlotte, and chaos as our home flooded during Hurricane Harvey. In all these situations we have sought to embody the words of David: "I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps 34:1). The Lord has used these past years to shape who I am as a preacher and writer. I hope that through these trials God has shaped the application I use in my sermons. No longer do I want to ignore the hurt of those sitting in the pews. No longer do I want to just provide information for them to download into their brains. I hope to bring the Scriptures to them in such a way that it changes all of who they are, so that they might think, feel, and do to the glory of God.

       I am most thankful to my wife, Caroline, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and sacrifice enabled me to persevere to the end. I am grateful to our two oldest children, Norah and Wyatt, for patiently waiting for Dad to finish school. Words cannot express my gratitude to Fellowship of Champions Church and its elders for their continued support and encouragement from the moment I began serving there in 2014. I am blessed to serve at a church that loves and supports both the pastor and his family.

       I appreciate all of the resources available to me at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am incredibly grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Hershael York,

My hope is that the work started in this dissertation will be further developed by others as the biblical counseling movement continues forth and as pastors seek to develop biblically-based application. I pray that God will take what is written here and use it for His glory and the sanctification of His people.

<div align="right">Dustin Nelson</div>

Spring, Texas

May 2019

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: PASTORAL PREACHING

In *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process,* theologian and pastor Jay E. Adams presents Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 as an outline for Christian counselors to follow: "If they would help people change in ways that please God."[1] From this passage, Adams argues that Scripture has two uses: to bring about salvation and for teaching, conviction, correction, and disciplined training in righteousness. These two uses of the Scriptures correspond to two aspects or stages of pastoral ministry: evangelism and edification.[2] The primary purpose of Adams' work is to explain and demonstrate how counselors are to lead believers through the four facets of edification clearly delineated in the 2 Timothy passage. Before embarking on this study, Adams makes a simple statement concerning 2 Timothy 3:14-17 that could potentially reform current understandings of pastoral preaching:

> The passage must not be limited to change brought about in counseling. Clearly, the entire ministry of the Word is under consideration. That ministry is twofold: public (preaching) and private (counseling), as Paul elsewhere asserts (Acts 20:20). While pastors must not lose sight of that truth, in this book our attention is given to the counseling ministry alone.[3]

Adams' assumption is simple and yet profound. He argues that the ministry of the Word consists of two halves: counseling and preaching. Counseling makes up the

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[1] Jay E. Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 10.

[2] Adams does not use the word *sanctification*, but writes, "Believers must be built up in their faith by changing from sinful to righteous ways." Ibid., 12. Adams uses the word *edification* instead of *sanctification*, and later writes that the goal of edification is sanctification. Ibid., 13. The term *sanctification* sufficiently describes this process.

[3] Ibid., 15.

private half of the ministry of the Word while preaching makes up the public half. The setting, private or public, determines whether the use of the Word is counseling or preaching. In both halves, the Scriptures are used for either the purpose of evangelism of the lost or sanctification of the believer. This dissertation defines pastoral preaching as preaching in the context of a local congregation for the primary purpose of sanctification by exploring the biblical evidence of the pastor as a shepherd and the Scriptures' emphasis on the sanctification of all believers.[4] Thus, it positions itself as an extension of Adams' original project.

The purpose of pastoral preaching is best understood when considered in light of Scripture's use of the shepherd metaphor for which "pastor" and "pastoral preaching" get their name. The shepherd metaphor is found in both the Old and New Testaments and is used to describe God's shepherding relationship to His people as the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). In addition, it describes certain men's shepherding relationship to small groups of God's people as undershepherds. The very nature of a metaphor "assumes cultural competence."[5] Timothy Laniak proposes that the shepherding metaphor needed no explanation, because the Jewish people as well as the early church existed in a "pastoral economy" where virtually everyone had some degree of familiarity with the shepherd's work.[6] However, the same cannot be said for all contemporary pastors and students of the Bible. Therefore, the role of a pastor and the purpose of pastoral preaching cannot be

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[4] The primary purpose of sanctification in pastoral preaching does not mean that sermons in a local congregation setting will not be evangelistic or contain evangelistic calls. Sanctification can only occur through the power of the Spirit in the already converted. Evangelism is essential to assure listeners have the power to grow in sanctification. However, in a local congregation setting, the pastor will primarily be preaching to professing born again believers, therefore making it necessary that his sermons primarily focus on sanctification.

[5] Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 42.

[6] Ibid., 46.

understood and accurately defined apart from exploring the Bible's use and cultural context of the shepherd metaphor.

The use of the shepherd metaphor in Scripture reveals a hierarchy of command as well as the source of its purpose. The undershepherd answers to and serves the Chief Shepherd. His role is an extension of the will and desires of the Chief Shepherd. The next step, therefore, in defining pastoral preaching is to ascertain the Chief Shepherd's primary expectation of His flock. The Old and New Testaments each contain hundreds of commands from God for His people. These commands are personal and interpersonal, individual as well as societal. Yet all of these commands come back to the Chief Shepherd's expectation and goal of sanctification.[7] In the Old Testament, God called His people to be holy as He is holy (Lev 11:44, 20:26). The New Testament presents Jesus as the example which all believers are to follow and emulate (1 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29). The Chief Shepherd's expectation of His people is sanctification and should define pastoral preaching and the pastor's goal in preaching.

Defining pastoral preaching in terms of the shepherd metaphor's purpose of sanctification raises a host of challenging questions. What is the primary preaching responsibility of a pastor as an undershepherd? Is God's command to "feed the flock" defined as or limited to the communication of the meaning of the text? In other words, has a pastor preached pastorally if he has accurately and even passionately preached the meaning of the text to his congregation? How does the purpose of sanctification determine the content of a sermon? Should pastoral preaching be informed or shaped by other pastoral ministries, namely biblical counseling?[8] This dissertation addresses these

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[7] This dissertation does not identify every command given in the Old and New Testaments, but a significant number of commands have been evaluated and compared to the Chief Shepherd's expectation and goal of sanctification.

[8] Different forms of "Christian" counseling have existed and continue to be born. The form of Christian counseling argued for in this dissertation is biblical counseling founded by Jay Adams. This form of counseling must not be confused with *integrationalism* or *Christian psychotherapy*. For resources on biblical counseling, see Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand

complicated issues and more as it defines pastoral preaching, specifically the pastor's call to preaching that encourages sanctification.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that pastoral preaching is any preaching in the setting of a local congregation where the pastor communicates the meaning of the text and properly applies it to the human experience of the listeners, thus participating in God's call for the sanctification of His people.[9] To explain this thesis, this section gives a brief description of each aspect of pastoral preaching: (1) insufficient approaches to pastoral preaching, 2) the shepherd metaphor, 3) the biblical command of sanctification, 4) the relationship between pastoral preaching and biblical counseling, and 5) essential elements of pastoral preaching.

Much of the concern that conservative evangelical preachers have with the concept of pastoral preaching is that its meaning is largely associated with the preaching of Harry Emerson Fosdick, who did not hold to the sufficiency of the Scriptures and who actively integrated psychological developments into his sermons.[10] Fosdick clearly

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Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); Heath Lambert and David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); John F. MacArthur, Wayne A. Mack, and Master's College Faculty, *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically,* 6th ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005); David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2010).

[9] This dissertation relies on the definition of *human experience* put forth by Jeremy Pierre: Caring for people requires understanding the delicate interplay between the internal responses of people's hearts and the external factors of their situation. In other words, people are designed with a dynamic response system that interacts with the various components of their situation. If counselors do not carefully consider the interchange between the two, they will not be able to adequately address what needs to change. (Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart of Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* [Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016], 9)

[10] Fosdick found himself in the middle of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy when he delivered the sermon "Shall the Fundamentalist Win?" He believed that the modernist position offered freedom of spiritual exploration, Christian liberty, which the fundamentalist position lacked. The fundamentalists demanded acceptance of old ideas, he argued, over conversations of the relevance or accuracy of those ideas. Fundamentalists responded to Fosdick by calling him a "heretic" and "Modernism's Moses." Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), vii.

communicated his position on preaching in his article "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" first published by *Harper's Magazine* in 1928.[11] Fosdick proposed that the problem with preaching is that most sermons are uninteresting. Speaking of expositional preachers, Fosdick writes,

> They take a passage from Scripture and, proceeding on the assumption that the people attending church that morning are deeply concerned about what the passage means, they spend their half hour or more on historical exposition of the verse or chapter, ending with some appended practical application to the auditors. Could any procedure be more surely predestined to dullness and futility?[12]

His solution to the dull, text-based sermon was a sermon that started with a subject that interested the congregation, namely, the listeners and their problems. He observed that within every congregation each individual was dealing with some personal problems.[13] They have real needs, and a sermon should be crafted to meet those needs. In addition, Fosdick believed that conservative expositional sermons were ineffective because even if they tried to solve the listener's problems, their theological conservative approach would fail to reach the modern mind which had moved on from orthodox views of Scripture.[14] With the rise of modernism, most people no longer believed in many long-held religious categories. Fosdick's method was birthed out of a conviction that ministers to this new generation of thinkers must have an intelligent way of answering the doubts of this group. He believed that modern preachers "should throw on the problem all the light he can find

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[11] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" *Harper's Magazine* 157 (July 1928): 133-11. The article has since been republished. See Mike Graves, *What's the Matter with Preaching?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 7-19.

[12] Graves, *What's the Matter with Preaching?*, 9.

[13] Edmund Holt Linn, *Preaching as Counseling: The Unique Method of Harry Emerson Fosdick* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1966), 15.

[14] Fosdick believed that people of a modern age no longer believe in "miracles, demons, fiat creation, apocalyptic hopes, eternal hell, or ethical conceptions of Jehovah that shock the modern conscience." He preached under the guiding principle that modern people should not have to throw away their minds in order to be a Christian. Fosdick's solution to this dilemma is the New Approach to preaching, which he details in *The Modern Use of the Bible*. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: MacMillan, 1927), 5.

in the Scripture or anywhere else," unlike the fundamentalist who required complete acceptance of doctrine despite logical inconsistencies and rational doubts.[15] Many preachers and scholars have continued to build upon Fosdick's pastoral preaching as problem-centered preaching. Others have expanded and recast pastoral preaching as needs-centered preaching while still holding to Fosdick's insufficiency of Scripture and integration of psychological methods.[16] In recent years, Richard Caldwell, Abraham Kuruvilla, and Jason Meyer have used the term "pastoral preaching" in the context of the sufficiency of Scripture, but with little agreement between them about what it means for a pastor to preach a pastoral sermon.[17] The exploration of these insufficiently defined approaches to pastoral preaching provides the backdrop for the definition proposed by this dissertation.

The terms *pastor* and *pastoral* come from the New Testament's use of the shepherd metaphor, but the shepherd metaphor is extensively used in both testaments and primarily applies to God.[18] God is the "Shepherd of Israel" who cares for His sheep in

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[15] Graves, *What's the Matter with Preaching?*, 10.

[16] For needs-centered approaches to pastoral preaching, see Harold T. Bryson and James C. Taylor, *Building Sermons to Meet People's Needs* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980); Edgar N. Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976); Tony Guthrie, *Guide to Effective Pastoral Preaching* (n.p., 2014), Kindle.

[17] Caldwell argues that anyone who hopes to preach pastorally will ascribe to eight key convictions: authority, accountability, adoration, awareness, accuracy, affection, ambassadorship, and adversity. Application is listed within the discussion of a few of these convictions, but it is not handled separately or even as the main thing to be accomplished within any one conviction. Meyer calls his preaching "pastoral," but defines that form of preaching as preaching done only before a local congregation. Kuruvilla comes the closest to arguing for a form of pastoral preaching being proposed in this dissertation, but he falls short in providing the details of what makes a sermon pastoral. He provides the goal, but not how to accomplish that goal in a helpful way. See Richard Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching: Expository Preaching for Pastoral Work* (San Bernardino: Rainer, 2017), 51. Jason C. Meyer and John Piper, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 222. Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 120.

[18] Timothy Laniak argues that the metaphor of shepherd is present in every single book in the Bible:
Imagine the great themes of the Bible as rivers, many of which begin in the lofty heights of the Pentateuch. A particular river sometimes comes into full view as rushing rapids. At other times it moves in secret through subterranean passages. Wherever the water flows there is movement and

the Old Testament (Ps 80:1; 23:1). Charles Jefferson argues that in the New Testament "Shepherd" was Jesus' preferred title. He writes, "Jesus never called Himself a priest, or a preacher, or a rector, or a clergyman, or a bishop, or an elder, but He liked to think of Himself as a shepherd."[19] The importance of the shepherd metaphor for the church is that pastors have been given the title of shepherds under the authority of God who have been given responsibility to watch over God's flock (1 Pet 5:1-5). Therefore, the shepherd metaphor not only provides a description of God's interactions with His people, but it also provides a description of the pastor's responsibility to lead God's flock. The exploration of the Scriptures' use of the shepherd metaphor is essential for the proper definition of pastoral preaching.

This dissertation proposes that the primary responsibilities of the pastor-shepherd is the feeding of God's people for the purpose of growth into Christ-likeness. Growth into Christ-likeness is capsulized in the doctrine of sanctification. This doctrine contains three categories: definitive sanctification, progressive sanctification, and ultimate sanctification. Where preaching is interested with all three categories of sanctification, pastoral preaching is chiefly concerned with progressive sanctification. At regeneration, believers have been set free from their slavery to sin. Even so, sin still remains in their lives and Scripture commands believers to cease sinning (Rom 6:12). Expressed positively, God commands His people to be holy as He is holy (Lev 11:44). Progressive sanctification is the process of replacing sinful elements of the believer's

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sound, but at the more remote depths it requires keener powers of observation and better tools to locate it. (Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 24)

The problem Laniak faces is that some books of the Bible do not contain the shepherd metaphor. In these instances, Laniak has to rely on previously mentioned characteristics of the shepherd metaphor. Just because a similar characteristic is mentioned does not mean that the author is developing this metaphor. Ultimately, the metaphor does not have to be mentioned in every book of the Bible to be prominent or of value.

[19] Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd: The Privileges and Responsibilities of Pastoral Leadership* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2006), 11.

existence with elements that reflect a person's regenerated identity in Christ.[20] R. L. Dabney describes this process as a renovation of the heart: "We regard sanctification then as advancing that renovation of man's heart, which regeneration begins."[21] Sanctification occurs through the enablement of the Holy Spirit primarily by the means of the truth of the Word of God.[22] Therefore, pastoral preaching is sanctification-centered preaching; preaching that communicates both the message of the Word and how to live out that message.

In the last half-century, multiple challenges were brought against preaching, leading some conservative biblical scholars to declare that preaching was in crisis. The biblical author's original intent came under attack by the rise of modernism, relativism, and other interpretative techniques that put the reader in a position of authority on par or exceeding that of the original author.[23] During this same time period, counseling within the church experienced crisis and subsequently a reformation in the form of the Biblical Counseling Movement ushered in by Jay Adams' seminal work *Competent to Counsel*. Heath Lambert writes of Adams' contribution: "It was the role of Adams to begin to restore to the church an understanding that it had held before the American Civil War, namely, that counseling was within the realm of the church every bit as much as its

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[20] The sanctification of a believer is not limited to certain parts of the believer, but involves the transformation of the whole person. Scriptural support can be given for the sanctification of the mind (Col 3:10; Phil 1:9; Rom 12:2), emotions/affections (Eph 4:31; Gal 5:22; 1 John 2:15), will (Phil 2:13); spirit (2 Cor 7:1; 1 Cor 7:34); and physical bodies (Rom 6:12; 1 Thess 4:4; 5:23; 1 Cor 6:19-20).

[21] Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 674.

[22] For a strong defense of the use of the Word for sanctification, see James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 418.

[23] For two excellent works on the crisis within preaching, see Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); and William J. Larkin, Jr., *Cultural and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

counterpart in public ministry, preaching."[24] Pastoral preaching and biblical counseling share a common theological foundation in Scripture. In addition, they share the same purpose in bringing the receiver of their ministry into Christ-likeness. Unfortunately, many preachers have not viewed pastoral preaching and biblical counseling as complementary. This dissertation proposes that not only are preaching and biblical counseling complementary, but pastoral preaching can better accomplish its purpose of sanctification through the study of advancements in biblical counseling.

Since Adams, resources in the biblical counseling field have burgeoned. An examination of these resources reveals practices that promote sanctification and can be integrated effectively into pastoral preaching. This dissertation relates discussed biblical counseling practices under the Read, Reflect, Relate, and Renew framework created by counselor and theologian Jeremy Pierre.[25] I am not arguing that all sermons contain every biblical counseling practice proposed in this dissertation, just as a counselor would not use all practices in a particular counseling session. However, I am arguing that the Read, Reflect, Relate, and Renew framework provides the pastor with a path for developing application that connects with the human experience and encourages sanctification.

Background

Before my final course for my Master of Divinity degree at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I had no interest in the topic of biblical counseling. I attended seminary to receive training in planting churches and leading congregations from the pulpit. My final course, "Introduction to Biblical Counseling," taught by adjunct professor Paul David Tripp, altered my perspective and personal mission in ministry. Prior to the course, I was not familiar with Tripp nor had I read any of his books. I now know that he is one of the most prolific writers and well-respected voices

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[24] Lambert and Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*, 36.

[25] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart of Daily Life,* 179.

of the Biblical Counseling Movement. Tripp's enthusiasm for helping people change into Christlikeness was inspiring.

After the course I began reading other biblical counseling resources, and as I immersed myself in biblical counseling thought and theory, a question continued to go through my mind: Why is there such a chasm between preaching and biblical counseling? Their goals are the same. Their foundation is the same. Yet, very few proponents of either ministry see a connection between these two ministries of the Word. My research into the matter led to the discouraging discovery that Fosdick had integrated counseling and preaching, but did so from a position I was unwilling to follow. While he was praised by liberal ministers, I could not accept his insufficient views of Scripture nor his reliance on popular psychology. The question remained unanswered until I read Jay Adams' previously mentioned comment concerning preaching and biblical counseling being complementary sides of the same coin; the ministry of the Word. In a conversation with Jay Adams, he confirmed the viability of this research topic, which solidified my desire to develop a biblical counseling-informed model of preaching: pastoral preaching.[26]

Relevance of Study

To understand the relevance for this dissertation, the current understanding of pastoral preaching and related topics must be considered. Evaluating the deficiencies in the current understanding of the topic confirms that pastoral preaching and the elements contained within are in need of being redefined with greater emphasis given to the purpose of sanctification and reliance on biblical counseling methods.

First, the term *pastoral preaching* is largely absent from leading conservative evangelical resources on preaching.[27] A possible reason for the absence of this term is

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[26] Jay Adams spoke with me by telephone in July of 2015. We discussed his writings on the ministry of the Word and the idea for this dissertation for roughly one hour.

[27] The leading conservative evangelical resources on preaching are excellent for the exegesis and delivery of the meaning of the text. However, due to the lack of emphasis and use of pastoral preaching,

its strong connection to Fosdick's problem-centered approach to preaching and modernistic view of Scripture. Only recently have preaching resources begun to mention preaching in the context of a congregation as pastoral preaching, but among them is little agreement on the central elements or definition of pastoral preaching. Pastoral preaching needs a clear definition that reflects its primary purpose.

Second, the popular use of *expository preaching* over *pastoral preaching* has deemphasized the purpose of sanctification in preaching. While these two terms are very similar, the dissimilarity is revealing. The term "expository" communicates a primary concern for the text, while the term "pastoral" communicates a primary concern for the pastor's ministry to the local congregation as shepherd. A cursory evaluation of expository preaching resources confirms this concern for the text. A majority of the authors' content details how the preacher exegetes and communicates the meaning of the text. Instruction on application is present in these resources, nevertheless, with sanctification being the primary goal of preaching to a local congregation, application in these resources is grossly underemphasized in both detail and amount of content.[28] I. Howard Marshall describes the situation perfectly:

> Discussions on biblical hermeneutics have given us a fair amount of guidance on how to elucidate what the text said—its original meaning and significance for its original readers. They have not done a lot to help us to make the passage from what the text said to what the text says.[29]

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they lack the details of how to do sanctification-encouraging application argued for in this dissertation. See Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); John F. MacArthur and Master's Seminary Faculty, *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

[28] The purpose of this dissertation is not to argue for or against expository preaching as a method of preaching, but to show that expository preaching to a local congregation with the proper emphasis on sanctification is pastoral preaching.

[29] I. Howard Marshall, "The Use of the New Testament in Christian Ethics," *Expository Times* 105, no. 5 (February 1994): 136.

The lack of emphasis on application may lead some preachers to mistakenly view application for sanctification as a peripheral element of preaching instead of the purpose of preaching.

Third, the limited attention given to application in preaching resources has resulted in a mysterious understanding of its development and a neglect of its use. Reflecting upon the scarcity of information on application in hermeneutics textbooks and major commentary series, William W. Klein proposes, "Perhaps many assume that sound application is more 'caught than taught.' This is probably true, but sound application often seems hard to find, much less to catch!"[30] This "caught than taught" approach has likely contributed to many chapters on application declaring in general terms that application must be "creative, concrete, and compelling" while giving the reader little explanation on how to make application meet any of these criteria nor how these criteria encourage sanctification.[31] Some preachers have settled for preaching sermons that are purely informational. Hershael York identifies preaching informational sermons as one of the two errors in preaching. He argues that "factoid sermons" are sermons that even the devil can agree with: "Merely knowing the truth is something that even the devil can do. . . . The difference is that Satan never acts on the truth."[32] The great pressure to determine the meaning of the text and the lack of emphasis and tools for the development of application coupled with the weekly demands of pastoral ministry has created a perfect storm for sermons to be the mere transformation of biblical information with little to no

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[30] William K. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert I. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation,* rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 479.

[31] Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching*, 120.

[32] Hershael York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 12.

application, or at best, the same general application week to week.[33] This dissertation develops a framework for creating application with the purpose of sanctification.

Fourth, biblical practices for sanctification are already being developed within the pastoral ministry of biblical counseling. Biblical counselor Ed Welch points out that biblical counseling and preaching are complementary ways of proclaiming Christ.[34] Others within biblical counseling note that the two ministries of the Word share the same theological convictions and biblical foundations.[35] Even so, many within homiletics view preaching not as complementary to counseling, but as superior to and separate from counseling.[36] These unnecessary divisions give the impression that preaching cannot benefit from biblical counseling practices. In addition, Fosdick's "personal counseling on a group scale" caused contemporary preachers to resist integrating counseling practices into preaching.[37] What Fosdick meant, however, by integrating counseling into preaching was the use of modern advancements of psychotherapy in his preaching. His method incorrectly elevated modern psychology over biblical truth. Biblical counseling is markedly different from the form of counseling advocated by Fosdick in that biblical

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[33] Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 2.

[34] Welch gives one distinction between preaching and counseling. Preaching is the public proclamation of Jesus, while counseling is the private proclamation of Jesus. "In pastoral ministry, the public and personal ministry of the Word are the two prominent ways that the work of Christ is proclaimed. Both are important, though counseling, either formal or informal, takes more time because we talk with people more often than we preach to people." Ed Welch, "Preaching or Counseling?" *CareLeader,* January 5, 2017, accessed January 5, 2018, http://www.careleader.org/preaching-counseling/.

[35] For more information about the theological foundations of biblical counseling, see Jay E. Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); and Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016).

[36] Welch, "Preaching or Counseling?"

[37] O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 667.

counseling is a theological discipline containing practices for sanctification which could prove beneficial in the development of application for sermons.

Fifth, the need for sanctification-centric pastoral preaching is most painfully obvious in the liberal approaches to preaching that may have evolved to fill the gap left by incomplete expository preaching that excels at communicating the meaning of the text, but fails to provide meaningful application for sanctification. According to Fosdick, his "project method" of preaching to felt needs was developed upon the conviction that "only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites."[38] Fred Craddock makes a similar point in his discussion of the New Homiletic: "Speaking that is 'about' God or Jesus or related themes but is not 'to' the hearers may be interesting and may even be followed by a cordial discussion, but it is not preaching."[39] William Sloane Coffin, Jr., based his social action preaching on the belief that to improve society is the Christian's duty and "preaching could help effect such change."[40] While these three homiletical methods differ greatly, the need for application that results in real action and change is at their core. Pastoral preaching maintains the theological convictions of expository preaching while properly emphasizing the steps of sanctification demanded by the passage being exposited.

Dissertation Contributions

This dissertation advances the discussion by injecting a sanctification-centered approach to pastoral preaching into the contemporary discussion on preaching. Several distinctive features of this treatment of pastoral preaching differentiate this treatment from other approaches to the subject. First, this dissertation offers a definition of preaching in

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[38] Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 668.

[39] Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching,* 5th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 18.

[40] Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 735.

the context of a local congregation as a special form of preaching with a specific objective. Beyond a few recently released resources referencing pastoral preaching, nothing like this study is available in current literature. While many resources on preaching handle hermeneutics, sermon design, and delivery, none are a comprehensive resource that addresses preaching in the specific context of a local congregation.[41] Considering that most preachers preach the bulk of their sermons in this context, this void needs to be filled.

Second, the pastoral preaching that this dissertation describes contributes to contemporary discussions on the purpose of preaching to a local congregation. Many of the current conservative evangelical resources on preaching focus primarily on the preacher's handling and communication of the biblical author's original meaning. This emphasis is necessary, but due to the attention given to it, application for the purpose of sanctification has not received the amount of attention it needs. However, the form of pastoral preaching argued for in this dissertation recognizes and affirms both the communication of the biblical author's original meaning and application for sanctification as essential to the preaching task. In short, a preacher has not accomplished the task of preaching to a local congregation without providing the congregation with application

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[41] Kuruvilla's recent work comes the closest to being a comprehensive resource on pastoral preaching. However, his work cannot be considered comprehensive because he does not detail how the preacher is to preach for the purpose of sanctification. Kuruvilla correctly argues that application is essential to pastoral preaching. He correctly argues that application comes from the text and should ultimately result in Christlikeness. What Kuruvilla's work lacks is not the determination of the application of a text, but the formation of biblical methods or steps that the listener would adopt to fully inculcate the application into his or her life. He only goes as far as giving examples of such steps and states that the preacher must offer specific ways to change and that those ways must be "creative, concrete, and compelling." In fairness to Kuruvilla, providing the reader with this level of detail falls outside of the stated scope of his work. He states in his introduction that the purpose of the book is to provide a vision for preaching, not the details of how to preach. "This vision of preaching simply exhorts that a sermon be biblical, pastoral, ecclesial, communicational, theological, applicational, conformational, doxological, and spiritual, without dogmatically quantifying each of these facts." Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching*, 11. He later writes, "It is an encouragement to preachers to keep traveling toward a broadly outlined goal ("vision") rather than arrive at some precisely pinpointed destination ("definition")." Ibid., 120. Similar comments can be made of Caldwell's work. Caldwell argues that he is providing a "mindset" for pastoral preaching, but not a method to accomplish pastoral preaching: "When I write about pastoral preaching I am not writing about a particular method for preaching, but rather a God-ordained mindset for preaching." In addition, Caldwell does not list application among his key convictions that contributes to this mindset. Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching*, 101.

that encourages sanctification; even if that preacher has properly communicated, interpreted, and illustrated the biblical author's meaning. Without application that encourages sanctification, the sermon falls short of its purpose in the local congregation, but pastoral preaching detailed in this dissertation can provide a helpful corrective to preaching approaches that fall short of the purpose of preaching to a local congregation.

Third, this dissertation offers a biblical counseling inspired framework for the development of application. Practices for sanctification abound in biblical counseling. However, no one has made an effort to integrate those practices into the task of preaching. This dissertation makes that contribution. Overall, this dissertation is warranted because of the important role that preachers perform in the sanctification of God's people as well as the helpful methods of application this dissertation provides to accomplish that role.

Though little has been written specifically on the topic of pastoral preaching, adequate resources were available to research the subject. Previous research on the subject for seminar papers confirmed the availability of needed resources. Locally, the Lanier Theological Library has most of the primary and secondary material that was needed to research this topic. In addition, the distant student services and inter-library loan system of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library allowed me access to other resources not immediately available. My personal library contained many key works on the subject as well. With these resources of research material, all the relevant resources were available for this dissertation.

Methodology

This dissertation defines pastoral preaching through a historical and biblical analysis of pastoral preaching and related themes. First, it evaluates approaches to pastoral preaching in recent history that have shaped its methods and goals. This evaluation includes rationale for how these approaches fall short of the definition of pastoral preaching proposed by this dissertation. Second, it addresses biblical teaching about the purpose of preaching through a study of the shepherd metaphor. Third, it

discusses the doctrine of sanctification and how that doctrine shapes the methods pastoral preaching employs. Fourth, it explores the foundational elements and practices of the biblical counseling movement. Lastly, it proposes an applicational framework for encouraging sanctification.

Since this dissertation covers history, biblical themes, and doctrine, it employs a wide variety of resources to develop its argument. Research for the historical analysis of pastoral preaching and the biblical counseling movement makes use of primary and secondary sources. The exploration of the shepherd metaphor used in the Bible and the doctrine of sanctification begins with the Scripture in the original languages and English, because the Bible is the authoritative, inspired, and inerrant source on these topics. Commentaries provide further insight during the interpretation of specific biblical passages. Throughout the treatment of pastoral preaching and related topics, it incorporates articles and reviews from journals.

Though this dissertation seeks to be thorough in its research and argumentation, several limitations restrict its scope. First, the historical description and evaluation of pastoral preaching only covers the most prominent approaches to pastoral preaching from Harry Emerson Fosdick to the present. The purpose of this section is not to give a detailed history of pastoral preaching, but to survey the views most influential of the current understanding and methods of pastoral preaching. Second, the section on the Bible's use of the shepherd metaphor is unable to address all texts from the Scriptures that reference or allude to the shepherd metaphor because its specific purpose is to develop a survey of how the shepherd metaphor determines the purpose of pastoral preaching. Third, the section on the doctrine of sanctification is not an exhaustive systematic theology of the doctrine, but instead discusses the major features of the doctrine that illuminate the purpose of pastoral preaching. Fourth, the discussion on the biblical counseling movement and its implications for pastoral preaching will require updates as the movement is still

developing with a steady flow of new resources being added. The limitations of this project confirm that much research remains in this area of study.

Outline

This dissertation's purpose is to offer a new definition of pastoral preaching that essentially is tied to sanctification in definition and methods. The following outline offers the structure for this dissertation.

Chapter 1 introduces the subject of pastoral preaching by detailing the primary influence of its perceived purpose and methods by contemporary evangelical preachers. It details how this dissertation emerges from Jay Adams' proposal that the ministry of the Word consists of two halves: preaching and biblical counseling. It proposes that an understanding of the biblical metaphor of shepherding is necessary to establish the purpose and goals of pastoral preaching. In addition, chapter 1 offers the thesis for the dissertation, which argues that pastoral preaching is any preaching in the setting of a local congregation where the pastor communicates the meaning of the text and properly applies it to the human experience of the listeners, thus participating in God's call for the sanctification of His people. Next, it positions the approach to pastoral preaching used here among contemporary treatments of preaching and pastoral preaching. It discusses the methodology used and concludes with a chapter-by-chapter summary of material covered in the dissertation.

Chapter 2 presents a summary and critique of two categories of pastoral preaching that have emerged in recent history: problem-centered and needs-centered preaching. The problem-centered approach to pastoral preaching developed out of the notion that the members of the congregation came to church to find answers for the problems confronting them. This approach encourages preachers to use whatever material available to them—biblical, topical, and illustrative—to address the problem and accomplish transformation. The needs-centered approaches to pastoral preaching vary significantly with more than a few following closely to the problem-centered

approach. The foundation of needs-centered preaching is that those in the congregation are damaged on the level of their souls and the role of the preacher is to provide soul-healing through the sermon. This chapter concludes with a summary of both positions that affirms elements that should remain in pastoral preaching and makes recommendations for what is missing.

Chapter 3 seeks to determine the purpose of pastoral preaching through the exploration of the Scriptures' use of the shepherd metaphor. Not all homileticians agree that application is required for a sermon to be considered a faithful exposition of a text.[42] An evaluation of the shepherd metaphor shines new light on this debate. In the Old Testament, the shepherd metaphor was used to describe the leadership of Moses, King David, and others who oversaw the people of God. In Ezekiel, God declared judgment against the shepherds of Israel who neglected their responsibilities to God's flock. In the Psalms, God is the shepherd who tends to His sheep. Jesus' concern for the lost extended the shepherd metaphor into the New Testament. He had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. Furthermore, in the book of John, Jesus identified Himself as the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for His sheep. In John 21, Jesus commissioned Peter to feed His sheep. Likewise, Peter, in 1 Peter 5, used similar language in exhorting elders to shepherd the flock of God. The shepherd metaphor is used throughout the Scriptures and an examination of its usage is essential for understanding the passages. After a biblical survey of the shepherd metaphor and an exploration of key passages, the chapter summarizes the main responsibilities of the shepherd and identifies those responsibilities of particular importance to pastoral preaching. The chapter concludes with sanctification as the primary purpose of pastoral preaching, thus making application a necessary element.

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[42] For an introduction into the debate on the necessity of application in preaching, see Hershael W. York and Scott A. Blue, "Is Application Necessary in the Expository Sermon?" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 70-84.

Chapter 4 details the doctrine of sanctification. The doctrine of sanctification contains three categories: definitive sanctification, progressive sanctification, and ultimate sanctification. The chapter largely handles progressive sanctification since pastoral preaching is primarily about the spiritual development of a believer. At regeneration believers are free from their slavery to sin, but sin still remains in their lives. Progressive sanctification is the process of replacing sinful desires, thoughts, and actions with desires, thoughts, and actions that reflect a person's regenerated identity in Christ. Progressive sanctification is primarily a work of the triune God. However, believers co-operate in this work through yielding to God and actively mortifying sin and practicing holiness. The aim of progressive sanctification is the transformation of the whole man. Next, the chapter handles the primary and secondary means of progressive sanctification. The primary means for the sanctification of believers is the truth found in the Word of God. Secondary means are opportunities that believers have to implement the Word of God. All secondary means are subordinate to the Word of God and essentially are tied to it. Lastly, the chapter concludes with implications of the doctrine of sanctification for pastoral preaching.

Chapter 5 seeks to reconnect the preaching and counseling ministries of the Word by detailing their shared foundation and purpose. The chapter begins with the obstacles facing pastoral preaching. First, sermon application is the primary method for encouraging sanctification in the listener, but many preachers believe it to be the most difficult and trickiest, and therefore the most neglected part of sermon development. Second, many conservative evangelical preachers do not counsel the members of their congregation or see the difference between biblical counseling and secular forms of counseling. Next the chapter explores the historical rise of the biblical counseling movement as well as the factors that lead to its formation. Then, it details the theological foundations of biblical counseling and its practices for sanctification. From this analysis it makes clear that preaching and biblical counseling are two halves of the ministry of the

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Word and can therefore be of benefit to each other. Brief attention is given to biblical

counseling practices. The chapter concludes with a summary and implications of

pastoral preaching being part of the full ministry of the Word.

Chapter 6 discusses how certain biblical counseling practices used in pastoral

preaching can accomplish the purpose of encouraging sanctification. Biblical counseling

practices may vary based on the biblical counselor, but many practices fall into useful

categories for pastoral preaching.[43] This chapter uses Jeremy Pierre's model for biblical

counseling to form a biblical framework for application in preaching. The chapter

concludes with examples of the framework applied to three unique preaching contexts.

Chapter 7 offers a conclusion to the dissertation that summarizes the

arguments established in the preceding chapters. It demonstrates that a biblical analysis

of the shepherd metaphor confirms sanctification as the purpose of pastoral preaching. It

affirms both preaching and biblical counseling as two sides of the same coin and that

preachers should not be wary of using biblical counseling approaches for sanctification

in preaching. Finally, it suggests areas for further study to the topic of pastoral

preaching.

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[43] Some of the discussed methods can already be found in preaching resources, but biblical counseling resources will help develop and enhance the method for pastoral preaching. For example, the method of presenting the indicative prior to the imperative is discussed by both Chapell and Kuruvilla in their respected works. Chapell writes, "In classic theological terms, this means that every imperative of Scripture rests on the indicative of our relationship with God, and the order is not reversible." Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 326. Similarly, Kuruvilla communicates the same concept through the terms "divine demand" and "obedience of faith": "What is critical is how the law is kept: the law of Christ describes law-keeping that is spiritual/Spirit-led (Rom 8:2-4)—the obedience of faith." Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 202.

CHAPTER 2

INSUFFICIENT APPROACHES TO
PASTORAL PREACHING

Introduction

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were monumental for the reshaping of pastoral preaching in the western church. Eric Johnson and Stanton Jones have identified two cultural shifts that contributed to this reshaping.[1] The first was the spread and acceptance of secularism that came with and survived long after the rise of modernism. They define secularism as "the tendency to empty culture of its religious significance, discourse, and symbols."[2] The rise of secularism resulted in a shift in the hierarchy of authority for both Christians and non-Christians. For secularized Christians, the Bible lost its place as the ultimate authority and was only authoritative in what was already believed to be true in the culture. Eric L. Mascall writes,

> The general criticism to which this secularisation of the Christian faith exposes itself is that it reduces the dialogue between Christianity and contemporary thought to a purely one-way process; there is no question of contemporary thought adapting itself to the Gospel, the Gospel must come into line entirely with contemporary thought.[3]

Naturally, the influence of secularization put the church in a position to be swayed by this "one-way" interaction with modern thought and practices. Outside of the church,

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[1] Eric L. Johnson and Stanton L. Jones were not writing about pastoral preaching but were writing about the debate of the level of integration between psychology and Christianity. Even so, their findings are helpful for an understanding of pastoral preaching, since pastoral preaching is largely shaped by Harry Emerson Fosdick, who was influenced by secularism and psychology.

[2] Eric L. Johnson and Stanton L. Jones, eds., *Psychology & Christianity: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000), 14.

[3] Eric L. Mascall, *The Secularisation of Christianity: An Analysis and a Critique* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1965), 7.

secularization resulted in an obsession with the self. Since God was no longer an essential element of the human experience—the aim of secularization—the secularists claimed that "the power to reach fullness is within."[4] That power is the power of reason, which liberated thinkers from the illusions and narrowminded thinking of past generations and empowered them through the sciences. Largely, western churches either retreated from secularization or, on varying levels, embraced it.

Secularization gave rise to the second cultural shift identified by Johnson and Jones: widespread acceptance and advancements in psychology. Psychology is the study of human behavior and it predates secularism, but it was during the age of secularism that psychology was reformed, excluding spiritual and biblical assumptions. Johnson and Jones note, "This mix of secularization and the application of scientific methods to the understanding of animal and human behavior, emotion, personality, and thought shaped the modern version of psychology."[5] This form of psychology, a psychology devoid of biblical presuppositions, was viewed by many as an authoritative replacement of the church, its leaders, and its doctrines. According to Johnson and Jones, in time, modern psychology became "institutionalized within the major academic settings of the day and accepted as the only legitimate versions of psychology and treatment for the soul."[6] Sociologist Philip Rieff refers to this ascension of psychology and its authority over the church as the "Triumph of the Therapeutic." He describes a cultural context where the church, as it was at that time, had lost its ability to impact culture in the realm of soul care:

> Preaching, which once communicated revelatory messages, is a dead art, wrapping empty packages in elaborate solecisms. The preachers have little of either controlling

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[4] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 8.

[5] Johnson and Jones, *Psychology & Christianity,* 15.

[6] Ibid., 31.

or releasing functions and retain therefore little power seriously to affect or alter the emergent control system. It is in this sense that the Christian and Jewish professionals have lost their spiritual preceptorships.[7]

In Rieff's estimation, as well as many others of his day, the church must change with the culture or die.

The cultural shift toward modernism resulted in two prominent positions within the western church represented in what is now known as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy.[8] Fundamentalists represented a firm commitment to the Bible as the final authority in life and the gospel message as the only means to wholeness in this life and the life to come. During their prominence, fundamentalists were also well known for what they were against. Historian George M. Marsden writes, "Fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and changing federation of co-belligerents united by their fierce opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought."[9] Modernists, on the other hand, embraced and integrated modernistic findings into their faith. Robert R. Mathisen notes that in 1924 modernism was defined as "the use of the methods of modern science to find, state and use the permanent and central values of inherited orthodoxy in meeting the needs of a modern world."[10] By 1925, the battles continued, but the war was won by the modernists as fundamentalists remained committed to their core convictions, but pulled away from cultural interaction. Marsden adds that the fundamentalists accepted

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[7] Philip Rieff and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006), 255.

[8] For select readings from some of the key figures from both sides of the controversy, see Robert R. Mathisen, *Critical Issues in American Religious History: A Reader* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).

[9] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

[10] Mathisen, *Critical Issues in American Religious History*, 549.

strong "sectarian or separatist tendencies" and assumed the role of outsiders in the culture.[11]

Where the fundamentalists refused to go, modernists, also known as mainline Protestants, were pleased to enter. Mainline Protestants experienced great successes throughout the twentieth century, with the height of their success, according to William B. Lawrence, coming between the years of 1930 and 1955. Lawrence refers to these decades as "the crest of the Protestant mainstream," and identifies the beginning of this crest with the dedication of Riverside Church of New York City, New York, on October 5, 1930.[12] Riverside was pastored by Harry Emerson Fosdick, a pastor who would be infamously labeled by fundamentalists as "modernism's Moses," and whose ideas and practices regarding the integration of psychology and counseling into the act of preaching would shape pastoral preaching for decades to come.[13] Thus, this study of the approaches to pastoral preaching begins with an in-depth look at the preaching of Fosdick. After Fosdick, the study explored other forms of pastoral preaching, some of which are a continuation of Fosdick's ideas, while others define pastoral preaching using completely different criteria. Each approach to pastoral preaching will be compared to the basis of evaluation proposed by this dissertation and detailed in the next section. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summation of why the evaluated approaches to pastoral preaching fail to qualify as pastoral preaching presented in this dissertation.

Basis for Evaluation

The following approaches to pastoral preaching are evaluated against the definition proposed in this dissertation: pastoral preaching is any preaching in the setting

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[11] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 6.

[12] William B. Lawrence, *Sundays in New York* (Evanston, IL: Scarecrow, 1996), 224-26.

[13] Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), preface.

of a local congregation where the pastor communicates the meaning of the text and properly applies it to the human experience of the listeners, thus participating in God's call for the sanctification of His people. This definition of pastoral preaching contains two essential elements, which are the standard for which the selected approaches to pastoral preaching are measured.

The first essential element of pastoral preaching is that the sermon communicates the meaning of the text. The words *meaning* and *text* are important to the correct understanding of this essential element. Each biblical text contains a single meaning intended by the original author. *Meaning*, as E. D. Hirsch defines it, is "that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent."[14] The meaning of the text is determined through the use of the historical-grammatical method. In this method of interpretation the interpreter seeks to understand the original author's meaning through a careful study of historical facts surrounding the writing of the text and a grammatical analysis of the text. The historical-grammatical method is the preferred method for understanding the author's original meaning, for as Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., argues, one of its foundational principles is that "words and sentences can have only one signification in one and the same connection."[15]

The meaning must be the author's intended meaning from the text, or it is unknowable. Speaking on this idea, the late theologian Milton S. Terry stated, "The moment we neglect this principle we drift out upon a sea of uncertainty and conjecture."[16] Unfortunately, modern interpreters in increasing numbers have decided to set sail upon

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[14] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity of Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 5.

[15] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 88.

[16] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017), 205.

this sea. Kaiser identifies this movement away from the author's original meaning from the text as a "crisis in hermeneutics" and adds that there is much at stake:

> Is the meaning of the text to be defined solely in terms of the *verbal* meaning of that text as those words were used by the Scriptural author? Or should the meaning of a text be partly understood in terms of "what it *now* means to me," the reader and interpreter? There hangs one of the great dilemmas of our age. And there also hang the fortunes of the authority of Scripture.[17]

In more recent years, the situation seems unchanged. Kevin J. Vanhoozer laments, "Today the context or location of the reader has become more significant for biblical interpretation than the context of the author."[18] Despite recent trends in biblical interpretation, the approaches to pastoral preaching are evaluated based upon their adherence to the original author's intended meaning determined through a historical-grammatical interpretation of the text.

The second essential element of pastoral preaching is that the sermon applies the meaning of the text to the human experience of the listeners. This dissertation uses biblical counselor Jeremy Pierre's understanding of "human experience" as he defines it in *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*. According to Pierre, the human experience is shaped by two realities: the dynamic heart of the individual and the context in which the individual lives. The dynamic heart of human experience contains three dimensions: thinking, wanting, and choosing. Pierre explains,

> The human heart responds cognitively, through rational processes based on knowledge and beliefs. It also responds affectively, through a framework of desires and emotions. It also responds volitionally, through a series of choices reflecting the willful commitments of the heart. Thinking, feeling, and choosing are complex, dynamic heart responses.[19]

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[17] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 24.

[18] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (2005): 91.

[19] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 16.

Applying the meaning of the text to the human experience in pastoral preaching means that application must not be one dimensional (always cognitive, always affectual, or always volitional), as if the human experience is one dimensional. Pierre argues, "Counseling should be directed to the breadth of the heart's functions—thinking, feeling, choosing."[20] Since the goal of counseling and pastoral preaching are the same—the application of the meaning of the text to the believer's life—this dissertation proposes that Pierre's comments also apply to pastoral preaching.

The second reality that shapes the human experience is context. Context describes the external factors to which the dynamic heart responds. Each context contains its own set of beliefs, values, and commitments that influence a person's heart. Pierre proposes four contexts common to the human experience: God, self, others, and circumstances. He writes, "The most important context of the heart's response is God himself. . . . In fact, when the heart responds rightly to God, it will respond rightly to everything else."[21] The context of self describes how the heart responds to a person's perceived identity, which is constructed from various sources, both internal and external. Third, the context of others describes the influential role of relationships in determining a person's responses. Finally, the context of circumstances focuses on how the heart's responses are shaped by the events and situations in a person's life.[22] Pierre's concern is the counseling situation, where the context is determined by the individual receiving counseling. In pastoral preaching, context cannot be determined by an individual, for the sermon is given to a collection of people. Instead, the context should be developed through two considerations: the pastor's perception of the spiritual health of the congregation, and what is most common to mankind in the culture in which the pastor preaches. The context

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[20] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 27.

[21] Ibid., 101.

[22] Ibid., 102.

is not as accurately and specifically developed as in a counseling session, but it still reflects the most common context of the listeners, making it appropriate and meaningful. The approaches to pastoral preaching are evaluated based upon their ability to provide application that is directed to the human experience. Appropriate application addresses the dynamic heart, which thinks, believes, and acts, as well as the context to which the heart responds.

Problem-Centered Pastoral Preaching

Harry Emerson Fosdick was arguably the most influential preacher of the early to mid-twentieth century. He is famously (and to some, infamously) known for his sermon against the fundamentalist movement delivered in 1922, titled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Historian Robert D. Clark regards this sermon as "the most sensational and widely-publicized sermon of his generation."[23] Fosdick's exposure and influence reached new heights when he became the preacher on the National Vespers Radio Hour. Historians estimate that he had a national audience of millions, which gave him the largest single audience of any one preacher up to that time.[24] The program ran from October 2, 1927, until his retirement in 1946. Fosdick preached 480 sermons over the airwaves during the twenty-year run of the program,[25] earning him the titles "the Dean of all Ministers of the Air"[26] and "the National Voice of Mainline Protestant Radio."[27] Fosdick was awarded numerous honorary degrees from the leading universities across America and Europe.

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[23] Mary Kathryn Hochmuth, W. Norwood Brigance, and Donald Bryant, eds., *A History and Criticism of American Public Address* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 3:425.

[24] O. C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 667.

[25] Halford R. Ryan, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Persuasive Preacher* (New York: Greenwood, 1989), 10.

[26] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 380.

[27] Larry Witham, *A City upon a Hill: How Sermons Changed the Course of American History* (New York: HarperCollins, 207), 2006.

His speaking and writing requests rose to a level where he could not keep up.[28] He also received great criticism from Fundamental Baptists and Presbyterians, which led to his resignation at First Presbyterian Church of New York, and the start of his new interdenominational venture, Riverside Church, with millionaire John D. Rockefeller, Jr., as his financial backer.[29] Riverside Church was thoroughly progressive from its construction to its practice. The building was surrounded by busts of Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed. In practice, Riverside removed gender-specific roles within the church and gave money liberally to humanitarian causes regardless of denomination.[30] Fosdick died at the age of ninety-one on October 5, 1969. His memorial service was attended by fifteen hundred people who together sang the popular hymn which Fosdick himself composed, "God of Grace and God of Glory."[31]

Fosdick not only influenced people through his preaching, but he influenced the way preachers preached. Charles F. Kemp argues in his book on pastoral preaching that "more than any single individual, he has influenced the pattern of contemporary preaching."[32] James W. Thompson agrees, calling Fosdick a model for many preachers, whose method of pastoral preaching considerably influenced preaching.[33] Fosdick termed his approach to preaching "The Project Method" and it appears to be birthed from two concerns: his disdain for contemporary approaches to preaching and a desire to provide

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[28] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 104.

[29] Ibid., 155.

[30] Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days* (New York: Harper, 1956), 192-201.

[31] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 570.

[32] Charles F. Kemp, *Pastoral Preaching* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963), 51.

[33] James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000)*,* 87.

counsel to those who are hurting. Fosdick was dissatisfied with the expository and topical approaches to preaching that dominated American pulpits in his day. Fosdick's major concern with expository preaching was that it operated on the assumption that the congregation came to church to understand the minutiae of the text. Fosdick famously said, "Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites."[34] Expository preaching, as far as Fosdick could tell, failed to connect to the real interests of the congregation. Similarly, Fosdick rejected the use of topical sermons, which he believed were built on the foundation of the preacher's own opinion on current matters. The congregation need not attend church to get such information, for they could get it from any number of editors, columnists, and radio commentators. In addition, Fosdick believed it was impossible for a pastor to be "sufficiently omniscient to speak intelligently on such a wide range of specialized topics."[35]

Much has been written about Fosdick's interest in counseling, but few sure conclusions have been made about what led him to put counseling at such an important place in his preaching and ministry. Fosdick witnessed both of his parents suffer from nervous breakdowns[36] and as a young man, he himself reached a point of suicidal breakdown, which he later claimed enabled him to have "clairvoyance" into the troubles of others.[37] Both world wars occurred during his pastorate, which saw Fosdick switch from a supporter of war in the First World War to a pacifist during the Second World War, who promised never to bless war again.[38] These traumatic and personal experiences may

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[34] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days,* 92.

[35] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 342.

[36] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days,* 18, 49.

[37] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 267.

[38] Dewitte Holland, Jess Yoder, and Hubert Vance Taylor, eds., *Preaching in American History: Selected Issues in the American Pulpit, 1960-1967* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 248.

have influenced Fosdick toward the care of others. Outside of Fosdick's personal life, the 1930s and 1940s gave rise in America to the counseling of psychologically troubled persons. Many pastors feared the secularization of this pastoral task and responded by integrating popular psychological structures into the church. Fosdick made regular use of popular psychology and was in discussions with Dr. Salmon, Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University, to establish a clinic at Riverside Church until Dr. Salmon's sudden death in a sailing accident.[39] Biographer Robert Moats Miller suggests that Fosdick was aware that church people were not immune to the horrors of life and that church events, like "coffee-and-cake-and-smiles," only mask the reality of those horrors. Counseling provided church people an opportunity to express their concerns and get help.[40]

Fosdick's interest in counseling went beyond the counseling session in the pastor's office. He believed that people came to church to find relief and answers to the problems they faced in life. He observed that within every congregation each individual was dealing with some personal problems and in addition to counseling, the sermon should address these problems.[41] Fosdick wrote in his autobiography:

> People come to church on Sunday with every kind of personal difficulty and problem flesh is heir to. A sermon was meant to meet such needs; it should be personal counseling on a group scale. If one had clairvoyance, one would know the sins and shames, the anxieties and doubts, the griefs and disillusionments, that filled the pews, and could by God's grace bring the saving truths of the gospel to bear on them as creatively as though he were speaking to a single person. That was the place to start—with the real problems of the people. That was a sermon's specialty, which made it a sermon, not an essay or a lecture. Every sermon should have for its main business the head-on constructive meeting of some problem which was puzzling minds, burdening consciences, distracting lives, and no sermon which so met a real

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[39] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 260.

[40] Fosdick's most popular book, in regard to sales, was *On Being a Real Person,* which was written for the lay person struggling with internal horrors. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *On Being a Real Person* (New York: Harper & Row, 1943). Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 258.

[41] Edmund Holt Linn, *Preaching as Counseling: The Unique Method of Harry Emerson Fosdick* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1966), 15.

human difficulty, with light to throw on it and help to win a victory over it, could possibly be futile.[42]

As previously stated, Fosdick called his approach to preaching "The Project Method," but others have labeled it "the counseling sermon";[43] however, it is most commonly known as "personal counseling on a group scale."[44] Fosdick believed that any preacher who used his method, even those of moderate skill and little learning or eloquence, could accomplish the special business of preaching because they would be helping people live successfully.[45]

Despite being the father of his own unique preaching method and a prolific author, beyond a few articles and a chapter in his autobiography Fosdick never wrote an exhaustive work on his preaching method, thus leaving his admirers, like Edmund Holt Linn, to piece together Fosdick's method. [46] Linn analyzed the available primary resources as well as Fosdick's sermons and concluded that Fosdick's preaching method contained a six-step process. Linn details this process in *Preaching as Counseling: The Unique Method of Harry Emerson Fosdick.* Before describing Fosdick's six-step process, Linn points out that foundational to Fosdick's method is the pastoral ministry of personal counseling. Linn believes that, for Fosdick, "the pulpit and the counseling room are

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[42] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*, 94.

[43] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling,* 14.

[44] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 342.

[45] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days,* 95.

[46] Miller put together a list of Fosdick's writings that contain information on his preaching method:

> In 1928 he penned a highly influential article entitled "What Is the Matter with Preaching?," and the substance of this *Harper's* article is found in his autobiography in the chapter entitled "Learning How to Preach." These major revelations are augmented by such essays as "How I Prepare My Sermons," "If I Had One Sermon to Preach," "The Christian Ministry," and "Personal Counseling and Preaching." Most students of Fosdick's preaching rely heavily on these sources to the neglect of two other illuminating works. One of these is his inaugural address at Union, "A Modern Preacher's Problem in His Use of the Scriptures." The other is *The Modern Use of the Bible,* for as the preface states, "Upon the basis of the approach to the Bible here set forth I have done my preaching from the beginning of my ministry." (Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Pastor, Preacher, Prophet,* 341)

incapable of being separated."[47] While commonly viewed as a preacher, Fosdick believed

counseling to be central in his ministry and the reason for his success in the pulpit.

Personal counseling transformed him from a lecturer to a preacher. Fosdick argued, "Any

pastor who, with intelligence and clairvoyance, practices such personal counseling, is

bound to find his sermons, in content and form, insight and impact, profoundly affected."[48]

Counseling not only gave Fosdick an insight into the lives of his congregation, but also

gave him a reminder of the power of the gospel to change lives. Having witnessed personal

transformation in counseling, Fosdick believed the counseling preacher had an advantage

in the pulpit. He wrote, "Because he has seen it, and has helped to mediate the truth and

power that did it. Nothing so much as this experience, I suspect can send a man into the

pulpit."[49] He even credits his commitment to personal counseling as the reason for his

longevity in the pulpit: "Without this creative experience of personal counseling I never

could have preached for twenty years in Riverside Church."[50] Linn's research and

Fosdick's own words provide irrefutable support to the idea that Fosdick believed personal

counseling to be an indivisible element of his preaching method.

Since Fosdick's method was so unique and influential, each of the six steps

identified by Linn will be described here. The first step of Fosdick's method was the

selection of the object. In contrast to the expositional sermon, the object was chosen

before the subject. The object in Fosdick's sermons was a definite problem that he

intended to address. Linn explains, "No longer is the emphasis upon creedal authority,

denominational divisions, biblical literalism, and religious trivialities, but rather upon the

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[47] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 23.

[48] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Personal Counseling and Preaching," *Pastoral Psychology* 3, no. 22 (1952): 9.

[49] Ibid., 12.

[50] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days,* 221.

persons and what is going on inside them."[51] The more urgent and immediate the problem, the more relevant the sermon would be to the listener. After selecting the problem, Fosdick would identify the precise response he desired from the listener after hearing the sermon. Linn points out, "He could not begin a sermon until he saw clearly what he intended to accomplish on Sunday morning." The goals of his sermons included addressing personal problems, handling theological questions, encouraging avoidance of sin, revealing public evil, or calling people to trust Christ.[52]

After determining the goal of the sermon, Fosdick's next step was to select the truth that would achieve the goal. The Bible entered the sermon process at this point. If a particular passage presented itself as effective in accomplishing the goal of the sermon, then he would give an exposition of that passage. If not, then he would select several passages of Scripture to accomplish his aim. In both instances, exposition took place not for the purpose of understanding the text, but for the purpose of achieving the goal of the sermon. After studying Fosdick's sermons, Linn notes the frequency and purpose of Fosdick's Bible usage: "His messages averaged a dozen references to the Bible, about equally divided between direct quotations and indirect citations. These were not used authoritatively, to prove an idea, but rather to present illuminating parallels of present-day life situations."[53]

Fosdick's third step was the connecting of relevant ideas. After the selection of the problem, goal, and relevant truth, he wrote down any ideas that came to mind related to the three. Fosdick encouraged great freedom during this step: "I give free gangway to my mind, and let it pick up anything, within the scope of the sermon's object and subject,

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[51] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling,* 27.

[52] Edmund H. Linn, "Fosdick as a Preacher," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1961): 19.

[53] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 55.

which it may chance to light upon."[54] Fosdick gained ideas through listening to the lives around him, observing the natural world, studying the Bible, reading all sorts of books, and giving freedom to his imagination. This process could go on for hours while thought generated new thoughts.[55] Ultimately, it would be this process of thought creation and association that would develop the structure of the sermon, instead of the biblical text determining the structure, as in expository sermons. Linn writes, "Dr. Fosdick said that no two of his sermons developed exactly the same way. Every one of them was different. When all went well, he did not build the structure; it came emerging out of the thought material as though by spontaneous generation."[56]

The purpose of Fosdick's fourth step was to develop and support the relevant ideas. Here Fosdick made use of many of the same preaching techniques as most other preachers. He primarily used examples, analogies, causalities, testimonies, and anecdotes to support his ideas. He also made use of definitions, particulars, quotations, statistics, contrasts, and questions. Linn refers to this latter list as Fosdick's "secondary supports," because while present in Fosdick's preaching, they were used far less than the first list.[57]

Fosdick's fifth step was to write out the sermon in its entirety. Fosdick observed preachers who did not write out their sermons and found that their sermons were often characterized by a monotonous style, limited vocabulary, and ruts of thought. His preference to write out his sermon forced him to give great consideration to his phraseology. Fosdick argued that his practice "makes the preacher weigh his words; compels him to reread what he has written and criticize it without mercy; constrains him

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[54] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "How I Prepare My Sermons: A Symposium," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 40, no. 1 (1954): 50.

[55] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 47-62.

[56] Linn, "Fosdick as a Preacher," 20.

[57] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling,* 90-110.

to clear up obscurities in thought and language; . . . and judge whether it would hit his nail on the head, were he an auditor!"[58] This step contained several smaller steps, but Fosdick did not feel it necessary to always follow the same pattern. He would normally write out the opening section, which would contain a specific phrasing of the purpose and how to achieve it. The opening section would be followed by the main points, which he would gradually fill in as the sermon began to take shape. His last step was to revise the phraseology for clarity and impact.[59]

Fosdick's final step was to deliver the sermon. He used all three popular approaches to sermon delivery: memorization, outline, and manuscript. His most common approach was outline but argued that preaching from a manuscript can be just as effective: "Just as one can write for listeners, so one can read for listeners, combining the advantage of a manuscript's careful preparation and the freedom of face-to-face address."[60] Fosdick saw the matter of delivery as a preference rather than a rule.

Analysis of Problem-Centered
Pastoral Preaching

Princeton Theological Seminary's Professor of Homiletics Andrew W. Blackwood said of Fosdick's preaching, "If any young man wishes to learn what to preach, he may look elsewhere; if he would learn how, he should tarry here."[61] Blackwood recognizes Fosdick's genius: he was one of the best communicators and motivators of his day. Blackwood also recognizes Fosdick's greatest shortcoming: his neglect and misuse of the biblical text. Fosdick's problem-centered approach to pastoral preaching falls short of

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[58] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 369.

[59] Linn, "Fosdick as Preacher," 21.

[60] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 370.

[61] Ibid., 339.

the first essential element of pastoral preaching presented in this dissertation: the sermon communicates the meaning of the text.

The primary concern of Fosdick's method was the problem to be solved, not the meaning of the text. This truth is evident in Fosdick's step-by-step process that begins with the problem and then moves to the biblical text along with other supporting resources. Fosdick was convinced that church attenders were only concerned about the biblical text as a means of answering their problems. He wrote,

> To start with a Biblical passage, and spend nearly all the sermon on its historic explanation and exposition, presupposes the assumption that the congregation came to church the morning primarily concerned about the meaning of those venerable texts—which, in my experience, is a condition contrary to fact.[62]

The biblical text was relegated to secondary importance in his sermon development process. According to Linn's understanding of Fosdick's method, secondary may be too generous: "The need of the listener affects nearly everything about preaching—method, context, organization, language, and delivery."[63] As a result, the biblical text is subservient to the goal of the sermon in Fosdick's method. A biblical text is selected only because it accomplishes the goal(s) determined by the preacher. Fosdick wrote, "Sometimes a single passage may sum up the matter, but if I give an exposition of that passage it is not for the exposition's sake, but because I hope to drop the truth, like a pile-driver, ramming home the impact to achieve a definite result."[64] The preacher's goal determines the text used and Fosdick was only concerned about the meaning of the text as far as it accomplished that goal. Therefore, Fosdick's method is guilty of two hermeneutical missteps: proof texting, which is the "isolation and use of verses apart from their immediate or sectional context"[65]

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[62] Fosdick, "Pastoral Counseling and Preaching," 13.

[63] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling*, 27.

[64] Fosdick, "How I Prepare My Sermons," 50.

[65] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology,* 82.

and eisegesis, which is the reading into the text what the reader wants it to say.[66] For example, in a sermon on the overbearing conscience, Fosdick took the apostle Paul's words in Romans 7:24, "Wretched man that I am!" out of context. He used Paul's confession as an example of his conscience overcoming him and ignored the surrounding context where Paul described his struggles with his sinful flesh.[67] Similarly, in a sermon about dealing with life when people do not get their first choice, Fosdick read into the passage motivations and emotions that are not present in the biblical text. He used God's leading of the apostle Paul to Troas instead of Bithynia in Acts 16 as an example of how to respond when life does not go the way a person expected. Fosdick preached that Paul had every reason to want to go to Bithynia, but he had to settle for Troas. He said, "Wanting Bithynia and getting Troas, how familiar an experience that is! But to take Troas, the second-best, the broken plan, the left-over of a disappointed expectation, and make of it the greatest opportunity we ever had, how much less familiar that is!"[68] Fosdick read into the passage what is not found in the text to suit the goal of the sermon; namely, that Paul was disappointed in God leading him to Troas over Bithynia. Since the meaning of the text is subservient to the problem, the preacher's goal of the text will overshadow, ignore, and misrepresent the original author's meaning.

Fosdick placed the goal of the sermon over the text for practical reasons, but he may have also constructed his sermons this way for theological reasons. One should not divorce Fosdick's method from his beliefs about the Bible. As a modernist, he was a theological liberal who denied the possibility of miracles and the inerrancy of Scripture. He ascribed to a liberal hermeneutical process called the "New Approach." In the New

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[66] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 45.

[67] Harry Emerson Fosdick and Henry Pitney Van Dusen, *Riverside Sermons* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 73-82.

[68] Ibid., 54-62.

Approach, scriptural ideas are traced as they are developed "from their simple and elementary forms, when they first appear in the earliest writings, until they come to their full maturity in the latest books."[69] Prior to the New Approach, the Bible was not thought of as a record of developing ideas and ideals. The New Approach was unique in that it proposed that biblical ideas were primitive in their first appearance and grow to maturity from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Therefore, the Bible is best understood as a book of spiritual ideas being developed instead of a repository of fully developed ideas from start to finish.[70] For example, Fosdick notes that people during the Bible-times attributed life's difficulties to the presence and activity of demons or other spiritual forces:

> Does that mean, then, that Christians must always so phrase their experiences of human evil and their convictions about it? To answer in the affirmative is to shut the door of Christianity against intelligence, for while an intelligent mind may well refuse to claim omniscience by denying the theoretical possibility that evil spirits exist, no intelligent mind can possibly go back across the centuries and enter into demonology as a habitual, inevitable, comprehensive category of explanation for human sin and misery. What we have in ancient demonology is a transient phrasing of abiding experiences. Once men explained eclipses of the sun by saying that a dragon swallowed it. We know better now, but because we no longer believe in that old explanation we have not thereby gotten rid of the sun's eclipses. So we surrender the old category of demonology as a means of scientific explanation but, for all that, the age-long eclipse of man's life in sin and misery is as much of a fact and as terrible a fact as ever it was. Everything the devil and his hosts ever meant is with us yet.[71]

In Fosdick's mind, the role of the preacher is to determine the abiding meaning of the Bible, strip it of its ancient phraseology, and convert those meanings into a current category that is understandable and acceptable to the modern mind. Understanding Fosdick's belief about the Bible, it should come as no surprise why the author's original meaning is

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[69] Fosdick credits Harlan Creelman and Jullius Bewer for making the New Approach possible. Creelman put the Old Testament into chronological order and Brewer developed a continual story of Hebrew literature from its first emergence to its canonization. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: MacMillan, 1927), 7.

[70] Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, 11.

[71] Ibid., 121.

subservient to the problem, goal, or idea of the sermon. To Fosdick, most of what the original authors of the Bible wrote reflected immature and unrelatable ideas. The Bible was not a collection of inspired words, but inspired ideas that continue to be developed to this very day. Fosdick believed it was his task to convert biblical ideas for modernism, however, future preachers will need to convert the same ideas for what lies beyond modernism.[72] With each new age, the transcendent ideas must be reshaped for a new generation of listeners. Fosdick's method must be rejected because he places the preacher and his purposes over that of the original author.

With Fosdick's substantial emphasis on application, it would be natural to think his problem-centered approach contains the second essential element of pastoral preaching, that the sermon applies the meaning of the text to the human experience of the listeners, but a closer evaluation reveals that Fosdick's method does not fully represent this element. As stated, Fosdick does not apply the meaning of the text to the human experience of the listener, but instead seeks to apply his own version of truth supported by a reader-centric hermeneutic and a liberal reading of the Bible. From a foundational level, his method fails to accomplish the purpose of the second essential element. But even if Fosdick had applied the meaning of the text instead of his own meaning, to the listener, his application would fall short for at least two reasons. First, Fosdick's application does not address all three dimensions of the human experience: thinking, wanting, and choosing creatures. Rather, Fosdick's application treats the human experience as purely cognitive. His method begins with a problem and the purpose of the sermon is to argue for a solution to the problem. The application was more often philosophical and general, rather than practical and specific. Fosdick sought to change the way someone thought about the matter at hand and rarely described how the change of thought changed a person in the remaining

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[72] Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Successful Christian Living: Sermons on Christianity Today* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937)*, 164.

two dimensions. Halford R. Ryan, Professor of Public Speaking at Washington and Lee University, described Fosdick's approach as similar to a lawyer who appealed to a jury for a decision.[73] Each Sunday Fosdick would make his case before the congregation, appealing to their intellect.[74] One critic of Fosdick said, "These sermons make a reader think profoundly but there is lacking that urge and hope which could save a dying thief."[75]

The second reason Fosdick's application fails is because it ignores the most important context of the human experience: a person's relationship with God. True lasting change can only occur as people believe and submit to the leadership of God in their lives. Pierre writes,

> Faith in Christ is the means by which the dynamic heart is restored to do what it was designed for: to worship God in thought, desire, and choice. Faith is how a heart receives the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that righteousness retakes control of the dynamic design, restoring the beauty of its ability to worship God.[76]

Fosdick preached so often of Jesus that he was accused of christomonism: the heresy of identifying Christ as the singular representation of God. But the problem in Fosdick's preaching was not the frequency in which he referenced Jesus, but the purpose for which he referenced Jesus. Like many liberal preachers, Fosdick denied Jesus' true nature and presented Him as merely the supreme example to be followed. Another critic, repeated by Miller, wrote,

> When he writes on faith, which he does most admirably, he speaks rather as a psychologist than as a theologian. When he preaches on God his attitude is that of a thinker rather than as one who proclaims a revelation. His Christ is the Hero rather than the Redeemer.[77]

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[73] Ryan, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 10.

[74] John Bishop, "Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preaching to Achieve Results," accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.preaching.com/articles/past-masters/harry-emerson-fosdick-preaching-to-achieve-results/.

[75] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 339.

[76] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 71.

[77] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 339.

Harry Black Beverly, Jr., wrote a similar critique about Fosdick and his sermons:

> They obviously communicated but his message proclaimed no Gospel to solve man's problems; no message about the redemptive acts of God in history on man's behalf; no witness to Christ as Lord or Savior in the majority of them. Instead "positive faiths and inner resources" (what man has and does) have replaced Christus Victor (what God did and does). The messages thus fail to deal adequately with the contemporary situation of man or to serve the Gospel.[78]

Fosdick's sermons lacked the personal indicative of Christ's work that gave the power and importance to the imperatives found in Scripture. As a result, his method must not be accepted because his application fails to reach the three dimensions of the heart and ignores the most important context in which all people find themselves: sinners in need of a Savior.

While Fosdick's method fails to fully represent the heart and the context of the human experience, in some ways it does get the preacher heading in that right direction. On a positive note, Fosdick's method forces the preacher to exegete the listener. Fosdick described his sermon development as a "co-operative enterprise": "When a man takes hold of a real difficulty in the life and thought of his people and is trying to meet it, he finds himself not so much dogmatically thinking for them as co-operatively thinking with them."[79] Fosdick believed that a speech became a sermon when the congregation was involved, and a sermon became effective when the "congregation's objections, questions, doubts and confirmations are fairly stated and dealt with."[80] Linn argues that personal counseling enabled Fosdick to gain insight into his congregation. From afar, a pastor may gain insight into the difficulties that the individuals of his congregation face, but only through personal counseling will he understand how his people are affected by those difficulties.[81] Consequently, a study of a select number of Fosdick's sermons reveals his

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[78] Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick,* 340.

[79] Fosdick, *The Living of These Days,* 96.

[80] Ibid., 97.

[81] Linn, *Preaching as Counseling,* 27.

regular "co-operative" interaction with the listeners.[82] His sermons are full of illustrations from all areas of life: Bible, hymns, entertainment, sports, pastors, political leaders, scientists, and personal experience. He provided at least one illustration for every point he made. His illustrations were sometimes rich with detail and other times succinct, but always engaging and relevant to the point at hand. Fosdick asked questions during his sermons, with no sermon containing less than twenty questions. Sometimes he asked the question as if it was part of his own thought and other times he presented questions he believed his audience might think: "You would think, would you not?" Fosdick also appealed to the shared human experience. "We as humans" was a regular phrase in his sermons. He would also use phrases like "universal experience" and "every normal human being" in connection with the sermon's main topic. One of the objectives of his introductions was to show how the topic at hand connected with every listener in the audience. Fosdick believed that the listener was of utmost importance in the sermon process and key to the effectiveness of the sermon, which was clear from both his sermon development and delivery. While Fosdick unfortunately placed the listener above the meaning of the text, he was nevertheless correct that the preacher must exegete the listener.

Another positive from Fosdick's method was that the sermon always contained a clear purpose: personal transformation. Fosdick rejected the use of expository and topical sermons, because in his judgment they lacked a focus on personal transformation. He wrote, "Far too many sermons are harmless discussions of a subject, intelligent it may be,

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[82] This study involved sixteen of Fosdick's sermons. Eight sermons were taken from his tenure at First Presbyterian Church in the 1920s, and the remaining eight sermons were taken from his tenure at Riverside Church. All sixteen sermons are contained in the books *A Preaching Ministry: Twenty-One Sermons Preached by Harry Emerson Fosdick at First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York* and *Riverside Sermons.* From the former, analyzed sermons included "Untitled [On Faith]," "Untitled [On Love]," "Untitled [On Grace]," "The Divinity of Jesus," "I Believe in Man," "The Deepening of Faith," "The Open Doors," and "The Victory of Faith." From the latter, analyzed sermons included "When Life Reaches Its Depths," "Handling Life's Second Bests," "Handicapped Lives," "No Man Need Stay the Way He Is," "Finding Unfailing Resources," "Mankind's Deep Need—the Sense of Community," "Modern Civilization's Crucial Problem," and "How Believe in a Good God in a World Like This?."

well thought out and well delivered, but lacking any purposeful drive to achieve an object."[83] Fosdick wanted the sermon to end with a definite result. He wanted the listener to have a Damascus Road experience and his sermon development process reflected this focus. Fosdick would not begin developing the sermon until he had determined the response he hoped to engender in the listener. According to Linn, Fosdick believed that the "primary cause of dull and harmless messages was the preacher's failure to have a target in sight before he began the construction of his sermon."[84] Therefore, Fosdick developed the goal to be achieved, and then the sermon was crafted to reach that goal. As stated, while the purpose of personal transformation in Fosdick's method is laudable, his first step of placing the listener's problems and the preacher's goals as master over the text condemns his approach. In Fosdick's method, the authority belongs to the preacher, not the Bible. In addition, Fosdick's approach to transformation should not be considered equivalent with biblical sanctification because his approach lacks the context of the listener's need for Jesus as savior. Biblical sanctification is only possible through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus and Fosdick's method does not necessitate such a belief.

Considerable time has been spent on Fosdick and his problem-centered method because he and his method were so influential for the evolution and modern understanding of pastoral preaching. While Fosdick's model has strengths, his approach should not be considered an appropriate approach to pastoral preaching, for in this model the meaning of the text is subservient to the sermon goals of the preacher, and the application fails to address the dynamic heart and context of the listener.

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[83] Fosdick, "Pastoral Counseling and Preaching," 12.

[84] Linn, "Fosdick as a Preacher," 20.

Other Problem-Centered Approaches
to Pastoral Preaching

Harry Emerson Fosdick led the charge for problem-centered preaching, but others took up the same banner. Among them was former Princeton Professor of Pastoral Care, Donald Capps. Capps approved of Fosdick's problem-centered approach and his dual emphasis of counseling and preaching, but he believed Fosdick failed to argue for and describe how these two ministries are connected.[85] Capps argues that while counseling and preaching have many differences they are similar in their structure. According to Capps, a counseling session and a sermon contain the same four elements often in a sequential order: identification of the problem, reconstruction of the problem, diagnostic interpretation, and pastoral intervention.[86] Capps' emphasis on the motives of the listener does allow for application that better represents the human experience, but like Fosdick, he develops the sermon around the problem instead of the biblical text, thus putting his method at risk of the same exegetical failures as its predecessor.[87]

Needs-Centered Pastoral Preaching

Needs-centered preaching, more commonly known as felt-needs preaching, is preaching that begins by focusing on the needs felt by the listener, which then transitions to deeper needs and God's solution of the gospel. The idea of preaching to felt needs has been applied to missiological contexts that do not apply to this discussion of inappropriate approaches to pastoral preaching. While this dissertation does not contain an evaluation

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[85] Donald Capps, *Pastoral Counseling and Preaching: A Quest for an Integrated Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1980)*,* 17.

[86] Ibid., 37.

[87] During the diagnostic stage of sermon development, Capps argues that counseling can help preaching through the following six methods: identifying underlying personal motivations, identifying the range of potential causes, exposing inadequate formulations of the problem, drawing attention to untapped personal and spiritual resources, bringing clarity to the problem, and assessing problems in terms of the deepest intentions of shared human experience. What is positive about Capps' methods is that he views the listener as a thinker, feeler, and doer. Fosdick's method largely assumed that the listener was primarily a thinker. See ibid., 108-15.

of missiological preaching to felt-needs, it will describe it for the sake of distinguishing this approach from other approaches to preaching to felt needs. This type of felt-needs preaching is better described as the integration of cultural anthropology into the preaching ministry. Stephen Grunlan and Marvin Mayers argue for the value of such an integration:

> Cultural anthropology can enable a missionary to understand his or her prospective new culture, to enter the culture with minimum culture shock and maximum adjustment, to insure that the message is being understood, and to plant a biblical, indigenous church and not transplant the church of his or her own culture.[88]

For example, Jacob A. Loewen writes about the necessity of felt-needs preaching among churches in Africa.[89] He believes that churches planted by Western missionaries do not understand the African perspective of life and so fail to preach sermons that contain and address those concerns from a biblical perspective. One such example Loewen gives is witchcraft and curses. These are common in the African culture and many Africans are fearful of being bewitched and credit negative experiences in their lives to witchcraft. Loewen points out that Western missionaries ignore this perspective because they believe it to be mere superstition and Western-trained African pastors disregard this reality because they are afraid of their Western superiors.[90] Loewen correctly points out that failure to teach the Bible to the Africans in a way that addresses their unique perspective (i.e., their felt needs) is an encumbrance to them growing in Christ-likeness.

The practice of preaching to felt needs that is under current consideration is not as much concerned about understanding the listener's perspective as it is about using felt

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[88] Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 29.

[89] For other examples of preaching to felt needs in a missiological context, see Pat Hile, "Communicating the Gospel in Terms of Felt Needs," *Missiology* 5, no. 4 (October 1977): 499-506; Tim Matheny, *Reaching the Arabs: A Felt Need Approach* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981); and Caleb Rome, "Consider the Nomad: A Felt-Needs Approach," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 113-22.

[90] Jacob A. Loewen, "Mission Churches, Independent Churches, and Felt Needs in Africa," *Missiology* 4, no. 4 (October 1976): 410.

needs to create a bridge to deeper theological discussions. Two main thoughts exist under this purpose: soul-winning and soul-healing. In the former thought, the purpose of preaching to felt needs is evangelistic. Dennis E. Johnson writes,

> [Churches] have made it their aim to reach out and enfold those who have dropped out of traditional church backgrounds, or who have never been engaged at all, particularly by using as a bridge those personal inadequacies and relational difficulties of which non-Christians are painfully aware, such as stress, alienation, dysfunctional family relationships, materialism, fear, worry, and violence.[91]

Churches that adopt such a strategy are referred to by some as "seeker-sensitive" churches. By crafting the sermon and other elements of the worship service around the felt needs of the listener, seeker-sensitive churches believe they have lessened the cultural gap that exists between the non-Christian and the gospel. From the non-Christian's perspective, preaching to felt needs gives the church an appearance of relevance in the matters of the world in which they live and distances the modern church from long held stereotypes that the church is an archaic institution with little to say about the real world. Therefore, preaching to felt needs is a gateway to the gospel. Duane Litfin refers to it as pre-evangelism: "It's more a form of pre-evangelism: that is, wooing them toward something, giving them little glimpses into something stronger and better than anything they know."[92] In addition, practitioners of felt-needs preaching believe this approach reproduces God's interaction with humankind as revealed in the Bible. Johnson describes their logic from a macro-perspective:

> Is it not consistent with God's accommodation to our limitations and weakness in revealing himself in Scripture and the Incarnation to take as our starting point some element of human experience that painfully exposes our neediness, then to trace the problem to its root in our alienation from the Creator, and finally to apply the cure in the gospel of Christ?[93]

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[91] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 29.

[92] Duane Litfin, "Felt-Needs Preaching," *Preaching Today,* accessed June 14, 2018, https://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/themes/redeeminghowtopreaching/200304.18.html.

[93] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 31.

From a narrower perspective, felt-needs practitioners argue that Jesus should be the model

for modern-day preachers as He was concerned about felt needs. Support is found in that

Jesus often healed physical maladies prior to speaking of His messianic purpose, such as

the healing of the man with the withered hand (Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-10)

and the woman with internal bleeding (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). In

addition, Jesus addressed emotional needs prior to speaking of His messianic purpose, such

as Zacchaeus' emotional need for friendship and fellowship (Luke 19:1-10). Soul-winning

felt-needs preachers argue they are following the example of Jesus by addressing the needs

of the non-Christians in their community as a part of the church's evangelistic strategy.

Practitioners of the soul-healing approach to preaching to felt needs view the

weekly preaching event to a local congregation as a therapeutic tool. The goal of such

preaching is maturity and wholeness. Very few congregants attend a service with complete

peace of mind, and those who do are surrounded by those who are burdened with

concerns. Pastor Edgar N. Jackson describes the average congregation and the pastor's

opportunity:

> Harold Roupp once compiled some telling figures concerning the congregation's idea of its needs. In response to specific questions nearly four thousand replies indicated that about half of the person felt the major problems of their lives to be such personal matters as futility, insecurity, loneliness, marriage problems, sex, alcoholism, false ideas of religion and morals, inferiority, suffering, illness frustrations, and guilt feelings. Nearly a quarter of the persons were concerned about family problems, child training, infidelity, separation, divorce, poor adjustment to marriage, religious differences in the home, and other problems that are symptoms of personal problems as they touch the lives of others. The remaining fraction were concerned with social, community, and national problems, or the more traditional religious concerns. It is significant that a major portion of the replies indicated personality problems that were symptoms of immaturity, inner conflicts, and aggressive behavior. The preacher who sees his people in terms of such needs has taken the first steps toward preaching with soul-healing power.[94]

Professors Harold T. Bryson and James C. Taylor argue that it is not only important that

preachers address felt needs, but that it is necessary to do so for the growth of the

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[94] Edgar N. Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 13-14.

congregant: "The basic needs of human beings have to be met. . . . Until these basic needs are met in a reliable, continuing manner, a person's life will be dominated by them. He will not be interested deeply in other things while this domination lasts."[95] Bryson and Taylor define these needs based upon Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Just like the soul-winning approach, the theological foundation for soul healing is the example of Jesus. Jackson writes, "The finest examples of preaching as a soul-healing force come from the ministry of Jesus. Here was life-situational preaching at its best."[96] Jesus' sermons were birthed out of commonplace situations, geared toward the concerns of his listeners, and understandable by all. Proponents of the soul-healing approach to preaching to felt needs will follow Jesus' example of using everyday life concerns as a bridge and a teaching tool to encourage emotional, physical, and spiritual maturity.

**Analysis of Needs-Centered
Pastoral Preaching**

Before evaluating needs-centered preaching based upon the two criteria presented earlier, it is important to evaluate the view's foundational argument that preaching to felt needs is necessary because it was Jesus' practice. Asking and answering two questions of this argument is helpful in this evaluation. Was it Jesus' method to preach to felt needs? Is Jesus the model for modern-day preachers? The first question challenges the assumption made by felt-needs advocates that Jesus always preached to felt needs. Speaking of Jesus' felt-needs preaching, Jackson writes, "People saw their own behavior dramatized. They felt their burdens lifted. . . . They saw their failures not as a final catastrophe but as a steppingstone to new understanding."[97] Jackson portrays Jesus' teaching as always encouraging and uplifting, as helping people reach a level of personal

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[95] Harold T. Bryson and James C. Taylor, *Building Sermons to Meet People's Needs* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980), 44.

[96] Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs,* 12.

[97] Ibid.

maturity that they were aware of and desired to reach but failed to reach up to that point. According to Jackson, preaching to felt needs was an entry point for later conversations of greater spiritual depth. Did Jesus preach to felt needs? Jesus was a master at using the circumstances around Him to teach the disciples and the crowds that followed Him, but He did not preach to felt needs exclusively in the way that needs-centered preaching describes. For example, John 6 describes the miracle of Jesus feeding five thousand people even though he only had five barley loaves and two fish. The next day, the crowd returned to find Jesus. What was their felt need?

> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him God the Father has set His seal." (John 6:26-27)

The crowd's felt need was hunger and they believed Jesus would meet that need. Instead of meeting that need, Jesus rebuked them and replaced their need for bread with a greater need. He told them of their greater need of faith in the Messiah: "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Instead of catering to the felt needs of the crowd, Jesus rebuked them and replaced their felt need with their actual need. Another example of Jesus ignoring the felt needs of those He was addressing can be found in Matthew 23. This particular interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees is one of several recorded in the Gospels, where instead of preaching to the felt needs of the Pharisees, Jesus rebuked them. After the Pharisees questioned Jesus, Jesus pronounced seven woes upon the Pharisees and those that lived like them. Instead of appealing to the Pharisees through their felt needs of importance and acceptance, Jesus rebuked them. He instructed them to cleanse their hearts of such desires: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean" (Matt 23:25-26). Jesus addressed the felt needs of the Pharisees as the rationale for God's

judgment. In summary, Jesus used the circumstances around Him to drive people toward salvation through faith, but it cannot be said that it was His model to preach to felt needs.

The second question that must be answered is whether modern-day preachers should use Jesus as their model for preaching. Hershael York argues that it is impossible to completely and appropriately imitate Jesus' preaching since His preaching was both God-centered and self-centered. Preachers, however, can only faithfully preach God-centered sermons. York argues that the goal should be to reflect Christ in preaching instead of mimicking His methods:

> In some ways, however, modern preachers should no more emulate Jesus' preaching than contemporary Christians should copy the crucifixion. Just as the work of redemption was His alone, a work in which we may merely share, so elements of His preaching can only be reflected in ours, but never actually appropriated.[98]

York identifies five qualities of Jesus' preaching that preachers should emulate in their own preaching: Jesus preached decisively, theologically, ethically, scripturally, and passionately. These five aspects of Jesus' preaching are normative, and preachers should seek to practice them as they preach Jesus.

Pastor Adam Dooley took many of the points made by York and expanded upon them in support of the idea that "Jesus really isn't the best model for preaching."[99] Dooley gives three reasons why preachers should not emulate Jesus' preaching. Dooley's second and third reasons are most important to this discussion. Dooley's second reason is that preachers are incapable of emulating Jesus' awareness: "When Jesus stood to preach before any number of people, He knew every hidden motive, every secret sin, every raw emotion, every carnal agenda, and likewise He knew every genuine, heartfelt response and every true expression of repentance."[100] Preachers will never

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[98] Hershael York, "Jesus Came Preaching about Himself." Accessed April 12, 2019, https://www.preaching.com/articles/jesus-came-preaching-about-himself/.

[99] Adam Dooley, "Should We Preach Like Jesus?" March 8, 2013, accessed June 14, 2018, https://swbts.edu/news/releases/should-we-preach-jesus-conferences-asks/.

[100] Ibid.

possess this kind of awareness when they preach, and yet practitioners of felt-needs preaching build sermons and sermon series based upon the assumption that they have accurately deduced their listeners' needs. Dooley's third reason is preachers should not emulate Jesus' agenda. This point is twofold. First, Jesus preached about Himself, a point made clear by York. Anything less than that would have been idolatrous. Second, at times, Jesus preached so that His listeners would not understand because of the hardness of their hearts, such as the parables (Mark 4:10-12).[101] This final point appears to be missed in the affirmation of Jesus' preaching method made by felt need supporters. Jackson writes of Jesus' preaching: "He was simple in his presentation. No one from the child to the scholar could be confused by what he said. He used stories that were related to the experience of his hearers, and each story had one main point that stood out too clearly to be mistaken."[102] Jackson later adds, "Never was the message left dangling, unrelated to life."[103] It appears that Jackson, along with others who use Jesus' method as the foundational argument for felt-needs preaching have failed to thoroughly evaluate Jesus' preaching. York's and Dooley's arguments correctly lead to the conclusion that preachers have been given Jesus' message and His conviction to be God-centered, but not necessarily every element of His preaching method.

An evaluation of needs-centered preaching against the two essential elements of pastoral preaching finds that it falls short in many of the same ways as problem-centered preaching. Once again, something other than the meaning of the text is given priority in the sermon development process. The felt need, either determined by the preacher or by a survey of the congregation, determines the sermon subject and direction. In needs-centered preaching, the meaning of the text is subservient to the goal of addressing the

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[101] Dooley, "Should We Preach Like Jesus?"

[102] Edgar N. Jackson, *A Psychology for Preaching* (Great Neck, NY: Channel Press, 1961), 162.

[103] Ibid., 163.

felt needs of the listener. Consequently, exposition is only necessary to the extent that it sheds light on the need. Jackson argues, "When people come asking bread in the form of an understanding of life's meaning, guidance in stress, and insight into the riddles of their own natures, shall they be handed a stone of meaningless exposition or theological abstraction?"[104] According to Jackson and other proponents of needs-centered preaching, exposition is meaningless unless it addresses a felt need.[105] Any sermon development process that puts the meaning of the text secondary will run the risk of making the hermeneutical errors of proof texting and eisegesis. In needs-centered preaching, the meaning of the text will be misrepresented, truncated, or ignored all together.

One of the fatal errors in needs-centered preaching lies in the presupposition that a felt need, rather than the meaning of the text, is an appropriate starting point for a sermon preparation because it will better bridge the gap between the Bible and the listener. Felt needs will appeal to the listener's desires and wants, but it will fail to accurately bridge the gap because it may be impossible to correctly diagnose or communicate a felt need. The prophet Jeremiah writes, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). The needs-centered preacher believes that he understands the desires of the heart, despite the biblical evidence to the contrary. Albert Mohler declares that people's needs are "hopelessly confused": "The knowledge of our deepest needs is a secret even to ourselves until we receive that knowledge by the work of the Holy Spirit and the gift of Scripture."[106] On the other hand, God has created mankind and knows the inner workings of people better than a

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[104] Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs,* 17.

[105] Bryson and Taylor argue the same point quoted earlier. Unless felt needs are met in the sermon, the listener will not grow to maturity.

[106] Albert Mohler, "The Problem of Preaching to Felt Needs," September 14, 2006, accessed June 14, 2018, https://albertmohler.com/2006/09/14/the-problem-of-preaching-to-felt-needs/.

person can know himself. God has communicated this intimate knowledge through the Scriptures which meets true needs and rebukes felt needs that are not of God.

In this same vein, preaching to felt needs will fail to bridge the gap because some felt needs are unbiblical. Many practitioners of felt needs just as quickly reach for the most recent psychological journal as they would reach for their Bible in an effort to understand people's felt needs. They integrate popular psychology into sermons as if man understands man better than God understands man. Jackson rejoices, "Our day has developed a great amount of understanding of the personality structure and human behavior that condition our approach to persons."[107] Jackson believes that these advancements must be adapted into the preacher's use of the pulpit. When Bryson and Taylor exhort the preacher to preach to the needs of the listener, they do not speak of needs contained in the Bible, but of needs outlined by Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[108] David Powlison is accurate in his assertion that this type of preaching will fail: "It's structured to give people what they want, not to change what they want."[109]

In addition, preaching to felt needs will fail to bridge the gap because felt needs are not always real needs. Many felt needs are temporal, fleeting, and not real. Litfin argues that most felt needs stem not from an internal struggle, but from cultural pressure:

> Felt needs can distract us because of the misdirection of our society, the pop culture, the advertising. People think they need all sorts of things they don't need, and they are distracted from the things they do need. It's almost a mistake to be asking, *What are the felt needs of my audience?* And use those as my take-off point.[110]

Where Litfin is hesitant to completely denounce starting with felt needs, Mohler is sure: "The sinner's need for Christ is a need unlike all other needs—and the satisfaction of

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[107] Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs,* 11.

[108] Bryson and Taylor, *Building Sermons to Meet People's Needs,* 44.

[109] David Powlison, "The Therapeutic Gospel," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 2.

[110] Litfin, "Felt-Needs Preaching."

having other needs stroked and affirmed is often a hindrance to the sinner's understanding of the Gospel."[111] According to Mohler, instead of felt-needs preaching being a bridge to the gospel, it is a hindrance to the gospel because meeting felt needs removes urgency of greater spiritual needs.

Equally as important, preaching to felt needs will fail to bridge the gap because its focus runs contrary to the focus of Scripture. The focus of Scripture is about man knowing God through repenting of self and turning to Christ, but needs-centered preaching appeals to self. According to *Christianity Today*, "The gospel calls us to surrender our desires, take up our cross, and follow Christ. How can a church effectively invite people to 'die to self' while constantly appealing to their self-interests?"[112] Felt-needs preaching reverses the order of emphasis in Scripture, which presents to the congregation a different gospel than the true gospel (Gal 1:6). Furthermore, because it presents a different gospel, it conveys a different purpose for God's gift of special revelation. Needs-centered preaching communicates that the Bible and the purpose of its writers is primarily about meeting felt needs. In needs-centered preaching, the meaning of the text has been twisted to fit the agenda of the preacher.

Despite some positives, needs-centered preaching also fails to fully represent the second element of pastoral preaching: the sermon applies the meaning of the text to the human experience of the listeners. Like problem-centered preaching, a positive of needs-centered preaching is that it requires the preacher to focus on the listener. The condition of the listener must be in the preacher's mind as he constructs the sermon if there is any hope of applying the meaning of the text to the listener's life. Jackson writes, "Preaching to human needs demands the ability to visualize the congregation, even while

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[111] Mohler, "The Problem of Preaching to Felt Needs."

[112] CT Pastors, "Felt-Needs and Messianic Marketing," *Christianity Today*, accessed June 14, 2018, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2008/july-online-only/felt-needs-and-messianic-marketing.html.

the sermon is being prepared."[113] The needs-centered approach also encourage pastors to have an active counseling ministry as a means of providing a window into the needs of the congregation. Another positive, which distinguishes needs-centered preaching from problem-centered preaching, is that needs-centered preaching is developed based on human experience having three dimensions. Humans are thinkers, feelers, and doers. People not only think and do, per the problem-centered approach, but they also have desires. Needs-centered preaching appeals to and gives application for all three of these dimensions.

Needs-centered preaching's crucial failure is in the context of human experience. First, needs-centered preaching projects that the Bible and Christianity are predominantly about the listener and his felt needs. However, Christianity and the Bible are not primarily about people, but about God and how people relate to God through faith in Jesus. Pierre writes of this context:

> People were created with corresponding functions that allow them to relate to God, and more than that, to imitate him. People's entire experience of daily life rests on this wonderful doctrine: they can understand and relate to God because they were created to be like him.[114]

Needs-centered preaching, however, encourages conformity to and attainment of felt needs, not Christlikeness. Powlison describes this tragic reversal of needs-centered preaching:

> It centers exclusively around the welfare of man and temporal happiness. It discards the glory of God in Christ. It forfeits the narrow, difficult road that brings deep human flourishing and eternal joy. . . . It does not want the King of Heaven to come down. It does not attempt to change people into lovers of God who embrace the truth of who Jesus is, what He is like, what He does."[115]

Needs-centered preaching is anthropocentric. It ignores God's claim as the center of existence and elevates man and his felt needs to what is most important to life. Second, needs-centered preaching rejects and redefines the human experience of being a sinner.

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[113] Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs,* 13.

[114] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 111.

[115] Powlison, "The Therapeutic Gospel," 2.

Pierre writes about this reality: "People are not theoretically sinners, but actively and inescapably so. Sin is not just an occasional thing people do, but a decay within who they are, so that their glorious capacities that were meant for worship of God are used to worship self."[116] The hope for sinners is found in salvation through faith in Christ. Only through salvation can a sinner receive the spiritual resources that enable true change and abundant life. Needs-centered preaching downplays the role of sin and portrays the unmet felt need as the real enemy of abundant life. Jackson argues, "The tone of preaching becomes different when the preacher pictures himself, first of all, as a minister to souls injured, scarred, or frightened by the experience of life."[117] Sin is sometimes listed as one of the contributors to felt needs that a needs-centered sermon may address, but it is not the root issue of man's problems; therefore, by removing a person's awareness of their need for a redeemer. Powlison is again helpful here:

> You are not the agent of your deepest problems, but merely a sufferer and victim of unmet needs. The offer of a cure skips over the sin-bearing Savior. Repentance from unbelief, willfulness, and wickedness is not the issue. Sinners are not called to a U-turn and to the new life that is life indeed. Such a gospel massages self-love. There is nothing in its inner logic to make you love God and love any person besides you. This therapeutic gospel may often mention the word "Jesus," but He has morphed into the *meeter-of-your-needs*, not the Savior from your sins. It corrects Jesus' work. The therapeutic gospel unhinges *the* gospel.[118]

The great irony of therapeutic, needs-centered preaching is that in its attempt to meet needs, it fails to address a person's greatest need of salvation from sin and separation from God through faith and repentance. In needs-centered preaching, sinners are left under the condemnation of God's righteous judgment while being encouraged through needs-centered sermons to continue to focus on the self. Instead of preaching to felt needs, sermons should rightly consider the human experience of sin. Sermons should focus on mankind's ultimate need, whether it is felt or not.

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[116] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 134.

[117] Jackson, *How to Preach to People's Needs,* 16.

[118] Powlison, "The Therapeutic Gospel," 3.

Needs-centered preaching is yet another attempt to develop a sermon that is more than simply information from the text. Advocates of this approach desire to reach the lives of the listener. They develop sermons tailored to the listener's life situation with resources aimed to increase the listener's happiness. Unfortunately, needs-centered preaching is an inappropriate approach to pastoral preaching because it places the felt needs of the listener over the meaning of the text, and fails to address the dynamic heart and context of the listener.

Summary

Problem-centered and needs-centered approaches to pastoral preaching are attempts to develop sermons that change the listeners' lives. They are pastoral in that they are all focused on the needs of the listener. This focus is sometimes lacking from biblically conservative approaches to preaching. Unfortunately, both approaches are inappropriate attempts at pastoral preaching because they place something other than the meaning of the text as the starting point and thrust of the sermon. To change people's lives, these attempts at pastoral preaching have made the fatal error of abandoning the truth that brings change. In addition, both approaches have ignored the complete human context in the development of application as well as all three elements of the dynamic heart. An appropriate approach to pastoral preaching will start with the meaning of the text and then apply that meaning to the human experience of the listener.

CHAPTER 3

PASTORAL PREACHING AND THE
SHEPHERD METAPHOR

Introduction

Essential to the definition of pastoral preaching is the meaning of the text and

the application of the meaning to the human experience of the listeners. While most

theologically conservative homileticians agree that the sermon must be based on the

meaning of the text, disagreement exists concerning the need for application. Professor

Hershael York and Scott Blue detailed this debate in an article entitled, "Is Application

Necessary in the Expository Sermon?" which was later adapted by Daniel Overdorf in his

book *Applying the Sermon: How to Balance Biblical Integrity and Cultural Relevance.*[1]

Together, they have identified three prominent arguments against the use of application

in preaching. First, God alone works in the listener's heart through the reading and

explanation of the biblical text. Karl Barth was one of the leading advocates against

application. He writes, "Two things call for emphasis: First, God is the one who works

and second, we humans must try to point to what is said in Scripture. There is no third

thing."[2] Barth viewed application as an attempt to bridge the gap between the world of

the Bible and the world of the listener, but he did not believe that this gap could be bridged.

Jay Adams writes of Barth's approach: "The preacher must speak about the text and about

life today, but God must bridge the gap, applying as He pleases what He will. Application,

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[1] See Hershael W. York and Scott A. Blue, "Is Application Necessary in the Expository Sermon?" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 70-84; Daniel Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon: How to Balance Biblical Integrity and Cultural Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 35-53.

[2] Karl Barth, *Homiletics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 45.

as far as the preacher is concerned, should at most be inferential, not direct."[3] In short, God, not the preacher, applies the text to the listener.

The second reason against the use of application stems from the first reason. Since God applies the text to the listener, any attempt by the preacher to give application may interfere with the work of God. Any decision made by the listener during the preaching event will be the result of the work of God in the listener's life. Therefore, by presenting application to the listener, the preacher may be interfering or disrupting the application that God intends. The preacher may even be subverting the work of God by proposing application that is less than the demand God would place on the listener. Overdorf writes of this possibility: "Such trite application may interfere with God's desire to perform a more momentous work. In application we run the danger of asking too little. God may desire more to the listener than we dare to point out."[4]

The third argument against the necessity of application is that the very nature of application assumes that the biblical text is insufficient on its own to change lives. Charles G. Dennison rejects the belief that a bridge must be built between the world of the Bible and the world of the listener in order for the Bible to be relevant. He argues, "Good preaching doesn't pull the Word into our world as if the Word were deficient in itself and in need of our applicatory skills. Instead good preaching testifies and declares to us that we have been pulled into the Word which has its own marvelous sufficiency."[5] In addition, Dennison argues that application not only presents the Bible as insufficient, but also presents contemporary culture as superior to the Bible. For, as Dennison writes, "This approach, as unintentional as it may be, allows the contemporary situation to

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[3] Jay Adams, *Truth Applied: Application in Preaching* (London: Wakeman Trust, 1990), 20.

[4] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon,* 38.

[5] Charles G. Dennison, "Some Thoughts on Preaching," *Kerux* 4 (December 1989): 8.

determine the Word's relevance."[6] Application leads the listener to believe that the Bible must be supplemented to be useful in his life.

Against these three objections to application, York, Blue, and Overdorf present their argument for the necessity of application. First, they point out the inconsistency in the argument that God requires the preacher to explain the text, but only the Spirit can apply the text. If the preacher must rely on the Spirit in explaining the text, why can he not also rely on the Spirit in applying the text? York and Blue ask the question, "What biblical or moral principle makes exegesis the work of the preacher and application the exclusive province of the Spirit? More plausible is the belief that the Holy Spirit uses human means to accomplish both tasks involved in exposition."[7] Warren Wiersbe makes a similar argument: "Yes, the Word does impress itself on the heart, and the Holy Spirit does convict, but the Word needs a preacher, and the Spirit needs a voice and therefore the sermon needs an application."[8] Barth believed that only the Spirit could apply the text, but Overdorf points out that biblical examples exist of teachers helping listeners apply the Scriptures. He points to the book of Nehemiah where the Law of God was read, explained, and applied:

> Beyond simply reading the Word of God, they offered explanation. Then, based on their explanation, the Levites joined Ezra and Nehemiah in offering direct application: "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep. . . . Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks" (Neh. 8:9-10).[9]

Application is necessary because through the work of the Spirit, God uses application to transform the listeners' lives.

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[6] Dennison, "Some Thoughts on Preaching," 8.

[7] York and Blue, "Is Application Necessary?," 72.

[8] Warren Wiersbe, *The Dynamics of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 78.

[9] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon,* 42.

Second, application is necessary to show the listener how they can live in conformity to the biblical text. Practical application not only bridges the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of the listener, but it shows the listener how he can live out the demands of the Bible in his own world. York and Blue propose, "Where the expositor takes seriously the obligation to give relevant, practical scriptural applications in his sermons, his audience will better understand the demands of the biblical text and more faithfully live out the gospel."[10] Barth argued against the use of application because the preacher's application may be different, contrary even, to what the Spirit is seeking to apply. Overdorf points out that a sermon without application can have similar results. He writes,

> Scholars who believe preachers are responsible for sermon application insist that listeners need someone to help them see how biblical teaching should impact their lives. They explain that if sermons remain abstract, faith will remain abstract. If sermons fail to describe life change, lives won't change.[11]

Application is necessary because it provides the listener with the instructions to living faithfully to God's commands.

Third, application is necessary because there is a real gap between the world of the text and the world of the listener. York and Blue point out that the distance of time, culture, geography, and language all contribute to this gap and demand that the preacher use application to bridge that gap.[12] Homileticians like John Stott and Sidney Greidanus have written extensively about the need to bridge the gap through application. Stott writes,

> It is across this broad and deep divide of two thousand years of changing culture (more still in the case of the Old Testament) that Christian communicators have to

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[10] York and Blue, "Is Application Necessary?," 79.

[11] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon,* 44.

[12] York and Blue, "Is Application Necessary?," 78.

throw bridges. Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today"[13]

Greidanus adds, "If preachers today wish to address their contemporary hearers with the word of God in an equally relevant way, they have no choice but to carry the message across the gap to the present historical-cultural situation."[14] Dennison argues that attempting to bridge the gap through application communicated that the Scriptures were irrelevant on their own. York and Blue disagree and propose that the opposite is true. They claim that application reveals to the listener how the Scriptures are relevant, a fact the listener may have missed if application did not bridge the gap between the ancient world and the world of the listener: "The expository preacher does not need to *make* Scripture relevant. He must, however, *demonstrate* its relevance; that is, he must appreciate the task of 'transferring a relevant message from the past to the present.'"[15] Far from removing Scripture's relevance, application reveals it because it demonstrates how ancient biblical truths are still at work in people's lives today. Contrary to Dennison, Bryan Chappell argues that failing to bridge the gap is what makes Scripture irrelevant to the listener: "If we do not place the proclamation of gospel truth in present world it will have no continuing meaning."[16] Application is necessary in preaching because of the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of the listener, and in bridging that gap application demonstrates how the Scriptures are relevant.

In addition to the objections detailed, others have noted that the misuse of application may be more damaging than no application at all. Haddon Robinson supports the use of application, but notes that "more heresy is preached in application than in Bible

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[13] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 138.

[14] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 159.

[15] York and Blue, "Is Application Necessary?," 78.

[16] Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 204.

exegesis."[17] In an effort to bridge the gap, some preachers may apply the text in ways that were not intended by the original authors. These preachers are guilty of application heresy.

Overdorf has identified seven common application heresies: spiritualizing, moralizing, patternizing, trivializing, normalizing, proof-texting, and promising the unpromised.[18] Spiritualizing is the application heresy of ascribing meaning to physical details of the text through the use of analogy, such as preaching that the five stones David used against Goliath stood for five spiritual weapons (Scripture reading, fellowship, Scripture memorization, prayer, and worship) that Christians need to battle their Goliaths. Similar to spiritualizing, moralizing is the development of moral principles from the details of the text that go beyond the author's intention. For example, in Acts 27, Paul warned the sailors that they should not set sail due to the inclement weather. Moralizing application from this passage could be that people should follow the advice of spiritual leaders even if the advice is in an area that the spiritual leader has no experience or training. Patternizing is the application heresy that takes descriptive elements of the text and makes them prescriptive, such as requiring all spiritual leaders to have twelve disciples because Jesus had twelve disciples. The next application heresy is trivializing, which means to give application that is less than what the text demands. For example, trivializing application of Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 4:29 to not allow an unwholesome word to proceed from one's mouth would be to ask the congregation to apply the text by saying one nice thing to someone each day the next week. The application lessens the original demand and is an afront to the gospel because the application does not call the listener to depend on the power of God to walk in faithfulness to the actual demand. Normalizing is the applicational heresy that derives application without consideration to circumstances as if the application is for all people at all times. The command for wives to submit to

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[17] Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, eds., *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 306.

[18] Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon,* 99.

their husbands is not a universal command. Wives must not submit to their husbands if by submitting, sin goes unchallenged. Correct application will acknowledge the nuances of the biblical commands. Another application heresy is proof-texting, which is the act of starting with the application and then selecting passages out of context to support the desired application. This process is heresy because the original author's intent is ignored or changed to fit the preacher's agenda. Promising the unpromised is the final application heresy and it means to promise the listener a certain outcome if they are obedient to the preacher's application. In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were rescued from the fiery furnace after not following the king's demand that they worship an idol. Preachers who promise the unpromised could take a passage like Daniel 3 and promise their listeners that God will not allow anything to happen to them if they walk faithfully to God.

The listed application heresies are an affront to Scripture. Robinson writes of application heresy, "That's a rape of the Bible. You're saying what God doesn't say. Through this process you undermine the Scriptures. Ultimately, people come to believe that anything with a biblical flavor is what God says."[19] The ease of slipping into application heresy should concern preachers, but for the reasons stated, it should not lead them to preach without application. Instead, preachers should be careful in how they develop application. Developing biblical application is a matter of stewardship in the same way as exegeting the text. Robinson notes, "Application is like a bridge, but it is filled with potential danger, so we must cross the bridge carefully."[20] Danger does not eliminate the need to cross the bridge.

In summary, application is a necessary element of the sermon. The Spirit of God works through the preacher's proclamation, explanation, and application of the

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[19] Robinson and Larson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, 307.

[20] Haddon Robinson, "The Preacher and the Message" (class notes, Gorden-Conwell Theological Seminary, May 27, 2002), quoted in Overdorf, *Applying the Sermon*, 73.

biblical text. Through application, believers are provided with biblical examples and instructions on how they are to live. Finally, application bridges the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of the listener. The potential pitfalls of poor application should not deter the preacher's use of application but should focus his attention on rightly producing application that is true to the biblical text.

An in-depth examination of the shepherd metaphor in Scripture will also reveal the need for application. Much more than simply providing food for the sheep, the shepherding metaphor reveals a holistic care that God's shepherds are to have for His sheep, a holistic care that results in faith and holiness. In the Old Testament, God is seen as the shepherd who tends to the needs of His flock. He cares for them and He judges human shepherds who fail by taking advantage of the flock instead of modeling God's care. In the New Testament, God's care for His flock is mediated first through Jesus who is the promised shepherd from Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34. In turn, Jesus commissions Peter, and through Peter the elders of churches, to tend to God's flock. Application is necessary in preaching because the shepherding work of God, which started in the Old Testament, continues through the elders of the church until Christ's return.

Examination of the Shepherd Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or a phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. Leland Ryken argues that metaphors are "bifocal utterances that require us to look at both the literal and figurative levels."[21] At the literal level, a metaphor presents an image that is meant to be understood in a non-literal way. Even so, the qualities of that image must be understood in their literal context in order to make a proper comparison. Philip Nel argues likewise: "In order to determine the exact context of the metaphor . . . establishment of its actual literary and cultural

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[21] Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1998), xiv.

context as well as the possible concrete experiential domain from which the mappings have emanated, is a *sine qua non.*"[22] Timothy Laniak adds that it is not only the literal image that needs to be established and consequently used in the comparison, but all associated images must be considered as well. He argues, "The metaphor drags a collection of inter-related associations from the source domain into the target domain as *prospects* for comparison."[23] Related to interpretation of metaphors in the Bible, Ryken identifies two common errors. First, the interpreter may have an extensive grasp of the literal image, but they err when they do not speak to the significance of the image in the comparison. Ryken writes, "The images of the Bible exist to *tell* us something about the godly life, something they will not do if they are allowed to remain in the physical phenomena only."[24] Similarly, the second error Ryken identifies is the opposite extreme of the first. Without detailing the image of the metaphor, the interpreter jumps directly to what the metaphor means. Proper interpretation of a metaphor will present both the literal picture and the intended meaning.

The biblical writers made regular use of metaphors, frequently using the shepherd metaphor and its connected associations. According to Ryken, "Sheep are the most frequently mentioned animal in the Bible, with nearly four hundred references if we include references to flocks. Additionally, the figure of the shepherd receives approximately one hundred references."[25] Multiple reasons exist for the popularity of the shepherd metaphor in the Bible. First, sheep and shepherding were an essential part of Ancient Near Eastern economy. Laniak notes, "Because of the importance of the pastoral

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[22] Philip J. Nel, "Yahweh Is a Shepherd: Conceptual Metaphor in Psalm 23," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 27, no. 2 (December 2005): 82.

[23] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 33.

[24] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, xiv.

[25] Ibid., 782.

economy virtually everyone was at least indirectly acquainted with the shepherd's work. Consequently the application of the shepherd's world to that of leaders and communities found a receptive, culturally competent audience."[26] Both Nel and Laniak detail through extrabiblical materials that many ancient cultures and nations made reference to the shepherd metaphor in regard to their leaders and their gods.[27] For God's people, the importance of shepherding stretches back to Abraham and continued through the New Testament (Gen 4:2). The people's familiarity with sheep and shepherding made it an easily understandable metaphor.

Second, the popularity of the shepherd metaphor can be attributed to the similarities between people and sheep. Sheep live in a state of dependence on the shepherd similar to mankind's dependence on God. Ryken describes the sheep's situation:

> They were totally dependent on shepherds for protection, grazing, watering, shelter and tending to injuries. In fact, sheep would not survive long without a shepherd. Sheep are not only dependent creatures; they are also singularly unintelligent, prone to wandering and unable to find their way to a sheepfold even when it is within sight.[28]

Isaiah must have had this understanding in mind when he wrote, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way" (Isa 53:6a). Similarly, Jesus connected the lostness of people to a sheep's need for a shepherd: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). The shepherd metaphor is fitting, because of mankind's need for a shepherd and its helpless state without one.

The literal image of the shepherd is developed through looking at the shepherd's role in the Ancient Near East—a role, that Laniak points out, was "comprehensive in

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[26] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 33.

[27] See Nel, "Yahweh Is a Shepherd," 92-98; and Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart,* 58-74.

[28] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery,* 782.

scope."[29] The shepherd had total authority, responsibility, and care over the flock. Even so, several attempts have been made to summarize the shepherd's responsibilities. Common to these attempts are the three roles of protector, provider, and guide.[30] An exploration of these three roles provides the literal image needed to properly interpret the shepherd metaphor.

First, the shepherd was responsible for protecting the sheep. The shepherd guarded the sheep from illness. Charles Jefferson refers to the shepherd as a physician. He writes, "Sheep, like human beings, have diseases, and like all other living creatures on our planet, they are liable to accident and misfortune. . . . The nature of his calling compelled a shepherd to be a doctor and a nurse."[31] At the end of each day, the shepherd would survey the flock looking for and tending to injured and diseased sheep. In addition to needing a physician's care, sheep lack the ability to defend themselves against the many predators that hunt in the wilderness. At night, the shepherd would corral the sheep into a sheepfold that he had constructed for their safety. Stones would be used to build the walls when available, otherwise the walls would be built out of thorn bushes to keep both the sheep in and predators out.[32] When out of the sheepfold, the shepherd carried a rod and a

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[29] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 248.

[30] Laniak uses the terms *protector*, *provider*, and *guide*. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 248. Resane prefers the terms *caring*, *courage*, and *guidance*. K. Thomas Resane, "Leadership for the Church: The Shepherd Model," *Heryormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1. Gladwell uses *provision*, *guidance*, and *safety*. Mary Beth Gladwell, "The Shepherd Motif in the Old and New Testament," Xenos Christian Fellowship, accessed August 2, 2018, https://www.xenos.org/essays/shepherd-motif-old-and-new-testament. Some scholars have identified additional roles, but they still fall under these three top-level roles. For example, Nel describes the shepherd's role as *care*, *provision*, *protection*, and *guidance toward well-being*. Nel sees care and provision as two separate roles, instead of falling under the heading *provider*. Nel, "Yahweh Is a Shepherd," 97. Ryken also covers the roles of *protector*, *provider*, and *guide*, and adds the role of *constant companion to the sheep*. Ryken's fourth role emphasizes the personal nature of the shepherd's relationship with the sheep. This personal nature can also be catalogued under the role of guide. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 782.

[31] Charles Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd: The Privileges and Responsibilities of Pastoral Leadership* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 2006), 43.

[32] Ibid., 39.

staff for protection. The rod was a clublike weapon that would be used against animals or robbers. According to Laniak, the staff had a crook on one end and was used mostly on the sheep: "His staff was useful for support, picking off branches, snagging a trapped animal with the crook, or redirecting misbehaving members of the herd."[33] In the event that sheep got separated from the flock, the shepherd was responsible to search, find, and bring the lost sheep back into the flock. Jefferson writes, "A critical part of the shepherd's task is rescue work. Sheep have the propensity for getting lost. They lose their way through stupidity and also through heedlessness and folly. . . . A lost sheep does not get home."[34] The defenseless state and lack of intelligence of the sheep necessitated the shepherd's protection.

Second, the shepherd was responsible for providing for the daily needs of the sheep. He would lead the flock to both food and water, a challenging duty in an environment that often lacked these essential elements. According to Jefferson, finding food and water was a task that the sheep were incapable of doing on their own: "Sheep cannot feed themselves nor water themselves. They must be conducted to the water and the pasture. . . . The grass varies with the seasons, and the shepherd is ever changing the location of his flock."[35] Rest was also essential to the wellbeing of the sheep. The shepherd would provide opportunities for the sheep to rest and recoup their strength. The shepherd's job was to provide, but more than provision, the shepherd was responsible for the appropriate consumption of all these resources. Laniak writes, "Shepherds have to watch their animals carefully; the right balance of eating, drinking and resting is

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[33] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 56.

[34] Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd,* 46.

[35] Ibid., 51.

essential."[36] The shepherd was responsible for providing for and overseeing the overall nourishment and physical wellbeing of the sheep.

Third, the shepherd was responsible to guide the sheep. This third responsibility is closely related to the roles of protection and provision. As the shepherd led his flock, he was ever watchful of danger. Jefferson notes, "It was his business to keep a wide-open eye, constantly searching the horizon for the possible approach of foes. He was bound to be circumspect and attentive. Vigilance was a cardinal virtue."[37] The ever-watchful shepherd was to guide the flock away from harm. Similarly, Laniak adds that the shepherd's watchfulness included the dangers of weather and limited resources. He writes, "Because the climate is so variable in the marginal areas, shepherds have to predict not only the weather, but also the amount of water and pasture needed in anticipation of each move they make."[38] As the guide, the shepherd was constantly vigilant to ensure that his leadership would lead to the flock's wellbeing and flourishing. Ryken notes that this guidance was a personal guidance. The flock would follow the shepherd because they knew his voice and trusted his leadership. Ryken says, "So close is the connection between shepherd and sheep that to this day Middle Eastern shepherds can divide flocks that have mingled at a well or during the night simply by calling their sheep, who follow their shepherd's voice."[39] Without the shepherd's guidance, the sheep would not survive in the harsh environment of the wilderness.

The roles of protector, provider, and guide describe the responsibilities of the Ancient Near Eastern shepherd and the image behind the shepherd metaphor. The shepherd protected the flock from both internal and external dangers. The shepherd

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[36] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 55.

[37] Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd,* 35.

[38] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 55.

[39] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery,* 782.

provided the flock with resources for nourishment needed for thriving and oversaw the flock's consumption of these resources. Finally, the shepherd guided a flock that knew his voice and trusted his leadership. He led the flock away from danger and toward what was needed for life. He was responsible for everything the flock needed for growth and flourishing. His care was comprehensive.

Shepherd Metaphor in the Old Testament

From the Pentateuch to the Minor Prophets, the shepherd metaphor is used frequently in the Old Testament.[40]

Pentateuch. In Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob gave credit to God for having shepherded him throughout his life (Gen 48:15). Gordon Wenham writes, "Jacob's blessing recalls God's guidance and protection of himself and his father and grandfather."[41] During the testament of Jacob to his twelve sons in Genesis 49, Jacob prophesied that God would give Joseph victory over his enemies and an abundance of descendants. Jacob credits these blessings to the "hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), by the God of your father who will help you" (Gen 49:24-25a). Kenneth Mathews points out that Jacob's use of shepherd refers to God's "divine provision."[42] Victor Hamilton believes Jacob is referring to God's "tenderness and care."[43] As Joseph's shepherd, God would protect and provide for Joseph.

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[40] The purpose of this section and the following section, "Shepherd Metaphor in the New Testament," is to survey the Old and New Testaments to show the frequent use and meaning of the shepherd metaphor. These sections are not intended to be comprehensive but are meant to give a glimpse into how the shepherd metaphor was deployed.

[41] Gordon John Wenham, *Genesis 16-50,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2 (Dallas: Zondervan, 1994), 465.

[42] Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2005), 906.

[43] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 685.

In the book of Numbers, Moses was concerned that God's people were like sheep without a shepherd. Because of Moses' disobedience, God will not allow him to lead God's people into the Promised Land. Moses prayed to God, "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd" (Num 27:16-17). Moses' time of leading God's people was coming to an end and he did not want to leave them without a shepherd. R. Dennis Cole writes, "Without such direction the often recalcitrant Israel might spend another forty years aimlessly wandering in a wilderness of spiritual darkness."[44] Moses believed that God's people needed a shepherd guide and God gave that responsibility to Joshua. In the Pentateuch God is first seen as a shepherd who provides, protects, and guides His people. God also placed men as shepherds over His people to accomplish these same tasks. Derek Tidball notes from the leadership of Moses and Joshua that "early in Israel's history it became apparent that God intended to mediate his ministry through others who would lead and guide Israel."[45]

History. The historical books of the Old Testament continue to use the shepherd metaphor to describe the leaders of God's people. Second Samuel 5 and 1 Chronicles 11 both cover the same event, the anointing of David as king over Israel (2 Sam 5:1-15; 1 Chron 11:1-5). In anointing David as king, the people from the tribes of Israel recognized that David was already leading the people. They said of David, "It was you who led out and brought in Israel" (2 Sam 5:2a; 1 Chron 11:2a). A. A. Anderson notes that this is the "language of military affairs, and it describes the activities of the

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[44] R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers,* The New American Commentary, vol. 3B (Nashville: Holman, 2000), 468.

[45] Derek J. Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 36.

chief or leader."[46] The people also noted the possession and prophecy of God: "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel" (2 Sam 5:2b; 1 Chr 11:2b). In response to this verse, Laniak writes, "Israel received its desired king, but only on the condition that it understand his role as derivative from and dependent upon the rule of YHWH, the flock's true Owner."[47] Robert Bergen agrees with Laniak. He adds that these passages make it clear that Israel belongs to God, the true owner of the flock, but God has placed David as shepherd over them "to defend, lead, and tend to the needs of those for whom he was responsible."[48] A couple of chapters later, in 2 Samuel 7, God refers to the tribal leaders of Israel as "those whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel" (v. 7). God is again emphasizing that Israel is His exclusive possession and He has placed leaders over His flock to shepherd them.

Second Samuel 24 illustrates the importance of good shepherds. King David, God's anointed shepherd over Israel, sinned against God by performing a census in the land. David realized what he had done, and "David's heart struck him," but God's discipline came quickly in the form of three days of pestilence that resulted in the death of 70,000 men (vv. 10-15). On the third day of pestilence, David cried out to God, "Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house" (v. 17). David's sin—his unwillingness to follow God's commands—resulted in calamity for those he was to lead. David failed to shepherd the sheep and the sheep suffered for it.

First Kings 22 covers Micaiah's prophecy of judgment against Ahab, the King of Israel. As King Ahab hoped to convince Jehoshaphat the King of Judah to join him in

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[46] A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 75.

[47] Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart,* 102.

[48] Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Holman, 1996), 318.

a battle against Ramoth-Gilead, he called all of his prophets to give an oracle about their success. Micaiah presented the only unfavorable prophecy. He said to King Ahab, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master; let each return to his own home in peace'" (v. 17). Micaiah used the shepherd metaphor to describe the leaderless state of Israel; a reality that may have been true even as Ahab was king, but came to reality when Ahab was killed in battle at Ramoth-Gilead.[49] In the historical books God declares that He is the ultimate owner of the sheep, but He has placed human shepherds over them to lead them according to God's direction.

Poetry. The shepherd metaphor is widely used in the poetry books of the Old Testament, especially the book of Psalms. Nowhere is the use of this metaphor more well known than in Psalm 23. Laniak writes, "The direct personal reign of God over his people and his king is affirmed most eloquently in Psalm 23. Here the psalmist expresses trust in the provision, protection and guidance of the divine Shepherd."[50] Later in the Psalms, David pleads to the Lord for help: "Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and carry them forever" (28:9). Tremper Longman notes, "The psalmist calls on God to carry Israel out of danger, just as a shepherd (Ps. 23) might carry a lame sheep out of trouble."[51]

After the destruction of the temple, which was caused by Israel's disobedience, the psalmist in Psalm 74 wonders if God will reject His people forever: "O God, why do

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[49] Laniak notes of this particular use of the shepherd metaphor that "the phrase is also a common designation for leaderless people." Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart,* 178. He later adds, "The phrase 'sheep without a shepherd' suggests a people without a king, or an army without a commander (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; 2 Chr. 18:16; cf. Isa. 13:14)." Ibid., 185.

[50] Ibid., 110.

[51] Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 154.

you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?" (74:1). Longman writes, "This phrase reminds God that he is their shepherd and thus should protect, guide, and provide for them."[52] Psalm 77 is another psalm of lament as the psalmist is in trouble, but he finds joy in rehearsing the great shepherding acts of rescue that God has performed for his people. He concludes the psalm, "You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (v. 20). Konrad Schaefer remarks of the psalmist's confidence in his heavenly shepherd, "Just as God mysteriously guided the people and their leaders, he continues to open a path through the turbulent waters."[53] Psalm 78 also uses the shepherd metaphor to describe the guidance of God: "Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock" (v. 52). Later in the same Psalm, God is described as selecting David from among His "sheepfolds" to be God's servant: "From following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance" (vv. 70-72). John Goldingay describes this transition in David's life: "So the shepherd boy became the shepherd king. As shepherd it was David's job to fight off the flock's attackers (1 Sam. 16:18; 17:34-37), and as king it became David's job likewise to protect God's people."[54]

In Psalm 79 the psalmist appeals for God's help on the basis that God is their shepherd: "Help us, O God of our salvation. . . . But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise" (vv. 8-13). Goldingay notes, "Yhwh's restoring the community will

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[52] Longman, *Psalms*, 278.

[53] Konrad Schaefer, *Berit Olam: Psalms* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2001), 190.

[54] John Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 512. See also Samuel Terrien, who draws a strong connection between God as shepherd and David as shepherd. He writes, "From Sinai to Zion: the bond of continuity is now established, religiously, and politically. David fed his flock 'with an upright heart' (v. 72; cf. 1 Kgs 9:4). He has become the true servant of the Lord. The idealization of the royal head of the Davidic dynasty matches that of the Zion sanctuary." Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 568-59.

instance Yhwh's relating to it as its shepherd, who rescues the flock."[55] Psalm 80 begins

where Psalm 79 finished by appealing to God to restore His people because He is their

shepherd: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock . . . come to

save us!" (80:1-2). Gerstenberger argues that by calling God "Shepherd of Israel," the

psalmist is "lauding God for being the owner and protector of his people."[56]

Psalm 95 is a call to worship God since He is the maker and shepherd-keeper of

His people: "For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his

hand" (v. 7). Goldingay captures the shepherd-flock relationship presented in this psalm:

"On one hand, Yhwh looks after Israel like a shepherd, ensuring that the flock is well

pastured. On the other, as Yhwh's flock Israel is 'in his hand,' under his sovereignty, like

the world as a whole."[57] The shepherd metaphor is used similarly as a call to worship

God in Psalm 100: "Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are

his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (v. 3). Especially important to this

psalm is that the writer not only speaks of God as shepherd, but also declares that God is

good (v. 5). Longman summarizes this call to worship the Good Shepherd: "The

composer calls on all the earth to stream into the sanctuary singing praises to God, their

Creator and Shepherd. He is their God, and they belong to him. They can count on him

for guidance, protection and provision."[58] Finally, Psalm 107 is a psalm of praise and

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[55] Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89*, 529. See also Erhard S. Gerstenberger who adds in regard to this passage, "A probative means to motivate God in this way is certainly to remind him that the enemy's hostility is warring against God himself." Erhard S. Gerstenberger and Gene M. Tucker, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations,* The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 101.

[56] Gerstenberger and Tucker, *Psalms, Part 2, and Lamentations*, 104.

[57] John Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, Baker Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 94. See also Longman, who wrote of Ps 95:6-7, "God not only created human beings, he also guides them, provides for them, and protects them as a shepherd guides, provides for and protects his flock." Longman, *Psalms*, 339.

[58] Longman, *Psalms*, 348.

thanksgiving. God is praised for having brought low evil shepherds and for having provided for the needy: "But he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks" (v. 41). Goldingay notes, "Yhwh not merely rescues them from affliction but puts them into a position where they have protection in the future."[59] The shepherd metaphor in the psalms presents God as Shepherd and Israel as His flock. All three elements of provision, protection, and guidance of the shepherd metaphor are present in God's interaction with His people in the Psalms.

Major Prophets. The shepherd metaphor is also widely used by the Major Prophets, although with a greater focus on human leaders serving as shepherds. The prophet Isaiah prophecies about the coming exile, but then offers a word of consolation concerning God's restoration of Israel: "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isa 40:11). Joseph Alexander notes the comprehensive care of God for His people: "The word correctly rendered *feed* denotes the whole care of a shepherd for his flock, and has therefore no exact equivalent in English."[60] Later, Isaiah will prophecy that this restoration will take place through God's shepherd Cyrus of Persia: "Who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'" (Isa 44:28a). As God's shepherd, Cyrus serves God's purposes by allowing Jerusalem and the temple to be rebuilt.[61]

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[59] Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, 259.

[60] Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 92. See also J. Alec Motyer, who writes, "This shepherd exercises general care (*tends his flock*), is watchful for particular needs (*gathers the lambs*) and identifies with concerns within the flock (*those that have young*). . . . *Close to his heart* is 'in his bosom,' symbolizing intimate, loving care." J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 302. Gary Smith also sees God taking on the comprehensive care of a shepherd: "The metaphors of gathering, feeding, carrying, and leading represents a full-orbed presentation of the various roles of a shepherd. This picture presents the intimate positive relationship God will have with his own people." Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66,* The New American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: B & H, 2009), 100.

[61] Smith writes, "As God's shepherd (a symbol of a king), Cyrus (Hb. Koresh) will be obedient and do everything God pleases. Specifically, he will give the instructions . . . that Jerusalem and the temple

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The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel made frequent use of the shepherd metaphor. During Jeremiah's prophecy of restoration, God said, "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer 3:15). The unfaithful shepherds of Israel contributed to their exile, but when God restores His people He will put faithful shepherds over them who will lead with wisdom.[62] The prophet points again to the unfaithful shepherds as the reason for the exile in chapter 10: "For the shepherds are stupid and do not inquire of the LORD; therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered" (Jer 10:21). Thompson identifies the critical error of Israel's shepherds, "They conduct themselves without reference to Yahweh's covenant and its laws and commandments, and without the sincere seeking after his mind and will which would arise out of an attitude of submission and obedience."[63]

In Jeremiah 13, the prophet blames King Jehoiachin and the Queen-Mother for leading the Lord's flock into captivity (vv. 17-19). The prophet demands that they look upon what their foolish leadership has wrought: "Lift up your eyes and see those who come from the north. Where is the flock that was given you, your beautiful flock?" (v. 20).[64] Jeremiah 23 begins with accusations against the unfaithful shepherds of Israel.

should be rebuilt." Smith, *Isaiah 40-66,* 250. See also Alexander, who says, "He is here called Jehovah's shepherd, which may either be the usual poetical designation of a king, so common in the oldest classics or . . . a special description of his mission and vocation to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 175.

[62] As God restores Israel, He also restores their leadership. Longman writes, "Those who do survive will come back to Zion, the spiritual center of Jerusalem, and God will give them shepherds (leaders) who will shepherd them." Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations,* New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 42. J. A. Thompson adds, "This new line of kings would rule . . . the people with knowledge and understanding, that is, wisely and well." J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah,* The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 202. William Holladay summarizes God's plans: "Yahweh will replace the unfaithful shepherds with his own faithful ones." William L. Holladay, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 120.

[63] Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah,* 335.

[64] Longman sees a special responsibility placed upon the queen-mother for having failed the Lord and His flock. He writes of v. 20, "Interestingly, in this case it is the queen mother who is the shepherd

They are guilty of destroying God's sheep, scattering His flock, driving them away, and not attending to their needs (vv. 1-2).[65] As the Good Shepherd, God will gather His flock together and place over them faithful shepherds who will provide, protect, and guide His flock: "I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the Lord" (v. 4).

Another declaration of judgment on unfaithful shepherds occurs in Jeremiah 25 where God, like a roaring lion, will treat the shepherds as they have treated their sheep. God declares, "Wail, you shepherds, and cry out . . . for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come" (v. 34). Longman describes their failure and punishment: "Their job was to keep God's people pure and on the path of godliness, but they did just the opposite. God, who is again likened to a lion (v. 38), will destroy shepherd and pasture (flock)."[66]

Jeremiah 31 describes God's glorious restoration of His people from their harsh life in exile: "Say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock'" (v. 10b). Mackay notes, "'Like a shepherd' indicates the care with which he will provide for his people and the tenderness of his action."[67] The faithful shepherd leads his sheep to life, but as Jeremiah writes in chapter 50, the unfaithful shepherd leads the sheep to death. Jeremiah expresses concern since Israel's

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who fails her flock, the people of Judah." He proposes that the queen-mother was actually leading the people since King Jehoiachin was so young. Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations,* 114.

[65] John Mackay details how the shepherd metaphor explains why responsibility fell on the leaders of Israel: "The phrase makes clear the role of the kings as under-shepherds and the LORD himself as the true Shepherd. It was the failure of the under-shepherds that led to their own downfall and that of the people." John L. Mackay, *Jeremiah Chapters 21-52*, A Mentor Commentary (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004), 47. Longman emphasizes the magnitude of the charges brought against Israel's shepherds: "The fact that these shepherds destroy the sheep (which stands for their subjects) is particularly damning since real shepherds go to great lengths to take care of and protect their sheep." Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations,* 160.

[66] Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations,* 177.

[67] Mackay, *Jeremiah Chapters 21-52*, 214-15.

shepherds have led them astray. God's people have been led away from their fold and have wandered through the mountains until they were devoured by their enemies (vv. 6-7). F. B. Huey, Jr., describes this downward path on which the unfaithful shepherds led God's flock: "They encouraged the people's participating in idolatrous practices that were abhorrent to God. They forgot their own 'resting place,' probably a figurative reference to the temple. Like unprotected sheep they were devoured by others."[68] Later in the same chapter, God is once again portrayed as the Good Shepherd who will protect, provide, and guide His sheep: "I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead" (v. 19). The wandering sheep will be content under the care of the Good Shepherd.

In Ezekiel 20, God's restorative and protective acts are described in the same way that a shepherd cares for his flock. God "gathers" His people who have been "scattered" among the nations (v. 20:34). He will make all those He has gathered "pass under the rod" in order to "purge out the rebels" from among them (vv. 37-38). Daniel I. Block writes of the shepherd metaphor used here: "The idiom derives from the custom of a shepherd standing at the entrance of the fold using his rod to count, examine, and sort his sheep."[69] As God restores His people from the exile, He will provide the same individual care and inspection that a shepherd gives his sheep.

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[68] F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, The New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: Holman, 1993), 410. Longman agrees, saying, "The leaders (kings, priests, and prophets) have not done their duty in guiding the sheep. . . . With such bad leaders, the people of God were like sheep without a shepherd. They not only got lost but they were devoured by their enemies who acted like wolves that prey on sheep." Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations,* 306.

[69] Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 651. Block also writes, "By having the sheep (the Israelites) pass under the rod Yahweh identifies the rebels and isolates them from those who participate in the covenant proceedings." Ibid., 652. Similar interpretations can be found from Walther Zimmerli and Leslie C. Allen. Zimmerli writes, "Yahweh, who is not only accuser, but also judge, separates those who have rebelled against him (cf. 2:3) like a shepherd who makes his flock pass under his staff (again Jer 33:13; Lev 27:32) in order to count them . . . and to separate them." Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1-24*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 416. Allen states, "The shepherd's role of soring out his flock (cf. Lev 27:32) is

No Old Testament passage makes use of the shepherd metaphor as extensively as found in Ezekiel 34:1-24, which is why it will be examined closely in a future section. In this chapter God passes judgment on the shepherds of Israel who have neglected the sheep, but "have been feeding themselves!" (v. 2). The shepherds' neglect has led to God's people becoming "prey" for wild beasts (v. 8). God commits to performing the role of shepherd that His people were missing. God declares, "I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice" (v. 16). In addition, God will establish a new shepherd who will lead His people. This shepherd shall come from the line of David and he shall be prince among God's people (vv. 23-24). All three shepherding tasks of provision, protection, and guidance are found in this chapter and ascribed to God and His future shepherd.

Ezekiel later prophecies of the increase that will occur under the leadership of the Good Shepherd. God will increase the people "like a flock" and the streets will be "filled with flocks of people" (Ezek 36:37-38). Block adds, "To describe the effects of Yahweh's action, the prophet compares the population of the land with flocks of sheep, jamming the streets of Jerusalem at festival time."[70] Finally, Ezekiel 37 returns to the future King David who will be the "one shepherd" over God's people. As a result of his leadership, "They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statues" (v. 24). Allen notes of the future king, "It gives the king the role of an undershepherd of the

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a powerful metaphor of inexorable selection." Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 29 (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 14.

[70] Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48,* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 365. John Taylor adds that it may not be numerical growth that is in mind here, but also spiritual growth: "It is tempting to wonder whether he thought beyond the mere numerical similarity to the picture of a people who were ready to be offered, like the sheep, as living sacrifices in the service of God." John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 22 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 227.

covenant flock, fulfilling all of God's purposes for them."[71] The Major Prophets present God as the Good Shepherd who steps in to provide holistic care for His sheep who have been led astray by selfish and negligent human shepherds. The Major Prophets also foretell of a future shepherd, the one in the line of King David, who will be established by God and will lead God's flock into all holiness.

Minor Prophets. In the Minor Prophets, the shepherd metaphor is used again of God and the leaders of His people. Like Jeremiah, Micah makes use of the shepherd metaphor to describe God's restoration of Israel after the exile. God says to Israel, "I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men" (Mic 2:12). God brings the scattered sheep of Israel under his leadership. Next, Micah captures the Good Shepherd guiding His sheep: "He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head" (Mic 2:13). Hans Walter Wolff describes the shepherd-sheep relationship presented here: "Yahweh is the one who breaks forth, bursting first through the barricades. The multitude follows him, passing through the gate, finally making an exodus into freedom."[72]

Zechariah 10 contains yet another accusation against the unfaithful shepherds of God's people, for they have led the people to serve false gods instead of trusting in Yahweh alone. God declares, "My anger is hot against the shepherds and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah, and will make

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[71] Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48,* 194.

[72] Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 86. See also Kenneth L. Barker, who writes,

> The literary genre is a salvation or deliverance oracle in which the Lord as royal Shepherd promises to gather a remnant of his people like sheep in a pen (2:12). Then, as their King, he leads them out through the city gate (2:13). The scope of the passage probably extends beyond restoration from exile to the Messianic Kingdom. (Kenneth L. Barker, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, The New American Commentary, vol. 20 [Nashville: Holman, 1998], 69-70)

them like his majestic steed in battle" (vv. 2-3). God not only promises judgment on the unfaithful shepherds, but He also promises that the flock will thrive under His leadership. Ralph L. Smith notes, "He will turn the frightened, passive, shepherdless sheep into an active, proud, brave war-horse."[73] Finally, the shepherd metaphor is continued into the next chapter of Zechariah where God pronounces judgment on the shepherd who "does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy. . . . Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock!" (11:16-17a). The shepherds of Israel will be held accountable for their treatment of the flock because the flock belongs to God and He will not tolerate unfaithful shepherds neglecting His people.[74]

In summary, the writers of the Old Testament made extensive use of the shepherd metaphor. God is portrayed as the Good Shepherd who owns the flock and oversees their complete care: protection, provision, and guidance. The leaders of God's people are also called shepherds and they are held accountable for their leadership of the people. The Old Testament writers credit the unfaithful shepherds for the reason why God's people entered apostasy and were exiled from the Promised Land. According to God's plan of restoration, God would gather His scattered sheep and place new shepherds over them. These new shepherds would lead God's people into godliness. Special attention is given to a shepherd that is to come, a shepherd in the line of David, and all of God's people will be placed under his care.

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[73] Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 32 (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 262. George Klein also understands God's leadership to result in a transformed people: "In the end, the Lord's tender care for his flock would transform her into an unrecognizable image. With a surprising twist, Zechariah portrays Judah after her metamorphosis as a battle horse." George Klein, *Zechariah,* The New American Commentary, vol. 21B (Nashville: Holman, 2008), 292. Andrew Hill describes both ends of God's work: "God intends to visit, that is, punish (NIV, NRSV) those misleading the people; by contrast, he intends to 'visit' (NAB, NEB), that is, to care for (NIV, NRSV) or 'look after' (NLT) his people." Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 220.

[74] Klein notes, "Figuratively the prophet proclaimed judgment on the shepherd who had abused his people through neglect and acts of violence." Klein, *Zechariah,* 346.

**Shepherd Metaphor in
the New Testament**

The New Testament writers were likewise fond of the shepherd metaphor and used it to describe both God and His people.

Gospels. In Matthew's Gospel, the wise men connected Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with the prophesies of Micah and Samuel: "For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel" (2:6b). Craig L. Blomberg describes the significance of the shepherd metaphor as it applies to Christ's reign: "He will not only rule but also 'shepherd' the people of Israel. . . . It implies guidance, pastoral care, and a sense of compassion."[75] During Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he uses the shepherd metaphor to warn the sheep of predators of their faith. Jesus preaches, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (7:15). Jesus presents God's people as a flock that is at risk from those who pretend to be part of the flock but are actually false prophets.[76]

Matthew 9 contains a frequently repeated sentiment of Jesus: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (v. 36). Jesus' comments not only speak to the lack of faithful leadership in Israel, but also the presence of spiritual predators misleading God's people

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[75] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew,* The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Holman, 1992), 64. See also R. T. France, who writes, "The latter phrase reflects (but not so closely) the language of Mic 5:4, 'he shall feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,' and defines the caring rather than despotic role of this ideal king in contrast with Herod's reign." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 72. In addition, John Nolland notes, "The reference to 'shepherd of my people Israel' can hardly avoid evoking the eschatological expectation of the ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel." John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New Testament Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 115.

[76] France writes, "The imagery of wolves dressed as sheep not only indicates that their destructive intentions are hidden behind a mild façade but also draws on the common metaphor of God's people as his flock (cf. 9:36, 10:6; 16; 15:24; 18;12-13; 25:32-33; 26:31): they want to be accepted as belonging to God's people." France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 290.

from the truth.[77] Matthew 10 contains a conversation that is also found in Luke 10:3. When Jesus prepared his disciples for their mission, He used the shepherd metaphor to describe the world in which they would work: "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (v. 16). R. T. France points out that sheep are stupid and unable to protect themselves against the wolves that plague Israel, but the disciples must not be like sheep.[78] They must be wise against the false prophets of Israel that would seek to stop them from living faithfully to Jesus' mission.

In Matthew 15, Jesus was approached by a Canaanite woman whose daughter was oppressed by a demon. Jesus said to her, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v. 24). Blomberg believes that Matthew includes this story to reveal Jesus' shepherding mission to the lost sheep of Israel. While this woman's daughter was oppressed by a demon, God's flock was oppressed by unfaithful shepherds and wolves. Blomberg writes, "Jesus must first go to the Jews."[79] The parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18 presents Jesus as the Good Shepherd who goes to great lengths to rescue the one who has gone astray. Jesus says, "So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven

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[77] Blomberg describes the situation that Jesus sees:

His compassion increases because Israel lacks adequate leadership, despite the many who would claim to guide it. . . . As in the days of the prophets, the rightful leadership of Israel had abdicated its responsibility, as demonstrated by its inability or unwillingness to recognize God's true spokesmen. . . . Predators, and possibly even unscrupulous shepherds (Zech 10:2-3; 11:16) have ravaged the sheep. (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 166)

France agrees: "Such a description is reminiscent of Ezek 34:1-16, where the sheep are oppressed and scattered because of the failure of the 'shepherds of Israel,' so that it is necessary for God himself to seek out and rescue the lost sheep." France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 372.

[78] France writes of sheep, "The vulnerability of sheep is enhanced by their proverbial stupidity, but disciples are not to be like that." France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 390. David Turner adds that the wolves continue to be the religious leaders of Israel: "The disciples will be among wolves as they minister only in Israel: their fellow country men will pose significant danger for them. The wolves in Matt. 10:16 point to the religious leaders whose opposition to Jesus mounts as the narrative unfolds." David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 275.

[79] Blomberg, *Matthew,* 243.

that one of these little ones should perish" (v. 14). France points out the lesson for the

disciples:

> The practical implications of the story will become clear from the verses that follow: if one member of the disciple community is in spiritual danger, action must be taken to "win" them back (v. 15). To do so is to share the pastoral care of God, the true shepherd of his people.[80]

Later in Matthew, Jesus used the shepherd metaphor to describe the final

judgment: "Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one

from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (25:32). Just as a shepherd

separates sheep from goats, so will the Son of Man separate from those who are mixed

together those who belong to His flock and those who do not.[81] Matthew 26 contains a

conversation between Jesus and his disciples that is also found in Mark 14:27. As Jesus

spoke of His crucifixion and death, He connects this event to Zechariah 13:7: "You will

all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the

sheep of the flock will be scattered'" (Matt 26:31). In Jesus' use of the metaphor He saw

Himself as the shepherd and the disciples as the sheep that would fall away, but would

later be restored to Him after His resurrection.[82] Concerning this reunion, William L.

Lane adds, "There the scattered sheep will be gathered together and reunited with their

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[80] France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 688. Supporting ideas can be found with Blomberg's first of three main points from the parable. Blomberg writes, "The three main points associated with the main characters of the parable apply equally to unbeliever (Luke) and backslidden Christian (Matthew): (1) God takes the initiative to go to great lengths to bring back to himself those who are estranged from him." Blomberg, *Matthew,* 277. Turner explains, "In Matthew, Israel's leaders are not faithful shepherds, and Jesus compassionately rescues the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; 32; 26:31). By implication, Jesus's disciples must model their lives and ministries after the concern of the Father as exemplified in Jesus and expressed in the parable." Turner, *Matthew*, 440.

[81] France supports this interpretation: "The point of the shepherd simile is to emphasize yet again the ultimate division among those who up to that point have been mixed up together." R. T. France, *Matthew,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 359.

[82] Blomberg, *Matthew,* 393. See also France, who writes, "The sheep in the prophecy are the people of God (as in Ezek 34), scattered when they lose their leader, but destined to be refined and restored, even if only one third of them (Zech 13:8-9). So for Jesus his disciples form the nucleus of the new people of God under the leadership of the Messiah." France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 998.

Shepherd."[83] In these passages, Jesus is not only the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, but He is also the Good Shepherd that will lead His people.

Like the Gospel of Matthew, Mark uses the shepherd metaphor to capture Jesus' compassion for the crowds because "they were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). Jesus then began to teach the crowds. Robert H. Gundry comments on how Jesus' compassion led to teaching: "His compassion on the crowd grows out of their being 'like sheep not having a shepherd,' not out of their hunger and lack of food (as in 8:2), and leads him to teach them. Thus, by teaching them he shepherds them."[84]

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus uses the shepherd metaphor to communicate the Father's care for His sheep. After instructing the disciples to eschew worry and pursue the kingdom, Jesus says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (12:32). Leon Morris notes the significance behind Jesus' use of this metaphor: "It speaks of the small number of true disciples, but also of the care they may expect from their Shepherd."[85] Similar to Matthew, Luke also contains Jesus'

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[83] William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 511.

[84] Robert Horton Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 323. Jesus shepherding through teaching is also supported by Robert H. Stein. He writes, "In Jewish literature the 'feeding' of Israel is often associated with their being taught the Torah (2 Bar. 77.13-15). By this editorial comment Mark indicates that Jesus supplied the spiritual needs of his hearers by teaching (1:14-15); shortly, he will relate how Jesus would meet their physical needs of feeding them." Robert H. Stein, *Mark,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 313. James A. Brooks adds, "'Sheep without a shepherd' is an Old Testament picture of Israel without spiritual leadership (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Ezek 34:5). Jesus is pictured as the Good Shepherd who feeds the new Israel (cf. Ezek 34:23; Jer 23:4). First he 'fed' the crowd with his teaching." James A. Brooks, *Mark,* The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: Holman, 1991), 108.

[85] Leon Morris, *Luke,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 233. Darrell Bock also notes Jesus' use of the shepherd metaphor to communicate the fragile nature of the disciples: "The tenderness of the reassurance is expressed in the address to the disciples as 'little flock,' an OT figure for God's fragile yet cared for people." Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:52,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1165. Similar thoughts have been conveyed by Robert H. Stein. Stein writes of the "little flock . . . which identifies the believer as part of the true people of God (Mic 2:12). Even if sent out as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3; cf. Acts 20:29), they need not fear, for God is with them." Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Holman, 1993), 356.

parable of the lost sheep. However, Luke sees the shepherd's search for the lost sheep to be evangelistic. Nevertheless, Jesus is still the shepherd who cares and searches after the lost sheep. Bock adds, "The shepherd would look until he failed to find the sheep, found its tattered remains, or located the animal. The point is that the lost sheep receives special attention over those that are safe and sound."[86] Like a shepherd, Jesus' mission is to find the lost sheep of Israel.

Among the Gospels, the shepherd metaphor is never used as extensively as in John 10.[87] In this chapter Jesus declares Himself to be the "good shepherd" (v. 11) who "leads" (v. 3) and "goes before" His sheep (v. 4). The sheep know Jesus and Jesus knows them because they are His own (v. 14). He is unlike the hired hand that flees when danger comes (v. 12), instead He will lay down His life for the sheep (v. 15). In this chapter, Jesus is portrayed as the shepherd who provides comprehensive care for the sheep. He protects, provides for, and guides His sheep. He is the good shepherd prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 23:2; Ezek 34:11-16). Colin Kruse argues, "Jesus' claim to be 'the good shepherd' was more than a claim to do what the national leaders of his day failed to do. It was also a claim to be one with God the Father, who is 'the good shepherd' of his people."[88]

Jesus made use of the shepherd metaphor in John's Gospel during the restoration of Peter into ministry (21:15-19). Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him, and in response to Peter's positive responses, Jesus commanded Peter to take care of the flock of

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[86] Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:52*, 1302.

[87] Tidball says of this chapter, "The most notable feature of the teaching of Jesus which is relevant to pastoral ministry is found in the parable of the Model Shepherd (10:1-21)." Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds,* 85.

[88] Colin G. Kruse, *John,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 234. Andreas J. Kostenberger adds, "Jesus' appropriation of the title 'shepherd'. . . places him firmly within the framework of the OT and traditional Jewish messianic expectations." Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 306.

God: "Feed my lambs" (v. 15), "Tend my sheep" (v. 16), and "Feed my sheep" (v. 17). J.

Ramsey Michaels notes, "As Good Shepherd (10:11,14), he commissions Peter to act as

shepherd in his absence, in view of his imminent departure. . . . Peter will act as shepherd

in Jesus' place, yet the 'lambs' belong not to him but to Jesus."[89] Jesus used the

shepherd metaphor to define Peter's commission over God's flock. The Gospels present

Jesus as the Good Shepherd prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. Jesus will gather

together the lost sheep of Israel and protect them from the false shepherds that are among

them. In addition, near the end of Jesus' life He commissioned new shepherds to

continue His work among God's flock until His return.

Acts. The remaining books of the New Testament also make use of the

shepherd metaphor to identify Jesus as the Chief Shepherd and the leaders of His church

as undershepherds. Paul uses the shepherd metaphor to highlight the responsibility of the

Ephesian elders before God:

> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has
> made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own
> blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not
> sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted
> things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert. (Acts 20:28-31a)

I. Howard Marshall notes of Paul's command, "Their task was *to care for the church;* the

RSV mg. rendering *feed* is too narrow in meaning for a word that means 'to act as a

shepherd'; it refers to all the care that must be exercised in relation to the flock."[90]

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[89] J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1044. Kruse argues that Jesus has three tasks in mind for Peter. Peter is to provide "spiritual nourishment for new believers," "pastoral care for believers generally," and "spiritual nourishment for believers generally." Kruse, *John*, 385-86. Kostenberger adds, "Shepherd imagery abounds in the OT, which is pervaded by a yearning for shepherds who are devoted to God, care for his sheep, and carry out his will." Kostenberger, *John,* 596.

[90] I. Howard Marshall, *Acts,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 352. Eckhard J. Schnabel adds, "They must keep watch over themselves, taking care of their own theological, spiritual, and ethical integrity. If they do not nurture themselves, they cannot take care of others. They must also keep watch over 'the whole flock' . . . caring for all members of the church." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 845-46. F. F. Bruce also understands this care to be comprehensive: "The Holy Spirit had entrusted them with

Particularly to Ephesus, Paul gives special attention to the shepherd's responsibility to protect the flock from false teachers. F. F. Bruce writes, "The sheep will have to be guarded with unceasing vigilance, for ferocious wolves will try to force their way among them and ravage them."[91] Paul uses the shepherd metaphor to communicate the responsibility that elders must comprehensively care for God's flock.

Epistles. Paul also uses the shepherd metaphor for the same purposes in the book of Ephesians: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (4:11-12a). Frances Foulkes writes of Paul's use of the word "shepherd": "The duties of the pastor (literally 'shepherd') are to feed the flock with spiritual food and to see that they are protected from spiritual danger."[92] Frank Thielman agrees and notes that the shepherd role is defined by the biblical writers' rich use of the shepherd metaphor throughout the Scripture.[93] In the benediction of the book of Hebrews, the writer calls Jesus "the great shepherd of the sheep" (13:20). The shepherd metaphor is used here to

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the charge of the people of God in Ephesus; they had to care for them as shepherds cared for their flock." F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 392.

[91] Bruce, *The Book of Acts,* 393.

[92] Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 126.

[93] Frank Thielman, *Ephesians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 276. Thielman also notes that there is some debate centered on whether Paul believed the positions shepherd and teacher to be one position or two similar positions. Andrew Lincoln does not believe so, but does believe that the two roles are closely connected: "It is more likely that they were overlapping functions, but that while almost all pastors were also teachers, not all teachers were also pastors." Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Zondervan, 2014), 250. William W. Klein agrees with Lincoln. He adds, "While they can be distinguished—not all teachers are pastors, though all pastors must be teachers (cf. Paul on elders, 1 Ti 3:2)—the functions overlap as these leaders transmit the truth about Jesus and serve as 'undershepherds' who guide and oversee their flocks." William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 115-16.

describe Jesus' sacrificial care of the flock as His death brought peace to His followers.[94]
In addition, the metaphor describes Jesus' supreme position ("*great* shepherd") over the
flock and undershepherds.[95]

The apostle Peter makes use of the shepherd metaphor twice in 1 Peter. The
first time he uses the metaphor to describe Jesus and His followers. He writes, "For you
were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your
souls" (2:25). Peter refers to Isaiah 53:6 as he describes their lives apart from Christ as
"straying like sheep." Peter H. Davids adds, "At that time they were straying sheep, a
picture used of Israel only when she was without a leader or under wicked rulers."[96]
Since placing their faith in Christ, they were now under the care and rule of Jesus who
would lead them through persecution to safety.[97] Peter's second use of the shepherd
metaphor described the role of elders as they wait for the Chief Shepherd to return. Peter

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[94] Donald Guthrie writes, "There is a particular tenderness in the shepherd metaphor which has never failed to appeal strongly to people of all ages." Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 279. Paul Ellingworth adds, "The image of a shepherd, inherited from the OT, is one who both cares and rules." Paul Ellingworth, *Hebrews,* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 729.

[95] David Allen notes the significance of the writer's use of "great": "Jesus is described as 'the great Shepherd of the sheep,' where the adjective 'great' is given prominence by the repetition of the article and its position at the end of the phrase." David L. Allen, *Hebrews,* The New American Commentary, vol. 35 (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 627. Ellingworth adds, "Christ is the great shepherd, as he is the great (high) priest (4:14; 10:21) by contrast with lesser Levitical high priests, and perhaps with subordinate leaders of the Christian community." Ellingworth, *Hebrews,* 729.

[96] Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter,* The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 113.

[97] Karen Jobes remarks on the safety found in following Jesus, though following Him leads through difficult paths:
> The imagery of sheep following after the shepherd, following in his footsteps so to speak forms a conceptual inclusio with 2:21, framing the entire christological exposition with the image that walking in Jesus' footsteps, even through unjust suffering, is nevertheless the Shepherd's path of safety, protection and deliverance. (Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005], 199)

Thomas R. Schreiner comments on the extent of the shepherd's care: "The word 'Shepherd' designates the leader and ruler over the souls (i.e., whole persons) of those in the church." Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2003), 147.

wrote, "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3). Thomas Schreiner writes of the elder's role, "They are to function as shepherds of God's flock. They are not to be like the shepherds indicted in Ezekiel 34 who treated their flock 'harshly and brutally' (34:4), who cared only for themselves (34:8)."[98]

Revelation. Lastly, John makes use of the shepherd metaphor in the book of Revelation to describe the reign of Jesus: "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water" (7:17). Like a shepherd provides for, protects, and guides his flock so that they will live and prosper, so does Christ shepherd His people. Leon Morris writes, "In this way John makes his point that Christ by his sacrifice of himself makes provision for the needs of his people."[99]

In the New Testament, the responsibility to shepherd God's people transitions from the Father to Jesus and then on to Peter and the elders of the church. Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd who received the responsibility to care for God's flock. Jesus would protect, provide for, and guide the flock that He was given. Per His Father's will, Jesus would go after the lost sheep and restore him to the flock. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He transitioned this responsibility to Peter and the elders of the church. Peter is commissioned to shepherd the flock that was entrusted to Jesus. Peter and Paul then commission elders to shepherd their flocks. Every time the shepherd metaphor is used in the New Testament, the Old Testament traditions of God as the shepherd of His flock that protects, provides for, and guides are passed down with it.

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[98] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 233.

[99] Leon L. Morris, *Revelation,* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 20 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 118. Robert H. Mounce also notes that John's use of the shepherd metaphor builds off of the OT picture of God as the shepherd of Israel. Jesus represents and embodies the continuation of the Father's shepherding care. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 166.

Elders continue the shepherding role of God the Father, under the authority and accountability of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, until His return.

Review of Select Passages

Further study of Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, John 21:15-19, and 1 Peter 5:1-4 supports the idea that the intended role of the shepherd is comprehensive and that this role has been passed down from the Father to the Son and then to human shepherds, or undershepherds. The job of the undershepherd is to carry out the Chief Shepherd's purposes.

Biblical Interpretation of Psalm 23

Psalm 23 is about the psalmist's trust in a faithful God.[100] The psalmist can place his complete trust in Yahweh because He is the divine shepherd that will not fail His sheep. In the psalm, God provides food, water, and rest for His sheep (v. 2).[101] He leads the sheep safely to resource rich locations and protects the sheep from harm (vv. 2b, 4, 5a, 6a).[102] The sheep thrive under the shepherd's care; his soul is "restored," and his feet walk upon "paths of righteousness" (v. 3). When the sheep is injured or ill, God nurses

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[100] Some scholars believe that Ps 23 should be classified as a psalm of thanksgiving, however, most view the psalm as a psalm of trust, including Goldingay, deClaisse-Walford, Kraus, and Craigie. John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 344; Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms,* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 238; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, A Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 305; Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalm 1-50,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Dallas: Word, 1983), 204.

[101] Kraus writes about abundant and thoughtful provision of the Lord: "The singer wants to emphasize that the shepherd leads his flock, not over sterile fields on which the sheep find only brush parched by heat, but to succulent, ideal pasturages." Kraus, *Psalms 1-59,* 307. Goldingay agrees: "Causing the flock to lie down there rather than simply feed suggests ample provision. It implies that they have eaten, are satisfied, and have no need to move on to look for further grass: this pasture will provide the next meal, too. Lying down after feeding also hints at security." Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41,* 349. deClaisse-Walford also sees protection and security in the psalmists use of "rest." She writes, "*Rest* means more than mere bodily repose. *Rest* connotes protection from enemies, the environment in which life might thrive, and indeed, the lifting of any threat of divine punishment." deClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms,* 241.

[102] Goldingay describes God's protection: "Yhwh also acts as our protective shepherd in accompanying us out into the world, with its dangers and hostility." Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41,* 346.

him back to full health (vv. 3a, 5a).[103] Under the Lord's care, the sheep is described as

lacking nothing (v. 2).[104] In the midst of danger, the sheep lives without fear because his

Shepherd is with him and will protect him (v. 4). The psalm presents God as the perfect

shepherd. Goldingay notes, "There are shepherds who neglect their flocks (see Ezek.

34), and Yhwh is not that kind of shepherd."[105]

God's care for the psalmist is as comprehensive as the shepherd's care for the

sheep. Peter Craigie writes of the psalmist's use of the shepherd metaphor: "The

fundamental points expressed in the metaphor are the interrelated dimensions of protection

and provision," but goes on to say, "Yet the metaphor is pregnant with meaning."[106]

Nancy deClaisse adds, "After the initial statement, a series of terse phrases unpack the

shepherd metaphor by charting the protecting, providing, pathfinding presence of the

Lord."[107] Similarly, Samuel Terrien notes what the metaphor says about God: "The

competence of a shepherd creates his reputation as a breeder, a feeder, a connoisseur of

geography, and a guide. Like a competent shepherd, Yahweh, respectful of his name, is a

model of fairness and fidelity, the mirror of his promise to maintain the covenant."[108]

The psalmist presents Yahweh as the shepherd who provides comprehensive care for His

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[103] The majority of scholars view Ps 23 as containing two metaphors. Verses 1-4 compare God to a shepherd while vv. 5-6 compare God to a host. Terrien argues that such a division is not necessary and that the shepherd metaphor continues on through the end of the psalm. The ramifications of seeing the entire psalm as the shepherd metaphor are minimal as the activities described in vv. 5-6 have already been discussed in earlier verses. Terrien, *The Psalms*, 241-42.

[104] Kraus writes, "An individual member of the "flock" knows that he is sheltered under the benevolent and powerful lordship of his 'shepherd'; he suffers no need." Kraus, *Psalms 1-59,* 306. Craigie adds, "In general terms, the words reflect simply the shepherd's provision. But more than that, they recall God's provision for his people during the travels after the Exodus; see Deut 2:7, 'you have not lacked a thing.'" Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 206.

[105] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41,* 347.

[106] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50,* 205.

[107] deClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, 241.

[108] Terrien, *The Psalms,* 240.

flock. Like a shepherd, Yahweh performs all the roles of a shepherd so that His people will flourish and walk in righteousness.

Biblical Interpretation of Ezekiel 34

Ezekiel 34 is believed to be an explanation and expansion of Jeremiah's shepherd metaphor found in Jeremiah 23.[109] Ezekiel used the shepherd metaphor to pronounce judgment on the bad shepherds of Israel (vv. 1-10) and to declare that Yahweh would gather His lost flock (vv. 11-22) prior to sending a new shepherd in the line of David (vv. 23-24). God's flock had suffered under the reign of evil leaders, here called "shepherds." The shepherds of Israel were guilty of both abuse and neglect. Block writes, "The rulers have taken excellent care of themselves, but they have not cared for the flock."[110] Ryken adds, "From Ezekiel's judgments upon these ignominious shepherds we can deduce that their role was to preserve and care for the people (not exploit them), to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the crippled and bring back the stray among them, to guide them gently and keep them together."[111] The poor leadership of the bad shepherds left God's people scattered and wandering over the mountains, easy prey for wild beasts. Moshe Greenberg argues that the flock's wandering was not only a picture of the exile, but also an indictment of idolatry that resulted from poor shepherds: "For

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[109] Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48,* 161; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 25-48*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 214; Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 197.

[110] Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 283. Zimmerli adds, "The shepherds of Israel have denied this nobility of thinking of themselves while busy with the flock. They thought of what benefit they could derive from the flock, but not the wellbeing of the flock itself." Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 25-48*, 214. Moshe Greenberg also sees selfishness as the paramount in the Lord's discipline of their behavior: "They have taken all the perquisites attached to their job—and more—without doing their job. Since these perquisites are all products of the flock, they stand accused of exploiting it rather than caring for it." Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 22A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 696.

[111] Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery,* 783.

lack of a leader to constrain them the flock strayed / the people practiced an erroneous worship on the mountains."[112]

God placed responsibility for the state of Israel on the shepherds of Israel who He then replaced with Himself. Walther Eichrodt notes the transition of leadership: "Yahweh himself will take charge of his flock and be the true shepherd who will put an end to all the misrule."[113] God's shepherding care for His people is the exact opposite of that of the bad shepherds. Where the bad shepherds failed to care for the flock (v. 4), God will succeed (v. 16).[114] The sheep of God's flock will thrive under the Good Shepherd's care until God sends another Shepherd (vv. 14-15, 23-24). At some future time, God will establish another Shepherd who is described as "my servant David" and "prince." This Shepherd will care for God's flock as an extension of God's care. Joyce refers to him as like a "viceroy to a king."[115] Some scholars have argued that Ezekiel's "servant David" is either the physical resurrection of King David or the reestablishment of the series of kings in his line, but Block argues that neither of these interpretations work with the grammar of the text. Instead, Block writes, "He envisions a single person, who may embody the dynasty but who occupies the throne himself."[116] In the New Testament,

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[112] Greenberg adds, "The figure is more or less transparent: subjection to conquest and pillage, alien worship on hilltop shrines (6:13; 18:16; 20:28), dispersion in exile." Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37,* 698. Zimmerli and Allen also connect the exile to poor leadership. Zimmerli writes, "The exile is the bitter fruit of the bad shepherding in which no one really sought or cared for his flock." Zimmerli, *Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 215. Allen adds, "Responsibility for the deportation of 597 B.C. and for the flight of refugees from Judah to neighboring states is laid at the palace door." Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48,* 161.

[113] Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary,* The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 471.

[114] Block writes, "By recasting negative statements as positive affirmations, he deliberately portrays Yahweh as good shepherd, the antithesis of the earlier evil shepherds." Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, 291. Eichrodt agrees and adds, "Thus v. 16 brings into view, in reverse order to what we saw before in v. 4, the lost, the strayed, injured and sick (omitting the weak), so as to colour in the picture of true shepherd's care for the flock; he also watches over the strong in the right way." Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* 471.

[115] Joyce, *Ezekiel,* 198.

[116] Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48,* 298.

Jesus is often connected with the "servant David" from Ezekiel's prophecy. Jesus' stated mission in Luke 19:10 to "seek and save the lost" corresponds with God's mission: "I will seek the lost" (v. 16) and "I will rescue (save) my flock" (v. 22). In John 10, Jesus' description of Himself as the "good shepherd," who is one with the Father, follows closely to the "one shepherd" sent by God to tend to His flock (v. 23). Similar connections between Jesus and Ezekiel's David can be made in Revelation 7:17 and Matthew 25:32-46. Ezekiel's prophecy describes the failure of human shepherds over God's flock. They were responsible to provide for, protect, and guide them to faithfulness to God. After the failure of human shepherds, God promised a future Shepherd that will accomplish this mission. The New Testament connects this prophecy to Jesus who will perform all the shepherding tasks attributed here to His Father.

Biblical Interpretation of John 21:15-19

John 21 describes one of the final interactions between the risen Jesus and His disciples. In the Beloved Disciple's telling of this story, Jesus met the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias and called them to join Him for breakfast around a charcoal fire (vv. 9-14). After breakfast, Jesus began a conversation with Peter that would not only restore Him into ministry, but also define for him what that ministry entailed. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him and three times Peter told Jesus that he did. In response to each of Peter's affirmations of love, Jesus gave Peter a task: "Feed my sheep . . . tend my sheep. . . feed my sheep" (vv. 15-17).

Jesus used the shepherd metaphor here to communicate three ideas. First, Jesus is the owner of the sheep: "Feed *my* sheep" (vv. 15-17). Jesus may be commissioning Peter to take care of the sheep, but Peter's authority is not absolute. Raymond Brown notes, "Jesus is the model shepherd to whom the Father has given the sheep and no one

can take them from him. They remain his even when he entrusts their care to Peter."[117] Jesus remains the Chief Shepherd of the sheep even as He appoints human shepherds over the flock (1 Pet 5:4). Second, devotion to Jesus qualifies Peter to shepherd Jesus' flock, and accordingly, Peter demonstrates love for Jesus by caring for Jesus' flock. The Old Testament shepherds were condemned for caring only for themselves (Ezek 34), but Jesus' shepherds must love Him supremely. George Beasley-Murray writes, "Peter's love for his Lord is to be made manifest in his care for the Lord's flock."[118] Kostenberger adds, "Paradoxically, one who loves Jesus supremely will love those entrusted into his charge more, not less."[119] Lastly, Peter's care for the sheep is comprehensive. Leon Morris notes, "The verb used here has a somewhat broader meaning. It means 'Exercise the office of shepherd' over against simply 'Feed.'"[120] Brown also understands Peter's commissioning is for something greater than feeding: "In the post-resurrectional appearance of xx 21 we found Jesus, the one sent by the Father, sending the disciples even as he himself was sent; similarly in this appearance we find Jesus, the model shepherd, making Peter a shepherd to tend Jesus' flock."[121] Jesus has commissioned Peter to shepherd God's flock in the same

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[117] Raymond B. Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* The Anchor Bible, vol. 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubeday & Company, 1970), 1115.

[118] George R. Beasely-Murray, *John,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Dallas: Word, 1999), 405.

[119] Kostenberger, *John*, 596. Brown writes,
Notably, the love required of Peter is primarily for Jesus rather than for the flock.; it is a love of total attachment and exclusive service (cf. Deut vi 5, x 12-13). The logical connection with the command given to Peter is that, if Peter is so devoted to Jesus, then Jesus can entrust his flock to Peter with the assurance that Peter will comply with Jesus' will (cf. Isa xliv 28). (Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* 1115)

[120] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 771.

[121] Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* 1114. Brown later adds,
The threefold command to tend the sheep puts less emphasis on the prerogatives accruing to Peter than on his duties: it stresses his obligation to care for the sheep. . . . And certainly this would be in harmony with the OT prophetic attitude toward the shepherd-rulers of Israel: there is bitter condemnation of those shepherds who make the flock serve them, and there is a yearning for shepherds after God's own heart who spend themselves with wisdom and devotion for the flock. (Ibid., 1115)

way Jesus shepherds God's flock. The ministry and mission of Jesus as shepherd to protect, provide for, and guide the flock have been passed on to Peter. Peter's commissioning is important, but it is not exclusive, as will be clear in the final selected passage.

Biblical Interpretation of 1 Peter 5:1-4

Peter's first epistle contains exhortations to Christians to live faithfully even as they are persecuted for following Christ. Among those exhortations is Peter's call to elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you" (v. 2). Peter first introduces himself to the elders as a "fellow elder" (v. 1). The significance of this designation has not been lost on Jobes. She writes, "Peter's self-description as (*ho sympresbyteros*, the fellow elder) indicates his solidarity with those whom he exhorts, making them aware that their ministry of church leadership is an extension of his own."[122] The extension of Peter's ministry to the elders is most clearly seen in his command that the elders "shepherd the flock of God" (v. 2). In similar fashion, Peter received the same commissioning from Jesus by the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:15-17). Paul Achtemeier writes,

> In using the imagery of tending God's flock, the author is drawing on a long OT tradition, in which God is the shepherd of his people Israel. . . . In the context of this letter, the immediate derivation of this command is probably to be seen in John 21:16, with Peter here understood as the mediator of that tradition.[123]

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[122] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 300. John Elliott also understands Peter's use of "fellow elder" to be synonymous with leadership responsibility within the church. He writes, "It is likely that *sympresbyteros* was coined by our author to accentuate the responsibility common to the author and the elders addressed." John H. Elliott, *1 Peter,* The Anchor Bible, vol. 37B (New York: Anchor Bible, 2000), 817.

[123] Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 324. Agreement can be found from Donald Senior, who writes, "The connection of Peter with the image of "shepherd" is also made in the beautiful resurrection appearance story in John 21:15-17." Donald Senior, *Sacra Pagina: 1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2002), 139. Elliott states similarly,
> The correspondence between 1 Peter and John 21 illustrates how this tradition was associated with the Apostle Peter in particular. According to John 21:15-17, the resurrected Christ enjoins Peter three times to feed his lambs or sheep. This threefold commission contrasts to Peter's threefold denial (John 18:17-18, 25-27) and restores the apostle to a position of authority and leadership. The pastoral metaphor and focus on Peter, along with other common terms and motifs, point to a coalescence of

Peter exhorted elders to shepherd God's flock just as Christ commissioned him. Jobes notes, "Where Jesus asks Peter to feed and care for his sheep as an undershepherd; Peter in turn commissions fellow elders as undershepherds, shepherding and overseeing the Christian believers in their local."[124] The shepherd tradition is seen in Peter's use of the aorist imperative of ποιμαίνω, which Selwyn points out, "includes the whole of a shepherd's care for his flock, and not feeding only."[125]

In addition, the shepherd tradition is seen in Peter's threefold instructions to the elders, which stands in contrast to the bad shepherds of Ezekiel 34. Unlike the bad shepherds who exploited the flock for their own selfish gain, Peter exhorts elders to lead willingly, selflessly, and by example until the "Chief Shepherd" returns (vv. 2-4). When Jesus commissioned Peter, He told Peter to "tend *my* sheep" (John 21:15-17). By referring to Jesus as the "Chief Shepherd," Peter is connecting his commissioning to his exhortation to the elders and reminding them that they are undershepherds of God's flock. Davids adds, "The picture of Christ as the Chief Shepherd is likewise most fitting in this context, for like the phrase 'flock of God' in 5.2 it reminds the elders that the flock does not belong to them and that they are therefore undershepherds entrusted with another's possessions."[126] Also in this passage, Peter is further clarifying their role as a shepherd. Achtemeier writes, "That Christ is the chief shepherd implies that the elders who shepherd God's flock are continuing, in part at least, Christ's ministry."[127] In summary, Peter's exhortation for the elders to "shepherd" God's flock is an extension of Jesus's

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tradition concerning ministry and leadership associated with the Apostle Peter and the beginning of a "Petrine motif" that continues in later time. (Elliott, *1 Peter,* 823)

[124] Jobes, *1 Peter,* 304.

[125] Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter,* Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 229.

[126] Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 181. Selwyn notes similarly, "In relation to them Christ is the *chief* shepherd, set over them yet sharing their function." Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 232.

[127] Achtemeier, *Peter 1,* 329.

commissioning of Peter in John 21. Elders within God's church are to continue the comprehensive care of the Chief Shepherd.

Summary and Implications

Several observations should be made from this survey and review of selected passages that make use of the shepherd metaphor. First, God the Father is the ultimate Shepherd of His people. His care for His people is both physical and spiritual. In the Old Testament, God restored His people to the city of Jerusalem and back to appropriate worship of Him. His care for His people is comprehensive as He protects, provides for, and guides His people. Sheep thrive under His benevolent shepherding (Ps 23:1-3; Ezek 34:14b).

Second, God appointed undershepherds to continue His shepherding work among His people. Consequently, God judged those shepherds who used their position for selfish gain instead of faithful obedience. Even though the people of Israel had entered into idolatry that eventually resulted in their exile from Jerusalem, God held the bad shepherds of Israel responsible for their exile.

Third, in the wake of removing the bad shepherds of Israel, God promised and provided a Good Shepherd, in the line of David, who would tend to God's flock. Jesus was the Good Shepherd who continued the shepherding work of the Father on earth: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Ultimately, His shepherding act is seen in His willingness to lay down His life for the flock so that they may have life through faith in Him (John 10:18).

Finally, Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, commissioned Peter, and through Peter, commissioned elders to continue the Father's shepherding work among God's flock. The shepherding work of God started in the Old Testament continues through elders who sit under the authority of Christ.

When preaching is viewed through the lens of the shepherding metaphor, application becomes essential. For one, feeding God's sheep is no longer misunderstood

as the mere transference of biblical information from the preacher to the congregation. Feeding is rightly interpreted as "tending," which conveys all the shepherding acts of protection, provision, and guidance. More importantly, application is necessary in preaching because it continues the work of God among His people, namely sanctification unto Christlikeness. God's judgment came upon the bad shepherds of Israel not only because of their selfish leadership, but also because of the spiritual idolatry of God's people under their care. The shepherds were supposed to lead God's people to holiness of life and genuine worship of God, but they sought only their own gain. Their neglect left the flock unequipped and vulnerable to the lies of false teachers. Their neglect led to idolatry. God reestablished His shepherding care through Jesus who then passed that responsibility on to elders through Peter. Elders, then, properly shepherd God's people through the encouragement of faithfulness to God (i.e., sanctification). This purpose should be present in every facet of pastoral ministry, but especially in the act of preaching. For in no other arena of pastoral ministry does the preacher stand before his congregation more like a shepherd than when he leads his flock through the preaching of the Word of God.

CHAPTER 4

PASTORAL PREACHING AND THE DOCTRINE
OF SANCTIFICATION

Introduction

Two implications emerge from the study of the shepherd metaphor that impact

pastoral preaching. First, pastoral preaching must not be understood as the mere transfer

of biblical information from the pastor to the congregation. Simply feeding biblical truths

to the flock of God ignores God's comprehensive care and the commissioning of Peter and

elders to *tend* to the flock of God. Communication of biblical information is essential to

pastoral preaching, but it is not the whole. Second, preaching, along with all areas of

pastoral ministry, is a continuation of God's shepherding care for His flock. The shepherd

is a steward of God's flock and has been appointed by God to continue His shepherding

work. God's primary concern for His people is that they would grow in all ways into the

likeness of God made visible through His Son.

God communicates this concern for conformity multiple times throughout the

Scriptures. Paul describes conformity to God as part of God's purpose in salvation: "For

those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in

order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29).[1] James identifies

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[1] Douglas Moo writes of this verse, "In these verses Paul spells out the 'purpose,' or 'plan,' of God. . . . Now it is God's purpose to imprint on all those who belong to Christ the 'image' of the 'second Adam.'" Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 531-33. Several scholars agree with Moo's statement. Robert Mounce writes, "These verses contain a series of five verbs (all in the aorist tense) describing how God has carried out his saving purpose. . . . What is predestined is that we become like Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3:18)." Robert Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1995), 188-89. Colin Kruse adds, "In this world where believers groan inwardly as they await their adoption they may experience suffering and persecution, but God in his sovereign power makes even these things serve the end of their conformity to Christ." Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 356. Thomas Schreiner notes that this purpose is not limited

perfection as God's purpose in trials: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials

of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And

let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in

nothing" (Jam 1:4).[2] In addition, Jesus and several biblical writers exhorted believers to

be perfect like God. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he preached, "You therefore must be

perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48).[3] Similarly, John communicates

God's expectation of perfection in his first epistle: "No one born of God makes a practice

of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has

been born of God" (1 John 3:9).[4] Peter also writes of God's desire that His people be like

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to a believer's final glorification: "This does not mean that all reference to the present era should be excluded (contra Barrett 1991: 159-60; Byrne 1979: 118; Scott 1992: 247, who limit conformity to the resurrection), for the genius of Paul's theology is that *eschaton* has invaded the present evil age." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 453.

[2] Dan McCartney notes, "The maturing of the believer is simply becoming what God intends that a human being should be. In other words, to be mature is to be what Jesus was as a perfect human being, a goal both prescribed and made possible for believers by Jesus." Dan G. McCartney, *James,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 87. Kurt Richardson adds, "It has three aspects: the character or individuals in all their acts, a divine model or purpose that is under construction or in process, and the ultimate realization of that purpose in the eschaton or the last things." Kurt A. Richardson, *James,* The New American Commentary, vol. 36 (Nashville: Holman, 1997), 62. Scot McKnight emphasizes the current reality of trials perfecting work: "Perfection for James is not just eschatological or an inner orientation toward God but concretely behavioral." Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 81.

[3] David Turner points out that this verse is the conclusion of what Jesus has said. He writes, "All six of the areas addressed by Jesus call for perfection or modeling of the Father's character. One can do no better than imitate the Father." David L. Turner, *Matthew,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 177. R. T. France adds, "It is thus a suitable term to sum up the 'greater righteousness' of v. 20, a righteousness which is demanded not only from an upper echelon of spiritual elites but from all who belong to the Kingdom of God." R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 229. Craig Blomberg notes the emphasis of Jesus' words: "Jesus is not frustrating his hearers with an unachievable ideal but challenging them to grow in obedience to God's will—to become more like him." Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Holman, 1992), 115.

[4] Daniel Akin summarizes John's purpose for this verse:
The life of the child who has been born of God is marked by the purity and righteousness of the One whom he follows. The child of God does not live a life of habitual sin because (1) the seed of God remains in him, and (2) he has been born of God. Although the Christian still falls prey to sinful acts,

Him: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:14-16).[5] In response to this passage, Jerry Bridges writes, "God has called every Christian to a holy life. There are no exceptions to this call."[6] God desires that His people be like Him, holy and perfect.

God's command for perfection has led some to argue that Christians are capable of living sinless, perfect lives. Louis Berkhof notes that streams of perfectionism exist within the Pelagians, Roman Catholics or Semi-Pelagians, Arminians, and Wesleyans as well as the Labadists, Quietists, and Quakers.[7] Proponents of this view, which is termed perfectionism, appeal to the previously-listed passages where God tells believers to be perfect. Their argument is simple: God would not demand something of His people that was not possible for them to attain.[8] The perfectionism view fails to convince in a number of ways.[9] It does not consider other scriptural references that describe mankind's continual

John insists that it is impossible for sin to become a believer's pattern of life." (Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, The New American Commentary, vol. 38 [Nashville: Holman, 2001], 149-50) I. H. Marshall adds, "Whatever is born of God must share God's character, and his opposition to sin. It should be unthinkable for such a person to sin." I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 187.

[5] Peter H. Davids writes of this passage: "To be called by God, to be drawn near to him is to be called to imitate him (*imitation Dei*), for God cannot coexist in fellowship with one who has an evil lifestyle (1 John 1:6-7)." Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 69. Schreiner agrees, and adds, "Instead of capitulating to evil desires, believers are to live holy lives. The pattern for holiness is God himself, who is unremittingly good." Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 79. Karen H. Jobes writes, "To be holy means that Christians must conform their thinking and behavior to God's character." Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 112.

[6] Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1979), 25. Arthur W. Pink adds, "Our Personal holiness is required by the very nature of God." Arthur W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification* (n.p.: CreateSpace Independent, 2016), 31.

[7] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 538.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Other objections to perfectionism include that it diminishes the believer's continual need for repentance and forgiveness of sins. Berkhof points out that some variations of perfectionism diminish the

struggle with sin, such as 1 John 1:10: "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."[10] God is not contradicting Himself in commanding believers to aim for perfection that is not possible in their lifetime. J. Oliver Buswell notes,

> When we stop to consider, it would be completely illogical for us to think that God would set before us any other standard than perfection. How preposterous would it be if the Scriptures said, "Stop ninety percent of your stealing, lying, etc.!" It is the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not have evil desires," which is the most exacting. Nevertheless how absurd it would be if the Bible said, "Thou mayest entertain evil desires as long as thou dost not commit the outbreaking act!" What an immoral psychology that would imply![11]

The command for perfection represents the ultimate goal, which Christians receive at their death, and in the meantime keeps them focused on God to attain that goal.

The complete outworking of God's concern for perfection among His people and the instruments in which He plans to address that concern may be best communicated by Paul in the letter to the Ephesians. Paul writes,

> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:11-14)

In verse 13 Paul describes God's single goal in three ways: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Referring to this verse, Clinton Arnold

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requirements of the law, thus diluting scripture to maintain their position. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 540. In addition, J. van Genderen points out, "Perfectionism weakens the longing for the consummation of all things and demands attention for itself and its own struggle." J. van Genderen et al., *Concise Reformed Dogmatics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P &R, 2008), 653. While perfectionism appears to take into account the teaching of Jesus, it fails to integrate that account into the testimony of the rest of Scripture.

[10] See also 1 Kgs 8:46; Prov 20:9; Eccl 7:20; Rom 3:9-18; Jas 3:1-2; 1 John 1:8. Akin writes of 1 John 1:10: "Sinlessness is theirs by virtue of life in Christ alone. It cannot be located merely within themselves. . . . By virtue of the cleansing effect of Jesus' atoning death, believers' sins are forgiven. In effect, they are sinless in God's sight (though not in themselves) and fit for fellowship with him." Akin, *1, 2, 3 John,* 75.

[11] J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 203.

writes, "Paul wants the church, as a unified whole, to grow to maturity. Another way of expressing this is for the church to become more like Christ himself in all of his completeness."[12] Paul then declares that achieving this goal is vitally important if the church is to remain faithful amid false teachers (v. 14). God's goal for His people is complete conformity to His likeness, and according to Paul, He accomplishes this goal through two ways, one way leading to the other. First, God provides His church with those who will train the body for the work of the ministry (v. 11). Frank Thielman writes, "He does this through giving gifts to discrete groups of people."[13] Second, these gifted individuals then equip other believers to actively build up the church. William Klein specifically addresses this verse in connection with the local congregation: "Paul spells out what pastors ought to do with their leadership gifts—equip saints—and what the saints should be equipped to do with the grace that has been given to each of us (v. 7)—the work of serving. As a result of this joint effort the body will grow."[14] From this passage Paul communicates God's goal and His plan to achieve that goal. God desires that all believers grow into His likeness, and He accomplishes that goal through those He has gifted and given to the church to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Paul is describing here the sanctification of believers into God's likeness.

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[12] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 265. Frank Thielman concurs,

> Unlike the three prepositional phrases in 4:12, these phrases do not build on each other but view the same result from different angles. . . . These challenges mean that believers must exercise the gifts that Christ has given them and work to build up the church until it attains the full union with the victorious Christ that God intends for it. (Frank Thielman, *Ephesians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010], 281, 283)

[13] Thielman, *Ephesians,* 273. William Klein adds, "In an emphatic way, Paul affirms that Christ *himself* gave gifted persons to the church to build it to unity and the attainment of Christ's fullness. These are all leaders who minister the word of God." William W. Klein, *Ephesians*, in. vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 114.

[14] Klein, *Ephesians*, 117. Thielman captures this same sentiment, "In sum, Paul tells his readers that when the church's gifted teachers use their gifts to equip all believers for the work of ministry, the church progresses toward maturity. It also moves steadily away from immaturity with its fragmentation and susceptibility to deception by cunning theological cheats." Thielman, *Ephesians,* 284.

Doctrine of Sanctification

The doctrine of sanctification can be properly understood as containing three categories: definitive sanctification, progressive sanctification, and ultimate sanctification. Not all scholars agree on these three categories, but most agree that the doctrine of sanctification at least contains definitive and progressive sanctification. Definitive sanctification describes the believer's position with God upon regeneration. At regeneration the believer's sins are forgiven; he is redeemed, purified, and adopted into the family of God. All these acts of God are immediate in the life of the believer and represent a spiritual reality in the believer. Paul wrote of this action of God: "And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who become to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).[15] Lewis Sperry Chafer argues, "All of this indicates a distinct classification and separation, deep and eternal, achieved through the saving grace of Christ. . . . Hence every believer is now said to be positionally sanctified, holy, and is therefore a saint before God."[16] Definitive sanctification is a onetime act of God in the believer's life at regeneration.

The second category of sanctification is progressive sanctification, which takes place in the present and is often described as a process that begins at regeneration. James P. Boyce articulately describes the need for regeneration to precede progressive sanctification:

A new nature must be attained which will love and seek after holiness, and struggle forward, dissatisfied until it shall be perfected. The Scriptures, therefore, represent

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[15] Gordon Fee notes of this verse, "These are not three different steps in the saving process; they are rather three different metaphors for the same event (our salvation that was effected in Christ), each taken from a different sphere and each emphasizing a different aspect of the one reality (cf. 6:11)." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 86. David E. Garland explains Paul's use of the term *sanctification*: "'Sanctification' refers to the state of holiness, which they have only in Christ Jesus and which allows them into the presence of God." David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 81.

[16] Lewis Sperry Chafer and John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scripture Simplified and Explained* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 206.

sanctification as occurring only in those who have been regenerated, and to whom a new heart and a new spirit have been given.[17]

Progressive sanctification is different from definitive sanctification in that it is not a onetime work of God that is completed, but a continual work of God in which man cooperates with God up until the believer's death. David Powlison writes of the process and goal of progressive sanctification: "God is working throughout your life—on a scale of days, years, and decades—to remake you into the likeness of Jesus. You are progressively sanctified."[18] J. C. Ryle also describes sanctification as a process toward holiness: "A man may climb from one step to another in holiness, and be far more sanctified at one period of his life than another."[19] Progressive sanctification is the process that will continue throughout the believer's life by which God changes a believer gradually into the likeness of His Son.

The final category of sanctification is ultimate sanctification. Ultimate sanctification is essentially the same doctrine as glorification. Consequently, some scholars remove this doctrine out from under sanctification and handle it separately under eschatology. Ultimate sanctification occurs after the believer's death. Chafer writes, "Ultimate sanctification is that aspect which is related to our final perfection, and will be ours in glory."[20] Ultimate sanctification is completely the work of God. The apostle John wrote of this transformation: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).[21] John describes the completed work of sanctification that will occur once believers enter into God's presence.

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[17] James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Louisville: C. T. Dearing, 1887), 411.

[18] David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 12.

[19] J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Exetor, Devon: A. Wheaton & Co., 1956), 20.

[20] Chafer and Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes,* 209

[21] Akin writes of this passage, "Although our present status as children of God is wonderful, our future state will be even more extraordinary. God has only begun a work in us that will not reach full fruition

Doctrine of Progressive Sanctification

Boyce describes the Christian life as a journey to the summit of a mountain. As the traveler heads toward the summit, his path contains both inclines and declines. The traveler may not always select the wisest path to the summit and consequently bring on himself greater hardship than what was necessary. The journey also has much treacherous terrain that may evoke doubt or fear in the traveler; his feet will become weary and his heart may sink in despair. However, there will also be many glorious vistas along the path, which will capture the traveler's heart and remind him why he is on this journey to the summit. In the midst of the difficult journey, Boyce tells, "He earnestly presses forward and the journey is completed, the ascent is made, the end is attained."[22] What Boyce has cleverly illustrated as a journey to the summit is the doctrine of progressive sanctification.

At regeneration believers have been set free from their slavery to sin. Even so, sin remains in their lives and Scripture commands believers to cease sinning: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions" (Rom 6:12).[23] Progressive sanctification is the process of replacing sinful elements of the believer's life with elements that reflect a person's regenerated identity in Christ. R. L. Dabney

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until the 'not yet' has been fulfilled." Akin, *1, 2, 3 John,* 172. Marshall adds, "The process of glorification, already begun here and now in the lives of believers (2 Cor. 3:18), will reach completion. John states finally that this transformation will take place because we shall see him as he is." Marshall, *The Epistles of John,* 172.

[22] Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology,* 415

[23] Schreiner notes of this new life in Christ,
> The power of the resurrection affects the present so that believers can now live in a new way (cf. v. 4). They now have God as their master and lord instead of sin. . . . The unfinished aspect of redemption is apparent since believers still await the resurrection and are still jeopardized by evil desires. Nonetheless, since believers have died with Christ and have his resurrection power, they are enabled to have dominion over sin even now, with the result that they do not submit to its desires. (Schreiner, *Romans,* 323)

Mounce adds, "The imperative challenges us to become what we are. In Christ we have died to sin and are alive to God. So we should base our daily lives on that truth and live out our days from that perspective." Mounce, *Romans*, 153.

describes this process as a renovation of the heart: "The relation between regeneration and sanctification has been stated: The first implants life which the second nourishes and develops. . . . We regard sanctification then as advancing that renovation of a man's heart, which regeneration begins."[24] The goal of renovation is the likeness of Christ, but this goal, as previously stated, cannot be completed in the believer's lifetime. Three characteristics of this renovation will be discussed here: it is an act of the Triune God, man co-operates with God, and it involves the transformation of the whole man.

Work of the Triune God

Progressive sanctification is primarily a work of the triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all described in Scripture as involved in the ongoing sanctification of believers. Paul prays to the Father, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely" (1 Thess 5:23).[25] Similarly, Jesus prayed to God the Father asking that He would "sanctify" the disciples as they were sent out to share the gospel truths (John 17:17).[26] The author of Hebrews states that God disciplines his children so that they may "share his holiness" (Heb 12:10).[27] The Father is also presented as an example of holiness

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[24] Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 674.

[25] D. Michael Martin writes, "The 'God of Peace' is the one requested to accomplish the complete and final sanctification of the church. Only through his power does the church exist, and only through his power can it endure and be acceptable to him at the parousia." D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians,* The New American Commentary, vol. 33 (Nashville: Holman, 1995), 188. Fee also emphasizes that Paul is praying for God to perform sanctifying work in the Thessalonians: "Paul's own concern that this sanctification that this sanctification be something that is going on now, and especially that it shall be so at the Coming itself." Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 231.

[26] Leon Morris notes the present work of sanctification that Jesus is seeking the Father to accomplish: "The sanctification that Jesus looks for the Father to accomplish will be worked out in their doing of the truth." Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 647. Gerald Borchert adds, "Jesus' petition is for the Father to sanctify the disciples just as he earlier sanctified and sent Jesus (cf. John 10:36). For the disciples to be holy necessitated the work of God." Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21,* The New American Commentary, vol. 25b (Nashville: Holman, 2002)203.

[27] F. F. Bruce writes, "The holiness mentioned here is rather the goal for which God is preparing his people—that entire sanctification which is consummated in their manifestation with Christ in glory." F. F.

which man is to emulate in both the Old and New Testaments: "You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7; 1 Pet 1:16).[28] God the Father is actively involved in the progressive sanctification of His people.

The second member of the Trinity is also involved in the progressive sanctification of believers. Pink refers to Jesus as the "procurer of sanctification."[29] Jesus' work on the cross is what initiated the possibility of sanctification in mankind. Paul wrote of Jesus, "[He] gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).[30] Paul also wrote that Christ gave himself up for the church in order to sanctify her (Eph 5:26).[31] Ryle comments on the purpose of Christ's coming: "We must be holy, because this is one

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Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 344.

[28] Mark F. Rooker writes of God's commandment that His people be holy as He is holy in Lev 11:44-45: "The concluding exhortation, which stresses Israel's relationship to God and the need for Israel to be holy, emphasizes the fact that it is not primarily (if at all) the physical health of the nation that is the reason for these instructions but rather their spiritual sanctification." Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus,* The New American Commentary, vol. 3A (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2000), 180.

[29] Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification,* 109.

[30] Commenting on this passage, Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin write, "Paul stated that the purpose of Jesus' self-sacrifice is twofold: redemption and purification." Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Holman, 1992), 315. Philip Towner connects Jesus' purification to progressive sanctification: "The wider textual network that Paul contacts also associates purification from idolatry with the event of 'becoming' God's people and the ongoing act of 'being' God's people by way of the Godward covenant commitments required of his people." Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 763.

[31] Arnold argues that this sanctifying work includes the present:
Yet it refers not just to the past but to the future and the present as well. It anticipates the future consummation when the sanctification of God's people reaches its goal (see 1:10; Col 1:28). But it also speaks of the ongoing process of sanctification and can be seen in the emphasis of this letter on the resurrected Christ empowering the body to grow and mature (Eph 4:11-16). (Arnold, *Ephesians*, 386)
Andrew Lincoln agrees, and adds, "The writer now elaborates on the goal of Christ's love for the Church. . . . The purpose of that love is seen as the Church's sanctification." Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 375.

grand *end and purpose for which Christ came into the world.*[32] Jesus came to make His

people holy. Similar to the Father, Jesus is often presented as the goal of progressive

sanctification and the example for believers to emulate (Rom 15:3; Phil 2:5-6; Heb 12:2-3).

Dabney argues that while God's Word is a sufficient description of God's expectations of

holiness, Jesus' example shows believers how to live. He writes of Jesus' life: "It verifies

for us the conception of holiness, as generally displayed in God."[33] In His life and His

sacrifice, Jesus is necessarily involved in the progressive sanctification of believers.

The role of the Father and the Son are instrumental in progressive sanctification,

but the ongoing action is largely attributed to the Holy Spirit. Wayne Grudem writes,

"But it is specifically God the Holy Spirit who works within us to change us and sanctify

us, giving us greater holiness in life."[34] The Scriptures regularly link sanctification and

the Holy Spirit: "in the sanctification of the Spirit," "through the sanctification by the

Spirit," and "you were sanctified . . . by the Spirit of our God" (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Thess 2:13; 1

Cor 6:11). Paul wrote of the Spirit's work: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding

the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of

glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). George

Guthrie writes of this passage, "As Moses was changed by his encounter with God (Exod.

34:29-30), so those of the new covenant are changed by their experience of God through

the ministry of the Spirit."[35] Paul also encouraged believers to daily trust the Spirit of

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[32] Ryle, *Holiness,* 40.

[33] Dabney, *Systematic Theology,* 686.

[34] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 754. Bridges agrees: "It is the Spirit of God who works in us that we may decide and act according to God's good purpose (Philippians 2:13)." Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness,* 74.

[35] George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 228. David Garland writes, "The passive voice, 'are being transformed,' indicates that this transformation is something done by God, and Paul's exegesis makes clear that it happens through the Spirit." David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Holman 1999), 200. Paul Barnett agrees, and adds, "The One who is the *end* of our transformation ("the Lord") is also its means and provider (through "the Spirit")." Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the*

God: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal 5:16).[36]
The Holy Spirit is the primary enabler of progressive sanctification within believers.

Boyce went so far as to describe the Holy Spirit as the author of the process of
sanctification. He identified four areas of work that the Spirit does within the believer.[37]
First, the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind to God's commands (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:9-16;
1 John 2:20,27). Paul prayed for the Ephesians "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the
Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of
him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened" (Eph 1:18).[38] A. W. Tozer comments
on this work of the Spirit: "He then goes on to illumine the new born soul with brighter
rays from the face of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13-15) and leads the willing heart into depths
and heights of divine knowledge and communion."[39] The Holy Spirit gives genuine and
ever-increasing knowledge of God to the believer. Second, the Holy Spirit gives spiritual
strength to accomplish the will of God (Eph 3:16; Gal 5:16-17). The apostle Paul wrote
to the Romans, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you
put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Rom 8:13).[40] Torrey comments on this

Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 208-9.

[36] Schreiner notes the work of the Spirit in the believer's obedience to God: "On the one hand, believers must choose to live by the Spirit, while on the other hand, the Spirit empowers believers to live a life pleasing to God." Thomas R. Schreiner, _Galatians,_ Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 342. Moo adds, "The 'walk' of the believer is determined by the Spirit, who both directs and empowers Christian living." Douglas J. Moo, _Galatians,_ Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 353.

[37] Boyce, _Abstract of Systematic Theology_, 416.

[38] Arnold writes concerning the work of the Spirit: "The Spirit who came upon the Messiah is the same Spirit who now rests upon his people and provides knowledge, wisdom, and power." Arnold, _Ephesians,_ 104. Lincoln agrees, "In its context, the genuine knowledge of God requested in 1:17 is grounded in a life of faith and love, is produced by the Spirit, and is explained further in the rest of the prayer in vv 18,19." Lincoln, _Ephesians,_ 58.

[39] A. W. Tozer, _That Incredible Christian: How Heaven's Children Live on Earth_ (Camp Hill, PA: Wingspread, 2008), 37.

[40] Schreiner communicates the role of the Spirit in this passage: "Victory is by means of the

passage, saying, "A true Christian life is not one governed by a long set of rules without us, but led by a living and ever-present Person within us."[41] The Spirit is at work, enabling believers to put sin to death and obey God. Third, the Holy Spirit removes the bondage to fear by serving as a seal, an assurance of the believer's right standing with God (Eph 1:13-14; Rom 8:15-16). Moo writes in response to Paul's words concerning the Spirit in Romans 8: "The Holy Spirit is not only instrumental in *making* us God's children; he also makes us *aware* that we are God's children."[42] Lastly, the Holy Spirit produces fruit within the believer (Eph 5:9). The apostle Paul writes, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Gal 5:22-23).[43] Van Genderen sees such a close connection between sanctification and the fruit of the Spirit that he refers to it as the "fruits of sanctification."[44] Buswell views this work from a different perspective. He argues that the Holy Spirit only produces one fruit in the believer, holy living, which manifests itself in the many ways mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22.[45] Perspectives vary, but the idea

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Spirit . . . which means that believers conquer sinful passions by relying on and trusting in the Spirit to provide strength to resist the passions that wage war within us." Schreiner, *Romans,* 421-22. Moo's words are also helpful: "Human activity in the process of sanctification is clearly necessary; but that activity is never apart from, nor finally distinct from, the activity of God's Spirit." Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* 496.

[41] R. A. Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 131.

[42] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* 503. Mounce agrees: "In much the same way that the hymn writer knew that Jesus lives ('He lives within my heart'), we rest assured that we are actually members of God's family because the same Spirit witnesses to our spirit that it is so." Mounce, *Romans,* 183.

[43] Ronald Y. K. Fung notes the contrast present in this verse and the preceding verse: "'The fruit of the Spirit' (AV, etc.) is obviously intended as a contrast to 'the works of the flesh'; if the latter expression denotes deeds done by the flesh, the former refers to the concrete manifestations of the Spirit's work in the believer." Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 262. Schreiner notes the Spirit's role in producing fruit: "Believers are not called upon to summon up the strength within them, for their new way of life is supernatural, stemming from the powerful work of the Holy Spirit." Schreiner, *Galatians,* 349.

[44] Van Genderen et al., *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*, 649.

[45] Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion,* 200.

remains the same—the Holy Spirit transforms the believer and produces in him the characteristics of God. The Scriptures describe progressive sanctification as the work of the complete Triune God. Father, Son, and Spirit work within a believer to bring about spiritual transformation.

Co-operation of Man

God is the primary enabler of progressive sanctification; however, the believer still has a role to play in the sanctification process. Pink argues, "Sanctification is our work. . . . It is our work as we diligently use the appointed means, and trust God to make them effectual."[46] Paul's words to the Corinthian church indicate the believer's participation: "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1).[47] Unlike many of the transformational acts of God (such as justification or definitive sanctification), believers play an active role in progressive sanctification.[48] Grudem provides clarity to the responsibilities of God and believers in the sanctification process by describing the involvement of believers as both passive and active: "The role that we play in sanctification is both a *passive* one in which we depend on God to sanctify us, and an *active* one in which

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[46] Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification,* 248. Pink is not arguing that progressive sanctification is one-sided but is emphasizing that believers have a role in their progressive sanctification. He later writes, "The process of our sanctification, then, is both a Divine and a human one." Ibid., 249.

[47] Guthrie notes the responsibility placed on believers: "So, as believers cleanse themselves 'from every impurity of flesh and spirit,' this results in them 'making . . . holiness complete,' removing sinful patterns of life so that one's pattern of life is characterized as being set apart for God." Guthrie, *2 Corinthians,* 360-61.

[48] Van Genderen writes,
The most striking difference between justification and sanctification is that in sanctification we are actively involved as subjects (particularly 1 Peter 1:16; Heb. 12:14), as it is said that we are to perfect our 'holiness in the fear of God' (2 Cor. 7:1). . . . We can only speak of justification as a gift, never as an assignment. . . . This is not the case with sanctification. (van Genderen et al., *Concise Reformed Dogmatics*, 642)

we strive to obey God and take steps that will increase our sanctification."[49] Berkhof

agrees with Grudem that progressive sanctification must never be viewed as something

that will come about regardless of personal effort. He writes, "It should never be

represented as a merely natural process in the spiritual development of man, nor brought

down to the level of a mere human achievement, as is done in a great deal of modern liberal

theology."[50] Berkhof describes the believer's role in progressive sanctification as a co-

operator with God.[51] The Spirit of God within the believer is ready to help him grow, but

God requires the believer to work in co-operation with the Spirit in order for sanctification

to occur. The Spirit is the primary operator and the believer must co-operate with Him.

Berkhof adds, "Though man is privileged to co-operate with the Spirit of God, he can do

this only in virtue of the strength which the Spirit imparts to him from day to day."[52]

Therefore, all sanctifying desires, thoughts, and actions are rightly understood as works

of God and evidence that the believer belongs to God.

The passive participation of the believer is often described as yielding to God.

Unbelievers are under the yoke of slavery to sin. They are only capable of sinning because

their nature is bent to that end (Rom 8:8; Heb 11:6; Eph 2:1-2).[53] After regeneration,

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[49] Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 754.

[50] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 533.

[51] Buswell agrees, and adds,
If it were true that regeneration and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit automatically produced holy living without detailed ethical instruction, then the Apostle Paul was very wrong in extensive passages of his epistles which he wrote, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit, for the churches which had recently come out of heathenism into the light of the Gospel. (Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 201)

[52] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 535.

[53] Schreiner comments on Paul's words in Rom 8:8:
Because they "are of the flesh," those in the flesh, no matter how familiar they are with the commandments of the law, can never put them into practice. The only hope for keeping the commandments is to be united with the new Adam (Rom. 8:1-4), Jesus Christ. Those who are in Christ have received his Spirit and thereby are enabled to keep the law. (Schreiner, *Romans,* 413)

believers can submit their lives to God, or back to the things that characterized their life in sin. Yieldedness to God reflects a simple surrender of the will to God. Thomas Oden writes, "The will renewed through grace is empowered to yield that God's will 'be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10)."[54] Paul likely had yieldedness to God in mind when he encouraged believers to "present" their bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1).[55] Chafer agrees, and writes of yieldedness, "Within the sphere of his own knowledge of himself, the believer may definitely choose the mind and will of God as the rule for his life."[56] Grudem argues that yieldedness to God is the most misunderstood element of progressive sanctification. Some Christians believe that yielding is the only thing believers are called to. He writes, "Sometimes the popular phrase 'Let go and let God' is given as a summary of how to live in the Christian life. But this is a tragic distortion of the doctrine of sanctification."[57] The "Let go and let God" view of sanctification increased in popularity from 1875 to 1920 as it received a considerable amount of attention at the annual Keswick Convention in northwest England. This view, often referred to as Keswick Theology, is an insufficient view of progressive sanctification since it only

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[54] Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 225.

[55] Mounce comments, "While sanctification is gradual in the sense that it continues throughout life, each advance depends upon a decision of the will." Mounce, *Romans,* 231. Schreiner writes on Paul's call for believers to present their bodies to God: "His purpose in doing so was to emphasize that yielding one's whole self to God is eminently reasonable. Since God has been so merciful, failure to dedicate one's life to him is the height of folly and irrationality." Schreiner, *Romans,* 645.

[56] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 7:281. Torrey describes yieldedness:
> In other words when we come to the end of ourselves, when we fully realize our own inability to keep the law of God and in utter helplessness look up to the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves, and surrender our every thought and every purpose and every desire and every affection to His absolute control and thus walk after the Spirit, the Spirit does take control and brings our whole lives into conformity to the will of God. (Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, 117-18)

[57] Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 754.

represents the passive element of sanctification.[58] The passive element of sanctification describes one facet of the believer's involvement in progressive sanctification. God is progressively sanctifying the believer as he yields his will to the will of God.

Believers actively participate in sanctification in two ways: resisting sin and living in obedience to the commandments of God. Berkhof labels these two actions as "the mortification of the old man, the body of sin" and "the quickening of the new man, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."[59] The old man represents the fallen human nature prior to faith in Christ. The apostle Paul describes the old man in Romans 6:6: "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."[60] The death of the old man is a spiritual reality for those who are in Christ and represents the removal of sin's power over believers.[61] While Christ has mortified the old man, the believer daily mortifies the sinful desires and worldly temptations that once characterized the believer's pre-regenerate state. This mortification is done though the power of the Spirit.[62] What is entailed in the mortification of sin? Sinclair B. Ferguson explains,

[58] Andrew David Naselli, "Keswick Theology: A Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the early Keswick Movement," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 13 (2008): 17.

[59] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 533. Grudem makes no divisions but describes both processes in his discussion on the believer's active involvement in progressive sanctification. Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 754-55. Oden refers to these two processes as self-denial and becoming filled with the Spirit that produces evidence. Oden, *Systematic Theology,* 3:224-26.

[60] Mounce describes the result of the old man's death: "With the old self rendered powerless, it is no longer necessary for a person to continue in bondage to sin. In Christ we are set free." Mounce, *Romans,* 151. Schreiner explains the difference between Paul's use of old and new person: "The 'old person' belongs to one's former life (3:9) and the new person is the fundamental reality of one's existence (3:10). Thus believers are to strip themselves of the 'old person' and don themselves with the 'new person' (Eph. 4:22-24)." Schreiner, *Romans,* 315.

[61] John Owen notes, "Unless a man is a true believer, and grafted into Christ, he can never mortify a single sin. Mortification is the work of believers." John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin,* abridged ed. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2004), 40.

[62] One of the essential works of the Spirit is the mortification of sin. Bridges writes, "Mortification must be done by the strength and under the direction of the Holy Spirit." Bridges, *The*

It is the constant battle against sin which we fight daily—the refusal to allow the eye to wander, the mind to contemplate, the affection to run after anything which will draw us from Christ. It is the deliberate rejection of any sinful thought, suggestion, desire, aspiration, deed, circumstance or provocation at the moment we become conscious of its existence. It is the consistent endeavor to do all in our powers to weaken the grip which sin in general, and its manifestation in our own lives in particular, has.[63]

Multiple passages point to the continual mortification of the old man. After reflecting on the salvific act of Christ, Paul exhorted believers, writing, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5).[64] Paul exhorts the Colossian believers to actively leave their old way of life. In response to Paul's exhortation, Puritan John Owen argues for the daily mortification of sin: "Do you make it your daily work? You must always be at it while you live; do not take a day off from this work; always be killing sin or it will be killing you."[65] What Owen calls work, Ryle calls warfare. Ryle writes, "The true Christian is called to be a soldier, and must behave as such from the day of his conversion to the day of his death."[66] Who is the Christian supposed to fight? None other than the thoughts,

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Pursuit of Holiness, 87.

[63] Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2017), 150.

[64] David Pao writes,
The call to "put to death" the old practices is to be balanced by the recognition that Christ's death allows such an imperative to be a possibility. Moreover, this call is also based on the fact that believers were already 'dead in [their] transgressions' (2:13). This call to "put to death" the old self is the living out of the victory that has already been won." (David W. Pao, *Colossians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 219)
Moo adds,
Union with Christ, because it puts us in a new relationship to sin and brings us into the sphere of the Spirit's power, *will* impact the way we live. Ultimately, then, the imperative "put to death" in this verse must be viewed as a call to respond to, and cooperate with, the transformative power that is already operative within us. (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 255)

[65] Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*, 5.

[66] Ryle, *Holiness,* 52. Anthony Hoekema on this same subject, writes,
The New Testament is full of the language of struggle: the Christian life is called a battle, a race, and a wrestling against evil spirits; we are told to be good Christian soldiers, to fight the good fight of the faith, to resist the devil, to take heed lest we fall, and to put on the whole armor of God. Moreover, in

desires, and actions of the old man. Similarly, Paul commands the Corinthians and

Thessalonians to abstain and flee from sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3; 1 Cor 6:18).

Elsewhere Paul will describe believers as those who *have already* mortified sin: "And

those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"

(Gal 5:24).[67] The Scriptures indicate that believers play an active role in putting to death

sinful thoughts, desires, and actions that were characteristic of the old man. Passages

dealing directly with the mortification of sin are clearly instructional for the believer's

involvement in sanctification, but Boyce argues that every call for holiness falls under

this same idea: "All warnings against the power of temptation, the lust of the flesh, the

subtlety of Satan, the influence of the world, the grievous character of sin . . . is evidence

of [the believer's] co-operation with the Holy Spirit in the work of sanctification."[68]

Believers have been set free from sin through the power of Christ and they are to daily

exercise that freedom through putting to death sinful thoughts, desires, and actions.

The quickening of the new man in Christ is the positive side of the believer's

active participation in progressive sanctification. Berkhof describes this process as an

"act of God whereby the holy disposition of the soul is strengthened, holy exercises are

increased, and thus a new course of life engendered and promoted."[69] The writer of

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this struggle we do not always win, we do not resist every temptation. (Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Christian Looks at Himself* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 46)

[67] Multiple commentators note that Paul's reference to "crucified the flesh" is primarily about salvation, but some note that the term continues to progressive sanctification. Timothy George writes, "Paul was here describing the process of mortification, the daily putting to death of the flesh through the disciplines of prayer, fasting, repentance, and self-control." Timothy George, *Galatians,* The New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: Holman, 1994), 405. Fung adds,

Christians need continuously to crucify the flesh: they need unceasingly to seek to live in obedience to the Spirit's leading (vv. 16, 18, 25) and by the Spirit 'put to death all the base pursuits of the body' (Rom. 8:13; cf. Col. 3:5). This continuous action is the practical outworking of the initiatory crucifixion of the flesh in the active sense (just explained) and is dependent upon the once-for-all passive crucifixion mentioned in 2:20. (Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians,* 275)

[68] Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology,* 471.

[69] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 533.

Hebrews exhorted believers saying, "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).[70] Similarly, after Paul instructed the Ephesian believers to put off the old self, he told them to "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24).[71] Elsewhere, Paul encouraged believers to "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16).[72] Believers have been commanded to quicken the new man through the Spirit. R. A. Torrey points out that the Spirit works through the truth: "If for one moment we were to get our eyes off from Jesus Christ, if we were to neglect the daily study of the Word and prayer, down we go. We must live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit if we would have continuous victory (Gal. v. 16, 25)."[73] Similarly, Ryle argues that Bible reading, regular attendance in public worship, and regular hearing of God's Word were essential acts that encouraged sanctification: "I lay it down as simple matter of fact, that no one who is careless about such things must

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[70] Bruce argues that the writer of Hebrews has progressive sanctification in mind here: "Here, as in v. 10, practical holiness of life is meant, the converse of those things against which a warning is uttered in the verses which follow." Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews,* 348. Gareth Cockerill adds, "The hearers must not take these blessings for granted, but give diligence to preserve and cultivate them lest the harmony of their community be fragmented through rebellion." Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 632.

[71] Arnold describes Paul's expectations:
Paul calls them to put on this new identity. This amounts to a daily and growing recognition of the truth of who they are no in Christ Jesus. It also involves an actualization of this identity in their daily experience through a transformed way of thinking (4:23) and bringing their lives into conformity with the defining characteristics of this new identity—righteousness and holiness. (Arnold, *Ephesians,* 290)
Peter O'Brien adds, "It is God's mighty work, not ours; yet the fact that this new identity is *put on* shows that his new creation is gladly appropriated by believers." Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 331.

[72] Schreiner believes Paul is exhorting believers to yield to the Spirit. Schreiner, *Galatians,* 343. Fung also sees the active participation of the believer in this verse: "To 'walk by the Spirit' means to be under the constant, moment-by-moment direction, control, and guidance of the Spirit. By living in this way believers can be sure that they will not 'carry out' (NASB) the desires of their sinful nature." Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians,* 248.

[73] Torrey, *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,* 120. Bridges agrees, and writes, "If we truly desire to live in the realm of the Spirit we must continually feed our minds with His truth. It is hypocritical to pray for victory over our sins yet be careless in our intake of the Word of God." Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness,* 78.

ever expect to make much progress in sanctification. I can find no record of an eminent saint who ever neglected them."[74] Believers actively participate in their progressive sanctification, the quickening of the new man in Christ, by pursuing truth and practicing holiness.

Van Genderen argues for a more specific understanding of the active participation of the believer. He argues that the imitation of general commands of holiness is not enough; the imitation of Christ should be the believer's goal: "Imitation means that Christ is manifested in us. The image of God, which we may once again become, displays characteristics of the Lamb that will continue to be praised and adored beyond the consummation of all things."[75] Van Genderen's approach is helpful in that it provides believers with a person to imitate, the God-Man Jesus. In addition, it seems logical to conclude that since the goal of sanctification is the transformation of believers into the likeness of Christ, believers should imitate Jesus (2 Cor 3:18).[76] However, van Genderen's approach becomes concerning if Christ is seen as the only example to imitate. Christ is a single person of the Trinity. All interactions of God with man represent the Trinity and are, therefore, representative of Christ. All in all, progressive sanctification within a believer is achieved as believers co-operate with God. Believers will grow into the image of Christ as they yield their will to the will of God and actively mortify the flesh and put on faithfulness to God.

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[74] Ryle, *Holiness,* 21.

[75] Van Genderen et al., *Concise Reformed Dogmatics,* 660.

[76] Garland writes, "In beholding the true glory of the Lord reflected in Christ, our minds become transformed (Rom 12:2) so that we are not conformed to this world and its perceptions and values but conformed to Christ and the paradoxical pattern of his suffering and resurrection (Rom 8:29; Phil 3:10, 21-22)." Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 200.

Transformation of the Whole Man

       The sanctification of a believer is not limited to certain parts of the believer but involves the transformation of the whole person. Berkhof argues, "This follows from the nature of the case, because sanctification takes place in the inner life of man, in the heart, and this cannot be changed without changing the whole organism of man. If the inner man is changed, there is bound to be change also in the periphery of life."[77] Boyce agrees that the scope of sanctification goes beyond a believer's actions: "The renewed nature, given in regeneration shows that sanctification includes the whole spiritual part of man. It is not to be confined to outward actions."[78] The Scriptures refer to the progressive sanctification of the whole person by referring to the body and spirit. To the Corinthian believers, Paul wrote, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1). Barnett argues that Paul has the whole person in mind: "That the totality of one's being must be preserved undefiled is indicated by Paul's 'of body and spirit'; no part physical or emotional is exempt from Paul's call for cleansing." [79]

       In a similar fashion, Paul commented on the advantage that unmarried believers have over married believers when it comes to holiness. Paul wrote, "And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit" (1 Cor 7:34). Once again, Paul's use of body and spirit communicates a

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[77] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 533.

[78] Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology,* 412. Heath Lambert agrees, and writes, "This Christlikeness happens in our whole person as we are changed from our inner person in thoughts, feelings, desires, and consciences as these flow out to the outer person in our physical behavior." Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 293.

[79] Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* 356. Garland explains, "Defilement 'of body and spirit' means that the entire person, externally and internally, is corrupted by idolatrous practices in much the same way that sexual relations with a prostitute corrupts both body and spirit (1 Cor 6:15-18)." Garland, *1 Corinthians,* 342. See also Guthrie, "Rather than communicating a dichotomy between sins of the flesh and of the spirit, the apostle simply challenges the Corinthians to be holistic in their resolve to reject sinful patterns of life." Guthrie, *2 Corinthians,* 360.

concern for the whole person. Garland writes, "The combination of body and spirit describes the whole person and means that she strives to be holy in every way and is totally devoted to the Lord."[80] Paul's benediction in his first letter to the Thessalonians includes a prayer for the sanctification of the whole person: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 5:23). Paul is not seeking to define the human experience in three parts but is using terms to capture all of what it means to be human. Fee agrees, and writes, "His concern is with the adjective-turned-adverb 'in entirety'; and to make the point he includes the terms that he uses elsewhere to speak of the human person."[81] In at least one instance, the whole person is in view even though the writer only speaks of the body. Paul wrote to the Romans, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions" (Rom 6:12) Moo notes, "'Body' (*soma*) may be the physical body; but it is probably, as in 6:6, the whole person, viewed in terms of the person's interaction with the world."[82] The Scriptures repeatedly refer to the progressive sanctification of the whole person using the terms "body" and "spirit." In addition, the Scriptures also speak of three specific areas of the whole person being sanctified through the power of God: The mind, emotions, and will.

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[80] Garland, *1 Corinthians,* 335. Fee also writes that Paul's likely meaning is the whole person: "If, on the other hand, the verb means 'care for' in a positive sense, then Paul probably intends by the phrase 'body and spirit' not to be thought of separately but together, as designating the whole person (see on 5:5; cf. 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1)." Fee, *The First Epistles to the Corinthians,* 346.

[81] Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians,* 228. Martin agrees: "The three terms used in v. 23, 'spirit, soul and body,' occur in a context stressing wholeness. Paul was not emphasizing the threefold nature of humanity but the deliverance of the 'whole' (*holokleron*) person." Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians,* 189. Gary Shogren concludes from this passage that "it is theologically important to note that sanctification includes both the outer and inner person." Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 234.

[82] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* 383. Schreiner notes that some argue that Paul's use of body should be limited to the physical body. Schreiner argues that this limitation is not necessary: "It is more likely, though, that [body] refers to the whole person, which includes the body (Cranfield 1975: 317; Kasemann 1980: 176-77)." Schreiner, *Romans,* 323.

Progressive sanctification involves the transformation of the mind. Where before Christ the mind was darkened by sin, after believing in Christ, the mind is alive to understand the truths of God. Jeremy Pierre writes,

> Rather than understanding the world from a limited set of beliefs formed from the opinions of family and culture, observations made over the years, testimonies accepted as trustworthy, or the priorities of the media, the Holy Spirit helps Christians perceive the world from a different center of beliefs.[83]

Paul instructed the Colossian believers to put off the old self and to put on the new self. Referring to the new self, Paul wrote, "Which is being renewed in *knowledge* after the image of its creator" (Col 3:10).[84] Similarly, Paul connects the believers' increase in love with an increase in knowledge in his prayer for the Philippians. Paul prayed, "And is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment" (Phil 1:9).[85] Lastly, in Romans Paul placed the sanctification of the mind as juxtaposed to sinful living prior to Christ: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the *renewal of your mind*, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2).[86] Moo describes the renewal Paul had in

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[83] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 78.

[84] Moo writes, "This *knowledge* is, of course, knowledge of God, an understanding of who he is in terms of Christ and what that understanding means for living rightly." Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 269. Pao adds, "'Knowledge' may echo the centrality of 'knowledge' in the account of the fall in Gen 2-3, so that 'being renewed in knowledge' points to the reversal of the effect of the fall through God's new creative act in Christ." Pao, *Colossians,* 227.

[85] Gordon Fee makes the argument that Paul is asking God to give the Philippian believers an increase in knowledge. He writes,
> If this be the case, then Paul is now praying a second thing, that along with an ever-increasing love they may also experience an ever-increasing knowledge (of God and his will) and moral insight. An increased knowledge of God is what is needed in order for them to 'walk worthy of the gospel' and in the one Spirit to contend for that gospel as one person (1:27). (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 100)

[86] Schreiner notes, "The downward spiral of thinking traced in Rom. 1:18-32 is reversed in those who are redeemed from sin. Their minds are not given over to futility but are renewed to understand the truth." Schreiner, *Romans,* 647. Mounce adds, "Released from the control of the world around us, we can now come to know what God has in mind for us." Mounce, *Romans,* 233.

mind: "This 're-programming' of the mind does not take place overnight but is a lifelong process by which our way of thinking is to resemble more and more the way God wants us to think."[87] The sanctification of the mind is enabled by the Holy Spirit and involves an increase of knowledge, wisdom, and discernment concerning the things of God.

Progressive sanctification includes the renovation of the believer's emotions and affections. Through the power of the Holy Spirit believers are no longer controlled by sinful desires and can rightly desire God. This too is the work of the Holy Spirit where man is a co-operator. Pierre describes this transformation: "Just like the mind is renewed so that new control beliefs push out old false ones, so these new affections wage war against the old."[88] Freedom from sinful desires is made clear in the many biblical calls to reject sinful desires. Paul calls believers to mortify sinful emotions: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with malice" (Eph 4:31).[89] Consequently, later Paul wrote of the sanctifying work of the Spirit to replace sinful emotions with love, joy, peace, and patience (Gal 5:22).[90] John commands believers not to misplace their affections by loving the world or the things in the world. For John, affections indicated the presence of God's Spirit within a person: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).[91] Peter encouraged

[87] Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* 757.

[88] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 80.

[89] Arnold summarizes Paul's appeal: "Paul continues his moral exhortation with the appeal that they rid themselves of feelings of bitterness that will eventually lead to intense anger and abusive speech." Arnold, *Ephesians,* 307. O'Brien adds, "As is fitting for those who have stripped off what belongs to the old man (4:22, 25), anger in all its forms and the vices associated with it are to be removed totally from the readers." O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* 349.

[90] Not all the fruit of the Spirit are emotions, but they are all the result of the Spirit's transformative purpose in the believer. Fung writes, "The phrase directly ascribes the power of fructification not to the believer himself but to the Spirit, and effectively hints that the qualities enumerated are not the result of strenuous observance of an external legal code, but the natural product ('harvest') of a life controlled and guided by the Spirit." Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians,* 262.

[91] Robert Yarbrough discusses the different interpretative positions centered on John's use of "love," and concludes, "Hence I suggest 'set affection on' as the sense of what John forbids. God (along with

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believers to abstain from the "passions of the flesh," which are at odds with their new identity in Christ (1 Pet 2:11).[92] The sanctification of the emotions involves the removal of sinful desires and the formation of emotions that represent the holiness of God.

Progressive sanctification also changes the human will. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christians can grow in making decisions that reflect the will of God. Paul briefly spoke of the sanctifying work of the Spirit that brings the believer's will to a place of conformity with God. To the Philippian believers, Paul wrote, "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). Grudem argues from this passage, "As we grow in sanctification, our will will be more and more conformed to the will of our heavenly Father."[93] Fee writes similarly, "Being Christ's means to be 'converted' in the true sense of the word, to have one's life invaded by God's Holy Spirit, so that not simply new behavior is now effected, but a new desire toward God that prompts such behavior in the first place."[94] Progressive sanctification transforms one's will, the decision-making element of the human experience, into union with God's will.

God intends to progressively transform the whole person. He is bringing all of the believer into conformity with the image of His Son. He is working on the core of the believer to bring about holy thoughts, feelings, and actions.

God's name [Ps. 119:132, Isa. 56:6] and salvation [Ps. 70:4 (70:5 MT)]) is to be the primary object of human love (Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:30)." Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 127. Jobes concurs, "Here, 'love' refers to an attraction to something that one wishes to enjoy, an indulgence in things that are not in the light. It is want to participate in what is set in rebellion against God." Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 19 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 111.

[92] Schreiner comments on this passage: "Such desires must be resisted and conquered, and the image used implies that this is no easy matter. The Christian life is certainly not depicted as passive in which believers simply 'let and let God.'" Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 121.

[93] Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 757.

[94] Fee, *Paul's Epistle to the Philippians,* 238. Moises Silva notes, "The divine influence is said to extend not only to our activity but to our very wills—a unique statement, though the idea is implied in other passages (e.g., John 1:13; Rom. 9:16)." Moises Silva, *Philippians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 122.

Primary Means of Sanctification

The means of sanctification are those elements outside of the believer's life that bring about sanctification. The primary means of sanctification is the truth found in the Word of God.[95] Berkhof writes, "The principal means used by the Holy Spirit is the Word of God. The truth itself certainly has no adequate efficiency to sanctify the believer, yet it is naturally adapted to be the means of sanctification as employed by the Holy Spirit."[96] In Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, He asked the Father to use truth in the sanctification of the disciples. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus returned to the idea of truth later: "And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19). Jesus prayed for sanctification, which is brought about by divine revelation. Morris notes that this truth not only comes from the Father but also comes from the Son who is the Word that became flesh (John 1:14). Morris writes of them both: "It is truth and may therefore be unhesitatingly accepted and acted on. It is in this way that sanctification takes place."[97] Boyce also argues this position and gives twelve indications from Scripture that the Word of God is God's primary means for progressive sanctification:

1. Such passages as connect spiritual life with truth; as John 6:63; 8:32.
2. Such passages as ascribe quickening power to the word of God; as Psalm 119:50,93.
3. Such as teach that truth is promotive of obedience; as Psalm 119:34,43,44.
4. Such as declare its usefulness in preventing sin; as Psalm 119:11.
5. Such as associate it with cleansing from sin; as Psalm 119:9; 1Peter 1:22.

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[95] Ryle views the Word of God as the primary means of sanctification: "The instrument by which the Spirit effects this work is generally the Word of God, though He sometimes uses afflictions and providential visitations, 'without the Word.'" Ryle, *Holiness*, 16. Berkhof and Boyce would agree with Ryle but would add that the presence of the Word in the believer's life prior to the affliction or providential visitation is what brings about sanctification in that moment.

[96] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 535. Lambert agrees, and writes, "The Bible does not work automatically and on its own as the sacred words wash over people. The Word of God is only effective when the Spirit of God renders it effective in the lives of individuals." Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 161.

[97] Morris, *The Gospel according to John,* 647. Kostenberger adds, "Critically, such service is ultimately grounded in divine revelation and predicated on an accurate understanding of and response to such revelation." Kostenberger, *John*, 496.

6. Such as state that it produces hatred of sin; as Psalm 119:104.
7. Such as assert its power to lead to salvation; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.
8. Such as say that "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" have been given through the knowledge of God, and Christ; as 2 Peter 1:2,3.
9. Such as imply that growth in grace is due to greater knowledge; as Hebrews 5:12-14.
10. Such as account for inability to accept higher doctrinal truth, by such weakness as should be characteristic only of those who are babes in Christ; as 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.
11. Such as set forth the word of God as "the sword of the Spirit;" as Ephesians 6:16.
12. Such as announce that all the ministerial gifts bestowed by Christ are "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ; till we all attain the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-16.[98]

Boyce's list demonstrates that both Old and New Testaments attribute the means of sanctification to the Word of God. Berkhof adds the Word of God in sanctification "serves to excite spiritual activity by presenting motives and inducements, and gives direction to it by prohibitions, exhortations, and examples."[99] Scripture is the truth of God that reveals to believers how they are to grow into the image of God.

Erickson and van Genderen have drawn special attention to the role of the Old Testament law in progressive sanctification. They focus on the law because some scholars argue that the use of the law in the believer's life is not necessary considering the coming of Christ. Christ is described in Scripture as being the "end of the law for righteousness" (Rom 10:4).[100] In addition, the Scripture say that the "whole law is fulfilled in one word:

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[98] Boyce, *An Abstract of Systematic Theology,* 418.

[99] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 535. Pink adds,
By the Scriptures the Spirit continues to enlighten the understanding, convict the conscience, inflame the affections, and move the will. By them He conveys to us a fuller and clearer knowledge of the amazing grace of God and love of Christ toward us, and how it becomes us to act in return. Not that our hearts then become more sanctified, but they are more influenced by Divine things and exercised before God. (Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification,* 229)

[100] Schreiner writes concerning Rom 10:4:
In what sense is Christ the "end" of the law? . . . Many scholars simply make a general statement that the law has ended as a way of salvation, and now salvation is through Christ. . . . This latter idea should be excluded since Paul teaches that salvation has always been by faith (cf. Rom. 4:1-8; Gal. 3:6-9), and that pursuing the law is not inappropriate; what is flawed is pursing it apart from faith (Rom. 9:32-33). (Schreiner, *Romans,* 546)

'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal 5:14).[101] The law is viewed as reaching

its culmination in Christ; therefore, the teachings and example of Christ are all that are

needed. The law may not serve the New Testament believer in the same way that it

served the Old Testament believer, but it still serves a purpose. In Matthew's Gospel,

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not

come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (5:17).[102] The law still plays a role in the New

Testament believer's life. Van Genderen argues, "Since the covenant of life has been

superseded by the covenant of grace, the law is no longer the way to life. However, it

remains valid as the code of conduct between God and man."[103] Erickson also points out

this difference and the current role of the law: "Since we are unable to achieve

righteousness by adhering strictly to the law, the role of the law is not to justify, but to

show us what sin is."[104] The law for New Testament believers serves as an expression of

God's will for their lives. Believers do not follow the law to justify themselves before

God, but to conform their thoughts, emotions, and actions to the expressed will of God.

Secondary Means of Sanctification

Secondary means of sanctification are the opportunities that believers have to

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[101] Regarding Gal 5:14 Moo does not understand Paul to be arguing for the abolition of the law for the sake of love. He writes,

> In keeping with the central theme of the letter, Paul once again emphasizes that Christ has inaugurated a new era, an era in which "observing the law" takes on a new Christological form. The Galatians are to serve one another "in love" precisely because love is the true meaning and "fulfillment" of the law in this new era. (Moo, *Galatians,* 348)

[102] Turner writes, "Jesus does not contradict or abrogate the law and the prophets, but neither does he merely reaffirm them. He fulfills them or brings them to their divinely intended goal, because they point to him." Turner, *Matthew,* 162. Grant Osborne adds, "These must not be taken as attacks against the law; instead, Jesus' hearers should realize he is deepening the law. . . . There is to be no 'abolishing' but rather a 'fulfilling' of God's true intent in revealing these truths." Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 181.

[103] Van Genderen et al., *Concise Reformed Dogmatics,* 655.

[104] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 989.

grow in their trust in God by implementing the Word of God in their lives. These means are actually subordinate to the Word of God but are best understood under their own category. None of these secondary means produce advancement in sanctification on their own. The believer must participate under the guidance of truth from Scripture.

The providence of God is one secondary means of sanctification. This includes both positive and negative elements of life that call the believer to remember and live out God's truth. These elements include afflictions, temptations, trials, diseases, confusion or doubt, successes, blessings, and unmerited rewards. Berkhof notes,

> God's providence, both favorable and adverse, are often powerful means of sanctification. In connection with the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word, they work on our natural affections and thus frequently deepen the impression of religious truth and force it home.[105]

Similar to Berkhof, Boyce argues that these negative and positive elements of life are only sanctifying if the believer connects them with God's truth: "But these acts themselves avail not unto their sanctification but are only made effective through the truth of God apprehended amid such events, and received as spiritual food for the growth of the believer."[106] The providence of God provides the believer with the opportunity to grow in sanctification by applying biblical truth to his current situation.

Good works are another secondary means of sanctification. The Scriptures provide criteria that must be met for human actions to be considered good works pleasing to God. One criteria is that only believers are capable of good works (Matt 7:17-18).[107]

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[105] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 536.

[106] Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, 419. Berkhof makes a similar statement: "It should be bourne in mind that the light of God's revelation is necessary for the interpretation of His providential guidance, Ps. 119:71; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:10." Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 536.

[107] Osborne writes of this passage: "Since God is not a part of their lives, they cannot in any sense produce ultimate good; sooner or later their basically evil . . . nature will surface and be seen in their lives and their teaching." Osborne, *Matthew,* 272. France adds,

> It seems, then, that a new dimension is now added to the question of "fruits." Even good works by themselves are not enough. Prophecy, exorcism, and miracles can hardly be described as "bad fruit," but even these spiritual activities can apparently be carried out by those who still lack the relationship

Dabney wrote of the works of believers: "They are essentially different in moral quality from the actions of the unrenewed; and they express a new and holy nature, as the principle from which they spring."[108] The action must also be connected with the Word of God. Good works are the works that believers perform when they knowingly do what God has commanded them to do from the Word of God. Berkhof refers to this as "conscious obedience."[109] The good works are pursued because the believer is conscious of God's law and desires. Another criterion is that the prevalent motive or motives of the action must come from a desire to be holy. Paul exhorted believers, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).[110] Berkhof notes, "Their final aim is not the welfare of man, but the glory of God, which is the highest conceivable aim of man's life."[111] Contrary to Berkhof, Grudem argues that the New Testament describes several God-glorifying motives for good works that the believer may not associate with the glory of God, but are no less God-glorifying. Some of these motives include the desire to avoid God's displeasure and the desire that angels would glorify

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with Jesus which is the essential basis for belonging to the kingdom of heaven. (France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 292)

[108] Dabney, *Systematic Theology,* 677. Berkhof writes of the deeds of the unregenerate:
The deeds of the unregenerate are divorced from the spiritual root of love to God. They represent no inner obedience to the law of God and no subjection to the will of the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth. They have no spiritual aim, since they are not performed for the purpose of glorifying God, but only bear the relations of the natural life. (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 541)
William Wilberforce adds, "All such endeavors are good things. But such endeavors do not earn favor from God. The public praise and recognition that come from such actions is their reward in full." William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity,* ed. Bob Beltz (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2006), 102.

[109] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 541.

[110] Garland writes, "Whether an action brings glory to God or provokes the jealousy of God (10:22), God becomes the hermeneutical litmus test for gauging whether it is right or wrong. The ultimate aim of Christians is to please God, not themselves." Garland, *1 Corinthians,* 500. Fee adds, "One's whole life must be to God's glory, not merely that part which is involved in the acknowledgment of his prior ownership of all things through the thanksgiving." Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* 488.

[111] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 541.

God.[112] Good works progressively sanctify the believer because they are the outworking of the Word of God in a believer's life for the purpose of glorifying God.

Another means of progressive sanctification is the church, God's local community of believers. Tim Chester writes of God's purpose for the church: "One of the reasons God put us in Christian communities is to help us change."[113] Opportunities for sanctification occur in the church as believers interact with one another, with the purpose of living out God's commands to give accountability, admonishment, encouragement, and edification. David Peterson notes, "The growth of the church 'toward him who is the head' takes place as members of the body of Christ 'speak truth in love' to one another."[114] The writer of Hebrews encouraged the believers in saying, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:24-25).[115] The corporate nature of this and other

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[112] Grudem writes,

Christians sometimes fail to recognize the wide range of motives for obedience to God that are found in the New Testament. (1) It is true that a desire to please God and express our love to him is very important motive for obeying him . . . (2) the need to keep a clear conscience before God . . . (3) the desire to be a 'vessel for noble use' and have increased effectiveness in the work of the kingdom . . . (4) the desire to see unbelievers come to Christ through observing our loves . . . (5) the desire to receive present blessings from God on our lives and ministries . . . (6) the desire to avoid God's displeasure and discipline on our lives . . . (7) the desire to seek greater heavenly reward . . . (8) the desire for a deeper walk with God…(9) the desire that angels would glorify God for our obedience . . . (10) the desire for peace (Phil. 4:9) and joy (Heb. 12:1-2) in our lives . . . (11) the desire to do what God commands, simply because his commands are right, and we delight in doing what is right. (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 757-58)

[113] Tim Chester, *You Can Change: God's Transforming Power for Our Sinful Behavior and Negative Emotions* (Wheaton, IL Crossway, 2010), 143.

[114] David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001), 135.

[115] Bruce writes,

Here love *is* provoked in the sense of being stimulated in the lives of Christians by the considerateness and example of other members of their fellowship. This will never happen, however, if they keep one another at a distance. Therefore, every opportunity of coming together and enjoying their fellowship

passages has led Grudem to conclude, "Sanctification is usually a corporate process in the New Testament. It is something that happens in community."[116] Believers grow in sanctification as they live out God's Word in community.

Berkhof and Boyce list participation in baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of progressive sanctification. They both also warn that the two ordinances have been taken to mean more than what they should in some streams of Christianity. Even so, Christians are still commanded to participate in both ordinances and therefore obedience to both contribute to the believer's sanctification. Berkhof writes, "They symbolize and seal to us the same truths that are verbally expressed in the Word of God, and may be regarded as an acted work, containing a lively representation of the truth, which the Holy Spirit makes the occasion for holy exercise."[117] Boyce adds, "Only as truth is, in some way or other, brought by them to the acceptance of the heart and mind, can they have sanctifying power."[118] Believers are progressively sanctified as they walk in obedience to the truth of God's command for them to participate in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Implications of Sanctification on Pastoral Preaching

Progressive sanctification is the process that all believers go through from the time they experience regeneration until they are ultimately glorified with Christ in death. God is the primary initiator and operator of this work, but believers still co-operate with God. Progressive sanctification involves the transformation of the whole person; through

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in faith and hope must be welcomed and used for mutual encouragement. (Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews,* 257)

Cockerill adds, "Such mutual concern, in turn, creates and sustains a community conducive to perseverance in a hostile world. It is only right that those called to give full attention to Christ as all-sufficient Savior and example of perseverance (3:1; 12:2-3) should give such caring attention to God's people." Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews,* 478.

[116] Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 756.

[117] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 536.

[118] Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology,* 425.

progressive sanctification one's thoughts, emotions, and actions are brought into conformity with the image of God. Believers co-operate with God through yielding their will to God's will and by actively living in obedience to God through the mortification of sin and the quickening of the new man in Christ. God has provided several means of progressive sanctification, but the primary means of sanctification is the Word of God.

The study of progressive sanctification has affirmed previous implications about pastoral preaching as well as revealed new implications. First, the study of progressive sanctification has affirmed that God's primary concern for His people is that they would grow in all ways into the likeness of God made visible through His Son. Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection made sanctification a possibility and God's Spirit, which has been placed within each believer, empowers the believer to that end. What a believer lacks in sanctification at the end of his life, God will finish in the life to come. Since God's primary concern for His people is progressive sanctification, it should also be the primary concern for the shepherds of God's people. Shepherds exist to watch over and continue the work of God by encouraging and equipping believers so that they may grow in sanctification. Pastoral preaching accomplishes God's purpose of progressive sanctification through communicating the meaning of the text and properly applying it to the human experience. This type of encouragement and equipping is not limited to the preaching ministry, but it certainly includes it.

The previous implication is supported by the next—if the primary means for progressive sanctification is the Word of God, then the preacher should use the Word for that purpose. He does this because he is the primary communicator of the Word of God to a local congregation and because he has been given the responsibility to tend God's flock. Tending God's flock represents God's comprehensive care for His people. Tending represents a concern for the health and vibrancy of the sheep, and the sheep will be healthy and experience wholeness as they are growing in sanctification. Therefore, the role of the shepherd is to do whatever is required to encourage sanctification (Eph 4:11-14). Again,

this is not limited to the preaching ministry, but it includes it. Peterson writes, "As the Word of God is applied to everyday life and relationships, believers are built up and sustained in holiness, until they are brought to share in the inheritance that God has in store for them."[119] Preaching must contain application because it is through applying the Scripture that believers grow in sanctification and, consequently, are spiritually healthy sheep prepared to flee sin and walk in faithfulness. In addition, the preacher must include application in his preaching to give the congregation an example of the Word's purpose in their lives. God's truth is the primary means for sanctification, but a sermon without application does not prepare God's people to see His Word as instrumental in their personal holiness. Pastoral preaching contains application, because as the Word of God is applied, believers grow in sanctification.

Another implication of this study of progressive sanctification is that sermon application needs to consider the whole man—the human experience. Lambert writes, "Biblical sanctification, which reflects Christlikeness, is not about mere behavior change, but about a completely new person changing from the inside out (Col. 3:1-4:1)."[120] God is sanctifying the whole believer and bringing him, in his entirety, into conformity to God's image. God is not only transforming the way believers behave, but He is also transforming the way believers think and feel. Preachers should reflect this wholistic transformation by giving application that addresses the whole person, their thinking, feeling, and doing. John Owen argues, "The *affections of heart and mind* are to be engaged. Without this duties are abominable to God."[121] Shepherds fail to properly tend their flock when they

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[119] Peterson, *Possessed by God*, 57. Peterson goes on to write,
Paul's exhortation in Acts 20 suggests that teaching about our sanctified status in Christ is foundational for pastoral theology and practice. The church is precious to God and belongs exclusively to him. Christian leaders have a responsibility to protect it from everything that corrupts and compromises its holiness. Defending and propagating the biblical faith is an important dimension to the sanctified life. (Ibid., 57-58)

[120] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 293.

[121] John Owen, *Indwelling Sin in Believers* (repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2010), 84,

exclude any element of the human experience in their application. They fail because they are not encouraging the sheep of their flock to bring all of themselves into conformity with Christ.

In addition, the study of progressive sanctification reveals that application should contain both the mortification of the old man and the quickening of the new man. Growing in the likeness of God entails growing out of the likeness of the way a person thought, felt, and behaved before Christ. Application that encourages sanctification will cover both the negative and positive elements of the believer's life. It will cover the sinful thoughts, desires, and actions that must be put away as well as new, godly thoughts, desires, and actions that must be cultivated.

Finally, since progressive sanctification is primarily the work of God, sermon application must always be accompanied by the truth of God's empowering presence. A great comfort to any believer faced with the righteous commandments of God and his own frailty is the truth that he has a willing helper in his Heavenly Father. God not only demands that believers be holy as He is holy, but He also enables them to that end (1 Pet 1:16). God's enablement is nowhere more clearly displayed than in the complete work of the Triune God in sanctification. Owen writes of the power available to believers: "By faith ponder this, that though you are in no way able to conquer your own disordered state, and though you are weary of fighting it, and though you are ready to faint, there is enough in Jesus Christ to give you relief!"[122] Proper application will not ease the demands of God, nor will it leave the believer thinking he must accomplish holiness in his own power. On the contrary, proper application will call the believer to trust in God even more, for it is only through the power of God that believers are sanctified.

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emphasis original. Owen is not specifically referring to preaching or application, but his point is still valid. Exhortation to change behavior without dealing with the whole person is fruitless.

[122] Owen, *The Mortification of Sin,* 117.

CHAPTER 5

PASTORAL PREACHING AND
BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Introduction

The necessity of application in preaching is widely supported by well-known

and scholarly homileticians. They speak of application as the purpose, end, and goal of

preaching. Application is so important to a sermon that one without application will

always miss the mark of bringing about the purpose for which God has given His Word.

Abraham Kuruvilla notes, "Application is . . . an indispensable component of preaching;

indeed, it is its end point: preaching is incomplete without application. Without

application, the field of homiletics lies fallow, preaching remains unfruitful, and the sermon

barren."[1] Bryan Chapell argues that application is the reason why preachers preach:

"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 truth but truth applied."[2] The sermon as truth applied

may be why John A. Broadus believed that application was the main thing to be done in

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[1] Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015) 116. Adams writes similarly,

> While I have no desire to see him do less exegetical work (indeed, any number need to *much more*), I believe he must not stop there. . . . In fact, in my opinion, exegetical work forms but half of his task in preparing a message. The other half ought to be divided equally between he development of form (that fits the content, the occasion, and the congregation) and applicatory, personal, how-to materials that give direction to doctrine and help the listener put feet on facts. (Jay Adams, *Truth Apparent: Essays on Biblical Preaching* [Philipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1982], 82)

[2] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005)*,* 210. Michael Fabarez writes on Jesus' use of application in Matt 7:24-27: "To Jesus, successful preaching was not simply to disseminate truth. Succesful preaching was not bringing the congregation to an understanding of the truth. To Jesus, an effective sermon resulted in people grasping truth *and putting it into action!*" Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002)*,* xi.

preaching.[3] The sermon is about applying truth to believers' lives. Without application, the truth remains theoretical instead of practical and life-changing.

Application is not only necessary for the listener, but several homileticians, including William W. Klein, argue that the preacher is unable to properly understand the text and therefore preach the text unless he understands how it applies to life.[4] Chapell agrees, and adds, "Application is as necessary for sound exposition as is explication. In fact, the real meaning of a text remains hidden until we discern how its truths affect our lives."[5] Since it is so important for the preacher to rightly understand the text and for the listener to properly live out the meaning of the text, Jay Adams believes that biblically-appropriate application is not a question of the preacher's time, preparedness, or preference, but is a matter of the preacher's faithfulness to God: "To preach the Bible faithfully in our time, we must find the *equivalent* to the original circumstance or situation to which God then (and now) applied the warning, the promise, the principle, or

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[3] John A. Broadus writes, "The application is not merely an appendage to discussion, or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing to be done." John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 197. Kuruvilla adds, "The application of the text to the circumstances and contexts of those listening is the goal of all preaching." Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching,* 113.

[4] William W. Klein writes, "Yet for the practicing Christian, the process begun with interpretation is incomplete if it stops at the level of meaning. One must then ask how the text applies to life." William W. Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004)*,* 477. Richard Ramesh adds, "It is not enough to tell them God wants them to be holy. You must give specific examples of holiness that will be relevant to their situation today." Richard Ramesh, *Scripture Sculpture: A Do-It-Yourself Manual for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995)*,* 117.

[5] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching,* 84. Walter Liefeld argues that a sermon is not expository unless it contains application: "The truly expository sermon will combine faithful explanation of the passage in proper balance with and relationship to its application." Walter L. Leifeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)*,* 112. Chapell makes a similar statement: "Biblical preaching moves from exegetical commentary and doctrinal exposition to life instruction." Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching,* 54. John Ortberg adds, "Far too many sermons have lots of information about the Bible but are not really biblical preaching because they do not call and enable people to respond to the Word. There is lots of information about the Bible—exegetical, historical, or theological—with maybe a few applications tacked on the end." John Ortberg, "Biblical Preaching is about Life Change, Not Sermon Form," from *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 452.

the command."[6] As argued in the last chapter and supported by many of the most

recognized names in the field of homiletics, application is necessary for faithful expository

preaching.

Unfortunately, the necessity of application has not translated to its proper use,

or in some cases, its use at all. Peter Jensen writes of the paltry use of application:

> To say that this is often handled poorly is an understatement. Sometimes no attempt
> is made at all, and the preacher simply delivers exegesis in the place of exposition.
> At other times the application is the same on every occasion ('we must evangelize—
> please bring people to church with you!') no matter what part of the Word is
> preached. At other times the Word becomes merely the source of illustrative material
> for the preacher's doctrinal or pietistic or political fantasies. Often the call to
> repentance is muted or trivialized, like the 'mint, dill and cumin' of the Pharisees.[7]

Jensen's description of the modern use of application hardly communicates the proper

emphasis on application being essential to preaching. Similarly, Jason Meyer writes, "Too

many sermons close with something like, 'May the Spirit of God apply what I am saying

to your hearts.' It is a pious way of a preacher saying, 'I did not devote much time to

this; I hope you will do better.'"[8] Sadly, Jensen and Meyer's comments may reveal that

preaching has not advanced much beyond John Stott's plea for application in his often-

cited work *Between Two Worlds*. Stott argues that it is the job of the preacher to bridge

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[6] Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986)*,* 133. Richard Ramesh also speaks of the preacher's faithfulness: "The preacher's responsibility is to delineate not only principles for application but pointers for application. We cannot leave it to the audience to find ways and means to creatively apply Scripture." Ramesh, *Scripture Sculpture*, 47. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix also speak of the preacher's responsibility:
> Just because the preacher explains the text clearly and makes a convincing argument does not
> necessarily mean the listeners will make the connection between the biblical text and their lives. To
> be sure, the Bible is relevant regardless of what people may think. But the Bible's being relevant
> does not guarantee that every person understands its relevancy. The responsibility of the preacher,
> then, is to establish the relevancy in the minds of his listeners through *application*. (Jerry Vines and
> Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* [Chicago:
> Moody, 1999]*,* 181)

[7] Peter Jenson, "The Seminary and the Sermon," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011)*,* 213.

[8] Jason C. Meyer and John Piper, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013)*,* 265.

the gap between the world of the Bible and the world of the listener. That bridge is built

through showing the listener how the Bible applies to the listener's life. Stott writes,

> [Theologically-conservative preachers] are determined . . . to expound the Scriptures, and to derive all our teaching from God's Word. But if I were to draw a diagram of the gulf between the two worlds, and then plot out our sermons on the diagram, I would have to draw a straight line which begins in the biblical world, and then goes up in the air on a straight trajectory, but never lands on the other side. For our preaching is seldom if ever earthed. It fails to build a bridge into the modern world.[9]

Haddon Robinson shares Stott's concern that application is either unbalanced or missing

altogether from most preacher's sermons.[10] Despite all the attention given to the necessity

of application in the sermon, many preachers are still not building bridges to connect the

world of the Bible with the world of the listener. Far too many preachers speak of what

the Bible says, but not how the listener is to live it out.

Many reasons are given from scholars and homileticians for why preachers

tend to neglect or minimize the role of application in their sermons. Several note that

thoughtful and practical application is simply hard to create. Jensen writes, "The task

still remains difficult. It requires a knowledge of human nature, of the life of the church,

of the world around us, and of the meaning of the text that addresses us as the Word of

Christ."[11] The preacher is faced with the difficult task of exegeting the text, the culture,

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[9] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982)*,* 140. Sidney Greidanus writes similarly, "The problem preachers face is how to integrate explication and application so that the whole sermon comes across as relevant communication." Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 183.

[10] Robinson writes, "But because this process is difficult, it is also rare. The characteristic fault of evangelicals is to be biblical but not contemporary. The characteristic fault of liberals is to be contemporary but not biblical. Few of us even begin to manage to be both simultaneously." Haddon Robinson, *The Art and Craft of Preaching*, 27.

[11] Jenson, "The Seminary and the Sermon," 213. Michael J. Quicke adds, David Mains goes so far as to say that while many hearers can tell you what a sermon subject was, 80 percent of hearers are unable to tell you what response the preacher was looking for. Thought-provoking and biblically sound sermons can still end in midair with no practical outcome. Mains believes that the primary reason for this 80-percent failure is that biblical preachers want to remain textual, but since the 'how to' is often not obvious in the text, they fail to give it due attention. (Michael J. Quicke, *360 Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word* [Grand Rapids: Baker,

and the congregation. Anderson believes the current culture contributes to the difficulty in producing application: "Application has become a lot more challenging in these days of 'postlegalism.' How does the preacher suggest an application of the sermon without creating a legalistic requirement?"[12] Alternatively, Chapell proposes the level of specificity needed in effective application, not the culture, as the primary challenge: "The specificity that makes application powerful also exposes why it is the most difficult aspect of expository preaching. The thought that is required to be specific strains mental and spiritual resources."[13] Application is often neglected because it is hard work.

Another reason application is often poorly executed is because the preacher operates off the wrong assumption that the listener knows how to apply the text on their own. Dave Veerman notes, "Many preachers and teachers assume that the congregation, class, or study group will make the connection between the lesson and their lives by themselves."[14] However, not all people can make those connections and need to be guided in how they apply the passage to life. In addition, application is often neglected due to fear of the listener's rejection of the preacher. Application is where the preacher moves from the text to the thoughts, desires, and actions of the listener. In application, personal sin will be challenged and resisted. Chapell writes, "Preachers know instinctively what makes application the most difficult part of preaching—the rejection we invite by being specific."[15] Further, application may be inadequate or neglected

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2003], 154)

[12] Kenton C. Anderson, *Choosing to Preach: A Comprehensive Introduction to Sermon Options and Structures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 223.

[13] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching,* 227.

[14] Dave Veerman, *How to Apply the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999)*,* 23.

[15] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching,* 216. Chapell also notes, "Application disrupts lives and as a result is the point at which listeners are most likely to tune out a sermon. Whether we like it or not, the breaking point of most sermons is application." Ibid., 228.

altogether due to poor training or limited resources. Several scholars have noted that seminaries excel at preparing preachers to exegete the text but fail to prepare or gloss over preparing preachers to create application. Robinson writes,

> Preachers want to be faithful to the Scriptures, and going through seminary, they have learned exegesis. But they may not have firmly learned how to make the journey from the biblical text to the modern world. They get out of seminary and realize the preacher's question is application: How do you take this text and determine what it means for the audience?[16]

Klein notes that seminaries are not the only preaching resource to neglect application—most commentaries and homiletic books reference application sparingly. He writes,

> Despite the importance of application, few modern evangelical scholars have focused on this topic. In fact, most hermeneutics textbooks give it only brief coverage, and many major commentary series only mention application with passing remarks to help readers bridge the gap from the biblical world to the modern world. Perhaps many assume that sound application is more "caught than taught." This is probably true, but sound application often seems hard to find, much less catch![17]

Preachers sometimes fail in the area of application because they are ill-equipped for the task.

Finally, sermons often lack appropriate application because preachers misuse application for their own purposes. Multiple scholars have sounded the alarm concerning the care needed in its formation. Application has been described as "hazardous waters" and "fraught with danger."[18] Robinson famously penned, "More heresy is preached in application than in Bible exegesis."[19] Application is often most dangerous when the preacher uses it for his purposes instead of the purposes of the original author. Anderson

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[16] Robinson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching,* 306. Dennis E. Johnson agrees, and adds, "Exegesis itself is impoverished when socialization and professional pressures in the academy inculcate into faculty and students a model of biblical interpretation that aborts the process short of *application*, depriving it of its sweetest fruit. Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 13.

[17] Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation,* 479.

[18] Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 68. Harold Freeman, *Variety in Biblical Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1987), 42.

[19] Robinson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching,* 306.

writes of the dangers of application: "It can be easy to moralize, making a text mean whatever we think it ought to mean to further the objectives we have for our people."[20] Thus, many reasons exist for why application is often neglected and misused in the modern pulpit. These reasons explain the dire situation and reveal the need for a solution.

The search for a solution to the problem is difficult due to the many pre-existing approaches to application. Adams notes of the current situation, "All homileticians insist on the necessity for application but argue for widely differing methods of applying truth."[21] Preachers are missing a catalogue of biblically-defined approaches to application. These need to be birthed from and exemplified in the Scriptures. They need to encourage progressive sanctification that reaches the whole person. The good news is that these types of approaches are already in use in the field of biblical counseling. The problem, whether verbally expressed or subconsciously maintained, is that there is a barrier in some preachers' minds between the areas of preaching and biblical counseling. Biblical counseling is sometimes viewed as inferior to or as a distraction from the higher calling of preaching. Biblical counselor Edward Welch describes the current adversarial relationship between preaching and biblical counseling:

> Most evangelicals agree that the preaching of the Word is essential to life in a local church. But when primacy of preaching is mentioned today, it is no longer contrasted with Catholic Mass. Rather, it is usually contrasted with other regular features of a pastor's life, such as the individual care of souls, a.k.a. counseling.[22]

Welch goes on to argue that this contrast has led to the demotion of biblical counseling in congregational life: "When personal care of souls becomes the contrast to, rather than the

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[20] Anderson, *Choosing to Preach,* 251. Robinson adds, "Ironically, almost every competent contemporary preacher knows the unchanging text must be contextualized into the modern world, but the great mistake that is often made is to start at *our* end of the process." Robinson, *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching,* 228.

[21] Adams, *Truth Apparent*, 76.

[22] Ed Welch, "Preaching or Counseling?" *CareLeader,* January 5, 2017, accessed January 5, 2018, http://www.careleader.org/preaching-counseling/.

complement of, the public care of souls, it relegates it to the theological ghetto."[23] As noted earlier by Adams, preaching and biblical counseling are not adversarial, nor is one presented as superior to the other in the Scriptures. Instead, they are two sides of the same coin of the ministry of the Word.[24] The purpose of this chapter is to support the idea that preaching and biblical counseling are two sides of the ministry of the Word through a brief exploration of the formation and history of the biblical counseling movement, along with theological foundations on which biblical counselors operate. Since preaching and biblical counseling are complementary, not adversarial or one superior to the other, the primary implication is that findings in the field of biblical counseling can provide biblical approaches to application that can be used in preaching.

Formation of Biblical Counseling

The formation of the biblical counseling movement was more of a regaining of what was lost, rather than the conception of something new. The use of God's Word for soul care stretches back to the beginning of human existence, as seen in Adam and Eve's choice of the serpent's counsel over the counsel of God.[25] This biblical tradition of

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[23] Welch, "Preaching or Counseling?" Garrett Higbee ascribes this designation to a loss of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scriptures. He proposes that many believe in particular sufficiency, where the Scriptures are only sufficient in certain settings. He writes, "Many Christians and Christian leaders don't seem to believe that the doctrine of sufficiency is relevant in a postmodern culture. For others, the Bible is preached relevantly on Sundays, but its relevant application falls woefully short in their office or in a small group ministry." Garrett Higbee, "The Practicality of the Bible for Becoming a Church of Biblical Counseling," in *Scripture and Counseling: God's Word for Life in a Broken World,* ed. Bob Kellermen and Jeff Forrey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 226.

[24] Jay E. Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 14-15. Welch adds,
> I would suggest that Scripture does not make precise distinctions between public preaching and personal pastoral care. Both are the Word proclaimed. One is not lesser. Given this equal weight, the pastor's goal is to grow in both pastoral care and preaching, and give as much attention to the personal care of souls as is given to the preparation of sermons. (Welch, "Preaching or Counseling?")

[25] Jeremy Lelek spends several pages discussing the biblical references to counseling in both the Old and New Testaments. Jeremy Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, & Future* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2018), 6-9.

counseling through the Word continued through the early church fathers, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Cassian. Especially influential was the work of Augustine, whose methods of biblical soul-care would remain prominent in psychology for nearly a millennium.[26] Later, the Protestant Reformers continued to write about the intersection of God's Word and human nature. Jeremy Lelek writes, "Following in the church fathers' footsteps, men of the Reformation, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin were major contributors to developing philosophies and theologies of human nature, human motivation, and personality development."[27]

Beyond the Reformers, the Puritans continued the work of bringing the Word of God to bear on the human condition. They are credited with the writing of hundreds of books that would apply the Word of God to specific problems of Christian living.[28] Shockingly, while the Bible's use in the believer's life flourished during the time of the Puritans, its use also ended with them. Ichabod Spencer's *A Pastor's Sketches* is viewed by many as the final contribution to soul care. David Powlison writes concerning the end of this age: "Spencer wrote in the 1850s, but the well of biblical counseling wisdom that had been trickling for years gradually went dry in the subsequent decades."[29] For over a

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[26] Morton Hunt writes, "Such is Augustine's selection and adaptation of what humankind had learned about the human mind in the first eight centuries of psychology; such are the principal notions that received the imprimatur of his authority and became the only acceptable psychology for the next eight centuries." Morton Hunt, *The Story of Psychology* (New York: Anchor, 2007), 55.

[27] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 11.

[28] Heath Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 25. Eric Johnson adds, "While our era far outstrips theirs in terms of an understanding of the created mechanics of human development and soul change, ours is dwarfed by theirs with regard to the more important expertise of applying the Bible to the greatest needs of the soul." Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 52.

[29] David Powlison, "Biblical Counseling in Recent Times," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically*, ed. John F. MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 18. Lambert writes on this matter:
    Spencer's work was not perfect. He could be a bit heady and ignored internal realities that helped some secular thinkers believe that Protestant reflection on counseling was a wasteland. Still, in many ways, it represented the end of careful and uniquely Christian reflection about the task of interpersonal ministry. (Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 26)

hundred years Christian scholars, authors, and pastors would not produce any resources on the Bible's use in Christian living and counseling.

Lambert identifies nine of the most prominent reasons for the Bible's neglect in practical Christian ministry after Spencer's last work. Two of these reasons are especially helpful for this discussion on biblical counseling and preaching.[30] First, Lambert credits the fundamentalist-modernist controversy for the neglect of the Bible's use among biblically conservative Christians. The fundamentalists were rightly focused on defending the inerrancy and authority of the Bible from the attacks of the modernistic thinkers who placed scientific advancements over established theology. The fundamentalists' error was that they did not include the Bible's use in pastoral ministry in their defense. Lambert notes what became of this omission:

> This left an opening for the modernists to come in and take over counseling within the church. With conservative minds focused on defending the Bible, modernists began to be consumed with secular approaches to counseling in their excitement over the social gospel. This modernists connection with counseling made it only more difficult for conservatives to reflect on the topic.[31]

Considering Welch's comments earlier on the perceived inferiority of counseling compared to preaching, the modernist takeover of counseling may contribute to conservatives' lack of thought on the topic of counseling even today.

Lambert also identifies the psychological revolution as a reason for the neglect of Bible-based counseling. The psychological revolution occurred virtually simultaneously with the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and resulted in the

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[30] Lambert's other reasons for the neglect of the Bible in practical Christian ministry include the desire of people to help and understand other people, since counseling is a private consultation it is rarely seen, counseling is difficult work, revivalism of the 1770s, a changing American economy, the Civil War, and World Wars I and II. Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 26-35.

[31] Ibid., 31. John Bettler confirms Lamberts claims and writes,
While evangelicals spent the first half of the twentieth century defending the faith and struggling to save their seminaries and churches from liberal takeover, those same liberals were free to define and develop pastoral counseling as they wished without input or opposition from those upholding full biblical authority. (John Bettler, "CCEF: The Beginning," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 [1988]: 46)

secularization of what should have been the church's responsibility to provide counsel to hurting individuals. Lambert identifies two influential leaders in this transition of counseling authority. The first was Wilhelm Wundt, who is credited with making psychology a respectable science through the construction of the first laboratory for psychological study. The second was Sigmund Freud, who challenged the church's ability to provide adequate counsel to individuals, since the job of counseling was now viewed as science, not religion. Lambert writes,

> Once psychology began to be defined in secular scientific terms (Wundt), it became possible to argue that psychotherapy should be the prerogative of secular professionals (Freud). The emphasis on each of these elements resulted in a massive decline in ministers reflecting on this same subject.[32]

What Lambert terms as a decline, Powlison and Lelek describe as a complete shift in authority. Powlison says, "Secular psychologies claimed the turf of counseling expertise and of insight into human nature."[33] Lelek adds, "Gone were the days of interpreting the psychology of humankind through the lens of the Bible."[34] The psychological revolution resulted in a complete shift in the pastoral ministry of counseling away from the church.

The established psychological culture went largely unchallenged into the 1960s until Jay Adams argued for the restoration of the Bible in counseling.[35] Adams was a pastor and theologian who, after being assigned to teach a class on practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, began to study the current state of psychology and individual care. Crucial to the development of Adams' method was the work of O. Hobart

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[32] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 32. Lelek agrees, and writes, "Within this modernist context, individuals such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Rogers began to rise in prominence as the new authoritative voices regarding human nature and the mind." Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 16-17.

[33] Powlison, "Biblical Counseling in Recent Times," 19.

[34] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 16.

[35] Lelek identifies a few others who were also beginning to resist the established secular counseling culture. Ibid., 20-26.

Mowrer.[36] Mowrer disagreed with the Freudian view that mental illness was the cause of

what vexed people. Instead, Mowrer believed that people were morally responsible, and

he instructed patients to deal with their moral failings.[37] Adams reflects on the inspiration

he received from Mowrer:

> Mowrer did two things for me. First, he *destroyed* the Freudian system in my mind.
> He knew it inside out; he'd been a part of it; he'd come out of it and rejected it, and
> he knew why he'd rejected it. That was the reigning system then. Second, at the
> same time, he shook my faith in the mental health professionals. Previously I was
> still caught up in the idea that we preachers shouldn't be doing counseling. Mowrer
> cleared the field of rubble for me. He gave me confidence to go forward.[38]

Mowrer's work was instrumental in Adams' life, but it was not Bible-based. After

spending a six-week intensive under Mowrer's teaching, Adams set out to develop a

counseling system that was thoroughly biblical.

Others would join Adams in this endeavor, and through their combined efforts

the Christian Counseling and Educational System (later reincorporated as the Christian

Counseling and Educational Foundation—CCEF) was born in 1966. By 1968, CCEF's

mission had grown to include "counseling services, education and training of counselors,

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[36] J. Cameron Fraser also ascribes the work of Cornelius Van Til as a major influencer of
Adams' method. He writes,
> Van Til's major contribution to apologetic and his influence on the Westminster school of thought
> was his stress on the need to engage unbelief—and indeed all thought systems—at the level of their
> fundamental presuppositions. He stressed the biblical antitheses between faith and unbelief and
> argued that the consistently Christian approach is to reason from the presuppositional basis of
> Scripture rather than to seek common ground with the unbeliever." (J. Cameron Fraser, *Developments
> in Biblical Counseling* [Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2015], 4)

[37] Lelek is insightful here when he writes,
> Mowrer was one of the first ardent critics of the liberal movement evolving in pastoral counseling.
> He was deeply concerned about the development of a psychological discipline overrun by what
> become known as the medical model. In his view, this model was decimating the idea of personal
> responsibility. As the former president of the American Psychological Association (1954), Mowrer
> contended that the religious community had made a strategic mistake by embracing exclusively
> medical explanations of human dysfunction. (Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 20)

[38] David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC:
New Growth, 2010), 36, emphasis original.

publication and mass media, and diversified institutions of care."[39] Despite CCEF's

success, it was still a small operation in Philadelphia; but that all changed with the release

of Adams' book *Competent to Counsel* in 1970. Powlison notes the influence of Adams'

work: "The publication of *Competent to Counsel* . . . marked the inception of a discernable

nouthetic counseling movement and triggered lively controversy in the evangelical

community."[40] Adams' approach was unique in the current counseling arena because it

relied on the sufficiency of Scripture and the power of the gospel to bring about genuine

change.[41] In an age of professionalism, *Competent to Counsel* was controversial in that it

encouraged pastors to counsel their people instead of the current practice of deferring and

referring distressed people to trained psychologists. Lambert writes, "It was the role of

Adams to begin to restore to the church an understanding that it had held before the

American Civil War, namely, that counseling was within the realm of the church, every

bit as much as its counterpart in public ministry, preaching."[42] With the onus of counseling

placed back on the church came a concern for the proper training, quality control, and

accountability of pastors and laypeople. Out of this concern was birthed the National

Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC) in 1976, and *The Journal of Pastoral*

Practice in 1977. Both served the purpose of equipping Christians to counsel from the

Word of God. Biblical counseling under Adams and his companions was not without its

controversaries or enemies; even so, it continued to find supporters within evangelical

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[39] Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement*, 41.

[40] Ibid., 51.

[41] Lelek adds, "Unlike other evangelical writing on the topic of counseling in the church, Adams's presuppositions did not allow for a synthesis of secular psychological theory wit orthodox scriptural teaching when such psychology overstepped its bounds into the realm of theology." Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 27.

[42] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 36. Adams writes on the purpose of *Competent to Counsel*: "The thesis of this book is that qualified Christian counselors properly trained in the Scriptures are competent to counsel—more competent than psychiatrists or anyone else." Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 18.

churches that started church-based counseling ministries and institutions that offered degrees and training in the field of biblical counseling.

Adams believed that what he started was only the beginning of the biblical counseling movement. The work was not finished and needed to be carried on. Lambert refers to those who carried on Adams' work as the second generation of biblical counselors.[43] The second generation was led by David Powlison and includes Paul David Tripp, Ed Welch, Louis Priolo, Elyse Fitzpatrick, and Richard Ganz.[44] Instrumental in this new generation of biblical counselors was Powlison's article "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," which was published in 1988 and later provided the framework for Lambert's *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams*.[45] Powlison's article identified six crucial issues that needed further development on the foundation established by the first generation of biblical counselors. Four of these issues will be detailed here.[46] First, further exploration was needed in the realm of motivation. Biblical counseling rightly focused on encouraging counselees to walk in obedience to the will of

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[43] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 47. Fraser's work contains a blog segment posted by Jay Adams seemingly in response to Lambert's first and second generation tags. Adams writes,

> Our self-tagged "second-generation" are nothing of the sort. They are what, more accurately, might be called the third generation or, more precisely stated, the heirs and recipients of an already-refined second generation of biblical counselors that, practically speaking, makes them nothing less than a third. . . . A great deal of refining, maturing and enlarging of the system has taken place since 1970. Much effort has been expended over the forty-year period, many aspects of counseling have been explored in depth, and a large amount of new material has been mined and made available. What is so surprising—and disappointing—is that this maturing process has been carried on not by our self-styled "second-generationers," from whom we expected so much, but largely by the same small group of "old-timers" who have been a part of the cadre of counselor-theorists who have been 'having at it' from (or near) the beginning. (Fraser, *Developments in Biblical Counseling,* 12)

[44] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 29. Lambert only identifies Powlison as one of the leaders of the second generationers. Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 47.

[45] David Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 9, no. 3 (1988): 53-78.

[46] Two of Powlison's concerns deal specifically with biblical counseling and have no direct connection to the purpose of the chapter.

God; however, Powlison argues that most of the information and practice related to this change sounded behavior-focused.[47] An appropriate emphasis and articulation of how internal motivators contributed to change was lacking. Powlison later wrote "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" which addressed the issue of motivation in biblical terms.[48] Lambert reflects upon biblical counseling's advancement in this area: "There has been a development from a true, but often simplistic, understanding of motivation in human sinfulness to a more dynamic appreciation of all the factors in the human heart that motivate people to behave in various ways."[49]

Second, clarification is needed concerning the relationship between human responsibility and human suffering. Powlison points out that one of the great works of the biblical counseling movement was the establishment of man's responsibility before God. However, a biblical understanding of man as a sufferer that does not negate his responsibility was lacking. Powlison explains,

> Unbiblical views construe man-as-victim to be a reason, an excuse, a cause for our faulty and negative actions. Biblically comprehending man-as-sufferer is never meant to answer, "Why do I sin?" It does answer, "When? Where? With whom? Under whose influence?" It describes the situation in which one is tempted and tried.[50]

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[47] Powlison writes, "We depart from the Bible if we ignore motives and drift towards an externalistic view of man. The caricature that we are 'behavioristic' indeed may be true more often than we would like to admit. The Bible itself tells us behavior has 'reasons.'" Powlison, "Crucial Issues," 56.

[48] David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (1995): 35-50.

[49] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 80. Later, Ed Welch and George M. Schwab would write articles critical of Adams' approach, decrying it as unbiblical and springing from secular behaviorism. Adams vehemently defended the charges and argued that he always had a focus on the heart. Ed Welch, "How Theology Shapes Ministry: Jay Adams's View of the Flesh and an Alternative," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 3 (2002): 16-25. George M. Schwab, "Critique of 'Habituation' as a Biblical Model of Change," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 21, no. 2 (2003): 67-83. Adams full response can be found in the appendix of Lambert's book. Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 165-70.

[50] Powlison, "Crucial Issues," 63.

The second generation of biblical counselors addressed Powlison's concern by taking the time to understand the counselee's struggles and life situation.

Next, further investigation is needed on the Bible's portrayal of the counselor-counselee relationship. Lambert notes of Adams, "[His] approach to the relationship between counselee and counselor was relatively formal and authoritative in nature."[51] In many ways Adams' approach imitated the professionalism of secular psychology. Powlison urges for a form of counseling that is less formal and more daily encouragement and exhortation as described in the Scriptures. Second generationers have made significant advancements in this area by emphasizing the similarities between the counselor and counselee. They have both been called to fight sin and pursue righteousness. Similarly, because of Christ, they are brothers or sisters in Christ. In addition, second generationers have made it a practice to begin with the issue of suffering before dealing with the sin.[52]

Powlison's final area for future growth was the need to contextualize biblical counseling for new audiences. Powlison believed that biblical counseling rightly sought to get the local pastors' attention, since it was the church that had abandoned the ministry of counseling, but that cannot be the end of their reach—they must seek to engage other audiences for their own edification and for the edification and evangelization of others.[53] While many advancements have been made in this area, Lambert notes that out of all of Powlison's concerns, second generationers have done the least in this area. Lambert writes,

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[51] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 87.

[52] Lambert also points out that second generationers have sought to communicate affection to the counselee by going to whatever lengths necessary to understand their concerns and communicate those concerns back to them. In addition, second generationers have emphasized the importance of being sacrificial in counseling. Counselors should go to great lengths to invest into the lives of the counselees. Finally, Lambert points out that second generationers are people-oriented in their counseling: "They emphasize dealing with counselees who experience problems rather than the problems articulated by counselees." Ibid., 90-98.

[53] Powlison, "Crucial Issues," 70.

It must be said, however, that this field of engagement is the one where biblical counselors have the farthest to go. Though the biblical counseling movement has demonstrated a desire to engage, there is much work to do to make this desire a full-scale project that actually does what it hopes to do.[54]

Despite room for growth in this final issue, second generationers developed biblical counseling significantly beyond what they inherited. They have continued the work of the first generationers by bringing the work of biblical counseling into greater conformity with Scripture.

Forty-one years after the release of Adams' *Competent to Counsel*, a third generation of biblical counselors formed. Over those four decades multiple organizations of biblical counselors had emerged with their nuanced purposes and mission statements, but still with a clear commitment to the basic tenets of biblical counseling. In 2011, at the encouragement of Steve Viars, David Powlison, and Garrett Higbee, these organizations agreed to work together, encourage one another, and share their resources through the development of the Biblical Counseling Coalition (BCC). The BCC exists "to foster collaborative relationships and to provide robust, relevant biblical resources that equip the Body of Christ to change lives with Christ's changeless truth."[55] This third generation now continues the work of its predecessors, a work that has seen its ups and downs, but whose workers have continued to remain committed to the sufficiency of Scriptures to bring about genuine change in the lives of believers.

Theological Foundations of Biblical Counseling

The biblical counseling movement is a global movement with organizations and church-based programs that stretch across the world. Even so, Lambert argues that a group of principles unites them. He writes,

> All biblical counselors are united around core principles of the sufficiency of Scripture, the necessity of the power of the gospel to bring about true and lasting

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[54] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 120.

[55] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 32.

change, progressive sanctification, the importance of the church, and concern over secular psychology.[56]

The purpose of this section is to explore each one of these principles to show that preaching and biblical counseling share the same theological foundations and concerns. Preaching and counseling represent the full ministry of the Word.

Sufficiency of Scripture

Biblical counseling is called "biblical" because it relies on the sufficiency of Scripture. In Adams' revolutionary work *Competent to Counsel*, he begins his argument with complete dependence on the Word of God: "My method is presuppositional. I avowedly accept the inerrant Bible as the Standard of all faith and practice. The Scriptures, therefore, are the basis, and contain the criteria by which I have sought to make every judgment."[57] In this statement Adams is making a claim that was unheard of in his day and remains controversial. Adams is arguing that the Bible is sufficient to help people today. While he did not disregard scientific advancements or psychological theories, he did not believe them to be equal to or a necessary addition to what was already revealed in the Bible.

Biblical counselors have taken two approaches to defending the sufficiency of Scripture for counseling. The popular approach is to appeal to the Scripture's testimony of its intended use. This discussion typically centers on three passages: Psalm 19:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:3-4.[58] In Psalm 19:7-11, David speaks of the quality of God's law (perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, enduring, true, righteous, to be desired) and also the outworking of God's law in one's life (reviving the soul, making wise the simple,

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[56] Lambert, *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams,* 47.

[57] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* xxi.

[58] Paul Tautges and Steve Viars write of the selected passages, "These stones in the foundation of a sound doctrine of the Scriptures display the Word of God as the desirable law, the direct trainer, the divine scalpel, and the definitive authority in Christian living." Paul Tautges and Steve Viars, "Sufficient for Life and Godliness" in Kellermen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 49.

rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes).[59] Wayne Mack comments on this passage: "In

this text, assertions are made that set the Bible in a class all by itself—statements that

unmistakably demonstrate the Bible's sufficiency and superiority over any man's theory."[60]

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the apostle Paul communicates the source of Scripture (breathed

out by God), the function of Scripture (profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,

and for training in righteousness), and the result of Scripture's appropriate use (that the

man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work).[61] Adams writes concerning

this passage: "Paul was concerned to discuss not only inspiration but primarily the purpose

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[59] Nancy deClaisse-Walford writes of this passage, "It teaches that the Creator can be known *about* through creation, but the torah is the only way that one can *know* the personal God of Israel. And once one knows this God through the torah, one can pray to God in a relational way." Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms,* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 204, emphasis original. Peter C. Craigie interprets the passage in the similar way:

> Just as the sun dominates the daytime sky, so too does *Torah* dominate human life. And as the sun can be both welcome, in giving warmth, and terrifying in its unrelenting heat, so too the *Torah* can be both life-imparting, but also scorching, testing, and purifying. But neither are dispensable. There could be no life on this planet without the sun; there can be no true human life without the revealed word of God in the *Torah*. (Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 [Dallas: Word, 1983], 184, emphasis original)

John Goldingay adds, "Yhwh's instructions are life-giving, or more specifically life-restoring." John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 292.

[60] Wayne Mack, "What Is Biblical Counseling?," in *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counseling,* ed. Ed Hindson and Howard Eyrich (Fearn, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2004), 43. Tautges and Viars add,

> These nine qualities of Scripture display its full-orbed sufficiency to not only explain what walking with God in a broken world may entail but also to empower us to live according to His revealed will. This unchanging revelation of God prevails as a secure lighthouse on the sea of humanity's ever-changing theories. (Tautges and Viars, "Sufficient for Life and Godliness," 53)

[61] Philip H. Towner writes,

> But this statement of the divine authority of every text of Scripture is really preliminary to the main topic of the verse, which comes in the second predicate adjective. Inspiration is, in a sense, a platform in the argument about Scripture's "usefulness," so that from the first adjective flows the second. But it is the thought of Scripture's "usefulness" of function that Paul develops. (Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006], 590)

George W. Knight III supports this interpretation when he writes, "The reminder of Timothy's long acquaintance with the scriptures and their central function (v. 15) leads Paul to conclude this section with a fuller statement on the divine origin and specific usefulness of scripture (v. 16) and on the purpose that it serves in the life of the man of God (v. 17)." George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles,* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 444.

of the Scriptures. He argued that because they were God-breathed, the Scriptures are useful for nouthetic purposes."[62] Finally, in 2 Peter 1:3-4, Peter states that God has granted to His people all things that pertain to life and godliness through God's divine power. This divine power certainly includes salvation but would also include the words of God given to man through divine inspiration.[63] In short, God has given man in the Word of God all that he needs to thrive in life. Mack summaries this approach well:

> Because the Bible asserts its own sufficiency for counseling-related issues, secular psychology has nothing to offer for understanding or providing solutions to the non-physical problems of people. When it comes to counseling people, we have no reason to depend on the insights of finite and fallen men. Rather, we have every reason to place our confidence in the sure, dependable, and entirely trustworthy revelation of God given to us in Holy Scriptures because it contains a God-ordained, sufficient, comprehensive system of theoretical commitments, principles, insights, goals, and appropriate methods for understanding and resolving the non-physical problems of people.[64]

The selected passages convey God's purpose of giving His Word for the ministry of counseling. They are a testimony to the Scripture's use in life and counseling.

Heath Lambert presents a different approach for the defense of the sufficiency of Scripture for counseling. He argues for the material sufficiency of Scripture for counseling. Material sufficiency is the concern of whether the Bible reveals everything that is needed to be known about a specific topic. For example, the Bible is not sufficient in a material way to help a mechanic diagnose a problem with an automobile; however, Lambert proposes that the Bible is materially sufficient to help a counselor diagnose and treat the problems of people. While Lambert does not define this approach, Jeremy

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[62] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 51.

[63] Peter H. Davids summarizes Peter's words: "In other words, there is no excuse for not living a godly life, for believers have already received everything that is necessary to do so." Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 168. Tautges and Viars write, "What God wants us to know about living for Him, He has revealed in words, which are recorded for us in Scripture. The authoritative revelation of God in the Scriptures is sufficient to lead us to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, and train us in all things pertaining to life and godliness." Tautges and Viars, "Sufficient for Life and Godliness," 60.

[64] Mack, "What is Biblical Counseling?," 50.

Pierre's definition appears to align with Lambert's understanding. Pierre writes, "Scripture is sufficient to frame the entirety of both human experience and the context in which that experience occurs according to God's essential purpose for people to reflect His personhood by means of the gospel of Jesus Christ."[65] The Scriptures are sufficient for people to know God and to live in ways that bring Him glory; therefore, they are sufficient for counseling. The evidence of this sufficiency is the application of the Scriptures on the issues of people. The problem, Lambert proposes, is that counselors are slow to turn to the Scriptures because of perceived limitations in them and conversely, the vast amount of information in secular resources that appear to describe people's problems in a way that appeals to the modern mind. Lambert exhorts biblical counselors to do the work of understanding their counselee's problems and how the Scriptures speak to those problems: "When biblical counselors can demonstrate how Scripture comes to life to change the difficulties of real counselees, they establish that the material sufficiency of Scripture extends to the work of counseling."[66] The counselor's sufficient resource is the entire Bible, which speaks about God, the human condition, and God's redemptive work to restore His creation.

The sufficiency of Scripture for counseling means that biblical counselors are also to be theologians. Adams wrote of the counselor, "Because his counsel is dependent upon biblical principles, a Christian counselor (like a Christian preacher) must understand *all* that the Scriptures say on a given topic in order to give fully biblical direction to their counselees."[67] Biblical counselors must understand doctrine as well as how to properly

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[65] Jeremy Pierre, "Scripture Is Sufficient, But to Do What?," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 105.

[66] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 59.

[67] Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemptions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 12, emphasis original. Adams wrote considerably more about theology and counseling:

mine that doctrine from the text. Adams identified the counselor's theological wherewithal as the preeminent requirement for counseling.[68] Counselors must exegete both the biblical text and the counselee they hope to help. Lelek points out that appropriate biblical counseling is not the selection of a few passages that deal with a certain issue, such as passages that have the word "anxiety" in them. Proof-texting based on a word search is not biblical counseling.[69] Faithful biblical counseling seeks to understand the whole message of the Bible and how that message intersects with life. Welch and Powlison call this a redemptive lens; they write,

> The Bible gives the redemptive lens through which we see everything: politics, art, relationships, war, economics, engineering and psychology. We come to understand ourselves, our problems, and the means by which grace changes us. This lens pervasively alters our vision; the redemptive word of the true God affects all seeing.[70]

The counselor cannot counsel biblically without a firm and robust knowledge of the Scriptures.

Power of the Gospel

The aim of counseling is change, but true change in a person's life can only occur through the power of the gospel. While all humankind is made in the image of God, the presence of Adamic sin in every person's life has broken that image. As a result, all people are bent toward sin and away from God. People actively sin in their actions and

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"Authoritative proclamation of the Word in preaching and in counseling . . . grows only from a sounds knowledge of theology." Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 13. In addition, he argued,
> All counseling, by its very nature (as it tries to explain and direct human beings in their living before God and before other human beings in a fallen world) implies theological commitments by the counselor. He simply cannot become involved in the attempt to change beliefs, values, attitudes, relationships and behavior without wading neck deep in theological waters. (Ibid., 14)

[68] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 61. The full quote reads, "Preeminently, a nouthetic counselor must be conversant with the Scriptures."

[69] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 57.

[70] Ed Welch and David Powlison, "Every Common Bush Afire with God: The Scripture's Constitutive Role for Counseling," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 16, no. 4 (1997): 303-22.

they are sinful in their nature, living in complete rebellion against their Creator. Sin's impact is universal; people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are all impaired by sin.[71] Lambert identifies sin as the reason for which counseling exists. People seek counseling because they have sinned, people sin against them, or simply because they live in a harsh world suffering under the consequences of sin.[72] Biblical counseling recognizes sin as the core human problem. Since people are sinners, left to themselves and apart from God they will continue to sin. Adams writes, "Unsaved counselees are neither capable of understanding God's revealed will (cf. 1 Corinthians 2) nor capable of doing it (Romans 8:7, 8)."[73] Powlison goes so far as to declare that biblical counseling's stance on sin and human nature is what makes it the best form of counseling: "Biblical counseling is different, better, and truer because it rests on a true understanding of human nature—from God's perspective."[74] The reality of sin forces biblical counseling to be gospel-centric.

Biblical counseling is gospel-centric in that it teaches that salvation is necessary for genuine change. Apart from Christ all people are slaves to sin and powerless to change in any way that would honor God. Adams argues, "A proper concept of nouthetic counseling must have deeply embedded in it the premise that man cannot be helped in any fundamental sense apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ."[75] Robert D. Jones adds,

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[71] This idea is often found under the doctrine of total depravity. MacArthur writes,
Total depravity means sinners have no ability to do spiritual good or to work for their own salvation from sin. They are so completely declined to love righteousness, so thoroughly dead in sin, that they are not able to save themselves or even to fit themselves for God's salvation. Unbelieving humanity has no capacity to desire, understand, believe, or apply spiritual truth. (John MacArthur, "Counseling and the Sinfulness of Humanity," in MacArthur, *Counseling,* 67)

[72] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 226-27.

[73] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 68.

[74] David Powlison, "Does Biblical Counseling Really Work?," in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient*, 63.

[75] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 68.

Apart from Christ and the regenerating work of his Spirit, unbelievers will not and cannot please God or understand the things of God's Spirit. Whatever changes they make will not be thorough, lasting, and pleasing to God. All true godly change proceeds from an encounter with and submission to Jesus Christ.[76]

This foundational truth does not deter the counselor from counseling unregenerate people, but instead shapes the direction and content of the counseling session. The counselee will be given freedom to express the concerns that led to him seeking a counselor, and the counselor will seek avenues to present the gospel and Jesus as the ultimate solution to the counselee's concerns. The counselor's goal is to help the counselee change, which begins with regeneration through the counselee's acceptance of the gospel. Through the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, there is hope for God-honoring, genuine change.

Progressive Sanctification

Biblical counseling is committed to the doctrine of progressive sanctification. Through faith in Christ a person is instantly justified before God; however, believers do not automatically begin thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that honor God. Progressive sanctification is the process of a believer leaving behind sinful and selfish elements of his life and growing into the image of Christ by adding godly elements to his life. While progressive sanctification is a God-empowered process in which an individual participates, biblical counselors assist in this process. Adams said of this relationship, "Nouthetic counseling in its fullest sense . . . is simply *an application of the means of sanctification*."[77] The confessional statement of the BCC affirms this association: "We believe that wise

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[76] Robert D. Jones, "Biblical Counseling: An Opportunity for Problem-Based Evangelism," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 31, no. 1 (2017): 80. Adams also wrote, "An unbeliever may be helped out of a tight spot, may be helped to see his need for the gospel, etc., but may not be counseled. God's counsel exists in the renewal of the image." Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling,* 120.

[77] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 73, emphasis original. Adams would also say, "Fundamentally, then, pastoral counseling is helping Christians to become sanctified. . . . This is the shepherd's challenge, opportunity and duty." Ibid., 77. Lelek adds,

Biblical counseling offers a theology of ongoing transformation that is situated in what theologians have termed progressive sanctification. In this process, the gracious Holy Spirit faithfully conforms the whole of believers' beings into the image of Jesus Christ throughout the totality of their lives. (Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 153)

counseling should be transformative, change-oriented, and grounded in the doctrine of sanctification."[78] The sanctification presented in biblical counseling is concerned with behavior, but it recognizes that the heart is the seat of all behavior. Therefore, biblical counseling accurately supports the purpose of progressive sanctification: the conformity of the whole person into the image of Christ. Powlison writes of the holistic mission of biblical counseling:

> We affirm that the growth process for which counseling must aim is conversion followed by lifelong progressive sanctification within *every circumstance of life*. Our motives, thought processes, actions, words, emotions, attitudes, values—heart, soul, mind, and might—increasingly resemble Jesus Christ in conscious and evident love for God and other people.[79]

Biblical counseling exists to assist Christians in the process of progressive sanctification through counselors helping counselees rightly understand and apply the Scriptures to their lives.

Considering this doctrine, the responsibility of the biblical counselor is to know the Bible and in what ways it calls believers into conformity with Christ. The effective biblical counselor is one who is able to communicate God's resources and demands to the counselee. Ernie Baker and Howard Eyrich write, "Biblical counseling endeavors to think deeply about how worship-filled, grace-motivated, Spirit-dependent obedience changes the orientation of the heart toward Christlikeness."[80] Biblical counselors do much more

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[78] James MacDonald, ed., "Appendix B: The Confessional Statement of the Biblical Counseling Coalition," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 433. The confessional goes on to read, "The aim of wise counseling is intentional and intensive discipleship. . . . It equips them to apply the principles of progressive sanctification through renewing their minds and actions based on Scripture with a motive of love for God and others (Romans 12:1-2)." Ibid., 433.

[79] David Powlison, "Affirmations & Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 19, no. 1 (2000): 20, emphasis added. Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer also affirm that progressive sanctification is a process: "It is the process of making us holy, a process that is not complete until our death." Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer, "The Pursuit of Holiness," in MacDonald, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling,* 182.

[80] Ernie Baker and Howard Eyrich, "Caution: Counseling Systems Are Belief Systems," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 172.

than point counselees to passages of Scripture that speak to the issue at hand. They also show the counselee how God's truths are meant to reorient one's life for God's glory and his good. In addition, the role of the biblical counselor is to instruct the counselee on the truth of God's Word and encourage the counselee to yield his will to it. Stuart Scott describes this encouragement as a balance between pressing the counselee to action and reminding the counselee of the riches of God's love and grace towards him: "As we press those who are changing from within to actively apply biblical principles for change, we will point them back to the great love of Christ, who we are in Him, and dependence on all His resources—which are each found in the gospel."[81] Powlison articulately describes the relationship of biblical counseling and progressive sanctification:

> The Scripture is *about* what counseling is about. God speaks about people whose lives are twisted away from the image of God. And God empowers true change into the image of the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ. That is what truly biblical counseling is all about! It is not Bible-banging counselees into submission to our view of Christian maturity. Rather, it is helping them find the only true freedom that can be found—the truth that sets them free![82]

Biblical counselors participate in the work of God by teaching, instructing, and encouraging believers to conform to the image of Christ in all things.

Work of the Church

By declaring that biblical counseling is a work of the church, biblical counselors are saying that it is an essential ministry that belongs to the church. Contrary to the movement of pastors deferring and referring troubled individuals to secular professionals, the biblical counseling movement challenges churches to be faithful to God's original intent that the church be a place where people would find scriptural guidance for their concerns. William W. Goode notes, "The local church is the instrument Christ ordained

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[81] Stuart Scott, "The Gospel in Balance," in MacDonald, *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling,* 177.

[82] Powlison, "Does Biblical Counseling Really Work?," 88.

to help believers grow into His likeness. . . . Counseling is an essential part of the local church's ministry as it disciples and helps believers mature in Christ's image."[83] Counseling as an essential ministry of the church is supported by two previously mentioned theological foundations. The first is the reality of the sufficiency of Scripture. The Scripture is all the church needs to help believers mature unto Christlikeness. The second is the believer's need for progressive sanctification. The church is commissioned by God to accomplish His purposes, and God purposes that all believers would grow in sanctification.

To varying degrees, each individual member of the congregation is the means by which a counseling ministry exists. Each member of the church is to be active in giving biblical counsel.[84] In this way biblical counseling is understood to be communal.[85] Adams writes on counseling in the church: "It is clear that the New Testament assumes that all Christians, not simply ministers of the Gospel, should engage in it."[86] One of the

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[83] William W. Goode, "Biblical Counseling and the Local Church," in MacArthur, *Counseling,* 223. Similar comments can be found from Mack, who writes, "The Scriptures clearly teach that the local church is the primary means by which God intends to accomplish His work in the world. The local church is His ordained instrument for calling the lost to Himself. It is also the context in which He sanctifies and changes His people into the likeness of Christ." Mack, "What Is Biblical Counseling?," 28. Powlison says similarly, "Soul care and cure—sustaining sufferers and transforming sinners—is a component of the total ministry of the church according to the Bible." David C. Powlison, "Counseling *Is* the Church," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 20, no. 2 (2002): 3.

[84] Garrett Higbee points out that counseling naturally occurs in the church. The question is whether that counseling is honoring to God. He writes,
> Scripture is clear that disciple making and giving wise counsel are the privilege and responsibility of every believer. Think about the last time you went a whole day without giving any counsel. Counsel starts with our thoughts and self-talk (Ps. 19:7-11; Prov. 23:26-27). Naturally our counsel ripples into our family, work-life, and friendships. The question then is not, "Do I counsel?" it is, "How biblical is my counsel?" (Higbee, "The Practicality of the Bible," 229)

[85] Lelek notes, "One cannot read the Bible without coming away absolutely convinced that the church is the preeminent context for rich, personal, even psychological transformation." Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 168-69.

[86] Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 41. Higbee adds,
> A comprehensive model for God's people cannot be exercised apart from the context that He has chosen for counsel and care—the local church community. Furthermore, God has chosen for counsel a specific way to carry out the care for His people. He calls for a structure that goes far beyond a few

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passages Adams uses in support of this claim is Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, *teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom*."[87] Paul was encouraging the Colossian believers to actively counsel one another by using Scripture to help each other grow into full maturity.

Since counseling is an expected ministry of each church member, the church leadership should emphasize each member's participation in this ministry in a similar fashion as the church leadership would emphasize other ministries, such as evangelism. Since counseling is a ministry of the church, the church should also provide training for church members so that they may effectively and correctly use the Word as they give formal or informal counseling to one another. Lelek argues, "As the church is the epicenter of biblical care, equipping the saints for such work should be a preeminent work."[88] Connected to this training is the issue of individual competence. The Scriptures are sufficient for counseling ministry, and those who are thoroughly trained in the Scriptures are often the best counselors. This is why Adams proposed that properly trained ministers make some of the best counselors.[89] However, the biblical counseling

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staff members or contractual counseling provided by a para-church ministry. (Higbee, "The Practicality of the Bible," 229)

Further support can be found from Frances Bragdon Nelson and Andrea Mungo when they write,
> The New Testament calls us to do the hard work of pastoring one another. This is not just the role of pastors, lay persons, or biblical counselors. Rather, each person who is committed to the body of Christ is interconnected like body-parts. We are dependent on one another in the task of building up and maintaining the peace and purity of the church. (Frances Bragdon Nelson and Andrea Mungo, "Large Church Pastoral Care: Personal Ministry That Transforms," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 3 [2006]: 27-28)

[87] Douglas Moo support Adams' interpretation: "Teaching and admonishing, while undoubtedly often the responsibility of particular gifted individuals within the congregation (such as Paul [Col. 1:28] or Epaphras [Col. 2:7]) or elders (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; see also, e.g., 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Tim. 2:2), were also engaged in by every member of the congregation." Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 290.

[88] Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics,* 171.

[89] Adams full endorsement reads,
> Paul also notes that nouthetic ability involves goodness and knowledge in large measure (fulness). Preeminently, a nouthetic counselor must be conversant with the Scriptures. This is one reason why properly equipped ministers may make excellent counselors. A good seminary education rather than

movement has led to a rise in lay people who desire to counsel others biblically. Brad Hambrick notes that this burgeoning interest in counseling is a blessing for God's church, but also a challenge—not all who seek to counsel biblically are fully competent in their ability or knowledge of the Scriptures for soul care. [90] The church is responsible to encourage greater competency among all members through training programs. In addition, the church should encourage personal recognition of limitations when a counselor is faced with a situation beyond their scriptural competency. Biblical counseling is a God-ordained ministry of the church, and the church has the responsibility to create a culture of counseling through discipleship programs so that the church is faithful to God in this ministry.

Concern Over the Secular

Adams began the biblical counseling movement under the bold banner that there was no necessary relationship between biblical counseling and secular psychology. He wrote *Competent to Counsel* to communicate this very point: "The thesis of this book is that qualified Christian counselors properly trained in the Scriptures are competent to counsel—more competent than psychiatrists or anyone else."[91] This same sentiment was later reinforced by Powlison, who wrote of secular forms of psychology, "It should play *no* role in our *model* of counseling."[92] The theological foundation of the sufficiency of Scripture forms the backbone of this conviction. John Street makes this point clear when he writes,

medical school or a degree in clinical psychology, is the most fitting background for a counselor. (Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 61)

[90] Brad Hambrick, "The Competency of the Biblical Counselor," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 279.

[91] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 18.

[92] Powlison, "Does Biblical Counseling Really Work?," 78, emphasis original.

Why biblical counseling and not psychology? The answer must necessarily be the Word of God reigns supreme in the jurisdictional domain of the soul where psychology trespasses and seeks to usurp authority. Only the Word of God can effectively instruct believers concerning how to glorify Him.[93]

Lambert describes the foundational issue of secular psychology through the exploration of the three levels of how psychologists gain and use information and where they go awry. The first level is that of observation where psychologists collect information. While this level is the most trustworthy, the information is still gathered by fallible people with limited abilities to observe. The second level is that of interpretation. As psychologists seek to understand what they have observed, they will do so through a fallen worldview, which will result in faulty interpretations. Finally, the third level is that of intervention. Based upon their limited observations and faulty interpretations, the psychologist will seek to develop a plan and method to counsel people.[94] While problems exist throughout, this final level is where psychologists should not go. Adams makes this clear:

> But psychologists—with neither warrant nor standard from God by which to do so—should get out of the business of trying to change persons. Psychology may be descriptive, but transgresses its boundaries whenever it becomes prescriptive. It can tell us many things about what man does, but not about what he should do.[95]

Without the Bible, secular psychologists simply cannot accurately counsel people toward genuine change that results in human flourishing.

While secular psychology is not necessary for biblical counseling, biblical counselors have found ways in which it can be helpful to their cause.[96] Lambert identifies

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[93] John Street, "Why Biblical Counseling and Not Psychology?," in MacArthur, *Counseling,* 46. Street also writes, "When the Bible is the Christian counselor's corrective lens, he has a sufficient worldview perspective, with abundant illustrative material, to reinterpret biblically ill human experience for soul-care." Ibid., 40.

[94] Lambert, *A Theology of Counseling,* 76-79.

[95] Jay Adams, *What about Nouthetic Counseling?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 18.

[96] Adams writes,
Counseling is an illegitimate activity of psychologists. Anything else that a psychologist does, so long as it does not conflict with biblical principles or practices, is legitimate and from time to time may be brought into fruitful contact with Christian counseling—just as any other valid activity of life may be. But counseling principles and practices must stem from the Scriptures, not from some other

three such ways. First, he notes that contributions and research done by secular psychologists can inform the work of biblical counselors: "Biblical counselors will object to secular counseling interventions when they deviate from Scripture, but we should be eager to hear the observations they've collected from years of careful work."[97] Powlison agrees with Lambert that biblical counselors should not eschew all scientific data gathered by secular psychologists.[98] Next, Lambert points out that biblical counselors can benefit from secular psychology, as it provokes biblical counselors to know the Scriptures. He proposes that the findings of secular psychologists should drive the biblical counselor to the Scriptures to find God's solution for the issues at hand.[99] Powlison also writes of the provoking nature of secular observations: "They could also play a *provocative* role, challenging us to develop our model in areas we may never have thought about or may have neglected."[100] Finally, Lambert argues that secular psychology demonstrates the effectiveness of biblical counseling by revealing not only the failure of secular methods to solve people's problems, but also by its own research which demonstrates the success of biblical counseling practices.[101]

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source—the least of which is a source set up in competition to God to do precisely what God is in the business of doing. (Adams, *How to Help People Change*, 38)

[97] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 79.

[98] Powlison notes of secular psychologies contribution that "they perhaps do empirical legwork that we do not have to repeat. But we must radically reinterpret what they see according to biblical truth." Powlison, "Does Biblical Counseling Really Work?," 80. Powlison writes elsewhere that
secular researchers and clinicians know reams of significant facts about people and problems, and strengths and weaknesses. . . . Secular theories seek to answer crucial questions and address hard problems. . . . Secular therapies often embody helpful sills in knowing, in loving, and in speaking so as to catch the ear of strugglers. . . . We gain much and lose nothing by being appropriately attentive to and appreciative of their strength. (David Powlison, "How Does Scripture Teach Us to *Redeem* Psychology?" *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 26, no. 3 [2012], 19)

[99] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 79-80.

[100] Powlison, "Does Biblical Counseling Really Work?," 78-79.

[101] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 81.

Powlison adds another benefit of secular observations in his belief that they serve an illustrational role in "providing examples and details that illustrate the biblical model and fill out our knowledge."[102] In all of the potential uses of secular psychology, any use still comes underneath the scrutiny of the Scriptures. No psychological observation or counseling method can be used that contradicts or distorts the Word of God.

Preaching and Counseling—The Ministry of the Word

The purpose of detailing the history and theological foundations of biblical counseling is to remove the wall between preaching and counseling in some pastors' minds and to support Lambert's declaration: "Counseling is ministry of the Word in every way that preaching is ministry of the Word."[103] Counseling and preaching as ministries of the Word are seen in the similarity of their recent histories, as they both came under attack by modern secular thought. Many scholars and pastors sought to give higher criticism, liberal theology, secular theory, and unbiblical practices primacy in both ministries of the Word. Battles were fought over the Bible and its use in the public and private sector of church life. Initially, counseling completely succumbed to the rise of secular thought, to the point where pastors and churches no longer offered counseling. Consequently, the biblical counseling movement emerged from the battle against secular influences much later than those who fought for the inerrancy of Scripture in preaching. Even so, biblical counseling and preaching now share convictions that reveal that they are both ministries of the Word.

In Stott's seminal work *Between Two Worlds*, he presents several theological foundations for preaching. These foundations align with the theological foundations of biblical counseling and display how preaching and counseling are both ministries of the

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[102] Powlison, "Does Biblical Counseling Really Work?," 78-79.

[103] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 307.

Word. He argues that biblical preaching is supported by a conviction about God. Stott writes, "It is when we are convinced that God is light (and so wanting to be known), that God has acted (and thus made himself known), and that God has spoken (and thus explained his actions), that we must speak and cannot remain silent."[104] Biblical counseling's commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture is seen in this statement, but most clearly seen is its conviction that only God through the power of the gospel can bring about genuine change. As Stott notes, God has acted to liberate people and has communicated the means of liberation: the gospel. Biblical preaching is only honorable to God when it contains what God has said. In the same way, biblical counselors believe that power for change in counseling happens as God's liberating act is pressed upon people. Biblical counseling expresses this conviction through its concern for the secular. It relies on the gospel to bring about change, not the gospel plus anything else. Just as preaching is based solely on what God has said, so is biblical counseling. Preaching and counseling share the conviction that God has spoken, His words are all that is needed for ministry, and there is power in His Word.

Stott adds that biblical preaching must also have a conviction about Scripture. Stott presents several layers to this conviction, the first being that Scripture is God's Word written. Stott goes on to explain the necessity of God's Word. If man is to understand God and how He can relate rightly to Him, then that can only be accomplished through the Word.[105] Stott does not use the word *sufficiency*, but he implies that meaning by pointing out that man knows God through the Word and that the Word is sufficient for man to know God. One of the most important theological foundations of biblical counseling is the sufficiency of Scripture. When the believer applies the Scriptures to his life, He will experience wholeness and life as God intended. Another layer of Stott's

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[104] Stott, *Between Two Worlds,* 96.

[105] Ibid., 96-100.

conviction about Scripture is that God's Word is powerful, meaning that it brings about God's will on earth. Stott writes, "God accomplishes his purpose by the Word; it 'prospers' in whatever he sends it forth to do."[106] This shared conviction is best seen through biblical counseling's theological foundation of progressive sanctification. Biblical counselors teach that God's will is to change believers into the image of His Son and that change is made possible through the Word of God. Adams writes,

> The overarching purpose of preaching and counseling is God's glory. . . . The work of preaching and counseling, when blessed by the Holy Spirit, enables men through the gospel and *God's sanctifying Word* to become pure in heart, to have peaceful consciences, and to trust God sincerely.[107]

Preaching and counseling share the theological conviction that the Scriptures are necessary for life and faithfulness to God's will.

Stott's third theological conviction about preaching is a conviction about the church. Stott argues that God's church is completely dependent upon the Word of God: "The Word of God is the scepter by which Christ rules the Church and the food with which he nourishes it."[108] Stott connects the ministry of the Word through preaching to the believer's faithful living or lack thereof: "The low level of Christian living is due, to the low level of Christian preaching."[109] Stott accurately associates the use of the Word in the church as essential for spiritual maturity. Biblical counselors share this conviction and add that the teaching of the Word for godliness occurs at all levels of ecclesiastical involvement. The lay person and trained pastor participate in the ministry of the Word in the church as it is used for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness.

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[106] Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 103.

[107] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 54, emphasis added.

[108] Stott, *Between Two Worlds,* 109.

[109] Ibid., 115.

Preaching and biblical counseling share the same history and theological foundations. They are both ministries of the Word given to God's people for the purpose of glorifying Him. Kevin DeYoung and Pat Quinn write of the shared convictions of these two ministries of the Word: "What shapes our understanding of pulpit ministry is a strong confidence in the necessity, sufficiency, authority, and relevance of God's Word. The same confidence shapes our understanding of counseling ministry."[110] Despite Adams' strong advocacy for the role of counseling in the church, he understands why a wall has separated the two: "When psychology replaced the Bible in counseling, no wonder pastors began to ask whether they had time for it."[111] However, the wall is no longer necessary; the two share the same theological foundations and purpose within the church. Now the problem is not the resurrection of biblical counseling from the schemes of secularization, but whether preachers will look to the full ministry of the Word for aid in their preaching. Adams writes, "Public and private ministry of the Word are of a piece and supplement (and contribute to) one another. . . . The two go together. In fact, when one is separated from the other, both suffer."[112]

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[110] Kevin DeYoung and Pat Quinn, "The Preacher, The Counselor, and The Congregation," in Kellemen and Forrey, *Scripture and Counseling*, 20. They continue, "We preach and we counsel from the Scriptures not simply because they help us so see a few good insights, but because they are the spectacles through which we must see everything." Ibid., 21.

[111] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling,* 279.

[112] Ibid., 279-80.

CHAPTER 6

BIBLICAL COUNSELING FRAMEWORK FOR
APPLICATION IN PASTORAL PREACHING

Introduction

Counseling and preaching are both ministries of the Word, and if Adams is

correct in his conclusion that they contribute to one another, then preachers and biblical

counselors should be looking for ways to learn from each other.[1] This chapter seeks to

describe one such way preachers can benefit from biblical counseling methods by

proposing a biblical counseling framework for the development of sermon application

that encourages progressive sanctification in the listener. Before looking at this framework,

two key differences between biblical counseling and preaching should be explored. The

first difference is the nature of communication. Counseling is a private communication

while preaching is public.[2] The private setting of counseling makes it more of a dialogue

between the counselor and the counselee instead of a monologue as in preaching, where

the communication is one way from preacher to congregation. The counselor can read

and respond to the counselee through questions and answers. He can get to know the

held values, commitments, and beliefs of the counselee through their conversation. In

this way, the dialogical nature of counseling significantly helps the counselor by allowing

him to be surgical in his application of the Scripture to the counselee's life. This same

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[1] Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 279. The full quote reads, "Public and private ministry of the Word are of a piece and supplement (and contribute to) one another. . . . The two go together. In fact, when one is separated from the other, both suffer."

[2] Lambert describes this difference: "Counseling is ministry of the Word of God, just as preaching is. The only difference is that counseling is the personal ministry of the Word in a conversation, and preaching is a public ministry of the Word in proclamation." Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 208.

level of precision is possible in preaching, but accuracy is harder to achieve since the preacher is preaching to a congregation of people who do not have the opportunity to correct the preacher if his application is inaccurate. Specific application without thorough knowledge of the congregation is more likely to miss the mark and be ineffective. The preacher must exert effort to get to know his congregation personally or settle for general application. The proposed framework recognizes this difference and seeks to provide ways to help preachers grow in knowledge of their congregation so that they can provide specific application in their sermons.

Another key difference between biblical counseling and preaching, which may even be a reason why some preachers oppose biblical counseling, is the Scripture's place in the order of operations for each ministry of the Word. In counseling, the counselor seeks to understand the counselee (his values, commitments, and beliefs) and what biblical guidance is required prior to turning to the Scriptures for spiritual aid. This can take time as the counselor asks questions and listens to the counselee's response. Only after listening to the counselee does the counselor bring the Scriptures into the conversation and he selects the passage(s) in a reactionary fashion. What the counselee has shared guides the counselor in what Scriptures he seeks to apply to the counselee's life. In preaching, the preacher begins with the Scriptures and then moves to the idea of what spiritual aid the passage provides.[3] This is most clearly seen in preachers who practice consecutive exposition, that is, verse-by-verse exposition through books of the Bible. Unlike preaching, counseling starts with the counselee, which may be concerning to some preachers. However, though counselors select Scriptures based on the counselee, they do not follow the example of the problem-centered or felt-needs preachers noted earlier. Those preachers were not concerned with understanding the meaning of the text, nor were they concerned

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[3] In topical preaching the preacher may select a passage because it deals with a certain issue that he would like to address in his congregation, but even so, the selected passage can still be studied expositionally, on its own and in context, prior to developing application.

with the context of the passage at hand. They simply wanted to find a passage of Scripture that supported the idea they already had in mind, and in doing so they practiced the false hermeneutical process of eisegesis. The biblical counselor does not use Scripture in this same way; he is a student of the Scripture just like the preacher, who must rightly represent the original author's meaning in his counseling. While the counselor does not begin with Scripture in the counseling session, he uses the Scripture in the exact same way; therefore, this key difference between preaching and biblical counseling does not indicate a difference in the actual study and use of the Word of God.

Dynamic Heart and Human Experience

The application framework proposed here relies on the biblical counseling method presented by Jeremy Pierre in *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.[4] Conceivably, other biblical counseling methods could have been used to develop an applicational framework for preaching, but this dissertation is limited to Pierre's method.[5] His method was chosen largely because it contains elements previously identified in the studies of the Bible's use of the shepherd metaphor and the doctrine of progressive sanctification. The study of the shepherd metaphor described the holistic care of the shepherd for his sheep. Similarly, the study of the doctrine of progressive sanctification describes God's plan that the entire person would gradually change into the likeness of God's Son. Pierre's method is congruent with these studies in that it presents an approach to applying the Bible that seeks to understand and transform the whole person. This transformation is possible as the counselor understands the counselee (dynamic heart) and the context in which he exists (human experience).

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[4] Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ in Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016).

[5] Such as Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002).

Pierre argues that humans experience life as spiritual beings who have a simple, singular internal reality.[6] The Bible uses many words to describe this internal reality— soul, spirit, mind, and more—but Pierre prefers to use the biblical word "heart." His point is that all these terms communicate the existence of a singular source within all people from which flows their responses in life (Prov 4:23).[7] People do not exist with internal divisions waging war against each other, but with one heart that dynamically responds to and is shaped by human experience. Pierre writes, "People's problems are not either spiritual or psychological, mental or emotional, moral or social. People are moral agents who conduct themselves from a singular response system for which they are responsible before their Creator."[8] People are spiritual beings and their functions flow from a spiritual core; therefore, Pierre argues, "All human problems are spiritual problems."[9] When people respond negatively to life situations, their response reveals a heart that is not aligned with God.

Humans are simple in that they have one heart from which responses flow, but

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[6] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 15.

[7] Tremper Longman III supports this view of the heart:
In the previous verses, we have described the "heart" as equivalent to character or core personality. We are now in a position to understand the importance that the father gives to the heart in this verse. It is most important that the son preserves the integrity of his heart. It is from the heart that life derives. The father is not speaking literally. The heart can remain beating, but a person be dead in other ways. An evil heart is a dead heart. (Tremper Longman, *Proverbs,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 154)
Also Bruce K. Waltke writes, "The point here is that the heart is the source of the body's activities." Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15,* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 298.

[8] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 15.

[9] Pierre adds,
So when I say all human problems are spiritual problems, I am not saying they are merely spiritual. People have bodies as well—bodies that function not as vehicles to an independent soul that drives it, but more like the canvas and paint embodying the ideas of an artist. People are embodied souls, and their physical makeup is the necessary physical correlate to their spiritual heart. (Ibid., 16)

the one heart is complex.[10] The heart has three dimensions: thinking, feeling, and doing.

These three dimensions interact and overlap with each other in people's responses to the

point where many times they are indistinguishable from one another. The human heart

responds cognitively as knowledge is gained and beliefs are formed. Beliefs in turn form

the lens for which new information is interpreted by the heart. Pierre notes, "[People]

remember past situations, interpret them in the present, and project estimations of their

future based on their own structures of plausibility."[11] The human heart also responds

affectively as desires and emotions motivate people to respond accordingly. People

develop value systems and emotions reveal what people value the most: "People long for

certain things, and deeply feel their loss as well as their gain."[12] Finally, the human heart

responds volitionally as internal dedications direct people in their decision making.

People make decisions based upon their value system and commitments. Actions are not

merely external, but flow from the heart. Pierre notes that all three dimensions of the

human heart work together, often intuitively, to form the trajectory of a person's life.[13]

People are dysfunctional because sin has damaged the threefold functions of

the dynamic heart. Sin corrupts the heart by focusing all its functions away from worship

of God and toward self-worship, which is idolatry. Destructive patterns begin to develop

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[10] Robert D. Jones describes the complexity of the heart: "In Scripture, the heart is intellectual, moral, spiritual, and emotional seat and control center of the entire inner person—what rules, drives, and controls us. It includes all our beliefs, motives, desires, emotions, affections, feelings, memories, will, intentions, and more, especially in relationship to God." Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling our Conflict* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 58.

[11] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 19.

[12] Ibid., 20.

[13] Pierre writes,
The dynamic functions of the heart express themselves intuitively—that is, as seemingly automatic responses to the situation at hand. People are often not aware of the deeper beliefs, desires, and commitments that shape the way they respond in the moment. Helping people involves tracing what their responses to life reveal about the deeper contours of their hearts. (Ibid., 30)

as people live out the beliefs, values, and commitments of their idolatrous hearts.[14]

Pierre argues that these patterns become natural responses for the idolater: "This whole-person pursuit becomes so automated that the motivating beliefs, desires, and commitments of a person fade into lesser and lesser consciousness."[15] Therefore, counseling must never focus solely on behavior, but must look beyond behavior to see how certain behaviors are rooted in self-worship. Ultimately, the dysfunction of the heart is corrected by proper worship of God through faith in Jesus: "Faith is how a heart receives the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that righteousness retakes control of the dynamic design, restoring the beauty of its ability to worship God."[16] Through faith, a person is able to co-operate with God in the process of progressive sanctification—a restoration of the human heart that gradually conforms thoughts, feelings, and actions to the righteousness of God.

Crucial to a person's cooperation with God in the process of progressive sanctification is the person's awareness of how his heart responds to and is influenced by his life context. Pierre argues, "Helping people understand how the active response of their hearts are influenced by their context is an important part of connecting their

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[14] Lambert writes, "Human beings have a nature that is oriented away from God. Sin does not just describe the bad things human beings do or fail to do. More fundamentally, it describes who we are as wicked people." Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 217. Powlison adds, "Interestingly (and unsurprisingly) the New Testament merges the concept of idolatry and the concept of inordinate, life-ruling desires. Idolatry becomes a problem of the heart, a metaphor for human lust, craving, yearning, and greedy demand." David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 2 (1995): 36.

[15] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 66.

[16] Ibid., 71. Lambert supports the importance of salvation for true change:
The doctrine of regeneration teaches that believers in Jesus Christ really are new creations (Rom. 6:4). Believers are not a mixture of old man and new man (2 Cor. 5:17). Tremendous blessings come from the work of regeneration that renders Christians new people. Christians, as new people, are no longer enslaved to sin and so can truly obey the command not to let sin reign in their lives (Rom. 6:6, 12). Because believers have been made new by the process of regeneration, they can now engage in the change process that is possible only for those who have put off the old and put on the new (Eph. 4:20-32). (Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 284)

experience to Christ."[17] External conditions are a person's context, which create the opportunity for the heart to respond. In addition, external conditions shape the heart's future responses. The shaping can be passive in that the person is unaware of how his context is shaping him, or it can be an active shaping in which the person has some level of awareness of what is shaping his heart, even if he cannot articulate exactly how that shaping is occurring.[18] Pierre refers to a person's context as the human experience which consists of at least four components: God, self, others, and circumstances. The dynamic heart exists in these four contexts and responds based upon a person's perceived relationship with each one of these contexts.

Pierre identifies the heart's relationship with God as the most important of the four contexts: "As people respond in faith to God, they take on the shape of his character in the way they think, in what they want, and in the choices they make."[19] A faith response starts at salvation as a person confesses, repents, and submits to Christ and continues throughout the person's life as he, through faith, increasingly submits more areas of his life (cognitive, affective, and volitional) to God.[20] The counselor's role is to use the Scriptures to help the counselee understand God as He has revealed Himself to be, not as the counselee prefers Him to be or wrongly believes Him to be.

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[17] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 89.

[18] Pierre presents an example for each type of heart shaping. A passive shaping of an individual's heart would be their socioeconomic upbringing, which shapes their perception of life and how their heart responds to life situations. An active shaping of an individual's heart would be going through car-jacking experience. The person actively responds to the car-jacking experience and can trace their dysfunction back to that very moment. Ibid., 89-90.

[19] Ibid., 106.

[20] Pierre writes of daily submission:
Believing is not merely a static, established belief, but also a continual process of submission. Yes, people have to read the Bible and understand its meaning, but they also have to surrender the remaining beliefs, values, and commitments that rival what they find there. This is a living, active, expulsive faith instead of a static, inert one. (Ibid., 119)

Self is the second context in which the dynamic heart exists. Most people operate based upon a constructed identity. Pierre writes, "People's established self-image, made up of a complex arrangement of various beliefs, values, and commitments about who they are and what role they play in the world."[21] The dynamic heart typically responds out of this constructed identity, which creates problems since most constructed identities are inaccurate and inconsistent. Opposed to a person's constructed identity is the identity they have been given by God. A person's given identity describes his current relationship with God and His expectations and purposes for him in life. This given identity necessarily includes the gospel elements. Pierre states, "People were created, but have fallen, yet may be redeemed, and are awaiting a new creation."[22] The role of the counselor is to help the counselee understand how his constructed identity differs from his given identity and consequently, begin the process of responding appropriately to his given identity. The dynamic heart also responds to others:

> A person is greatly influenced by the expectations and values of his surrounding family, church, workplace, social circles, economic strata, ethnic background, and countless other cultural expectations, and these personal relationships exert influence to varying degrees.[23]

This influence is bidirectional as people are able to influence others as well as be influenced by others. In addition, the influence may be intentional or unintentional; it could be toward good or toward harm. The role of the counselor starts with determining which influences the counselee values most and how they are shaping what he values. Next the counselor encourages the counselee to submit to God by rejecting all unbiblical values.

The final context the dynamic heart responds to is circumstances. Circumstances may consist of major events in a person's life or the mundane daily

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[21] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 128.

[22] Ibid., 130-38.

[23] Ibid., 153.

struggle; the dynamic heart responds to and creates meaning from both circumstances. Meaning is created from the pre-existing beliefs, values, and commitments of the heart: Pierre explains, "People's control beliefs will determine how they interpret circumstances; their control values will determine how they feel about circumstances; and their control commitments will determine what choices they make in response to circumstances."[24] The role of the counselor is to help the counselee reevaluate the meanings he has created through the lens of Scripture. In doing so, he is equipping the counselee to rightly understand the meaning of future events in his life.

Entirely necessary to Pierre's biblical counseling method is a right understanding of all people. Everyone exists with a single, unified heart that thinks, feels and wills. This heart is dynamic, constantly being shaped by and responding to the human experience: God, self, others, and circumstances. This heart is also fallen, meaning that sin has damaged it, turning people away from God and toward self-worship. The solution to people's dysfunction is salvation through faith in Jesus and continual faith to submit one's beliefs, values, and commitments to God. Pierre's method presents a holistic approach to helping people by reaching beyond behavior and considering the entire life experience of the person.

Applicational Framework for Preaching

The practical elements of the dynamic heart and human experience are expressed in Pierre's biblical counseling method, which he summarizes as follows:

> People must know God to change. Knowing him relationally involves increasing in the knowledge of who he is from the Word (cognition) in such a way that addresses deeply held values or strongly felt emotions (affections) and calls them to submit to God as responsible moral agents (volition) in the various contexts of their experience (self, others, and circumstances).[25]

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[24] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 167.

[25] Ibid., 177.

His method is best understood as containing four tasks (Read, Reflect, Relate, and Renew) that the counselor may cycle through multiple times during the counseling process. Pierre notes that his method was created for counseling, but any transformation-based ministry could find it helpful. He writes, "The principles of dynamic human experience can help people speak wisely and realistically to others—whether they are parenting children, managing employees, or *preaching to a congregation*."[26] This section will present an applicational framework for preaching from Pierre's method by first describing each task of his method for counseling before discussing how that task can be accomplished in preaching.

Read: Hearing People's Hearts

Counselors gain direction in their counseling and understanding about the condition of the counselee's dynamic heart and human experience through asking questions and listening to the counselee's responses. The counselor listens for information that reveals the counselee's values and commitments. He listens for what is most important to the counselee as well as what should be important to the counselee, but the counselee does not mention. The counselor's questions target the dynamic heart and how the heart responds "cognitively, affectively, and volitionally to the various contexts around [him]— to God, to self, to others, and to circumstances."[27] Pierre argues that this step is indispensable in counseling: "Without listening, counselors understand neither the person nor the context, and thus the process of applying theology becomes impossible."[28] Asking questions and listening to the counselee's responses provides the counselor with a picture

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[26] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*, 177, emphasis added.

[27] Ibid., 180.

[28] Ibid., 179.

of the counselee's spiritual condition and the opportunity to bring God's Word to bear upon it. Without listening, the counselor is operating in the dark.

Similarly, preachers are operating in the dark if they do not exegete their audience in addition to exegeting the biblical text.[29] Preachers who do not know their congregation are forced to rely on general application instead of the specific application the Scriptures demand for walking in godliness. Ramesh Richard refers to pastors who give only general application as "long distance shepherds" who are "neither biblically approved nor congregationally appreciated."[30] Long distance shepherds are not appreciated by the congregation because their sermons fail to reach the human experience of the listener with all its complexities and unique settings specific to that congregation. Instead of preaching from a distance, preachers must draw near and grow in knowledge of their congregation so that they can apply the Scriptures to their unique human experience.[31] Walter Liefeld notes, "The more keenly [the preacher] is aware of congregational needs the more readily his congregation will respond to the teaching of the Scriptures."[32] The congregation responds because the preacher is dealing directly with them and their beliefs, values, and commitments. The application is unavoidable because

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[29] Haddon Robinson writes, "We must know the people as well as the message, and to acquire that knowledge, we exegete both the Scripture and the congregation." Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 28.

[30] Ramesh Richard, *Scripture Sculpture: A Do-It Yourself Manual for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 81.

[31] Tim Keller writes about the propensity for preachers to preach to whoever they listen to the most during the week: "One of the natural dynamics in preaching is that you will tend to preach to the people you listen to most during the week." Keller writes out of a concern that preachers will only listen to those people that they like or who reflect theological opinions that are like them and therefore they will be narrow in their preaching. Keller does not argue that preachers should spend time counseling, but it naturally follows that a preacher who wants to minister to his congregation (preach to them, as Keller would argue) should spend time listening its members. Tim Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 180.

[32] Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)*, 106.

the preacher has accurately exegeted the audience as well as the biblical text and the application he presents speaks directly into the human experience of the congregation. Robinson points out that exegeting the audience is simply following the pattern of the biblical writers:

> The letters of the New Testament, like the prophecies of the Old, were addressed to specific assemblies struggling with particular problems. Our expository sermons today will be ineffective unless we realize that our listeners, too, exist at a particular address and have mind-sets unique to them.[33]

Preachers must exegete their congregation by spending time with them if they are to have meaningful application that transforms the listener.[34]

Exegeting the congregation involves understanding people on a personal level, and this level of knowledge can only be attained through intentional personal interaction. Counseling ministry is one such personal interaction that gives the preacher insight into the needs of his congregation. Jay Adams writes of the counseling preacher,

> When a pastor (who has been counseling) preaches, he does so differently from the one who preaches only. . . . [He] is more down-to-earth in his preaching; it sounds less bookish. People begin to say, "He knows! He understands my problem," and they come for counsel."[35]

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[33] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching,* 28.

[34] Both Richard and Liefeld point out that time with the congregation is necessary for exegeting the congregation. Richard writes, "It is essential to be well acquainted with your audience. . . . You can know your audience only by spending time with them." Richard, *Scripture Sculpture,* 81. Liefeld remarks similarly,
How can the preacher be aware of his people's needs? The conscientious preacher feels the need to spend many hours in preparation. Paper work, committees, community tasks, and many other needs consume his time. The visitation of church families as a matter of course has been abandoned by many busy pastors. How then is he to know their needs? In my opinion the call to expository preaching is also a call to pastoral ministry. Therefore the preacher *must* find ways to be close to the people. Even if others on the church staff and in the congregation carry on most of the visitation, the preacher needs to seek as much contact with people as possible. He can also learn from his associates (for example in weekly staff meetings) what the feelings, needs, and problems are among the flock. Asking the right questions and *listening* are imperative. If the preacher is not personally aware of the needs of his own congregation, his sermons may have little personal relevance to them. (Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition*, 105-6, emphasis original)

[35] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 224.

Counseling gives the preacher insight into the specific issues facing the people of his congregation. General knowledge of people can be gained through media outlets, magazines, and books, but specific knowledge of the people of a local community can only be gained through personal interaction. Since the preacher better understands the issues facing his congregation through counseling, he is better able to provide them with the specific scriptural guidance needed to overcome their issues. William Goode writes of the preacher who does not counsel and is therefore ill-prepared to help his people: "He loses touch with their difficulties and the thought processes and habits that lead to problems. Thus he is not prepared to provide the spiritual weapons they need to overcome those problems."[36] Counseling also benefits the preacher in that counseling dialogue helps the preacher understand how the human heart responds to biblical truth. John Street identifies this as one of the key ways that counseling helped his preaching:

> If you're not counseling people, you don't really know what their objections are going to be. So when you counsel and go to study for a message or sermon, in the back of your mind you come upon portions of the Word of God and can almost picture the response of a counselee to that truth.[37]

A counseling ministry benefits the preacher by giving him a better idea of what his people need to hear, what spiritual resources he should provide to them, and what objections they may raise to the biblical text.[38]

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[36] William Goode, "Biblical Counseling and the Local Church," in *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically,* ed. John F. MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 224.

[37] David Powlison, "Exegete the Bible; Exegete the Person: An Interview with John Street," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 16, no. 2 (1998): 10. Adams adds that counseling develops respect for the pastor from the congregation:
> His people will discover that he is interested in the real issues, not secondary ones. They will count him to be a man of courage. Because he will not settle for the status quo, some people will be offended, but the majority will be helped greatly and nearly all (whether they agree with him or not) will respect him. (Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 63)

[38] Lambert argues that preachers should counsel not based upon how it benefits their preaching, but because counseling is part of the biblical definition of an elder. He points out that preachers wrongly connect the teaching of the Word to the act of preaching alone. The biblical examples of Jesus and Paul (Acts 20:20) communicate a broader understanding of this teaching role to include counseling. He writes, "Pastors err when they fail to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and Paul, who gave themselves to the teaching work of counseling and preaching." Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling,* 306-7.

Counseling is an excellent, biblical way for a pastor to exegete his congregation, but he should explore other ways of having intentional interactions with his church body that help him understand their spiritual condition and human experience. Pastors can learn about their congregation through leading or simply participating in the church's small group ministry. Small group interactions allow the pastor to see how people are relating to one another and the Word of God. The dialogue provides a window into how they view their world and their interpretation of the role of God in that world. In addition, it gives the pastor insight into how people are immediately responding to the biblical text, insight that is often lacking from a sermon. Weekly meetings with church members are another way pastors can gain information about their congregation. The meeting could occur with a different church member or family each week over lunch or coffee. Since the purpose of such meetings is to gain insight into the dynamic heart and human experience, the pastor should be just as intentional with the conversation as he is with the Bible during sermon preparation. Of course, these meetings can contain small talk to get the conversation moving, but it must not stay there. The pastor should ask questions that help him understand the life of those in his congregation. He should ask questions such as: What is the most fulfilling thing about your life right now? Is there anything that concerns you, that keeps you up at night? Is there anything that you fear right now? How do God and the Bible help you the most? If God could do one thing for you, what would it be? How would God doing that make things better? Is there a relationship in your life that you wish was better? What would you change about that relationship? Naturally, these questions are not only for sermon preparation, but should be used by the pastor in the moment to counsel the person with whom he is meeting. By adopting this practice, the pastor is shepherding both the individual members of his congregation as he cares for them in the moment and the congregation at large as he becomes acquainted with their experience through personal interaction.

Some pastors may complain that committing to meeting with congregants once a week takes too much time away from sermon preparation and other church requirements. They may ask, "How am I supposed to have time for this and prepare to preach a sermon?" This question reveals a shift in thinking that has not yet occurred in this pastor's mind. As discussed, application is an essential element of the sermon. The meaning of the passage is yet to be fully discovered if the preacher does not know how to properly apply it to his congregation. Therefore, pastors developing the discipline of meeting and getting to know the members of the congregation is instrumental in the preparation and delivery of the sermon. If the sermon does not apply to the human experiences of his listeners, then it will be a failure. This practice does not guarantee success, but it greatly increases the likelihood that application will hit its mark—the dynamic heart of the listener.

A pastor's intentional interaction with his congregants is an ongoing shepherding act, and through it the pastor grows in awareness of the strengths, weaknesses, concerns, and struggles of his congregation. All this information is helpful for personal ministry with a single congregant, but the most common information is helpful for preaching. The counselor has the advantage of ministering to a single person, but the preacher stands before a congregation of people with varied heart situations and experiences. For the preacher, the most common heart elements and contexts provide him with the mental image of his average congregant that he will use to develop application.[39] This mental image consists of at least three characteristics. First, the image is dynamic; it must never become static. The aim of the preacher is to preach a sermon that communicates the meaning of the text and applies that meaning to the human experience, but multiple factors to the human experience are constantly changing. As the

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[39] Donald R. Sunukjian also encourages preachers to think of their congregation during the sermon writing phase: "Visualize the different kinds of people you'll be talking to—men, women, children. Break these down into subcategories, and rummage around to see if your biblical truth shows up in some situation." Donald R. Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 113.

pastor intentionally interacts with his congregation, what he discovers about his congregation will change his perception of them.

This work is never ending for the pastor because the church is an ever-changing entity consisting of ever-changing people. For most churches, no two Sunday services are alike; every week contains a different mixture of members, regular attenders, and guests, which over the months and years gradually changes the makeup of the church. The people of the church and their life situations are changing as well. Sermon application to a church consisting of many young singles will need to change in a few years when those young singles are dealing with the pressures of marriage and parenting. Similarly, the pastor should not apply the Scriptures in the same way when the congregation is transitioning from predominantly families to empty-nesters and grandparents. The application of a pastor who has allowed his mental image of the church to become static will miss the mark because the congregation is constantly changing.

The second characteristic of the mental image is that, in most situations, the image is not a single image but a collage of images. Depending on the demographics of the church, the preacher should develop several images that accurately represent his congregation. For example, a pastor of a multigenerational church should develop pictures of each group represented in the congregation. He should do this because the values, commitments, and fears of young families differ from empty-nesters and retirees. A pastor with significant representation of various family units (nuclear, blended, and single-parent) needs to develop a mental image for each family unit. Certainly, commonalities exist between these family units, but significant differences also exist that may call for unique application of the Scriptures. Pastors of even the most homogeneous of churches, such as a church on a military base, will discover major differences as they get to know their people. The context, fears, and daily life of the soldier is different from the civilian spouse and children. The soldier who submits to authority exists in a different context from the

soldier in authority. Every church consists of different groups of people who need to be included in the pastor's image of the church.

The final characteristic of the mental image is that it must be simple enough to preach. While the mental image consists of a collage of images, the groups contributing to that collage must be limited. The goal of creating mental images is not to create as many images as subsections of the congregation, but to have just enough mental images that together, they represent the dynamic heart and human experience of the congregation. Application is what drives this limitation on the number of mental images. One mental image of the average congregant will often result in application that is too general to apply to most people in the congregation. Similarly, application for each subsection of the congregation would have to be so specific to apply to that subsection, that there would not be enough time or attention span to appropriately preach the text and flesh out each group's unique application. The preacher's aim is to create a final mental image that represents the church at large and that makes sermon application manageable for the allocated amount of time.

Now that the preacher has a mental image of his congregation, he is prepared to apply God's Word to the specific contexts and needs of his congregation. The pastor keeps this mental image in mind as he studies the selected text for that Sunday's sermon. As the pastor communicates the meaning of the text, the mental image enables him to apply that meaning in a specific manner appropriate for his congregation. By intentionally interacting with his congregation and creating a mental image of their spiritual condition, the preacher is able to apply the Scriptures in a way that directly addresses the hearts and the contexts of the members of the congregation. Similar to counseling, giving application without some method of gauging the spiritual condition of the congregation is operating in the dark.

Reflect: Helping People Understand
Their Responses

Listening enables the counselor to understand the counselee, but the counselee

likely does not correctly understand himself. The next step in counseling is to help the

counselee become self-aware of how his automatic thoughts, feelings, and actions are the

result of internal beliefs, values, and commitments. Pierre refers to these automatic

responses as intuition: "Intuition is an important concept because it explains how people

act in the way that comes most natural to them, and what is natural to them is indicative

of how their heart is functioning cognitively, affectively, and volitionally."[40] A

counselee's natural response reflects the condition of his heart. Once the counselee is

aware of his internal beliefs, values, and commitments, and how these internal elements

are impacting his thoughts, desires, and actions, he can take responsibility for them and

begin heading in the direction of biblical change. Self-awareness is paramount; without

self-awareness the counselee will not be able to address the heart issues behind his

intuitive responses.

Likewise, the preacher's sermon preparation begins with the text and what the

text is seeking to do in the Christian's life. Once he has determined the text's purpose for

spiritual maturity, the goal of the preacher is to develop moments in the sermon that seek

to open the listener's heart to the possibility that the text is speaking directly into their

situation, as if the text was addressed only to him. This is an uphill battle for the preacher,

as the natural tendency for people is to think that the text is referring to other people and

not them. People are quick to find faults in other people while ignoring their own faults,

which may be more destructive and blatant than the faults of others and yet they go

unnoticed (Matt 7:5).[41] The Scriptures are clear that the heart is deceitful and terribly sick,

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[40] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 193.

[41] R. T. France notes,
While it is possible that the critic here is to be understood as aware of his own failings but concealing them, it is more likely that he is criticized for failing to apply the same standards to himself that he applies to others (like David in his response to Nathan's parable, 2 Sam 12:1-7), and thus being

people are unable to completely understand the motives behind their own thoughts, feelings, and actions (Jer 17:9).[42] The preacher must realize that the heart of the listener may be working against the purposes of the text. Therefore, the sermon's application will miss the mark if the preacher is unable to help the listener see that the text is meant primarily for him.[43]

Illustrations. Several preaching tools exist to help the preacher develop self-awareness within the listener. The first such tool is the use of illustrations in the sermon. Robinson argues that illustrations rooted in the listener's everyday experiences allow the preacher to restate, explain, validate, and apply the truths from the text to the listener.[44] These types of illustrations serve their purpose in the sermon, but the type of illustration that opens a listener's eyes to his need for the biblical text must be pointed at the heart. It must describe a scenario that reveals the heart's faulty responses so that the preacher can direct the listener to the Scripture's remedy. For example, preaching the passage, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you," can be a challenge if the congregation consists of many people who compartmentalize their spiritual lives from the rest of their lives and view church attendance as being faithful to this passage (Matt 6:33). The aim of the passage is that

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unaware of the inconsistency of his behavior; v. 3 speaks of "failing to notice" rather than deliberate deception. It is other people, and especially God, who can see the 'hypocrisy' of his self-righteousness for what it is. (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 276)

[42] F. B. Huey, Jr., writes of this passage, "The human heart has an unlimited capacity for wickedness and deceit so that human resources are incapable of dealing with it (Mark 7:21-23; Gal 5:19-21). The only remedy is a radical change, nothing less than rebirth (John 3:7; 2 Cor 5:17)." F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah Lamentations*, The New American Commentary, vol. 16 (Nashville: B & H, 1993), 174.

[43] This dissertation is not claiming that the Holy Spirit is incapable of working in the listener's life regardless of the accuracy of the preacher's application. The Holy Spirit moves and works as He pleases (John 3:8). However, the Holy Spirit works in conjunction with the Scriptures and their purposes in the believer's life. The preacher would be prudent to work along with the Holy Spirit through preaching and applying the Scriptures as God intended.

[44] Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 152.

the believer would seek God first in all things. The following sermon illustration may

open the congregation's eyes to how they are not seeking God first in all areas of their

lives:

> This week I received a surprise visitor—a church-goer whom I had not seen in years, and she was looking for advice. Specifically, she came to my office for advice on what to do with a problem in her marriage. I told her what the Scriptures say, but that's not why I'm telling you this story. I'm telling you this story because of what this woman was planning to do with what I told her. You see, before she came to my office she visited her psychologist and asked him the same question that she asked me. And after she was done with me, she was planning on going to her medical doctor to ask her the same question she just asked me. Now, what was this lady doing? She was collecting opinions from experts in her life to determine which opinion she liked the best, instead of going straight to what God's Word has to say. Was she doing what Jesus commands His followers to do in this passage? No she was not, and we do the same thing, when we turn to the world, when we turn to supposed experts and do what we want to do, instead of turning only to the Lord.

Considering the passage being studied, this illustration clearly communicates the faulty

heart response of this woman, and in addition, it connects her faulty heart-response to the

heart-responses of the listeners if they are in fact living the same way.

This type of illustration is akin to Nathan's rebuke of David for having

committed heinous acts in his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12).[45] Nathan tells a story of

sin and injustice so that David would become aware of his own sin and injustice. Nathan's

illustration is effective because he read his audience and used an illustration that mirrors

David's faulty heart response. Nathan's illustration made David aware of his own sin in

ways that his heart was hiding from him, which left him with one response: "Then David

said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'" (2 Sam 12:13). Illustrations of proper

heart responses are also effective for reinforcing how people should think, feel, and act,

but the main purpose of illustrations should be to help the listener become aware of their

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[45] A. A. Anderson writes of Nathan's approach:
Nathan's parable has been often defined as a "juridical parable" . . . which, apparently, disguises a real-life violation of the law as a parable told to the guilty person in order to lead him to pass a judgment on himself. This then means that the parable and its presentation must be as realistic as possible (cf. 1 Kgs 20:35-43) until the "camouflage" is suddenly dropped, and the unsuspecting hearer is trapped in his own self-condemnation by some such phrase as "You are the man!" (A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 11 [Dallas: Word, 1989], 160)

need for conforming their life to the Scriptures.

Asking questions. Asking questions is another tool for helping preachers develop the listener's self-awareness. The monologue nature of the sermon makes it easy for the listener to daydream or temporarily focus his attention elsewhere. When the preacher asks a question, he is inviting the listener to reengage his mind into the sermon. Not only that, but it invites the listener to wrestle with the matter at hand as he seeks to answer the question in his mind. The goal is not simply to ask questions, but to ask questions that get to the heart responses of people. This is one of the practices that made Harry Emerson Fosdick one of the most popular preachers of his day. He regularly engaged the audience through anticipating their questions and posing questions within the sermon. Sometimes he would ask questions that he anticipated from the audience as if it was part of his own thought process. Other times he presented questions he believed his audience might be thinking—"You would think, would you not?"[46] Questions were a regular feature of his sermons, with no studied sermon containing less than twenty questions.[47] As discussed earlier, Fosdick's approach to preaching is insufficient, but his approach to engaging the listener through probing questions is exemplary. The example illustration outlined above puts the listener in the same context as the woman in the illustration and makes use of asking a question to get at the listener's beliefs, values, and

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[46] Quote is from the sermon "The Divinity of Jesus," delivered at First Presbyterian Church, New York, February 11, 1923. Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Preaching Ministry: Twenty-One Sermons Preached by Harry Emerson Fosdick at the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, 1918-1925* (New York: First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, 2000).

[47] This study involved sixteen of Fosdick's sermons. Eight sermons were taken from his tenure at First Presbyterian Church in the 1920s, and the remaining eight sermons were taken from his tenure at Riverside Church. The sermons "Untitled [On Faith]," "Untitled [On Love]," "Untitled [On Grace]," "The Divinity of Jesus," "I Believe in Man," "The Deepening of Faith," "The Open Doors," and "The Victory of Faith" are located in Fosdick, *A Preaching Ministry.* The sermons "When Life Reaches Its Depths," "Handling Life's Second Bests," "Handicapped Lives," "No Man Need Stay the Way He Is," "Finding Unfailing Resources," "Mankind's Deep Need—the Sense of Community," "Modern Civilization's Crucial Problem," and "How Believe in a Good God in a World Like This?"are located in Harry Emerson Fosdick and Henry Pitney Van Dusen, *Riverside Sermons* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958).

commitments. When asked, "Was she doing what Jesus commands His followers to do in this passage?" the listener becomes aware of his heart response as he answers the question, which will then either be challenged or affirmed by the preacher as he continues to explain and apply the passage. People lack self-awareness because of sin and their tendency is to focus on the faults of others.[48] The preacher must make use of tools in his sermons, such as illustrations and asking questions, to help the listener consider his heart response to the situations being brought up in the Scriptures.

**Relate: Looking to Jesus, the Author
and Finisher of Faith**

Self-awareness is meant to drive the counselee to faith in God. As the counselee becomes aware of his own imperfections, struggles, and sinfulness, he will better understand his broken condition before God and his need for help. The job of the counselor is to encourage the counselee to seek help through faith in Jesus Christ, both for salvation and for his daily life. Pierre writes, "Faith is the means by which the heart's dynamic functions are restored to proper use. So that means Jesus is the one who starts and finishes the renovations needed in the human heart."[49] Since faith is a work of God, not the counselor, the counselor's essential tool in this step is the Word of God, which God uses to produce faith. The counselor's hope and prayer is that as the Word of God is brought to bear on the counselee's experience, God will work in the counselee's life and he will respond in faith. A faith response may not occur immediately in the life of the counselee, but it is entirely necessary for change. Genuine change can only occur as the counselee trusts in the power of the gospel for salvation and progressive sanctification.

Gospel call. In preaching, the preacher relates Christ to the congregation in at

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[48] Keller adds, "Do not underestimate our human ability to avoid conviction of sin. Every heart has scores of time-tested subterfuges and excuses by which it can somehow rationalize away any direct confrontation with its own wickedness." Keller, *Preaching*, 185.

[49] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Real Life,* 205.

least two ways. First, he relates Christ by including a call to trust Christ for salvation in every sermon. A pattern exists in both testaments of proclaiming redemption prior to demanding obedience to the law. In the Old Testament, God demonstrated this pattern by redeeming his people and then giving them the laws to follow. Dennis E. Johnson notes that this was God's practice prior to the Mosaic Covenant. God initiated this relationship through rescuing Israel from their slavery to the Egyptians before He made any demands of them. God's grace in establishing the relationship preceded the expectations of being in relationship with God. Johnson writes,

> Since the grace of the exodus set the context for the stipulations that Israel was to observe as the Lord's servant, how much more should Christian preachers expound those many biblical texts that shine the spotlight on the responsibilities of God's covenant servants (whether commandments, wisdom maxims, or narratives that profile faithful responses to the Lord of the covenant) by calling attention to God's gracious provision of Jesus, the Servant who kept covenant commandments and bore covenant curse in our place![50]

In addition, Israel was reminded to continue to keep God's saving act as the reason for faithfulness to God's law. Jewish parents were instructed to answer their children's questions about the law by first connecting the law back to their redemption through the grace of God:

> When your son asks you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded?" then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand." (Deut 6:20-21).[51]

Before demanding obedience, God redeemed His people from their affliction, which formed the foundation for Israel's obedience to the law. James W. Thompson argues that

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[50] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2007), 267.

[51] Duane L. Christensen writes of this passage,
The people of Israel are instructed to use a child's question to explain the reasons for obeying God, which reasons are found in the story of the exodus from bondage in Egypt. The continuity of the covenant depends on the transmission of the relationship to each new generation; hence the catechizing style. The actions and words of YHWH reveal his concern and purpose for his people. The relationship imposes the responsibility on God's people to honor and obey him, in order that they might continue to experience his presence in history and continue to hear his words. (Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 6a [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001], 151)

this same practice of pointing the listener to redemption was continued in the New Testament by the apostle Paul. Paul often wrote to the early churches to give them warnings concerning their unfaithfulness or instructions on how to live faithfully to God in the unique situation they were facing. In these letters to churches, Paul regularly communicated the gospel message in addition to the matters of faithful living. Thompson notes, "[Paul] did not cease evangelizing his congregation; he continued to announce the good news of Christ to communities that were undoubtedly composed of both believers and nonbelievers, and he continued to urge his listeners to receive his evangelistic message."[52] A pattern exists in both testaments of proclaiming the savings acts of God prior to the duties expected of those in relationship with God.

In addition to these biblical patterns, other logical and theological reasons exist for proclaiming the saving work of Christ in every sermon. First, sermons that communicate a biblical demand without rooting it in salvation communicate a false idea, or at least a rival idea, of what it looks like to live in a right relationship with God.[53] Since no alternative for being right with God is given in the sermon, the listener may believe that his behavior, namely behaving the way the sermon communicates, is what will justify him before God, instead of God's grace (Eph 2:8-9).[54] Moreover, the sermon may lead the listener to wrongly believe that it is possible for him to attain justification on his own. Tim Keller writes on the importance of avoiding this misrepresentation of

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[52] James W. Thompson, *Preaching Like Paul: Homiletical Wisdom for Today* (Louisville: Westminster, 2000), 55.

[53] Graeme Goldsworthy writes, "If we ever give the impression that it is possible to [follow the law] on our own, not only do we make the gospel irrelevant, but we suggest that the law is in fact a lot weaker in its demands than it really is." Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 118.

[54] Frank Thielman writes, "In 2:8-10 Paul further defines the overwhelming graciousness of God. He does this by affirming that the work of salvation belongs solely to God, who grants salvation as an entirely free gift and emphatically not on the basis of human effort." Frank Thielman, *Ephesians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 147.

justification: "Any sermon that tells listeners only how they should live without putting that standard into the context of the gospel gives them the impression that they might be complete enough to pull themselves together if they really try hard."[55] A gospel call in every sermon helps the listener understand his or her dire situation and need for spiritual empowerment through faith to obey biblical commands.

Someone could argue that a gospel call in every sermon is an unnecessary expectation if the majority of a pastor's sermons meet this criteria, but the second reason calls that argument into question. That reason is that the unpredictable and only occasional attendance of unregenerate visitors necessitates that every sermon contains a clear call to believe in Jesus for salvation. As stated, while Paul wrote for the benefit of the believer, he included the gospel in his letters because he assumed unregenerate people would hear them. Even the smallest of churches will have visitors on most Sundays whose regenerate state is unknown to the pastor. Thus, the inclusion of a call to faith in Christ is a stewardship issue for the pastor. The visitor has come to hear a word from God that he has not found in the world. If the pastor presents the commands of God without the saving work of Christ that brings people into a right relationship with God, then his sermon is not that much different from the world's message: just be a good person. While the sermon is for the spiritual growth of the church member, the pastor must never ignore those who come to church for the first time seeking healing that can only be found in the gospel.

Third, just as preachers should not assume that all visitors are regenerate, neither should they assume that all who claim to be regenerate among their congregation have placed saving faith in Christ. Jesus warns that some will speak positively about Him and do works that mirror His ministry but do not have saving faith in Him (Matt

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[55] Keller, *Preaching*, 60.

7:21-23).[56] While pastors who spend time with their congregation can have a very good idea of their congregants' spiritual condition, they cannot declare with full assurance anyone's salvation. Therefore, the wise preacher will regularly remind even those who claim allegiance to Christ that salvation is only possible through faith. In conclusion, since every preaching setting will likely include those who are unregenerate, a preacher should present the gospel in every sermon. Only regenerate people through the power of the Spirit can apply the Scriptures to their lives which changes them (Gal 5:16).[57] A sermon may lead to an unregenerate person changing some behaviors, but those changes do not glorify God because they were not done in faith or for the glory of God (Rom 14:23; 1 Cor 10:31).[58] Instead, since the person is still enslaved to their sin, whatever

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[56] Craig L. Bloomberg writes of this passage,
Of course, any individual action can prove insincere, but those who have detailed opportunities to scrutinize both the private and public behavior of people who claim to be Jesus' followers (and particularly who can watch how those people respond after sinning) will have the best chance of evaluating the genuineness of professed commitments to Christ. It is worthy emphasizing, however, that one can never know with absolute certainty the spiritual state of any other individual. (Craig L. Bloomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 133)

[57] Timothy George writes about the power of the Spirit:
But where does the believer acquire the resources for this kind of victorious Christian living? Modern religious pedagogy offers many answers: a winsome personality, one's innate abilities, advanced degrees in theological education, special seminars on the higher Christian life, social activism, spiritual psychotherapy, and others. Paul's answer is the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God who has made us free from sin and given us new life in regeneration can keep us truly free as we experience through walking in him the power of sanctification." (Timothy George, *Galatians,* The New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: B & H, 1994], 386)

[58] Schreiner writes concerning the Romans passage:
It makes sense, then, in 14:23 that Paul would say that anything done apart from faith is sin. Lack of faith is the same sin delineated in 1:18-25. Idolatry is the fundamental sin because self rather than God becomes the center of one's affections and reliance. Faith is the only way to please God because it looks to him as the all-sufficient one. (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 739)
Gordon D. Fee comments on Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians:
One's whole life must be to God's glory, not merely that part which is involved in the acknowledgment of his prior ownership of all things through the thanksgiving. Certainly Paul intends that this "rule" dictate the appropriateness of behavior as well. What is not, or cannot be, for God's glory probably should be excluded from "whatever you do." (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistles to the Corinthians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987], 488)

changes he made was for his own selfish purposes. Therefore, every sermon should include a gospel call because true change comes only through belief in the gospel.

The preacher's challenge is presenting the gospel in each sermon in ways that honor the original author's meaning of the text while also flowing naturally from the study of the text, instead of attaching the gospel to the end of the sermon as if it was an afterthought. Several scholars have presented methods for accomplishing this task, many of which find their roots in the redemptive-historical hermeneutic created by Geerhardus Vos during his study of biblical theology.[59] Instead of viewing the Bible as a collection of moral examples and the characters of the Bible as representatives of those examples, both good and bad, biblical theology teaches that the Bible is the unfolding story of Christ that is progressively revealed throughout salvation history.[60] By placing the passage in its place in the unfolding story of redemption, Christ is then preached through any section of the Bible. Variations of this position have been proposed by scholars Edmund P. Clowney, Sidney Greidanus, and Graeme Goldsworthy, among others.[61]

Greidanus argues that his method reflects the thrust of Scriptures: "Christ is the center of redemptive history, Christ the center of the Scriptures. In preaching any part of Scripture, one must understand its message in the light of that center, Jesus Christ."[62]

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[59] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 47.

[60] Johnson expounds, "The purpose of the Old Testament historical narrative is not to teach moral lessons, but to trace the work of God, the Savior of his people, whose redeeming presence among them reaches its climactic expression in Christ's incarnation." Ibid., 51.

[61] Related resources by Edmund P. Clowney include *Preaching and Biblical Theology,* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002); *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1998); and *Preaching Christ in All of Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003). See also Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); and *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). Finally, see Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*; and *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002).

[62] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 227.

Critiques of this approach rightly raise the concern that emphasis on Christ in passages that do not directly deal with Christ may overshadow the direct meaning and application of the passage. The critique should serve as a caution to the preacher, but not as a prohibition to preaching Christ from any passage. Instead, the preacher must be careful to communicate the meaning of the passage as it stands and then move to how the passage points to Christ and fits in God's redemptive story.[63]

Bryan Chapell presents another option for preaching the gospel in every sermon. He argues that every text contains a Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) that the preacher can use to create Christ-centered sermons. He defines the FCF as "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."[64] The passage reveals some problem in people or in the world that is a result of sin, the FCF. After communicating the FCF of the passage, the natural next step is to show God's solution to the FCF through Christ.[65] A more direct way of preaching the gospel in every sermon is simply by reminding the congregation after a biblical command that God's commands are meant for His people and that the Bible describes His people as those who have placed their faith in Christ. For especially difficult commands, the preacher can make this same transition by acknowledging the difficulty of the command, how every person

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[63] Johnson writes,

> Only after identifying as clearly as we can the text's meaning to its original recipients, with due recognition of the fact that early revelation may offer only an indistinct and general testimony to the Messiah who would come in the fullness of time, should the interpreter place the text's message in the broader context of the biblical canon as a whole. (Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 123-24)

Greidanus also communicates his concern for the original author's meaning: "A preacher's first responsibility is to seek to understand the message of the selected passage in its own historical-cultural context." Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 228.

[64] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expositor Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 50.

[65] Chapell writes, "Since fallen creatures cannot correct or remove their own fallenness, identification of an FCF forces a sermon to honor God as the only source of hope rather than merely promoting human fix-its or behavior change." Ibid., 50.

in the room is unable to follow this command on his own, but God has provided the power through faith in Christ.

Indicative precedes the imperative. The second way that preachers relate Christ to the congregation is by rooting the imperative in the indicative.[66] The imperative describes a biblical command (what a person should do) while the indicative describes what has already been done (what God has done). The indicative not only covers what God has done in redemption, but also what God continues to do for the believer to grow in sanctification. The preacher roots the imperative in the indicative by connecting the biblical command of the passage to the work of Christ already accomplished and being accomplished in the listener. A biblical example of this approach can be found in Jesus' "Parable of the Unforgiving Servant" (Matt 18:21-35). When the master confronts the servant he had recently forgiven concerning that servant's unwillingness to forgive someone who was indebted to him, the master says, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Matt 18:32-33).[67] Jesus used the parable to

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[66] Kevin DeYoung is concerned that some have erred in their effort to root the imperative in the indicative. His concerns mark a ditch that the preacher should avoid in presenting the indicative. A biblical counseling framework for preaching must present the imperative. DeYoung writes,

> Among conservative Christians there is sometimes the mistaken notion that if we are truly gospel-centered we won't talk about rules or imperatives or moral exertion. We are so eager not to confuse indicatives (what God has done) and imperatives (what we should do) that we get leery of letting biblical commands lead uncomfortably to conviction of sin. We're scared of words like diligence, effort, and duty. Pastors don't know how to preach the good news in their sermons and still strongly exhort churchgoers to cleanse themselves from every defilement of body and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). We know legalism (salvation by law keeping) and antinomianism (salvation without the need for law keeping) are both wrong, but antinomianism feels like a much safer danger. (Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap between Gospel Passion and the Pursuit of Godliness* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 19)

[67] Grant R. Osborne notes, "Since the first slave had experienced mercy from the king, he should have followed that model and shown mercy in turn to his own debtor. . . . This is the basic message of the parable: Once we have experienced God's merciful forgiveness, it is mandatory that we show that same forgiveness to others." Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 697.

communicate the source of the believer's call to forgive someone else—because God has forgiven (indicative), believers are commanded to forgive others (imperative). This same idea is found in much of the structure of the books of the Bible, especially Paul's writings.[68] Paul began several of his letters with the amazing works of God on behalf of believers before he communicated the commandments of God. In each of these letters Paul was presenting the indicative as the foundation for the imperative.

Rooting the imperative in the indicative serves at least two purposes. First, the indicative relates the listener to Christ by reminding him that salvation and progressive sanctification is the work of God that he co-operates with through faith. Faith remains essential for the believer's obedience to be rendered unto God. Abraham Kuruvilla, who has written extensively about this very matter, refers to this type of obedience as the "obedience of faith" expressed by apostle Paul in Romans 1:5: "Through [Christ] we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations." Kuruvilla argues that Paul did not disregard the law, as some scholars claim, but only the way that the law was being used:

> In essence, then, there are two kinds of *approaches* to the law—by faith, and without faith (as Rom 9:30-32 describes). . . . The latter is the "law of sin and death" in Rom 8:2, the law operating in a fleshly and faithless person resulting in condemnation. . . . The former, the approach to the law by faith, is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:2), the same single law of God, but approached "faith-fully" and empowered by God's Holy Spirit (it is a "spiritual" law, after all; 7:14)—law fulfilled (the obedience of faith).[69]

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[68] Gary Miller and Phil Campbell note,
Paul commonly spells out the good news of the gospel in his opening chapters, drops in a massive "therefore" (e.g. Rom 12:1), and then spends the following chapters explaining how to live for Jesus in response to God's grace in the gospel. If you forget to mention the reasons before the "therefore," you're dishing up a to-do list without anchoring it in the gospel. Gospel action always builds on the fact that Christians celebrate both the finished work of Christ for us the Spirit's work in us in a way that Israel could only ever dream of. (Gary Miller and Phil Campbell, *Saving Eutychus: How to Preach God's Word and Keep People Awake* [Youngstown, OH: Matthias Media, 2013], 71)

[69] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 200, emphasis original.

Faithless obedience is a rejection of the resources provided through faith in Christ.

Therefore, when a person approaches the law, he seeks to do so under his own strength.

If he is able to follow the law, he attributes his success to his own ability and he believes

the lie that he is justified before God based on his own works. Faithless obedience is

simply a form of legalism. However, a person who practices faithful obedience

acknowledges that he does not have within himself the ability to faithfully follow the law.

He trusts in the provisions of Christ, namely the Holy Spirit, to guide him and empower

him to faithful living. Kuruvilla concludes, "And that is to be the preacher's goal and

lifelong passion: the obedience of faith of listeners, implemented in the power of the Spirit,

so that God is glorified as they are conformed to the image of his Son."[70] Rooting the

imperative in the indicative reminds believers that God's commands are meant to be

followed through faith, for God's purposes, and in God's power.

Second, the indicative relates the listener to Christ in that it properly motivates

the believer by focusing him on what God has already accomplished. Without the

indicative, preachers tend to motivate obedience through a sense of duty, fear, guilt, or

greed, all of which are expressions of self-preservation or selfishness.[71] However, the

gospel seeks to move people away from self-love and toward selflessness.[72] The

imperative must be rooted in the indicative to provide the believer with a selfless

motivation for obedience: obeying God out of an overwhelming sense of love and gratitude

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[70] Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 162.

[71] Miller and Campbell add, "No matter where you're preaching from, it's easy to lose sight of the gospel of *what Jesus has done* and replace it with a whole lot of concrete and persuasive and guilt-inducing applications about *what we need to do.*" Miller and Campbell, *Saving Eutychus,* 70.

[72] Johnson notes, "Instead of motivating obedience by offering God's favor as contingent on human performance, the apostles spoke for a God who had *begun* the process of new creation by extending unmerited mercy and who thereby evokes from renewed people a grateful love and eager desire to obey." Johnson, *Him We Proclaim,* 265.

for having been loved by God. Chapell writes, "Grace makes true obedience possible because a thankful response to unearned merit is motivated more by love for God than by love for self."[73] The indicative reminds the believer of the depth of God's love for him not only through salvation, but also through the grace God gives His people daily. In addition, the indicative reminds the believer of his new identity in Christ, his exalted status as a child of God, and the resources available to him. Adams argues that if preachers would bring the full indicative into a sermon, there would be no need to manipulate a response through an appeal to the self. Instead, people would gladly respond to what God has done. He writes,

> Too often preaching and counseling present the bare commands of God to believers apart from the accompanying truths that Scripture provides. We have the Pearl of Great Price! Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift! Such delight and grateful knowledge rejuvenates to joyful service.[74]

The preacher has an essential task of relating Jesus to the listener in the sermon. He can accomplish this task through preaching sermons that call people to faith in Christ for salvation and encouraging obedience that is done through faith and motivated by what God has done.

Renew: Calling People to New Responses by Faith

The final task of counseling is preparing the counselee to reshape his thoughts, desires, and actions through biblical instruction and participation. Pierre writes, "Heart change occurs as it is lived out, shaping and reinforcing new values and commitments. A counselor has to help people strategize about how to respond differently in that context."[75] This fourth step includes the teaching of God's truth for intellectual acceptance, but tends

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[73] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching,* 220.

[74] Jay Adams, "The Motivation of Rejuvenation," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 11, no. 1 (1992): 25.

[75] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life,* 179.

to focus more on what new scriptural behavior patterns the counselee needs to incorporate into his life. Affections will gradually change as old sinful patterns are replaced with biblical patterns that glorify God. Faith is still a crucial part of this process. The counselee lives out an active faith as he imitates Christ while trusting that God will work within him to reorient his heart away from self and toward God.

The previous three tasks build up to this final task of the preacher providing the listener with application that reaches his heart, is meaningful to his experience, and encourages sanctification. If the preacher has sought to read his congregation, then he is prepared to give application that will hit the mark. If the preacher has drawn the congregation to reflect on their need for biblical truth, then they are prepared to receive it. Finally, if the preacher has properly related Christ to the congregation, then they will be rightly motivated to trust Christ and walk in His power. All the tasks work together so that the sermon application is effectual in the life of the believer. This final task describes three approaches to application that reach all three dimensions of the dynamic heart: thoughts, feelings, and actions. An individual sermon does not have to contain all three approaches but will likely contain one or more that best fit the demands of the text. This final task flows out of the preacher's study of the biblical passage. After studying the passage, the preacher considers God's purpose in the passage—how the passage is supposed to shape God's people into the image of His Son. The preacher needs to identify the context(s) the passage describes. Since all Scripture is lived out through faith in God, application always centers on God, but the preacher needs to ask himself what other contexts the passage speaks about. Answering these questions will help the preacher make specific application that the listener can immediately put into practice.

Cognitively: Replacing lies with truth. As the pastor preaches, there is a spiritual battle raging in the listener's mind as false beliefs, values, and commitments are challenged by the truth of God's Word. Through the power of the cross, Satan has been defeated and has no power over the believer. Even so, the devil is still at work seeking to

influence believers away from God and His purposes. Powlison writes, "Satan's power to influence and enslave the inner life is vividly portrayed [in the Scriptures]—he snatches away truth, inserts lies, blinds minds, holds people in bondage."[76] Jesus described Satan as a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).[77] As the antithesis to God, who is truth, Satan works to distort the truth in the lives of believers. He seeks to deceive them into believing that what will destroy them (sin), will give them life, and that what will give them life (God), will destroy them. Bob Kellemen and Dwayne Bond write, "Satan's grand strategy is to blind us to God's true nature. Being the father of lies, the creator of the lying narrative, he attempts to cause us to see God as the Evil Emperor, Darth Vader, or Ming the Merciless. He wants us to view God as malevolent."[78] The wise pastor understands Satan's deceptive work and develops application that encourages the believer to resist Satan and grow in the knowledge of God.

The apostle Paul describes the sanctification of the believer's mind in his letter to the Romans: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and

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[76] David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 103. Ed Welch adds, "Since God is truth, and since Satan is against God at all points, it is not surprising that the kingdom of Satan consists of lies." Ed Welch, *Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 183.

[77] Leon Morris writes of the devil: "Truth is associated with God and with Christ. Satan has no interest in them or in truth. His habitat is falsehood. When he speaks a lie (NIV, 'lies'), he is at home. That is what we expect from him. Basically he is a liar and the father of lying." Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, The International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 411-12.

[78] Bob Kellemen and Dwayne Bond, "The Weapons of Our Warfare," in *Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling,* ed. James MacDonald (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 204. Kris Lundgaard also describes the deception of the devil:
> The deceiver disguises what is undesirable and harmful (the hook in the fishing lure, for example) beneath what he thinks we want (a brightly colored fly, if you're a fish). He hides from our minds the painful consequences we ought to consider (if you bite the hook, you'll be captured, cleaned, and cooked), so that we make false judgment. He is subtle, alluring, patient when he needs to be, pushy when has to be, and he knows our weaknesses. He has one goal in mind and is unscrupulous in his pursuit of it. (Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy within* [Phillipsburg: P & R, 1998], 57)

acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2). In this passage, Paul describes a two-step process for the sanctification of a believer's mind. The first step consists of the believer rejecting the lies of the world: "Do not be conformed to this world," which is Satan's kingdom (2 Cor 4:4).[79] The believer must actively identify the message of the world and resist conforming to that message. Elsewhere Paul describes the believer's intellectual resistance as warfare: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:4-5). Paul is describing a battle in the mind of believers where the claims of the world are challenged and defeated as they are compared to God's truth. Kellemen and Bond write about this passage:

> Our general commands us to destroy strongholds, arguments, and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. . . . The word "destroy" means to take down by force by demolishing the foundation. It pictures knocking the props out from under someone, knocking him off his feet.[80]

The preacher participates in this destructive first step of mind renewal by anticipating, communicating, and humiliating the lies that run contrary to the truth in the preaching passage. The preacher must perform this task because the listener may be blind to the lies that he currently believes (Jer 17:9). In addition, without the removal of lies, the truths from the passage will struggle to take hold in the believer's heart. As the preacher prepares the sermon, he should ask questions of the truth claim contained in the passage: What lies do people believe about this truth? What reasons do people give against believing this truth? What better life does the world promise in contrast to this truth?

[79] George Guthrie writes, "Although the use of [*ho theos*] for Satan is unique to the NT, and some commentators suggest the phrase 'the god of this age' refers to the one true God. . . . [T]his reference here almost certainly is to the Enemy." George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 240. Paul Barnett also agrees that the "god of this age" refers to Satan. Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 218.

[80] Kellemen and Bond, "The Weapons of Our Warfare," 205.

What fleeting pleasure tempts believers to abandon this truth? Why would Satan want to blind a believer to this truth? How has Satan twisted this truth? What consequences to this lie has the devil hidden from people? As noted, the preacher's ability to perform this task succinctly and accurately is enhanced by his familiarity with the congregation. The more time he has spent intentionally reading his congregation, the more familiar he will be with their thought processes and the nature of their objections to the truth. At some point during the sermon, the preacher should describe the lies that contradict the truth and direct the believer away from the truth. This can be done at the moment the truth claim is brought to bear from the text or it could be accomplished in the introduction, as the preacher seeks to debunk the lie through a study of the text. Regardless of its placement in the sermon, the preacher must challenge the congregation to evaluate the lies that may hinder the acceptance of God's truth.

The second step of mind renewal involves the development of godly cognitive responses through learning God's truth and actively engaging the mind with that truth. Growth in knowledge of God's Word helps the believer resist sin and walk in faithfulness: Psalm 119:11 says, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."[81] Learning truth is helpful, but it is not the same as applying truth. The Scriptures encourage believers to renew their minds through active mental participation with the truth: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil 4:8).[82] Paul is

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[81] John Goldingay comments on this passage:
Whereas "with all my heart" suggests attitude and commitment, "in my *heart" . . . suggests treasuring Yhwh's *statement (in the context, a word of command) in the inner person so as to shape one's thinking, decision making, and life. There this word is hidden deep so that it cannot easily be ferreted out and removed, as teachers want their insight to be buried deep in their students' hearts. (John Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 386)

[82] Peter T. O'Brien writes, "In effect, the apostle is calling upon his readers to let their thoughts continually dwell on all those positive and wholesome qualities which he has just mentioned." Peter T.

encouraging believers to not only learn the truth, but to meditate upon it. Similarly, he

wrote to the Colossians telling them to "set" their minds, not on the things of this world,

but on the things that are above (Col 3:2).[83] The renewal of the mind involves an active

mental participation with the truth that reaches into the believer's everyday life. Jesus'

comments to the Jews captures this activity as well as the blessing of mental renewal: "If

you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the

truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).[84] Jesus presented the knowledge of God to the

Jews, but it was only those who would remain in that knowledge who were his disciples

and would experience the freedom that comes with the application of God's truth.

The preacher encourages the listener's mental renewal by first faithfully

communicating the truth of the text intended by the original author. The truth claim

should be expressed clearly and in understandable terms. It should be nestled in the

appropriate context of life to avoid any misapplication on the part of the listener. The

more complicated truth statements should be repeated or reworded for easier

comprehension. The preacher should immediately address potential misunderstandings

of the truth. He may say, "You might be thinking that this truth means . . . but in fact, it

means . . ." or, "Now, don't mishear what I am saying, this truth is not saying . . . but

O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians,* The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 507. G. Walter Hansen adds, "Developing a Christian mind and character requires a lifetime of discerning and disciplined thought about all the things that are excellent and praiseworthy." G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 299.

[83] David W. Pao comments, "This clause completes the thought of 'seek the things above' in v. 1. 'Set your minds' goes beyond 'seek' in emphasizing the need to dwell intently on the things above, and this translation is adopted by most modern versions." David W. Pao, *Colossians-Philemon,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 212.

[84] Morris notes, "[Jesus] is not laying down a condition of discipleship, but telling them in what discipleship consists. When anyone abides in Christ's word, then that person is a true disciple." Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 404. J. Ramsey Michaels adds that Jesus is encouraging those who have believed to "dwell on" Jesus' word. This is how they unite their lives with Jesus' life. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 505.

actually means. . . ." Once again, familiarity of the congregation helps the preacher be aware of how his listeners might misinterpret the claims of the passage.

Next, the preacher encourages the listeners' mental renewal by illustrating and explaining how listeners can actively engage the truth through preaching the truth to themselves in everyday life. While the heart is being sanctified through faith in Christ, vestiges of the old self remain in all believers, leading them away from God's truth. These sinful beliefs are often incited by external circumstances and are the first thoughts that people have in that moment. Martyn Lloyd-Jones argues that listening to the old self is the root of much unhappiness and depression among Christians. He notes that believers spend too much time listening to their old selves instead of practicing the discipline of speaking the truth to themselves.[85] Tim Chester argues similarly: "We need to become preachers. We need to learn to preach to our own hearts."[86] Adams believes that preaching to oneself is contained in the biblical practice of meditation, which he defines as "self-talk that is productive."[87]

The believer is to do more than take the Scriptures and file them away in the mind along with countless other facts about the world. Instead, he is to focus on the Scriptures in daily life. The believer is to regularly consider the impact of the Scriptures in the circumstances he faces. The preacher helps the listener do this by providing examples in his sermons of situations where the fallen tendency is to listen to oneself instead of meditating upon the truth of the passage. The preacher may say at the

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[85] Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to your self?" Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression, Its Causes and Concerns* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 20.

[86] Tim Chester, *You Can Change: God's Transforming Power for Our Sinful Behavior and Negative Emotions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 78. Welch also writes, "These are the battle lines. God speaks the truth. He calls us to believe him and follow him by speaking the truth ourselves. Satan speaks lies. He wants us to doubt the goodness of God, and he bids us to follow him in speaking and believing lies. This kingdom conflict is behind all deception." Welch, *Addictions,* 184.

[87] Jay Adams, *Ready to Restore: The Layman's Guide to Christian Counseling* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1981), 64.

conclusion of an illustration, "In that moment, your first response may be to think . . . but as we see in this passage, God is seeking to develop a new response in us, a holy response. He wants us to . . ." The illustration has two benefits to the listener. First, it reveals the sinful heart-response common to that situation and second, it shows the listener how God desires truth to change the way he thinks and responds in real life. When the preacher regularly includes examples of preaching to oneself in his sermons, he is not only helping shape the heart of the listener for that truth in that particular circumstance, but he is also encouraging the listener to develop the discipline of cognitive renewal that goes beyond the truth in the sermon. He is equipping the listener to renew his mind by taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

In summary of cognitive renewal, the preacher encourages the sanctification of the believer's mind during the sermon in two ways. First, he should attack the lies and misconceptions that rail against the truth of the biblical passage. Second, he should faithfully preach the truth of the passage and illustrate how the believer can preach the truth to himself in his everyday life. The preacher's familiarity with the listeners and their experiences greatly aid him in this endeavor.

Affections: Pulling weeds and watering seeds. Just as mankind's mind needs renewal, so do his affections. Instead of valuing God, due to sin, people value and desire lesser things, Jesus-substitutes.[88] Man worships what he desires and he is an idolater if he desires anything but God. Jesus teaches on the idols of the heart in the gospel of Matthew: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (6:21).[89] What people

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[88] Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" 35.

[89] David L. Turner writes of the heart:
Human finiteness alone, not to mention the exacerbating effects of sin, makes it very difficult to focus our heart solely on God and not on our possessions (cf. 6:24). Our heart is inevitably drawn to what we value most, and if kingdom values (cf. 5:3-10) are the priority, we are indeed laying up

value becomes their motivation in life, which, through the right circumstances, will work its way out of the heart in their words and behavior. Powlison writes, "The idols of the heart lead us to defect from God in many ways. They manifest and express themselves everywhere, down to the minute details of both inner and outer life."[90] The importance of right affections can be deduced from the proverb writer's call to caution: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov 4:23).[91] The wise pastor will not ignore the role of affections in the lives of his listeners, but will instead seek to develop application that brings affections into conformity with Christ.

The apostle Paul describes the sanctification of the affections in both Ephesians and Colossians. To the Ephesians, Paul wrote,

> Assuming that you have heard about [Christ] and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4:21-24)[92]

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treasure in heaven. (David L. Turner, *Matthew,* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 196)
Osborne confirms, saying, "Jesus concludes that what people 'treasure' becomes the guiding principle for their whole life." Osborne, *Matthew*, 243.

[90] Powlison, "Idols of the Heart and 'Vanity Fair,'" 37. James K. A. Smith adds, "To be human is to have a heart. You can't not love. So the question isn't *whether* you will love something as ultimate, the question is *what* will you love as ultimate. And you are what you love." James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 10. Keller also writes extensively about the affections and the role they play in people's decisions: "What makes people into what they are is the order of their loves— what they love most, more, less, and least. That is more fundamental to who you are than even the beliefs to which you mentally subscribe. Your loves show what you actually believe in, not what you say you do. People, therefore, change not by merely changing their thinking but by changing what they love most. Keller, *Preaching*, 159.

[91] Waltke notes the significance of guarding the heart: "The comparative, *above every (mikkol-)* constitutes the standard by which the quality of guarding the heart is measured (i.e., it must be reckoned as more important than anything else that one needs to restrain)." Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*, 297.

[92] Clinton E. Arnold writes of the putting off/putting on practice: "The background of the metaphor . . . comes from the daily experience of taking off and putting on clothes. . . . Since Paul is offering a snapshot of the entirety of the action, it could well involve a long process, that is, a daily activity." Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 287.

Similarly, Paul writes to the Colossians, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. . . . Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col 3:5-10).[93] What Paul is describing is often referred to as the mortification of sin and the vivification of the new life in Christ. God calls the believer to put off his old way of life as well as put on his new life in Christ.[94] This two-part process is essential in the reformation of desires and the progressive sanctification of the believer. Adams writes, "These two factors always must be present in order to effect genuine change. Putting off will not be permanent without putting on. Putting on is hypocritical as well as temporary, unless it is accompanied by putting off."[95]

The idols of the human heart are like weeds that grow around the dynamic heart and prevent it from functioning as God has intended. The negative element of the pastor's job in the sermon is to use the Scriptures to help listeners identify weeds (ungodly desires) and ways in which they can kill those desires. Often the ungodly desires will come directly from the text as God challenges what people value and worship: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed" (Luke 12:15). Other times, the preacher may need to ask what ungodly desires lead people away from doing what God has commanded them to do in the preaching passage. For example, the desire for revenge may lead some people to dismiss God's command for believers to love and pray for their enemies (Matt 5:44). In both these instances, the preacher should rely on what he knows about his

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[93] Douglas J. Moo notes,

In our text Paul wants to remind us that we have been transferred into this new realm and that because of this transfer we are both empowered and required to live in a new way. The *practices* characteristic of the "old self" must be "put off" (v. 9b, cf. vv. 5 and 8). And the practices of the "new self" must be "put on" (see 3:12-17). (Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon,* The Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 268, emphasis original)

[94] A similar putting off and putting on can be found in Matt 16:24: Jesus says, "If anyone come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The true disciple will leave his old way of life as well as walk a new path in life, the path that Jesus walked.

[95] Adams, *Competent to Counsel,* 239.

congregation to determine which desires to identify in the sermon. The more familiar he

is with the desires of his congregation, the better equipped he will be to identify the

ungodly desires that need to be removed from their hearts. Once the preacher has

determined the ungodly desires, his work has only just begun.

His next task is to communicate in the sermon how to kill these desires by

cutting off the activities that are feeding them. Adams refers to this process as radical

amputation, and he finds its source in Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Matthew:

> If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (Matt 5:27-30)[96]

Jesus is communicating a simple truth to His followers—no earthly desire is worth living

separated from God; therefore, his followers are to be serious about cutting sinful desires

and what fuels them out of their lives. The preacher assists the listener in this task by

identifying the ways, both big and small, in which these desires are often fed and

eliminated in the listener's context. Tim Chester writes concerning the importance of

such a task:

> We can sometimes think that small concessions to temptations don't really matter: the lustful look, the resentful thoughts, the brief fantasy. They don't lead to anything, we tell ourselves. But small concessions don't satisfy temptation—*they fuel it!* Giving in to temptation makes temptation come more quickly and strongly next time. In time sin can become a habit. But turning from sin can also become a habit. Instead of temptation coming more quickly and strongly, it comes less often and less strong.[97]

Small concessions lead to bigger concessions that shape the heart away from God and

eventually results in the living out of sinful desires in words and actions. The preacher

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[96] Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling,* 263-66. Adams writes, "But in order to put off, one must structure *against* the return of the sinful pattern as well as *for* the furtherance of the righteous one. That is why Christ called us to what I have described as *Radical Amputation*." Adams, *Ready to Restore,* 58-59.

[97] Chester, *You Can Change,* 111, emphasis original.

helps the listener by identifying ungodly desires, the influences, both big and small, that

feed those desires, and how the listener can cut those influences out of his life.

The identification of ungodly desires and what feeds them is enlightening to

the listener, but unless there is confession and repentance toward God, change is unlikely.

Confession is the admission of wrongdoing to the offended party.[98] Since all sins, whether

of omission or commission, are against God, the believer must confess his ungodly desires

and values to God (Ps 51:4).[99] Related to confession is the act of repentance. Biblical

repentance involves turning away from sinful and selfish ways of living and turning to

God's way of living. Repentance is a prerequisite to change because until one rethinks

his thoughts, desires, and actions and brings them into conformity to God's so that he is

like Him, there is no possibility for the change. Until there is repentance, the listener has

not reached an attitude of yielding to God, which is necessary for progressive

sanctification. Without yielding, the listener remains entrenched in his sinful desires and

wants; he is incapable of welcoming into his heart God's greater values.

The preacher helps the listener begin the process of renewal through the regular

call to confession and repentance in his sermons. The preacher should call the listener to

agree with God that their ungodly desires are sinful and need to be removed. In addition,

in the language of repentance, the preacher should encourage the listener to yield and cry

out to God for grace and power to live in faithfulness. The preacher should model

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[98] Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving: Learning to Forgive One Another God's Way* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1994), 98. Heath Lambert adds, "There is no mercy or favor for those who arrogantly cover their sin and keep it hidden. You will find God's grace to change only when you humbly confess your sin—not just to God, but to all those you have wronged, whether they know or not." Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 78.

[99] Marvin E. Tate writes, "Violations of the commandments of God is construed as sin against God himself." Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 20 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 17. Both Goldingay and Nancy deClaisse-Walford note that acknowledging sin against God does not mean that the psalmist did not sin against people, but merely that he viewed his sin primary against God. John Goldingay, *Psalms 42-89,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 128. Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms,* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 456.

confession and repentance in the sermon, for example: "We have seen from this passage that God desires that we live generously, but unfortunately we are often selfish people. Would you begin the process of living generously this morning by confessing to God your selfishness? By crying out to Him for His grace and mercy." The removal of idols of the heart is incomplete unless the listener sees his idolatry in relationship to God and flees from it. The preacher helps in the removal of idols by regularly encouraging the listener to confess his sins to God and repent.

In addition to removing weeds from the listener's heart, the preacher should also communicate ways for the listener to grow righteous desires. Wayne Mack comments that in counseling the tendency is to focus on the negative, but the positive creation of new desires is just as important. He writes, "They tell counselees, 'Don't do this,' or 'Stop doing that,' but, unfortunately, this leaves a vacuum in the counselees' lives because they do not know the positive counterpart: what they should do."[100] Likewise, preachers can leave the congregation sure of what they should not desire, but unclear of how to create new desires that honor God. The preacher helps the listener create the new desires commanded in the preaching passage by communicating new pursuits that generate godly desires. James K. A. Smith has written extensively about the role of godly pursuits in heart formation:

> If you are what you love, and love is a habit, then discipleship is rehabituation of your loves. This means that discipleship is more of a matter of *reformation* than of acquiring *information*. The learning that is fundamental to Christian formation is affective and erotic, a matter of "aiming" our loves, of orienting our desires to God and what God desires for his creation.[101]

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[100] Wayne Mack, "Providing Instruction through Biblical Counseling," in MacArthur, *Counseling*, 170, emphasis original.

[101] Smith, *You Are What You Love,* 19, emphasis original.

Smith argues that ungodly loves and desires are caught rather than taught as people pursue the kingdom of this world.[102] In the same way, new godly loves and desires can be reformed in the heart as people pursue the kingdom of God. Ultimately, Smith argues, "Because love is a habit, our hearts are calibrated through imitating exemplars and being immersed in practices that, over time, index our hearts to a certain end."[103]

The preacher encourages renewal of desires as he communicates the truth of the preaching passage and the new desires, which replace the ungodly desires that come from pursing those truths. The language of desire may be the most neglected area of renewal in sermons. Clearly, most preachers understand that God wants to change the way people think and act, but He also wants to change what people love; therefore, the preacher should communicate how God intends the truths in the preaching passage to change desires. He should communicate practical ways of pursuing the truths in the context of the listener's experience. Alongside communicating these new desires, the preacher should regularly remind the listener that new desires are not the goal of godly pursuits, knowing God is the goal, but new desires are the result and benefit of godly pursuits. In addition, the preacher should also remind the congregation that sinful or selfish desires were formed over years and new replacement desires will take time to form, but as the listener faithfully aims his heart at the truth of the passage, new desires will grow. Essentially, the preacher is seeking to have the listener do what he has always done, pursued what he has wanted, but, through the power of the Spirit, the preacher is helping the believer create new desires as he pursues God.

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[102] Tim Keller also writes on desires and captures well the preacher's ability to renew desires by presenting an image that captures the imagination. He writes of the aim of affection renewal, "This means to bring abstract concepts into connection with the listeners' actual sense experience in order to engage their imaginations and not just their intellects." Keller, *Preaching*, 165.

[103] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 21.

Keller has written extensively on the role of affections in the believer's heart and the preacher's role to encourage both the removal of ungodly desires and the addition of godly desires.[104] Building on the ideas of Smith and Jonathan Edwards, Keller argues that it is not enough for a sermon to be factually accurate if it is not real to the listener: "Preaching cannot simply be accurate and sound. It must be compelling and penetrate to their hearts."[105] Keller rightly understands the heart as the central decision maker for all people. People make decisions based on what the heart most wants; therefore, the preacher must gain access to the heart. Keller proposes six ways of preaching that get to the listeners' hearts so that affections can be renewed: preaching should be affectionate, imaginative, wondrous, memorable, Christocentric, and practical.[106] Each way presents a unique method that serves as a key to gain access to the listener's heart and thus his desires. For example, in affectionately preaching, the preacher discloses how the preaching text has renewed his desires. Keller writes, "What is required is that as you speak it becomes evident in all sorts of ways that you yourself have been humbled, wounded, healed, comforted, and exalted by the truths you are presenting, and that they have genuine power in your life."[107] Keller's work is helpful because he goes beyond simply the communication of new desires. He presents several ways that the preacher can gain access to the listener's heart so that new desires become real to the listener and can begin to take root in his heart.

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[104] Keller, *Preaching*, 157-87.

[105] Ibid., 157.

[106] Keller's six ways are summarized here. Affectionally preaching is to communicate to the listener how the truth of the passage has changed the desires of the preacher. Imaginatively preaching is to engage the imagination through images that communicate truth and grab the attention of the listener. Wondrously preaching presents the truth of the gospel in all of its glorious levels to evoke wonder in the listener. Memorably preaching is the use of culturally-appropriate language that sticks in the mind of the listener. Christocentrically preaching exalts Jesus and all that was accomplished for the listener through his life, death, and resurrection. Practically preaching provides the listener with what they can do to live faithfully to God's commands. Ibid,. 166-80.

[107] Ibid., 167.

In summary of the renewal of affections, the preacher encourages sanctification of the believer's desires by helping them put off ungodly desires and put on godly pursuits. Putting off ungodly desires starts with identifying those desires and removing the activities that fuel those desires. Coupled with this process is the need for confession and repentance; true change cannot occur unless the listener yields to God and relies on His resource. The preacher also helps congregants form new desires by communicating godly pursuits that reshape desires and encouraging the listener to engage in these pursuits. Change will be slow, but as the listener aims his heart at God, desires will follow.

Volition: Trust and obey. All three dimensions of the human heart impact each other. Renewal of the mind and affections will impact what people do; likewise, as stated, renewal of choices has the potential to reorient the rest of the heart. The preacher encourages sanctification in the renewal of choices by providing the congregation with how-to instructions for applying the preaching passage. In doing so, he is following the New Testament model. Paul wrote, "Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do" (Phil 3:17).[108] Paul believed his life, as well as those who lived like him, to be worthy of imitation. Younger believers were to do what they saw mature believers do. Paul would continue this exhortation later in the same letter: "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace

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[108] Gordon D. Fee expounds,

They are urged to join together in following Paul's example (as he follows Christ is always implied), while at the same time they also "take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you." For the sake of comment we need to put that more literally": "and take note of those who walk thus, just as you have us as an example." To "walk" has do with behavior, living uprightly in all that one does. . . . They are to walk, and to watch for others who so walk, in keeping with the example of Paul just given in vv. 4-14. (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 365-66).

will be with you" (Phil 4:9).[109] Paul expected the Philippian believers to take all that he gave them, whether through direct teaching or modeling, and apply it their daily lives. They were to practice what Paul taught them to do. A similar statement can be found in Jesus' commission of the disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20).[110] The disciples were commissioned to create new disciples who would be just like them. To accomplish this, Jesus told the disciples to instruct new disciples on how to obey God.

Preachers follow this model by providing specific how-to instructions so that the listener is able to practice the truth revealed in the preaching passage. Adams argues that a lack of instructions has been one of the larger failures of the church, which has resulted in much frustration for believers:

> Conservative churches have been strong on discovering what is wrong and even in declaring what ought to be done about it. But they have been extremely weak in telling and showing people *how* to do it. Instead, we (rightly) bring people to conviction of sin and to commitment to change, only to forsake them at that point, and it accounts for much of the failure and apathy that we see in individual lives and in the corporate life of congregations.[111]

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[109] Hansen writes,

Paul's command, *put into practice*, challenges his readers to move beyond contemplation to action. The imperative calls for them to "bring about or accomplish something through activity." The time has come to get out of the chair of theoretical reflection about Christ and the Christian life and *press on toward the goal* (3:14)." (Hansen, *The Letters to the Philippians,* 301)

O'Brien adds, "The present imperative [practice] indicates that continuous action is in view: they 'must keep putting into practice' the things Paul had shown them by teaching and example." O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians,* 511.

[110] Osborne notes, "The emphasis on obeying 'everything I have commanded you' shows that the discourse sections are not really didactic material to be learned by more importantly practical injunctions to be lived." Osborne, *Matthew,* 1082. Turner agrees, writing, "This teaching is not about information so much as ethics. Its goal is not so much knowledge as obedience. Righteous behavior is the mark of Jesus's disciples (5:17-20; 7:21-27)." Turner, *Matthew,* 690.

[111] Adams, *Ready to Restore,* 62.

Adams provides a picture of why some Christians are deeply discouraged in their Christian walk. They desire to follow after God, but they have not been given the instructions to do so. Even so, they try but fail. Over time, recurring failures lead the believer to deduce that obedience is simply outside his ability to accomplish. Some become overwhelmed by despair and discouragement, while others simply stop caring. Adams concludes, "It is cruel to demand of congregations what they are never taught *how* to perform."[112] The wise pastor understands that the listener needs to know how to live out what the preaching passage says. Therefore, the application of his sermon cannot remain in the abstract. It cannot communicate just the end goal of the biblical truth but must also communicate the steps that help the believer achieve the end goal.

The preacher should consider several factors beyond the meaning of the text as he develops how-to instructions for his congregation. First, he should consider the spiritual maturity of his congregation. How-to instructions for a congregation of young believers should be more basic and introductory than instructions for seasoned Christ-followers. Preachers who pastor churches with both young and mature believers will still give how-to instructions but will want to encourage the listener to start at the most basic instruction that he is not currently doing. By verbally communicating this distinction, everyone is encouraged to start applying the preaching passage in some new way. In addition to spiritual maturity, the preacher should also consider the life circumstances of those in his congregation. The how-to instructions for a stay-at-home mother may differ from a working mother, just as instructions for a family with small children may differ for empty-nesters or young singles. The preacher may need to present several threads of how-to instructions that touch on the different contexts of those in his congregation. The

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[112] Adams full quote,

It is cruel to demand of congregations what they are never taught *how* to perform. Much of the congregation whipping that goes on in Bible-believing pulpits stems directly from the frustration of pastors who think that exhortation and beatings are necessary when what is really needed is simple how-to instructions. (Jay Adams, *Truth Apparent: Essays on Biblical Preaching* [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982], 84, emphasis original.

preacher's goal is to present how-to instructions that best represent the spiritual maturity of his congregation and the contexts in which they live. Once again, the preacher's familiarity with his congregation will greatly improve his ability to develop how-to instruction that encourages sanctification.

While essential for spiritual growth, how-to instructions can easily hinder the listener if done improperly. The preacher must first and foremost make sure that the instructions are birthed out of the original author's meaning in writing the text. Since many how-to instructions are derived through the preacher's imagination as he visualizes the needs of his congregation, it is easy for instructions to move outside of the scope of the text. The preacher must avoid this by regularly comparing the instructions with the meaning of the preaching passage. Another concern with how-to instructions is that without careful wording, the listener may believe the instructions are just as inspired by God as the preaching passage from which they are born. The preacher must take care to help the listener know what is commanded by the preaching passage and what is suggested by the preacher to walk in faithfulness to that command. Finally, how-to instructions should always be coupled with a call to trust in God and his resources. Obedience to God is always done by faith in God and the resources that He supplies. How-to instructions run awry when the preacher portrays that obedience to them can be done without faith in God.

In summary of volitional renewal, the preacher encourages sanctification of the will by providing the listener with how-to instructions from the preaching passage. The instructions encourage the listener to begin doing what is godly in the circumstances of their lives. The preacher not only supplies the end goal of such instructions, but also steps along the way that are appropriate for the spiritual maturity and contexts of the congregation.

Examples

The purpose of this section is to provide examples of the applicational framework for preaching in use. Three passages of Scripture have been selected along

with three fictional churches representing unique preaching contexts. For each passage, elements unique to that church context which emerge from the framework will be discussed. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive but are meant to show the framework's use in context.

First Church is a medium-sized rural church consisting of mostly nuclear families who have lived in the community for decades. The church is largely ethnically homogenous, but socioeconomically consisting of both blue and white-collar workers. A large portion of the church consists of single-income families, with the husband working and the wife staying at home and volunteering in the community. First Church has the mentality where those who have been accepted into the church community are often held to a lower moral standard than those outside the church.

Second Church is a large church in the suburbs of a major metropolitan city. While the area around the church is very transient, the church remains mostly homogenous in the ethnicity and socioeconomic status of its members. The church is proud of its denominational affiliation and it largely attracts those who come out of that same denomination. Its members are considered well-churched people familiar with the Bible and church traditions. The church consists of mostly nuclear families where both spouses work long hours. Free time is spent socializing or taking children to their activities.

Third Church is a small church in a major metropolitan city. The area around the church is very transient, which is reflected in the makeup of the church. Third Church is diverse in both ethnicity and socioeconomic levels; the homeless as well as CEOs attend the church. The church largely consists of first-generation believers with little biblical knowledge or experience with church rituals. All types of family structures (nuclear, blended, and single-parent families) are equally represented in the makeup of the church. Since many members of the congregation grew up outside of a Christian context, there is an uncertainty of how Christ seeks to reshape every area of life.

Passage 1: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

God is preparing His people to enter the Promised Land. He has given them the Ten Commandments as well as the other Mosaic laws and He commands Israel to follow these laws, the greatest of which is to love God completely. Contained in this passage is God's commissioning of parents to train up their children in the laws.[113] This is God's discipleship plan in Ancient Israel—parents training their children to know God and walk in faithfulness to Him.

First Church. The people of First Church are hard-working and their concerns center on the needs of the day: putting food on the table. They believe that church is important and that it has its place. Sunday is for church, but the rest of the week is about the needs of the moment. They are often frustrated when their adult children do not share the same belief that Sundays are for church and they may blame the church for their child's absence. At First Church opportunities abound for the sermon to address misplaced beliefs, values, and commitments. It should dismiss the false beliefs that Christianity and church is a once-a-week activity and not the whole-life experience communicated in the Scriptures. The sermon should also address values that prevent parents from training up their children. The people value life in the moment, but they lack urgency and vision about spiritually preparing their children to stand before God as adults. Just "getting through the day" is not the goal of Christianity; instead, "preparing for the day" of Christ's return should be valued. The people of First Church may not disciple their children because they feel ill-equipped. The sermon should provide them specific and simple steps they can begin doing each day. As best as possible, the preacher should devise steps that easily fit

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[113] Peter C. Craigie comments on the scope of God's command: "The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. In summary, the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man." Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy,* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 1976), 170. Eugene H. Merrill adds, "So much so is this the case that the covenant recipient must impress the words of covenant faith into the thinking of his children by inscribing them there with indelible sharpness and precision." Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy,* The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 167.

into the people's normal routine. Most families in this community still value having dinner together. A how-to instruction that the pastor could encourage is for families to begin each dinner by reading a single chapter from the Bible and then use the first few minutes of dinner to discuss that chapter. The opportunities for growth at First Church are many, and the pastor will have to use discernment in which, if not all, areas of renewal he will address.

Second Church. The parents of Second Church, in their own minds, excel at everything, especially at educating their children. They send their children to private Christian schools. Their children get into the best colleges, often on academic scholarships. The parents have high expectations for their children to succeed academically and they will do what it takes to make sure that it happens. The order of importance, whether stated or not, is clear to all. First comes school, then comes everything else, including church involvement. The sermon application for the people of Second Church should address their faulty beliefs and values. The people value education and career success far more than growing in faith and holiness. Failing to get into the right college is a greater sin than disobeying God. The sermon must address these ungodly values and the influences feeding them, as well as reimagining their view of success—pleasing the Lord. In addition, the sermon should address the false belief that parents are able to outsource their responsibilities of training their children to the church. Second Church people are busy with work and are accustomed to paying people to do what they do not have time to do. Several families have this same mentality with the church, where they equate their tithe to a tuition payment. These false beliefs, which are also values, must be addressed in the sermon. The application must aim for the heart of the matter, which is the fact these families worship at the idol of success, but they are in fact failing as they ignore their responsibilities before God.

Third Church. The people of Third Church lack the knowledge of what to do with their children. Very few of them grew up with godly parents modeling biblical formation to them. Many of them are so overwhelmed with their own problems that they cannot image being able to address the formation of their child's heart. The people could easily get discouraged by God's commands; therefore, the preacher must be sure to communicate the commands of the passage along with the truth that there is hope and power for heart change through faith in Christ. Most of the application of the sermon will probably need to focus on how-to instructions. With such a diverse congregation, the preacher may have to provide several examples of how families can take advantage of daily opportunities to train up their children in the Lord. The examples should be simple, but also with opportunities for the families to build upon them as new habits are formed. The sermon application may also challenge the values of the church to look beyond individual needs and look to the needs of others who are less fortunate. For example, would those in the church with extra time, such as empty-nesters, be willing to help a single mom by doing a small task for her each week (e.g., mowing the lawn or getting groceries) so she can have intentional training time with her children? Serving others in such a way reshapes values away from self and toward God and others.

Passage 2: Matthew 10:34-39

In Matthew 10 Jesus is preparing the disciples for the division that will come into their lives by following Jesus. Jesus and the message of the gospel will not bring peace to their outward lives. Quite the opposite, those from their own family will hate them because of Jesus.[114] The gospel is divisive, and those who remain faithful to Jesus

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[114] Turner confirms, "The kingdom message of repentance is confrontational (cf. 11:12), and conflicting responses to this message can fracture even the dearest human relationships." Turner, *Matthew,* 281. France adds, "Loyalty to Jesus and his mission comes first, and the result of that may be that family ties are strained to breaking point. But there is a new family relationship for disciples of Jesus which more than compensate for what may be lost by loyalty to him." France, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 408.

should be prepared to pay the cost for those who do not are unworthy of Jesus and eternal life.

First Church. First Church loves relational peace. They have the mentality that they would rather look the other way when someone sins than have to deal with conflict and the relational fallout that may occur. Instead, they will keep on going as if nothing ever happened while still gossiping amongst themselves about the sins of others. The preaching passage calls for the renewal of the people's values. God has not called them to relational peace, if that peace means compromising the gospel. The preacher should identify the idol of relational acceptance and the influences that feed it. In addition, he should call the congregation to reimagine their relationships in light of the kingdom of God. God desires that relationships between believers be about building each other up in the truth and exhorting one another in godliness. These relationships are genuine, loving, and reflective of God's treatment of His people. The sermon application should also include instructions on how to lovingly correct other believers instead of ignoring them. The preacher should provide step-by-step instructions. He may even want to bring someone up on stage to role-play through those instructions and encourage the church to pick a partner and do the same thing that night.

Second Church. The people of Second Church value peace in their relationships, but for a different reason than First Church. Second Church values economic security and the people are tempted to do whatever it takes, even compromise their faith, to maintain that security. They will bend the rules of their profession for their own gain. They will use and abuse people to advance in their careers. They will not do anything that might put a ceiling on their professional advancement, even if that meant not sharing the gospel with others. The sermon must handle their faulty beliefs and values that put self-gratification above faithfulness to God. The preacher should expose the lies of materialism and fame—how they promise fulfillment but cannot deliver on that promise.

He should address the faulty values of their hearts for what they are—selfish and wicked. He should help them see what they value contrasted to what God values. The sermon should also point them toward what success looks like in the kingdom of God. He should guide them through answering the question, "What did Jesus mean when He said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant'?" He may even direct them to imagine themselves before Christ with their lives as they currently are. As the preacher does this, he must also include a reminder of God's grace, mercy, and power for change.

Third Church. The people of Third Church desire peace, but there is little peace in their lives. Most of the people come from broken families with non-Christian parents where morality took a backseat to selfishness and sin. In their own families, they are reproducing many of the same sinful words and actions that were so painful to them as children. The preacher needs to renew their minds by teaching them about biblical peace. Some of them may have come to Jesus believing that God would bring peace to the chaos of their lives. Those who believe this way are highly susceptible to the lies of the health-and-wealth gospel. The preacher must renew their minds by teaching them about the peace that God offers, both internal peace through salvation and external peace through the presence of God in difficult circumstances. He must also encourage cognitive renewal through exposing the lies of the health-and-wealth gospel. The sermon should also deal with values. The possibility exists that some people are pursuing Christ because of what they believe He will give to them, namely peace. While peace is a byproduct of faith in Christ, Christians should pursue Christ, not peace. The preacher should expose the idol of peace and present to the congregation how they can faithfully pursue the One who gives peace.

Passage 3: Galatians 2:15-21

In Galatians 2 Paul describes a confrontation between Peter and himself that centers on Peter's behavior. Instead of eating with the believing Gentiles, Peter sat at the

table with the believing Jews. From this confrontation, Paul declares that all people (Jew and Gentile) are justified before God through faith.[115] Salvation is a work of God through faith, to which man makes no contribution. Paul concludes the chapter declaring that justification by anything other than faith nullifies the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

First Church. As noted, the people of First Church tend to overlook the sins of those in the congregation, but they do not miss the sins of those outside the church. They believe that someone must clean up his life in order to be part of their church. They look down upon guests who do not make the effort to dress and look as nice as they do on Sunday mornings. The preacher needs to renew their minds by teaching them the doctrine of justification by faith. He should also dispel the lies that any person, including those in the congregation, can make himself right with God by his works. The application may also need to address the values of the congregation. They appear to value outward appearances and not the heart. The Scriptures communicate a concern for outward appearances, but they start with the renewal of the heart. In addition, the preacher may want to give how-to instructions on how the people can communicate the gospel message. In doing so, he is not only training the congregation in evangelism, but he is also reinforcing the truth from the passage, that Christians are justified by faith in Christ alone.

Second Church. The people of Second Church know the gospel message and have been trained in how to communicate it. Their problem is not knowledge of the message, but pride in their understanding of it. They know that people in the world need the gospel—their sin is obvious to the people of Second Church. The problem with the people of Second Church is that they do not see their own need for the gospel. They know

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[115] Thomas R. Schreiner notes, "Paul argues that no human being . . . whether Jew or Gentile, is declared to be in the right before God by virtue of keeping what the law requires. Even though Peter and Paul were part of God's covenant people as Jews, they know that a person is justified not by works of law but only through faith in Jesus Christ." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 154.

they need Jesus, but they do not believe they need Jesus as much as others. The sermon application must be driven at the renewal of their beliefs and values. The preacher must expose the lie that being a successful, good person in society means that a person is less guilty before God or less deserving of His righteous judgment. He may want to renew their minds by looking at the doctrine of total depravity, pressing upon them the truth of the condition of their hearts before God. In addition, he should use that truth to drive them to the cross where they will find salvation for their sins. The application should also expose the false value they have placed on outward appearances as means of justification. The aim here is to help the people see that all outward work is done, not out of the need for justification, but out of joy for having been justified through Christ.

Third Church. The people of Third Church understand the gospel and lean on God's grace. They must do so because they have nothing else in which to have confidence. Their lives are a mess and their past is even messier. They have nothing but God's grace to lean upon to justify themselves before God. Their problem with the gospel is not their need for it, but that God expects the gospel to be the beginning of a new work in them. Their tendency is to use God's grace as an excuse for their lackadaisical pursuit of righteousness. They believe they will always be broken. The preacher needs to encourage renewal of both the mind and the affections. He needs to identify the lie that change is impossible, even for those who have a long way to go. This lie must be replaced with the truth that God, through the power of the Spirit, changes people as they walk by the Spirit. He also needs to correct their vision of the Christian life. He should present to them the full story of what God will do to them in glory, that God is making new all things that are broken, and that they get to participate with God in this renewal as they follow Him. Finally, the preacher may want to give the people instructions in how they can participate with God in this renewal. These instructions need to be basic and achievable.

Conclusion

The proposed framework is a means for preachers to produce application in their sermons that derives from the original author's meaning and is appropriate for the experience of their listeners. The methods contained in this four-task framework originate from Scripture itself; every task is thoroughly biblical in origination. In addition, this framework is intentionally designed to increase the accuracy of application. Much application is general or misses the mark because the preacher is unsure of how the application applies to the listener's experience. The proposed framework challenges the preacher to exegete his congregation just as he exegetes the preaching passage so that there is no doubt in the listener's mind as to how the Scriptures speak into his life. The Scriptures, which have always been relevant, are revealed to be so in the listener's mind as the preacher places biblical truth squarely onto his human experience, as exemplified in the examples of the three churches. When done properly, the biblical demand on the listener and the spiritual resources provided for obedience to that demand are unmistakable. The preacher has accomplished his God-given mission. Through the Scriptures he has equipped and encouraged the listener to grow in all ways into the image of God.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process,* Jay Adams is focused on helping counselors take their counselees through the four facets of sanctification delineated in 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Prior to describing this process for counseling, Adams notes that the same truths could be applied to preaching, since counseling and preaching make up the two sides of the ministry of the Word.[1] This dissertation sought to understand the preaching side of the ministry of the Word through an exploration of the Bible's use of the shepherding metaphor and the doctrine of progressive sanctification. This final chapter will present a summary of the arguments presented in this dissertation and suggest areas for further study.

Summary of Arguments

This dissertation has made a series of arguments related to preaching that culminate in its thesis: pastoral preaching is any preaching in the setting of a local congregation where the pastor communicates the meaning of the text and properly applies it to the human experience of the listeners, thus participating in God's call for sanctification

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[1] Adams' full quote is,

The passage must not be limited to change brought about in counseling. Clearly, the entire ministry of the Word is under consideration. That ministry is twofold: public (preaching) and private (counseling), as Paul elsewhere asserts (Acts 20:20). While pastors must not lose sight of that truth, in this book our attention is given to the counseling ministry alone. (Jay E. Adams, *How to Help People Change: The Four-Step Biblical Process* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 10)

of His people.[2] Sermon application that accomplishes God's purpose of sanctification will spring from the meaning of the original author, acknowledge the unique contexts of the listener, and encourage renewal of the whole person: his thoughts, feelings, and actions. A summary of each chapter's findings follows.

Chapter 1 positioned the subject of pastoral preaching in its contemporary theological context. The twenty-first century saw conservative preachers battle for a return to the original author's meaning of the text, but in this return, some sermons became merely the communication of biblical facts. This chapter proposed several reasons why preaching has struggled to move beyond the "factoid sermon."[3] Then it suggested that preachers should look toward the developments within the biblical counseling movement for biblical methods to help in the development of application that renews the whole person. This chapter also offered the thesis and methodology of the dissertation, contending that pastoral preaching that is rooted in the shepherd metaphor and the doctrine of progressive sanctification must contain application aimed at the renewal of the whole person. Biblical counseling provides preachers with help in the development of this type of holistic application.

Chapter 2 demonstrated that contemporary approaches to pastoral preaching since the time of Harry Emerson Fosdick fail to accomplish the goals of pastoral preaching presented in this dissertation. On a positive note, the evaluated approaches—problem-centered and needs-centered preaching—reflect a concern for the spiritual formation of the listener. In these approaches, the development of real, life-changing application is considered an essential step to faithful preaching. However, the focus on application led both approaches to allow the desired application to either determine the meaning of the

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[2] This dissertation relies on the definition of "human experience" put forth by Jeremy Pierre, in *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2016), 9.

[3] Hershael York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance* (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 12.

text (eisegesis) or determine the text that would be preached (proof-texting). Similarly, these approaches failed in that the application was often expressed in only one form (i.e., cognitive renewal without affectional or volitional renewal). If these approaches to pastoral preaching are to be rejected, as this dissertation has argued, then a new approach to pastoral preaching is needed that honors the author's original meaning and applies it to the human experience of the listener.

Chapter 3 revealed the necessity of holistic application in preaching through the exploration of the biblical authors' use of the shepherd metaphor. First, through a survey of the shepherd metaphor, it was determined that the metaphor was used to describe God's holistic care for His people; His care for His people is comprehensive as He protects, provides for, and guides them. Next, the chapter traced the continuation of this shepherding responsibility from God to preachers through a detailed study of four passages. God is the ultimate shepherd and his shepherding work was continued by Jesus, the Chief Shepherd. Jesus then commissioned Peter, and through Peter, commissioned elders to continue the Father's shepherding work among God's flock. Since the shepherd tradition has been handed down to preachers, application must reflect the holistic care that the Chief Shepherd provides for His flock. Edward Gordon Selwyn writes that the responsibility "includes the whole of a shepherd's care for his flock, and not feeding only."[4] Therefore, the chapter argued that in light of the shepherd metaphor, preachers cannot be satisfied with sermon application that is merely intellectual, but instead they must strive for application that encourages the whole person to grow into the likeness of Christ.

Chapter 4 reinforced the need for a holistic application in preaching through a study of the doctrine of progressive sanctification. It revealed that God's primary concern for His people is that they would grow in all ways into the likeness of God made visible

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[4] Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, Thornapple Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 229.

through His Son.[5] Progressive sanctification is the renewal of the whole person: mind, emotions, and will. While this is a work of the Holy Spirit, man co-operates with the Spirit by yielding to the Spirit and then actively resisting sin and living in obedience to the commandments of God. Next, the chapter discussed the means by which progressive sanctification occurs—the primary means being the Word of God.[6] Since the primary means of sanctification is the Word of God, this chapter proposed that the purpose of the preacher's sermons should be aimed at accomplishing God's primary purpose of progressive sanctification. In addition, since progressive sanctification involves the renewal of the whole person, the sermon application needs to consider the whole person. The chapter demonstrated how God's desire for His people to be transformed into the image of Christ not only necessitates application but determines the type of application that should be given.

Chapter 5 argued that preaching and biblical counseling are complementary sides of the ministry of the Word, thus enabling preachers to incorporate biblical counseling methods of progressive sanctification into their sermon application development. First, the chapter summarized the beginning of the biblical counseling movement as it returned to its biblical and ecclesiological foundations, much like preaching had accomplished a few decades earlier. Next, the chapter detailed five theological foundations of biblical counseling. Finally, the chapter concluded by showing that preaching and biblical counseling share the same history and theological foundations. Preaching and biblical counseling are both ministries of the Word given to God's people

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[5] Douglas Moo writes concerning Paul's words in Rom 8:29: "In these verses Paul spells out the 'purpose,' or 'plan' of God. . . . Now it is God's purpose to imprint on all who belong to Christ the 'image' of the 'second Adam.'" Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 531-33.

[6] Louis Berkhof states, "The principle means used by the Holy Spirit is the Word of God. The truth itself certainly has no adequate efficiency to sanctify the believer, yet it is naturally adapted to be the means of sanctification as employed by the Holy Spirit." Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 535.

for the purpose of glorifying God and continuing His work on earth; therefore, instead of each ministry of the Word acting in isolation of the other, preachers should make use of the full ministry of the Word as an aid for preaching.[7]

Chapter 6 proposed an applicational framework for preaching that is derived from Jeremy Pierre's biblical counseling method found in his work *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.[8] The chapter detailed how all four tasks of Pierre's method could be used by the preacher to develop application that honored the original author's meaning and applied it to the human experience of the listener. The chapter contained three example passages of the framework in use. Within each example, the framework was used to develop application that was specific and unique to three different church contexts while honoring the original author's meaning behind the passage. By adjusting Pierre's biblical counseling method for preaching, preachers now have a biblically-based sermon application process that encourages the progressive sanctification of the whole person.

Overall, this dissertation attempted to make a new contribution to the field of homiletics in the areas of pastoral preaching and application. The faulty approaches to pastoral preaching and the dearth of biblically-based and detailed approaches for the creation of application made such a study necessary. The framework proposed here accomplished the thesis of the dissertation by presenting an approach to pastoral preaching that continues in the shepherding tradition and encourages progressive sanctification in the listener. It honors the original author's meaning and encourages application that comes from that meaning and is then applied to the human experience of the listener. Yet, more contributions could be made to the subject through further research.

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[7] Adams writes of the complementary nature of the ministries of the Word: "Public and private ministry of the Word are of a piece and supplement (and contribute to) one another. . . . The two go together. In fact, when one is separated from the other, both suffer." Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More than Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 279-80.

[8] Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life*.

Areas of Future Research

This dissertation attempted to provide preachers with an applicational framework that honored the original biblical authors' meaning and applied it to the human experience of the listener. However, additional areas of research warrant further exploration in this subject matter. As this dissertation concludes, the final section will suggest three areas of further study.

First, further research is needed on additional biblical counseling methods that may serve as viable sources for developing additional applicational frameworks for preaching or enhancing the framework presented here. This dissertation developed an applicational framework from Pierre's Read, Reflect, Relate, and Renew model, but other biblical counseling models exist. For example, Paul David Tripp details the four tasks of his counseling process—Love, Know, Speak, and Do—in his work *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands.*[9] While Pierre's and Tripp's models are similar, there may be advantages to one or the other that have yet to be explored. Additional biblical counseling models could be used for the creation of alternate frameworks. At the minimum, additional models could serve the purpose of contributing to and enhancing the presented framework. Further study should be given to other biblical counseling methods in order to build upon this framework with the goal of improving the accuracy of the sermon's application.

Second, further research is needed as the biblical counseling movement continues to grow and take shape. Since Jay Adams ushered in the biblical counseling movement with his work *Competent to Counsel*, new leaders with new ideas have continued to step to the forefront.[10] Heath Lambert identified David Powlison as the leader of the second generation of biblical counselors who pushed the movement further

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[9] Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 115-348.

[10] Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

in many respects.[11] Jeremy Lelek believes that a third generation of leaders have already begun to take their place within the movement.[12] As the movement continues to grow, further attention should be given to new discoveries and how they might improve the applicational framework for preaching.

Third, further research is needed on how homework could be incorporated into the pastor's preaching ministry. Homework serves a clear purpose in counseling. In many ways it allows the counseling session to continue throughout the week as the counselee interacts with God's Word and reflects upon his heart's response to the Word. In short, homework is a tangible, step-by-step aid that helps the counselee grow spiritually. Consideration should be given to whether the preacher should also use this same form of homework, and if so, in what ways homework from the pulpit would look different than homework from a counseling session. In addition, the counselee has the counselor to provide support, feedback, and accountability concerning the homework. Does the preacher serve in the same capacity, and if not, what capacities does he serve? Homework could be another tool the preacher could use to help the congregation grow in sanctification, but there is still much research needed to know exactly how the preacher should use this tool.

Conclusion

The motivation of this dissertation and the hope for the future of pastoral preaching is that preachers would attempt to provide their congregation with sermon application that encourages biblical change and strives to develop application that is both brought out of the original author's meaning and appropriate for the human experience of

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[11] Heath Lambert describes the ways that biblical counseling has moved forward in *The Biblical Counseling Movement after Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

[12] Jeremy Lelek, *Biblical Counseling Basics: Roots, Beliefs, & Future* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2018).

the listener. In doing so, preachers are continuing the shepherd tradition given to them by God and encouraging their congregations to grow in all ways into Christlikeness.

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ABSTRACT

PASTORAL PREACHING: A REFORMATION AND REDEFINITION
OF A PASTOR'S CALL TO PREACH FOR THE
PURPOSE OF SANCTIFICATION

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
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Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation's thesis, highlights its methodology and establishes its goals. The dissertation argues that pastoral preaching is any preaching in the setting of a local congregation where the pastor communicates the meaning of the text and properly applies it to the human experience of the listeners, thus participating in God's call for the sanctification of His people.

Chapter 2 describes approaches to pastoral preaching that have emerged since Harry Emerson Fosdick's controversial methods. It compares these approaches to the definition of pastoral preaching and discusses why they are inadequate forms of pastoral preaching.

Chapter 3 argues for the use of application in pastoral preaching through an exploration of the shepherd metaphor in both the Old and New Testaments. It focuses on four passages that describe God's shepherding work and how it has been passed down to pastors.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the shepherding work to which God has commissioned pastors: the work of progressive sanctification. It argues that this work is accomplished through the Word of God by applying the Word to the whole person.

Chapter 5 seeks to illuminate the biblical counseling movement as an aid to the pastor in creating application that encourages sanctification. It argues that biblical

counseling and pastoral preaching are both ministries of the Word and helpful to one another.

Chapter 6 proposes a biblical counseling-inspired framework for sermon application. It describes the framework and gives examples of its use.

Chapter 7 concludes the dissertation by offering a summary of arguments and considering areas for future research related to the subject.

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