Pastoral Necessity of Homiletical Application

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Abstract: *This work combines Scripture's applicative emphasis and preaching's pastoral nature to answer the question, "What are the pastoral implications of homiletical application?" The first section, "Pew Observations," surveys the pastor through the congregation's lens to determine his impact on their obedience to the sermon's exhortations. This section includes two subcategories that promote textually faithful, grace-driven, and pastorally applied sermon applications. The second section, "Pulpit Observations," reverses the order by observing the audience through the preacher's lens to develop contextually localized applications. With the lens still intact, the pastor performs a self-examination to discover his biases and background to avoid imposing himself on the biblical text and his audience through the applications he provides.*

Key Words: *contextualization, ethos, exegesis, grace-driven application, pastoral application, sermon application, textual application*

Scripture repetitively insists that true understanding results in obedience. Moses commands Israel's priests and elders, "Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law" (Deut 31:12).[1] Jesus says to his disciples, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17). The theme continues in the apostolic age. Paul states, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified" (Rom 2:13).

Scripture's consistent emphasis on applying its truths supports sermon application's necessity. Late and contemporary preachers voice their approval of the previous claim through their statements on homiletical application. William Perkins says that preaching involves reading the text, explaining its meaning, gathering doctrines, and "if the preaching is suitably gifted, applying the doctrines thus explained to the life and practice of the congregation in straightforward, plain speech."[2] John Broadus claims that "application in a sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion, or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing to be done."[3] Bryan Chapell says that "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."[4] Calvin Miller asserts that "diagnosis is analytical. Application is prescriptive. Without application, there is no sermon. Application is what gets the Sermon off the Mount, and down into the valley where the toilers live out their days."[5]

Preaching is also pastoral in nature. Samuel Volbeda argues that if preaching is pastoral, the sermon must have a pastoral quality and spirit.[6] Richard Caldwell claims that "preaching is a pastoral work. The man who faithfully preaches is the man who loves God and his church, and therefore watches for souls. He should have the mindset and aim of one who is called by God to shepherd the church through the careful teaching and application of the word of God."[7] He highlights how pastoral responsibilities outside preaching offer the congregation opportunities "for the reiteration and application of preaching."[8]

Therefore, if preaching is pastoral and application is an essential sermon component, what are the pastoral implications of sermon application? This work seeks to determine the pastoral necessity of arriving at accurate homiletical application. Does sermon application strengthen if the pastor is a model of his applicative statements? Can application become more effective when the preacher knows his congregation? This essay concludes that faithful contemporary application is pastorally applied and contextually localized for a specific audience.

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[1] All English Scripture quotations are taken from the ESV unless other noted.

[2] William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, rev. ed. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 75.

[3] John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (Louisville, KY: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 197.

[4] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 188.

[5] Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 79.

[6] Samuel Volbeda, *The Pastoral Genius of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 29.

[7] Richard Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching: Expository Preaching for Pastoral Work* (Spring Hill, TN: Rainer, 2016), 18.

[8] Caldwell, *Pastoral Preaching*, 26.

The first section, "Pew Observations," focuses on the lens the congregation sees the pastor through and how their observations impact their obedience to the sermon's application. "Pew Observations" includes two subcategories that argue for favorable outcomes when the congregation sees that the pastor develops textually faithful and pastorally applied applications. The second section, "Pulpit Observations," considers the lens a preacher must apply when developing contextually localized homiletical application. "Pulpit Observations" also consists of two subcategories discussing the homiletician's responsibility to exegete the audience and himself to arrive at contemporary applications.

Pew Observations

Aristotle was not a man of faith; however, he speaks extensively on persuasive rhetoric through his three modes of rhetorical persuasion. *Logos* and *ethos* are two of the three relevant modes for this work. He states in his first book on rhetoric (translated), "There is persuasion through character (*ethos*) whenever speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly. Persuasion occurs through the arguments when we show the truth (*logos*) or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case."[9]

Therefore, the homiletician's life and character of godliness (*ethos*) and faithfulness to preaching Scripture accurately (*logos*) play significant roles in persuasion when applying Aristotle's modes to the preaching ministry. The preacher can "persuade others" (2 Cor 5:11) not by "plausible words of wisdom" (1 Cor 2:4) but with the wisdom God reveals through his Spirit (1 Cor 2:10). This section discusses the lens that a congregation sees the preacher through and how their view positively or negatively impacts their response to the sermon's exhortations. Confidence in gospel truths, the Spirit-inspired word, and holy living result in God producing favorable outcomes in the attendees' hearts, which are spiritual formation and maturity.

Textually Faithful Sermon Application

Parishioners are confident that a pastor's sermon applications benefit their spiritual lives when they derive from the biblical text. Textual applications carry more authority and prevent congregants from questioning whether the preacher wishes to sway them toward his agenda through manipulative techniques and methods. Luke records the following words

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[9] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, 2nd ed., trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 38–39.

when Peter preaches to Cornelius and the Gentiles present at Caesarea, "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word" (Acts 10:44). A church that receives faithful exposition from their pastor week after week becomes confident that his contemporary exhortations are Spirit-empowered. This section highlights four principles to ensure sermon applications adhere to the Scriptures.

The first principle is to ensure that applications are biblical and textual. This work does not discuss the exegetical process necessary to determine a text's meaning; however, the expositor must know the divine and human author's intended meaning before proceeding with textual application. Daniel Akin explains that text-driven application should be "grounded in biblical truth through a historical-grammatical-literary-theological analysis of the biblical text," "based on the author's intended meaning," and should "demonstrate[s] the relevance and practical nature of biblical truth for listeners in their present life context," "include[s] practical illustrations, examples, and suggestions," and "persuade[s] and exhort[s] listeners to respond in obedient faith."[10] Akin's explanation includes several ways that application can express itself in the sermon (illustrations, examples, and suggestions) while remaining faithful to the text's authorial meaning.

Greg Heisler argues for the Spirit's involvement in textual applications by stating, "The purpose of the sermon should match the Spirit's purpose in the text. The goal of the sermon should match the Spirit's goal in the text. The change I (Heisler) call for in my sermon (application) should be the change the Spirit calls for in the text."[11] Some applications are biblical and beneficial, yet not textual to where the congregation can connect the sermon's application and the pericope the pastor preaches. Pace adds, "Advocating for prayer, spending more time in God's word, or a stronger commitment to the church are all helpful reminders our people need to hear. While these applications may be biblical, that does not mean they are textual."[12]

To summarize the first principle, Pace responds to an interview question, "What safeguards do you recommend so that preachers do not stray from the biblical text in their use of application?" by recommending three questions to ask to ensure that application remains textual. "'What is the

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[10] Daniel L. Akin, "Applying a Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Matthews (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 272–74.

[11] Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018), 110.

[12] Robert Scott Pace, *Preaching by the Book: Developing and Delivering Text-Driven Sermons*, ed. Heath A. Thomas (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2018), 51.

theological truth of this text?' because the nature of revelation is revealing who 'God is.' The second question should be doctrinal, 'God does.' How does it relate to God's people? The third layer is spiritual. 'God is …,' 'God does …,' therefore, 'We should.'"[13]

The second principle to ensure that sermon application adheres to the biblical text is that application must follow exposition. The following are examples of application's placement in the sermon throughout church history. Paul's letters, although not sermons, provide a model for the second principle. For example, the first three chapters of Ephesians provide indicatives and doctrinal instruction. In comparison, the final three chapters list imperatives, applications that correlate to the theological teaching from the letter's previous chapters. Thomas Carroll comments on John Chrysostom's sermon structure by stating, "For Chrysostom, preaching was essentially the interpretation of a text from Scripture and its application to a particular congregation. Exegesis is, therefore, the starting point of his preaching as exhortation is its conclusion."[14]

The Spirit transformed Geneva through John Calvin's preaching multiple times throughout the week.[15] The body of Calvin's typical sermon includes exposition with application to follow and exhortation to obedience for each major point or sermon division.[16] Richard Baxter says of application, "What a tragedy it is, then, to hear a minister expand doctrines and yet let them die in his people's hands for the lack of a relevant and living application."[17] Application appears throughout Baxter's sermon divisions, with a majority in the conclusion. Jonathan Edwards concludes his sermons with a lengthy section on application after expounding upon a specific doctrine at the sermon's onset.[18] John Broadus suggests, "The body of the discourse has furnished the intellect with instruction and argument; what we want in concluding is, as remarked above, something which appeals to the affections and the will."[19] He also recommends that "the conclusion will, for the most part, consist of application. This term, as we have already seen, is popularly used to embrace a variety of materials, including application proper, suggestions for practical guidance,

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[13] Robert Scott Pace, interviewed by author, February 24, 2022.

[14] Thomas K. Carroll, *Preaching the Word: Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 114.

[15] Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister Is Called to Be* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2017), 17.

[16] T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 133–36.

[17] Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 69.

[18] Ralph G. Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 168.

[19] Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 247.

and persuasive appeal."[20] Lastly, Timothy Keller speaks against following the Puritan sermon model too rigidly by explaining the text and doctrinal propositions and saving application for the end.[21] He recommends that general applications appear in every division, with specific applications arising as the sermon progresses.[22]

I agree with Keller by not promoting a rigid structure when developing sermon outlines. Akin, Allen, and Matthews properly define a text-driven sermon as "a sermon that develops a text by explaining, illustrating, and applying its meaning. Text-driven preaching stays true to the substance of the text, the structure of the text, and the spirit of the text."[23] Their definition prioritizes the text when developing exposition, formulating the sermon's structure, and even the spirit and tone that preachers express when delivering the sermon. Therefore, different texts call for various structures and application placement; however, as the second principle highlights, application must always follow exposition. The congregation trusts applications that originate from the biblical text.

This pattern parallels the exegetical process the homiletician follows during sermon development. Developing applications happens after exegeting the text. Pace comments on exegesis preceding application during sermon preparation, "We really have to guard ourselves from putting the cart before the horse. Even if we know where the path is going, we still have to walk down the path to ensure we don't high jack or detour where the text is leading us. Application should be done at the end of the exegetical process. This prevents subjective application and reading present day application into the passage."[24]

Daniel Doriani's stance stands in opposition to the previous statements. He argues, "We do not exclude all thoughts of relevance until we complete our exegesis. While we interpret Scripture, Scripture interprets us. We might say that the Scripture applies itself to us. Understanding and application are separable but overlapping."[25] Naturally, contemporary application may birth in the preacher's mind during the exegetical process; however, textually unfaithful applications appear when he fails to filter his

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[20] Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 245.

[21] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 183.

[22] Keller, *Preaching*, 183.

[23] Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews, eds., *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 8.

[24] Robert Scott Pace, interviewed by author, February 24, 2022.

[25] Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 22–26.

applications once the interpretation process is complete. The congregation listening to the sermon is similar. They wish to see that a pastor's applications originate from the text's authorial meaning by following exposition.

The third principle for developing textually faithful application is that application must not exceed the amount of time spent reading and explaining the text. The preacher communicates Scripture's value by allowing the text and its explanation to eclipse the time spent in remaining sermon elements. Calculating the amount of exposition versus application can safeguard the preacher from overriding the biblical text. My previous research on Calvin and Edwards' sermons supports the principle and highlights how genre contributes to the amount of application to include. The research on Calvin observes four homilies from four separate biblical genres. Calvin's Decalogue and Job sermons contain forty to forty-five percent application versus exposition. The Beatitudes embody under fifty percent application, and his Ephesians homilies include thirty-five percent. Application appears more in his sermons on narrative texts versus epistles.

Ralph Turnbull records Edwards' sermon breakdown between exposition and application in several of his most famous homilies. "The Sovereignty of God" contains twelve pages of exposition, three pages of application; "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," four pages of exposition, nine pages of application; "The Excellency of Christ," thirteen pages of exposition, nine pages of application.[26] Edwards follows the Puritan approach to sermon structure by predominately saving application for the sermon's conclusion. There is no universal percentage of homiletical application's inclusion in the homily as long as it does not override textual exposition.

Finally, applications that are grace-driven increase a congregation's trust and prevents exhaustion or frustration. Jesus says of the scribes and Pharisees' demands, "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders" (Matt 23:4a). Chapell comments on Pharisaic applications by stating, "Make sure that you motivate believers primarily by grace, not by guilt or greed. If God has freed his people from the guilt of sin, then preachers have no right to put believers back under the weight Jesus bore or to reenslave them to any idolatry of selfishness."[27] Miller correctly states, "The world is tired of hearing pulpit 'how-tos' that have arrived to take the place of genuine transcendence."[28] Any application that does not derive from justification by grace alone through

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[26] Turnbull, *Jonathan Edwards the Preacher*, 168.
[27] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 198.
[28] Miller, *Preaching*, 29.

faith alone obscures the gospel message. Doriani says, "The first theme of application is that God's prior love calls forth faith, obedience, and affection for the Father."[29] A congregation's obedience to a pastor's applicative statements originates from the previous statement. Faithful service to God stems from a love for him and a desire for his glory. Application is a response to God's character on full display through Christ in a particular passage of Scripture.[30]

A preaching method that ensures sermon applications are grace-driven instead of moralistic is Chapell's Fallen Condition Focus (FCF). He defines the FCF as "the mutual human condition that contemporary persons share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage of God's people to glorify and enjoy him."[31] Therefore, applications originating from the grace required to rescue a person from the fallen condition that the text reveals become grace-oriented and impossible to articulate without the Spirit's help. Chapell argues that when applications lose sight of the FCF, the sermon becomes a handful of legalisms to follow without a redemptive focus.[32] Miller highlights, "The congregation wants the pastor to be a person of information. No one who speaks all the time, as preachers do, can be right all the time, as preachers aren't. Still the people in the pew want us to be right, and not just about the Bible either."[33] Miller probably agrees with the addition, "but especially the Bible," at the end of his previous quote. A biblically literate audience expects the pastor to preach the truth accurately. They expect him to be a man of biblical and theological information. The audience quickly recognizes the homiletician who steps into the pulpit ill-equipped with content. He loses his listeners' trust and fails to leave a lasting mark that sways them toward obedience to his applications.

The Pastor's *Ethos* and Sermon Application

God says to Jeremiah, following Israel's misleading by self-serving leaders, "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer 3:15). Therefore, God's future shepherds that he promises to his covenant people are followers before they are leaders and understand that the people in their care are not

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[29] Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 45.
[30] Pace, *Preaching by the Book*, 52.
[31] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 199.
[32] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 190.
[33] Miller, *Preaching*, 31.

their own.[34] Countless churches are guilty of prioritizing a pastor's gifted-ness over his godliness and eventually suffer the consequences. This section presents four spiritual components of the preacher's life that connect his *ethos* with the audience's response to his sermon applications.

The preacher that lives a life yielded to the Holy Spirit will see favorable outcomes from his congregants. Congregants hear a pastor preach with his life prior to him stepping into the pulpit, impacting whether they heed his textual applications. Charles Spurgeon encourages his students to ensure that their character agrees in all respects with their ministry.[35] He says of preachers, "Our truest building must be performed with our hands; our characters must be more persuasive than our speech."[36]

Abraham Kuruvilla says rhetoric "is not simply the art of persuasion but the art of persuading for good, accomplished only by one who is morally good."[37] "Good" to God is conformity to Christ (Rom 8:28–29). Therefore, the preacher that remains yielded to the Holy Spirit consistently allows the Lord to minister to his soul so that he can minister to others. Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix argue that good exposition and meaningful personal worship are not separate from one another.[38] They state, "Many otherwise gifted men miss the mark here. They assume their natural and spiritual giftedness will suffice. But even God's gifts, exercised in the energy of the flesh, breed death instead of life. How can we possibly communicate the reality of God to those who listen to us preach unless we've been in God's presence ourselves?"[39]

The second component is the preacher's dependence on God through prayer. Paul's reliance on prayer for the churches and companions he ministers to plays a significant role in their spiritual growth. He tells the church in Rome, "that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers" (Rom 1:9–10). He prays for the Ephesians' spiritual maturity in Ephesians 3:14–21. Paul's consistent and fervent prayers result in growth and maturity for those he instructs.

Paul also states in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "I worked harder than any of

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[34] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22.

[35] Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students: The 28 Lectures, Complete and Unabridged—A Spiritual Classic of Christian Wisdom, Prayer and Preaching in the Ministry* (Pantianos Classics, 1875), 17.

[36] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 17.

[37] Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching: Understanding the Heart of Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 43.

[38] Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2017), 96.

[39] Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 96–97.

them, though it was not I, but the grace of God this is with me" (1 Cor 15:10). John Piper asks the question from this verse, "How do you preach so that the preaching is a demonstration of God's power and not your own?"[40] The answer to this question is significant for this study because God's power in the preaching moment (or absence) is quite evident to the audience. His five-step response appears as the acronym APTAT. "I *admit* to the Lord that without him I can do nothing. Therefore, Father, I *pray* for help. The next step is *trust*, not merely in a general way in God's goodness, but in a specific promise where I can bank my hope for that hour. I *act* in the confidence that God will fulfill his word. I *thank* God at the end of the message that I was sustained and that the truth of his word and the purchase of his cross have been preached in some measure in the power of his Spirit."[41] His model provides a practical tool for pastors to seek God's grace in the preaching moment for soul transformation.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones refers to the Spirit's anointing as "unction" and emphasizes the significance of seeking, expecting, and yearning in prayer for his power and yielding to him when his power arrives.[42] He believes that the audience senses the effects of a Spirit-filled preacher through prayer and is more likely to apply his exhortations. He says, "They (listeners) are gripped, they become serious, they are convicted, they are moved, they are humbled. Some are convicted of sin, others are lifted up to the heavens, anything may happen to any one of them. As a result, they begin to delight in the things of God, and they want more and more teaching."[43] Prayer causes listeners to hear and visualize the Spirit's power working through the preacher's proclamation.

The third component is the homiletician's obedience to his applications. If a preacher exhorts, rebukes, corrects, or teaches his audience to follow specific applications yet the congregation does not see their shepherd as a model to follow, it weakens his persuasive appeal. For example, suppose the pastor begins an evangelism initiative from the pulpit due to a lack of salvations in the church but rarely shares his faith. In that case, it weakens the conviction and response from hearers.

Jesus's perfect discipleship model builds upon the third component. His disciples listen to his teaching and then observe his life accurately, reflecting his words as a paradigm to follow. He can say, "For I have given

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[40] John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 49.

[41] Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 49–51 (emphasis original).

[42] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 40th anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 340.

[43] Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 340.

you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:15). Kevin Vanhoozer's advice to the teacher reflects Jesus's example. He says, "Imparting and receiving information is only part of what transpires in teaching and learning. The good teacher, of Christian doctrine or anything else, knows that one must not only state facts but also show how."[44] While the pastor will not display the perfect model that Jesus provides his disciples, he must strive for obedience to all the general and contemporary applications he presents to his flock.

The apostle Paul repeatedly encourages the churches and individuals he disciples to become imitators of him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor 4:15–17; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 3:7–9; 2 Tim 3:10–11). He says to the Philippians, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us" (Phil 3:17). To Timothy, "You however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me" (2 Tim 3:10–11). Paul can provide a wide range of imperatives to his spiritual children that they can mimic from his words and life. Kuruvilla adds, "The Aristotelian *ethos* demands that preachers' lives also reflect their words. They should be models, to the best of their abilities and in the power of the Spirit, as they portray what it means to be faithfully obedient."[45] Homileticians who neglect to follow the same applications they pronounce are no different from scribes and Pharisees. A congregation with the same pastor consistently teaching and living amongst them will soon become conscious of his hypocrisy, negatively impacting their obedience to his exhortations.

The final component focuses on the homiletician's *ethos* in the preaching moment. A preacher's *ethos* describes the prior reputation that a preacher brings to the pulpit (extrinsic *ethos*) and an *ethos* created in his discourse (intrinsic *ethos*).[46] The previous section highlights how the Christian orator can earn his audience's trust by remaining faithful to the text's substance, structure, and spirit. This portion of the study focuses on how the homiletician reveals the text's spirit through rhetoric and ways to establish relationships with the congregation during the speaking engagement.

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[44] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 44.

[45] Kuruvilla, *A Vision for Preaching*, 44.

[46] James E. Beitler III, *Seasoned Speech: Rhetoric in the Life of the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 31.

Communicating the text's spirit requires the preacher to align his emotion (*pathos*) with the passage's emotional expression. Hershael York states, "Through conveying emotion, we can denote urgency, joy, sorrow, hope, grief, solemnity, faith, or any other appropriate emotion that further highlights the meaning of God's original message."[47] For example, Paul expresses the severity of incestual, sexual sin in the Corinthian church by stating, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you" (1 Cor 5:1–2). Paul's tone is harsh, expressing words of rebuke for the hideous sin the church is allowing to linger. The expositor has the right to imitate Paul's tone during his exposition, causing the audience to connect his tone with the biblical text instead of suspecting that the preacher is targeting them. However, preachers must assess their congregations before rebuking them for sinful actions they are not guilty of committing.

Dooley and Vines caution the preacher to avoid forcing the text to align with his emotional design. They state, "*Pathos* that does not correspond to the emotive mood of the biblical author is dangerously manipulative. Just as we are not free to tamper with the inspired *logos* of the Bible, neither are we at liberty to alter its *pathos*."[48] Comparing Scripture's *logos* and *pathos*, York argues, "I concur completely and argue further that a failure to preach the emotional content of the text is as much an abdication of expository responsibility as failure to preach the theological content."[49] I agree with York that expressing a passage's emotion is significant; however, I would not equate the emotional (*pathos*) content with the theological (*logos*) content. Akin's lecture to his seminary students appropriately responds to York's statement. He says, "What you say is more important than how you say it, but how you say it has never been more important."[50]

There is also a relational dimension to persuasive communication from the pulpit. It initially sounds strange that a one-way verbal conver-

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[47] Hershael York, "Communication Theory and Text-Driven Preaching," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Matthews (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 237.

[48] Adam B. Dooley and Jerry Vines, "Delivering a Text-Driven Sermon," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Matthews (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 247.

[49] York, "Communication Theory and Text-Driven Preaching," 241.

[50] Daniel Akin, Ph.D. Seminar in Expository Preaching, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 31, 2022.

sation can create a relational tie; however, it happens during every speaking engagement whether the speaker and audience are aware or not. Daniel Berger references Billy Graham's ability to establish relational ties with his audience at the sermon's onset to enhance the evangelistic appeal, arguing that "persuasion is primarily relational."[51]

The relational aspect of persuasive Christian rhetoric originates from a relational God. Berger comments, "Without the spiritual dimension, communication would be coercive or informative but not persuasive. The still small voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to the spirit can be exceptionally persuasive, yet never manipulative."[52] The preacher speaks with words clothed in the Spirit to build authentic Christian relationships from the pulpit to the pew.

Finally, Stephen Rummage suggests that every pastor ask these questions about his appearance that may impact the audience's perspective of his *ethos*. "Are you staying physically fit and watching your weight? Is your hair arranged in a pleasing way? Are you dressed appropriately for the occasion? Are you neat and orderly? Does your appearance distract or detract from your message?"[53] The pastor must consider all minor details that can deter an audience.

Conclusion

"Pew Observations" conclude that the church responds positively towards textually faithful applications delivered by a pastor who consistently displays a Christian *ethos*. This section highlights that homiletical application must originate from the passage expounded upon by remaining biblical and textual. Applications also follow textual exposition to ensure the audience makes the connection between the application and the biblical text. Exposition exceeds application in sermon time so that listeners notice their leader giving prominence to the Scriptures. Faithful applications remain grace-oriented to prevent exhaustion and insincerity. Lastly, the preacher is responsible for yielding to the Holy Spirit, depending on God through prayer, becoming the applications he preaches, and maintaining a Christian *ethos* inside and outside of the pulpit. A congregation that observes their shepherd express these pastoral necessities are more likely to imitate his life and words as he imitates the Lord.

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[51] Daniel Berger, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Christian Public Rhetoric* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 5.

[52] Berger, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, 8.

[53] Stephen Rummage, "The Preacher's Personal Life and Public Behavior," in *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 345–47.

Pulpit Observations

The focus now transitions from the audience's lens to the preacher's observations. What should a pastor consider when exegeting an audience for developing contemporary sermon applications? Collins dictionary definition of "contextualization" reads, "to place (a word, event, etc.) into a particular or appropriate context for the purpose of interpretation or analysis."[54] Homileticians and missiologists use "contextualization" to describe methods of preaching the gospel to specific cultural contexts.

Bruce Nicholls defines contextualization as "the translation of the unchanging content of the gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their separate cultures and within their particular existential situation."[55] Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost's definition reads, "the dynamic process whereby the constant message of the gospel interacts with specific, human situations. It involves an examination of the gospel in the light of the respondent's world view and then adapting the message, encoding it in such a way that it can become meaningful to the respondent."[56]

The first section, "Audience Exegesis," focuses on the significance of knowing and contextualizing an audience to develop contemporary textual applications. This section lists factors to consider when exegeting an audience that includes "guiderails" and "guardrails" to implement. The second section, "Self-Exegesis," requires the expositor to exegete himself to determine the presuppositions and biases that positively or negatively impact the applications he presents.

Audience Exegesis

Any information pastors can gather from their flock and the surrounding community improves the specific applications they use; however, preachers must apply certain precautions to prevent hermeneutically elevating the audience to a position they do not belong. Exegeting the audience requires the preacher to prioritize the Scriptures, live amongst the congregation, identify his flock's spiritual maturity, and understand generational differences to develop faithful contemporary applications for the expository sermon.

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[54] "Definition of 'Contextualize,'" https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/contextualize.

[55] Bruce J. Nicholls, "Theological Education and Evangelization," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), 647.

[56] Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 83.

D. A. Carson divides the contemporary understanding of contextualization into two separate brands. The first brand "assigns control to the context; the operative term is praxis, which serves as a controlling grid to determine the meaning of Scripture."[57] This brand allows readers from various cultural contexts to determine the text's meaning, leaving little to no significance to the original author's (divine and human) intent. Fred Craddock and Stanley Fish support Carson's first brand of contextualization. Craddock calls for a "program of biblical study and biblical preaching that is more realistic and more responsible as far as the bearing of the congregation's situation upon understanding the message of the text."[58] Fish argues, "It is interpretive communities, rather than either the text or the reader, that produce meanings and are responsible for the emergence of formal features."[59]

I support Carson's second brand of contextualization that "assigns the control to Scripture, but cherishes the 'contextualization' rubric because it reminds us that the Bible must be thought about, translated into, and preached in categories relevant to the particular cultural context."[60] Nicholls and Hirsch and Frost's definitions previously highlighted also support Carson's second brand.

The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is an example of providing instructions from the text's unchanging principles to a specific audience. The apostles conclude that circumcision and works of the law are not requirements for salvation; however, James does suggest that Gentiles "abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20). These applications for the Gentiles are not prerequisites for salvation, nor are they universal, timeless applications (apart from sexual immorality). They are applications for the contemporary Gentile audience in the first-century church to avoid offending the Jews in their context.

Stott's conversation on conservative and liberal preachers concludes with these comments: "On the one hand, conservatives are biblical but not contemporary, while on the other liberals and radicals are contemporary but not biblical. Each side has a legitimate concern, the one to conserve God's revelation, the other to relate meaningfully to real people in

the real world. Why can we not combine each other's concerns?"[61] This work agrees with Stott's conclusion. The previous research provides guardrails to prevent elevating the audience above the biblical text. Once the guardrails are secure, the expositor can proceed to audience analysis by living amongst his flock.

Doriani discusses the factors that preachers consider when examining their people by stating, "Exegeting the congregation means knowing that its history, social strata, age, region, and ethnicity create unique traits and recognizing that the thought world of pastor and congregation may differ."[62] Matthew Kim adds six more areas through the acronym "BRIDGE," recommending knowing the audience's beliefs, rituals, idols within the cultural context, dreams for life, their view of God, and past experiences.[63] A preacher may ask, "Are you telling me that after spending all this time exegeting the text, I must also dissect these various areas in my listeners before the task is complete? Even if I decide to study my congregation, how do I address every member's context through specific applications?"

The answer to the first question is that a preacher that values ministry longevity does not have to restart audience exegesis every few years. MacArthur shares his father's advice before stepping into pastoral ministry, "First, the great preachers, the lasting preachers who left their mark on history, taught their people the word of God. Second, they stayed in one place for a long time."[64] The ministries of Calvin, Simeon, Edwards, Stott, Lloyd-Jones, Criswell, MacArthur, and others support MacArthur's father's advice.

Ramesh Richard offers helpful advice to the second question. He suggests using specific applications from the following five life arenas: personal life, home life, work life, church life, or community life.[65] Most people fall under one (if not several) of these five categories, captivating their attention to applying text-driven contemporary applications for transformational change.

Arriving at localized homiletical application requires work. The pastor must become a shepherd to his people before he can speak directly to

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[57] D. A. Carson, "Church and Mission: Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon," in *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1987), 220.

[58] Fred B Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, rev. ed. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 101.

[59] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 14.

[60] Carson, "Church and Mission," 220.

[61] John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 106–7.

[62] Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 38.

[63] Matthew Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 18–24.

[64] John MacArthur, "The Legacy of Long-Term Ministry," The Master's Seminary, https://blog.tms.edu/legacy-long-term-ministry.

[65] Ramesh P. Richard, *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 117.

their issues. Pace argues, "If you can preach the same sermon to any congregation, then I'm not sure you've gone far enough with application in your sermon."[66] The study now shifts to a crucial congregational element that a preacher must determine prior to sermon development.

Assessing an audience's overall spiritual maturity level is crucial during the sermon development and delivery process. Two questions will guide the discussion on preaching to an audience's spiritual state. First, is the audience predominantly lost or saved? Second, how mature are the regenerate in a predominantly Christian congregation? Before answering these questions, Dennis Johnson reminds homileticians that "what both the unbeliever and the believer need to hear in preaching is the gospel, with its implications for life lived in confident gratitude in response to amazing grace."[67] The gospel's value, sufficiency, and necessity in every sermon do not change as the audience changes, but knowing an audience's relationship with Christ assists in communicating the gospel's unchanging truths effectively.

Vines and Shaddix help answer the first question by stating, "Although many passages of Scripture address issues that are equally applicable to believers and unbelievers, most texts address either the people of God or unregenerate mankind. The preacher must be very clear in his mind regarding the primary audience of his particular text."[68] The primary audience that Vines and Shaddix highlight changes throughout seasons of the year and special services. For example, churches often experience an increased number of lost people attending Easter Sunday. The pastor should include a practical gospel message that avoids words only the educated can comprehend and a clear, brief invitation to follow.

Chapell presents five suggestions when preaching to a predominantly unsaved audience that captures the balance Helm recommends: "An evangelistic sermon should be biblical…. An evangelistic sermon should be positive…. An evangelistic sermon should be clear…. An evangelistic sermon should be relatively brief…. An evangelistic sermon should communicate urgency."[69] These elements avoid abandoning gospel truths while displaying an attitude of love and concern for lost souls.

Rummage acknowledges the second question by highlighting, "There are believers who are obeying God while others are living far from him. Some are stagnating in their spiritual lives, while others are growing. The application you make in the message and the way you present the truths

of Scripture should be, to some extent, determined by the spiritual status and maturity of those who listen to your sermon."[70] Tony Merida suggests assuming biblical illiteracy from congregants. His suggestion does not mean the expositor cannot discuss the more profound matters of the biblical text. Merida explains, "Tell them how to find a passage of Scripture. Explain the stories as if you were teaching to someone who lived on foreign soil and had no Bible."[71]

Keller adds to the conversation by stating, "Avoid evangelical subcultural jargon and terms that are unnecessarily archaic, sentimental, or not readily understandable to the outsider." He adds, "You should give listeners theological definitions in their own language."[72] Spurgeon further takes what the Puritans called "plain-style preaching" by commenting, "We ought not to make even children inattentive. 'Make them inattentive,' say you, 'who does that?' I say that most preachers do; and when children are not quiet in a meeting it is often as much our fault as theirs. Can you not put in a little story or parable on purpose for the little ones?"[73] The focus now turns towards these "little ones" and other age groups to show how generational differences impact contemporary sermon applications.

To say that the current American culture is drastically divergent from previous generations is an understatement. Alan Noble acknowledges, "Whereas people traditionally kept the beliefs of their parents and community, today it is normal and even expected for each contemporary individual in the West to choose their own, personal beliefs. And it is common for people to change beliefs multiple times over their lives."[74] Thomas Bergler suggests that today's adolescents are searching for a faith that adapts to their social world versus their social world adapting to their faith.[75] Unfortunately, the American church often caters to their desire versus teaching otherwise. Bergler comments in a later work,

> American Christianity looks a lot like we would expect it to look if many Americans were stuck in a Christianized version of adolescent narcissism. It could be that most American churches have been fighting a heroic but failing battle against these trends toward

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[66] Robert Scott Pace, interviewed by author, February 24, 2022.

[67] Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 55.

[68] Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 128.

[69] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 369–71.

[70] Stephen Rummage, "Preaching to the People in Front of You," in *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 327.

[71] Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Expositor: A Field Guide for Word-Driven Disciple Makers* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 239.

[72] Keller, *Preaching*, 104–5.

[73] Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 100.

[74] Alan Noble, *Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 37.

[75] Thomas E. Bergler, *The Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 13.

a self-focused, immature faith. But the fact that so few American churchgoers know much about spiritual maturity and so few pastors have a plan to foster it suggests otherwise.[76]

Pastors must prioritize spiritual maturity in their churches from the pulpit through expositional preaching and allow it to flow to remaining ministries in the local body.

Jean Twenge provides a plethora of statistical data on what she terms the "iGen" or "internet generation." Twenge notes that the internet began two decades before the internet generation, though "iGen" represents adolescents with the internet constantly at their fingertips. She highlights how data on previous generations show increases in sex before marriage, alcohol consumption, teen pregnancy, driving under the influence, lack of parental supervision, and other categories; however, the internet generation is experiencing declines in these areas.[77] Today's teenagers are decreasing where previous generations increase and vice versa. High schoolers now wait longer to have sex, get their driver's license, go on a date, leave home, and find an occupation. Twenge credits the rapid change to an answer she calls obvious, smartphones.[78]

These changes now contribute to the rise in teen suicide, anxiety and depression, insecurity issues, and other areas that preachers can do more than talk negatively towards.[79] Expositors will serve young people well by including these issues with compassion and sincerity in their contemporary textual applications. Noble comments, "We need to be attuned to how our neighbors conceive of meaning and justification, what visions of fullness move them, and where they have found particular visions wanting. The desire to live a life of meaning and to have our being in the world justified is natural and good, but our goal is not to offer them just another vision of fullness to add to their options."[80] Noble's challenge requires trusting the Spirit's work through teaching gospel truths as closely to their circumstances as possible through sound biblical and audience exegesis.

Preachers cannot ignore their congregation's generational differences that influence their homiletical application. Despite these differences, they

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[76] Thomas E. Bergler, *From Here to Maturity: Overcoming the Juvenilization of American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 25.

[77] Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy–and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* (New York: Atria, 2017), 17–47.

[78] Twenge, *iGen*, 17–47.

[79] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* (New York: Penguin, 2019), 148–51.

[80] Noble, *Disruptive Witness*, 81.

also must recognize what never changes about their messages. P. T. Forsyth says, "The only preaching which is up to date for every time is preaching this eternity, which is opened to us in the Bible alone, the eternal of holy love, grace and redemption, the eternal and immutable morality of saving grace for our indelible sin."[81]

There is no shortage of hermeneutical and homiletical works that teach and exhort exegeting the biblical text, which is praiseworthy. The books on audience analysis are thin in the preacher's library. This section discusses how sermon application preparation can begin once textual and audience exegesis ends to ensure that applications remain textually faithful and contextually localized to a specific audience. The following section explains how work is still left to accomplish before contextualization is complete.

Self-Exegesis

This section continues to see through the preacher's lens; however, his focus is not on the parishioners but himself. MacArthur comments, "Most of us will admit that we tend to be so self-oriented that we see many things first of all, and sometimes only, in relation to ourselves."[82] Contextualization requires the preacher to perform a self-examination of his biases and cultural and religious background to ensure that he does not impose himself on the biblical text and his audience through the applications he provides. Scott Gibson and Matthew Kim discuss the inescapability of our makeup by saying, "Lenses are inevitable and shaped by our gender, race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, experiences, denominational affiliation, seminary training or lack thereof, and so on."[83] The following paragraphs speak briefly to several elements Gibson and Kim list (along with others) to assist homileticians in self-analysis.

The first topic contributing to the preacher's makeup is his family background. A person cannot avoid inheriting the traits of their parents or guardians. Wayne McDill says, "You are like your mother or your father. Sometimes it is a strange experience to stand a certain way or gesture with your hand and see your father in it. Your temperament has come

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[81] P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 20–21.

[82] John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1986), 118.

[83] Scott M. Gibson and Matthew D. Kim, eds., *Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 157–58.

from a long line of forebears."[84] Analyzing family backgrounds requires studying the past familial environment, preacher's birth order, beliefs and values, time spent with one another, the health of parents' relationship, and multiple other factors.

A preacher also inadvertently carries his family dysfunction into his ministry. Familial issues such as parents separating, verbal, physical, or sexual abuse, hearing and visualizing racism towards others, treatment of the opposite sex, and other issues travel with the pastor as he steps into the pulpit; however, these experiences do not have to remain a hindrance. For the Christian, "all things work together for good" (Rom 8:28). McDill later highlights this truth through a conversation on exegeting past experiences.

The preacher's previous church experience also affects his preaching in multiple ways. These variations exhibit themselves through homiletical authors from different denominational backgrounds. A pastor's preaching philosophy, theology, methodology, and delivery often (not always) stem from their denominational affiliation. McDill says,

> If you grow up in a dynamic, growing church, you will likely have a more dynamic concept of worship and preaching. If your home church was characterized by a peculiar folk style or regional tradition, you will think of preaching in terms that fit that approach. Students from the mountains of North Carolina tell of the "hackers" from their region who preach in a unique style. Black students often come from churches where the preaching follows a traditional style that may not work well outside those circles.[85]

The opposite can also occur. Some preachers may reflect on negative experiences from the pulpit ministries of previous church affiliations and wish to abandon their upbringing. Regardless, certain aspects of previous church experience are inescapable whether the pastor is conscious of what remains engraved.

Preachers often neglect to address women with specific applications.[86]

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[84] Wayne McDill, *The Moment of Truth: A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 1999), 29.

[85] McDill, *The Moment of Truth*, 30–31.

[86] This study supports the complementarian roles of males and females in the home, church, and society. Therefore, self-exegeting the preacher's gender assumes that the preacher is a male; however, this portion revolves around the preacher's view towards the opposite gender. This work is not a conversation that attempts to convert anyone toward a specific theological viewpoint. It is a challenge for the preacher to exegete himself and his thoughts surrounding the opposite sex.

Haddon Robinson reports from his context what remains applicable today, "In virtually every congregation, sixty percent or more of regular attendees are women, but many male preachers seldom refer to them or use illustrations or applications specifically related to their experiences."[87] Sam Andreades recalls a woman's response to his sermon on gender roles. She told him after the service, "I have heard plenty of times what I cannot do. Okay. Even if I accept that, it doesn't move me an inch toward knowing what I should be doing."[88] Andreades shamefully responds, "I saw my failure, and the church's failure in general, to give Rachel what she really needed. I was not giving her a reason to rejoice in the commands the Bible gives her."[89] Daniel Overdorf suggests that ladies often connect best "with preachers who speak relationally, in a conversational manner, and with a warm tone and body language. They appreciate speakers who let their guards down, laugh at themselves, and share their own stories."[90] Addressing women does not require the preacher to address every issue women have, especially not pretending to understand them all. The preacher must acknowledge that a large portion of his audience is the opposite gender and part of God's flock that he must shepherd well.

Race and ethnic divides appear throughout the Bible and across epochs of church history to the present day. This study supports Kenneth Matthews and M. Sydney Park's acknowledgment of the differences in the terms "race" and "ethnicity." They explain, "'Race' refers to inherited physical traits that characterize peoples, such as facial features and skin color. On the other hand, the term 'ethnic' (Greek, *ethnos*) identifies an affiliated 'people group' who share history, traditions, and culture, such as familial descent, language, and religious and social customs."[91] The preacher must ask, "Because I am '(a specific race and ethnicity),' how does that shape my preaching theology, methodology, and delivery? Do I favor a specific area of applications and illustrations over others due to my biases that originate from my race and ethnic background?"

Paul shares this issue with multiple churches he writes to that contain a blend of Jewish and Gentile believers. Clinton Arnold highlights the ethnic issues in the Ephesian church by arguing, "The problem may have

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[87] Haddon Robinson, "Foreword," in *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, Alice P. Mathews (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

[88] Sam A. Andreades, *enGendered: God's Gift of Gender Difference in Relationship* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2015), 12–13.

[89] Andreades, *enGendered*, 12–13.

[90] Daniel Overdorf, *One Year to Better Preaching: 52 Exercises to Hone Your Skills* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 132.

[91] Kenneth A. Matthews and M. Sydney Park, *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 30.

been exacerbated by a large influx of Gentile believers into the community in the years since Paul ministered in Ephesus. Not only was there already a natural and cultural tension between Jews and Gentiles, but Gentile converts often lacked an appreciation for the Jewish heritage of their new faith."[92] Christian leaders must understand their congregation's potential racial divides and whether their biases are contributing to the divide to address the issue as Paul does.

Past life experiences also shape our direction when approaching textual applications for sermons. For example, someone with a history of marital challenges and negative experiences from their parents' marital issues may insert more applications and illustrations towards marriage in their sermons compared to the single pastor or the pastor without the same hardships. These experiences contribute significantly to a preacher's development and sermon content.

Derek Prime and Alistair Begg agree that life experiences enhance effective preaching. They believe that God allows preachers to pass through difficult experiences that cause them to question his purpose; however, these experiences allow pastors to serve others more faithfully.[93] They mention, "Our application of God's word will be unconsciously and helpfully colored by our assimilation of their experiences and cries for direction."[94] Prime even argues, "One reason I would discourage a young man from training for the ministry straight from school or university is that he probably does not have the experience of life that will be so important in relating his ministry of God's word to men and women's real-life situations."[95]

Cultural backgrounds also impact the sermon application preachers produce. Kim encourages pastors to ask what types of "food, clothing, language, music, celebrations, and view of time" they "eat, wear, speak, hear, celebrate, and hold?"[96] These answers naturally appear in the homiletician's specific applications in various ways; however, it is unbeneficial to mention applications that overlap in the areas favorable to him while ignoring the audience's cultural backgrounds. The applications from the Jerusalem Council mentioned earlier are examples of specific applications revolving around food that may apply to one audience but not another.

Whether the expositor went to seminary and where also impacts his

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[92] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 44.

[93] Derek J. Prime and Alistair Begg, *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2004), 122–23.

[94] Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 123.

[95] Prime and Begg, *On Being a Pastor*, 122.

[96] Kim, *Preaching With Cultural Intelligence*, 223.

sermons and applications. Raymond Bakke says, "Most of us went to Bible schools or seminaries where we learned to design ministry in our own image, i.e., to sing the songs we appreciate, and to preach sermons we would like to listen to. Unfortunately for us, the challenge now is to retool and design ministry strategies in the image of the unreached who may be very different from us culturally."[97] Bakke does not highlight Scripture's involvement in ministry strategies in this quote. However, he does reveal the pride that multiple preachers develop and implement in local churches after completing their seminary training. Every context in which a preacher ministers requires audience exegesis regardless of where a pastor completes his seminary training. Keller comments, "The moment you open your mouth, many things, your cadence, accent, vocabulary, illustrations and ways of reasoning, and the way you express emotions make you culturally more accessible to some people and force others to stretch and work harder to understand or even pay attention to you."[98] The expositor should not attempt to change the message or himself after self-examination; however, he must test whether he can make minor changes to his preaching content and delivery that will result in major changes to his audience's response.

Conclusion

First Corinthians 9:19–23 must become the heart of every pastor that seeks to reach his audience with the gospel by the Spirit's power without compromising biblical truths. "Pulpit Observations" determine that audience analysis grants ultimate control to the Scriptures and does not allow an audience to dictate textual meaning. The preacher must also be a man that loves, knows, and spends time with his flock by living amongst them. It is not good when the church sees its minister as supernatural and set apart from their lives.

Knowing an audience's spiritual maturity is crucial when preparing and delivering a sermon. This study supports Tony Merida's suggestion by assuming biblical illiteracy and making extra explanatory steps to ensure the audience comprehends the content. Generational differences also play a significant role when developing contemporary applications to ensure applications are specific to those attending while remaining textually faithful.

"Pulpit Observations" are not complete until the pastor directs the

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[97] Raymond J. Bakke, "The Challenge of World Urbanization to Mission Thinking and Strategy: Perspectives on Demographic Realities," *Urban Mission* 4.1 (September 1986): 15.

[98] Keller, *Preaching*, 102.

attention to himself at some point during the exegetical process. Pastoral self-exegesis includes determining elements from the pastor's family background, previous church experience and denominational influences, thought process surrounding gender roles in the church, home, and society, racial and ethnic considerations, life experiences, seminary experience, and aspects of the preacher's cultural background. There is wisdom in implementing a strategic plan for the pastor to routinely perform a self-observation to protect him from declaring his cultural influences and biases as universally acceptable and correct.

Final Thoughts

The previous content explores the pastoral implications of sermon application to arrive at faithful homiletical application for the contemporary audience. The research supports the working thesis from the introduction. Faithful contemporary application is pastorally applied and contextually localized for a specific audience. Pastorally applied and contextually localized application requires the expositor to exegete the Scriptures, his audience, and their context, and systematically perform a self-observation to prevent from becoming the pastor that says, "Imitate me as I imitate me." The preacher must become a model of the specific applications he preaches while living amongst his flock to increase the application's effectiveness in their lives.

The following closing quote seems fitting to conclude this conversation. Alexander Maclaren comments on Jesus isolating the blind man before healing him, "Is there not in it a lesson for all you good-hearted Christian men and women, in all your work? If you want to do anything for your afflicted brethren, there is only one way to do it, to come down to their level and get hold of their hands, and then there is some chance of doing them good. We must be content to take the hands of beggars if we are to make the blind see."[99] Maclaren's quote supports the pastoral necessity of trusted homiletical application.

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[99] Alexander Maclaren, *Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 5, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 322.