

**A METHODOLOGY FOR THE EXPOSITORY
NARRATIVE PREACHING AS APPLIED
TO THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE:
FROM TEXT TO SERMON PRESENTATION**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Jae Seog Han, hereby declare that the dissertation submitted to the University of Pretoria for the degree of Doctor of philosophy is my own work and has not been previously submitted by me at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

The study begins with outlining the weaknesses of contemporary narrative preaching and traditional expository preaching, as we try to preach the Old Testament narrative texts.

As an alternative method for preaching the biblical narrative texts, the author proposes the expository narrative preaching as a genre-sensitive biblical sermonic methodology in the interpretation and the communication of the biblical narrative texts. The author uses the term “expository narrative preaching” to distinguish from the general use of the “narrative preaching” that excludes propositions from the narrative form of the sermon.

To establish a preaching paradigm for the homiletical process, the author examines the bridge-building model and the merging model and suggests a full 360 degree model as an alternative model. This model is then applied to the Old Testament narrative genre.

Throughout this dissertation, the author tries to show the full process of the expository narrative preaching from the selection of the text to the sermon presentation based on the Old Testament narrative. The expositional process (exegesis—theology—homiletics) moves from the meaning of a passage in its original setting to the theological principle, which is usually not expressed explicitly, and to the specific application of that truth recontextualized for the current situations of the particular audience.

As the first step of the sermon preparation, the study explores the exegetical analysis to preach the Old Testament narrative texts. In the exegetical process the preacher scrutinizes the meaning of the text in the original context. Exegesis focuses on the original audience of the text and the meaning that the text had for them.

As the second step of the sermon preparation, the study examines the theological analysis to preach the Old Testament narrative texts. The theological process begins only when the preacher has grasped explicitly and confidently the meaning of the text through the exegetical study. In the

theological process the preacher tries to unearth the universal theological principle which is applicable to the timeless universal audience.

As the third step of the sermon preparation, the study examines the homiletical process. In this process the preacher applies the original meaning of the text to the particular situation today. Homiletical process focuses on the specific audience as the target of sermon. The purpose of the homiletical analysis is focused on developing a homiletical product such as a time-bound homiletical proposition, purpose, and outline for today's listeners. Homiletical analysis is needed to preach a biblical text with relevance.

As the part of the homiletical process, the author explores how to develop and deliver the expository narrative sermon based on the former exegetical and expositional works. In this stage, various strategies are discussed to construct and deliver a relevant narrative sermon carrying a biblical message for the contemporary audience.

KEY TERMS

Audience analysis

Construction of the sermon

Delivery of the sermon

Exegesis

Expository Narrative preaching

Homiletical analysis

Old Testament Narrative

Proposition

Relevance in preaching

Theological analysis

ABBREVIATIONS

A. Abbreviations of the Bible books

Old Testament		New Testament	
Gen	Genesis	Matt	Matthew
Exod	Exodus	Mk	Mark
Lev	Leviticus	Lk	Luke
Num	Numbers	Jn	John
Deut	Deuteronomy	Acts	Acts
Josh	Joshua	Rom	Romans
Judg	Judges	1 Cor	1 Corinthians
Ruth	Ruth	2 Cor	2 Corinthians
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Gal	Galatians
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Eph	Ephesians
1 Kgs	1 Kings	Phil	Philippians
2 Kgs	2 Kings	Col	Colossians
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	1 Thes	1 Thessalonians
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	2 Th	2 Thessalonians
Ezra	Ezra	1 Tim	1 Timothy
Neh	Nehemiah	2 Tim	2 Timothy
Esth	Esther	Titus	Titus
Job	Job	Phlm	Philemon
Ps	Psalms	Heb	Hebrews
Prov	Proverbs	Jas	James
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	1 Pet	1 Peter
Song	Song of Songs	2 Pet	2 Peter
Isa	Isaiah	1 Jn	1 John
Jer	Jeremiah	2 Jn	2 John
Lam	Lamentations	3 Jn	3 John
Ezek	Ezekiel	Jude	Jude
Dan	Daniel	Rev	Revelation
Hos	Hosea		
Joel	Joel		
Amos	Amos		
Obad	Obadiah		

Jonah	Jonah	
Mic	Micah	
Nah	Nahum	
Hab	Habakkuk	
Zeph	Zephaniah	
Hag	Haggai	
Zech	Zechariah	
Mal	Malachi	

B. General Abbreviations

A.D.	Anno Domini
B.C.	Before Christ
BH ³	Biblia Hebraica, 3 rd ed.
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
Cf.	Confer
Ch(s)	Chapter(s)
ed(s)	Editor(s)
e.g.	For example
i.e.	That is
LXX	Septuagint
MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
MT	Massoretic Text
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OTN	Old Testament Narrative
tr	translation
Vol(s)	Volume(s)

C. Abbreviations of Reference Works

<i>BDB</i>	The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon
<i>BETS</i>	Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society
<i>Bsac</i>	Bibliotheca Sacra

<i>CJT</i>	Calvin Theological Journal
<i>CTM</i>	Concordia Theological Monthly
<i>CTQ</i>	Concordia Theological Quarterly
<i>ERT</i>	Evangelical Review of Theology
<i>Int</i>	Interpretation
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature
<i>JETS</i>	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
<i>JTSA</i>	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa
<i>LuthQ</i>	Lutheran Quarterly
<i>NTS</i>	New Testament Studies
<i>TMSJ</i>	The Master's Seminary Journal
<i>SJT</i>	Scottish Journal of Theology
<i>TJPP</i>	The Journal of Pastoral Practice
<i>TWOT</i>	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament
<i>TynBul</i>	Tyndale Bulletin
<i>VT</i>	Vetus Testamentum
<i>WTJ</i>	Westminster Theological Journal
<i>WTS</i>	Wesleyan Theological Society

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In this chapter, the author addresses essential issues of the dissertation. First, the author presents the rationale for the study. The rationale includes the statement of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and previous studies.

Second, the author establishes parameters for the study. This section includes the author's assumptions and hypotheses for the study. The author then articulates delimitations of the study establishing what he wants to accomplish and what is beyond the scope of the study. In addition, the research method to be used in the study is indicated.

Third, the author establishes a paradigm for homiletical process. In this section, the author introduces two different types of homiletical models related to the preaching process and then proposes an alternative model to be used to achieve the purpose of the study.

Fourth, the author introduces the overview of the dissertation. This section includes the overview of each chapter.

1.1 Rationale for the Study

The rationale for the study includes the statement of the research problem to be solved, the purpose to be accomplished through this study, and a brief survey of previous studies.

1.1.1 The Statement of the Problem

The difficulty in the development of a sermon from the Old Testament narrative texts made the author interested in the expository narrative preaching, while it was relatively easy to preach from the New Testament epistles. At all events, the New Testament epistles are addressed to Christians, and their hortatory and didactic style makes their relevance rather obvious and facilitates their

practical application for a modern reader. On the other hand, the Old Testament narratives are not directly addressed to Christians and they rarely give directly applicable message to a modern reader (Chisholm 1998:221).

The journey of the author toward a sermonic methodology for the Old Testament narrative texts began with the practice of the traditional expository preaching which he learnt from the seminary. For all its advantages,¹ the traditional didactic approach to the Old Testament narrative texts, ignoring the literary characteristics, brought about a difficulty in the effectiveness of the communication in pulpit ministry. The literary genres of the Bible should not be ignored in the development of a sermon.² The traditional didactic preachers, however, usually derive a three point sermon from every biblical passage, without regard to the literary form of the text. Preaching a few logical points from every text of the Scripture rather than making the texts themselves that have various genres speak causes the loss of the diversity and richness of the sermon from the pulpit. The sermon must reflect the contour of the biblical text without being a mere reiteration of the passage. The content of the text can be properly communicated in the sermon when the sermon form corresponds to the literary genre of the text (Pieterse 1981:10). Greidanus (1993:127) agrees:

One cannot separate form and content since form is integral to meaning. To inquire about form is already to inquire about meaning, for the form of the text sets our expectations of the meaning of the text . . . If form is integral to meaning in the biblical text, there is no reason why this should not be the case for sermons: The form of the sermon also co-

¹ For the advantages of the expository preaching, see Alexander (1988:228-253).

² This does not imply that the sermon form should replicate the literary form of the text. For example, preaching for a narrative text should not simply be a reproduction of the narrative itself, nor preaching on the Psalms should necessarily require a poem-form for a sermon. As Long (1989: 33) states, "This would obviously be both difficult and impractical." The preacher's task is not to replicate the biblical text but to regenerate authoritative message of the biblical text to the contemporary audience. Nevertheless, in order for the text to be heard today as it was heard at that time, the preacher must attempt to be faithful to maintain the literary contour of the text. Preachers must try to preach a poetic text differently from a historical account. If the text is a parable, then the sermon ought to retain that narrative quality (Willimon 1984:68). For example, a sermon on a narrative text can follow the plot of the narrative, while a sermon on a poetic text can follow the movement of its images.

determines *its* meaning. The form of the sermon is not a secondary matter but is vital in communicating the desired message. Moreover, the sermon form should do justice to the biblical form. Given the great variety of biblical forms, it will not do to have one sermon form fit all biblical texts.

The interest in the sermon method of the biblical narrative, on the other hand, led the author to become concerned about the contemporary narrative sermon method. Showing the possibility of the narrative preaching as an effective inductive sermon form, the “New Homiletic”³ against traditional deductive preaching began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Providing a remarkable new harvest of homiletical implications, the homileticians who belonged to the New Homiletic, including Fred B. Craddock, Edmund Steimle, Richard Jensen, Eugene L. Lowry, David Buttrick, Henry H. Mitchell and others, contributed to the development of contemporary preaching.

First, their stress of the natural inclination of the people to get involved in a story enhanced the effectiveness of the communication in preaching. Stories speak to the whole person. They inform the intellect, arouse the emotion, and challenge the will. A didactic sermon sounds more like a presentation and a narrative sermon sounds more like a story. Narrative preaching, thus, provides a wonderful opportunity to communicate the gospel in exciting, unexpected, and effective ways. People of all ages like stories. When a story is initiated, “the ear bends to the speaker, wanting to listen (Markquart 1985:137).” If a preacher loses the attention of an audience, then he or she loses everything. A congregation does not have an opportunity to rewind a speaker and to grab what was said. This is the main difference between the spoken versus the written word. If one important aim of preaching is to be heard, then a narrative

³ The term “New Homiletic” is the phrase used by Eslinger (1987) in the introduction to *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Methods*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. This term was used to express the emergence of contemporary homiletic movement based on an inductive approach, narrative or story form of sermon. Most homileticians acknowledge that the birth of the New Homiletic occurred in 1971 when Craddock’s *As One Without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching* was published. According to Lowry (1997:12), “The ‘New Homiletic,’ as it is often called, has evoked new images and new definitions about what preaching is all about—with such terms as *inductive* preaching, *phenomenological* sermons, storytelling, *eyewitness* biblical accounts, and *narrative* plots.”

sermon will gain a more solid response. Almost every textbook that discusses narrative preaching and its advantages reminds the readers that Nathan's story of the little ewe lamb, delivered to David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, is nothing other than an inductive narrative sermon (2 Sam. 12:1-7). The sinful king was ensnared in the story immediately, which was the preacher's intent.

Second, through the emphasis on the inductive approach in the construction of a sermon, the narrative preaching theorists changed the position of the congregation from observers to participants. The New Homiletic urges that the very design of the sermon should invite maximum participation of the congregation⁴ by using an inductive approach. Craddock (1971:54) says that the deductive preaching is "a most unnatural mode of communication, unless, of course, one presupposes passive listeners who accept the right or authority of the speaker to state conclusions which he then applies to their faith and life." He (1971:60) adds:

Everyone lives inductively, not deductively. No farmer deals with the problem of calfhood, only with the calf. The woman in the kitchen is not occupied with the culinary arts in general but with a particular roast or cake. The wood craftsman is hardly able to discuss intelligently the topic of "chairness," but is a master with a chair. We will speak of the sun rising and setting long after everyone knows better. The minister says "all people are mortal" and meets drowsy agreement; he announces that "Mr. Brown's son is dying," and the church becomes the church.

An inductive approach allows the audience to move from participation to the discovery of truth. In the narration of the gospel story the listener is more than an audience; he or she is a participant. Making the listener a participant of the sermon, when done effectively, the Bible story now becomes '*my story*.'

Third, their emphasis on the character of the narrative genre of the Bible evoked the concern about genre-sensitive preaching. It is insensitive to try to

⁴ According to Lowry (1980:8), for example, "a sermon is an event-in-time which follows the logic born of the communication interaction between preacher and congregation." Also, see Craddock (1985:25-27).

put every biblical text into a particular sermon form, ignoring the diversity of literary genres of the Bible. Discursive rendering of a narrative often fails to reach the listener with the intended force. For too long, however, many preachers have been guilty of a “cookie-cutter” approach in which the preacher forcefully presses a shape upon the dough of the text, assuring that every sermon looks alike. Narrative preaching, on the other hand, affords the basic union of form and content in the sermon. Generally speaking, contemporary homiletics agree that literary form is crucial in carrying the meaning of a text into a sermon. Achtemeier (1980:46), for example, notes, “because the story of God's salvation of humankind is presented to us through the heart-stirring genres of the Bible, it therefore follows that if we are to proclaim that story, we should do so in words and forms that will produce the same telling effects.” Graves (1994:28) also states:

Rather than forcing the same shape upon different texts, the preacher should be sensitive to the clues within the text as to what shape the sermon should take. Simply stated, the contents of a biblical text and the form of that text are both inspired. Marshall McLuhan's well-known expression, “the medium is the message,” might be amended to read, “the medium and the message are complementary.” Thus, the form of any given text is more than just packaging. Form and content work together to produce a combined impact.

Narrative preaching, as discussed above, is “a form of communication that must not be neglected in our preaching, especially for the exposition of narrative texts (Pieterse 1981:15).” The narrative preaching theorists have contributed to the preachers, providing useful insights to construct messages whose contours more closely conform to the tone and structure of some texts (Chapell 1996:4).

Contemporary narrative preaching theory has not only merits, however, but also some critical problems. Because they have a presupposition that personal experience is the basis of the meaning,⁵ new homiletics oppose to have a proposition in a sermon and suggest an open-ended sermon with no

⁵ For the process of the development of the narrative preaching theory and its presumptions, see Chapell (1996:5-12).

applications. A major tenet of the New Homiletic is that propositions, conclusions, and applications are out of the sermon. Preachers, therefore, must keep in mind the weaknesses as well as the strengths of narrative preaching in proper perspective. A balanced understanding of narrative preaching will lead to a balanced approach to preaching.

Let us now focus on the problematic aspects of the contemporary narrative preaching for the moment. The first problem we have to consider is the rejection of proposition in narrative preaching. Although they do not deny that the Bible contains propositions, the narrative preaching theorists believe that the Bible carries largely nonpropositional record and reject the notion that propositional preaching can fully deliver the message of the Bible to the congregation.⁶ Allen (2000: 511) speaks of this matter:

It should not be inferred that discursive reasoning has absolutely no place in the New Homiletic, but rather that it is subordinated to narrative, symbol, metaphor, and the like. The questions of truth and historicity in this schema are secondary to the experience evoked by the sermon which is grounded in a narrative and symbolist approach to preaching.

Narrative preaching, thus, allows individuals the freedom to experience the sermon for themselves, to draw their own meaning and application, and to feel their own feelings (Craddock 1971:157). Preaching is understood as a creative experiential event, not as a cognitive propositional conceptualization. The focus of preaching is a personal experience in the listener. Each person can draw his or her own conclusions. Reviewing this shift which has taken place in contemporary homiletics, Long (1993:167-188) summarizes: In the past, preaching sought to communicate meaning in a propositional way. Today's sermons, on the other hand, tend to invite the hearers to get the experience of

⁶ For example, see Buttrick (1981:46-58; 1987:23-28); Lowry (1985:78-81; 1997:45). Lowry (1985:79-80) says, "To claim the biblical record to be largely nonpropositional is not to claim there are no biblical propositions. It is to say, first of all, that the Christian revelation as experienced historically in the corporate body of Christ, the church, simply cannot be contained in propositional form. At best, propositional statements viewed formally can be no more than dead skeletons of what once was lived experience . . . At worst, propositional thought by its very nature distorts and even reforms the experiential meaning so that it is scarcely recognizable."

the gospel message. But, the meaning based on only personal experience which differs from each individual cannot be a trustworthy meaning, because a narrative sermon without proposition can produce different meanings in the minds of the congregation that can be contradictory to each other. As Chapell (1996:15) comments, “when personal experience dominates interpretation, transcendent meaning disappears.”

The problem we have to consider next is the open-ending with no conclusions and applications in narrative preaching. The emphasis on the indirect approach of preaching by the narrative homiletics naturally leads them to the open-ended sermon. Since they believe that the open-ended nature of the sermon provides real opportunities for the hearers to supply their own conclusions and applications to the sermon, narrative preaching theorists do not allow the preacher’s explanation and application.

In the open-ended sermon, the decision making is the task of the hearer, not the preacher. According to Jensen (1980:130-134), narrative preaching functions like a work of art that leaves the interpretation to the audience. At the end of their work, artists such as dramatists, novelists, movie makers, etc. do not tell us, “Now the point of this work is . . .” In its most developed form, likewise, a narrative sermon is the preaching itself. Narrative preaching need not point somewhere else. It can be autotelic. The hearers of a narrative preaching, therefore, do not need the preacher’s explanation, “Now the point of the story is....” Because of their presumption that personal experience is the primary foundation of human understanding, as mentioned above, contemporary narrative preaching theorists leave individuals to experience the sermon for themselves, to reach their own conclusions, and to make their own applications.

However, the open-ended preaching with no conclusions and applications by the indirect approach poses some problems. Because narrative preaching communicates indirectly and is open-ended, it is difficult for the hearers to catch the point of the sermon. Narrative preaching, thus, does not always communicate the intended meaning of the preacher. The hearers of the narrative preaching are stranded in the story line when they miss the point of the sermon. Davis (1958:161) speaks of the limitations of the narrative as a sermonic form, “The story conveys meaning indirectly, through its characters, their conversation,

and their interaction. It speaks by suggestion rather than in direct and explicit statement.” “There is always the chance that,” Davis (1958:161) continues, “[the audience] will hear nothing but the more superficial action of the story.”

Biblical preaching requires two essential elements of reference: the prior biblical message and the present situation of the hearers. The preacher’s two essential tasks are, in other words, to explain accurately the biblical text and to demonstrate the relevance of the text to the audience. Biblical preaching, thus, necessarily demands the authority of the Bible and the relevancy to the hearers. Warren (1991:463) states this point as follows:

The challenge of Christian ministry is to proclaim changeless eternal truth while applying it to ever-changing temporal situations. This demand is especially acute in the realm of homiletics. The biblical preacher must recognize and represent the timeless truth of God’s Word and then relate that truth to his audience.

The question we have to ask here is whether contemporary narrative preaching has these two essential elements. First, does narrative preaching carry the authority of the Bible? Biblical preaching requires the authority of the Bible. Preachers use a biblical text for preaching because they believe that the authority and trustworthiness of their preaching come from the Bible. “If people are listening for messages that carry elements of authority to guide their lives, where will they find such authority? What in the preaching event is authoritative? Is it the preacher himself? No. It is the Scripture that confers authority (Warren 1991: 465).” If the written words of the Bible are not to be considered as God’s revelatory speech, then the preaching of the Bible in an expositional manner becomes less important and has no authority—which is exactly what we see in the New Homiletic (Allen 2000:496).⁷

⁷ The Bible as the Word of God in an ontological sense is at the heart of the issue of the Biblical authority in preaching (Allen 2000:496). Jensen (1980:58) says, “Tell me how you understand Scripture and I think I can sketch a fairly clear picture of the kind of sermons you preach. A change in hermeneutics will therefore have an effect on the homiletical practices of its generation.” The rejection of propositional preaching by the narrative homileticians has its roots in the theological relativism and rejection of the biblical authority. For this concern, see Chapell (1996:3-16). Buttrick (1994:31), for example, who is a supporter of the New Homiletic, shows the negative opinion of the Biblical authority when he says that “neither Scripture nor preaching is word of God *per se*. The Bible can be God’s word because it can speak

To obtain the authority of the Bible, a sermon should be based on an accurate interpretation of the biblical text. Preachers must understand the meaning of the Bible for its first hearers before they can apply its significance for the present hearers. They cannot expect to discover the contemporary meaning of the Bible unless they know its original meaning. Without support of the authoritative propositional meaning of the biblical text in preaching, individuals are left to discover their own personal meanings in experiential narratives. Judging from the perspective of the authority of the Bible in preaching, therefore, the presupposition of the New Homiletic, in which truth is relative, personal and existentially related to one's own circumstances, cannot be accepted. As Adam (1996:25) notes, "Without God's words there can be no ministry of the word . . . The first great theological foundation for preaching, then, is that God has spoken." The title of Craddock's book, *As One without Authority*, may leave the reader with the impression that inductive preaching *per se* has no authority. But this is not the case. If an inductive sermon declares the truth of the biblical text, then the sermon has the inherent authority of the proper kind (Hamilton 2000:51).

Second, does narrative preaching have the relevance to the hearers? Biblical preaching requires relevance to the contemporary audience as well as the authority of the Bible. Effective preaching calls for demonstrating the application of the timeless truths of the biblical texts arrived at by means of sound hermeneutical principles (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:407). In narrative preaching, application occurs through a story which is indirect since it involves hearers in making it their own story. The indirect approach to preaching, however, cannot escape the loss of relevant application to the audience as well as biblical authority in pulpit ministry. The average hearers will not automatically make the right application.⁸ Without a clear logical connection based on the

redemptively. Otherwise the Bible is no more than a distinguished literary compendium." He (1994:17) also states that "what the Bible offers is narrative with an elaborate mythic beginning—creation and fall, Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the tower of Babel . . . the Bible offers meaning—not in every little passage; some Bible passages may be largely irrelevant or even sub-Christian—the Bible offers meaning by handing out a story with a beginning and an end, in between, a narrative understanding of how God may interface with our sinful humanity."

⁸ Miller (1992:107) warns that narrative preachers often assume that their audience will supply their own

meaning of the biblical text between various parts of the sermon, the hearers of an open-ended sermon will miss the point. Also, without the provision of clear applications supported by the textual meaning, the hearers of an open-ended sermon will miss the opportunity to get trustworthy applications. Open-ended narrative preaching without propositions and applications, therefore, will produce ambiguous meanings and applications in the minds of hearers.⁹

The validity of biblical preaching, on the other hand, is not determined by its traditional deductive three point sermon. Biblical preaching does not necessarily exclude narrative sermon construction. In the Old Testament narrative texts, biblical truth is carried to the readers by the vehicle of narrative literary form. Since form is integral to meaning, the narrative form and the propositional meaning should not be underestimated in the process of sermon construction. Ryken and Longman (1993:17) support the inter-relationship of meaning and form with this statement: "With a literary text, form is meaning. This implies that we cannot grasp the truth of story or poem, for example, without first interacting with the story qualities or poetic images."

According to Keck (1978:106), "Preaching is truly biblical when (a) the Bible governs the content of the sermon and when (b) the function of the sermon is analogous to that of the text. In other words, preaching is biblical when it imparts a Bible-shaped word in a Bible-like way." Propositional content and narrative form are equally important in the preaching of the narrative texts. Proposition cannot replace narrative form, and a narrative relinquishing proposition would lose its critical power. A poorly interpreted or communicated sermon cannot have the authority of the Bible and the relevance to the hearers. Chapell (1996:15-16) sums up the importance of both proposition and narrative

life stories to the sermon or they will draw proper conclusions from what the biblical story describes. Such an assumption, according to Miller, is a false one. Preachers cannot always assume that hearers can make connections between biblical stories and personal stories by themselves.

⁹ The author does not deny the possibility of the open-ended sermon. He simply stresses that the application in the narrative sermon "should never be allowed to be unconditionally free (Janse van Rensburg 2003:64)." If the message of the sermon is supported by means of sound exegesis, the preacher may occasionally finish his or her sermon with implicit application or open-ended form.

form in the preaching for the narrative texts:

The truth in Scripture comes packaged in both propositions and narratives, suggesting that a theory that minimizes the importance of either is insufficient for communicating the Bible's message. The theory that most closely corresponds to the Bible's contours does not require an either/or choice between narratives and propositions, but rather recognizes the value of each to serve differing purposes in the communication process . . . Propositions articulate, organize and universalize (or particularize) principles, while narratives clarify, stimulate responses, and personalize (or universalize) meanings. Each form of expression serves the other by supplying communication dynamics the other does not equally possess.

Since form and meaning cannot be separated from each other in the biblical text, the preacher should also respect both the form and meaning of the text in his or her sermon construction. The form of a text determines the character of the interaction between text and recipient. A poem, for instance, is received differently by the listener than a narrative is. Likewise, a narrative is not just a literary device. It is a form that directs the listener to read the text in a certain way. Although one can explain the meaning of a narrative in biblical texts, the narrative itself is much richer than the explanation. A preacher who wants to be consistent with the propositional meaning and form of a narrative text, therefore, should strongly consider shaping his or her sermon as an expository narrative sermon form.¹⁰

The above discussion leads to the research problem of this study. Then, how can preachers preach properly the Old Testament narrative texts with the authority of the Bible and the relevance to the hearers? What is a proper homiletical methodology for the Old Testament narrative texts containing propositions and relevant applications in narrative forms? To answer these questions, the author suggests the expository narrative preaching as a genre-sensitive biblical sermonic methodology in the interpretation and the communication for the Old Testament narrative.

¹⁰ For the definition of the expository narrative preaching, see the next section (1.1.2) of this chapter. This topic will be discussed further in Chapter 5 (5.3.2).

1.1.2 The Purpose of the Study

Based on above research problem questions, the purpose of this study is to investigate how to find exegetical, theological, and homiletical propositions from the Old Testament narrative texts and how to construct and deliver a narrative sermon carrying a clear proposition of the text and the explicit and implicit trustworthy applications to the hearers.

The author defines “expository narrative preaching” as *the communication of a biblical concept discovered through a Holy Spirit-directed exegetical, theological, and homiletical interpretation of a biblical narrative textual unit, applied by the Holy Spirit through a preacher to a specific audience, and delivered in a narrative sermon style*. First, the expository narrative preaching as a kind of expository preaching, therefore, requires an exegetical, theological, and homiletical analysis to generate a timeless proposition from the text and to apply it to the contemporary hearers. Second, the expository narrative preaching as a kind of narrative preaching, on the other hand, requires a narrative sermon form and its delivery. Therefore, the research title, “A Methodology for the Expository Narrative Preaching as Applied to the Old Testament Narrative: From Text to Sermon Presentation,” leads to the following sub-problems:

1. How can preachers get an exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline from the Old Testament narrative text in its own context?
2. How can preachers develop a timeless theological proposition, purpose, and outline from the exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline discovered from the Old Testament narrative text?
3. How can preachers get a homiletical proposition, purpose, and outline in order to apply the timeless theological meaning of the text to the hearers?
4. How can preachers develop and deliver a narrative sermon based on a homiletical proposition, purpose, and outline discovered from the Old Testament narrative text?

These sub-problems, constituting key chapters of the body, are scrutinized one by one in this research.

1.1.3 Previous Studies

Generally speaking, there existed a great dichotomy in scholarly works between the categories of hermeneutics and homiletics until 1980's. The classical works on homiletics concentrated on the preparation and delivery of sermons, while the standard works on hermeneutics stayed within the parameters of interpretation or exegesis. Since 1980's, there has been a healthy shift in exegetical and homiletical studies, focusing on the integration of the two disciplines into a complementary working relationship.

The work of Kaiser (1981)¹¹, for example, evoked the urgent need for a bridge to fill the gap between exegesis and exposition, i.e., hermeneutics and homiletics. In this book, Kaiser (1981:8) tried "to show the student how one moves from analyzing the text over to constructing a sermon that accurately reflects the same analysis and is directly dependent on it." He also emphasized the importance of the theological analysis in the process of exegesis and preparing a sermon. According to Kaiser (1981:131), "Nothing could be more frustrating and discouraging to the interpreter than to have a message fall flat and lifeless on an audience . . . The missing ingredient in most sermon preparation is theological analysis." Kaiser believes that biblical theology should play a central role in informing the text and in identifying the universal relevance of a passage for the modern audience. In addition, Kaiser (1981:91) highlighted that the literary form of the text should not be ignored in the exegetical process. He identifies five basic literary forms (i.e., prose, poetry, narrative, wisdom, and apocalyptic) and subsequently examines each one according to their distinctives (Kaiser 1981:91-95). The chapter entitled, "*The Use of Narrative in Expository Preaching*" deals with the unique challenges of the historical narrative for the modern preacher. Since Kaiser's introductory book on exegetical theology, numerous books on the subject of hermeneutics which are oriented toward the goal of expository preaching have been published.¹²

¹¹ Kaiser, W C 1981. *Towards an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹² For example, Liefeld, W L 1984. *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House; Achtemeier, E 1989. *Preaching from the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press; Johnson, E E 1990. *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House; Osborne, G R 1991. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press; Bailey, R (ed) 1991. *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*. Nashville: Broadman Press;

Recent development of the literary criticism has also brought a greater sensitivity and awareness to the literary forms of the Bible. As Greidanus (1988:xi) states, “Biblical studies has recently entered into a new world: it has undergone a paradigm shift from historical to literary studies so that scholarly interest today is focused not so much on history as on genres of biblical literature—with a concomitant shift in homiletics to forms of sermons.” This paradigm shift involves not only a growing awareness that much of the Bible is literature but also a tendency to use the methods of literary criticism when analyzing the Bible (Ryken 1990a:3). This new emphasis on literary criticism has been most beneficial for the interpretation of historical narratives. Now preachers are encouraged to respect the literary forms of the Bible in the process of sermon construction as well as exegesis.¹³

Especially, interest in narrative preaching has increased in churches of all different theological stripes in recent years. Even though there is an increasing interest in narrative preaching, however, there is no comprehensive homiletical guide as to how a preacher can move from accurate exegesis of a biblical narrative text to sermon construction conveying the propositional meaning of the text and reflecting the elements of narrative form of the text.

1.2 Parameters for the Study

The author establishes several parameters in this section. The parameters include the assumptions and hypotheses underlying the dissertation, the delimitations of the study defining the boundary of the dissertation, and the methodology of the study indicating the method to be used to achieve the purpose of the study.

1.2.1 Assumptions and Hypotheses

While the author examines many unresolved issues of expository narrative preaching, the following assumptions and hypotheses may guide this research.

First, the Bible is the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit which is inerrant,

Doriani, D M 1996. *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, etc.

¹³ For the importance of the meaning and literary forms of the text, see Keck (1978:106); Ryken and Longman (1993:17); Greidanus (1993:127); Chapell (1996:15-16); Vos (2005:51).

infallible, and authoritative in all areas of human life. The Bible was recorded in forms that still can be comprehended and obeyed, even today.

Second, a biblical text including the Old Testament narrative carries a single meaning which is intended by the biblical author. Every form of sermon, therefore, including narrative sermon as well as traditional expository sermon, should be concerned about communicating the timeless theological meaning of the text to the hearers.

Third, a valid sermon including narrative sermon should be based on an accurate interpretation of the text and the relevant application of its meaning to the hearers.

Fourth, narrative preaching should be considered as one of the possible preaching genres, but, at the same time, narrative preaching and traditional expository preaching are neither contradictory to nor exclusive of each other; rather, they complement each other.

Fifth, the expository narrative preaching can be an effective way of genre-sensitive sermonic methodology in the communication as well as in the interpretation of the text when the preacher wants to convey God's message from the Old Testament narrative to the hearers of today.

1.2.2 Delimitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations that impact this project. First of all, this dissertation will reflect the author's theological viewpoint. While the author consults the vast resources of existing literature largely related to the interpretation of the Bible and to preaching, he will screen all ideas through the conviction that the Bible is the authoritative revelation of living God that is both verbally and plenary inspired and inerrant. This implies that the literature based on the doctrine different from the author's will be critically examined rather than freely embraced.

This study will concentrate on the exposition of the Old Testament narrative texts, sermon construction and the delivery of a sermon. This study, thus, excludes other topics on the homiletics, such as the philosophy of preaching,

the history of preaching, the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching, the spiritual preparation of the preacher, and other aspects.

In relation to sermon construction, although the author does not believe that a narrative sermon form is necessarily the only way to preach the Old Testament narrative texts, this research will only be a study of a narrative sermon form. In addition, the scope of narrative sermon construction will be limited to the third person narrative preaching on account of length considerations.

Although the study of many other genres in the Bible is equally important, this study will limit itself exclusively to the study of the Old Testament narrative in the application of the homiletical method to the Biblical text.

1.2.3 The Methodology of the Study

The methodology of this study will be a literature-based research. The method of analysis is comprised of an intensive review of homiletical, hermeneutical, and theological writings. Through the systematic and critical survey of existing literature, the author suggests the expository narrative preaching as a proper homiletical methodology for the Old Testament narrative texts.

In this research, an exegetical methodology on the Old Testament narrative will lay the foundation for an accurate exposition of the text. In the preparation of a sermon, logically, exegesis precedes exposition. Once exegetical foundation is laid, the study of theological and homiletical exposition which transposes exegetical meaning into relevant meaning to the contemporary hearers will follow. As the final stage of this research, a study of the sermon construction and delivery on the expository narrative preaching will be carried out. In this stage, various strategies will be discussed to construct and deliver a relevant narrative sermon carrying a biblical message for the contemporary audience.

1.3 A Paradigm for the Homiletical Process

As mentioned in the previous section (1.1.1), the two crucial elements of preaching are the authority of the text and the relevancy to the audience. A wide gap exists between the world of the ancient text and the world of the modern audience. The gap was caused by the distance between the languages,

cultures, values, and experiences of the biblical authors/readers and those of the interpreters/hearers of today. The dilemma of the preacher is how he or she prepares a relevant sermon to the contemporary audience, without sacrificing the authority of the Bible. How best can we picture a homiletical model that holds together the complex dynamics that make biblical preaching eventful and empowered? If preachers have a method that meets the two requirements, and they must, then that method can relieve them of the dilemma (Warren 1991:469).

The preacher's task is to connect the two different worlds, that is, the world of the ancient text and the world of the audience. There have been two different homiletical models to connect the gap between the world of the text and of the audience. In this section, the author introduces these two homiletical methods briefly and then suggests an alternative model, following Timothy Warren.

1.3.1 The Bridge-building Model

A simple bridge-building model has been offered to explain what happens in preaching. In the process of the creation of a sermon, many evangelical preachers follow this model. Using the bridge-building metaphor, Stott (1982:137-138) states that the preacher's task is to build a bridge between the biblical world and the modern world. He believes that it is possible to connect the two worlds through the expositional process. On one side is the biblical text. On the other side is today's audience. The preacher bridges these two worlds as an interpreter and communicator, making the biblical text relevant (see Figure 1.1). Stott (1982:137-138) explains the bridge as "a means of communication between two places which would otherwise be cut off from one another by a river or a ravine. It makes possible a flow of traffic which without it would be impossible."

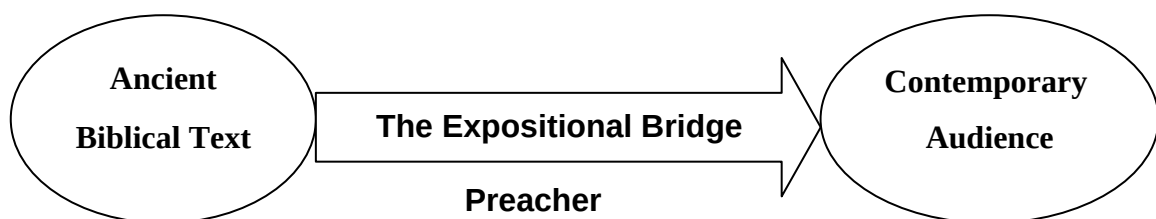


Figure 1.1 The Bridge-building Model

Stott (1982:138) continues, “What, then, does the gorge or chasm represent? And what is the bridge which spans it? The chasm is the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world . . . 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.”

As Quicke (2003:45) mentions, this model has certain merits. He comments on the merits of the bridge-building model as following:

This bridge model has many merits, not least that it appears solid and straightforward with two fixed points that need to be connected through vital communication. Stott warns about those who fail to make the connection: the theological conservative, who lives on the Bible side of the gulf and whose trajectory goes straight up into the air and does not land on the other side; and the theological liberal, who lives on the contemporary side and has the opposite problem. Stott commends an incarnational model of communication as the way to enter and connect Scripture and people’s worlds of thought and feeling. Such communication is “authoritative in expounding biblical principles, but tentative in applying them to the complex issues of the day (Stott 1982:178).”

This bridge-building model, however, has demerits as well. First of all, this model provides only one way communication, from text to audience. Thus, Quicke (2003:46) calls this bridge-building model the ‘180-degree model.’ We need a full cycle ‘360-degree model’ rather than a 180-degree model.

Second, this model does not explain how the connection between the two worlds is to take place (Warren 1991:471). Warren (1991:471-472) comments on this concern as following:

Stott’s conclusion that “the principal features of a preaching ministry which is conceived as an activity of bridge-building between the revealed Word and the contemporary world” are being “authoritative in expounding biblical principles, but tentative in applying them (Stott 1982:178)” leaves too much to imagination. Listening to others preach

and trying to learn how to preach, homiletics students may have been led to believe that some kind of ‘magic’ happens when, having carefully gleaned the exegetical meaning of the text, the preacher blinks his eyes and “Behold!” a relevant message appears. The process that enabled preachers to bridge that gap with authority and relevancy has not been delineated. And too often the “blinks” have brought forth ineffective results. One homiletician has written, “As professional skills go, sermon construction ranks among the most inexact (Robinson 2001:52).”

1.3.2 The Merging Model

As mentioned above, the gap between the world of the biblical text and the world of the modern audience represents the distance between the languages, cultures, values, and experiences of the biblical authors and of the modern interpreters/readers. The phenomenologists suggest the merging method to connect these two different worlds (see Figure 1.2). Many preachers who belong to the New Homiletic follow this method. The phenomenologists describe the aim of text-understanding as the fusion of two horizons, that is, the conversation between the ancient text and the modern interpreter (Thiselton 1977:329; Thiselton 1980:445; Gadamer 1989:304; 389-390).

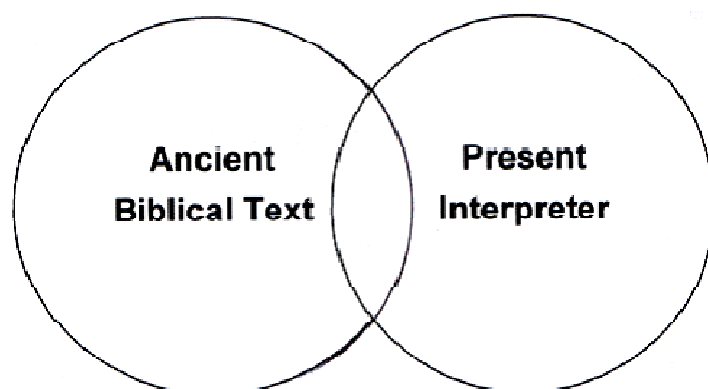


Figure 1.2 The Merging Model

According to Gadamer (1989:370-371; 398-403), the communication between these two horizons takes place through language. Conversation is the particular form in which language mediates between two people. In fact, the fusion of the two horizons, i.e., the communication between the text and the interpreter,

takes place in the process of the dialectic conversation between these two parties. In the process of conversation between the text and the interpreter, something, which is not only the interpreter's or the author's but common, is expressed. The text does not relate to the interpreter in an active or correcting way. On the contrary, the conversation between the text and the interpreter is initiated by the interpreter: "The text brings a subject matter into language, but that it does so is ultimately the achievement of the interpreter. Both have a share in it (Gadamer 1989:390)." The act of interpretation as a conversation with the text in the present, therefore, does not so much unlock the past meaning of the text. Gardamer (1989:393) says,

Rather, literature has acquired its own contemporaneity with every present. To understand it does not mean primarily to reason one's way back into the past, but to have a present involvement in what is said. It is not really a relationship between persons, between the reader and the author (who is perhaps quite unknown), but about sharing in what the text shares with us. The meaning of what is said is, when we understand it, quite independent of whether the traditionary text gives us a picture of the author and of whether or not we want to interpret it as historical source.

The merging method enlightened us on the importance of the world of the interpreter in the process of the sermon preparation. However, the merging method has weaknesses inherent to this theory. First of all, it is not so clear how the interpreter can protect himself or herself against misunderstanding of the text (Osborne 1991:371). As Osborne (1991:371) comments, "there are no clear criteria for avoiding subjectivism. In fact, each moment of reading can produce a new and innovative understanding."

1.3.3 An Alternative Model

Although preaching seeks to connect the gulf between the biblical text and the modern audience, its process is more complex than the merging model or the simple bridge-building model with the biblical text and audience at its two ends and a preacher making the connection. According to Long (1989:22-23), the crucial ingredients of preaching are congregation, preacher, sermon, and

presence of Christ. There is the *congregation* as the hearers of the preaching. There is the *preacher* who arises from the congregation but now stands to preach in front of the community. There is the *sermon*, which is an action, a spoken event that the preacher performs in Christ's name. Finally, there is the *presence of Christ*, for to say that the preacher acts in Christ's name is to say more than the mere notion that the preacher is an agent for a distant authority. Christ is present in and with the church, and all ministries, including preaching, are expressions of this presence. Long (1989:23) states that all these ingredients of preaching work together because the process of preaching possesses "an inner dynamic." Therefore, preaching needs a more detailed model to accommodate the various factors of preaching.

Warren (1997:19) suggests a full cycle 360 degree preaching process, which consists of four distinct sections connecting four separate points along the way (see Figure 1.3).

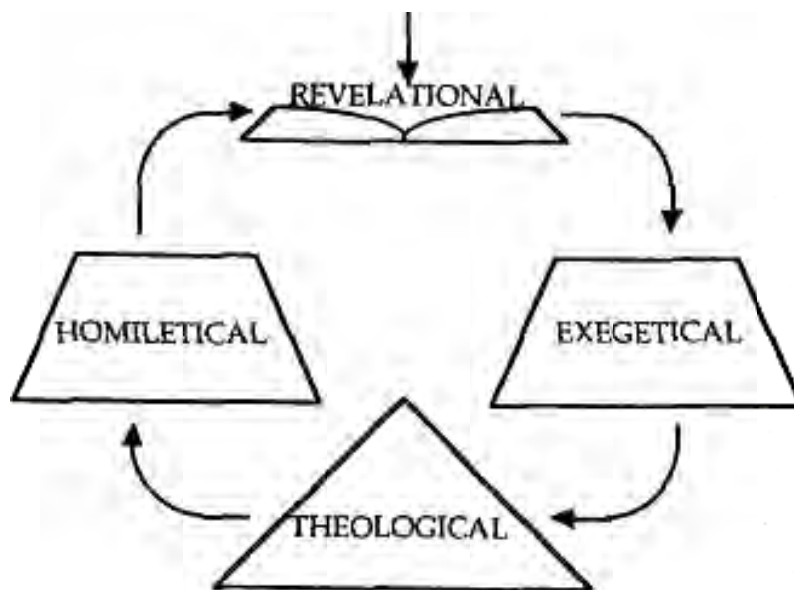


Figure 1.3 A Full Cycle Model

Figure 1.3 shows the four sections required of authoritative and relevant preaching. The preaching process begins with the Bible which is inspired by God and is therefore absolute and authoritative. As the first step in the

preaching process, the preacher moves into the world of the biblical text, and toward the product of the exegetical process (Warren 1991:473). Through the exegetical process, the preacher seeks to understand the authorial meaning of the text when the author wrote the passage for his particular, contextualized readers (Warren 1997:19). The exegetical process begins to bridge the gap between the world of the text and the world of the audience. The exegetical product is a statement of the textual meaning, in terms of exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline (Warren 1991:473). The next step consists of the theological process, which moves the preacher from the exegetical to the theological product. Through this step, the preacher seeks the universal theological principle of the text for a timeless universal audience. The third step consists of the homiletical process. In this process, the preacher seeks the best way to communicate the contextualized meaning of the text to a particular, contemporary audience (Warren 1997:19). The final step of the preaching process is the revelational process.¹⁴ This process “involves not only the preacher but also the listeners, whose lives demonstrate change for having heard and responded to the sermon (Warren 1991:473).”¹⁵ As Warren (1991:473) says, “The process is not completed until God’s people think and act differently for having heard the Word expounded. This is the revelational process, for its goal is to manifest or reveal God’s truth by living it out.”¹⁶ The preaching process begins with the divine revelation, i.e., a particular biblical passage, and moves through exegesis to theology to homiletics and back to the living revelation of the obedience to the sermon (Warren 1997:19). Where the preacher first enters this process is not important. The sermon may be biblical preaching if the preacher works through the full expository cycle. However, it is

¹⁴ Warren (1991:473) states, “One certainly must distinguish between the Revelational (capital R) product which is the result of the process of inspiration, and the revelational (small r) process of making God known through righteous living. In 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 3:18; and 4:6-12 Paul argued that the glory of God and the life of Jesus are revealed in Christians’ moral bodies. The increasing obedient Christian is not an inspired and infallible Word, but is a witness to and of the glory of God.”

¹⁵ This final bridging process is related with the obedient life of the audience to the preached message. It goes beyond the role of the preacher. So this revelational process will be excluded from this research.

¹⁶ “Although this final bridging process moves back toward the absolute, one must be careful to expect not perfection but an approximation of Christ-likeness that points to the absolute perfection (Warren 1991:473).” See, for example, Matthew 5:16; 5:48.

important that there must be no merging of sections and no eliminating of sections.

1.4 Overview of the Dissertation

Although this section is overlapping with the above methodology of the study, it will be helpful to introduce a brief summary of each chapter. This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapter one presents an introduction to the dissertation.

In Chapter two, the author examines the exegetical aspect in the preparation of the expository narrative preaching for the Old Testament narrative. The purpose of the exegetical analysis is focused on discovering an exegetical product such as an exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline from the Old Testament narrative text. In order to prepare a proper sermon for the Old Testament narrative text, it is necessary to understand what the story is saying in its original context.

In Chapter three, the author examines the second step of the interpretive analysis of the text by moving into the theological analysis of the Old Testament narrative text. The purpose of this chapter is focused on formulating a theological product, such as a timeless theological proposition, purpose, and outline. In sermon preparation, the theological task is needed to fill the gap between exegesis and homiletics.

In Chapter four, the author examines the third step in the interpretive analysis of the text by moving into the homiletical analysis. The purpose of the homiletical analysis is focused on developing a homiletical product from the timeless theological product, such as a time-bound homiletical proposition, purpose, and outline for today's hearers. Homiletical analysis is needed to preach a biblical text with relevance.

In Chapter five, the author explores how to develop and deliver the expository narrative sermon based on the former exegetical and expositional works. In this chapter, the developmental aspects of the expository narrative preaching and its presentation are explained.

In Chapter six, the author draws a conclusion and suggests some recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS TO PREACH THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

In the sermon preparation, exegesis comes first. Vos (2005:298) rightly emphasizes the primacy of the biblical text and exegesis in preaching when he writes:

In the creation of a sermon there are a number of hermeneutic processes that take place. First of all, the homiletician must enter the world of the text. What makes this so time-consuming and difficult is the fact that biblical texts were written many centuries ago, hence created in a different world. The homiletician has to try to bridge this difference. This requires him/her to respect the text, which implies that the homiletician should recognize its unique nature.

The purpose of Chapter two is to introduce a step-by-step exegetical procedure to obtain the original meaning from the Old Testament narrative texts. Here the author introduces a brief survey about hermeneutics and a procedure that will take the preacher from the original text all the way to finding the exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline of the text.

2.1 Introductory Study

Before proceeding to the exegetical procedure, it will be helpful to clarify what we mean when we talk about hermeneutics, what necessary hermeneutical foundations for biblical preaching are, and why we need exegesis.

2.1.1 Definitions in Hermeneutics

Whether he or she likes it or not, every reader of the Bible is at the same time an interpreter. Everyone can interpret the Bible, but how can an accurate meaning

be found? This question gave rise to the development of the science of hermeneutics by which we understand the Bible. Then exactly what is hermeneutics? And how does it differ from exegesis and exposition?

In its theological meaning, hermeneutics is defined as the science that deals with principles and methods of biblical interpretation (Berkhof 1950:11; Kaiser 1981:47; Silva 1994:15; Voelz 2003:13).¹⁷ It is common to distinguish between general and special hermeneutics. *General hermeneutics* is the study of the general principles which are applicable to the interpretation of all kinds of writings. It includes the topics of historical-cultural, textual, contextual, grammatical-syntactical, lexical, theological analyses, etc. *Special hermeneutics* is the study of the principles which are applicable to particular books and the classes of writings, such as laws, history, narrative, poetry, proverbs, prophecy, parables, allegories, types, and so on.

What then are exegesis and exposition? Hermeneutics is a kin to exegesis. As mentioned above, hermeneutics is the theory of biblical interpretation. When the theory is applied and put to work in the text, it is then called *exegesis*. Thus exegesis is an implementation of, and a set of procedures of, valid interpretive principles. Kaiser (1981:47) draws a distinction between hermeneutics and exegesis as follows:

While hermeneutics will seek to describe the general and special principles and rules which are useful in approaching the Biblical text, exegesis will seek to identify the single truth-intention of individual phrases, clauses, and sentences as they make up the thought of paragraphs, sections, and, ultimately, entire books. Accordingly, hermeneutics may be regarded as the *theory* that guides exegesis;

¹⁷ Some scholars define hermeneutics as the science and art of interpreting the Bible (Ramm 1970:11; Terry 1974:20; Virkler 1981:16; Osborne 1991:15; Zuck 1991:19, 61). In this view hermeneutics is considered as a science because it has certain principles and these principles can be classified into an orderly system. It is considered as an art because the application of those principles is flexible, and therefore a mechanical and rigid application of principles will sometimes distort the true meaning of the text. But if we include the application of those principles under the rubric of "hermeneutics," the line between hermeneutics and exegesis will not be clear.

exegesis may be understood in this work to be the *practice* of and the set of *procedures* for discovering the author's intended meaning.

The aim of exegesis is retrospective; that is, to understand what the text originally meant by discovering the historical meaning intended by the ancient author. The prospective aim, what is the meaning of the text along with its relevance to the contemporary readers, is called *exposition*, an application based on exegesis but not part of it. As Zuck (1991:20) says, "The primary concern in exegesis is an *understanding* of a biblical text, whereas the primary concern of exposition is the *communication* of the meaning of the text."

2.1.2 Hermeneutical Foundations for Biblical Preaching

Everyone is apt to interpret a Scriptural text subjectively with a certain theological conviction, regardless of whether he or she is conscious of the fact or not, and there is no neutral objectivity in interpreting a text. However, the theological conviction of the interpreter, while it does not by itself guarantee correct interpretation, affects seriously his or her understanding of the Scripture. If we want to be true Christians, our Christian commitment, including the reading and interpretation of the Bible, should coincide with the faith of the Scriptural writers who have functioned as the path of Christian revelation. If our basic concepts conflict with those of the Scriptural writers, we must have doubt over whether or not we are true Christians. In this section, we will discuss what a right way of hermeneutical approach to understanding the Bible is.

2.1.2.1 The Bible as the Word of God

Most Christians would agree that the Bible plays a unique role in connection with the relationship between God and man. Christian churches have long believed that the Bible is the Word of God. But the phrase that the Bible is the Word of God is in a controversy today. What then does it mean to say that the Bible is the Word of God? There are many different answers to the question. Generally speaking, however, two different views confront with each other: one, that the Bible is inerrant in all that it says—what the Bible says, God says; the other, that the Bible is inerrant in matters of faith and practice only—what is said in other realms may be mistaken.

The Bible bears witness to its own character as God's Word. The Bible teaches that it is the very Word of God addressed to human beings. The Bible has an inherent sense of authority, seen in the constant use of "YHWH says" or "God says" in the OT and the interchangeable use of "God says" and "the Bible says" in the NT (Osborne 1991:8). Woodbridge (1982:20) affirms that the Bible is inspired by God:

Evangelicals have commonly assumed that the biblical writers, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, wrote infallibly. These authors did so, not only for matters of faith and practice, but also in making incidental affirmations concerning history, geography, and the natural world. The contention on Evangelicals is usually based on the internal claims of the writers that what they had written came from God. It is also founded on a *a priori* premise: God cannot lie. His word, therefore, contains no admixture of error. Evangelicals have generally affirmed that this perspective represents the historic position of the church. Moreover, Evangelicals have consistently asserted that their stance reflects Christ's teaching about the Bible's authority.

This view is then often castigated as "Biblicists" who refuse to recognize the historically determined character of the biblical writings and turn the Bible into an idol. For example, Barr (1977:78) severely criticizes the conservative scholars who refer to the Bible's view of itself to defend the authority of the Bible, when he writes:

According to conservative arguments, it is not only Jesus who made "claims"; the Bible made "claims" about itself. The Book of Daniel "claims" to have been written by a historical Daniel some time in the sixth century B.C.; the Book of Deuteronomy "claims" to have been written by Moses; and more important still, the Bible as a whole "claims" to be divinely inspired. All this is nonsense. There is no "the Bible" that "claims" to be divinely inspired; there is no "it" that has a "view of itself." There is only this or that source, like 2 Timothy or 2 Peter, which makes statements about certain other writings, these rather undefined. There are no such things as "the Bible's view of itself" from which a fully

authoritative answer to these questions can be obtained. This whole side of traditional conservative apologetic, though loudly vociferated, just does not exist; there is no case to answer.

Barr's criticism is well known and cannot be bypassed. A strict rationalist does not allow the supernatural things in the Bible. Those who approach the Bible naturalistically believe they must minimize or eliminate the elements unacceptable to their reasoning because the Bible is of human authorship. For example, according to the rationalists, the crossing of the Red Sea was actually the crossing of the Reed Sea, a shallow swampland, through which the fleeing Israelites could walk. The rationalists, however, did not provide the answers about the meaning and goal of life that its proponents anticipated. They ignored aspects of life beyond the rational in biblical study (McQuilkin 1992:49). If Scripture were nothing but a statement of historical events in the past, it could be examined by the historical criticism. "But Scripture is much more than a historical statement; it is God's Word which even now comes to man to call him to faith and repentance (Greidanus 1970:199)." Runia (1962:184) speaks of the revelatory authority of the Bible:

In Scripture we have to do with the revelation of God and His great saving acts in Jesus Christ. Scripture is "a kerygma and not a history lesson; a message calling to faith and conversion and not only a proclamation communicating certain historical facts." Of course this must not be interpreted to mean that in the Bible historical facts are unimportant, or that there is a contrast between the kerygma and the historical facts The above-mentioned distinctions intend only to say that history has its place and function *in* the kerygma. It finds its correct accent only within the structure of the kerygma. In all its necessity and indispensability the history is "subordinate" to the proclamation of salvation, and serves the proclamation in its own peculiar way.

The Bible is not a source book for the historian, and that is not its purpose. Its purpose is to proclaim the gospel by telling us the true stories of God's mighty acts. It is illegitimate, therefore, to impose on the Biblical texts standards which proceed from a modern mentality. The historical texts of the Bible can be preached relevantly only because they are unique and because, in proclaiming

the acts of God, they far transcend the modern ideal of exactitude. As Lindsell (1976:18) puts it, the Bible can be trusted as truthful in all its parts as normative. Lindsell (1976:18) clarifies what this means:

By this I mean that the Bible is infallible or inerrant. It communicates religious truth, not religious error. But there is more. Whatever it communicates is to be trusted and can be relied upon as being true. The Bible is not a textbook on chemistry, astronomy, philosophy, or medicine. But when it speaks on matters having to do with these or any other subjects, the Bible does not lie to us. It does not contain error of any kind.

The authority of the preaching comes from the authority of the Bible. McCartney and Clayton (2002:33) state,

To deny that the Bible is the word of God inevitably vitiates its authority. If the Bible only becomes or only testifies to the word of God, then the individual reader is free, and indeed is obligated, to decide which parts truly become or truly testify to God's word. He or she must extrapolate the true word of God from the chaff of the errant text. So the authority ultimately rests with the reader and not with the Bible itself. How then can believers hear what they do not wish to hear? How can the wrong presuppositions and outlooks of the current age and culture be corrected?

2.1.2.2 The Starting Point for Biblical Hermeneutics—Human Reason or Divine Revelation?

The vast majority of scholars today, even though their theological views about the character of the Bible may differ from each other, employ the historical-critical method to interpret the Bible.

The historical criticism is rooted in rationalism. The spirit of the Renaissance (1300-1600) gave birth to the important intellectual movement called Rationalism. Following the Reformation, the spread of rationalistic interpretation was accelerated by the advances of science. Rationalism stresses that human

reason can decide what is true and false. The Bible, then, is true if it corresponds to man's reason, and what does not correspond can be ignored or rejected. In his originally anonymous *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670), Jewish Philosopher Bernard Spinoza argued for the primacy of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. In other words, Scripture should be studied like any other book—by using the rules of historical investigation (Grant & Tracy 1984:105-108). On that basis, the rationalist could not accept the miraculous in Scripture because he or she had not personally experienced the miraculous, and also because the reports of miracles could not be verified by experimentation. As a necessary consequence, the rationalist subjected the Bible to the authority of the human mind rather than the other way around.

Since the nineteenth century, there has been a great deal of development in the methods of interpreting the Bible, largely due to the ascendancy of the historical criticism. Further, much has been written on hermeneutics, especially from the point of view of modern philosophy. Radical advances in human science created popular confidence in the scientific method, which in turn produced an evolutionary method for studying history—the modern scientific study of history.

Scholars, especially those teaching in German universities, sought to approach the Bible through similar objective, scientific means.¹⁸ They developed the approach known as the historical-critical method, an interpretive method guided by several crucial philosophical presuppositions. Scholars regarded human reason as the best tool to study the Bible. They considered the Bible as any other literature—not as God's special revelation to humanity. They tried to explain everything in terms of natural laws and excluded the possibility of supernatural intervention (Zuck 1991:52; Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:44). According to them, "God said" in the Bible means "people wished." The supporters of the historical-critical method also believed that all history happened as an evolutionary process of development. Thus, they interpreted the history which was recorded in the Bible along that line, viewing earlier eras as "primitive" and later ones as "advanced" (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:44).

However, it has turned out that the historical-critical method is not sufficiently

¹⁸ For detailed survey, see Neil (1963:128-165).

scientific. Rationalists took a look into a well to find Jesus' face in 1st century, but they saw their own face reflected from the surface of the water. They failed to see the real Jesus because they tried to see Jesus with the presupposition that the historical Jesus was a moral teacher. The historical-critical method came to mean not simply the scientific investigation of biblical documents but a method that assumed from the start the critic's right to give judgment on the claims to the truth of the Bible. In the theological commitment, thus, to interpret the Bible by using the historical-critical method means almost by definition to acknowledge that it contains contradictions (Silva 1994:236). Rationalists chose the historical-critical method to provide a genuine and objective technique for biblical interpretation. However, they overlooked the truth that the interpreter cannot maintain an absolute and neutral standard of judgment, but only have a relative, preconceived, and subjective viewpoint which is influenced by the particular historical environment and particular interest of his or her own self.¹⁹ Silva (1994:237) comments on the historical-critical method as following:

[The history of biblical interpretation] reminds us that theological commitments can hardly be separated from decisions about hermeneutical principles. Given the claims of the Bible and the religious expectations it places on its readers, theological neutrality is a mirage. This is not to deny that people with widely differing theological assumptions can come to the same conclusions on numerous points of detail and even on significant issues. But we fool ourselves if we think we can approach the text of Scripture with unprejudiced minds. Current emphasis on the role of the reader's "preunderstanding" is therefore a

¹⁹ McCartney and Clayton (2002:67) comment on the historical-critical method, "We should use strictly grammatical-historical exegesis, some say. But on what ground? The Enlightenment insisted on "pure" grammatical-historical exegesis on the assumption that such exegesis is based on reason and is rationally controllable, and that a scientifically restricted approach to a text could result in a consensus. The past two hundred years have shown both of these assumptions to be false. Just as a hammer by itself cannot build anything, so "reason" by itself is a basis for nothing. And no consensus has been reached even among professional critical exegetes on the problems of the Bible. Thus we agree with Markus Barth (1962:78):

I am not yet convinced that the hermeneutical methods developed since the enlightenment have yielded results so superior to those employed by the authors of the NT that we are entitled to put their hermeneutics on a *Schandpfahl* or into a museum for good."

Note: A *Schandpfahl* is a small stand for displaying antiquities or art objects, a pillory.

salutary development that must not be ignored.

Grenz (2001:37) states that the historical-critical method as an interpretative tool excluded the canonical heritage of the Bible and regarded the logical understanding by reason as the only medium to interpret the Bible. As a natural consequence, it produced deconstruction. Rationalists did not realize that reason itself cannot be proved by certain empirical evidence. The historical criticism is based on the belief in the autonomy of reason (Dooyeweerd 1960:83).

All kinds of modes connected with the theoretic concept of human beings begin with an assumption which has a religious character (belief in presupposition) in its initial stages. There is no theoretical conception which is free from preunderstanding and transcendental presupposition in its frame of reference. On the last step of the logical process, because presupposition precedes the logic of reason, one can believe or reject a certain presupposition but cannot prove it. The Bible is not a product of human insight in relation to God but a product of divine revelation inspired by God. Therefore, the belief in the divine revelation of Scripture inspired by God must be the starting point of biblical hermeneutics. In other words, the proper starting point for biblical hermeneutics is not the belief in human reason but the belief in divine revelation (Davis 1988:36).

2.1.2.3 Presuppositions and Interpretation

Hermeneutical methods are the tools that the interpreter can use to find out what a biblical text means. Hermeneutical methods and techniques provide important insights regardless of who utilizes them. However, the interpreter's set of presuppositions about the nature of Scripture profoundly affects his or her task. Hermeneutical methods do not really determine the end result of interpretation (McCartney & Clayton 2002:61). They help the interpreter to derive legitimate meaning from the text. "But, as tools, they do not themselves determine what meaning will be found in a text, any more than a woodcarver's tools determine what he will do with a piece of wood (McCartney & Clayton 2002:61)." As Ellis (1978:163) says, "'Method' is inherently a limited instrumentality and, indeed, a secondary stage in the art of interpretation. More

basics are the perspective and presuppositions with which the interpreter approaches the text.”

The aims and presuppositions of interpreters govern and even determine their interpretations. No one interprets anything without a set of underlying assumptions. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993:87) put it this way:

When Charlie Brown expects to find the shapes of ducks and sheep in the clouds overhead, he finds them! Like Charlie Brown, interpreters can find in a text precisely the meaning, and *only* the meaning, they expected to find—as anyone who has read or listened to debates over biblical scholarship will attest.

When we try to explain the meaning of the Bible, we all bring our systems, traditions, prejudices, and presuppositions to the task of interpretation (Larsen 1989:159). That is why the great families of OT interpreters, such as the rabbis, Philo, the Qumran community, and NT authors, derived different meanings from the same passage. It was mainly because they had different convictions and presuppositions about the nature of the Bible rather than they used different interpretative methods (Chilton 1988:122-140). The NT authors understood the OT to speak of Jesus, and they indeed found him in its pages. In contrast, the Qumran sectaries, even though their exegetical methods resembled those of the NT authors, regarded their community as the primary target of Scripture, and so found themselves in its pages. Philo thought that the OT spoke Platonic philosophy, and of course he found it there.²⁰ “Hermeneutical goal is more important than, and antecedent to, method (McCartney & Clayton 2002:62).” For example, the interpreter who rejects the possibility of resurrection must explain all such biblical “events” as myth or legend—certainly not as literal history. Whatever these passages may convey to modern readers, such interpreter will reject the reality of such events.²¹ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard

²⁰ See Fitzmyer (1960:297-333).

²¹ If the Bible is regarded as the religiously inspired thinking of pious Jews and Christians rather than divine revelation itself, then “interpreters may feel free to handle it precisely and only as they do other ancient religious books. Such interpreters may seek to explain on the basis of sociological or anthropological models (among others) how the Jewish or Christian religious communities came into existence and how they formulated myths such as the crossing of the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds) or Jesus’ resurrection to explain their religious experiences and

(1993:87) state,

These presuppositions may be examined and stated, or simply embraced unconsciously. But anyone who says that he or she has discarded all presuppositions and will only study the text objectively and inductively is either deceived or naive. So as interpreters we need to discover, state, and consciously adopt those assumptions we can agree to and defend, or we will uncritically retain those we already have, whether or not they are adequate and defensible.

It is certain that the hermeneutical presupposition precedes the method. But this does not mean that method is unimportant. For example, the systematic theology functions as the “grid” for the interpretation of biblical texts. It affects the interpreter’s decision when he or she determines what is read from the text. Hermeneutical method is a product of the interface between experience and what one already knows of special revelation. Hermeneutical method assists in keeping the hermeneutical spiral spiraling. Hermeneutical method also provides rules to the study. And when method is in accord with presupposition, it provides a means of resolving certain differences in interpretation (McCartney & Clayton 2002:62).

What methods or approaches are appropriate in view of our Christian presuppositions? This is not an easy question. Various presuppositions have produced various interpretive methods. The author believes that the Bible is inspired by God and inerrant in its nature. Thus, the author assumes that we can draw proper interpretive principles from the Bible itself. As McCartney and Clayton (2002:63) state, “the Bible is its own best interpreter, not only in a general sense, and not only with respect to the passages specifically quoted and interpreted later in the book. I.e., *the Bible’s interpretation of itself should indicate to us the nature of our own interpretation*. That is, our hermeneutic should have as its standard the hermeneutic of the biblical writers, particularly the NT writers as they interpret the OT.”

If God makes men understand human language, using it in the way language generally functions, this hermeneutical circle is not a vicious one but a spiral

longings (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:88).”

(Osborne 1991:324). It is because the text itself has a power to correct if we depend on the internal consistency of Scripture. If the way of normal language-use in the OT involves the genuine purpose of longing for the Redeemer, the interpretive purpose of the NT is a proper frame for reading the OT, and the interpretation of the NT is true as it is in accordance with its purpose. The purpose of the NT writers had lain in Jesus Christ and his redemptive work through his crucifixion and resurrection. Therefore, what the NT writers considered most basically in methodology was that they should see how the OT told about Jesus' person and work, and the life of his people that would grow out of it. If the NT is truly God's Word, we should follow it, in its purpose and in the method authorized by the inspired writers as well. All of these, of course, are on the premise that the NT understands the OT properly.

The most important thing is that when one starts to interpret, he or she should have the correct purpose. On the other hand, however, the purpose will also determine the method. If we agree with NT writers' purpose, should we not agree with their basic interpretive method too?

2.1.2.4 The Place of Textual Meaning

In all communication, three distinct components must be present. These three components, as communication theorists tend to say, are the encoder (the sender), the code (the message), and the decoder (the receiver). If any component is lacking, communication is impossible. For written communication, there must be an author, a text, and an interpreter (reader or hearer).

The main goal or at least one of the main goals, of interpreting the Bible is to discover the meaning of the text being studied. Where then does the meaning of a text come from, or where is it located? Some say that meaning is independent of the author and resides within the text itself. Others argue that meaning comes only from the reader. Still others say that the author is the source of meaning, and that interpretation is simply a matter of recovering his or her intended meaning. In this section, we will examine and evaluate these approaches.

2.1.2.4.1 The Autonomy of the Text

This approach, supported by the “New Criticism” and “Structuralism”, regards texts as intentional objects. The New Criticism of the 1940s lost interest in the author and instead focused on the text’s formal features. In the 1960s critics turned their attention to certain deep structures that were thought to lie behind all forms of human life and thought. The structuralists attempt to find the deep structure in every story and literary account rather than the intentions of the historical author or the text’s historical context.

As an intentional object, according to this approach, a text possesses semantic autonomy in the sense that its meaning is completely independent of what its author meant when he or she wrote it. The meaning of a text does not come from the author or reader; rather a text has its own meaning. Once texts are written, they stand independently of their authors or readers. Thus, what the biblical author was trying to convey by the text is quite irrelevant with respect to the meaning of the text. In this approach, the author of the text vanishes into nonexistence. There exists only the implied author who is the assumed narrator of the text and only a fictitious speaker within the text.

The obvious problem with this view is that it separates texts from the author and reader who are the only clear source of the meaning. In other words, it depersonalizes the text (Ricoeur 1974:27-61). This approach, as Ricoeur (1976:30) comments, “forgets that a text remains a discourse told by someone else about something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing texts to natural objects, i.e., things which are not man-made, but which, like pebbles, are found in the sand.” Text itself cannot produce meaning because meaning is a product of reasoning and thought. Thus, whereas a text can convey meaning, the production of meaning can only come from either the author or the reader.

2.1.2.4.2 The Role of the Reader

In the 1970s and 1980s many critics abandoned textual positivism (where the text is the object of scientific study) and instead began to focus their attention on the role of the reader. As a result of this movement, the so-called Reader-Response Criticism was born as a reaction to the structuralist idea that the text

was an intentional object independent of both author and reader. Fowler (1991:25) summarizes on two common features of the Reader-Response Criticism: “(1) a preeminent concern for the reader and the reading experience and (2) a critical model of the reading experience, which itself has two major aspects: (a) an understanding of reading as a dynamic, concrete, temporal experience, instead of the abstract perception of a spatial form; and (b) an emphasis on meaning as event instead of meaning as content.”

According to this approach, the meaning of a text is determined by the reader. The autonomy of the text is rejected and replaced by individual identity. This view supposes that there are many legitimate meanings of a text, for each interpreter contributes his or her meaning to the text. This approach regards authorial intention as almost wholly irrecoverable and irrelevant anyway. The important thing is not what the authors intended to write, but what they wrote. Reader-response critics seek to find meaning from the interaction between text and reader, and think that no two readers will necessarily find the same meaning from their interaction with the same text (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:439). In fact, as Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993:439) comment, “this view maintains that similarities in interpretation derive only from the fact that various readers belong to ‘interpretative communities’ with shared conventions that lead them to read texts in similar ways. But apart from these shared conventions, there is no objective meaning in the symbols of the texts themselves.”

This approach made us aware of the intense involvement of the reader in the process of biblical interpretation. Based on their needs and inherent preunderstandings, readers can create various meanings out of the texts they read (Silva 1994:244). Interpreters and readers play a crucial role in determining textual meaning.

Despite its contributions, Reader-Response Criticism has its disadvantages. Its main weakness lies in its relativism. Reader-response critics face the danger that all other meanings now potentially have an equal footing, but few interpreters are now able to say which are normative.

Even though contemporary significance varies, original meaning remains

fixed.²² Reader-Response Criticism reminds us how widespread the influence of interpreter's preunderstanding is (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:440).

2.1.2.4.3 Authorial Intent

The more traditional approach to the study of the Bible regards the meaning of a text as being controlled by the author. According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993:133), textual meaning is: "that which the words and grammatical structures of that text disclose about the probable intention of its author/editor and the probable understanding of that text by its intended readers. It is the meaning those words would have conveyed to the readers at the time they were written by the author or editor."

This view argues that the Bible and other great works of literature are not to be treated as unique works of "art" possessing distinct rules supposedly appropriate only to art. On the contrary, they are to be interpreted in the same way that we interpret other forms of verbal communication. Thus, the most credible interpretation of a text is the one that is consistent with language in the way people typically write and understand that genre. We seek to understand a text in the normal and clear sense in which humans ordinarily communicate by that type of literature. As Vanhoozer (1986:85) says, "Scripture is composed of 'ordinary' language and 'ordinary' literature."

"Though one may never completely understand all dimensions and nuances of a specific message, normally the goal of the recipient in communication is to understand what the author/speaker intended (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:117)." We admit that it is unjust to take a conversation we have just heard and interpret the words of one of the speakers in a different sense from what the speaker meant. Indeed, we usually blame that sort of thing as morally unacceptable behavior. The idea that such a principle cannot be applied in the case of written documents is unacceptable (Silva 1994:246). Even the Reader-response critics, when they write books, will expect their reader to understand

²² Hirsch (1967:8) provides a crucial distinction between meaning and significance: "*Meaning* 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. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable."

the meaning of the text correctly.²³ Silva (1994:246-247) provides an example of this:

Consider, for example, liberation theologian Croatto's claims that interpreters should read into the text their own meaning. One suspects that Croatto would be deeply offended (and rightly so) if we were to interpret his book to mean that the best kind of hermeneutics is the fundamentalist approach, or that his book sets forth a capitalist ethics on the basis of which the United States is justified in exerting imperialist pressures on Latin America. Such an interpretation of Croatto's work would be deplorable and a personal insult.

Kaiser (1994a:45) concludes the matter of the place of textual meaning as following:

As Hirsch has pointed out, the basis for validating the meaning of any passage can only be located in the meaning that the author intended. But the legitimate significance in all contemporary applications of that passage is to be found in the identification of all valid relationships that exist between the intended sense of the author and any suggested contemporary issues, readers, and interpreters. To put it in another way, the authority for the sense of a text is only as solid as our grasp of the truth the author intended to convey.

2.1.3 The Need of Exegesis

The aim of exegesis is not trying to discover what no one else has ever found

²³ Silva (1994:247) states, "Exposure to contemporary theories of meaning and interpretation not only can prove dizzying; they can also create personal angst about the uncertainty of human experience. We need to keep in mind, however, that the same scholars who challenge the determinacy and objectivity of meaning go on in their daily lives assuming that interpretation is both possible and essential. They engage in conversations with the clerk at the bank and believe that the money they were told had been deposited is really there. They read the newspaper account of a fire in another city and do not experience an emotional crisis wondering whether the fire actually took place in the very house where they are reading the newspaper. They even write books about the death of the author and expect the reader to believe that they themselves are alive and kicking."

from the Bible. This is not to say that the correct understanding of a biblical text may not often seem unique to someone who hears it for the first time. But it is to say that uniqueness is not the aim of exegesis. At the same time, the interpreter is not trying to find some ideal, perfect or final interpretation, but to find the plain meaning of the text.²⁴ Good interpretation makes good sense of the text.

But if the aim of the exegesis is to find the plain meaning of the text, why not just read the Bible? Why is exegesis needed? We need interpretation because we live in a world far removed from the world of the Bible. There are several blocks (for example, in time, in language, and in custom) to prevent the spontaneous understanding of the original meaning of the text. Without proper exegetical work, thus, the understanding of the Bible may be misdirected or superficial. This suggests that, in exegetical work, we must seek to bridge several gaps existing between the biblical times and our age (Doriani 1996:4; Zuck 1996:19; Vos 2005:298).

2.1.3.1 A Third-Party Perspective Gap

Generally most documents are best understood when the writer has some prior knowledge of the reader and the reader has some prior acquaintance with the writer (Hays & Holladay 1982:8). But none of the Bible was originally addressed to the modern readers. The modern readers read the Bible from the third-party perspective. The third-party reader, in this case, must seek to understand the communication by assuming the role of or by empathizing with both the author and the reader. This requires the third-party reader to search out information about both the original author and the reader and their situations (Hays & Holladay 1982:9).

²⁴ Though man will never arrive at the full or perfect understanding, we cannot say that the partial knowledge of the text is wrong. Some knowledge is certain while it is partial and conditioned (Cf. De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg 2005:10). Motyer (1997:220) states, "We are not seeking some ideal, perfect or final interpretation, but that interpretation which (alone) is possible for me, granted the capacities of my intellect, heart and imagination. I know that I do not know, and that I cannot know fully—and this is true of my relationship with my wife, as well as the Scriptures. But I want to know *truly*, and to know as *fully* as possible, and the key to growth in all relationships is *questioning*. So I question the text, allowing the questions to be shaped by the text itself."

2.1.3.2 A Historical Gap

There is a huge historical gap caused by the fact that the present readers of the Bible are widely separated in time from the original writers and readers (Zuck 1996:19). Making a distant chronological gap, the books of the OT closest to us in time come from no later than 400 B.C. This chronological gap makes different practices, perspectives, customs, and many other differences between the biblical era and the present. When we read the OT narrative texts, we must keep this extensive chronological gap in mind.

2.1.3.3 A Geographical Gap

Most readers of the Bible today are separated thousands of miles from the places mentioned in the Bible. Even if we could visit all the places where the Bible events took place, few of them retain the original physical features that they had in biblical times (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:15). This lack of geographical knowledge prevents us from the correct understanding of the Bible.

2.1.3.4 A Linguistic Gap

The task of exegesis is needed because of a language gap between the biblical times and our age. The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These three biblical languages have their own distinctive structure, grammatical features, and vocabulary nuances from our own (Zuck 1996:20). The Hebrew and Aramaic of the original OT manuscripts include only consonants without vowels. In the process of the transmission of the original manuscripts, moreover, scribal errors occasionally crept in. To get the proper meaning of the text, thus, we must bridge the linguistic gap by translating the biblical languages into our modern language. To make principles to bridge the linguistic gap is one of the most important tasks of biblical hermeneutics (Ramm 1970:5).

2.1.3.5 A Cultural Gap

The modern readers of the Bible are separated from the world of the biblical texts by an enormous cultural gap. In biblical time, for example, machines were little developed. Slavery was widespread. Travel was slow and difficult. Animals

were slaughtered and burned on altars as an integral part of worship. In addition, our understanding of ancient customs in the Bible might be so coloured by cultural values of today that we miss their significance (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:14). It is impossible for us to be objective when we study a biblical text. Everyone sees reality through eyes conditioned by his or her own culture and experiences (Virkler 1981:19). Therefore, we need to know about the cultures and customs of the biblical world to get the most from reading the Bible.

2.1.3.6 A Supernatural Gap

Another reason for the need of exegesis lies in the dual nature of Scripture itself. The Bible is unique in the sense that it was written by God through men (Zuck 1996:21). The Bible, thus, has at the same time both *eternal relevance* as the Word of God and *historical particularity* as the document written by the human authors in history. The mere mention of historical and rational methods of interpretation, therefore, will never be sufficient to complete the task of biblical exegesis. In the interpretive process, tension exists between the divine and the human aspects of the Bible. Fee and Stuart (2003:21) speak of this concern:

Because the Bible is God's Word, it has *eternal relevance*; it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God's Word, we must listen—and obey. But because God chose to speak his Word through *human words in history*, every book in the Bible also has *historical particularity*, each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written (and in some cases also by the oral history it had before it was written down). Interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the "tension" that exists between its *eternal relevance* and its *historical particularity*.

Historical and rational methods of interpretation should have a proper place in the biblical exegesis. At the same time, we should keep in mind that these critical methods should not diminish the divine quality of the Scripture.

2.2 Determining and Translating a Narrative Unit

2.2.1 Choose a Narrative Text

The proper selection of a text is a necessary condition for valid preaching.²⁵ If the chosen text for a sermon is too short, preachers cannot escape subjective interpretations. A short text will yield a fragmented sermon perverted by the loss of the context. If the chosen text is too long, on the other hand, the sermon will be based on a superficial interpretation (Dorani 2001:305). The preacher selecting a too long text will skip explanation of important matters because of lack of time for development. The length of the sermon text, thus, should not be too short or long, but just right. If we finish a sermon on a narrative text shortly after we meet a certain character, it will lead to a moralistic and anthropocentric sermon. Only by following the narrative to the end can we find the action of God to preach. And only when we find the action of God from the text can we call the church to respond properly to it (Dorani 2001:306). Dorani (2001:308) speaks of the importance of the selection of a sermon text:

The hazards of wrong-sized texts are clear enough: moralisms, lectures, and pastoral chaff from short texts, and volumes of undigested data from long ones. The selection of right-sized texts, on the other hand, smooths the path toward applications that lend themselves to the forceful proclamation of one main point.

An appropriate passage has one distinct, unified message. It contains the whole thought of the author on one point (Beekman & Callow 1974:279; De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg 2005:15). To get an appropriate text, accordingly, the preacher must determine whether the narrative passage he or she has chosen for preaching is a genuine, self-contained unit of thought (Fee 1993:35). In addition, a narrative passage tells one story. Therefore, a well-chosen narrative text must be a passage that tells one complete story including one central idea (Beekman & Callow 1974:279-280).

2.2.1.1 General Principles for Choosing a Narrative Text

How then is a text with one central idea found? Dorani (2001:312-315)

²⁵ Preachers have several sources for finding sermon ideas: (1) The easiest way of finding sermon idea is starting from the biblical text itself. (2) Preachers can move from the congregational needs and situations to an appropriate passage. (3) Preachers' personal experience will also provide them with lots of possible preaching ideas.

introduces four general principles for finding a text with one central idea or one complete story.

1. Right-sized texts have a prominent and coherent idea.²⁶
2. Unified texts have a distinct vocabulary.²⁷
3. Unified texts repeat key phrases or ideas.²⁸
4. A unified passage clearly fits within its larger context.²⁹

The principles above are applicable for all kinds of texts. Some specialized principles will help preachers determine the boundaries of narratives. However, the process of choosing a narrative text will be easier if the preacher is working with general principles for a right-sized text.

2.2.1.2 Special Principles for Choosing a Narrative Text

²⁶ The goal of choosing a text for a sermon, therefore, is to locate one or more paragraphs where one big idea has prominence and subpoints develop it coherently.

²⁷ Special terminology often signals a text unit. Continuity and change in vocabulary can be obvious or subtle. The topic of Mark 7, for example, is obviously “tradition,” for the term appears five times in verses 1-13. Does the passage therefore end at 7:13? No, for the special vocabulary relating to clean and unclean things begins in 7:2 but continues to 7:23, after which it disappears. Thus, in Mark 7, vocabulary alone discloses the limits of the text. Confirming the clue given by vocabulary, Mark 7:24 begins with the geographical marker, “Jesus left that place . . .”

²⁸ Genesis 1 repeats the phrase, “And there was evening and there was morning, . . . day.” In the Sermon on the Mount, the repetition of a key phrase delineates several sections. Jesus’ phrase “Blessed are . . .” marks the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12). The phrase “You have heard that it was said . . .” sets apart the section developing the true meaning of the law (Matt. 5:21-48). The phrase “and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” unites the section on hypocrisy (Matt. 6:1-18). A special type of repetition called “inclusion” (or *inclusio*) is the use of the same phrase at the beginning and end of a section. For example, the statement “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable,” opens and closes Paul’s discussion of Christian freedom in 1 Corinthians (6:12; 10:23).

²⁹ Every passage contributes to its larger section. The themes of sections and books are usually clear; each smaller unit should advance them. For example, Israel’s need of a king is the theme of Judges 17-21, as the *inclusio* at 17:6 and 21:25 shows, “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” Each particular text within Judges 17-21 develops that theme. Every coherent text belongs to a larger section. If no such connection is seen, the text being considered is probably not of the right size.

A narrative text tells one story with one set of characters. As Doriani (2001:315) states, “A story ends when the action has been completed, when the tension has been released, when the protagonist achieves a goal, passes (or fails) a test, or makes a choice.” There are several signals that show a new story is beginning.

2.2.1.2.1 Discontinuity in Time, Place, Action, and Participants

A story is composed of a set of scenes. Each scene of the story usually describes actions that took place between two parties of characters at a particular time and place (Alter 1981:72; Kaiser 1995:71). In narrative, then, a new story or scene begins when there is a significant discontinuity in at least one of four dimensions, i.e., time, place, action, and participants, and usually in more than one (Dooley & Levinsohn 2001:37). Therefore, discontinuity in time, place, action and participants often indicates that a new scene or story is beginning.

2.2.1.2.2 Morphosyntactic Indicator

Introductory **וַיְהִי** followed by a circumstantial clause usually signals the beginning of a new narrative or scene (Bergen 1994:102-103). For example, **וַיְהִי** followed by a circumstantial clause in the beginning of Jonah 3:1 indicates the beginning of a new narrative unit.

2.2.1.2.3 Discontinuity in Language Pattern and Change in Topic

Discontinuity in language pattern and change in topic often signals the beginning of a new narrative or scene. For example, the book of Judges is presented by its formulaic language pattern exhibiting a “pattern in which successive cycles are organized in a set of pattern (Cotterell & Turner 1989: 242-243).” Also, discontinuity in language pattern between Jonah 2 and Jonah 3 indicates the beginning of a new narrative unit. While Jonah 2 consists of poem, Jonah 3 consists of prose. At the same time, change in topic in the beginning of Jonah 3 shows the beginning of a new narrative. In Jonah 3:1-2, the topic changes from Jonah’s deliverance by YHWH to YHWH’s renewal of His commission.

2.2.2 Establish the Text of the Passage

Exegetical task should be practiced on the original documents of the Bible. To get the correct meaning of the Bible, the exegete needs to have an accurate text. If there are errors in the text before the exegete, he or she is bound to be misled. Thus, the foundational part of exegesis is to identify the textual variants and to establish the original wording of the text (Waltke 1997:48; Thorpe 1999:9).³⁰

The books of the Bible were written by real authors in real situations. These original documents are called the autographs. It seems that copies were soon made of the autographs. But the manuscripts in the ancient world were not always copied perfectly. Furthermore, the autographs of all books of the Bible have disappeared and no single copy of any book or portion of a book can claim a clear copy from any given autograph. Because we do not have any of the autographs of the Bible, it sometimes becomes necessary to employ textual criticism³¹ in order to establish the original wording of the text.

Ancient writing on scrolls and codices (manuscripts in book form) did not look much like print in modern books. In the oldest biblical manuscripts words were written in capital letters with no spacing between words, punctuation, hyphenation, paragraphing, section headings, or any of the other devices of modern writing. Also, in the case of Hebrew and Aramaic, generally just consonants were written. The vowels were supplied by scribes later, centuries after the books were written. Many of the variations among later biblical manuscripts, thus, resulted from the ambiguities of the older manuscripts, especially in relation to word division (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:70).

Textual variations can be classified roughly into three categories: physical, unintentional and intentional changes (Brotzman 1994:107-108).³² First, some

³⁰ The "original wording of the text" means the wording which existed in the Old Testament text at the end of the process of written formation by the original author.

³¹ Textual criticism is commonly defined as "the art and science of recovering the original text of a document (Holmes 1991:101)."

³² For the examples of the mistakes which are typical for the manuscript transmission of the Old Testament, see McCarter (1986:26-61); Tov (1992:6-13; 232-285); Brotzman (1994:107-121;

physical defects in the scroll from which the scribe was copying caused scribal errors (Würthwein 1979:105). A stained spot or a worm hole could make scribal changes in the copying process. “Unfortunately, the modern text critic has no way of gathering information about such errors and no way of systematizing them by types (Brotzman 1994:107).” Second, unintentional variations are errors which occurred accidentally in the copying of manuscripts by the human frailties of the scribes (Brotzman 1994:107). When variations occurred accidentally, something went wrong in the copying process apart from the will of the copyist. It seems that, as they copied, scribes on occasion lost their attention (due to fatigue, distraction, etc.), and, as a result, spelling variations or other mechanical errors occurred (Voelz 2003:28-29). Third, intentional variations are errors which occurred deliberately for the purpose of the improvement of the text (Voelz 2003:31). Items in the text which caused problems to the copyists tempted them to make adjustments in the text which they produced.

According to Hayes (1979:47), the goals of Old Testament textual criticism are twofold: (1) an understanding of the transmission of the text in its various forms throughout history to locate scribal mistakes which have crept in during the text history and (2) the reconstruction of the text in its most authentic and original form by critically scrutinizing the Hebrew text transmission (or Aramaic in portions of Ezra and Daniel) as well as the ancient translations.³³

As McCarter (1986: 62-75) puts it, the process of textual criticism has three steps: the evaluation of the witnesses, the examination of the witnesses, and the reconstruction of the original wording. First step refers to the preliminary sorting of the witnesses to determine their relative worth. In this stage, the exegete collects the various witnesses, compares them, and attempts to determine the relationships among them. He or She asks which is descended from which and tries to establish a family tree of manuscripts. The goal of this stage is the isolation of those witnesses that, being independent, have a potential claim to originality. In the second step, the exegete examines the witnesses isolated by the first step to determine which, if any, is

133-166).

³³ The primary witnesses for the text of the Old Testament fall into two general categories: Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible and translations made from Hebrew manuscripts.

primitive. If the exegete concludes from his or her examination of the witnesses that the primitive text has not survived, in the third step, he or she attempts to reconstruct it. In practice, however, these three steps are seldom entirely distinct. The first and second steps, for example, very often merge into a single activity by which the original form of the text is identified. Sometimes the third step is not necessary. The solution is often found earlier in the work rather than at the end.

Despite the specialized nature of the field of textual criticism, the exegete can begin to take some significant steps toward the practice of the discipline. The author recommends the following basic procedures.³⁴

Step 1: Evaluation of the transmitted texts

- A. Consult the textual apparatus in BH³ and BHS. These two texts and the critical apparatuses of them, even though they are not always complete, generally suffice for the establishment of the transmitted text. Examine the variants and the MS evidence connected with each one. In the first place, the text transmission of the Hebrew (or Aramaic) texts should be taken into account, followed in the second place by the text transmission of ancient translations.
- B. List each variant and the MS witnesses that support them. Evaluate each non-Hebrew witness. Make the text witness groups according to their weight. Eliminate easily recognizable textual corruptions and changes. Correlate text witnesses dependent upon one another.

Step 2: Examination of the Various Text Transmissions

- A. Examine the external MS evidence for each variant.
 - a. To which textual family does the variant belong? What OT text testifies to this variant? As a rule, MT takes preference over every other transmission, as long as it is not defective linguistically and materially. The reason for this precedence is that it is the transmission of the original language and rests upon a calculated process of transmission of the text through careful studies.

³⁴ Here the author follows Thorpe (1999:10-13). For detailed procedures of the textual criticism, see Würthwein (1979:113-120); McCarter (1986:62-75); Tov (1992:21-369).

b. How old are the witnesses which support the variant?

B. Examine the internal evidence for each variant under examination.

- a. Is the variant a more difficult reading? (The more difficult reading is usually preferred.)
- b. Is the variant reading shorter? (The shorter reading is usually preferred.)
- c. Does the variant agree better with the author's style (choice of words) and use of grammar? Give proof.
- d. Does the variant fit the immediate context better? Give evidence for your contention.

Step 3: Scholarly research and reasoned decision

- A. Consult the best scholarly works on biblical textual criticism. Look for comments regarding your passage or other verses that involve similar characteristics.
- B. Consult the more critical commentaries that deal with your passage. Research those areas in the commentary that consider the textual issues.
- C. Now, on the basis of your own analysis of MS evidence and scholarly research, choose the textual variant which you believe is best to use in a formal translation of your passage. Rewrite your passage, if needed, with the new variants.

2.2.3 Make a Provisional Translation

After establishing the preaching text, the preacher as an exegete must become thoroughly acquainted with the passage. The best way to do this is to read through the passage in Hebrew several times and make a provisional translation. The preacher should read the Hebrew text several times, until he or she is sufficiently familiar with the content of the preaching text. Then he or she must translate the Hebrew text into his or her own language and read the translation over several times. The preacher must try to get a feel for the passage as a unit conveying God's Word to him/her and his/her congregation. He or She must try to become sufficiently familiar with the preaching

passage so that he or she can keep its essentials in his/her mind as he/she carries on through the next exegetical steps (Stuart 2001:69). It can also be useful at this point to compare modern English translations to discover options for translating difficult words and phrases. The exegete may find it convenient to note a few of the better options in these translations along with a few of his/her own ideas (Guthrie & Duvall 1998:119).

Also, at this point, the exegete should be on the lookout for the possibility that he or she may need to adjust somewhat the limits of the chosen passage, since the chapter and verse divisions which we have are secondary to the composition of the original and are not always reliable. The exegete must check by starting a few verses before the beginning of the chosen passage, and by going a few verses past the end. He or She should adjust the limits if necessary (shrink or expand the passage to coincide with more natural boundaries).

One thing to keep in mind is that the translation at this point is still a tentative, preliminary translation of the text that the exegete has established. A finished translation will be made later in the exegetical process. After thorough exegesis, the exegete should revise his or her provisional translation and provide a finished translation to reflect as accurately as possible the correspondence in meaning between the original text and his or her translation. The purpose of this step is primarily to establish a reliable translation and to familiarize with the content of the preaching passage (Fee 1993:37).

There are several advantages in doing one's own translation. One thing is that it will help the exegete to notice things about the passage that he or she would not notice in reading, even in the original. Making one's own translation requires careful attention to any textual questions that will affect the meaning of the text, the structure of the passage, its vocabulary, its grammatical features, and some aspects of its theology, since all these matters are drawn naturally to the attention of the exegete in the course of translating the words of the passage (Stuart 2001:71). Moreover, the preacher is the specialist in his or her audience. He/She knows his/her church members' language and educational level, the extent of their biblical and theological knowledge, etc. Indeed, the preacher is the very person that can

make a significant translation that he/she can use in whole or in part during his/her sermon, to ensure that the congregation is really understanding the true force of the Word of God as the passage presents it (Stuart 2001:71). As Stuart (2001:8) states, “a good translation is one that creates the same general impression for the hearer as the original would, without distorting the particular content conveyed.”

Once satisfied that the passage is properly delimited, and that its content is sufficiently familiarized, the exegete can proceed to the next step of the exegesis.

2.2.4 Make a Provisional List of Exegetical Difficulties

The exegete, when he/she writes out his/her translation, is recommended to make a provisional list of textual, grammatical, lexical, theological, and other items that will need special study (Fee 1993:37). The list need not be long; only a few significant exegetical issues should be included. This list may then serve as a reference point in the next exegetical procedures.

At this point, the exegete should ask questions to the text. For example, are there textual variations that make a difference in how one understands the text? Are there difficult words to understand? Which matters of grammar surface in attempting to translate? Are there theologically important and essential words in the understanding of the passage? Are some words used repeatedly in this passage? Are there words in the passage that do not occur frequently in this author's writings (Fee 1993:37)? The key question is, “What items in the passage are truly significant?” Check whether there are some items that are more crucial than others to the meaning of a passage. These items may be words or other semantic units, or structural features.

2.3 Interpreting the Text

2.3.1 Grammatical Analysis

Generally speaking, the exegete first should focus on the literary design of the narrative rather than the grammatical approaches in the case of narrative

literature. This means that the exegete, when working in narrative texts, has to endeavour to obtain the author's meaning from the study of broad literary context rather than struggle through a maze of complex grammatical relationships. Since grammatical study should not be ignored in interpreting any literary genres of the Bible, nevertheless, this section is designed to help the preacher with brief grammatical questions that are applicable to sermon preparation.

The goal of grammar is accuracy. In any language, bad grammar blocks our comprehension. In the exegetical process, a failure to appreciate the grammar in an OT passage is not simply a failure to observe niceties of speech; it is a failure to be sure that you know exactly what was or was not said (Stuart 2001:51).

In his or her exegetical paper, the preacher should discuss only a few items that have significance for the meaning of the selected OTN text. Pay attention to any crucial grammatical features that affect correct understanding of the text. Are any grammatical points in doubt? Could any sentences, clauses, or phrases be read differently if the grammar were construed differently? Are you sure you have given proper weight to the nuances in meaning inherent in the specific verb conjugations and not merely the verbal roots? Slight variations in syntax can convey significant variations in meaning. Are there genuine ambiguities that make a definite interpretation of some part of the passage impossible? If so, what at least are the possible options? Is the grammar anomalous (not what would be expected) at any point? If so, can you offer any explanation for the anomaly?

2.3.2 Lexical Study

Words are the vehicles that enable us to think. Through the combination of words, we express the distinctive thought in our mind. Words are also the basic building blocks for understanding the meaning of any written text. Accordingly, language communication employs words in its very nature. As Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993:183) state, the centrality of words in language communication emphasizes the importance of the lexical principle of hermeneutics: "The correct interpretation of Scripture is the meaning required by

the normal meaning of the words in the context in which they occur.” In seeking the author's intended meaning, we must consider the meanings of individual words in the context (McQuilkin 1992:109).³⁵ However, many preachers mistakenly consult a dictionary or lexicon to find out an uncontextual meaning and then use that meaning in every place the word occurs in the Bible without regard to context and other necessary study aids (Thorpe 1999:17).

Meaning is not expressed so much by separate words, but by larger units through the use of words. It is necessary to place the words in the wider context of the unit's structure in order to understand them fully and correctly (Yoder 1982:110).³⁶ An illustration may help to understand this point more easily. A single word by itself can be very ambiguous. For example, the word "shepherd" can be used as either a noun or a verb. The word "red" can refer to either a colour or to someone's politics. Yoder (1982:110-111) comments about the importance of understanding the words in the larger context as follows:

What is actually to be communicated must be seen from the larger context of the phrase, sentence, or basic unit. From this unit of meaning we understand which "sense" the word has in its present context and how it helps communicate the meaning of the larger whole.

Thus, the task of the exegete is to define as precisely as possible the meaning of a word in the way the author used it in its specific context. The serious Bible student will make a direct study of words that are crucial to the meaning of the passage he or she is studying. A word study will assist the exegete in locating the range of meanings of a word; through a careful examination of the context, the student can identify the meaning in a particular text (McQuilkin 1992:110). To appreciate fully how words work and the various questions an exegete must raise in order to study a term, both in context and with an eye to its overall usage, we must first understand several characteristics of words and method in word study.

³⁵ Their meanings, in many cases, are not always self-evident.

³⁶ "Having said this, it is still true, of course, that if we do not understand the meaning of words, we will not understand the passage. The study of words can be decisive for the meaning of a unit. To do this properly words need to be looked at in context. The principle to keep in mind is that the passage is *the context for understanding words, rather than the words studied in isolation determining the meaning of the passage* (Yoder 1982:111)".

Here the author suggests a summary of the basics of doing a word study, using the tools developed by linguistics experts. As your abilities and interests develop, you may go beyond the basics.

2.3.2.1 Select Words that Require Detailed Analysis

Since the word study is a time-consuming task and time is limited to busy pastors, you must choose carefully words in need of additional attention. Not all the words in an OTN passage need to be selected for special study. In many cases, in fact, no words need to be selected for further study. The depth of lexical analysis will depend on what the preacher needs to know to understand a particular passage.

How do you choose words for further study? One category includes words you cannot understand in English. You must be careful not to neglect pivotal terms simply because you assume you know their meaning. Words that are *crucial for a passage*, that are *theologically significant*, or upon whose meaning the entire sense of the passage rests warrant careful study (Kaiser 1981:127-128). It is better to do a preliminary study of a term and then exclude from more exhaustive study than to overlook a term whose meaning makes a crucial impact upon a passage. Study *rare words*—particularly those that occur only once³⁷—especially if they might have a major impact on the meaning of a passage (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:190). Then, also, a *word that a writer repeats* in a passage is usually significant and worth further study, especially to clarify its function in the passage. You should take particular care to investigate terms that are *figures of speech* in order to understand the implied sense. A word might not be instantly or fully understood because its wide range of meaning may span very different concepts. Thus, if English translations differ from the meaning of a word, the interpreter should investigate to discover the most accurate sense of the word (McQuilkin 1992:111; Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:190).

2.3.2.2. Determine the Range of Meaning of the Word

³⁷ Technically, a word that occurs only once in the Bible is called a *hapax legomenon*, from the Greek meaning "being said once."

As Bock (2006:138) comments, "Often an exegete simply assumes that a word has a certain meaning. However, the meaning of terms can change—from situation to situation, from person to person, and most important, from context to context." Words have a range of meaning. The task here is to discover the range of the possible meanings of words, called the *semantic range*, which the exegete has chosen to study. The task involves research in *lexicons* to discover the range of meaning the word had at the time when it was used by the author.³⁸ The consideration of these possible meanings of the word in the light of the chain of thought in the immediate context and the study of the historical background admit the interpreter to make an initial selection of the best English translation (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:190).

Searching the lexicons is a fact-finding mission.³⁹ While many lexicons assist in making contextual choices by listing biblical references under the various meanings of a specific word, we should always weigh the contextual evidence rather than simply accept the lexical opinion.

2.3.2.3 Consider the Context that Governs the Word

The meaning of a word is determined by the usage in the context. Fee (1993:100) comments on this concern:

In any piece of literature words are the basic building blocks for conveying meaning. In exegesis it is especially important to remember that words function in a context. Therefore, although any given word may have a broad or narrow range of meaning, the aim of word study in exegesis is to try to understand as precisely as possible what the

³⁸ In semantics this is called "synchronic analysis." Though words may have an interesting array of meanings over their history (thus "diachronic analysis"), interpreters must discover what words mean at the time in question (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:190).

³⁹ For OT studies *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* [abbreviated BDB] provides help for studying the range of meanings for words. Another source, certainly more convenient to use, provides a compact discussion of key Hebrew words: Harris, R L et al., (eds) 1980. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. [TWOT] Chicago: Moody Press. As a beginning, these sources help students discover the basic range of meaning for a word through its history.

author was trying to convey by his use of this word in this context. Thus, for example, you cannot legitimately do a word study of σάρξ (flesh); you can only do a word study of σάρξ in 1 Cor. 5:5 or in 2 Cor. 5:16, and so on.

Context actualizes the meaning of the word. By studying the "bigger picture" of your passage, you can take up the best position possible to do a contextually informed word study. Use what you have learned up to this point to convince the decisions you make in your word study (Guthrie & Duvall 1998:130-131). Select the lexicographical meaning that makes the best and most logical sense in the sentence and context (Van der Watt 2001:4). Comparison between different translations is useful here.

2.3.2.4 Consider How the Author Uses the Word in the Rest of the Book under Examination

This study serves as a control over the meaning that was contextually established (Van der Watt 2001:5). In order to establish meaning from context, it is necessary to have a number of clear and precise contexts in the same book.

At this point, however, it is important to keep in mind that the same word may have different meanings or that different words may have the same meaning in the same book (or in different books). This is called *polysemy*. It should not automatically be accepted that if it means one thing in one context, it will have the same meaning in all other contexts in the same book, not even to speak of different books (i.e., 'faith' in John does not mean the same in every context in John and is not used in the same way in John and Paul; 'flesh' is also not used for the same meaning in John and Paul). This is called *fixed meaning fallacy* (Van der Watt 2001:5). A word in a particular book does not always carry the same meaning and different words (i.e., synonyms) do not always carry different meanings. *Illegitimate totality transfer* must also be avoided. This means that all the semantic (lexicographical) possibilities of a word are read into every usage of that particular word (Barr 1961:218; Thiselton 1977:84; Van der Watt 2001:5).

If occurrences are few or contexts do not provide the necessary information for a clear sense of the meaning of the word, the case study in the same book cannot

produce reliable results. In this case, the exegete is often required to investigate how the same biblical author uses the word in other books and how other biblical authors use the word in other OT/NT books.

2.3.2.5 Select the Meaning that Best Fits the Context

Once the potential meanings of the word are known, *context* becomes the single most important factor for selecting the most probable meaning. Thus we must carefully evaluate the total context to decide which of the possible meanings fits best in the passage under study (Guthrie & Duvall 1998:132). We must be careful to avoid simply, but illegitimately, imposing any of the possible senses onto a specific use. This temptation is especially great where one meaning fits the interpreter's theology or pet position (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:200).

To select the meaning that fits best in the context, consider the following context-sensitive questions (Cf. Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:200; Guthrie & Duvall 1998:132):

- Which meaning fits best the historical-cultural background of the given passage?
- Which meaning best fits the overall message of the book?
- Does the way an author uses the term elsewhere (especially in similar contexts) influence your decision?
- Which meaning best matches the literary context, particularly the role or function of the unit of text you are studying?

Though words have a range of possible meanings through their history, individual authors decide how they will use the words in specific contexts. Conceivably, authors modify meanings or employ words in unique ways. To sum up, context is the single most significant determiner of the meaning of a word or phrase (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:200).

2.3.3 Research the Historical-Cultural⁴⁰ Background

After the preaching text is in his or her mind, the preacher must do extensive background reading from commentaries, biblical encyclopedias, dictionaries, and books on OT backgrounds. The very nature of Scripture demands that the exegete have some skills in investigating the historical-cultural background of OT texts. In their origin, OT texts were not written in a vacuum but rather rooted in a specific historical situation. God interacted with his people in a real life setting, in a specific time, and in a specific geographical realm to reveal Himself. Biblical texts reflect throughout the historical-cultural setting in which they were written, and to read them apart from that particular historical-cultural background is to invite a basic level of misunderstanding (Tate 1991:4). As Berkhof (1950:113) rightly puts it, "the Word of God originated in a historical way, and therefore, can be understood only in the light of history." He (1950:114) continues to say, it is "impossible to understand an author and to interpret his words correctly unless he is seen against the proper historical background." Exploring the historical and cultural background of an OT text therefore is an essential aspect of understanding its meaning.

An interpretation that accurately corresponds to the original setting best represents the text's intended meaning. The goal of historical-cultural research is: "(1) to retrieve, as best we can, the world of the Bible, (2) to discover the circumstances involved in the writing and the reading of particular books, and (3) to investigate the individuals and groups who play roles in the biblical drama (Doriani 1996:44)." What then are the clues which will help to reconstruct the historical background? Obviously, there are no easy answers or steps to follow here. The research of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the biblical world cannot be done without access to numerous bibliographic resources, both primary and secondary. The following guidelines, therefore, are not so much attempts to guide you through a process as to broaden your perspective and to give you some suggestions as to where to look.

2.3.3.1 Examine the General Historical and Cultural Background of the Book

⁴⁰ Culture is part of history because it concerns the creative result of man's actions.

The general information of historical and cultural background about the whole book provides insight into its overall setting and gives a general outlook for each passage. It becomes a historical-cultural "backdrop" for understanding the individual passages within the book (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:179). General background information includes pertinent facts about the author, recipients, and date of the book.

2.3.3.1.1 Authorship

Concerning the author, the interpreter will want to research the matters of identity, characteristics, position among God's people, relationship with the recipients, and circumstances at the time of writing. This information will help the interpreter understand the book from the perspective of the writer (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:180). We need to know when and to whom the author ministered so that we can be aware of the situation behind their actual statements. It is also helpful to know what kind of ministry they had and what their background was. A good introduction will recreate the historical era within which a book was written. This is an invaluable interpretive tool, since the words of the text were addressed to that original culture and cannot be understood properly apart from that culture (Osborne 1991:20). Of course, such material may be more accessible for some books than for others. For many books of the Old Testament, however, the information about authorship is uncertain. In such cases the inductive insight we gain from reading the book itself may be all we can say about the writer. If a book of the Bible does not make its authorship clear, we should not try to reconstruct the authorship and setting of the book and respect the author's choice to remain anonymous (Sailhamer 1995:198).

2.3.3.1.2 Recipients

Legitimate interpretation demands that, before we try to understand what a writer is saying to the readers today, we must do our very best to understand what he said and meant to the original readers (Tolar 2002:29). God spoke through that human author first to them. The original readers to which a book is addressed play a major role in the meaning of a passage. Their circumstances shed light on a passage; in particular, on how and why the writer develops

specific subjects (Osborne 1991:20). It is improbable, as Tolar (2002:30) comments, that “God would say one thing to them and say something totally different to us in the same identical words. We may be able to apply the meaning to a different situation, but that must not change the original meaning. The best axiom is that there was one meaning but it may have many applications.” Concerning the recipients, following questions will be helpful: Who received the book? What was their relationship to the author?⁴¹ What was their social setting? What was the level of spiritual commitment of the original recipients? What were their values, circumstances, needs, problems, hopes, and so forth?

2.3.3.1.3 Date

The date when a particular book was written gives the exegete an interpretive set of tools for unlocking the meaning of a text. Daniel would mean something quite different if it were written during the period of the Maccabees (Osborne 1991:20). Knowing the date when a book was written enables the exegete to include, in the exegetical analysis, historical-cultural information from other sources for that period (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:180). For some OT books there is not enough information to determine an accurate date. The historical facts included in the book may fit several time periods equally well. Or we may be able to set a book only within a given century at best. In such situations the main emphasis should be on the general circumstances in that period of time in that part of the world (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:180-181).

For interpretive purposes, knowing the characteristics of a given period of time provides more insight than knowing a specific date (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:181). In OT narrative texts, moreover, the interpreter may need to distinguish between the time when the events happened and the time when a writer organized the book into its final shape (Stuart 2001:11).

2.3.3.2 Examine the Historical-Cultural Factors of a Specific Passage

⁴¹ As Doriani (2001:50) writes, “to evaluate the relationship between a writer and his readers, look for pointed questions and objections, sharp rebukes, and terms of endearment.”

Discovering the historical-cultural background of the whole book provides the initial framework for understanding specific narrative passages within that book. “Determining the meaning of a passage requires interpreting each paragraph consistent with its natural meaning in its specific, original situation, that is, what the writer most likely meant by these words to these recipients in this set of circumstances (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:181).” To understand correctly each narrative passage within the book, one must first determine whether a proposed interpretation of a passage is supported by the historical-cultural information learned about the book as a whole (De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg 2005:51).

Beyond this, individual passages within the book may contain special historical-cultural traits that are relevant to the meaning of those passages. While these background facts may not be contained in the description of the setting of the whole book, they are absolutely essential for the meaning of these individual texts (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:181). Thus, the interpreter of Scripture must also research the specific historical-cultural details mentioned in each passage. These include such things as:

- worldview: moral attitudes, values, or outlook of the author, recipients, other people mentioned in the text, or in society at large.
- societal structures: marriage and family patterns, roles of men and women, or racial issues.
- geographical and physical features: geographic location, climate and weather, and means of transportation.
- economic structures: means of making a living, issues of wealth and poverty, slavery, or economic mobility.
- political climate: structures, or loyalties, including actual personnel.
- behavior patterns, dress, or customs.
- religious practices, power centers, convictions, rituals, superstition, or pagan influences.

After identifying these items in the text, the interpreter must attempt to discover additional information that could shed light on them. The first resource to consult is the Bible itself. It contains valuable information concerning many

historical-cultural phenomena. Materials in other parts of the specific book of the Bible, in other writings by the same author or to the same audience, in other parts of the Bible in general, or in specific parallel accounts of the same event often help to reconstruct the original situation. Beyond the Bible, other sources provide the principal and necessary means to secure background information. Many specialized works, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries contain helpful materials for clarifying historical or cultural references (De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg 2005:58-59).

2.3.4 Examine Literary Context

Examination of a text in the light of its context⁴² forms one of the most essential aspects of exegesis.⁴³ Good exegetical procedure conducts that the details should be viewed in the light of the total context. The biblical authors normally expressed themselves in a series of related ideas. The text thus forces the exegete to examine the entire line of thought of the author. When the interpreter projects his/her own ideas into the text that he/she is interpreting, he/she ceases to be an honest interpreter and becomes a personal propagandist under the guise of explaining the work of another (Mickelsen 1963:100). A basic principle of biblical exegesis is that “the intended meaning of any passage is the meaning that is consistent with the sense of the literary context in which it occurs. Hence, the first test that all proposed interpretations must pass is this: *Is it consistent with the literary context* (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:156)?” The ability to state what each section of a book is about and how the paragraphs in each section contribute to that argument, therefore, is one of the most important qualities of the exegete. In the exegetical process, if exegetes do not know where the thought of the text begins and how that pattern develops, all

⁴² In literature, the context of any passage is the material that comes immediately before and after it, which helps to make its meaning clear. If a statement or remark is quoted out of context, the circumstances in which it was said are not correctly reported, so that it seems to mean something different from the meaning that was intended. The context of a sentence is its paragraph, the context of a paragraph is the series of paragraphs that precede and follow it, and the context of a chapter is the surrounding chapters. Ultimately, the whole book in which a passage appears is its controlling context. In a further sense, the canon of all sixty-six books of the Bible provides the largest context in which every passage must be understood (Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard 1993:156).

⁴³ Mickelsen (1963:99) says that “neglect of context is a common cause of erroneous interpretation and irrelevant application.”

the intricate details may be of little or no worth (Kaiser 1981:69).

2.3.4.1 The Importance of the Literary Context

Misunderstandings can certainly arise when people hear only part of what was said and base their understanding on it. The same is true of the Bible. In fact, if the biblical authors were alive, they would undoubtedly protest loudly that they are "taken out of context" frequently when Christians quote individual Bible verses and apply them to their lives in violation of the biblical context. Neglecting the context of a biblical passage has serious implications (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:157). Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993:157-160) suggest three reasons why every passage must be interpreted consistently within its context.

2.3.4.1.1 Context Provides Flow-of-Thought

The first reason why an interpretation must be consistent with the context is because taking a passage out of context violates the writer's "flow-of-thought." A flow-of-thought is a chain of related ideas strung together to communicate a specific concept. Most significant communication includes some type of logical thought-flow in which one thought leads naturally to the next in keeping with the genre of literature employed.⁴⁴ A preceding statement prepares for the one that comes after it. The words that follow grow out of what precedes. People communicate, not with a series of randomly selected ideas, but with related ideas linked together in a logical pattern. Since we normally communicate by a series of related statements, each sentence must be understood in the light of the other ideas expressed in the context—in terms of the writer's train of thought.

2.3.4.1.2 Context Provides Accurate Meaning of Words

The second reason why an interpretation must agree with the general message of the context derives from the nature of words. Most words have more

⁴⁴ The different kind of literature genre affects the nature of the progression of thoughts. Certainly the lines of poetry are "connected" differently than those of carefully-reasoned prose or a parable (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:157).

than one meaning. The literary context presents the most reliable guide for determining the most likely meaning in that setting. In normal circumstances our minds automatically adopt the one meaning that best fits the subject at hand. Confusion or misunderstanding occurs when the literary context is vague or when several meanings fit equally well. Then the exegete must deliberately stop and think about the words' various possible meanings or analyze the context more carefully. Then he or she must select the one most likely intended by the writer.⁴⁵ Interpreters are not free to pick whichever meaning they choose for multiple-meaning words. Each term must be understood according to the meaning that is consistent with the other ideas expressed in the literary context. This is how successful language communication works.

2.3.4.1.3 Context Delineates Correct Relationships among Units

The third reason why a correct interpretation must be consistent with the context is because most biblical books were written and preserved as complete documents intended to be read as a unit. Biblical writers composed and edited individual sentences and paragraphs as parts of a larger document. Biblical verses do not exist as isolated, independent entities. They comprise of individual units of larger literary works, and interpreters must understand them according to their relationship to the whole argument of the book. As written communication, biblical statements must be understood as integral parts of the larger units where they occur. Detached from their contexts, individual verses may take on meanings never intended by their writers. To qualify as the text's intended meaning, an interpretation must be compatible with the total thought of the immediate context and the book context. The meaning should be consistent with the point the text is making in that section of the writing.

⁴⁵ For example, if we only hear the exclamation, "That was the largest trunk I ever saw!" we do not possess enough "literary context" (in fact we have none) to know what kind of "trunk" is meant. Does it refer to a type of luggage, the main stem of a tree, the rear storage area of a car (in American English), or the long nose of an elephant? Suppose, however, we read the statement in a book about animals at the zoo. Then we automatically picture an elephant's trunk. Given an article about the virtues of various automobiles, the image of a car's storage compartment would emerge. Yet neither of these meanings will come to mind if we are reading about the largest "trunk" seen in a forest. The literary context defines the precise meaning of the word.

2.3.4.2 Principles of Exegesis Relating to Literary Context

Since a biblical passage is always part of a larger context, the author assumes that his readers will try to find the meaning of a particular paragraph in the light of the overall meaning of the book (Stein 1994:157). To facilitate the interpretation of biblical text, the following are especially useful.

2.3.4.2.1 Interpret Paragraphs and Episodes in the Light of Their Immediate Context

The immediate context exerts the most important control over the meaning of a specific passage. Immediate context refers to the scriptural material that immediately precedes and follows the passage under study (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:162).⁴⁶ The exegete must discern the connection of thought that threads its way through the text and context that weave it into a whole. Sometimes the immediate context provides a clue for how the author intends his readers to interpret a particular paragraph (Stein 1994:158). The investigation of the context of a paragraph can be as illuminating as the discovery of how the various sections of a book relate to one another.⁴⁷ As Kaiser (1981:83) states, “without the benefit of knowing the connection between the paragraph under consideration and the section of the book in which it is found, the exegete will often be at sea in interpreting a passage.”

The investigation of the immediate context focuses on two things: *theme* and *structure* (Cf. Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:162).⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Single verses, groups of paragraphs, even groups of chapters, can build on one another.

⁴⁷ For illustrations of the immediate context, see Mickelsen (1963:102-104); Kaiser (1981:83-84); Virkler (1981:85-88); Stein (1994:168-159); Doriani (1996:34).

⁴⁸ Virkler (1981:84-88) suggests six secondary questions to understand a text in its immediate context. First, what are the major blocks of material and how do they fit together into a whole? Alternatively, what is the outline of the book? (Outlines should take into account the fact that some biblical writers were more organized than others.) Second, how does the passage under consideration contribute to the flow of the author's argument? Alternatively, what is the connection between the passage under study and the blocks of material immediately preceding and following it? There is usually a logical and/or theological connection between any two adjacent passages. Third, what was the perspective of the author? Fourth, is the passage stating descriptive or prescriptive truth? Descriptive passages relate

1. Theme

To discover the *theme* or *central idea* of the entire section of the book where the passage under study occurs, the exegete must first determine the theme of the preceding section, the passage itself, and the following passage. Of course, this assumes that the passage for study does not occur at the beginning or end of a unit of thought. If it does, one can evaluate only what follows or precedes, respectively. Then the exegete must analyze these subjects to find the common theme that holds them together. This theme of the immediate context regulates the meaning of the individual words, phrases, clauses, and sentences within the specific passage being studied. A procedure of formulating a central idea of the OTN text will be discussed in detail in the section 2.5.3.

2. Structure

The second focus of the immediate context is *structure*. Passages are not only linked by a common theme but also by structure. A thorough interpreter investigates not only what a text says but also how the writer organized the material.

First, determine how the specific passage grows out of the preceding section and prepares for the following one. How does each paragraph contribute to the development of a thought in the immediate context? These insights enable the interpreter to explain the relationship between the passage being studied and the surrounding paragraphs or sections. Just as one must understand each sentence in the given passage which is consistent with the general theme of the immediate context, so also one must interpret that sentence according to

what was said or what happened at a particular time. What God says, is true; what man says, may or may not be true; what Satan says, usually mixes truth and error. When Scripture describes human actions without comment, it should not necessarily be assumed that those actions are approved. When Scripture describes an action of God with respect to human beings in a narrative passage, it should not be assumed that this is the way He will always work in believers' lives at every point in history. Prescriptive passages of Scripture claim to be articulating normative principles. Fifth, what constitutes the teaching focus of the passage and what represents incidental detail only? Finally, who is being addressed in this passage?

the structural relationship of the paragraph with the adjoining material.

2.3.4.2.2 Interpret Paragraphs and Episodes in the Light of the Context of the Entire Book

The context of the entire book in which the biblical passage exists is the second most important literary context in determining the author's intended meaning of a passage. To understand a passage correctly means to understand it in terms of the whole book in which it is a part. The parts of the book should add up to the whole book. The following information about the entire book is significant for proper understanding of any given passage within that book.

1. Look for purpose(s) or controlling theme(s) of the entire book.

The meaning of the individual passages is limited by the main purpose(s) or theme(s) of the whole book. Individual passages or sections contribute in some way to the author's goal. The exegete thus must attempt to understand the writer's purpose(s) or controlling theme(s) and determine how a selected passage contributes to the accomplishment of that purpose(s) or controlling theme(s) (Kaiser 1981:77).

Sometimes the author makes it easier for interpreters by explicitly stating the purpose(s) or theme(s) for the book. For example, at the beginning of his Gospel, Luke precisely states his aim (Luke 1:1-4). For the books of the Old Testament, explicit purpose or theme statements are more difficult to discover (if we can discover them at all). So when books lack formal purpose or theme statements, the exegete must infer them from the contents (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:167). He or She must observe what the author does in a book and then deduce the main purpose or theme from that information (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:167).

2. Discern the chosen text's role within the larger context and the entire book.

At this point, the exegete tries to determine how a particular passage contributes to the whole book, and why his/her text belongs precisely where it is, and nowhere else. When he or she asks how a passage contributes to the

whole book, and why a passage is here, and nowhere else, he or she looks into the thematic and structural effectiveness of its location in the larger section and the whole book (Dorioni 1996:35). Finding answers to the following questions can shed much light on a passage. How does this one piece of passage fit into the puzzle? What role does it play in the larger scheme of the book? How does this particular passage contribute to the author's overall argument? Why does the author include this passage at this point in the book? How does the passage relate to what comes before and what comes after? What would be missed in the author's flow of thought if the passage is removed from the larger section (Guthrie & Duvall 1998:114)?

2.3.5 Read the OT Narrative as Literature

Though narrative is common in our experience, correct interpretation of the stories in the Bible is not easy to reach. "With so much of the Bible written in narrative form,⁴⁹ correct interpretation of narrative must be the concern of all who are serious students of Scripture (Kaiser 1995:70)." Though their communication is indirect, narratives carry God's message powerfully when they are correctly interpreted (Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard 1993:261).⁵⁰ So to comprehend fully the meaning of the Hebrew narrative, the exegete needs to develop an insightful hermeneutics, whereby both the art and the science of narrative are observed, interpreted, and communicated.

The biblical story is much more than an objective recounting of historical data.⁵¹ Biblical narrative is a multifaceted construct of literary characteristics and artistic style, all working together to teach us about God and His people. Current narrative analysis, thus, is more concerned with individual narratives. It

⁴⁹ Narratives are the most common type of literature found in the Bible. The OT makes up 75 percent of the Bible, and over 40 percent of the Old Testament and nearly 60 percent of the New Testament consist of narratives (Bar-Efrat 1989:9; Fee & Stuart 2003:89).

⁵⁰ Rarely does the author of a narrative text state what the point of the story is; that is left to interpretation (Kaiser 1995:70).

⁵¹ As Sailhamer (1992:25) states, "historical narrative is the re-presentation of past events for the purpose of instruction. Two dimensions are always at work in shaping such narratives: (1) the course of the historical event itself and (2) the viewpoint of the author who recounts the events. This dual aspect of historical narrative means that one must look not only at the course of the event in its historical setting but also for the purpose and intention of the author in recounting the event."

seeks to stress the narrative's artistic qualities, its rhetorical characteristics, its inner organization, and other structural and stylistic features (Kaiser 1995:70). Before starting the guidelines for the narrative interpretation, because narrative is different from other genres, understanding the components of the biblical narrative is a necessary first step.

2.3.5.1 The Components of Narrative

Biblical writers construct biblical stories aesthetically with a package of literary devices. They are scene, plot, point of view, characterization, setting, dialogue, structural levels, and stylistic devices. These are the aspects of literary devices that are most significant if one is to solve the puzzle of meaning from the narrative forms in the Bible (Kaiser 1995:70-71).

2.3.5.1.1 Scene

"In Old Testament prose," Fokkelman (1975:9) says, "the scene is about the most important unit in the architecture of the narrative." The action of the story is broken up into a sequence of scenes. Each scene presents something that happened at a particular place and time, concentrating the attention of the audience on the deeds and the words spoken (Licht 1978:31). The action is moved along by a series of scenes that together make up the whole. Thus the scenes function much like the way a movie or a television drama tells a story through a succession of scenes.⁵² Each scene has its own integrity, yet it is the progressive combination of scenes that makes up the story as a whole (Fee & Stuart 2003:94).

For biblical narrative, a notable feature of scenes is that each scene usually has no more than two characters (Alter 1981:72). When there are more than two characters, the twofold division usually still maintains with one individual character and a group which functions as a collective character.

⁵² Berlin (1983:125) also likens Hebrew narratives to the frames from which films are made, "Each one exists separately, and they are combined in a certain order to make the greater narrative, but an individual frame has no life of its own outside of the film as a whole."

Another notable feature of these scenes is the pervasive presence of God (Greidanus 1988:199). Often God is one of the two “characters” in a scene: for example, God and Adam (Gen. 3), God and Cain (Gen. 4), God and Noah (Gen. 6), God and Abraham (Gen. 12), God and Samuel (1 Sam. 16), etc. God appears also in the person of the angel of YHWH with, e.g., Hagar (Gen. 16), Moses (Exod. 3), and Gideon (Judg. 6), and as “the commander of the army of YHWH” with Joshua (Josh. 5). Prophets also function as the voice of God. Even in scenes where God, in a particular frame, is not one of the “characters” or is not represented by one of the characters, the scene as a whole will undoubtedly reveal the presence of God, for the human characters act out the scene against the backdrop of God’s promises, God’s enabling power, God’s demands, and God’s providence.

One of the important tasks of the interpreter is to identify each of the scenes, just as one would break up a long prose passage into paragraphs (Kaiser 1995:71). Once the division of the scenes has been made, a brief summary of what is in each scene is most helpful. That summary focuses on the words and deeds of the main characters as displayed by the writer or narrator of the scene. As Kaiser (1995:71-72) says, “By using the author or the narrator’s point of view as the basis from which to judge, the divine point of view should be in the forefront of interpretation.”

2.3.5.1.2 Plot

A narrative cannot function without a plot.⁵³ This means that the narrative must have a beginning, a middle, and an end, which contribute to the buildup

⁵³ Ryken (1984:40) defines the plot as “a coherent sequence of interrelated events, with a beginning, middle, and end. It is, in other words, a whole or complete action.” Longman (1993:71) defines the plot as “the succession of events, usually motivated by conflict, which generates suspense and leads to a conclusion.” According to Pratt (1990:179), on the other hand, the plot means “the heightening and lessening of tension through the arrangement of scenes.” To have a plot, a narrative must have *dynamic* and *sequential* elements (Holbert 1991:63). To have a plot, first of all, a narrative must be *dynamic*, that is, characterized by action. More specifically, whereas story is a general term for character and action in a narrative form, plot is intended to reflect action alone, with the minimum possible reference to character. To have a plot, second, a narrative also must be *sequential*. If art presents its materials simultaneously or randomly, there is no plot.

of dramatic tension that is eventually released (Wilcoxon 1974:93).⁵⁴ “The essence of a plot is a central conflict or set of conflicts moving toward a resolution (Ryken 1984:40).” “As a general rule,” according to Longman (1987:93), “plot is thrust forward by conflict. The conflict generates interest in its resolution. The beginning of a story, with its introduction of conflict, thus pushes us through the middle toward the end, when the conflict is resolved.” Visualizing the central role of the conflict in the advancing of the story, Longman (1987:92) provides a structural diagram of biblical narrative. His structural diagram is pictured as following (Figure 2.1).

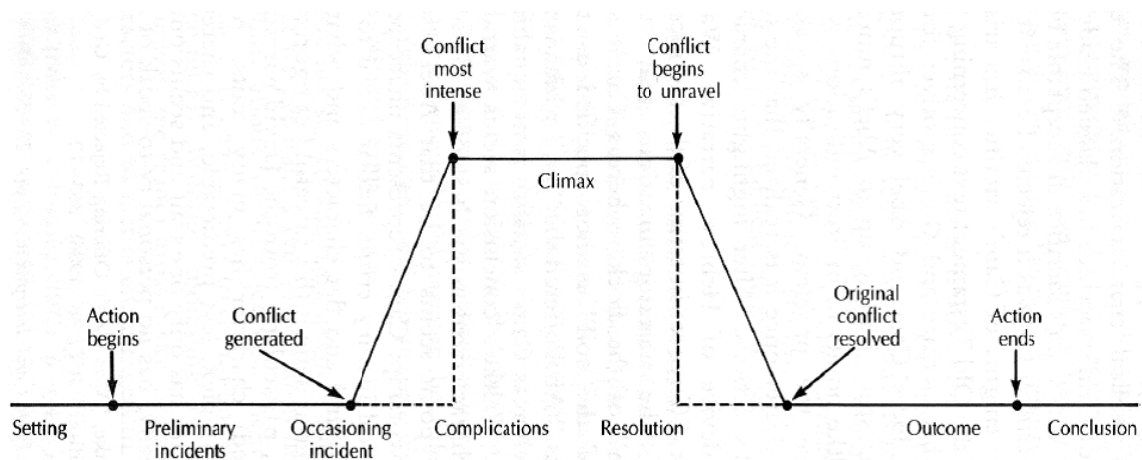


Figure 2.1 Structural Diagram of Biblical Narrative

Plots can be either simple or complex. Single plots are the most common in biblical narrative. As Bar-Efrat (1980:165) explains, single plots “exhibit the classical pyramid pattern. From a peaceful initial situation the action rises

⁵⁴ According to Long (1989:71-72), “A story is a series of events which can be seen as having a beginning, a middle, and an end. It is important, of course, that we recognize the logical relationships among those three parts. The beginning of a story always describes a situation of need that must be addressed through an action of some kind. The middle grows out of the beginning by describing what is done about this needed action. The end in turn grows out of the middle by showing what happens as a result of the action taken in the middle. At the same time, the end relates to the beginning by resolving its situation of need. The end allows the reader to say, ‘Yes, this is the end,’ either by showing how the need described in the beginning has been met (the king got well) or by describing how all reasonable opportunity for future action has been cut off (the king died).”

towards the climax where the decisive step determining the outcome of the conflict is taken, and from there it drops again to a more or less tranquil situation at the end.” An example of the single plot is seen in Gen. 22 where God requests Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

The narrative of Isaac’s blessing in Gen. 27 shows an example of a complex plot. “The narrative . . . reaches its climax when Jacob comes very close to the suspicious Isaac and is subjected to bodily examination. A resting point is reached when Isaac, apparently satisfied, gives Jacob his blessing. But when immediately after Jacob's departure Esau enters his father's tent the story flares up again. A new resting point is reached only after Jacob departs from his home and a physical distance is created between the hostile brothers (Bar-Efrat 1980:166-167).”

Another aspect of plot is pace. The narrator can control the speed of the story. The pace of a plot can be accelerated by the use of short sentences, the reduction of details, and the avoidance of lengthy character descriptions (Greidanus 1988:205; Kaiser 1995:72). Generally, the plot in Hebrew narrative moves at a faster pace than that of modern narration. However, the biblical narrator deliberately slows down the action by the use of verbatim repetition, direct speech, and exceptional description of detail (Greidanus 1988:205). By partly quoting from Bar-Efrat (1978:25-26), Greidanus (1988:205) explains the significance of detecting 'retardation' in the narrative as following:

the significance of detecting ‘retardation’ in the narrative is not only that it helps one perceive the built-in suspense but, more importantly for preachers today, that it helps one understand ‘the structure of the narrative, its culminating points and consequently its significance.’

Correct interpretation of biblical narratives depends in part on an understanding of the plot as it marks out the beginning, middle, and end of both single and complex patterns, and an understanding of the pace of the narrative.

2.3.5.1.3 Point of View

In literary analysis, “point of view” indicates “the position or perspective from which a story is told (Berlin 1983:46).” Like narrative in general, Hebrew narrative discloses only what the author desires.⁵⁵ The narrator's point of view is “the perspective through which we can observe and evaluate everything connected with the story (Ryken 1990b:135).”

Old Testament narrative employs several modes of narration. The author may disclose the narrative through the voice and eyes of the omniscient narrator or any one of several characters within the narrative.⁵⁶ The author can also disclose the narrative through the multiple perspectives of various characters, alternating from narrator to character to character.

Following Boris Uspensky, Longman (1987:87-88) and Kaiser (1995:73-74) distinguish point of view in four different modes: spatial, temporal, psychological, and ideological. In the *spatial* point of view, the narrator identifies himself with a particular character that is quite often set in a specified locale. But when that identification is not specified, the narrator is seen jumping from scene to scene.

There may also be a *temporal* limitation or lack thereof placed on the narrative. Here we must ask if the narrator limits himself to telling the story

⁵⁵ The narrator is directly or indirectly connected to every aspect of the story. According to Berlin's (1983:44) analogy, the narrator is the one who determines “camera angles” by which the reader will be allowed to see. Berlin (1983:44) states, “Biblical narrative, like most modern prose narrative, narrates like film. The narrator is the camera eye; we “see” the story through what he presents. The biblical narrator is omniscient in that everything is at his disposal; but he selects carefully what he will include and what he will omit. He can survey the scene from a distance, or zoom in for a detailed look at a small part of it. He can follow one character throughout, or hop from the vantage point of one to another.”

⁵⁶ Narrators may adopt the first person approach (e.g., Nehemiah and Daniel's four visions in Dan. 7-12) or a third person approach (the most common approach in biblical narratives). In a first person narrative, the narrator is also one of the characters in the story. First-person narrators exhibit a more limited knowledge, learning of problems and developments as the story unfolds. Third-person narrative exhibits omniscience and omnipresence of the narrator. As such, he is more detached from the story and tells the reader what the characters are thinking, even what God is thinking! In this regard, we cannot see any distinction between the narrator and God in biblical narratives; the human and divine viewpoints are fused (Howard 1993:50). Sternberg (1985:130) discusses three possible relationships that constitute the point of view: between narrator and characters, narrator and reader, or reader and characters.

as it happened. Or does he interrupt his story with information that comes from a later point in time? There is also the *psychological* point of view. In this point of view, the narrator describes the thoughts and emotions that run through the heart and mind of the character.

Finally, there is the *ideological* point of view. This point of view includes statements by the narrator which evaluate characters or events in the story either directly or indirectly.⁵⁷ On numerous occasions the narrators of the biblical narratives intrude into the story and give interpretive clues to their readers as to how they should interpret these narratives. If the narrator is God's chosen instrument for revealing the narrative at hand, his evaluation not only describes God's point of view but manages to turn our attention to God even when the narrative is about human characters.⁵⁸

Generally in Hebrew narrative, the reader and characters are even-handed in their knowledge. There are also instances, however, when the reader has more knowledge not available to characters. This type of perspective is called *reader-elevated*. Although rare in Hebrew narrative, there are instances where a character has more knowledge than the reader. An instance of this is in the Joseph narrative where the reader finds out about Joseph's reaction to being thrown into the cistern, a knowledge which the brothers had all along. This type of perspective is called *character-elevated* (Tate 1991:96).

2.3.5.1.4 Characterization

The fourth component of narrative is characterization: the presentation of key individuals in a story. Characters give life to a story. Our understanding of a

⁵⁷ For example, in disclosing his omniscience in the words "but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord (2 Sam. 11:27b)," the narrator presents an evaluation of David's sins of adultery and murder.

⁵⁸ In 2 Sam. 11:27, when the narrator tells us that "but the thing that David had done displeased the Lord," he presents not only just his own human point of view but the point of view of the Lord. The lack of character evaluation on the part of the narrator, on the other hand, "exhibits the narrator's purposeful attempt not to close off the narrative at the human level but to keep the narrative open to God: What is the covenant God doing in and through and in spite of these human characters (Greidanus 1988:208)?"

character is controlled and mediated by the narrator, who may even be one of the characters. Berlin (1983:23-24) identifies three types of characters in Hebrew narrative: (1) *full-fledged* (round) characters, (2) *types* (flat), single-dimension characters, and (3) *agents* (props) who are accessories to the plot .

The *full-fledged* character is multi-dimensional and complex, manifesting a range of character traits. This character confronts the reader with psychological, emotional, and spiritual complexities. A *single-dimension character* trait distinguishes the *type*. Such a type is Laban. From the first time we meet him in Genesis 24, we are struck by his distinguishing trait of materialism. The *agent type of character* is nothing more than a functionary that serves to move the story along. This character is usually not characterized at all, but simply serves the purpose of providing the necessary characters for a story. Depending upon the narrative and the purpose of the narrative, however, a single character's role may change. A full-fledged character may thus become an agent or a type in another narrative.

Bar-Efrat (1989:48) presents the techniques of characterization under the two ways of shaping characters,⁵⁹ i.e., the direct and indirect ways of shaping the characters.⁶⁰ How then can we observe the direct shaping of the characters? First, we can observe it through outward appearance of the characters. In contrast to modern literature, Hebrew narratives do not describe their characters in great detail. Also, the description of external appearance of characters are not intended to help the reader visualize them clearly, but rather to give the reader an information about what type of people they are, and for

⁵⁹ Berlin (1983:34-41), on the other hand, presents four techniques of characterization: (a) direct description, (b) revelations about characters' inner life, (c) reporting of speech and actions, and (d) contrast with other characters or with themselves at various points in the story. She comments that narrators do not often use one exclusively. "Characterization in biblical narrative is achieved through an artful combination of several or all of these techniques (Berlin 1983:41)."

⁶⁰ As Bar-Efrat (1989:64) explains the difference between direct and indirect shaping of characters, "Whereas the importance of the direct ways of shaping the characters lies in their quality (the fact that they are clear and unequivocal), that of the indirect ways lies in their quantity. This means that there is more indirect than direct shaping of characters in biblical narrative and therefore the burden of characterization falls primarily on this method"

the purpose of advancing the plot (Cf. Berlin 1983:34-35; Bar-Efrat 1989:48).⁶¹

Another way of the direct shaping of the characters by the narrators is to describe their inner personality. As Bar-Efrat (1989:53-54) states,

There are two kinds of direct statements about an individual's inner personality: one that refers to character traits and one that relates to mental states. The first kind is what is customarily called direct characterization (in the narrow and precise sense of the word). . . . Direct characterization may be voiced by the narrator or by one of the characters.⁶² . . . Apart from these characterizations, which refer to the moral aspects of the individuals involved, there are also accounts of their mental traits and other facets of their personalities.⁶³

Indirect shaping of characters, on the other hand, can be observed through the character's words and actions. The predominant way of characterization in Hebrew narrative occurs in the characters' words and actions,⁶⁴ not in the narrator's own descriptions (Greidanus 1988:201). Direct speech conveys the internal psychological and ideological dimensions of the characters and is much more dramatic than external description (Tate 1991:92).⁶⁵

⁶¹ For example, Esau is a hairy man, while Jacob is a smooth man (Gen. 27:11). This external description of the characters is very important for the plot of the narrative, since Jacob impersonates Esau in order to obtain the blessing intended for his older brother.

⁶² For example, we read about Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9)." The men of Sodom are characterized as being: "wicked, great sinners against the Lord (Gen. 13:13)." The sons of Eli are described as follows: "they were worthless men; they had no regard for the Lord (1 Sam. 2:12)."

⁶³ For example, the narrator tells us that the serpent in the garden of Eden was: "more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made (Gen. 3:1)." Esau is portrayed as being: "a skillful hunter, a man of the field," while Jacob was considered: "a quiet man, dwelling in tents (Gen. 25:27)." Jonadab the son of Shimeah, Amnon's friend, is described as: "a very crafty man (2 Sam. 13:3)." While the woman from Tekoa (2 Sam. 14:2) and the woman from Abel of Beth-maacah (2 Sam. 20:16) are both said to be wise.

⁶⁴ As Longman (1993:73) states, "Our knowledge of real people comes through our experience of them in their actions and conversation. We learn about the characters of a story in much the same way—by their actions and by speech (both the speeches they make and those that are made about them)."

⁶⁵ The direct speech of Samson in Judges 14 illustrates the point. After returning from Timnah, Samson says to his parents, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife (14:2)." Although his parents

Instead of giving actual dialogue between characters, the biblical writers often offer a summary of speech. This divergence from actual dialogue to summary of speech should be carefully noted.

While actual speech and actions are usually mixed in OT narrative, actions can be presented without speech. These speechless accounts of actions highlight character. They tend to serve as unannounced commentary on a character's speech (Tate 1991:92).

2.3.5.1.5 Setting

Setting is "the space in which the characters perform the actions that constitute the plot (Longman 1993:74)."⁶⁶ The setting of a narrative can be classified into four categories: *geographical*, *temporal*, *social*, and *historical*. *Geographical* setting consists of the variety of geographical elements such as locale (nation, region, town, village, household), climate (hot and arid, rainy and windy), and topography (mountains, hills, valleys, plains, caves, deserts, rivers, and sea shores), each of which may play an integral part in the presentation (Cole 2002:265-266). Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mt. Carmel takes on new significance when one fully comprehends the geographical setting: an elevated location at which Baal worship had flourished for centuries.

The *temporal* setting may be defined along several lines. This may be expressed by the use of (a) a relative chronological date, such as "in the year that King Uzziah died (Isa. 6:1)"; (b) by a sequence of events, such as "after the plague (Num. 26:1)"; (c) a general time period in which significant acts or events occurred, such as "forty days (Num. 13:25)"; or (d) a customary occasion, such as "on the day of the firstfruits (Num. 28:26) (Cole 2002:266)."

The *social* setting consists of the full area of human interaction with God and

opposed taking a foreign wife, Samson replies, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me (14:3b)." The sharp, demanding tone of this speech reveals Samson's character, a character marked by a sense of immediate, thoughtless gratification (Tate 1991:92).

⁶⁶ Howard (1993:54) defines setting as, "the stage upon which the events unfold or the backdrop against which they occur."

other people. The religion, politics, customs, and family relations of the ancient Near Eastern world provide us with those clues that help us bridge the temporal and social gaps between the present and the past (Cole 2002:266).

Descriptions of *historical* setting can provide important interpretive clues. For example, understanding the postexilic background of the composition of 1 and 2 Chronicles can help the interpreter discover the author's purpose and message.

Ryken (1987:55) views several possible functions for setting: (a) to provide physical locations for the action and characters of the story, (b) to make the story vivid and thus engage the reader's imagination, (c) to help provide structure and unity in longer narratives, and (d) to prevent misreading of the text by those unaware of the cultural dimensions of it. In the light of these functions for setting, Ryken (1987:55) suggests an interpretive rule: "Pay close attention to every detail of setting that a storyteller puts into a story and observe how it contributes to the story."

2.3.5.1.6 Dialogue

Dialogue is a crucial feature of Hebrew narrative, and one of the main methods of characterization. Dialogue brings vividness and a sense of being present to the story. It is a predominant element in the biblical narrative, through which the great part of the narrative is conveyed. Dialogue may be called the transactions between characters typically unfolding through the words they exchange. There are four features of dialogue to be considered:

First, the initial words in dialogue often provide a significant clue both to the story plot and to the character of the speaker (Fee & Stuart 2003:96). As Alter (1981: 74) states, "In any given narrative event, and especially, at the beginning of any new story, the point at which dialogue first emerges will be worthy of special attention, and in most instances, the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory, perhaps more in manner than in matter, constituting an important moment in the exposition of character." For example, the first words of Naomi to her daughters-in-law—"May the Lord grant that you may find rest, each in the home of her husband (Ruth

1:9)”—set the stage for the plot of this narrative: Will Ruth find a home in Israel?

Second, contrastive dialogue to contrast and portray different characters often functions as a way of characterization as well (Fee & Stuart 2003:96). We can see a different kind of contrastive dialogue with the final speeches of Judah and Joseph in Gen. 44:18-34 and Gen. 45:4-13, by which the first plot resolution is achieved.

Third, another feature of dialogue is stylized speech. When one character repeats in whole or in part the speech of another character, it is well to pay very careful attention in these instances to any small deviations, differences, slight alterations, reversals of order, elaborations, or deletions. These may tip off the interpreter to key disclosures about the character or the events being described (Kaiser 1995:76). Notice, for example, the serpent's blatant alteration of God's speech. According to Gen. 2:16-17, God had said, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." The serpent, however, asked the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" The woman's subsequent alteration of God's speech makes God's demand appear quite unreasonable: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it . . . (Gen. 3:1-3).'"

Fourth, the other feature of dialogue is summarized speech. Sometimes, instead of quoting speech verbatim, the narrator will summarize it. This change from quoting to summarizing is also significant (Greidanus 1988:203). The reasons for such divergence are, according to Alter (1981:78), (1) to accelerate the movement of the narrative at a particular point, (2) to avoid excessive repetition, or (3) to show some consideration of concealment of decorousness, or a devaluation of what is said.

2.3.5.1.7 Structural Levels

OT narratives have a structure that is defined as "the network of relations among the parts of an object or a unit (Bar-Efrat 1980:155)." Bar-Efrat (1980:157-170)

indicates that narrative structures can be distinguished by four different levels: (1) the verbal level; (2) the level of narrative technique; (3) the level of the narrative world; and (4) the level of the conceptual content.

2.3.5.1.7.1 The Verbal Level

The analysis of structure on this level is based on words or phrases. For example, the first creation account in Genesis has a very explicit structure. This structure, which divides the whole account into seven clearly marked sections, is clearly indicated by the repeated phrase: “And there was evening and there was morning.”

2.3.5.1.7.2 The Level of Narrative Technique

The analysis of structure on this level is based on “the alternating patterns of (1) dialogue versus narrator’s description; (2) narration versus description; and (3) comment, or even explanation and presentation of scenes, versus summary of the action (Kaiser 1994b:77).” We can see an example of *the level of narrative technique* from 1 Samuel. The narrative of Samuel’s birth (1 Sam. 1:1-2:11) alternates between summary and scene as follows (Bar-Efrat 1980:159):

- Summary (1:1-3)
- Scene (1:4-18)
- Summary (1:19-20)
- Scene (1:21-23a)
- Summary (1:23b)
- Scene (1:24-2:10)
- Summary (2:11)

2.3.5.1.7.3 The Level of the Narrative World

The analysis of structure on this level is primarily based on characters and events. Several facets of the characters, such as their identity, their nature and their function in the story, may serve as a foundation of structural analysis of the narrative (Bar-Efrat 1980:161). Interpreters should observe the linking of the various characters as they appear in sequence in a text. Usually the

character found second in a text becomes the first to appear in the next link as the narrative progresses. Following these links may provide a clue as to what the author wishes us to focus our attention on (Kaiser 1994b:78). For example, the narrative of Amnon and Tamar (2 Sam. 13) provides “a striking illustration of structure based upon identity of characters (Bar-Efrat 1980:162).” After the opening section introducing the main characters, the narrative is constructed as a chain with seven links, each link being made up of two characters, the second of which is first in the next link.

Jonadab-Amnon (verses 3-5)

Amnon-David (verse 6)

David-Tamar (verse 7)

Tamar-Amnon (verses 8-16)

Amnon-servant (verse 17)

servant-Tamar (verse 18)

Tamar-Absalom (verses 19-20)

The mutual relationships of the events of a story make up the plot (Bar-Efrat 1980:163). Most narratives in the Hebrew Bible have a single plot.

In the whole book of Esther, for example, Haman’s design to exterminate all the Jews in the Medo-Persian Empire takes the main plot, with Mordecai and Esther’s attempts to counteract Haman’s intention taking a secondary role. In reality, describing the plot usually boils down to simply paraphrasing the story. Common plot devices include the climax, the second climax, and reversal. Plots usually ascend to the climax and then descend to a peaceful conclusion. Sometimes this pattern is ignored and the narrative immediately ascends to a second climax (Kaiser 1994b:78). Job faced the four messengers, for example, only to be confronted by three “comforters” for a new challenge he had to surmount. In reversal, the action takes a sudden turn in the crucial point. The episode of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 illustrates reversal, as does the narrative about Jacob’s return to meet his brother Esau after twenty years of service to Laban in Genesis 32–33.

In the narrative-world level of analysis of the text, references to the spatial and temporal terms used in the narrative are included (Bar-Efrat 1980:167; Kaiser

1994b:78). The action of a single story is not confined to one single place, but it often shifts from one place to another, thereby creating a distinct structure. Likewise, the story may shift by indicating a change in time or even how long the event took, such as in the narrative of the flood in Genesis 6–8.

2.3.5.1.7.4 The Level of Conceptual Content

On this level the analysis of structure is focused on the themes of the narrative units or the ideas included therein. Themes are usually expressed in the form of short phrases, or ideas in the form of complete sentences (Bar-Efrat 1980:168). Themes set forth the central issues of the narrative, while ideas refer to the meanings, lesson, message, or philosophy found in the narrative. Since in the majority of cases both themes and ideas are merely implied in the narrative and not stated explicitly, they have to be abstracted by interpretation (Bar-Efrat 1980:169). For example, one of the themes of 1 Samuel is “the transference of leadership—from Eli to Samuel, from Samuel to Saul and from Saul to David (Bar-Efrat 1980:169).” This theme divides the book into three parts, chapters 1-7 dealing with Eli and Samuel, chapters 8-15 with Samuel and Saul, and chapters 16-31 with Saul and David.

In conclusion, as Bar-Efrat (1980:172) points out, we can use structural levels to (1) show the unity of a narrative, (2) determine the boundaries of a narrative unit, (3) describe the rhetorical or expressive values found within a text, and (4) understand the effect of the work in which the author wanted to have on the reader.

2.3.5.1.8 Stylistic Devices

The last major component of Hebrew narrative texts is literary style. Unlike modern literature, biblical texts were written without chapter divisions, sectional headings, or even verse separation. Because the text was originally intended to be heard by the audience, the authors of Hebrew narrative used a whole series of structural and stylistic devices to catch the hearer’s attention and to make the narrative memorable (Fee & Stuart 2003:97). Kaiser (1995:77)

identifies five important stylistic devices of the OT narrative text: repetition, omission, inclusion, chiasm, and irony.

2.3.5.1.8.1 Repetition

Repetition, which pervades the OT narrative, is one of the significant rhetorical devices in the OT narrative. There are five types of repetition commonly employed in the Hebrew Bible: key word, motif, theme, sequence of actions, and type-scene (Alter 1981:95-96).⁶⁷ The most significant of these repetitions is the *key word*. In this case the author repeats certain phrases or sentences in order to establish thematic unity in larger sections. These repeated phrases or sentences have a formulaic air in the text (Tate 1991:97). An example is the sentence “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” This occurs in full or in part in Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; and 21:25. The author emphasizes the theme of social anarchy by this repetition.

2.3.5.1.8.2 Omission

Often the OT narrative omits information that the reader might wish had been provided. Omission is bits of information deliberately omitted by the writer in order to force the reader to get involved in the narrative (Osborne 1991:162). As Sternberg (1985:186-189) states, the text controls the gap-filling process through previously provided information, the development of the plot and its characters, and the cultural conventions behind the story. By the gap-filling process, the readers are forced to immerse themselves more deeply into the narrative world (Osborne 1991:162). The omissions in the narrative create interest, curiosity, suspense, and surprise (Kaiser 1995:78).⁶⁸

2.3.5.1.8.3 Inclusion

The stylistic device known as inclusion is a means of marking a section of text

⁶⁷ For detailed analysis of repetition, see Alter (1981:95-96), Sternberg (1985:365-440), and Tate (1991:96-98).

⁶⁸ For examples of the omission, see Sternberg (1985:190-219), Osborne (1991:162), and Chisholm (1998:166-167).

by repeating the identical words or clauses both at the beginning and end of either the whole narrative or one of the scenes within the narrative.

2.3.5.1.8.4 Chiasm

The OT narrative frequently uses a literary device called chiasm. It is named for the inversely repeated words, phrases, or themes in parallel constructions (Kaiser 1995:79). As Greidanus (1988:209) points out, “the clue to identifying chiasm is repetition. Where repetition is frequent, ... the analyst must at least ask if the narrative has been constructed with a chiastic architecture; if the narrative shows repetition, does it also show the necessary inversion, balance, and climactic centrality?” Chiastic patterns are found in dialogue as well as in scenes.

2.3.5.1.8.5 Irony

Irony is to say one thing but mean another, generally the opposite. Booth (1974:1-6) delineates four characteristics of irony. First, it must be demonstrated that it was *intended* by the author. In that sense, the narrator said something in order to set it forth as being false and therefore subject to rejection. Of course, this view involves a hypothesis that an unstated intention of the author is almost always easily recognized. Second, irony is usually covert, for there is no explicit statement that the statement or passage is ironic in nature. Ironies are “intended to be reconstructed with meanings different from those on the surface (Booth 1974:6).” Third, biblical ironies are stable, for there is a limit as to how far one can move from the surface meaning of the text. Finally, ironies are limited in terms of scope, treating only a certain part of the text as ironic.

2.3.5.2 Guidelines for the Interpretation of the OTN as Literature

The author, summarizing the components of the narrative in 2.3.5.1, suggests the guidelines for the interpretation of the OTN as literature as follows.

2.3.5.2.1 Identify Each Scene of the Narrative

Divide the narrative into its individual scenes. Where does the scene begin and where does it end? What morpho-syntactic device does the author use to mark the onset and closure of the scene? Introductory **וַיְהִי** followed by a circumstantial clause may signal the beginning of a new episode (e.g., Gen. 22:1; Jonah 3:1). What kind of notional or topical identification markers does the author use to indicate the beginning of the scene? Is there any change in topic, setting (location, time), participants, or background to indicate the beginning of a new scene? Since the focus of interpretation centres on the main character(s), summarize their words and actions so as to reflect the narrator's point of view and reason for recording the details in each scene.

2.3.5.2.2 Analyze the Setting of the Scene

Record the details of the settings which are given in each scene (e.g., historical, geographical, cultural, temporal). What type of atmosphere is established in the setting (e.g., solemnity, celebration, suspense, tragedy, etc.)? Study what background knowledge is assumed to be understood by the original audience, but involves some explanation for today's congregation.

2.3.5.2.3 Analyze the Plot of the Narrative

Note how the action rises toward a climax and how the author paces the plot and highlights the high points of the story, thereby marking the beginning, middle, and end of both single and complex patterns within the story. There are several practical suggestions that should make this a manageable task. Look at the beginning of the narrative and then determine the beginning point of conflict. Where did the problem begin? At what point did the background material finish and a problem begin? Is the plot single or complex? What events in the story cause the conflict to become most intense? What is the turning point in resolving the conflict? Where in the story is resolution reached? What techniques are used to build suspense?

2.3.5.2.4 Determine the Point of View from which the Narrative is Recorded

How does the narrator tell the story? Which character in the story does the narrator focus on? Does the narrator reveal the thoughts and emotions of the characters or add a critique of the action? These are the key issues in isolating the meaning of narrative.

2.3.5.2.5 Examine the Characters of the Scene

List all the characters in the scene (including groups of people collectively). Classify the characters in the narrative by their function: identify who the protagonist, the antagonist and the foils are. What is the issue of confrontation between the protagonist and the antagonist? What causes the antagonist to be the way that he or she is? Also, when examining the foils, identify the attribute, or trait, which is highlighted in the life of the protagonist by the presence of the foils. How do the foils accentuate such a trait in the protagonist?

2.3.5.2.6 Examine the Dialogue that the Author Uses to Narrate the Story

Pay close attention to the very first statements that are made in the first dialogue or speech in a narrative. Watch the differences between two opposite characters which are revealed in a contrastive dialogue. Observe the thoughts of the characters (even at times the Lord) by overhearing the internal dialogue in their hearts written by the inspired narrator. Attention should also be given to how things are stated.

2.3.5.2.7 Examine the Units within a Scene and Their Relationship with One Another

Search how each scene can be divided into small units and how the units contribute to the meaning of the scene.

2.3.5.2.8 Investigate the Stylistic Devices the Author Uses

This study includes repetition, omission, inclusion, chiasm, and irony. Though not easy to define, stylistic devices are always easily recognized by its presence or absence.

2.4 Compare the Experts

It is important that the exegete takes an initial run through the exegetical steps before turning to what others have said. In order for the exegesis to be his/her own work and not merely a mechanical compendium of other's views, the interpreter must arrive at his/her own conclusions as much as possible prior to this step (Fee 1993:55; Stuart 2001:26). Otherwise he/she will not go beyond what others have achieved. Having done his/her own exegetical work, the exegete is now in a good position not only to learn from established scholars, but also to evaluate their exegesis.

2.4.1 Investigate What Others Have Said about the Passage

Even though they will have consulted lexicons, grammars, commentaries, and many kinds of other books and articles in the process of completing the preceding steps, preachers should now undertake a more systematic investigation of the secondary literature that may apply to his/her exegesis. If a preacher's own exegesis is to be responsible, his/her exegesis must be examined by the established scholars.

The work of scholars can confirm or correct the preacher's own discoveries as well as resolve unanswered questions that have arisen during the process and generate new ones. As Gorman (1994:136) states, "Scholars can define unknown terms, show connections to other biblical texts, supply helpful historical information, explain grammatical constructions, and suggest implicit and explicit aspects of the significance of the text." Now it is the proper time to ask what various scholars think about the passage. Fee (1993:55-56) suggests that the following questions should be asked at this point:

What points have they made that you overlooked? What have they said better? What have they given more weight to? Can you point out things that they have said that are questionable or wrong? If in your opinion other commentators are incorrect, point this out, using the footnotes for minor differences and the body of the paper for

more significant ones.

2.4.2 Compare and Adjust

Neglecting the research of the experts will short-change a sermon or exegetical paper. The opinion of the experts can help us avoid superficiality and our own idiosyncrasies (Broyles 2001:61). If we seek an expository narrative sermon based on correct interpretation of the text, then we must continue the task of comparing with the experts. Asking the following questions suggested by Stuart (2001:26) will be helpful at this juncture.

Have the conclusions of other scholars helped you to change your analysis in any way? Do other scholars analyze the passage or any aspects of it in a manner that is more incisive or that leads to a more satisfying set of conclusions? Do they organize their exegesis in a better way? Do they give consideration to implications you hadn't even considered? Do they supplement your own findings?

If so, do not hesitate to revise your own conclusions or procedures in the preceding steps, giving proper credit in each case. However, we must avoid reproducing slavishly the interpretations of others. As Broyles (2001:62) comments, "We must be mindful that we should use secondary literature simply as a resource for shedding light on our primary literature, the Bible. We do not submit to its authority as we do the Bible's, so we must evaluate its claims critically." In addition, we should never feel that we must cover in our exegesis everything that the others do. We must be careful not to be driven by the issues and agenda of secondary literature. "It is best to be as clear as we can on the passage itself before we adopt the views of later commentators; otherwise we will not escape being tossed by the waves of scholarly opinion (Broyles 2001:62)."

2.4.3 Apply Your Discoveries throughout Your Paper

As Stuart (2001:27) comments, "Do not include a separate section of findings from secondary literature in any draft of your paper. Do not view this step as resulting in a single block of material within the paper." Exegetical step 2.4 is, in other words, a step in your research process but not in your final written product. Your discoveries from secondary literature should produce additions or

corrections, or both, at many points throughout your exegesis. Keep in mind that an addition or correction at one point does not contradict statements made elsewhere in your exegesis (Stuart 2001:27). Consider the implications of all changes.⁶⁹ Plan to achieve consistency and evenness throughout your exegesis. Additionally, using what you have learned up to this point, produce a finished translation of the passage.

2.5 Formulating an Exegetical Product

Examining the world of a biblical narrative is a necessary part of understanding the narrative. Before formulating the central theme or idea of a narrative, we need to scrutinize what happened to the characters. Biblical narratives are not a collection of ideas. Biblical stories communicate those conceptual ideas through setting, scene, character, action, and plot. It should, therefore, be the first consideration to interact with a biblical story as a story for its proper interpretation.

Though grammatical, historical, and literary analyses are a necessary part of understanding the biblical narrative, however, those are not sufficient in themselves. After the preacher has gathered all the information from the exegetical studies, time should be given to summarizing what the text meant to the original readers. The purpose of biblical narrative is not just to tell what happened in the past. Rather, it teaches us timeless biblical truths through these past events. Thus, the proper understanding of the biblical narrative texts involves not simply the investigation into what happened but rather the interpretation of what happened (Stein 1994:157). To reach the complete understanding of a narrative, therefore, our effort to formulate the intellectual truth of the story through an interpretive lens which makes us see its significance is needed.

As the result of the exegetical analysis, the preacher is to formulate the exegetical meaning of the text; that is, the original text's proposition, purpose, and outline. These exegetical products use the wording of the text, including the

⁶⁹ For example, if you modify the textual analysis (2.2.2) on the basis of what you have now learned from the secondary literature, this will affect the translation, lexical data, and other parts of the exegesis as a necessary consequence (Stuart 2001:27).

names of characters and places in the narrative.

2.5.1 Identifying the Original Situation and Purpose of the Text

There are two aspects of the biblical context, the historical-cultural context behind the passage (discovered via background research) and the literary context of the passage (discovered via exegetical research). Both are essential. The historical-cultural context determines the possible *areas of the application* for the modern congregation; the literary context determines the *message* addressed to the modern context. Preachers, therefore, must seek a consistent and significant overlap between the original and modern contexts before true application can occur. Failure at either level will result in an improper application, if not false, which can have serious consequences (Osborne 1991:333).

Before preachers seek the application of the text for the congregation, as mentioned above, they must first know the original situation behind the passage, that is, the circumstances that led the original author to emphasize his point. Then they must determine the purpose of the passage that the author seeks through the passage. This task will give authority to the application of the sermon. The passage will then be applied to the parallel situation in the lives of the congregation. Sometimes identifying the original situation and purpose of the OTN text is so clear that we cannot miss it. In many cases, however, finding them is uncertain, which will require more study.

2.5.1.1 Describe the Circumstances or Needs Addressed

The study of the cultural situation will help both the preacher and the congregation to immerse themselves in the original situation and to better understand how they can apply the text in the current context. While in many cases we cannot ascertain the exact situation with precision (especially in narrative portions), what we can discover is very helpful. By noting the situation behind the surface story, the preachers can see how the author has applied his underlying theological principle and can seek parallel applicable situations in the life of their current congregation. For instance, Paul's "urban evangelism" approach at Ephesus (Acts 18-19) teaches us the need for evangelism

including the village evangelism of our time and the power of the gospel over all evil, including its authority over the unclean spirits of magic. However, Paul's burning of all the books on magic and witchcraft is not a command for us to burn down every "porn-shop" and brothel (Degner 1996:275).

The situation behind the text shows us why the original audience needed the message of the text or the particular ministry that was given them, and what their needs were (Liefeld 1984:96). In OT narrative texts, there are two types of situations, the historical situation depicted in the text and *Sitz im Leben* ("situation in the life" of Israel) behind the text. The latter is very speculative, and twenty scholars will often have twenty different opinions on a passage. Thus, the situation in the text itself is more valuable (Osborne 1991:337). "For instance, it is almost impossible to detect the *Sitz im Leben* behind the Jacob-Esau conflict (Gen. 27), but the situation in the text (rivalry over the blessing but God's unseen hand in the background) provides tremendous contextualization opportunities (Osborne 1991:337)."

For another example, Ezekiel tells us of a valley filled with dry bones in Ezek. 37:1-6. Many preachers have spiritualized this passage, often referring to a description of the new birth, when a person is brought from death to life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, knowledge of its historical situation of the text is crucially important for an understanding of this passage: "Now it came about in the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth of the tenth month, that the refugees from Jerusalem came to me, saying, 'The city has been taken (Ezek. 33:21).'" Immediately following the vision the Lord tells the prophet, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel (Ezek. 37:11-12).'" The situation of the text helps us understand that the vision refers to Israel and its restoration to the land of promise. Therefore, this passage cannot be applied for the new birth.

2.5.1.2 Determine the Purpose of the Text

Determining the purpose of the text is crucially important to make the expository

narrative preaching relevant to the contemporary audience. A faithful adherence to the purpose and audience of the text will give authority to the application of the sermon (Warren 1991:482).⁷⁰ If we make a passage state something it does not indeed say, then our application is no longer tied to the Word of God. The purpose of the sermon may not be the same with the purpose of the text, but it ought to be congruent with the purpose of the text (Warren 1991:483). As Adams (1990:39) puts it, “Preaching is *truth applied* . . . the truth of God revealed in Scripture came in an applied form and should be reapplied to the same sort of people for the same purposes for which it was originally given.” Like the proposition of the sermon, the purpose of the sermon should be derived from the purpose of the text.

The biblical writers had a purpose in mind when they wrote their books.⁷¹ None of the biblical authors took up their pen to record a few appropriate remarks on a religious subject. All the biblical authors wrote their books to affect the lives of their original audience. That is to say, the whole books of the Bible, including sections within books, were written to make something happen in the actions and the thoughts of the readers (Robinson 2001:108). Therefore, discovering the reason why the author included the narrative passage in his book will give authority to the application of the sermon.

The purpose of the text is a succinct statement of the purpose the biblical author had in sending this message to his original hearers (Greidanus 1999:287). While the exegetical proposition states the truth of the text, the purpose of the text shows what the truth should accomplish to the original audience. How then can we determine the purpose of the narrative text? To do this, the interpreter must answer to the questions, Why is the author sending this narrative passage to the original readers? What effect does he expect this passage to have on his readers? Does the author aim to teach, to warn, to persuade, to urge, to encourage, or to comfort Israel to do or in order not to do something? Through these questions, the exegete must figure out the reason

⁷⁰ According to Greidanus (1999:287), the advantage of discerning the purpose of the text is that “it reveals the relevance of the preaching-text. It exposes the question behind the text, the need in Israel the author sought to address.”

⁷¹ For examples of the purpose statement by the biblical authors, see Greidanus (1988:109-110) and Robinson (2001:108).

why the author included the particular narrative passage in the specific juncture (Greidanus 1999:287; Robinson 2001:108).

Discovering the purpose of the narrative text brings preachers halfway to making a relevant sermon. “The other half is discovering the same or a similar need among the contemporary hearers, so that the word of the Lord for Israel may be proclaimed as a relevant word of the Lord for the church today (Greidanus 1999:287).”

2.5.2 Describe the Mood of the Text

The mood of the text should be reflected in the sermon’s mood. Every passage has a mood. The mood of the passage includes “the feelings of the writer and also the emotions his writings evoke in the reader (Robinson 1984:813).” The interpreter of literature needs to catch not only the literary meaning of the passage but also the emotions of the passage which the first readers experienced. Quoting Marvin R. Vincent, Robinson (1984:814) states the case for mood as following:

The expositor must . . . aim to put himself for the time into the very atmosphere and spirit of the age out of which the word comes; not only to know, but to feel the motives of its acts and sayings. He must catch the quality of Jacob’s shrewdness; he must glow with Deborah’s warlike ardour; he must appreciate the political sagacity, no less the fatherly tenderness of Jephthah; he must thrill, like the singers of the Pilgrim Psalm, with inspiring and mournful memories of Jerusalem; he must be touched with the grateful affection which overflows in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, and burn with the righteous indignation of his words to the Galatians and Corinthians.

As there are dominant ideas in a passage, so there are dominant moods. The dominant mood, at least, should command the spirit of the sermon. Unfortunately, however, the dominant mood in some pulpits is guilt. No matter what passage the preacher selects, the congregation is scolded for not being all they ought to be. Reflecting the mood of a passage starts by asking the simple question, What mood does the biblical author want to convey?

2.5.3 Formulating the Exegetical Meaning of the Text

2.5.3.1 Determine the Central Idea of Each Scene

Each scene of a biblical narrative carries a theological idea (Vos 2005:316-317). Borden (1998:73-74, 76) and Kaiser (2003:64-66), in the preparation of sermon, support dividing the narrative passage into scenes and then writing down the central idea of each scene in one sentence.⁷² Kaiser (2003:64) comments on the function of the scene in the sermon preparation as follows:

Each scene represents something that took place at some particular time or place. In this regard, then, the scene acts much as the paragraph does in regular prose writing, usually supplying one main idea for each scene. That will be a great help to the teacher or homiletician who is struggling to show how the narrative goes together in its own inner logic and how legitimate principles may be derived from that text.

It is helpful to make a chart for each scene using one large piece of blank paper. Begin with summarizing what is being said or happening in each scene in a few sentences, and explain how each scene fits in the overall plot. The summary statement of each scene will function much like the theme sentences in the paragraphs within a didactic prose passage (Kaiser 2003:65). As each scene contributes to the whole plot in its specific juncture in the story, the summary statement of each scene should contribute to the main idea of the story in its organic whole.

As the final step to determine the central idea of each scene, reduce each summary paragraph into one sentence. This sentence should reflect the main idea of each

⁷² Kaiser (2003:65) says, "The task of the interpreter, teacher, or preacher, then, is to begin the study of each narrative by marking off the scenes in each story. This process is similar to the way one would break up a prose passage by marking off the individual paragraphs. Once these divisions are made, it is helpful to compose in one's own words a brief synopsis of what is being said or happening in each scene, for this will function much like the topic or theme sentence functions in prose paragraphs. In this way, the interpreter will focus on the narrative itself, allowing the form of the story as it now appears in the text to set the agenda of ideas to be attached to it."

scene and contribute to the exegetical proposition of the whole narrative.

2.5.3.2 Clarify the Plot

While the exegetical outlines are derived from the scenes of the narrative, the exegetical proposition of the whole narrative depends much on the plot.

To discover the exegetical proposition of a narrative, follow the story line and observe how the tensions arise and are resolved in the story (Shilds 1996:184-185). Shilds (1996:90-91) mentions two steps of observation to find the rise and resolution of the tension that may eventually result in the central idea of the story as follows:

1. Identify what tension emerged in the story and summarize that tension in a single sentence.
2. Identify how the tension was resolved and summarize the resolution of the tension in a single sentence.

Once the identification of the rise and resolution of the tension is completed, the exegete should combine these two elements into one descriptive sentence summary. This summary sentence of the plot should reflect the relationship that exists between the sequential development of the scenes and the causes and consequences that are related to that sequential development (Kaiser 2003:66). Because plot is composed of a series of scenes, the plot and the scenes should fit together tightly and make sense.

On the other hand, it is highly recommended that the development of the plot must be formulated from the narrator's point of view, unless the narrator uses one of the characters to present his own point of view (Greidanus 1988:224).⁷³ It is because the point of view provides coherence to the whole series of joined episodes or scenes. In addition, the narrator's point of view often provides either directly or indirectly the authorial evaluation of the characters and events in the story that are intended to help the reader. Such statements give us interpretive

⁷³ Most often the narrator carries his point of view from the perspective of the protagonist, but not always. The choice of the point of view will have a major influence on the preacher's development of the exegetical, theological, and homiletical idea.

clues by which we can discover the central theme of the story. When preachers formulate the development of the exegetical proposition for the narrative text, therefore, they are encouraged to review their exegetical notes on the point of view and look for authorial comments on the characters and events.

2.5.3.3 Develop an Exegetical Proposition

To discover the central idea of the OTN texts is not always easy, but it is essential that the preacher be able to articulate the main idea of the narrative text that will provide the ground of the unity of sermon. If the preacher's responsibility is not to create his or her own message, but to communicate what God has already said through the Bible, then the central idea of any given sermon must reflect the central idea of the biblical text intended by the author himself (McDougall 1992:229).

The OT authors do not use narratives as a vehicle to carry a list of conceptual principles. Yet OT narratives focus more on the communication of a single idea (Mathewson 2002:39-40). Pratt (1990:126) states the concept of the single meaning of the OT narrative text in the following way:

As we begin to investigate Old Testament stories, we must remember that *there is one original meaning, but there are many legitimate summaries of the one meaning*. Careful examination can rule out incorrect assessments, but many correct descriptions can be made. Our goal is not to formulate the *only* proper description or original meaning. It is to formulate an assortment of legitimate descriptions.

We know that not all the meaning of the biblical narrative texts can be determined with certainty. Yet this does not mean that nothing can be known with certainty. As Richard (1986:17) states, "Though man will never know fully, what he partially perceives is not wrong. There is certainty in knowledge-perception, though it is partial and conditioned." When the preacher finds the main idea which encompasses the whole narrative based on sound exegetical study, even though it is not perfect, we can say he or she has the exegetical idea or proposition on which he or she can develop a sermon.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ As Mathewson (2002:83) defines, the exegetical idea or proposition is "a sentence statement

Before we discuss formulating the exegetical idea of a particular narrative text, we must make sure we are clear on what an *idea* is. An idea or concept, according to Robinson (2001:41), consists of two essential elements: a subject and a complement (see Table 2.1). Both are necessary. The subject of a biblical text is the definite answer to the question, “What is the text talking about?” And the complement of a biblical text is the answer to the question, “What is the text saying about the subject (Davis 1958:24-26; Willhite 1998:17; Robinson 2001: 41-43; Edwards 2005a:65)?” Quoting Sunukjian (1993), on the other hand, Shields (1996:185) suggests that the subject can be replaced by the Big Question that is either explicit or implicit in the passage. Therefore, when formulating the subject of the exegetical proposition from the text, the preacher can ask and answer, “What is the Big Question that God is trying to answer in this narrative?” Shields (1996:186) continues to suggest that the complement, the second essential ingredient of the exegetical idea, can be replaced with the answer the question, “What is the Big Answer to the narrative’s Big Question?”

1. Subject : What is the Big Question that God is trying to answer in this narrative? (What is the text talking about?)
2. Complement : What is the Big Answer to the narrative’s Big Question? (What is the text saying about the subject?)

Table 2.1 Components of an Exegetical Idea

Once a subject and a complement are identified, the exegete must combine the two elements into a one sentence summary that provides a succinct statement about what the narrative text is teaching. Thus the development of an exegetical proposition can be classified into three steps: identifying the subject, identifying the complement, and one sentence summary.⁷⁵

2.5.3.3.1 Identify the Subject of the Narrative

of the author’s intended meaning that reflects the time and culture of the original audience.”

⁷⁵ For a more detailed treatment of how to identify and develop the exegetical idea of a text, see Robinson (2001:33-50).

The plot is the essence and backbone of the story. To get an exegetical idea from the narrative text, the plot statement must be transformed into a descriptive statement which provides the central idea about what the whole story is teaching. Accordingly, the formulation of the exegetical idea from the narrative text may be regarded as a conceptualization of its plot. In conceptualizing plot, exegetical idea tends to focus on the significance and implications of the narrative (Clines 1978:17-18).⁷⁶ Thus, the exegetical idea of the OTN text must reflect the didactic intention of the plot (i.e., the whole story).

Determining the subject of a narrative text is closely connected to comprehending the plot of the story. The subject will normally be derived from the tension-producing element of the plot statement mentioned in the preceding section. The tension-producing statement should be converted to the subject statement of the exegetical idea answering the question, What is the Big Question that God is trying to answer in this narrative? The pitfall here is “formulating a big idea that uses the text as an illustration rather than formulating a big idea that the text actually communicates (Mathewson 2002:84).”⁷⁷

When the exegete has a possible subject, he or she must return to the text, and relate the subject to the details. Robinson (2001:66) suggests several questions to do this.

- Does the subject fit all the parts?
- Is it too broad? How would you narrow it?
- Is it too narrow? Is there a larger subject that accounts for all the parts?
- Is your subject an exact description of what the passage is talking about?

Often the initial statement of a subject will be too broad. To narrow it, as Robinson (2001:66-67) suggests, the subject must be tested with a series of definitive questions. These definitive questions always begin with one of six words: how, what, why, when,

⁷⁶ In contrast to the exegetical idea, the plot tends to concentrate on the characters or events of the narrative.

⁷⁷ For an example about the case that uses the narrative as an illustration, see Mathewson (2002:84).

where, or who. The subject statement can always be expressed in the form of a question and presents a problem to be solved by the complement. Applying these six interrogatives to the proposed subject, therefore, will help the interpreter be more exact.

2.5.3.3.2 Identify the Complement of the Narrative

Once the subject is isolated, the exegete must now determine the complement that completes the subject and makes it into an idea (Robinson 2001:67). The complement has a logical relationship with the subject of the passage.⁷⁸ That is, if the subject refers to the “big question” in a passage, then the complement will refer to the “big answer” to the big question being raised. Understanding how narrative tension finds resolution will be a helpful clue in finding the complement (Shilds 1996:92). To formulate the complement of the exegetical idea, therefore, the statement of the tension-resolving element in the plot of a narrative passage must be converted to the statement of the “Big Answer” to the Big Question presented through the subject statement.

2.5.3.3.3 Combine the Subject and Complement into a Complete Exegetical Idea

The preacher must check the subject and complement in the light of the sequential movement of the scenes and the significant details of the narrative. If there is enough support by the text, the preacher must combine the subject and complement into a single descriptive sentence that provides a concise expression about what the entire narrative is teaching. The combination of subject and complement constitutes an exegetical idea. The exegetical idea of a narrative passage must retain both the original movement and conceptual significance.

Perhaps the first writing of the exegetical idea will be a rough statement that needs adjustment. The first draft of the exegetical proposition must be checked and adjusted in the light of the main points of the scenes, plot statement,

⁷⁸ Robinson (2001:41) says, “a subject without a complement dangles as an open-ended question. Complements without subjects resemble automobile parts not attached to a car. An idea emerges only when the complement is joined to a definite subject.”

narrator's point of view and the purpose of the text. Once the exegetical idea has been established, the exegete must go back to the passage to check how the exegetical idea is supported by the details of the narrative (Robinson 2001:70). In doing this, the right answer must be given to the question, Can you explain how the parts fit your idea? If there are details in the narrative that do not seem to contribute to the exegetical idea, ask yourself why. The statement of the exegetical idea should fit all the details of the narrative. Do not bend the passage to fit your statement of the exegetical idea (Robinson 2001:70). Determining the exegetical idea of the OTN requires rigorous exegesis. Without hard work on the text, the preacher cannot get the proper exegetical idea. The exegetical idea is "the key that unlocks the meaning of the text (Robinson & Robinson 2003:28)."

The following is an example of the exegetical proposition presented by Mathewson (2002:88):

Text: Genesis 22:1-19

Subject: How far did Abraham go to put obedience to God first?

Complement: Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Exegetical proposition: Abraham put obedience to God first even though he faced the prospect of sacrificing his son Isaac.

Robinson and Robinson (2003:28) provide another example of the exegetical proposition as follows:

The story of the selection of David as king and the account of his battle with Goliath in 1 Samuel 16-17 tells us something important about leaders. Spiritual leadership is not a matter of age or physical stature. God chose Israel's second king by a different standard.

Text: 1 Samuel 16-17

Subject: What did God look for in the man he chose to lead his people?

Complement: David demonstrated courage that grew out of a vital faith in God.

Exegetical Proposition: The man called to be king demonstrated courage that came from a vital faith in God.

2.5.3.4 Develop an Exegetical Outline

The development of the exegetical product culminates in the creation of an exegetical outline. The best way to create an exegetical outline is to convert the central ideas of the scenes into the main points of the exegetical outline. Reviewing the central ideas of the scenes in the light of the exegetical proposition, the preacher should transform the main ideas of the scenes into the main points of the exegetical outline.⁷⁹ Exegetical outline also uses the language of the text, including the names of characters and cities in the narrative. This exegetical outline may be exactly the same or slightly different from the central ideas of the scenes. The exegetical outline must retain both the sequential movement and conceptual significance of the scenes. Each main point should support and be related closely to the exegetical proposition.

If the narrative is made of two, three or four scenes, then each scene can naturally construct a main point of the exegetical outline (Cf. Osborne 1991:172).⁸⁰ If more than three or four scenes make up a narrative, then list some of them as supporting materials (subpoints) under the exegetical outline. One thing to keep in mind is that each main point of the exegetical outline represents an idea and should thus be a grammatically complete sentence. This will help the preacher to think more accurately (Robinson 2001:134; Mathewson 2002:55).⁸¹

Once the main points are decided, the preacher must fill in the main points with supporting materials, that is, subpoints (Robinson 2001:140). Episodes which make up a scene in the narrative will function as the supporting materials to

⁷⁹ This two-stage transition process will reduce the risk of oversimplifying and produce a smooth development of the exegetical outline.

⁸⁰ Kaiser (2003:66) recommends, "It will be necessary to limit each scene to one major idea that develops the central idea of the passage in successive thoughts in the progress of the whole story."

⁸¹ Robinson (2001:134) states, "When only words or phrases stand as points, they deceive us because they are incomplete and vague. Partial statements allow thought to slip through our minds like a greased football."

establish and develop the main points of the exegetical outline. While the supporting materials (subpoints) may be stated in a didactic fashion, its presentation in the sermon should be in story form (Linares 2000:160). An exegetical outline is not a sermon outline. We will return to it later when we deal with the sermon outline in Chapter 4 (4.4.5). The following is an example of an exegetical outline suggested by Mathewson (2002:55-56). This outline is developed from Genesis 22:1-19.⁸²

Exegetical proposition: Abraham put obedience to God first even though he faced the prospect of sacrificing his son Isaac.

- I. *Exposition:* The narrator explains God's intent to test Abraham (v. 1).
- II. *Crisis:* God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (v. 2).
- III. *Rising Tension:* Abraham responds to God's command with obedience (vv. 3-10).
 - A. Abraham travels to the mountain of sacrifice to worship God (vv. 3-6).
 - B. Abraham replies to Isaac's question about the lamb by asserting that God will provide (vv. 7-8).
 - C. Abraham prepares to slay his son Isaac (vv. 9-10).
- IV. *Resolution:* God stops Abraham from slaying Isaac and provides a ram for the sacrifice (vv. 11-14).
 - A. The angel of the LORD commands Abraham not to do anything to Isaac and commends Abraham for demonstrating the fear of God (vv. 11-12).
 - B. Abraham finds a ram for the sacrifice and attributes it to God's provision (vv. 13—14).
- V. *Conclusion:* The angel of the LORD returns to reaffirm the LORD's blessing on Abraham and the LORD's intent to fulfill his promise (vv. 15-19).

⁸² While exegetical outlines work deductively, usually the presentation of the narrative sermon works inductively. Thus, the sermon outline may be constructed inductively.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS TO PREACH

THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

Chapter 3 involves determining the theological implications of the narrative passage. Before the preacher can apply the exegetical meaning to the contemporary audience, he or she must determine what it says to all people of all time. Application must come from the theological message of the text. Understanding preaching as a theological task can provide a safeguard against sermons becoming excessively focused on exegetical study of the text to the exclusion of how that text relates to the larger gospel message or teachings of the Scripture. Bright (1967:171-172) stresses the importance of determining the author's theological intention:

[The preacher's] aim is to expound and interpret the mind of the Bible writer in such a way that his word may once again speak through the text to the congregation. In order to do this, the preacher needs to understand not only what the text says, but also those concerns that caused it to be said, and said as it was. His exegetical labors are, therefore, not complete until he has grasped the text's theological intention. Until he has done this he cannot interpret the text, and may egregiously misinterpret it by attributing to its words an intention quite other than of their author.

In sermon preparation, theological interpretation functions as a bridge to connect the gulf between two worlds, the world of the text and the world of the modern audience. When you cross this bridge, you will have gone from studying the world of Scriptures—an exegetical exercise—toward the world of preaching the Scriptures—a homiletical exercise.

This chapter is composed of four parts: the nature of theological interpretation, the task of theological interpretation, tensions involved in the task of theological interpretation of the OTN texts, and formulating a theological product.

3.1 The Nature of Theological Interpretation

3.1.1 The Term and Concept

The term *theological Interpretation* seems to be problematic because the word *theological* might imply that the interpreter of the Bible must be a theologian to understand its meaning. It will be helpful to clarify what we mean when we use the term *theological interpretation* in this dissertation. The author uses the term *theological interpretation* only with the clear understanding that “theological” refers not to theory or the discipline of theology but to God, specifically, the revelation of God and the revelation about God (Greidanus 1988:103). “Theological interpretation,” as Greidanus (1988:103) states, “seeks to hear God’s voice in the Scriptures; it seeks to prove beyond mere historical reconstruction and verbal meanings to a discernment of the message of God in the Scriptures; it concentrates on the prophetic, kerygmatic⁸³ dimension and the theocentric focus.”

3.1.2 The Expositional Process: Distinctions between Exegetical, Theological, and Homiletical Processes

Before going any further, we need to understand the expositional process, which leads to expository messages that are faithful to the text and that contain relevant applications for listeners. The expositional process (exegesis—theology—homiletics) moves from the meaning of a passage in its original setting (e.g., meat offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8) to the theological principle, usually not expressed explicitly (e.g., “Love for a fellow believer limits the Christian’s expression of liberty in Christ” in 1 Cor. 8), and to the specific application of that truth recontextualized for the current situations of the particular audience (e.g.,

⁸³ The word *Kerygma* reflects the element of authority. Clowney (1961:54) states, “The *Kerygma* is the message of the *keryx*, the herald of the king. The term is used in the New Testament of the preaching of Jonah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles. In each case there is a divine commission, and Jesus stands in the center, who is greater than Jonah, whose sandal-strap John the Baptist was unworthy to loosen, who is the Lord of the apostles. The great announcement is the coming of the kingdom, with the demand which this makes first upon the people of God, and ultimately upon the whole world. The God-centered content of the message requires the official form. Directly and immediately the saving work of God is proclaimed.”

the use of alcoholic beverages by local church members).

The process from text to sermon is one that begins in the exegetical, travels through the theological, and reaches the homiletical. Although this overview of the expositional process comes as a sequence, the actual process from text to sermon is retroductive and includes a few U-turns to check and balance among exegetical, theological and homiletical processes. Preachers must keep in mind the distinctions between the exegetical, theological, and homiletical processes. Failure to maintain these distinctions in sermon preparation leads to an unfortunate merging of text and audience (Warren 1999:353).

3.1.2.1 The Exegetical Process

In exegesis, the preacher examines the meaning of a passage in its original setting. Exegesis focuses on the original audience of the text and the meaning the text had for them (Willhite 2001:63; Mattewson 2002:83). As the result of the exegetical process, the preacher states the exegetical products, that is, the original text's proposition, purpose, and outline. Exegetical products use the language of the text, including the names of characters and cities in the narrative. In the exegetical process, the preacher's theology and audience must have been bracketed off so that their influence will not interfere with discerning the meaning of the text in its own context (Warren 1991:475). When the preacher has a clear and confident comprehension of the meaning of the text through exegetical study, the theological process begins.

3.1.2.2 The Theological Process

When the exegetical conclusions have been sufficiently established, the preacher begins the theological process. In theological process, the preacher does not seek to grasp what the meaning of the text in its original context is. He now tries to demonstrate what the universal theological principle of the text for a timeless universal audience is.

Through theological process, the preacher produces the theological proposition, structure, and purpose of the text expressed by "the timeless theological truth that the passage teaches, in a way that would be applicable to the original

situation as well as to the contemporary corresponding situations (Ross 1996:46).” The theological statements will not include the time-bound historical and descriptive language of the text, but rather will be worded for a timeless universal audience. While exegetical statements are written in the past tense, theological statements must be written in the present tense. The proposition will therefore be stated in terms of theology rather than history.

The theological process is critical in moving up the ladder of abstraction and crossing the theological bridge from the ancient world of the text to the contemporary world. Willhite (2001:64) provides a picture of the theological bridge that reaches from the text to the contemporary sermon (see Figure 3.1).

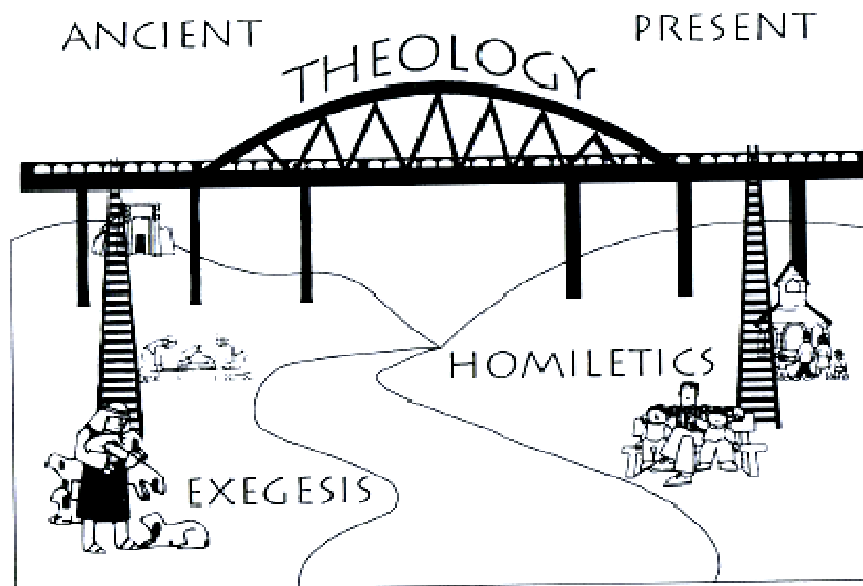


Figure 3.1 The Expository Process

In this picture, the world of the text and the world of the listeners are bridged by the theological process. Through theological process, as Zuck (1982:27-28) mentions, the preacher bridges the gulf between the meaning of what God had done or said in the past and the application of the truth to the specific audience today. The ladder at each end of the bridge is a ladder of abstraction. The preacher climbs up the ladder at the left end of the bridge, from a specific exegetical idea to a more general principle that is applicable to a universal audience, not just the original readers. Then at the right end of the bridge, the preacher comes down the

ladder from general to specific, stepping into the homiletical phase, from the universal theological principle to the specific homiletical application for the contemporary audience (Willhite 2001:64).

3.1.2.3 The Homiletical Process

The third process is the homiletical, leading to the sermon as it is delivered. In homiletics, the preacher applies the original meaning of the text to specific situations today. Whereas the theological process focuses on the statement of the theological meaning expressed as universal principles, the homiletical process concentrates on the specific audience to whom the sermon will be preached. The specific applications, which carry the authority of exegesis and theology, will be different from one audience to another. Thus, the homiletical statements become “biblical truth applied.”

Often preachers are tempted to stop with principles. Often we can see that preachers preach based on a theological principle, such as, “Whether we live in crisis or contentment, God is always faithful and trustworthy.” Although this theological principle may give a sound biblical foundation to the sermon, there is no desired response from the audience. Hence, the more homiletical and applicational proposition in this case becomes: “Regardless of your circumstances, trust God, for He is always faithful and trustworthy.” If the preacher leaves it to the hearers’ choice to apply the theological principle of the sermon into their specific life situation, most of them will never move one foot.

In homiletics, the preacher focuses his or her attention on effective communication. While both exegesis and theology remain stable (one meaning), for this reason, homiletics varies from one audience to another (many applications). Willhite (2001:65) provides a summarized chart to show the distinctions of the language between exegetical, theological, and homiletical statements (see Figure 3.2):

Exegetical	Theological	Homiletical
Biblical language	Timeless language	Contemporary language
Time bound to biblical author and audience	Covers all time and has no specific audience in view	Time bound to a specific contemporary preacher and audience
Technical wording	Nontechnical wording	Applicational wording
Information and meaning oriented	Perfection oriented	Application and motivation oriented
Provides analytical detail	Provides integrated truth	Provides interest and relevance
Textual order of the passage	Logical order of the argument	Communication order of a developed homiletical proposition
Concrete and specific	Abstract and general	Concrete and specific
Declarative	Declarative	Declarative/Imperative
Paul commanded the Philippian Christians to take on the attitude of Jesus so that they would serve one another.	Serving one another requires having the same attitude that Jesus had in coming to earth as an atoning sacrifice.	To be a servant, be like Jesus: Submit to God's plan.

Figure 3.2 Distinctions between Exegetical, Theological, and Homiletical Statements

3.1.3 The Need for Theological Interpretation of the OTN

Neither exegetical interpretation nor theological interpretation can rightly exist in isolation from each other. Both approaches are demanded by the human, yet divine, nature of Scripture. In biblical revelation, human beings stand before the Word of God; but also, in Scripture, the Word of God stands before us in a human form. Bright (1967:170) observes that most biblical passages have some facet of theology expressed in such a way that marks them part and parcel of the fabric of the whole Bible. The interpreter's exegetical labors are, therefore, not complete until he or she has grasped the text's theological intention.

3.1.3.1 The Divine Authorship and the Unity of the Bible

The task of grammatical and historical interpretation is an attempt to find the textual meaning scientifically. It attempts to discover the human author's intended meaning. The OT was not given to us out of the sky as a complete book. The OT is the work of humans as well as God and there was a historical process by which it came to be. It has come to us, at least from the human perspective, like any other book. The human dimension of the Scripture, like the humanity of Christ, cannot be ignored without great loss to our theology. In this sense then, the grammatical-historical approach to the Scripture is an unmistakably necessary task (Sailhamer 1995:177).

But should biblical interpretation end with such a limited meaning? Responsible biblical interpretation includes more than grammatical and historical interpretation. It is because the Scriptures have double authorship. The orthodox view of the Scripture is that the human and divine authors worked together to produce the inspired text (Virkler 1981:25). The mystery of divine inspiration is that the Bible is 100% divine while it is also 100% human.⁸⁴ The author of a text is its source of meaning, even though it must be acknowledged that to some extent a text's meaning also has a subjective aspect in the reader (McCartney & Clayton 2002:35). If God is the ultimate author of the Scripture, then He, as the living author, retains the moral right to define its meaning. If

⁸⁴ This fact must not be resolved into a dualism which splits the Bible into divine elements and human elements, or divine factors and human factors, or divine aspects and human aspects.

God is the author of the Bible, and if the whole Bible is a coherent communication from God, then a biblical preacher must be committed to interpreting the Bible as a coherent whole. As Henry (1976:69) writes, “The very fact of disclosure by the one living God assures the comprehensive unity of divine revelation.” In other words, unitary theological interpretation is possible because God has breathed out these texts (2 Tim. 3:16-17).⁸⁵

Divine authorship, therefore, acknowledges that God speaks His word through the writings of human authors and redactors. At the same time, divine authorship calls for a theological interpretation which seeks beyond historical reconstruction and verbal meanings for the message of God (Greidanus 1988:104-105).

3.1.3.2 The Old Testament as the Canon of the Christian Church

The second reason for the necessity of theological interpretation is that the Christian church accepted the Old Testament as her standard for faith and practice (Greidanus 1988:105; Cf. Janse van Rensburg 2003:75). Certainly, it is possible to analyze the OT as the material for the historical, archaeological, literary, and religious historical studies themselves. Even theologically the OT can be studied as the basic documents for the Judaism. But in the Christian church, the OT study cannot be separated from the Christian theology (Dreytza, Hilbrands, & Schmid 2002:162). The reason is that the Christian church is made up of the various nations which accepted the OT as the canon for her faith and practice.⁸⁶ Since the Bible is the Christian church’s standard of faith and practice, its interpretation requires a theocentric focus which is able to discern the revelation of God and His will. In other words, the Bible requires theological interpretation not only because it is the Word of God but also because it is the

⁸⁵ Whoever gives up the unity of the Scripture can at best partially, and perhaps not at all, carry out a biblical classification or an inner-biblical comparison.

⁸⁶ As Kaiser (1994c:198) states, “The very idea of a canon implies a standard or authoritative measuring device by which a collection of books is recognized as norms for the community. Implicit within that recognition is not only the idea of a beginning and ending point but the suggestion that there are linking notices and devices within that corpus as well. Thus, while the individual parts of the canon are individually valuable, only as the entire corpus is viewed as a whole can the whole mind of God be finally declared on any topic that several of the books may address.”

authoritative word about God—his acts, his will, and his relation to his creation and to his people (Greidanus 1988:105).

In the Christian church, the approach of the OT starts from the Christian faith and moves to an understanding of the OT based on the NT. That is to say the OT has to be interpreted beyond its plain historical meaning in its Christian significance and contemporary relevance. Theological interpretation is not something that contradicts grammatical and historical interpretation. Rather it makes the true historical meaning apparent in the light of the whole Bible (Jepsen 1963:255). This needs to be understood in the way that the Old Testament history has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ's event. Bright (1967:148) states:

What concerns us first and last in the Old Testament is not its historical information as such, but its understanding of the words and deeds, demands and promises of Israel's God in this history, which in one way or another underlies each of its texts. This last is relevant and normative for us precisely because the New Testament affirms that this history found its terminus, and this theology its fulfilment, in Jesus Christ.

In relation to the understanding of the OT based on the NT, a double approach to the OT study is possible. Judging from the progressive history of revelation, there is a flow which moves from the OT to the NT. At the same time, judging from the fulfillment of the OT in Christ, there is a flow which moves from the NT to the OT. It is because Jesus and his apostles cleared the way for the proper interpretation of the OT (Dreytza, Hilbrands, & Schmid 2002:163).

We can draw two important principles from the fact that the OT is the standard for the faith and practice of the Christian church.

1. Biblical study should not exclude theological interpretation based on the whole Bible. This shows that the OTN (including the whole OT) has relevance for the Christian church today.
2. The OTN (including the whole OT) can only be understood properly as a part of the whole Bible.

3.1.3.3 The Confessional Approach to the Scripture

A Christian interpreter cannot approach the Bible in a totally neutral way but will naturally use a method of interpretation that is informed by the confession of faith (Greidanus 1988:105). According to the *confessional approach*, the task of biblical interpretation is thus not merely to describe the meaning of the text but also to stand under its authority. In principle, the confessional approach consists only of describing the message of the Bible under the assumption that the message is to be understood as the Word of God (Sailhamer 1995:170). The confessional approach acknowledges that the OT message should be described as part of the message of the whole Bible (the OT and the NT) as the Word of God. Sailhamer (1995:175) summarizes the value of the confessional approach to the OT as following:

The chief value of the confessional approach is that it acknowledges and attempts to deal with the problem of the evident tensions that Christians find within the Bible. These tensions include the relationship between the OT and NT; law and grace; cultural particulars and universal principles; Scripture and tradition; religion and theology. Moreover, the confessional approach acknowledges the responsibility of a theology of the OT to go beyond mere description to provide normative conclusions. It acknowledges that the Bible (OT) is God's Word and that God does speak to the reader through his Word.

3.1.4 The Goal of Theological Interpretation

The first goal of theological interpretation is to bridge the gap between the world of the ancient text (through the exegetical process) and the world of the modern listeners (through the homiletical process) with the statement of universally applicable truth (Warren 1999:337). Theological interpretation allows what the text “meant” to address the present church anew (Osborne 1991:270).⁸⁷

⁸⁷ According to Kirkpatrick (2002:356), only theological interpretation bridges the gulf between the realities of the past and the realities of the present; realities sometimes considered mutually exclusive.

The second goal of theological interpretation is to keep the preacher on track. Some preachers who become enamoured with theological preaching turn out to take journeys that follow the trail of a word, metaphor, theme or concept from Genesis to Revelation. Clever interpretations and interrelationships between the OT and NT are noted and deep insights are exposed that the average listener would never have discovered when left to his or her Greek text and commentaries. However, the problem is that little justice is given to particular passages. Such preaching tends to bypass the purpose of these passages in favor of a few, great concerns (Adams 1987:47). Even when the starting place happens to be a particular passage, those who preach so globally tend to use the passage merely as a springboard for such larger concerns.

Adams (1987:48) provides a good example to show the use of systematic-theological study for the preparation of preaching.

I know from a systematic study of the Scripture that includes James 4:2-3; 5:15-18, etc., that there are conditions for praying effectively. So when preaching on John 14:13, "I will do whatever you ask in My Name," I know that getting answers to prayer is not so simple as John seems to be saying. So when preaching from John, I keep in mind my systematic understanding of prayer in the whole of the Bible. This does not mean, however, that in the sermon of John 14:13 I must mention all that James and many other writers had to say on the subject . . . What I must do when preparing and preaching a message from John 14:13 is to keep in mind a systematic knowledge of prayer (as Jesus and John certainly did) so that what I say from that passage does not contradict or preclude what James, et al say. That means that I will preach John 14:13 in a manner that is informed and influenced by the other passages, without necessarily mentioning or referring to any one of them. If I was to try to say all there is to say about prayer when preaching from any given passage, I wouldn't have time to concentrate on the passage before me. I'd say too little about too much to have said well any one thing. Moreover, all my sermons on prayer would tend to be alike.

The use of biblical theology in preaching is similar to the use of systematic

theology. The preacher must know the progressive development of God's revelation and take note of where any selected passage for preaching occurs in the history of redemption. When preaching any passage of the Bible, the preacher must examine proper interrelationships between various OT and NT passages, along with themes that persist and grow as they are enlarged with more and more revelation. But when preaching, it is not necessary to mention all of these things any more than the whole teaching on prayer when preaching from John 14:13. "Biblical-theological study, then, like systematic-theological study, is primarily for the sake of the preacher (Adams 1987:49)."

Sermons should not always recount the history of redemption. Rather they ought to be moments in which a preacher presents to a congregation some particular from that history in a focused and concentrated way in order to enable them, by God's grace, to love God and their neighbor better. As Adams (1987: 49) puts it, "Christ should be central in Christian preaching, but not the history of redemption as such. The cross should be central in a sermon because it bears everything in the Christian life as well as provides the only means of forgiveness, not because the sermon is an historical survey of redemption."

The goal of theological interpretation is, therefore, to keep the preacher on track on the basis of the theological message of the text as a principled statement⁸⁸ that is universal (Warren 1999:346). It should keep his or her preaching truly Christian. Preaching is not merely tracing the past history of redemption over and over again from various perspectives and under various themes. In preaching, the unique message of the selected preaching-text should be proclaimed and nothing else. Although "Christ" is the over-all theme of historical text, the preacher must proclaim the unique theme of the selected text. The exact determination of the place in the progression in redemptive history and the specific synthesis of elements in a particular text make up the unique message of the preaching-text. In preaching the text, to conclude, the preacher should not stray from the unique message of the text.

⁸⁸ Principialization is, according to Kaiser (1981:152), "to state the author's propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church." For more detailed explanation, see 3.2.2.3.

3.2 The Task of Theological Interpretation

The goal of the theological process, as mentioned above, is to bridge the gap between the world of the ancient text (through the exegetical process) and the world of the modern listeners (through the homiletical process) with the statement of universally applicable truth. This bridging task enables the preacher to interpret both the text in its ancient contextual world and the listeners in their immediate contextual world without fusing or merging the horizons of those two distinct worlds. The theological process advances the exegetical conclusions (the text's proposition, purpose, and outline) through three modifying stages toward the homiletical process. Those stages are *stylizing* (moving from technical, exegetical language to general, theological language), *theologizing* (moving from specific, time-bound statements to universal, timeless truth), and *organizing* (moving from textual structure to logical, psychological flow) (Warren 1999:337).

3.2.1 The Task of Stylizing

A text's theological proposition, purpose, and outline should restate the exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline in nontechnical, non-specific terms. The expositor now moves from technical, specific, contextual, and exegetical expressions to more general, theological expressions (Warren 1999:338). Ross (1996:46) states:

The wording should not now be historical and descriptive, for that would remove the lesson from the present audience; neither should the wording be totally contemporary, for that would leave the meaning for the original audience out of the picture. The wording should express the timeless theological truth that the passage teaches, in a way that would be applicable to the original situation as well as to the contemporary corresponding situations. When this step is done the message will be relevant—and tied to the text.

Also, theological statements must be written in the present tense, while exegetical statements are written in the past tense. In addition, whereas

copulative verbs can be used in exegetical statements, strong, substantive, and active verbs should characterize the theological statements. Again, whereas exegetical statements may be long and complex, theological statements should be shorter and less complex (Warren 1999:238).

Warren (1999:339) provides an example from an OTN text (Judg. 3:12-30) to explain the task of stylizing in theological interpretation. The exegetical proposition uses the technical and specific terms referring to narrative features (plot, characters, setting, reversal, irony, and others): “As a result of the Lord’s giving Ehud, the surprise left-hander, to deliver repentant Israel from Moabite subjugation through conning assassination and courageous conquest, Moab at that time became subject to Israel, which then enjoyed peace in the land for two generations.” In the theological statement of this, technical and specific terms disappear: “God’s surprisingly unorthodox deliverance of His repentant people provides triumphant peace.”

3.2.2 The Task of Theologizing

3.2.2.1 Categories of Theologizing

The process of bridging the gulf between the ancient text and the present listeners requires at least two theological movements—biblical and systematic—as well as several hermeneutical skills.

3.2.2.1.1 Biblical Theology⁸⁹

The attempt to do biblical theology assumes that the text has unity and that the whole Bible also has unity. Biblical theology constitutes the first step away from seeking the author’s meaning of the text in its original setting (“what the author meant”) and toward the delineation of its significance for the church today (“what the author means”) (Osborne 1991:263).⁹⁰ Biblical theology focuses on

⁸⁹ Ladd (1974:25) provides a definition of biblical theology: “Biblical theology is the discipline which sets forth the message of the books of the Bible in their historical setting. Biblical theology is primarily a descriptive discipline Biblical theology has the task of expounding the theology found in the Bible in its own historical setting, and its own terms, categories, and thought forms.”

⁹⁰ While biblical theology provides a bridge between the original meaning of the text (exegesis)

the transmission of the message. Through biblical theology, the interpreter wants primarily to understand, not what a particular passage says, but how God builds up his total message to us over the course of time. Even if we consider a smaller passage in the OT, we ask how this passage fits into a growing corpus of canonical communication destined to be completed with the coming of Christ and the writing of the NT (Poythress 1999:120).

Biblical theology in sermon preparation provides the big picture, or overview, of biblical revelation which is expressed in a particular text. To get the big picture of biblical revelation, the preacher collects and arranges the themes that unite the passages and can be traced through a book or author as a whole. This is done in three steps: first, the interpreter studies the theological themes in terms of individual books, second, the interpreter explores the theology of two or more books written by the same author, and finally he/she traces the progress of revelation that unites a Testament and even the Bible as a whole (that is, the historical development of these themes throughout the biblical period). In this way biblical theology collates the exegetical meaning of the text and its application for the church today (Osborne 1991:263). To illustrate, it is possible to examine the theme of *faith* in Galatians or Paul's whole writings. We can also compare the theme of faith in Galatians to the notion of faith presented by James, the writer of Hebrews, or the whole Bible. Thus, we can speak of the contrasting views of faith in Paul's theology in Galatians and that of James. But this does not mean the two are contradictory. It simply means that the writers expressed their views out of concrete situations that were strikingly different. Paul and James framed their theological responses differently because each was replying to specific problems in specific churches.

Through the biblical theological study, the original meaning of a particular text

and its significance for the church today (application), biblical theology remains primarily within the sphere of exegetical research because its major goal is to discover the views of the biblical period. There is a two-way relationship between biblical theology and exegesis. Biblical theology provides the categories and overall scriptural unity behind one's interpretation of individual passages, while exegesis provides the data collated into a biblical theology. In other words, the two are interdependent. The exegete studies the author's meaning on the basis of literary considerations (grammar and thought-development) and historical background (socioeconomic), then the biblical theologian works with the results and compiles patterns of unity behind the individual statements.

becomes deeper and clearer by the pursuit of the progressive development of the biblical revelation. This underscores the continuity of a text's meaning throughout redemptive history along with recognizing that further reflection wins for the earlier text a deeper and clearer meaning (Walke 1981:9). Biblical theology "enables the interpreter to separate the substantive and permanent truth expressed in the Scriptures from particular historical contexts in which the various texts expressed that truth (Warren 1999:341)." Throughout the Bible, for example, blood was continually shed for the atonement of sin. In the OT the form was animal blood (Lev. 8:15; 17:11). Ultimately Jesus Christ shed His blood once and for all (Heb. 9:12). Although the principle of the blood sacrifice was and remains always in effect (Heb. 9:22), the form changed. The new form, in Christ, fully and finally met the permanent requirement for atonement.

3.2.2.1.2 Systematic Theology

The steps of theologizing also involve systematic theology. Whereas biblical theology studies the individual themes behind the individual books and traditions within the Bible, seeking covering laws that integrate the themes into a holistic pattern, systematic theology contextualizes these into a logical and conceptual whole that reconstructs dogma for the modern period (Osborne 1991:267). As Nicole (1978:185) says, "Biblical theology is a foundation for systematic theology in that it provides the rich fruit of exegetical study conducted with a proper relation to the original context and the development of divine revelation." For instance, biblical theology begins with the realized eschatology of John (salvation/eternal life as a present possession of the believer) and the final eschatology of Hebrews or 1 Peter (salvation as a future attainment). Noting that these aspects are complementary and part of a larger truth (inaugurated eschatology, which recognizes that salvation begins in the present and is consummated in the future), the biblical theology finds both security and responsibility in the Christian life. Systematic theology, on the other hand, takes this result and places it into a more comprehensive and broader arena of Christian theology integrating soteriology and eschatology.

The following guidelines may be helpful in seeking theological meaning:

1. Search the theological location of the passage. Where does the passage fit within the whole arena of revelation comprising systematic theology (Fee 1993:55)?⁹¹ Under which covenant does it fit? Are its aspects limited in part or in whole to the Old Covenant as, for example, certain cultic sacrificial practices would be? If so, is the passage still relevant as a historical example of God's relationship to human beings, or as an indication of God's standards, justice, immanence, transcendence, etc.? If the passage is related to these areas of doctrine, is it seen in its vocabulary or subject matter, or in something less explicit (Stuart 2001:24)?⁹²

2. Study the specific issues raised or solved by the passage. The interpreter should study the specific issues, going further beyond the general areas of doctrine touched on in the passage. What in fact are the problems, blessings, concerns, confidences, etc., about which the passage intends to say? How does the passage say about these? How clearly does the passage deal with them (Fee 1993:55)? Does the passage raise some difficulties for some doctrines? If so, the preacher should try to deal with this situation in a manner that is helpful to his or her hearers (Stuart 2001:25).

3. Analyze the theological contribution of the passage. What of the passage contributes to the solution of doctrinal questions or offers the solutions to other parts in the Scripture? To what extent is its contribution? How certain can you be that the passage contains theological significance (Guthrie & Duvall 1998:140)?⁹³ Does the passage keep the balance or correctness of any questionable or extreme theological position? Does it contain any portion that does not seem readily to be connected with a particular theological

⁹¹ The theological meaning found in a particular passage must fit into the broader system of systematic theology. In other words, any theological proposition found in a biblical text must be certified by coherence (does the conclusion fit the biblical data?), comprehensiveness (does it represent biblical material as a whole?), adequacy (does it provide a better explanation of the doctrine than competing options?), and consistency (does it fit into a viable system of truth?) (Warren 1999:342).

⁹² The passage which shows the nature of God's love for us may not mention the words such as 'love', 'God', or 'us' directly.

⁹³ It is a basic and necessary process that a proper theology should be consistent overall and noncontradictorily.

expression?⁹⁴ What is the clue that can solve certain questions, even temporarily? If a solution is not readily given, why? Is it because the passage is obscure, or because the interpreter lacks knowledge? Or are too great presumptions and speculations required to be convincing (Stuart 2001:25)? There are some parts in the Bible which may seem hard to understand, or even paradoxical from a human viewpoint. Does the passage contain too many unknowns to determine its theological contribution? If so, it is valuable to research. It is essential that the interpreter should give all his or her energies to reach the theological value of the passage (Stuart 2001:25).

The preacher takes on the theological process not so that all the passages on a particular theological theme might be included comprehensively in the sermon, but so that the theological methods might help the preacher conceptualize an accurate and inclusive theological proposition. The goal is not to take the listeners through the theological process, but to discover and test the theological proposition, before preaching it with its particular implications and applications in a specific time and place.

3.2.2.2 Demanded Skills for Theologizing

3.2.2.2.1 Retroductive Reasoning

Theologizing demands retroductive reasoning skill. There are two basic approaches to theological reasoning: deduction, which proceeds from general assumptions or evidence to particular conclusions and involves a degree of probability as to the logic of the argument; and induction, which proceeds from particular or specific data to general conclusions and therefore arrives at possible rather than probable answers. However, most theologians today acknowledge that the best way of constructing theological systems can be seen by integrating alongside inductive and deductive methods, that is, retroductive method (Montgomery 1966:67-98; Holmes 1968:131-138; Feinberg 1979:267-304).⁹⁵ Osborne (1991:297) mentions about the necessity of the retroductive

⁹⁴ However, the preacher should keep in mind that the Scripture is primary, and theological systems are secondary.

⁹⁵ For this integrating method between inductive and deductive reason, Montgomery uses the term retroduction, Holmes calls it adduction, and Feinberg labels it abduction.

reasoning in the formation of theological theory:

The biblical material becomes the inductive basis for theological formulation; the data itself in the end provides the basis from which dogma is “adduced.” Yet the formulation itself also proceeds from the deductive interpretation and collation of those texts as well as from the application of issues derived from the history of tradition. In short, these two aspects must remain in dynamic balance throughout the theological task.

Osborne (1991:298) offers a helpful diagram of the retroductive approach in theological reasoning, showing how theological decision is generated, as follows (Figure 3.3):

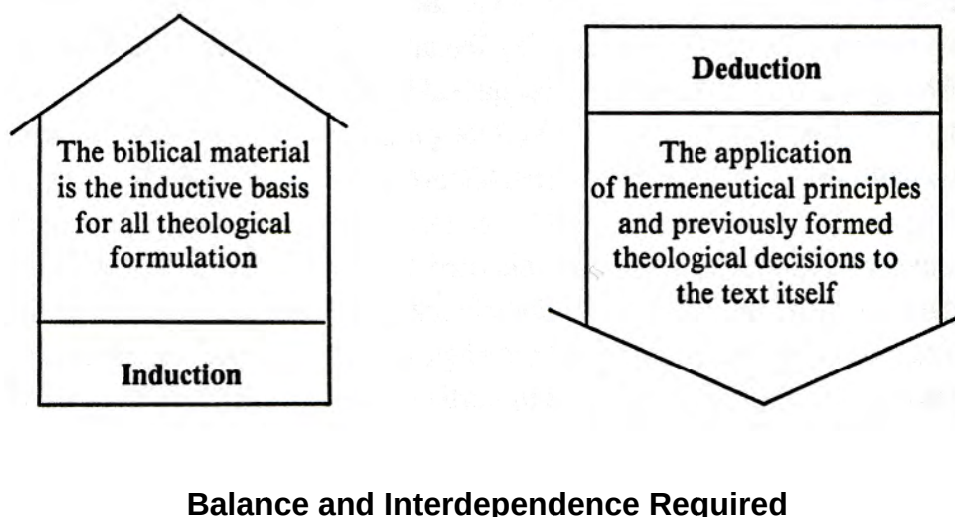


Figure 3.3 The Retroductive Approach in Theological Reasoning Process

Inductive reasoning employs the imagination to move from observations on the material (Scripture) to the theories or concepts that best explain those truths for this day. Deductive reasoning employs logic to establish theological models that can be verified on the basis of the evidence. Moreover, as Montgomery (1966:73) states, there is an endless cyclical renewal from one to the other as the theologian continues to refine the theological decision on the basis of an

increased understanding of the data.

This endless cyclical renewal of the retroductive process toward a more accurate understanding of a biblical text includes objective/scientific, subjective/artistic, and divine/sacral elements. In common with *science*, theology formulates its theories with a view to the objective fitting of facts (the facts of the Scripture); in common with the *arts*, theology seeks by its theoretical formulations to enter personally into the heart of reality (the personal involvement with God's revelation in the Bible). But theology is more than science or art, for it possesses a dimension unique to itself: the realm of the *holy* (the divine nature of the Scripture as the single authoritative source for all sound theological theorizing) (Montgomery 1966:87-92).

Only by operating theological process beyond the surface level of observations, the expositor will discover the author's theological meaning. For example, "only when the full theological significance of Matthew's account of Jesus' temptation is considered will the interpreter identify the author's meaning. Matthew was not providing a strategy for handling temptation. Rather, the Matthew 4 narrative proved that Jesus did what no one else could do. He successfully resisted Satan's attack. Therefore Jesus alone meets the necessary qualification of moral perfection (Warren 1999:344)." If the preacher neglects to consider the theological meaning of a text, he or she will be vulnerable to an exemplary preaching, that is, "David did this and it was bad, so don't do this," or "Jesus did that and it was good, so do that (Warren 1999:344)."

3.2.2.2.2 Bracketing

The next demanded skill for theologizing is bracketing. During the exegetical process theological and homiletical considerations are suspended so that their influence will not interfere with discovering the meaning of the text in its own context (Warren 1991:475). Exegesis must be completed before starting theological interpretation.

Hermeneutical bracketing, like mathematical bracketing, brackets (or parenthesizes), not in order to eliminate, but merely to place out of question for the time being. Attention is narrowed to the essential

problem at hand, disregarding or ignoring the superfluous or misleading. This temporary suspension of judgment purposes to grasp the meaning of the original text untainted by the influence of either a more fully developed theology or any contemporary cultural significance (Warren 1991:475).

France (1984:42) demands “the priority in biblical interpretation of what has come to be called ‘the first horizon’, i.e., of understanding biblical language within its own context before we start exploring its relevance to our own concerns, and of keeping the essential biblical context in view as a control on the way we apply biblical language to current issues.”

Likewise, a theological bridge, which connects the meaning of the text to the timeless truth, is developed during the theological process, and homiletical process is suspended so that application does not influence the theological process (Warren 1999:345).

3.2.2.2.3 Validation

Theologizing also demands validation skills. Even though we affirm that the Bible is inspired by God, what value is an authoritative text if our interpretation fails to be justified (Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard 1993:145)?⁹⁶ The safeguard based on validation prevents the preacher from stating the theological idea incorrectly. The criteria for validation are made of coherence, comprehensiveness, adequacy, and consistency (Osborne 1991:310).

The first level in validating a theological idea is to see whether it fits the biblical data (criterion of *coherence*). This concerns whether a theological idea accurately portrays the theological teaching of the text (tested by the exegesis of the relevant texts) and has clarity. The second level is to see whether the theological idea is a true model of biblical material taken from a whole unit of the text (criterion of *comprehensiveness*). Does it account for a whole unit of the Scripture or does it merely arise from selected partial portions? The third level is to ascertain whether the theological idea provides a better description of the

⁹⁶ “Expository preaching solemnly binds the preacher to represent the precise meaning of the text as intended by the original or as illumined by another inspired source (Chapell 1994:69).”

theological meaning of the text than those of others (criterion of *adequacy*). The fourth level is to see whether the theological idea is validated with the rest of God's revelation (criterion of *consistency*). If any theological idea developed from a particular text is contradictory with the rest of biblical teaching, this calls for re-examination and modification.

3.2.2.2.4 Principilizing

Another demanded skill for theologizing is principilizing.⁹⁷ Principilizing is a hermeneutically legitimate way of showing the relevance of the OTN for today's believers (Virkler 1996:231).⁹⁸ A simple recounting of the biblical narrative is an insufficient and ineffective way of exposition. Such a method may lead to a message that had relevance for hearers at the time of the writing, but fails to give an applicable message to today's hearers. What is need, then, is an expository method that makes the narrative portions of the Bible relevant for contemporary hearers without making the text say something the original author did not intend it to say (Virkler 1996:232). One method of doing this is called principilizing. Principilizing is an attempt to discover in a narrative the spiritual, moral, or theological principles that have relevance for the contemporary audience.⁹⁹ The necessity of principilizing is based on the assumption that the Holy Spirit chose those historical incidents that were recorded in the Bible for a purpose: to give information, to make a point, to illustrate an important truth, etc. Principilizing is a method of trying to understand a narrative in such a way that we can grasp the original reason it was included in the Bible and the principles it was intended to teach.

⁹⁷ The goal of theologizing is to articulate a timeless universal message as a principled statement of the textual meaning that continues to possess relevance for the contemporary audience.

⁹⁸ One unsatisfying approach for the OTN is allegorizing the stories to find hidden meanings that were not intended in the text, but in interpreter's own mind. Another inadequate method for the OTN is using it only as an example or illustration of the NT doctrine.

⁹⁹ Principilizing, according to Chisholm (1998:223-224), "begins with solid exegesis, including analysis of the text's historical-cultural background and its literary dimension. From one's exegetical study the text's primary theme in its original context should emerge. One can then transform the main theme into a general theological principle that would be true now, as well as then. The next step is to derive from this principle an applicational point which stresses how we should think and/or act."

Unlike allegorizing, which gives a text new meaning by assigning its details symbolic significance not intended by the original author, principlizing recognizes the validity of both the historical meaning of the text in its original setting and the principle that the author intended to teach. Bartow (1997:96) mentions the preacher must communicate theological message that is intended by the text:

The text has something to say, and the meaning of the text never can be less or other than what is asserted in it. Its asserted meaning is its conceptual content. Yet the text's significations and effects go beyond what can be said. Denotation [meaning] is enriched by connotation [significance]. Therefore scriptural texts, particularly in their canonical form, accrue meanings that, though not inconsistent with meanings inherent in their originating contexts, nevertheless go beyond them.

All the elements of modification involved in the task of theologizing—biblical theology, systematic theology, retroductive reasoning, bracketing, validation, and principlizing—are needed to articulate the proper theological message from the narrative text. The specific historical meaning of the narrative in Numbers 21:4-9 may be cited as follows: "Looking at the serpent erected by Moses upon a pole in the wilderness according to the Lord's instruction provided physical healing for the rebellious Israelites who had been bitten by the poisonous serpents." Through the modification of theologizing, however, the exegetical statement can be adjusted as a theological statement of timeless truth as following: "Faith in God's provision for sin in Christ results in salvation" (Warren 1999:349).

3.2.3 The Task of Organizing

Once we have expressed the exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline in nontechnical and principled terms, we are ready to modify the exegetical structure into a logical order, as the final stage in the theological process.¹⁰⁰ This modification, which may differ from the flow of the text, is a matter of organizing. For instance, the exegetical outline may reflect a written pattern of

¹⁰⁰ The next two chapters (Chapter 4 and 5) will cover more detailed process of organizing in sermon preparation.

the text that is understandable for readers, but that is too complex for listeners (Adams 1982:56-58). Preachers must respect the truths of a text, but not necessarily the pattern of the passage.¹⁰¹ In his exegetical outline of 2 Samuel 21-24, for example, Warren (1999:350) uses a chiastic structure:

- A. Story of a national Disaster (2 Sam. 21:1-14)
(Famine followed murder)
- B. Soldiers' Exploits (21:15-22)
(God's enablement brought victory)
- C. Song of Praise (ch. 22)
(The Lord delivered His own)
- C¹. Song of Praise (23:1-7)
(The Lord was faithful to His own)
- B¹. Soldier's Exploits (23:8-39)
(God's enablement brought victory)
- A¹. Story of a National Disaster (24:1-15)
(Plague followed census)

However, Warren's theological outline takes a linear structure:

- I. God's response to repentance brings about deliverance (21:1-14 with 24:1-15).
- II. God's enablement provides the victory over all enemies (21:15-22 with 23:8-39)
- III. God's mighty acts of redemption evoke praise (ch. 22 with 23:1-7)

3.3 Tensions Involved in the Task of Theological Interpretation of the OTN Texts

The tensions involved in the task of theological interpretation of the OTN texts can be classified into three categories: theocentric versus anthropocentric interpretation, OT text and Christological preaching, and theological principling

¹⁰¹ Greidanus (1988:19) says, "The goal of shaping the sermon according to the form of the text obviously cannot be to copy slavishly the biblical form—that endeavour would falter immediately in cases, where the text is a psalm or an epistle. Rather, the goal is to study carefully the form of the text and how it, in its literary context, plays its part in carrying the message to its intended effect with the hearers."

and levels of abstraction.

3.3.1 Theocentric versus Anthropocentric Interpretation

Theological interpretation emphasizes the overarching continuity of the biblical revelation and, as a necessary consequence, theocentric interpretation of the Bible. The preacher who views the OTN text as part of one overarching redemptive history of God will preach that text in quite a different manner than the preacher who sees the OTN text as a biography of the Bible characters will.

3.3.1.1 The Bible as Religious Literature

As religious literature, the Bible is “pervaded by a consciousness of God, and human experience is constantly viewed in its religious dimension (Ryken 1974:16).” As a religious book, the Bible reveals God’s actions in human events, not the events themselves. Thus, everything in the Bible is described “in relationship to God: the world is God’s creation; human beings are image-bearers of God; salvation belongs to God—in short, all of life belongs to and is governed by God (Greidanus 1988:114).” For the OT writers, as Rowley (1945:59) says, “religion . . . was something that belonged to the whole of life and experience, both individual and corporate. There is, in their view, no aspect of our life from which God is excluded, or in which He is uninterested . . . He is a participator in the drama of all our life.”

3.3.1.2 God-Centered Focus of the Bible

God-centered worldview of the Bible underscores the importance of theocentric interpretation. As Ryken (1974:16) notes, “Biblical literature consistently affirms a God-centered world view. This means that God is not only the supreme value, but that He also gives identity to all other aspects of experience.” The primary focus of the OT books is Israel’s relationship with God (Von Rad 1980:14).¹⁰² If this theocentric concern is apparent in OT writings, it is even more obvious in the NT books, where Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise (Greidanus 1988:116).¹⁰³ Rhodes (1964:11-12) comments, “the

¹⁰² For example, Exod. 14; Gen. 50:20; 1 Kings 12; Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7.

¹⁰³ For example, Matt. 26:54; Luke 24:24-27, 44-49.

Bible is not only 'the greatest story ever told'; it is the greatest drama ever enacted: what he has done, is doing, and will do for us . . . and our salvation through Jesus Christ."

Furthermore, the Bible is the very Word of God addressed to human beings.¹⁰⁴ Various human beings participated in producing the Bible.¹⁰⁵ But God controlled them in such a way that the written product is not only the production of human beings, but a communication breathed out by God. The biblical authors' purposes are predominantly theological and their selection and presentation of events is dominated by their theocentric viewpoint. "Theocentric interpretation seeks to expose in every passage this God-centered focus of the entire Bible (Greidanus 1988:116)."

3.3.1.3 Contrast to Anthropocentric Interpretation

Gowan (1980:3) states on a dilemma in preaching when he says that "we have wanted to use the Bible as a set of moral examples, then when we run across real people, such as Jacob or David, whose behavior was sometimes far from exemplary, we don't know what to do . . . most of the book presents, not models of perfect behavior, but the story of how God deals with ordinary, imperfect human beings." Kromminga (1983:38) also comments on the same concern:

Yet, despite its venerableness and its immediate utility, the traditional moralistic use of Old Testament narrative, even at its best, slowly works to reduce the dimensions of full-orbed biblical faith and obedience. . . moralism easily overlooks the author's intention and the divine intention in narrating a given event, or it allows that intention to play only a subsidiary role in the application of the message to life. The *revelational* scope of the text is narrowed to fit the preacher's easy exploitation of the apparent surface "lesson" of the text.

¹⁰⁴ For example, the Scripture is "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16), is called the "oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), and is originated "from God" (2 Pet. 1:21).

¹⁰⁵ The Bible focuses on the actions of God in the world—not God in the abstract, but God in relationship to his creation and his people.

Most of the stories about Bible characters were recorded for a purpose other than that of giving us information about the particular person (Best 1978:90). For example, “the incidents in which the weaknesses of Peter are shown are not recorded primarily to tell us about Peter’s weakness but about the mercy of God who forgives him and the strength of God which, when he repents, can sustain him (Best 1978:91).” Thus, Best (1978:91) continues, “The selection of incidents which we have been given about Peter has been dominated by an interest other than the character of Peter himself. It is foolish of us therefore to use these incidents to build up a picture of the character of Peter and then to go on and apply it to men generally. We ought to use the incidents of Peter’s weakness instead to argue for God’s mercy and strength.” Greidanus (1988:117) contrasts the theocentric interpretation with the anthropocentric interpretation.

We do, of course, meet human characters in the Bible, but never in isolation, never as independent characters in their own right. Human characters in the Bible are always part of the larger story, which is theocentric. Unfortunately, preachers are easily tempted to begin at the wrong end: “We often begin by immediately concentrating on the people and are busy drawing a line from these people to the application before we know it. Naturally we may not neglect the people in the text; every detail—this too—requires our attention. Nevertheless, we must always see these human deeds as a reaction to *God’s* action (Greidanus 1970:146).” In contrast to anthropocentric interpretation, therefore, theocentric interpretation would emphasize that the Bible’s purpose is first of all to tell the story of God.

On the other hand, the OTN texts, like other genres of texts, call for contemporary readers to faith and obedience. Theocentric interpretation and preaching, therefore, should not exclude proper ethical interpretation and application. For this reason, proponents of theocentric preaching such as Clowney, Greidanus, Seerveld, and Bright reject an improper use of moralizing, but do not oppose proper use of ethical application.¹⁰⁶ Kromminga (1983:40-42)

¹⁰⁶ Krommiinga (1983:37) summarizes four common hermeneutic characteristics among these scholars as following: “First, although the “surface lessons” of the passage are not denied (e.g., Samuel-like obedience versus Saul-like disobedience), these “lessons” are not

suggests six steps of integrated interpretive method to determine the ethical significance of the OTN:

1. Identify the basic *continuity* in the substance of divine revelation and the *discontinuity* in the forms of its disclosure because of the historic character of the revelation. The text's "theological horizon" and the "epoch" of the history of revelation in which it occurs must be discerned and must be allowed to function in understanding the text's original reasoning. After this is carefully done the text's immediate theological context is next related to the larger period in which both text and context appear. The text so seen is further related to the entire span of biblical revelation and its significance for us in the light of all of these relationships is articulated. In short, the *historical* locus of the text and the events it records must be fully respected.
2. OTN texts are literary compositions and must be interpreted as such. Usually, the writers of OTN do not express their message directly, but employ literary devices to express it.
3. Determine what God was trying to communicate through human writers to the original readers of the text in its original situation. If preachers are not to distort the Scriptures, they must reach their hearers today with the message of the text *by way of* its meaning directed to and grasped by the first hearers. We are pressed back on the Scriptures not only to know what God reveals concerning

allowed to become the main thrust of the contemporary application of the text. Second, significant themes, larger than the given passage and running through the passages from prior revelation and on into later revelation, are used to determine the ethical thrust of the narrative. Third, it is clear that the larger literary and canonical context of the text has been examined in order to identify and trace these themes and to disclose their unique coloration and ethical significance in the text in its historical locus. Fourth, by this process an earnest attempt has been made to discern the *intention of the biblical writer* in his narration of the event in focus. All this means that the textual data, which the "moralists" tend to isolate and exploit for some immediate ethical significance, are by these critics held firmly in the web of larger, continuing themes of revelation as these themes are in process of development in salvation history."

himself but also to know what he reveals about us in relation to him.

4. If ethical claims are to be rightly proclaimed from biblical narrative texts, the theological purpose of the text must be discerned. What is *God* recorded as doing in this text? How is his initiative or superintendence indicated? How does he view matters?
5. Observe every factor of the text (human action, psychological clue, geographical indication, genealogical table, or whatever), and examine how these factors contribute to convey the theological intent of God in the narrative. As one preparing to preach to others, the preacher must first ask how all of these factors are integrated around and serve that one purpose, namely, to reveal to me in this text what God would have me believe and do in believing obedience and obedient faith in response to the central revelation of the text. Failure to focus on and keep central this integrating revelatory intent of the text will make the sermon settle on an aspect, a factor—given in the text by God, to be sure—but an aspect which has now been broken off from an organic unity. That fragment of psychological reflection, typological indication, spiritual suggestion, or moral lesson will then usurp the place which the narrative in its integrity and wholeness should have in the sermon.
6. Consider the Christodynamic character of the text.¹⁰⁷ Christ is the center of the Scriptures (John 5:39-47).

3.3.2 OT Text and Christological Preaching

3.3.2.1 Necessity of Christological Preaching from the OT

Before we discuss preaching Christ from the OT, we must first consider the necessity of preaching from the OT. Generally the OT is counted as the most neglected area of the Bible in the Christian pulpit. Archer (1972:5) comments on

¹⁰⁷ This subject will be treated in more detail in the next section (3.3.2).

this tendency, “Curious to observe and hard to understand is the relative neglect of the Old Testament by Christians in our day as Sunday after Sunday the average church attendant in the average evangelical, Bible-believing church hears no message at all from the Hebrew Scriptures.” And he concludes, “How can Christian pastors hope to feed their flock on a well-balanced spiritual diet if they completely neglect the 39 books of Holy Scripture on which Christ and all the New Testament authors received their own spiritual nourishment?” The editor of a preaching magazine, Duduit (1992:10) says,

Even among evangelicals, the Old Testament is often treated as secondary in value when selecting texts for preaching. As editor of a professional journal for preachers, I annually receive hundreds of sermon manuscripts from ministers in a variety of Protestant denominations. Though the Old Testament makes up some two-thirds of the canon, less than one-tenth of the sermons submitted to *Preaching* are based on Old Testament texts.

To have balanced and effective pulpit ministry, however, preaching from the OT as well as the NT is necessary. Greidanus (1999:25-32) suggests six reasons why pastors must preach from the OT.¹⁰⁸

1. The OT is part of the Christian canon.
2. The OT discloses the history of redemption leading to Christ.
3. The OT proclaims truths not found in the NT.
4. The OT helps us understand the NT.
5. The OT prevents misunderstanding the NT.
6. The OT provides a fuller understanding of Christ.

Along with the necessity of preaching from the OT, we should also consider the demand for Christological preaching from the OT. Like theocentric interpretation, Christological preaching is also opposed to anthropocentric interpretation and preaching, for it demands a sermon that neither the people in the Bible nor the

¹⁰⁸ Duduit (1992:10-15) suggests five reasons for the necessity of the preaching from the OT: (1) the OT aids us in understanding the NT, (2) the OT is vital for theological understanding, (3) the OT offers practical insights for Christian living, (4) the OT deals with life's great questions, (5) the OT leads to Jesus.

people in the pew but Christ Himself be central.

The NT teaches throughout that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of OT history, promises, and prophecies. The Christian preacher, therefore, cannot preach any text in the OT in the way in which a Jewish rabbi would preach it (Janse van Rensburg 2003:75). The person of Jesus Christ unites the two Testaments. In addition, the authors of the NT intentionally fuse their writings with the OT. The two Testaments are not two books but one (Vos 2005:27). The church, thus, received the OT as well as the NT as its canon (Vos 2005:27). These facts influence our interpretation and preaching of the OT; it requires that we must now move beyond strictly historical interpretation, interpret the OT in the light of its fulfillment in the NT, and preach the message from the OT in the light of the whole redemptive history. Janse van Rensburg (2003:75) states on the connection between the OT and the NT relating to a Christological perspective, “The Old Testament precedes the New Testament in its promise of God’s deliverance through a Messiah. The New Testament shows how perfect God’s salvation in Jesus Christ really is.”

Osborne (1991:280) asserts the centrality of Christ in both Testaments, when he says that “The Old and New Testaments stand on their own as the record of God’s covenant with his two peoples—Israel and the church—yet are united into a single Bible via the Christ-event.” Poythress (1991:5) says, “The whole Old Testament finds its focus in Jesus Christ, His death, and His resurrection. . . . A great heritage awaits us in the Old Testament. But how do we unlock it? Christ Himself is the key that unlocks the riches of the Old Testament.” The person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible (John 5:39-47). Therefore, the Christological preaching is based on the Christ-centeredness of the whole Bible. However, this does not mean that we can find or preach Jesus Christ from every passage of the OT and the NT. To preach Christ from the OT text, there must be a clear clue supported by the NT passages. We must not read the incarnate Christ back into the OTN text, which would be eisegesis, but we should look for legitimate ways of preaching Christ from the OTN in the context of the NT.

Unfortunately, the legitimate demand for Christological preaching often results in very questionable methods of interpretation in order to have the text speak of

Christ. Osborne (1991:280) warns of the dangers of the Christological preaching as following:

However, on the whole there are greater dangers than strengths in this movement. Nearly all practitioners [*of the Christological preaching*] allegorize and spiritualize Old Testament texts to fit preconceived “types of Christ” or some such. The Old Testament as the history and record of God’s salvific dealings with his covenant people Israel is lost. Subjective speculation and a reductionism reduce it to a series of prophetic acts. The intention of the text, the Old Testament as canon in its own right, and the validity of the religious experiences of the Hebrews as the chosen people of Yahweh are all sacrificed on the altar of “relevance.”

If we relate Christological preaching to theocentric preaching, however, we can avoid the pitfalls like allegorizing and arbitrary typologizing. To preach Christ from the OTN text, in addition, the preacher must keep proper interpretive moves for Christological preaching.¹⁰⁹ Greidanus (1999:54-55) explains how to move from the OT text to Christ in the NT:

A better option is to start one’s sermon with an Old Testament text and then move to the New Testament to preach Jesus Christ. Since every text should be interpreted in its literary context anyway, and since the Old and New Testaments are a unity, there is warrant for such a move. Of course, one ought not to move to the New Testament in an arbitrary manner. One must look for a clue, a feature, in the Old Testament text that warrants linking it with a particular New Testament event or one or more New Testament passages. In other words, one must look for a road that allows one to move meaningfully from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

The historical approach to the OT often produces a sermon that is virtually unaware of the NT or the prophetic purpose of the OT. On the other hand, the Christological preaching from the OT has several advantages: the Christological preaching from the OT guards against an overzealous historicizing tendency

¹⁰⁹ For more detailed explanation, see the section 3.3.2.3 in this chapter.

and recognizes the centrality of the Christian faith; for the Christian the whole Bible indeed reveals God's redemptive work through Christ. As Cilliers (2004: 54) puts it, "The Gospel is not limited to the New Testament, just as the law is not limited to the Old Testament. We could indeed say that the most profound point of God's salvific work can be found in Christ, and that preaching of salvation, as revealed in all biblical texts, always, in some or other way, must penetrate to this most profound point."

3.3.2.2 Christological Preaching versus Theocentric Preaching

The Christological emphasis in preaching can easily lead to the preaching of Christ to the neglect of triune God. Preaching then degenerates into Christomonism (Cilliers 2004:54). In other words, Christ is preached as if he alone is God (Le Roux 1991:147). Steimle (1954:14) warns against the danger of Christomonism in preaching:

The Christocentric emphasis in . . . preaching . . . has been twisted so out of proportion, even though unintentionally, that for the people in the pew the essential Gospel, the revelation and redemptive act of God in Christ, has been all but lost. To 'accept Christ as my personal Saviour' apparently has little or nothing to do with God.

In contrast to Christomonistic tendencies, the NT does not isolate Christological preaching from God-centred preaching.¹¹⁰ As Cilliers (2004:54) states, "One can only preach Christologically from an integrated theological vision on the work of the trinity." Dunn (1993:212) emphasizes Christological preaching must aim at the glory of God:

The Christian gospel has to do first and last and foremost with God . . . Christian faith is primarily faith in the one God, Creator, Savior, Judge . . . The writers [of the NT] had no thought to present Christ as an alternative to God, as an object sufficient in himself of Christian worship . . . Worship which stops at him and does not pass through him to God, the all in all, at the end of the day falls short of Christian worship.

¹¹⁰ e.g., 1 Cor. 1:23-24; 2 Cor. 4:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Pet. 4:11.

Nevertheless, Christological preaching is more than theocentric preaching. But what is this “more”? The Christological preaching of an OT text is not just the preaching of God’s acts of an OT text, but the preaching of God’s acts from the perspective of the NT (Greidanus 1988:119).

3.3.2.3 Two Basic Interpretive Moves for Christological Preaching

First, Christological preaching seeks to understand an OT text first in its own historical-cultural context. Only after we have heard a passage in the way original hearers heard it, can we move on to understand this message in the broad contexts of the whole canon and the whole of redemptive history (Vos 2005:300-301). As Bright (1966:189) states, “All biblical preaching must begin with grammatico-historical exegesis of the text, with all that entails . . . Whatever message it may legitimately have for hearers today must grow out of, and remain true to, its original meaning.” This original meaning of the text is important because it offers the only objective point of control against deriving all kinds of subjective and arbitrary messages from the text. “Once the plain meaning has been abandoned, control over interpretation is gone and Scripture may mean anything the spirit (and who shall say if it be the Holy Spirit or the preacher’s?) may see in it (Bright 1967:91).”

Second, an OT text must not be preached in isolation, but should be understood in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history. An OT text must be interpreted in its own setting. However, we should not forget that the NT authors exhibit a focus on Christ in the OT texts (Vos 2005: 300). Making a distinction from the Jewish sermon, thus, a Christian sermon on an OT text will necessarily move on to the NT and elucidates an OT text in the light of the revelation of the NT (Vos 2005: 301). This is especially evident when the OT text includes a promise that is fulfilled in Christ, when the text contains a type that is fulfilled in Christ, and when the text relates a theme which is further developed in the NT (Greidanus 1999:230-231).

3.3.3 Theological Principilizing and Levels of Abstraction

In some biblical texts, certain timeless truths will easily surface and can be

conveyed straight over to our contemporary audience. In many cases, however, the process of theological principlizing is more complex. Robinson (1997:22) speaks of this concern:

The Bible is specific—Paul writes letters to particular churches; the stories are specific—but my audience is general. For example, a man listening to sermon can identify with David committing adultery with Bathsheba, but he’s not a king, and he doesn’t command armies. We have to take this text that is historically specific and determine how the living God speaks from it to people today . . . Preachers make that journey in different ways. One is to take the biblical text straight over to the modern situation. In some cases, that works well. For example, Jesus says, “Love your enemies.” I say to my listeners: “Do you have enemies? Love them.” But then I turn the page, and Jesus says, “Sell what you have, give to the poor, and follow me.” I hesitate to bring this straight over because I think, *If everybody does this, we’ll have problems, big problems.*

Failure in the proper theological principlizing can easily lead the preacher to say “Thus says the Lord” when in fact the Lord did not say! Avoiding this danger actually begins with thorough exegesis. Preachers do not have the right to make a passage mean something today that it did not mean in principle in the biblical text. Robinson (1997:23) suggests using “The Abstraction Ladder” of principlization (see Figure 3.4) to connect between the biblical situation and the contemporary situation:

I cannot make that passage mean something today that it did not mean in principle in the ancient world. That’s why I have to do exegesis. I have to be honest with the text before I can come over to the contemporary world. I picture a “ladder of abstraction” that comes up from the biblical world and crosses over and down to the modern setting. I have to be conscious how I cross this “abstraction ladder.” I want to make sure the biblical situation and the current situation are analogous at the points I am making them connect. I must be sure the center of the analogy connects, not the extremes. Sometimes, as I work with a text, I have to climb the abstraction ladder until I reach the text’s intent.

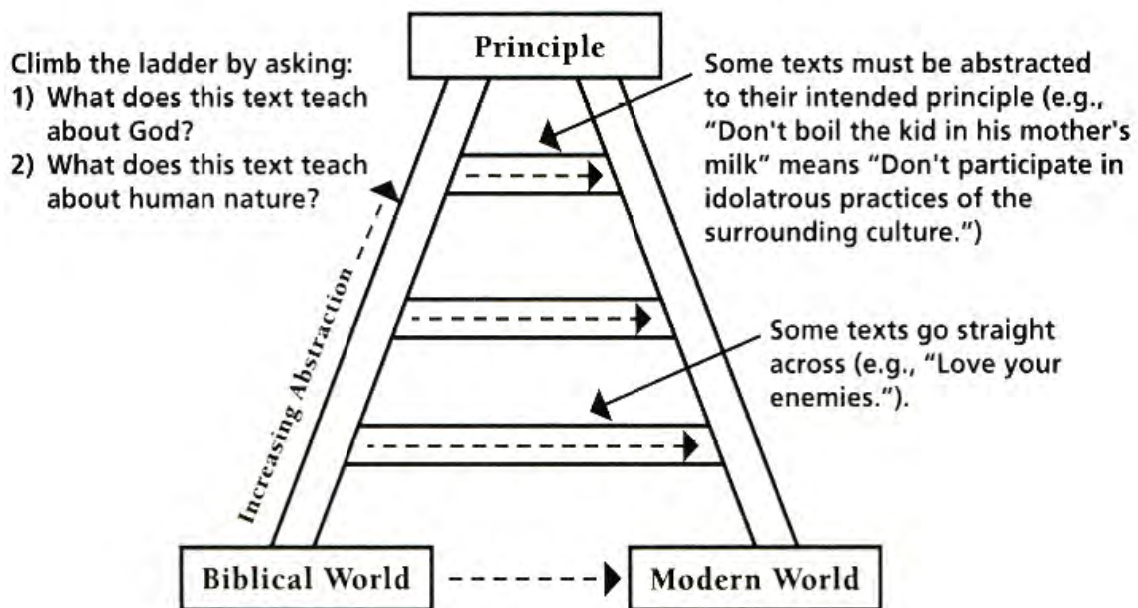


Figure 3.4 The Abstraction Ladder in Theological Principling

As the picture indicates, the preacher should climb “The Abstraction Ladder” until he or she reaches the timeless principle of the text. In some texts, the timeless principle of the text will easily surface. In many other texts, the principle will be more abstract. Regarding the latter, Freeman (1987:42) states:

What in this text is always true? . . . many times the biblical statement will be a culturally conditioned particularization—provided for the people, time, and place of the textual situation—of a general principle. In that event, you would need to strip the text of its cultural specifics in order to get at the principle behind it.

The preacher will move up the Abstraction Ladder toward principle by asking two questions. First, what does the text teach about God? Every biblical passage has a vision of God, such as God as Creator or Sustainer. Second, what does the text teach about the depravity factor of human nature? What depravity factor of humanity rebels against the vision of God (Robinson 1997:24)?

One thing to keep in mind through the abstraction process is that preachers should not climb too far up the ladder of abstraction. Over-generalized statement

of the text fails to capture the unique message of it. As Warren (1999:346) describes, “The goal of the theological process is to state the theological message of the text as a principlized statement that is universal, yet not so abstract as to be meaningless. In so doing, specific contextualizations are eliminated and specific behaviours generalized.” For example, the theological proposition from 1 Cor. 8:1-13 can be stated as “love limits liberty.” But this is over-generalized proposition that it cannot reflect the unique message of the text. Warren (1999: 349) offers more improved proposition, “Love for a fellow believer limits the Christian’s expression of liberty in Christ.” Borden (1998:72) comments on the unique contribution of the narrative passages:

The implication of the assumption that each narrative is unique in its teaching means that the idea preached from one narrative fits no other narrative. If a sermon preached from one narrative could be used with a different one, then the preacher’s understanding of one or both narratives is incorrect. An infinite God who creates unique personalities, snowflakes, and fingerprints has done the same with stories, including those accounts that are parallel.

There is an interpretive question that should be raised to avoid over-generalizing in the theological proposition: What would I be missing if this text were not in the Bible? The failure to ask this or a similar question may cause the preacher to climb the abstraction ladder in such a way that his proposition does not reflect the unique contribution of the text (Harbin 2001:129).

3.4 Formulating a Theological Product

From the above broad perspective on the theological interpretation, the preacher needs more precise tools to formulate theological propositions of particular OTN texts preached on a weekly basis. The procedures described below may be one of such tools.

3.4.1 Principlize the Exegetical Proposition and Outline into Timeless, General, and Universal Statements in Nontechnical, Nonspecific Terms

The exegetical proposition and outline of the story must now be converted into

timeless, general, and universally applicable statements of truth. Before it is applicable for the contemporary audience, the message that particular God's people experienced in the past must become the universal message that is applicable for God's people in general across times and cultures. It should now be written as a theological statement rather than a historical description. In narrative texts, it is important to watch for the narrator's statements of interpretation and for direct statements of the Lord in response to human actions or activities. If no such statements appear, then theological principles must be drawn by inference from the context.

3.4.1.1 Identify the Redemptive Principles Evident in the Text

The identification of theological principles must be limited by authorial intent. Preachers must not make a text say more than it says. If an idea that the author never intended to communicate is preached, a sermon ceases to be expository. A text may be applied in a number of ways, but it can only be interpreted in the light of the author's intent. Remaining faithful to the text, the preacher derives a timeless principle from the exegetical idea. Like exegetical proposition, theological proposition should be a complete thought, and it should account for the entire narrative unit. Identifying the divine nature that provides redemption and the human condition that requires redemption will help preachers formulate the theological proposition of a text (Cf. Chapell 1994:298-299).

3.4.1.1.1 Identify the Revealed Aspects of the Divine Nature that Provides Redemption

The purpose of theological interpretation is to focus on God and God's actions in the past and present, and the promise of those actions in the future. Try to discover what the passage says about the covenant God, about his creation, and about the relationship that exists or does not exist between them. Wilson (2004:147-148) recommends preachers to ask the following questions to the text: What does the passage say about God and his will? Who is God in this text? What is God's nature in this text? What is God doing in this text? What does the passage say about the actions of human beings in relationship to God's will? If God is not mentioned, we might ask, What is God doing behind this text in the larger historical picture? Why was this text identified as God's

Word and preserved as such? What does this text call us rightly to believe?

3.4.1.1.2 Identify the Revealed Aspects of Human Condition that Requires Redemption

Discover the aspects of human condition that requires the instruction, admonition, and/or comfort of God. Even the most gifted people remain spiritually incomplete apart from God's revelation (2 Tim. 3:16). Our condition as fallen creatures in a fallen world requires God's redemptive work not merely for our salvation, but for continuing sanctification. Thus, all Scripture—and by corollary all expository preaching that unfolds its meaning—focuses on some aspect of the fallen condition of human beings that needs the power and remedy God alone can offer (Chapell 1994:263-264).

Specific sins are frequently the human condition of a passage, but a sin does not always have to be the human condition of a passage. Sins such as greed, rebellion, lust, irresponsibility, poor stewardship, and pride are frequent subjects of the human condition described in the Scriptures. Identifying the human condition of a passage does not necessarily have to find something for which human beings are culpable. Grief, illness, the desire to be a better parent, the need to share the gospel, the desire to raise godly children, determining God's will, and understanding one's gifts are not sins, but these human conditions are frequent subjects of the texts.

3.4.1.2 Formulate a Provisional Theological Proposition and Outline

3.4.1.2.1 Reflecting the Theological Principles of the Narrative, Restate the Exegetical Proposition into a Timeless Theological Proposition

While exegetical proposition uses the language of the text, including the names of characters and cities in the narrative, the theological proposition uses timeless language that applies to God's people living in any stage of salvation history. Once the exegetical proposition of the narrative is stated, it ought to be tested in the context of the canon to formulate theological proposition, for

the message for that particular historical situation is not necessarily the message for the church today. Theological proposition focuses on theological meaning implicit in a story that is applicable across times and cultures. Therefore, determine what the main theological idea of the narrative is. The details may change, but the principles remain the same: e.g., Satan may continue to tempt us by maximizing a restriction, but is not likely to do so by using a fruit tree. A narrative unit may include many theological motifs and statements, but they will express a unified theological idea together. Accordingly, the preacher must discover the main theological idea of the passage; failure to do so will inevitably leave the sermon on the level of simple storytelling, historical inquiry, or Bible trivia (Ross 1996: 44).

Investigating the exegetical proposition of the OTN text, to formulate a theological proposition, restate it in order to reflect both the exegetical and theological intention of the text by using terms that create a timeless proposition. When deriving the theological meaning of a story as a basis for theological proposition, the meaning must always be developed from a careful historical and literary analysis: the meaning must be the author's intended one.

3.4.1.2.2 Restate the Exegetical Outline into a Theological Outline in the Light of Theological Idea

Transform the main points of the exegetical outline that is composed of the scenes of the text into the main points of the theological outline while using terms that create timeless universal statements. If an accurate theological proposition is produced, this procedure will flow very naturally. While the main points of the theological outline can be modified in logical order,¹¹¹ they must support theological proposition. When preachers restate the exegetical outline into the theological outline, at the same time, they must keep the plot moving and order of the text with few interruptions.

As you continue to examine theological contexts of your passage, revise your tentative theological proposition and outline to make improvements.

¹¹¹ For example, we do not necessarily follow the chiasmic or symmetrical structure of the text. Instead of imposing our own logical order on the text, unless only good reason is provided for the change, priority should be given to the structure and order of the text.

3.4.2 Understand the Provisional Theological Proposition in the Contexts of the Whole Bible and Redemptive History

With the exegetical proposition and purpose for Israel firmly in mind, we can now broaden the scope and seek to understand the message in the context of the whole Bible and all of redemptive history. At this all-encompassing level, literary interpretation becomes canonical interpretation. It asks, What does this passage mean in the context of the whole Bible, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22? Historical interpretation at this level becomes redemptive-historical interpretation. It asks, What does this passage mean in the context of God's all-encompassing story from creation to new creation? And theocentric interpretation at this level becomes Christological interpretation. It asks, What does this passage mean in the light of Jesus Christ in the New Testament?

3.4.2.1 Understand How the Passage Fits into the Body of Growing Revelation (Biblical Theology)

Naturally, theological idea must be validated with the rest of God's revelation. This safeguard prevents the preacher from stating the point incorrectly. Narrative passages describe what happened; whether or not that happening is normative must be determined from the clear teaching of Scripture. We must be sure that the theological idea we develop is true. The correlation of other passages will provide the necessary qualifications.

3.4.2.2 Check Whether the Passage Has Any Christological Connection

At this level preachers examine the passage in the light of the fullness of God's redemptive achievement in Jesus Christ. Christ-centeredness of the Bible does not mean that we can find or preach Jesus Christ from every passage of the OT in some way. An OT text has its inherent message in its own setting. Only after we have firmly established the historical meaning of the text and have struggled to focus this meaning in a clear statement of the exegetical proposition and purpose can we move on to the following questions: Does this

passage in the course of redemptive history lead to Jesus Christ in the New Testament? Does it promise his coming? Does it prefigure his person and work? Does it show by analogy that God in Christ is for us today? Does its theme lead into the New Testament to Jesus or his teaching? Does a New Testament author quote this passage or allude to it? Does New Testament teaching stand in contrast to this Old Testament message?

3.4.3 Examine the Provisional Theological Proposition in the Light of Systematic Theology

Understand how the passage fits into an entire body of teaching on various topics and issues of the systematic theology and Christian living. The meaning and principles derived from a narrative passage must be consistent with all other teachings of Scripture. A theological principle drawn from a narrative which contradicts the teaching of some other scriptural passages is invalid.

There is a convenient way of getting a good idea of how your passage fits into the bigger picture: Look in the indexes of major works of systematic theology to find discussions relating to your passage, and then read them. As you read, remember the key question: What is the broader theological context of which my passage is a part?

3.4.4 Examine Levels of Abstraction in the Theological Proposition

In some texts, the timeless theological principle of the text will easily surface. In many other texts, however, the timeless principle will be more abstract. Moving towards the timeless principle underlying the text, examine levels of abstraction in your theological proposition. Once again, check whether the text is stripped of cultural nuances, and determine how far up the ladder of abstraction you need to move.

3.4.5 Make Final Adjustment to the Theological Proposition and Outline Based on the above Observations

Considering what you have learned up to this point, make final adjustment

and write out your finished theological proposition and outline of the passage.

Ross (1996:42-47) provides an example of the theological proposition and outline that is developed from the exegetical proposition and outline as following:

Text: Genesis 11:1-9

Exegetical Proposition: When the human race settled together to preserve their unity and to develop their fame by building a grandiose city-tower, the Lord interrupted their collective apostasy and scattered them across the face of the earth by confusing the language that united them.

Exegetical Outline:

- I. Prologue: The human race was united by one language (1).
- II. Human endeavour: Migrating to the land of Shinar, the people resolved to build a grandiose city and tower to preserve their identity and their unity (2-4).
 - A. Event: The people migrated to, and settled in Shinar's fertile valley (2).
 - B. Resolution: The people resolved to make bricks and build a city and a tower so that they might preserve their name and their unity (3-4).
 1. Ingenuity: They resolved to make bricks out of the materials available to them (3).
 2. Ambition: They resolved to develop a tower-city to make a name for themselves and to prevent scattering (4).
 - a. Purpose: They wished to preserve their name (4a).
 - b. Fear: They did not want to be scattered abroad (4b).
- III. The Lord's intervention: Investigating the enterprise of the human race and knowing the dangerous potential of their unified pride, the Lord confounded their speech and scattered them abroad (5-8).
 - A. Event: The Lord descended to investigate their building (5).

- B. Resolution: Knowing their potential was dangerously evil, the Lord resolved to scatter them across the face of the earth (6-8).
 - 1. Observation: The Lord concluded that nothing would be withheld from their designs (6).
 - 2. Resolution: The Lord resolved to destroy their unity (7).
 - 3. Solution: The Lord scattered them across the face of the earth so that their project ceased (8).
- IV. Epilogue: The human race was disunited and scattered by the Lord's making a babble of their one language at Babel (9).

This exegetical outline demonstrates the unity and progression of the narrative. It is developed from summaries of the individual ideas of the text. It uses full sentences to express complete thoughts about the contents of the text. It also uses descriptive and time-bound language.

From this exegetical proposition and outline, Ross develops the following theological proposition and outline:

Theological Proposition: God will subjugate the proud who rebel against his will.

Theological Outline:

- I. Immense pride (hubris) is rebellion against God (2-4).
 - A. Pride leads to disobedience to God's Word (2).
 - B. Ingenuity strengthens proud ambition (3).
 - C. Ambition and fear motivate pride (4).
- II. God will not permit proud, rebellious acts to succeed (5-8).
 - A. God investigates the activities of arrogant mortals (5).
 - B. God knows the danger of collective apostasy (6-7).
 - C. God cuts off the expectations of such prides (8).

This theological outline is derived from the exegetical outline of the text and explains how the parts of the text contribute to the central theological principle of the text. It uses timeless universal wording instead of time-bound language, in a way that would be applicable to the original situation

as well as contemporary corresponding situations.

3.4.6 Determine the Theological Purpose of the Text

While theological proposition states universal truth, theological purpose describes what the truth should accomplish. Identifying the purpose of the text¹¹² and its restatement into the theological purpose are crucial to good preaching.

When the author of this research speaks of the theological purpose of a text, he refers to the purpose that the Holy Spirit had when He “moved” the biblical writer to pen the words of the text. Usually, the theological purpose of the text is broader than the immediate purpose of the text in the biblical author’s mind when writing to a particular audience (Adams 1982:28). The apostle Paul makes this point when he uses the OT passages (Exodus 13-17 and Numbers 10-15) in the NT contexts (1 Corinthians 10) to warn the Corinthian believers. This Pauline use is particularly important because in it Paul refers to the design of the OT narrative: it was written “for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:11).” As Johnson (1990:246) comments, “This instruction is more than information given as a report about historical events; these events are interpreted in the perspective of God’s purpose to judge evil and of his way of doing so with his people in spite of their relationship to spiritual blessings.”

Note also Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9:9, 10:

For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

Paul here determines that the theological purpose or God’s purpose of the text is broader than the situation to which the passage in Deuteronomy 25:4 was

¹¹² To identify the purpose of the text, preachers ask: What theological impact did the author intend the passage to have upon its original readers?

originally addressed. He saw that God's intention of the passage was to teach a principle that was of greater value than when it was originally applied to oxen. The principle, stated in 1 Cor. 9:10b, is that the one who works at a task ought to share in its benefits. Paul clearly applies it to his day, when, in his own words, he writes in 1 Cor. 9:14:

In the same way the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

Thus, it must be understood that the theological purpose (or God's purpose) of the text does not mean merely the biblical author's purpose of the text in its limited application to an event at the time when the passage was written, but all valid theological purposes must be generalized from the basic thrust of the passage (Adams 1982:26). The proper theological purpose does not alter or distort the purpose of the text. To be just to any human author, his purpose in a given passage must be considered, and purposes that he did not have in mind should not be attributed to him. To find normative purpose of God in the passage, however, the message *should be* understood not only in its original context, but also in the context of the whole canonical revelation. Adams (1982:30-31) provides an example of finding the theological purpose of the OT passage through the study of the whole canonical revelation:

A good example of this is found in Matthew 5:31-32. The Holy Spirit's purpose in Deuteronomy 24 was not to teach that a bill of divorcement must be given, as the false teachers said. Rather, it was to control and discourage divorce and make clear that divorce on the wrong basis would set up conditions for committing adultery. The issue was the intention or purpose of the passage. Christ, unlike the scribes, revealed the purpose of Deuteronomy 24; in contrast, they had used the passage for their own ends.

Determining the theological purpose of a passage is one of the most important obligations in preaching. You must never preach on a passage until you are certain you understand why God included that passage in the Bible. When you grasped the theological purpose of the passage, then—and then only—you can develop the purpose for your sermon based upon it, and then—and then

only—you will know what God wants you to do to your listeners through it (Adams 1982:27). When preachers fail to discern the proper theological purpose of the passage, the passage that is the Word of God itself is misrepresented, misused, and mishandled, with the direct result that its power and its authority are lost (Adams 1982:27).

To find the theological purpose of the text, at each step during every aspect of the process of theological interpretation, you ought to have some such thought as this in mind: What does God want His people to understand and obey through this passage? If you do, the purpose will come clear, usually during, but if not, at the end of, the process of theological interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

HOMILETICAL ANALYSIS TO PREACH THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

There has existed for some time a misconception that the works of the biblical interpretation begin and end with the “meaning” of the text. The study of the Bible, however, can never be complete until preachers have moved from text to specific situations today. The truth of the Bible must be believed and then proclaimed. This dynamic aspect of the Word is the task of homiletical analysis. Application is crucial to the task of biblical interpretation and must be as accurate as the process of determining the meaning.

In Chapter 4, we will explore the homiletical analysis to preach the OTN texts with relevance. As Pieterse (1987:9) says, “the sermon should let Scripture speak in such a way that the Word of God can be heard.” The only messages that will reach the contemporary hearers are ones that connect with relevant life issues. Preachers must apply the original meaning of the text to specific situations today.

In order to preach the content of the Bible faithfully, preaching must consist of exposition and relevance. Preachers must accurately carry the meaning of the biblical text, and they must also demonstrate the relevance of the biblical text to their listeners. This is the basic structure of all biblical preaching (Pieterse 1987:9). In the previous chapters, we explored the exegetical and theological aspects in sermon preparation for the OTN texts. In this chapter, thus, our study will focus on the homiletical analysis with people-focused applicational wording rather than text-focused exegetical wording.

4.1 The Nature of Homiletical Analysis

4.1.1 The Terms and Concept

According to Holmes (1971:163), “application is the art of fitting the truth to

personal, contemporary needs. Its purpose is to make each individual in the congregation feel ‘Thou art the man.’” Braga (1981:205-206) offers a better definition, “We therefore define application as the rhetorical process by which truth is brought to bear directly and personally upon individuals in order to persuade them to respond properly to it.”¹¹³ According to Braga’s definition, application is a rhetorical process, and therefore it is a legitimate part of communication theory and practice for preaching. Application stands in its own right alongside other essential sermonic elements such as exegesis of the text. Another element of Braga’s definition of application is the idea of truth focused directly upon the individual. Braga clarifies that the truth he is referring to is first and foremost biblical truth, “By this rhetorical process the claims of the Word of God are focused upon the individual in order that he may respond favorably to the message (Braga 1981:205).” Application is always directing the Word of God towards an individual in a relevant fashion. In this quest for relevant application of truth, it is important that the truth should be brought out of the text itself. Braga’s definition of application also includes persuasion and response. Application is not meant merely to inform individuals, or to educate them, but its task is to change the listener’s life to fit with the Word of God.

In this dissertation, *relevance* refers to the communicative link between the exegetical and theological meaning of the biblical text and the listeners’ lives so as to demonstrate pertinence or applicability of the biblical truth. Relevance must point the way to application. Thus, relevance is a larger term, and closer in meaning to significance, pertinence, or consequence. Relevance includes more than application. It includes validity too. Validity asks whether it can be trusted or believed. Validity is an essential aim of communication relevance. In *application*, the listener asks “So what?” or “What difference does it make?” In *validity*, the listener asks “Is it true?” Thus, relevance includes both application and validity (Willhite 2001:17).

Another word which has similar meaning to relevance is contextualization. Contextualization in preaching is a process of communication between the Word of God and a particular local community which respects both the authority

¹¹³ For more definition of application, see Reu (1924:361-361); Whitesell (1963:91); Baird (1968:120); Brown (1968:120); Randolph (1969:75); Perry (1973:22); Adams (1990:15-17); Duffett (1995:73-74).

of Scripture and the demands of culture. Through contextualization, a local community can appropriate the gospel message for an act of obedience (within the acceptable expressions of their culture) which is equivalent to the response God was seeking from the original biblical audience.

4.1.2 The Importance of Relevance in Preaching

The importance of relevance in preaching is not to avoid boredom, although a message with good relevance will not be boring. Relevance in preaching is mandated by theological and biblical reasons.

The acts of God in the incarnation, the life and ministry of Jesus, and the writings of Paul provide theological and biblical precedent for developing relevant preaching as we attempt to communicate biblical message today (Fant 1975:28-30; Duffett 1995:75).

Even God himself had to become incarnate to communicate with man at the most profound level. The incarnation was the supreme revelation of God because it was God's ultimate means of communication. In the incarnation of Jesus, God spoke to humanity in understandable ways. God's will for the world, the message that God desired to convey, was communicated to humanity through Jesus. To communicate with relevance, Jesus used the cultural realities of his day. In the Gospels we see that Christ never dealt with two people in the same way. He told the curious Pharisee that he needed to be born again, and the woman at the well that she needed living water. He brought good news to each individual at the person's point of contact. Nicholls (1987:101) describes the incarnation of Jesus as the clearest biblical model of contextualization:

The incarnation is the ultimate paradigm of the translation of the text into context. Jesus Christ the word of God incarnate as a Jew identified with a particular culture at a limited moment in history through transcending it. In his life and teaching he is the supreme model of contextualization. His every command was *de facto* a command to contextualize whether to love one's neighbour or to disciple the nations.

Paul also, both in his recorded messages (e.g., Acts 17:16-34; 26:2-29) and in his

writings, worked from common ground, experience, questions, and perceptions. 1 Corinthians 8:1-10:22 shows that Paul accepted the basic cultural contingencies of Gentiles (especially 9:19-23) but asked that such freedom be waived for the sake of new believers. 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 shows that Paul uses cultural regulations from society when they are conducive to Christian ethics. Colossians 3:18-4:1 and the other social code passages illustrate situations when the church followed accepted social structures. Within this we note the tension reflected that the slave was at one and the same time to be “brother” of his master (Phlm. 16) and content with his situation (1 Cor. 7:21). In other words, Paul refused to demand social change on the external scale but did demand an internal change on the relational level (Ericson 1978:74-79).

Baumann (1972:243) questions whether a sermon without relevant application can even be called a sermon. Lacking relevant application, he charges, a sermon becomes a mere declamation. Relevant preaching allows listeners to see the connection between the biblical idea and their own situation. It enables them to understand what the biblical message has to do with them, and what they ought to do about it (Baird 1968:120). Relevant preaching, as Brown (1968:60) states, “shows the hearer how he can solve problems, live a better life, please God, and perform other spiritual acts and duties.” Good contextualization is just as important as good exegetical work of the text since interpretation includes practice as well as theory.

Relevant preaching also enables listeners to identify with the message. When identification takes place, what God said or did for others in ancient times becomes our story today. Rather than taking listeners back to the biblical era, the ancient biblical story breaks into our lives now (Duffett 1995:75). Proper relevance made in the language and thought forms of the listeners gives the message the opportunity and power to challenge contemporary world-views, cultural assumptions, and values. Poor relevance, on the other hand, stymies the power of God in working through the message. The opportunity to awaken or affirm faith is forfeited. Further, a steady diet of poorly connected messages has caused thousands to lose their appetite for the church and the Bible, and to view both as purveyors of empty calories (Duffett 1995:75). The audience expects to hear their own story through relevant preaching. Irrelevant preaching, therefore, will result in the hearer’s disappointment and feeling of incompleteness with the preaching

(Jones 1956:162).

4.2 Audience Analysis and Relevant Preaching

Preachers often view the audience from the surface. The listeners appear to be much the same. There is a tendency for parishioners to role-play in the presence of a pastor and thereby deprive him/her of accurate analysis. But when preachers penetrate below the surface of the congregation, a more complex picture comes into view. The typical audience contains many different kinds of people who are defined by many different traits. These traits include phenomena such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, personality type, patterns of mental operation, modes of perception, cultural setting, social location, and theological worldview. Different traits incline people to hear the sermon differently. The audience is a community made up of people who have different listening tendencies.

With relation to preaching, audience refers to the people to whom the sermon is delivered as they are psychologically oriented toward the preacher and his/her message (Adams 1976:2). The study of audiences in homiletics is commonly known as audience analysis.

4.2.1 Looking from the Pew's Perspective

"In relevant biblical preaching," as Willhite (2001:21) mentions, "perspective is everything." Relevance is a conditional word. So preachers have to ask, "Relevant to *Whom*?" When we preach, we focus on our listeners. Another question preachers have to ask is "Who determines whether the sermon is relevant?" From a strictly theological perspective, the only viable answer is God. "The Lord did not leave us His Word in hopes that we would discover some human utilitarian value in it. He revealed Himself and His will to bring glory to Himself through the obedience and praise of His people (Willhite 2001:21)."

Judging from the communication perspective, however, listeners determine whether the sermon is relevant or not (Vos 2005:331). If preachers are to show the relevance of God's Word to listeners, they must take the perspective of the pew rather than the pulpit (Willhite 2001:22). Preachers do not have to make

the Bible relevant, for it already has actual relevance (Henderson 1998:24).¹¹⁴ One of the convictions that unite Christians is that the Bible provides us with authoritative answers to questions about faith and life. God's revealed Word is the final arbiter of all truth.

On the other hand, preachers must be aware of the transformational character of the current listeners' context. While the content of biblical revelation is unchanging, the *form* in which it is presented is ever changing. These two aspects—form and content—provide the indispensable core of communication in preaching. We believe that “only biblically based communication—speaking and writing which spills from the pages of God's vast self-disclosure—is truly relevant (Henderson 1998:25).” Preachers aim to ‘adjust’ the audience to the biblical truth.¹¹⁵ Without the preacher's assistance, however, listeners in the pew face difficulty in connecting the biblical message to their situation. Thus, the pursuit of relevance in preaching is essentially communication relevance (Pieterse 1987:20; Henderson 1998:23; Willhite 2001:18; Vos 2005:297). Through preaching, the preacher seeks to show that God's Word is relevant to his or her audience.

To demonstrate the relevance of God's Word to his or her listeners, the preacher now has to look at the text from the listener's perspective. That look begins by acquainting the preacher himself/herself with those to whom he/she speaks. Hence, the following section deals with the audience analysis for preaching.

4.2.2 Audience Analysis for Preaching

Exegeting the Scripture is not enough; a preacher must also exegete his or her listeners' lives. Before we can properly apply any biblical statement to our culture or another, we must seek a deeper understanding of the specific cultural environment (Pieterse 2001:17). In preaching, one of the key issues is

¹¹⁴ The Bible clearly declares its relevance: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).”

¹¹⁵ Contextualization in preaching must occur at the level of form rather than of content. The meaning of the biblical text must never be negated in the name of contextualization. Preachers do not rework the content, only the presentation of gospel truth.

relevance. Biblical principles must be constantly adapted to meet new cultural challenges of the contemporary hearers (Osborne 1991:319). Each new sermon requires a fresh assessment of the congregation's connection to the textual meaning (Baumann 1972:54). But a preacher's knowledge of his/her audience must not be simply utilitarian, for that leads to manipulation; it must be incarnational, for that leads to transformation.

Preachers often think that they know their audiences and that they are aware of the audience's circumstances and needs. However, frequently this is not the case. Relevant preaching requires time, attention and sensitivity (Cilliers 2004:144; Vos 2005:297).

Willhite (2001:24-33) suggests five categories of analysis that enable the preacher to analyze his/her distinct audience. His audience analysis includes general, theological, psychological, demographic, and purpose-oriented analysis. One thing to keep in mind, at this point, is that this analysis is not of the entire church body but only of the preaching audience.

4.2.2.1 Categories of Audience Analysis

4.2.2.1.1 General Analysis

The first phase of the analysis is general and allows the preacher to gather general information about the community and culture from a variety of resources.

1. Plan to analyze generally.

The preacher's knowledge of humanity must not be limited to his or her parishioners.

- a. Various national polls provide general analyses of audiences.
- b. Sociological and cultural studies provide general analyses of audiences.

Note: Use all sources critically. Be careful not to read descriptive research as prescriptive.

Preachers must not stop at cultural analysis. Cultural analysis is valuable, but insufficient by itself. It's valuable to know the general 'gatekeepers' of information and trends in a given culture, but people are still individuals who make choices about their values and beliefs. Likewise, churches are communities that often take on a subculture or traits of their own. Hence, we must go beyond cultural analysis.

2. Plan to analyze locally.

To speak with relevance, preachers also must understand their local communities. To understand our local community means we can at least begin to answer questions as following (Henderson 1998:38-39):

- What drives your local community?
- What makes it different from other places and times?
- What is most on the heart of people who share the freeway and the supermarket with you?
- What are people thinking about, dreaming about, and longing for?
- How do people make sense of life?
- What worldviews¹¹⁶ are you most likely to encounter among your acquaintances?
- Who or what has the ear of the people around you?
- How does sin most often express itself?

Henderson (1998:39-40) suggests some ways to analyze our local community.

- a. *Read everything you can get your hands on.* Look for clues to what's going on in the hearts of people in the world around you. The newspaper, news magazines, comics, best-sellers, airline magazines, and so on can give some valuable information.
- b. *Watch TV and go to the movies.* The screen has more influence on our generation than any other voice. Know what it is saying.
- c. *Be a quiet observer of what makes your friends and neighbours' lives tick.* There's a lot to be learned simply by keeping your eyes

¹¹⁶ Worldview is defined as the way we see the world in relation to ourselves and ourselves in relation to the world (Redfield 1957:85-86).

open. Which room is the centre of the home? How is it arranged? What does that say? What books are on the shelves, if any? What magazines are stacked for browsing in the bathroom? What videotapes are piled up by the entertainment system? What new purchases fill the garage and den?

- d. *Make the most of every conversation.* Just ask a lot of questions: Where do you work? Do you like what you do? What drew you into the field? How would you separate the winners from the losers in your profession? What do you like to do when you have some free time? Had a vacation lately? Where'd you go? How'd you pick that? Who do you like to spend time with? Who are your heroes? Why?

Put your fingertips on the pulse of the world around you. Know the colours of the sea around you.

- 3. Plan to analyze particularly.
 - a. Analyze a particular audience through records, questionnaires, surveys, visitation of all kinds, personal observations, informal conversations, past experience, pre-sermon discussions, post-sermon discussions, and so on.
 - b. Talk to people; listen to people!
- 4. Learn about and love your audience.
- 5. Pray for your audience.
 - a. Keep an active prayer list of your audience and pray through that list on a regular basis.
 - b. Stop the sermon preparation process at the point of audience analysis and, from the pulpit, pray through the empty seats by visualizing the audience and individuals who will listen. Or at least create an Application Grid (see Figure 4.1) with people's names so that you can pray by visualizing them.

Sam	Kate	Mark	Bill
Suzanne	Lucy	Tim	Rex
Margaret	Harold	Paul	David
Cindy	Dale	Janet	Gary
Beth	Marcia	Phil	Stephen
Jim	Sandy	Debora	Wayne
Joan	Chuck	Ralph	Shirley
Kim	Megan	Gabe	Beverley
Sherri	Charles	Carol	Allen
Richard	Lynne	Bill	Sally
Tommy	Jay	Michael	John

Figure 4.1 A Sample Application Grid

The Application Grid provides a way of “keeping the people in front of you” as you prepare a sermon. The names in an Application Grid represent somewhat of a cross-section of the congregation.

Willhite (2001:31) provides the following guidelines to use the Application Grid for maximum value.

- As you think through the flow of the message, look at the names on the Application Grid and ask, How will this truth touch this person?
- Ask, How should this person respond in terms of belief, attitude, values, or behaviour?
- Aim to be concrete, but shape application in terms that are general enough not to identify or embarrass anyone.
- Don't be so specific with application that you become irrelevant. (If application gets too narrow, it may miss a large percentage of the people, who will then think, “That's not me.” More importantly, it may

“misrepresent” the text.)

- e. Change the name of the grid monthly, especially if you preach to one audience regularly.

Preachers also need to classify their congregation into specific groups. Classify your congregation according to the types of people—young parents, harassed clerks, lonely teens, new believers, divorcees, and so on—whose situations require scriptural guidance, comfort, and challenge. This grouping of the congregation enables the preacher to focus his or her message on the situational specificity. “You cannot speak to all groups every week, but since we confront not temptation but such as is common to all, speaking to specifics will have some relevance for each person (1 Cor. 10:13) (Chapell 1994:207).”

4.2.2.1.2 Theological Analysis

1. Identify your audience’s spiritual condition(s) by percentages.
 - a. Unregenerate
 - _____ % of the people are far from the kingdom (maybe some interest).
 - _____ % of the people are coming to the kingdom (seekers).
 - _____ % of the people are near the kingdom (contemplative seekers).
 - b. Regenerate
 - _____ % of the people seem to be immature or carnal.
 - _____ % of the people seem to be immature and growing.
 - _____ % of the people seem to be maturing but stagnant.
 - _____ % of the people seem to be maturing steadily.
2. Identify your audience’s spiritual longings.
 - _____ % of the audience longs for transcendence (the urge to be).
 - _____ % of the audience longs for action (the urge to do).
 - _____ % of the audience longs for community (the urge to belong).

4.2.2.1.3 Psychological Analysis

1. How does the audience *think* (process information)?
Does the audience follow the reflective thinking process of (1) recognizing a felt need or difficulty, (2) defining the problem, (3) collecting and analyzing data, (4) listing alternative solutions, (5) identifying criteria for a solution, and (6) adopting a solution? Does the audience follow this process closely? Does it follow some other process of “thinking” (authority, tradition, spontaneity, rational-emotive, anecdotal, and so on)?
2. How does the audience feel (sense experience)?
3. How does the audience act (choose from different options)?
4. Identify the audience’s paradigms.
 - a. What are the audience’s attitudes? (Attitudes answer the question “How do you think, feel, and act concerning . . . ?”
 - b. What are the audience’s beliefs? (Beliefs answer the question “How strongly do you think, feel, and act concerning . . . ?” or “What do you embrace?”)
 - c. What are the audience’s values? (Values answer the question “What do you hold dear?”)

4.2.2.1.4 Demographic Analysis

1. What percent of the audience is ages
_____ 5-12 _____ 13-18 _____ 19-22 _____ 23-30
_____ 31-40 _____ 41-55 _____ 56-65 _____ 66-80
_____ over 80
2. What percent is
_____ male _____ female
3. What is the approximate mean adult annual income? (Take an anonymous survey, if necessary.)
\$_____ annually

4. What percent of the audience lives
_____ within one mile of the church property
_____ 1-5 miles
_____ 6-10 miles
_____ over 10 miles
5. What percent is
_____ Caucasian _____ African _____ Indian
_____ Hispanic _____ Asian _____ other
6. What percent works in
_____ "white collar" occupations _____ "blue collar" occupations
_____ unemployed
7. What percent is
_____ married _____ divorced _____ never married
_____ divorced and remarried _____ widowed
8. What percent identifies with
_____ a particular political viewpoint or party
9. What percent in regard to education has
_____ no high school diploma _____ high school or equivalent
_____ college _____ graduate degree
10. What percent has been Christian
_____ less than 1 year _____ over 3 years
_____ over 5 years _____ over 10 years
_____ over 20 years _____ over 30 years
11. What percent has
_____ "grown up in church"
_____ started coming to this church within the last two years
_____ started coming to this church within the last five years
12. What percent comes from backgrounds that are predominantly

_____ unchurched _____ Catholic _____ Mainline Protestant
_____ Evangelical _____ non-Christian religion

4.2.2.1.5 Sermon's Purpose-Oriented Analysis

1. Are any members of the audience "hostile" (argumentative, adverse to Christian beliefs, application, and so on)? Or are any members of this audience "hostile" to this sermon's purpose? If so, why?
2. What feedback has been received from audience members about previous sermons?
3. How long should sermons be for this audience? (Is length a significant issue?)
4. Have previous messages delivered to this audience been generally positive, negative, corrective-admonishing, encouraging, motivational, instructive, and so on? How might previous sermons influence future messages?
5. Are there significant "issues" that undermine or influence the overall ministry (a split, unresolved tensions, financial concerns, tensions between the preacher and audience members, etc.)?
6. What will stimulate interest in the sermon's subject for this audience?
7. In what ways does this audience influence the organization (structure and outline) of a sermon?
8. What is impossible to know in advance of preaching to this audience?
9. What do you like about preaching to this audience/in this setting?
10. What do you dislike about preaching to this audience/in this setting?

4.2.2.2 Adaptation to Audience

The preacher who likes to ignore the contemporary world often does so in the

name of fidelity to the Bible. Preachers, however, must remember that the message of the sermon is inescapably bound to the listeners' situation and delivered by the way that the listeners can understand.

Our aim for audience adaptation is to capture their attention and keep their interest so that the message may be received effectively (McDill 1999:50). Like it or not, we live and preach in a culture formed by secular forces of media and technology rather than traditional forces of the Bible and church. A good sermon, therefore, must be well-adapted to the contemporary listeners. Adaptation here is understood as the preacher's ability to present the message on the ground of the audience analysis, so as to achieve the purpose for which it is delivered (Adams 1976:2). Successful audience adaptation requires accurate analysis and skilful adjustments.

Preachers must have the knowledge of the segments within their audience. Within every audience there are small groups who are different from the many individuals or from the audience as a whole. Selectively address segments within the audience. As in the case of exegesis of the text, not all the information of the audience analysis will show up in every sermon. Preachers should select enough data to address the message effectively for the various segments of the audience, but only to enable the message to hit home to a large percentage of 'real' people (Willhite 2001:30).

In addition, preachers must become aware of the community as well as individuals. Most of the information gathered from the above Audience Analysis will inform about individuals. But sometimes preachers have a text that applies to the community as well as the individual. Thus, the sermon needs to develop a corporate application as well as an application for individuals (Willhite 2001:30).

The preacher must be adapted to the audience in some simple ways, as necessary, to aid communication. The preacher should do his/her best to show listeners that he/she is on their side (Vos 2005:291). Robinson (1994:103) gives a good account of the importance of the empathy with the listeners:

I also try to show empathy. When I quote from Malachi, "God hates

divorce,” I know there are divorced people sitting in the congregation who may begin to feel that God and Haddon Robinson hate them. So I’ll follow up that verse with, “Those of you who are divorced know that better than anyone. You understand why God hates divorce. Not because he hates divorced people but because of what divorce does to people. You have the scars. Your children have the scars. You can testify to what it does. God hates divorce because he loves you.” I’ve found if listeners know you love and identify with them, they will let you say strong things. Most people are just asking that you be aware of them and not write them off.

Willhite (2001:31) suggests following check lists for the modes of audience adaptation that are useful:¹¹⁷

1. Topic—central idea?
2. Language—elevated, normal, or conversational?
3. Arguments—logical, ethical, or emotional?
4. Arrangement—deductive, inductive, conceptual, imagery, and so on?
5. Support—credible authorities, research, statistics, illustrations?
6. Allusions/images—biblical, historical, current, or local?
7. Association/dissociation with audience?
8. dress—formal, casual, or sporty

4.2.2.3 The Importance of Feedback

Feedback is necessary for successful communication in preaching. Effective preachers look for feedback. Feedback is hearing or receiving the response to a message in such a way as to influence further transmission. Perhaps feedback is “one of the most distinctive and influential discoveries of research into the communication process (Pieterse 1987:94).” The principle of feedback reminds us that the role of the audience is more than occupying a pew and becoming a passive recipient of the sermon without any opportunity for reaction, interaction, or response (Baumann 1972:266).

¹¹⁷ Not all the factors of this list are relevant to every sermon; some of these factors, however, may be of the highest significance.

Important feedback takes place during the act of preaching. In the process of the preaching, feedback is obtained by closely observing the audience. An experienced preacher will observe every reaction of the audience to see whether his/her audience is listening, or merely waiting for it to end. He/She will then adapt his/her speech as he/she goes along (Pieterse 1987:95). Listeners show their responses to the speaker by their expressions and posture when they understand, approve, question, or are confused. They nod in agreement, smile, check their watches, or slump in their seats. Feedback from the audience may be either positive or negative. Positive feedback reinforces the way the message is being delivered, whereas negative feedback indicates that amendments are necessary to obtain better feedback (Pieterse 1987:95).

Churches, large or small, can organize systems of feedback. Pastors may invite a selected group of listeners to give their reactions to the sermon. The easiest way to make this feedback available to the preacher is to provide the discussion group with a tape recorder that will record its discussion to which he/she can listen sometime later. The best feedback may come from the discussion group that meets without the preacher. Members of the group will discuss the sermon with one another based on simple questions such as: What did the pastor say to you? Do you think you understood the text from which the pastor spoke? Did his/her style and method, language, manner of delivery, and illustrations help or hinder the hearing of his/her message? Explain. What difference do you think the sermon will make in your life? In what ways were you challenged or drawn to greater devotion to your areas of responsibility? If there were one or two things you could tell the pastor that you think could improve his/her preaching, what would it be? Let the group meet, turn on a tape recorder, and let them speak freely. If convenient, the discussion should take place immediately after the service. Effort should be made to select a cross section of people from the congregation. The feedback will often indicate to the preacher what he/she needs to improve his/her effectiveness. The preacher will discover what the crucial issues his/her listeners face are. He/She will also receive countless leads to areas of interest and needs that he/she might otherwise never learn about.

4.3 Application and Relevant Preaching

4.3.1 The Functions of Application

If preachers leave it to hearer's choice to apply what is taught to them, they will never move one foot. Therefore the doctrine of itself can profit nothing at all (Chapell 1994:199). Preachers make a serious mistake when they presume that by providing listeners with biblical information the people will automatically make the connection between scriptural truth and their everyday lives (Veerman 1990:121).¹¹⁸ The application of the message is not an optional, but an essential element of preaching. Chapell (1994:199-204) explains three functions of application as follows:

1. *Application fulfils the obligations of exposition.* Application is the present consequence of scriptural truth. Without application the preacher has no reason to preach the Word of God because delivering truth without application is not preaching, but a kind of lecture. When you preach “practically,” you preach for life changes in your audience. As Adams (1990:39) states, “You do not preach for the benefit of God or the angels (though, ultimately, preaching and its results should glorify God by effecting His purposes and pointing to His grace) but for the benefit of the congregation of God’s people assembled in His Name. That is what preaching is all about.” This means that, at its heart, preaching is not merely the proclamation of truth, but is truth applied (Adams 1990:39). The exposition of Scripture remains incomplete until the preacher explains the duty God requires of man.
2. *Application justifies the exposition.* If there is no apparent reason for listeners to absorb exegetical insights, historical facts, and biographical details, then the preacher cannot expect to hold their attention long. Through application the preacher implicitly encourages the parishioner to listen to the message’s explanations because they establish the reasonableness and necessity of particular responses. Thus “application is the main thing to be done (Broadus 1944:210).”
3. *Application also focuses the exposition.* Exegesis and explanation are

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Chapell (1994:199).

bottomless pits of commentary possibilities if the preacher has no clear purpose in mind. But preachers have only a few minutes each week to expound what a passage means. How do we choose what to say? Application answers by forcing us to determine what information most strongly supports particular responses we say the passage requires of listeners in the light of the God-centred focus of the message.

Until we apply a truth, understanding of it remains incomplete. This means that until a preacher provides application, exposition remains incomplete (Greidanus 1970:157; Bettler 1986:332). We must make the meaning of the text concrete for contemporary people in contemporary situations. If we do not place the proclamation of gospel truth in the present world, it will have no continuing meaning.

Preachers need to provide explanations of the text that demonstrate the validity of applications, and our listeners should ignore applications that have no clear biblical warrant. We simply must not let application become a tacked-on task. Application is the exposition that grants present meaning (Lloyd-Jones 1982:200-201). What we do as well as what we know enables our understanding of God's will for our lives. Greidanus (1988:183) writes, "To put the issue succinctly: since the message was first addressed to the ancient church [or Israel], it requires explication; since that message now needs to be addressed to a contemporary church, it requires application."

4.3.2 The Components of Application

Chapell (1994:204-211) suggests four key questions that preachers must answer to get proper application: What does God now require of me? Where does he require it of me? Why must I do what he requires? And, how can I do what God requires?

4.3.2.1 What Does God Now Require of Me?

The theological truth of the text which is universal and timeless must be

specifically related to the situation of the audience at hand. Because of the discontinuity between an ancient people and the present congregation, mere description of the text will not support application. Application is dependent upon the setting, the time, the culture, and the needs of the particular audience. It is questionable whether a sermon is really a sermon unless it motivates some action or decision. Application is personal and in the present tense. Thus, it answers the question, What does God now require of me? “This *instructional specificity* translates the text from ancient history to present guide (Chapell 1994:204).” Sermon listeners must be able to conclude: Now, we must do this because it is what we have seen the Bible says (Chapell 1994:205).

4.3.2.2 Where Does God Require It of Me?

As mentioned above, the answer to the question—What does God now require of me?—provides the *instructional specificity* of the text. “Instructional specificity uses biblical principles to establish what contemporary people should do, but if preachers never specify where in real life these principles apply, the instructions remain irrelevant abstractions (Chapell 1994:206).” The instruction moves from a general principle (we should love our neighbors) to a specific application (love your neighbour who supports a different political party) when the preacher identifies the contemporary situations, in which listeners should apply the biblical principle (Stuart 2001:82).

Good application must explain how believers today would have to live in specific situations to remain faithful to the Bible.¹¹⁹ By seeking to whom a biblical principle applies, the preacher focuses on the specific situations parishioners face and the guidance this text offers (Vines 1985:98). Offering appropriate application in the context of situational specifics is more an art than a science (Stuart 2001:28). It is no easy task. As Chapell (1994:207) concludes, “the text contains the information for instructional specificity, but the experience, courage, care, and spirituality of the preacher provide the material for situational specificity (i.e., instructional specificity is supplied to you; situational specificity is supplied by you).”

¹¹⁹ Too often preachers opt for church application when listeners are longing for applications in their work, lives, and relationships. What a tragedy, for example, when every reference by a preacher is dominated by a million dollar church refurbishment project.

4.3.2.3 Why Must I Do It?

Sermon listeners must know why they should give attention to the applications. Thus, applications must provide proper motivation as well as contextualized instruction (Chapell 1994:208).

The best way to motivate people to obey God's will is by grace, not guilt (Duffett 1995:81-82). Many preachers try to motivate listeners by guilt-provoking messages. They seem to believe that God is angry with everybody and proper application comes only through angry, guilt-inducing tones. However, 'beating people up' sermons contradict biblical teaching. If God has freed his people from the guilt and power of sin, then preachers have no right to seek holiness through 'beating people up' messages (Chapell 1994:208; Duffett 1995:81). "Believers need to serve God out of gratitude and thanksgiving for the redemption he provides (Chapell 1994:208)." Grace is the only legitimate source of our service (Rom. 12:1). The more a preacher uses 'beating people up' messages for making application, the less God can make His applications (Quicke 2002:9).

4.3.2.4 How Can I Do What God Requires?

With motivation, preachers must provide means, or enablement of application (Chapell 1994:209).¹²⁰ A sermon may have great instruction, but sometimes listeners are left wondering how they can work it out practically. "Complete application requires the preacher to spell out the practical steps and the spiritual resources that make the aims of the sermon attainable (Chapell 1994:209)." How can one who hates love? How can an addict leave the drug? How can the negligent mature? How can one with no past discipline practice devotion? How can a life-long pursuit of self be transformed into a passion of selfless care? Simply saying so doesn't make it so. Preachers must be careful not to fall into a self-help gospel in regard to application. Chapell (1994:209-210) says, "When preachers tell their congregations to love their neighbours as themselves, but do not point to the Spirit who alone makes that this love possible, then people

¹²⁰ "Even the experts give rare thought to how people can do what God requires. It is so much easier to say what to do than to enable the doing (Chapell 1994:210)."

may assume that this love is something they can stimulate in themselves. Too many applications are simply human-centered exhortations to do better in the power of the flesh.”

The power to do what God requires resides in God. If preachers neglect to mention divine dependence, listeners will forget to seek divine enablement. A sermon without mentioning enablement is like shouting to a drowning person, “Swim! Swim!” The advice is correct but not helpful. It simply tells someone to do things that they have no means of accomplishing (Veerman 1990:121).

4.4. Formulating a Homiletical Product

Exegetical and theological products must come to terms with the contemporary audience. The homiletical product should reflect the needs and situation of the particular contemporary audience rather than merely duplicate the author’s strategic outline for the original audience (Warren 1991:481). In other words, the shape, logic, and development of the sermon must meet the demand of the contemporary audience, without violating the exegetical and theological shape, logic, and development of the text (Kaiser 1981:160; Warren 1991:481).

The homiletical product is the sermon with its own particular application, purpose, proposition, outline, and construction. For convenience’ sake, the development of the homiletical construction will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.4.1 Determine the Categories of Application

Application should be made in the same way it was used in the original situation addressed by the biblical author (Osborne 1991:338). The parallels between the original situation and the contemporary experiences of the congregation should be genuine rather than contrived. We want the passage to live anew in the current situation of the audience. To do so, we must identify first the original situation behind the message of the text.¹²¹ Then we should ask a question to find the parallel situation in the current life of our audience: If Moses (or Daniel and so forth) were preaching this passage to my congregation, what issues

¹²¹ For the detailed discussion of this subject, see 2.5.1.

would he address? As Osborne (1991:346) states, “The original situation behind the text led the sacred writer to employ certain theological principles to solve a certain problem or address a certain aspect in the life of the original readers. Now the interpreter tries to elucidate similar aspects in modern life to which the underlying biblical principle might also apply.”

Application functions as the relevant point of contact between the biblical passage and the contemporary life (Sunukjian 2004:117-118). To establish the relevant point of contact between the biblical passage and the contemporary audience, preachers should ask questions to the text (Pieterse 2001:20): Is the application directed toward matters that are primarily interpersonal in nature? Is the application related to faith or action? Is that concerned with the relationship of God and people? Is the concern social, economic, religious, spiritual, familial, financial, and so on? Sunukjian (2004:117-118) comments on the application and provides example questions that preachers should ask:

The way to determine how the author’s flow of thought and Central Truth connect to your listeners is to ask, “What does this *look like* in *our* day? How does it *show up* in *our* contemporary situations? Where do we see it in *our* day-to-day situations?” The italicized words help us to focus on the real lives of our listeners and to come up with “pictures”—concrete instances, visual images, specific situations. These “pictures” can be current or past examples, or they can be anticipated situations that might realistically occur.

4.4.2 Determine the Mood of the Sermon

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the mood of the sermon should reflect the mood of the text. Reviewing the section 2.5.2 in Chapter 2, determine the mood of the sermon. The mood of the biblical passage involves the feelings of the writer and also the emotions his writings tried to evoke in the original reader (Robinson 1984:813). Some passages create a sense of assurance, some hope, some joy, some anger at injustice, and others triumph. The biblical passages touch every emotion of life. Expository preachers need to create the dominant mood of the text in his or her listeners (Robinson 2004:92).

4.4.3 Determine a Homiletical Proposition

In this stage, the preacher is to transform the theological proposition of the text into the sermon proposition that communicates to his/her audience. The preacher is not just teaching his/her audience something about the Bible. He/She is talking to his/her audience about themselves from the Bible. The sermon proposition, therefore, should use fresh, vital, contemporary language. In his “Yale Lectures on Preaching,” Jowett (1912:133) emphasized the practical importance of the sermon proposition:

I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching, not ready for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal. I find the getting of that sentence is the hardest, the most exacting, and the most fruitful labour in my study. To compel oneself to fashion that sentence, to dismiss every word that is vague, ragged, ambiguous, to think oneself through to a form of words which defines the theme with scrupulous exactness—this is surely one of the most vital and essential factors in the making of a sermon: and I do not think any sermon ought to be preached or even written, until that sentence has emerged, clear and lucid as a cloudless moon.

A sermon is built on one big idea, that is, a proposition. At this point of time, preachers must have done the exegetical and theological proposition. As we discussed in previous chapters, the author follows three steps of propositional development (see Table 4.1).¹²² The exegetical proposition is a theme statement of the biblical author’s intended meaning for his audience. It uses the language of the text, including the names of characters and places in the story. The theological proposition is a timeless theological truth that can be applied to God’s people living in any stage of salvation history. The theological proposition does not use the time-bound language of the text, but rather states timeless theological principles for any audience. The homiletical proposition is biblical truth applied to the contemporary audience (Pieterse 2001:20; Robinson 2001:105). Thus, it uses applicational wording, usually in the declarative sentence.

¹²² Many homileticians including Braga (1981), Stott (1982), and Robinson (2001) follow two steps of the propositional development, that is, the exegetical and homiletical propositions.

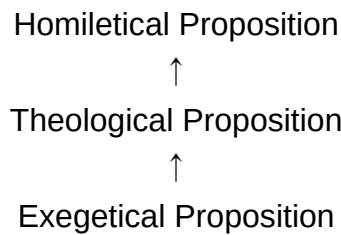


Table 4.1 The Procedure of the Propositional Development

Now the timeless theological proposition of the text that can be applied to any people must be converted into a personally addressed sermon proposition for the particular audience today. Through the sermon proposition, the theological proposition of the text is contemporized to lead obedience to God's claims (Richard 1995:86). The sermon proposition must be in line with the theological proposition, but it will apply the idea to a specific situation of the audience (Mathewson 2002:107). The following guidelines will be helpful to direct the formulation of the homiletical proposition:

1. The homiletical proposition should be clear and simple.

The homiletical proposition should be expressed in a single sentence with the simple syntax. Every word and every connection of the words in this statement must be weighed with care. The wording should be so simple and lucid that its meaning is immediately intelligible and memorable to the hearers.

2. The homiletical proposition should have balance between the truth of the text and the application of the truth.

A sermon proposition is more than a theme statement of a biblical passage. A sermon proposition is, as Chapell (1994:140) says, "the wedding of a universal truth based on the text with an application based on the universal truth." A truth without an apparent application or an application without support from the biblical truth falls short of the requirements of the sermon

propositions (Chapell 1994:141). A homiletical proposition meets formal requirements when it answers both ‘why?’ and ‘so what?’ The *why* question makes up the truth-principle component of the proposition. The *so what* question compels the preacher to determine an application based on the universal truth of the text since ultimately that is what Scripture—and the sermon—requires (Chapell 1994:141). We are not speaking to the ancient Israelites, but to our own congregation. This is why our sermon proposition and main points have to be contemporized and personalized. To apply the timeless principle of the text into your listener’s situation, see it from the listener’s perspective. In a manner, the sermon proposition can be called the sermon in a sentence. A sermon proposition summarizes the whole content of the sermon.

3. The homiletical proposition should focus on response and state it as a declarative (or imperative) sentence.

While maintaining the balance between the universal truth of the text and the application of the truth, focus on how you want your listeners to respond to the truth. In addition, you must state your sermon proposition as a declarative (or imperative) sentence. A declarative sentence means that the thesis or subject sentence must be an explicit and positive assertion, not a negative one. Instead of “You can rejoice in trials because they lead to maturity,” for example, try “Rejoice when hard times come (Robinson 2001:106).”

4. The homiletical proposition should be stated by using active verbs.

Choose active verbs for the sermon proposition wherever possible. Active verbs create an image in the listener’s mind. Minimize the use of passive and linking verbs. When you use active verbs, the emphasis falls upon the one who initiates the action, and upon the action itself. Passive constructions are often limp and without punch. But active verbs bring your ideas to life. The active verb prompts the listeners to see some action in their minds and the impact is correspondingly stronger than passive verbs (Litfin 1981:288). For example, “I watched the game with great excitement” is stronger than “The game was observed by me with great excitement (Litfin 1981:288).”

Linking verbs are inherently weaker than active verbs. Litfin (1981:288-289) comments on linking verbs, “They are essentially statements about some state of being and signify no movement at all. Thus they have less interest appeal than the ‘man bites dog’ type of sentence. So try to avoid using linking verbs when a more active construction is available.” Litfin (1981:289) suggests, “Instead of, ‘Going to Jerusalem was dangerous, but Paul was determined to go there,’ try to make the sentence more lively: ‘Jerusalem spelled trouble in bold letters, but Paul set his course for there anyway.’”¹²³ Listeners need active words to reinforce the theological truth that God is not passive, static, motionless, or remote but active and involved, loving and compassionate (Wilson 1999:44).

Mathewson (2002:107), using the story in Genesis 22:1-19, provides an example of the progression from the exegetical to theological to homiletical proposition as following:

Exegetical proposition: Abraham put obedience to God first even though he faced the prospect of sacrificing his son Isaac.

Theological proposition: Faithful worshipers of God will put obedience to God first even when there is great cost involved.

Homiletical proposition: The greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids!¹²⁴

4.4.4 Determine the Purpose of the Sermon

After formulating a sermon proposition, preachers are to think about the sermon purpose for a specific audience. For the sake of a well-focused sermon, preachers ought to have a specific purpose that meets a specific need in the congregation. This purpose defines what the preacher expects to happen in his

¹²³ This example is used just to give an illustration of the use of linking verbs and active verbs, not as an example of a homiletical proposition.

¹²⁴ This sermon was prepared for the fathers on Father’s Day.

or her hearers as a result of preaching his/her sermon—what the preacher wants them to do (Vines & Shaddix 1999:137; Pieterse 2001:20; Robinson 2001: 107). The clear statement of the sermon purpose is crucial to making a sermon relevant to the audience. Indeed, it is recommended that the preacher to write out, at the top of every sermon manuscript, a one-sentence purpose statement that becomes the compass for the entire sermon.

The purpose of the sermon rules the whole process of the sermon construction. Richard (1995:78) says that a proper sermon purpose:

- focuses the introduction of the sermon on the need that will be raised in the sermon
- determines what must be included and/or excluded in the body of the sermon
- influences the sermon's conclusion and any application
- helps in choosing the illustrations that will help accomplish the purpose of the sermon
- provides a more objective way to measure the proficiency or success of the sermon
- most importantly, directly contributes to the form of the theme of the central proposition of the sermon

How then can preachers determine the purpose of the sermon? Effective purpose statements should meet at least three requirements.

First, the purpose of the sermon should be in harmony with the theological purpose of the text. As we discussed in Chapter 3, determining the theological purpose of a passage is one of the most important obligations in preaching. Usually, the theological purpose of the text is broader than the immediate purpose of the text in the author's mind when writing to a particular audience. Reviewing the theological purpose of the text, you should ask, What do I

expect to happen in the lives of my audience after listening to this sermon? Adams (1982:31) says, “Until you can capsulize the purpose of the sermon in one crisp sentence, you probably do not yet have it clearly enough fixed in your own mind.”

The purpose of the sermon can be different from the theological purpose as long as it is in line with the theological purpose of the text. When moving from the theological purpose to the sermon purpose, you can move from apples to oranges because you are still talking about fruit. Moving from apples to baseballs, however, is too large a stretch, even though both objects are roughly the same shape and size (Mathewson 2002:109). Mathewson (2002:109) gives an example,

The author of Genesis 22:1-19 did not intend to address a group of fathers on Father’s Day about the need to discern whether or not they are worshiping their children instead of God. However, if you are speaking to a group of fathers on Father’s Day, it’s legitimate to craft your purpose so that it becomes audience specific. Your purpose for a sermon of Genesis 22:1-19 could be, Fathers will write out a list of sacrifices they make for their children that steal time or money rightly belonging to God.

This purpose statement for Genesis 22:1-19 lines up with the theological purpose of the passage (see 3.4.6) since it builds on the idea of putting God first when obedience may seem to threaten a blessing He has previously given you. The key is that your sermon purpose should line up with the theological purpose of the text. When the biblical text calls for a change in attitude, do not try to ask people to change their behaviour (Willhite 2001:69).¹²⁵

Second, the purpose of the sermon describes measurable results.¹²⁶ Stating the sermon purpose in terms of a specific desired application gives the preacher

¹²⁵ Willhite (2001:68-69) divides sermon purpose into four categories, that is, the sermon purpose in terms of specific desired response of beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviours.

¹²⁶ Not every sermon, however, purposes to change something. Overall, preaching purposes to change lives for the glory of God, but each individual sermon may not necessarily purpose a change. Sometimes preachers may encourage their congregation to keep them doing something good.

a means of gauging the sermon's effectiveness. This requires stating the sermon purpose in observable terms (Robinson 2001:111; Willhite 2001:69-71; Mathewson 2002:110). It is too general to say, "Listeners should encourage two people this week." A measurable purpose statement specifically focuses on the performance of the listener. You arrive at a measurable statement by saying, "Listeners should send two cards to two people, thanking them for their contributions to the church's ministry (Mathewson 2002:110)."

Whether or not listeners will actually follow the desired response, the preacher should preach as if they will. It is not the preacher's work to bring about that desired response. That is the Holy Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit may even use your sermon to accomplish a different purpose than the one you intended. Like a road map, nevertheless, stating the sermon purpose in a specific response helps to keep you on the right track.

One more thing to keep in mind is that preachers should write the sermon's purpose statement in terms of the desired audience response, rather than the preacher's purpose (Willhite 2001:78). Instead of, "I purpose to persuade the audience to use their mealtime prayers to count God's specific blessings in their lives and to request from him contentment." Try, "Listeners will use their mealtime prayers to count God's specific blessings in their lives and to request from him contentment." When the preacher keeps the desired response in view, he or she will lessen the risk of calling for a change in values when the biblical text calls for a change in beliefs (Willhite 2001:69; Mathewson 2002:111).

Third, the purpose of the sermon should be in line with the proposition of the sermon. While the proposition of the sermon states the universal truth of a biblical passage applied to the particular audience today, the purpose of the sermon describes what the truth should accomplish for the audience as a result of preaching a sermon. A sermon's purpose differs from the sermon's proposition, in the same way that a target differs from a gun shooting. As the target influences the shooting, however, so does the purpose of the sermon the proposition of the sermon and vice versa. The sermon's purpose and the sermon's proposition should fit together. The sermon's proposition contributes to the form of the sermon's purpose; the sermon's purpose, at the same time, contributes to the form of the sermon's proposition. The proposition and the

purpose of the sermon are the keys that open the door to sermon development. Whatever sermon form he or she chooses, the preacher should communicate the proposition of the sermon and fulfil the sermon's purpose (Cahill 2007: 102).

4.4.5 Determine a Sermon Outline¹²⁷

Different audiences require different sermon outlines. So possibilities for outlining an expository narrative sermon are almost unlimited. Generally speaking, however, sermon outline must reflect two important factors, that is, both the exegetical and theological outline of the text and the situation of the audience. First, the expository narrative sermon outline must honor the exegetical and theological outline of the text; that is, it should keep the plot line and the order of the text.¹²⁸ Stott (1982: 229) states, "The golden rule for sermon outlines is that each text must be allowed to supply its own structure. The skilful expositor opens up his/her text, or rather permits it to open itself up before our eyes, like a rose unfolding to the morning sun and displaying its previously hidden beauty."

Second, the expository narrative sermon outline must reflect the cultural situation of the particular audience. The universally applicable language of the theological outline should be changed into the contemporary language in the light of the sermon proposition and purpose. In this manner, the composing of a sermon outline is controlled not only by the theological outline of the text but also by the proposition and purpose of the sermon (Greidanus 1988:155). While the sermon proposition usually controls the body, the sermon purpose controls the whole sermon, that is, the introduction, body, and conclusion of the sermon keeping the sermon on track that calls for the desired audience response.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Sermon outlines usually consist of an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. As mentioned in 4.4, the development of the sermon construction will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹²⁸ Preachers must respect the outline of the text. But we do not blindly follow the outline of the text. For example, we do not need to copy the chiasmic or symmetrical structure of the text. Sometimes we must change structures that can communicate in these days.

¹²⁹ There is a strong connection and continuity between the proposition and purpose of the sermon. The sermon's purpose and the sermon's proposition should be in harmony. They should contribute to keeping the sermon on one track and lead to applicational wording that carries the authority of the text.

In the narrative sermon, usually the scenes of the story make up the main points and again the episodes in the scenes make up supporting materials (subpoints) of the sermon outline (Kaiser 2003:66). As Osborne (1991:172) states, "If there are two or three parts (or 'moves') of the story in the text, it would be natural to construct the sermon around them . . . The key to the narrative sermon is that the plot line of the story controls its outline. In this way the 'actantial' units become the 'points' of the sermon, although it is better to think of 'movements' (the 'acts' of a play) rather than points (which are better for a didactic sermon)." The concern is not on the quantity of verses but on the completeness of the story.

This preliminary sermon outline can be modified through the process of sermon construction that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.4.5.1 Guidelines for a Good Narrative Sermon Outline

There are five guidelines of a good narrative sermon outline that preachers need to keep in mind.

1. State a sermon outline that contributes to the development of the proposition of the sermon.

Good outlines display unity. Every point of the sermon outline is controlled by the proposition of the sermon. Therefore, the main points must support or develop the proposition or the big idea of the sermon. Anything that does not contribute to the proposition should be eliminated. In inductive development, each move should lead towards the sermon proposition. The question to keep in mind as the preacher develops the sermon outline is this: Does each point or move contribute to the development of the big idea of the sermon?

2. Do not try to create a forced outline through parallelism.

A major danger in an attempt to create a memorable sermon outline through parallelism is that the passage may not lend itself to that way. A sermon outline is like a map. It gives preachers directions. Preachers have to keep it in mind but the listeners do not. McDougall (1992:234) recalls, "One of the greatest compliments ever paid me was given inadvertently when a lady

commented after a message, ‘I came to realize that you didn’t have an outline; it just flowed.’ Actually I did have an outline I was following, but it was inconspicuous; that is how it should be.” Ideas take shape in people’s minds through images and pictures, not through outlines (Mathewson 2002:124). Let the listeners go home with God’s truth in mind, and particularly with a picture of what that truth looks like when lived out in their lives. While the preacher needs the outline to communicate the ideas and pictures, the audience does not need to see the outline (Mathewson 2002:124).

3. Develop the main points inductively.

Usually, stories work inductively. With inductive reasoning, the argument moves from specific instances to a general truth. So, main points emerge at the end of the supporting materials (subpoints). As Mathewson (2002:124) puts it, “in the outline of a story sermon, the preacher will often move out of the introduction into subpoint A, then to subpoint B, and then through further subpoints. Only at the end of the subpoints does the idea in the first main point emerge.” The inductive approach is like a murder mystery on television in which we are involved in the search to discover who the killer is. The conclusion is revealed at the end of the show. The inductive sermon structure will be examined further in the next chapter (5.2.3).

4. Think in terms of “movements” instead of points.

A narrative text embodies a series of scenes that assemble into a plot. The elements that comprise a text’s movement include the sequential series of single meanings together forming a plot. The Bible story is not static. Like a film, it moves from episode to episode, or it travels along with the give-and-take of lively conversation moving from one idea to another (Buttrick 1994:83). In the same manner, a narrative sermon outline must have a sequential movement of thought through word pictures towards a climax to accomplish its purpose (Osborne 1991:172; Mathewson 2002:125; Vos 2005:312-315). Buttrick (1987:23) emphasizes a sequential movement of language in the sermon when he writes:

Sermons are a movement of language from one idea to another, each

idea being shaped in a bundle of words. Thus, when we preach we speak in formed modules of language arranged in some patterned sequence. These modules of language we will call “moves.”

Each movement in the narrative sermon is to unpack one theological idea. To introduce a new or additional theological idea, a new movement of thought is needed (Cooper & McClure 2003:108; Vos 2005:313).

5. State each main point in full sentences.

A main point is a division of the thought presented in the proposition of the text. So each main point represents an idea that supports the proposition. To express an idea, each main point should be a grammatically complete sentence. As Robinson (2001:134) comments, “When only words or phrases stand as points, they deceive us because they are incomplete and vague. Partial statements allow thought to slip through our minds like a greased football. While you may carry an abbreviated outline into the pulpit, you will find that it fails you if you use it in your study.”

CHAPTER 5

THE CONSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY OF THE EXPOSITORY NARRATIVE SERMON FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

Once the preacher has a homiletical product mentioned in the previous chapter, he or she is ready to construct and deliver a sermon. While the exposition of a biblical text must govern every sermon, this does not mean that the construction of every sermon must be the same. Because Christian communication depends not only on the content of the sermon but also on the form of the sermon, we should not separate the two (Loscalzo 1995: 60; Long 2005: 129). Without effective communicational sermon organization and delivery, a sermon does not have the effect and power it could have. With Bible-centred truth and listener-centred communication, the sermon carries God's Word to the ears and hearts of the congregation. So it is essential that preachers should commit themselves not only to the exposition of biblical truth but also to culturally relevant communication (York & Decker. 2003:101). In this chapter, the author concentrates on the matter of sermon construction and delivery to preach the OTN texts through the narrative style of sermon.

5.1 A Rationale for Sermon Structure

5.1.1 The Necessity of Sermon Structure

Every sermon has a certain structure of some kind.¹³⁰ A well-organized sermon works. It connects effectively the message of the text with the target audience, appealing to the listener both functionally (according to its intended purpose) and aesthetically (according to a sense of beauty). A badly-structured sermon, on the other hand, does not have the same appeal. Listeners are left to fend for themselves, showing a cold response to poorly-designed sermon (McDill 1994: 158).

¹³⁰ Sermon structure is defined as the selection and arrangement of the materials to be presented in the sermon.

Some preachers spend most of their time on the content of the message, as if how they present the message is so effortless that it requires little thought. But simply taking exegetical and theological exposition into the pulpit with no organization frustrates the listeners. Some preachers, on the other hand, spend most of their time dealing with sermon structure. The role of sermon structure, however, should be understood properly so that it is neither overemphasized nor ignored. If sermon structure is overemphasized with disregard to the content of the sermon, as Hamilton (1992: 21) states, the sermon “becomes the proverbial ‘cart before the horse.’ If it is underemphasized, the sermon becomes a shapeless mass that exerts itself in any convenient direction and deprives the audience of a fair chance at following a progression of ideas.” Craddock (1985:84) emphasizes the importance of the sermon structure as well as the content of the sermon: “The principle of procedure fundamental to the task of sermon preparation is this: the process of arriving at something to say is to be distinguished from the process of determining how to say it.” Although the content of the sermon must be given priority, the importance of structure must not be ignored.

Preachers must organize the sermon systematically. Sermon design is primarily a matter of arrangement. It deals with how the various parts will be assembled—the order of details and the shape of the presentation—with its style and tone. This will include the selection of materials, balance in proportion, unity of thought throughout, and movement in the presentation order (McDill 1994: 158). If preachers organize their sermons well, they will be far ahead in their attempt to get the biblical message across to a contemporary audience. Sermon structure is as important to the flow and direction of a sermon as are the banks of a river to the movement of its currents (Long 2005: 117).

Sermon structure is needed for effective oral communication. Significant differences between written communication and oral communication demand sermon design specifically to focus on the listener. The task of sermon design should be approached from the viewpoint of the audience, not from the viewpoint of the preacher (McDill 1994:159). No matter how good it may look to the preacher, sermon design will ultimately be judged by the audience who will respond to it.

A well-organized sermon design will be of significant benefit to both the preacher and the listeners (Hamilton 1992: 22-23).

1. Benefits for the Preacher

- A. Good structuring confirms and solidifies the preacher's grasp of the material being presented in the sermon.
- B. Good structuring helps the preacher emphasize one central idea in a sermon, rather than dabble in several minor ones.
- C. Good structuring encourages the preacher to know his/her target clearly and not digress from it.
- D. Good structuring results in good sermonic movement toward an appropriate climax.
- E. Good structuring results in a "balanced attack," avoiding the error of overloading certain parts of the sermon and underloading other parts.
- F. Good structuring helps the preacher in delivery, for each time the next idea will flow naturally from the last one.
- G. Good structuring enhances the preacher's credibility with the audience, making the total force of the presentation more effective.

2. Benefits for the Audience

- A. Good structuring helps the listener follow the argument being presented. Thus, persuasion is enhanced.
- B. Good structuring gives the listener a feel for where the sermon is headed.
- C. Good structuring helps the listener remember the thrust of the sermon, and not just isolated or unrelated parts.
- D. Good structuring helps attention span, for it gives the audience periodic psychological breaks at the right times rather than encouraging the listeners arbitrarily to take needed breaks at the wrong times.

5.1.2 Traditional Approaches to Sermon Form

The traditional rhetorical theory dates back to at least the fourth century B.C. Ancient Greek society developed a rich tradition of speech communication (Thonssen, Baird, & Braden 1970:35). In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) systematized an approach to persuasive speaking. His greatest work, *Rhetoric*, has been considered one of the most important works in the history of speech theory. In the first century A.D., Quintilian (35-95 A.D.) elaborated rhetorical theories through his classical work, *Institutio Oratoria*. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* greatly influenced the Christian rhetoricians until the nineteenth century.

By the middle of the fourth century, Christian sermons began to reflect a more intentional use of rhetoric. The work *On Christian Doctrine* by Augustine is regarded as the first treatise on sacred rhetoric and homiletics. Augustine applied what he had learned as a rhetorician to the proclamation of the gospel.

The classical form of organizing the sermon influenced from the traditional rhetorical theory takes a deductive approach. A deductive preaching begins with a biblical principle and moves toward specific life applications.

5.1.3 Alternative Approaches to Sermon Form

In the last fifty years, traditional approaches to sermon structure have come under increasing criticism from many scholars who advocate a more existential nature for modern homiletics. This group strongly opposed propositional sermon and put great emphasis on movement and experience in preaching.¹³¹

In his 1958 *Design for Preaching*, Davis was most revolutionary in his idea of a sermon structure. He clearly broke with the old approach when he proposed

¹³¹ Many proponents of New Homiletic, however, develop their sermons based on some proposition and adopt logical arrangement. As Hamilton (1992:28) states, "It is interesting to note that the same authors who condemn the concept of propositional truth do so almost exclusively through means of propositional argumentation. For example, Eslinger (1987:85) states that 'Sermonic trading in ideas, whatever organization they are given, is a static, lifeless, and reductionist enterprise.' Yet, the same chapter in which this quotation is found is organized around ideas in the form of propositional statements. Those involved in espousing a 'new homiletic' seem to be contradictory in the way they communicate *their* ideas about preaching in comparison to the way they say sermonic ideas themselves must be communicate."

that the sermon must have organic growth. Craddock's book, *As One Without Authority* published in 1971, helped preachers move into new ways of engaging listeners. Craddock called for inductive movement instead of traditional rationalistic-deductive movement in sermon form. While deductive movement goes from general truths toward the particular, inductive movement goes from the particulars of experience to the general truths of the Bible. Craddock was soon to be followed by a host of homileticians writing on the issues of sermon form. Books and articles on narrative, story, plot, and movement have abounded in the homiletic field since then.

5.1.4 The Importance of the Variety of Forms

A sermon form should reflect the shape of the literary form of the biblical text being proclaimed as well as the listening patterns of those who will hear the sermon (Long 2005:134). Some homileticians insist that people always listen inductively or narratively. The inescapable conclusion, then, is that sermons always employ inductive or narrative forms because that, after all, is how human listening is shaped. Rather than beginning with the development of a biblical principle, the preacher will often describe someone in a life-situation that needs scriptural answers. When the preacher wants his or her listeners to have an experience with God, inductive or narrative form of message will surely work better than deductive form. Nevertheless, inductive or narrative form alone is not comprehensive enough to serve as the master organizer of sermon structure (Janse van Rensburg 2003:43-44). As Long (2005:134) states, "The dynamics of human listening, while certainly an important and often neglected ingredient in the creation of sermon form, must not serve as the only basis, and not even as the starting point, in considerations of sermon design." If we overemphasize oral communication and neglect the content and form of the text in sermon development, we will not provide the biblical authority in our preaching.

The form of the sermon shapes the listener's view of life. If a congregation hears week after week only the problem-solving sermon, they will see the Christian life as a problem in need of a solution. A steady listening to 'before/after' pattern of sermons can impress the listener that conversion is the normative model for becoming a believer. Listening to either/or pattern of

sermons on a regular basis can lead to a black-and-white view of life. On the contrary, 'both/and' sermons tend to broaden horizons and sympathies but never confront the listener with a crisp decision. A consistent diet of deductive sermons which give the listener 'three reasons,' 'three keys,' or 'four benefits' can create a rationalistic view of life. If a congregation is continuously fed by only one fixed sermon form, they will be malnourished. Craddock (1985:174) states,

Form is so extremely important. Regardless of the subjects being treated, a preacher can thereby nourish rigidity or openness, legalism or graciousness, inclusiveness or exclusiveness, adversarial or conciliating mentality, willingness to discuss or demand immediate answers.

Diversity in sermon form will protect the preacher from the problem of teaching people to see life from only one perspective. A variety of sermon forms will provide a more balanced worldview for our listeners (Cahill 2007: 84).

Specifying our purpose of the message helps us establish the form of the sermons. If we try to teach a doctrine through our sermon, for example, a deductive form of message may provide the most effective communication environment. Because the principles have to be established before particulars are applied, it may take quite a while to get to what the congregation sees as relevant. The strengths of deductive form are clarity and rationality. As Long (1995:147) comments, "Far from being predictable and uniform, the traditional approach to form in skilful hands produced a remarkable array of sermon structures." The deductive sermon form cannot also be comprehensive enough to be the master organizer of sermon structure. There is no ideal, standard, or fixed form for sermons. Davis (1958:9) states as following:

There is no ideal or standard form which every sermon should take. The sermon is not a species with fixed and invariable characteristics, as the form of the violet, the lily, the leaf of the red oak, the twig of the weeping willow is fixed. There is no pre-existent mold into which the substance of thought must be poured in order to make a sermon.

Variety in sermon form is a key to a well-received pulpit ministry. We do not always need to follow the standard sermon form. We do not need to use the same homiletical cookie cutters for every sermon, routinely mash down on the dough of the text and pop out another three point sermon (or problem-solving sermon) (Fant 1975:110). As Cahill (2007:55) mentions, “A variety of sermon forms are possible. At times a narrative sermon will work, at other times a more didactic approach will be best. Our approach to sermon form should be as varied as the Bible’s own approach to genre. The intention of the text and the intention of the sermon will govern the choice of sermon form.” The Bible is too rich, complex, and varied to be proclaimed through a single sermon form. Therefore, preachers need to be sensitive when they choose a sermon form.¹³² The traditional forms are not outdated simply because they are tradition-worn. The alternative forms are not wrong simply because they are new. In the hands of experts, sermon construction is handled as familiar tools that meld traditional practice and informed innovation into original masterpieces.

The beginner preacher, however, would do well to master several basic sermon forms before experimenting with other forms. Although basic guidelines and principles may initially seem constraining, they protect the beginner preacher from experiencing and causing confusion because he or she has never been introduced to the specific standard of sermon forms (Chapell 1994:156). Braga (1981:90) advises:

The Lord is not restricted to any rules of rhetoric or homiletics. Instead, we may have a message from the Word without any apparent plan or unity of thought. It is not necessary, therefore, that the preacher feels he is always bound to the principles of homiletics . . . But while the student is learning homiletics it would not be wise for him to exercise this liberty. On the contrary, the beginner should apply himself rigidly to the rules until he has mastered them thoroughly. There will come a time later in his ministry when, under the leading of the Spirit of God, he may disregard some of these principles.

5.1.5 Basic Characteristics of Good Sermon Form

¹³² For more advices in choosing sermon forms, see Janse van Rensburg (2003:44-45).

No matter what particular form we choose, there are several components that should characterize all forms of message. Some basic characteristics of sermon structuring will be helpful so that a broad frame of reference may be established.

1. A well-structured sermon reflects the shape of the text. A sermon must be faithful to the text. The theme of the sermon must reflect the theme of the text. A sermon structure also must reflect the treatment of that theme in the way the text writer treats it (McDill 1999: 155).
2. A well-structured sermon has unity. Sermons of any significant length contain many theological concepts, illustrative materials, and corroborative facts. These many components, however, should not imply that the sermon is about many things. There is no quicker way to lose a congregation's interest than to preach a sermon that does not fit together. All the features of the entire sermon should support one big idea and one central purpose that unities the whole. A sermon is a particular message with a particular purpose. Listeners will more readily grasp the ideas that have a unified focus (Chapell 1994: 37).
3. A well-structured sermon has a movement toward a climax. A sermon should never be static; it must move toward a climax. The listeners should have a sense that the sermon is moving toward a climax. A sermon design is a road map of how that trip is to be taken. A good sermon, as Hamilton (1992: 23) mentions, "moves toward a specific target and arrives there climactically." Each point should lead to the next one, so the points should be in the proper sequence and move to the conclusion in the proper way. An important thing to keep in mind, however, is that every sermon should move in harmony with two different worlds, that is, the Bible and the audience. A sermon not only ought to make a movement toward a climax but also to make a movement with the biblical message and relevant communication (Miller 1995: 140).

5.1. 6 The Elements Influencing on Sermon Form

The form of the sermon is influenced by the theology of the preacher, the shape of the text, and the listening patterns of the audience.

5.1.6.1 The Theology of Sermon Design

Preaching is more than a task of rhetorical practice. Preaching includes a theological task. The theology of preachers influences the form of the sermon. Accordingly, sermon form is deeply influenced by the theological view of the preacher. Cahill (2007: 48-55) lists the following five theological issues as the factors that affect sermon structure.

5.1.6.1.1 Theology of Scripture Affects Sermon Structure

A preacher's theology of Scripture affects not only sermon content but sermon structure. The preacher who has confidence in the authority and truthfulness of Scripture may be different from those who are less sure. He or She will not hesitate to use propositional or direct applicational sermon form. He or She may sometimes utilize inductive, narrative, or even story forms of sermon, but always in the service of a biblical idea and biblical content.

Conversely, the preacher who doubts the authority and truthfulness of Scripture may tend toward sermon forms that are less direct. He or She may often use open-ended forms. He or She will prefer to create an experience of the gospel rather than to communicate propositional truth.

5.1.6.1.2 Ecclesiology Affects Sermon Structure

Ecclesiology affects sermon form since all preaching is done in the context of the church. Although some preaching may occur outside of the church, all preaching speaks the church's stories, uses the church's language and is part of the church's mandate. As Lischer (1993:128) states, "Preaching is not represented as one person's persuasive address. It is the ceaseless activity of the church (see Acts 5:42)."

Our view of the church and the purpose for which the church gathers will affect how we design our sermons. Is the church primarily a teaching station? If so, we will design didactic teaching sermons. Is the church a place to bring unbelievers for hearing the gospel? Then we will likely create topical sermons using a subject-completed pattern. Is the church gathering primarily intended to

reinforce our identity as the people of God? In that case, we may make great use of narrative and story. All of this is to say that our view of the particular rhetorical situation and its relationship to the church will affect the form we use.

5.1.6.1.3 Anthropology Affects Sermon Structure

We must preach to people, and our understanding of the nature of humanity and of how people hear and respond will necessarily influence the form of our sermons. Sermon form is closely related with anthropology (Lischer 1988:69). Propositional sermon forms reflect an emphasis on humanity's rationality. Narrative and story forms see the essence of humanity as living in narrative. Inductive preaching understands that people approach life in a certain (inductive) way.

Our view of humanity in sin will affect our sermon form. If we understand people to be fallen and in need of salvation and inner transformation, we may choose forms that are more direct or capable of direct address. Even narrative and inductive forms, though more indirect in nature, can be designed using direct address. If our view of humanity is more optimistic, we may design sermons more for their aesthetic impact. The sermon form may be more open-ended, and inconclusive.

5.1.6.1.4 Language Theory Affects Sermon Structure

Two major theories of language have influenced contemporary homiletics: empirical theories and phenomenological theories. Empirical theories of language hold that “the rules for language and for the creation of meaning are bound to behaviour and to physical laws (McClure 1995:292).” Preachers who have empirical theory of language prefer a denotative style. “Preachers with denotative styles strive to achieve clarity of language and logic. They use clear, common language and are less inclined to use figurative language such as metaphor, image, or symbol. They prefer deductive forms of logic or forms that have cultural and communal precedents (McClure 1995:293).” On the other hand, those who hold to phenomenological theories of language give the “priority to metaphor and symbol” in their preaching (McClure 1995:293). Metaphorical language is explosive and enables the listeners to experience

surprises and moments of awe (Vos 2007:22). Preachers with a phenomenological understanding of language are more likely to adopt a connotative style. Narrative, inductive, and conversational homiletical theories promote connotative styles.

5.1.6.1.5 Theology of Preaching Affects Sermon Structure

The theology of preaching, or what a sermon is to accomplish, affects the forms of sermon. When the purpose of the sermon is informational, certain forms will be used; when the purpose is to create an impression or cause something to happen in the life of the listener, then other forms may be chosen.

In traditional homiletics, the purpose of a sermon was to bring an idea or concept across the homiletical bridge, which connected the text to the listener. Traditional deductive forms served this purpose well. The sermon was intended to convey an idea, which would be written as a proposition. Thus, when it was thought that a proposition must be communicated, a rational, discursive form predominated.

But more recently, the emphasis has been on the sermon as an event or experience. The focus is more on what should happen in the sermon rather than on informational content. This model focuses on “non-informative and non-discursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, and existential orientations (Lindbeck 1984:16).” In this view, the sermon is not static but dynamic; something should happen during the preaching time. The preacher is to preach the text, not just about the text. Those who advocate an experiential-expressive approach to preaching will probably gravitate toward a narrative or story form of preaching as the most effective means of communication. Sometimes in this approach, the fact that the Bible contains propositional truth is overlooked.

5.1.6.2. The Shape of the Text

The Bible is given to us with various literary forms. The literary forms cannot be separated from the content, for the literary forms influence the way we interpret the content (De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg 2005:19). Vos (2005:51) supports this view:

The 'literary genre' . . . contains inherent clues on how the content should be interpreted. Every genre uses particular textual strategies for communication with the reader or listener, e.g. a funeral eulogy would not make use of irony and satire, but these strategies would be appropriate in a comedy. In addition to the literary genre's textual offering, a certain expectation is also created for the reader, of how the text should be understood and experienced. While we wouldn't find a eulogy amusing, we might laugh heartily at a satire.

If we are to be faithful to the Bible, therefore, our biblical interpretation and sermon design must consider the literary forms as well as the content of the Bible (Cahill 2007:58). Traditional homiletics paid insufficient attention to the form of the Bible. The usual followed procedure was to exegete the passage, identify the central idea, and then discard the form. What they brought across the bridge of homiletics was a preachable idea—the literary form was left behind.

Preaching locates its primary content as well as its authority in the Bible. In preaching, we are attempting not only to make a speech, but to communicate the meaning of a biblical text. There is a relationship between text and sermon. And that relationship embraces not only the relationship between textual content and sermon content but also the relationship between the literary form of the text and sermon form (Cahill 2007:58). As one cannot separate the shape and substance of a work of art, neither should we separate form and significance in literature. In a work of art, shape and substance are inseparable and mutually determinative. In the same manner, what the Bible says and how the Bible says must not be separated. There is then a relationship between content and form (Wilder 1971:25).¹³³ In relation to the shape of the text, according to Cahill (2007:60-63), preachers must consider two kinds of relationships between textual form and sermon form.

5.1.6.2.1 A Relationship of Influence

Most homileticians have perceived that the relationship between the literary form of the Scripture and sermon form should be less direct than some have

¹³³ As quoted in Cahill (2007:59-60).

suggested.¹³⁴ They understand that the Scriptural text and a sermon are different types of communication (literary vs. oral/aural), and have different audiences, different cultural contexts and generally different purposes from each other. Thus, we cannot simply use the form of the Scriptural text as our sermon form as it is (Cahill 2007:60). In other words, the fact that the Scriptural text we take for our sermon is in the form of poetry does not mean our sermon should necessarily take the poetic form.

A more effective approach is to let the form of the Scripture text be reflected in the sermon form. As Greidanus (1988:141) states, “the sermon form reshapes the form of the text. Such reshaping is unavoidable if one does not wish simply to repeat the text.” Then the purpose of sermon form is to “respect the form of the text (Allen 1983:35).” Long (1989:24) suggests the following five questions to achieve this goal.

1. What is the genre of the text?
2. What is the rhetorical function of this genre?
3. What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?
4. How in particular does the text under consideration, in its own literary setting, embody the characteristics and dynamics described in questions 1-3?

To these exegetical questions we can add a homiletical question:

5. How may the sermon, in a new setting, say and do what the text says and does in its setting?

This approach helps to make the form of the Scriptural text reflected in the sermon form. The sermon form recreates the form of the text to some extent. The emphasis here is on the rhetorical function of the text rather than the form of the text itself (Cahill 2007:61). This means that we should have an interest not only in the form of the Scriptural text alone but in the function which the text has in a specific context as well. This implies our sermon may sometimes take

¹³⁴ For example, Mitchell supports direct relationship between the literary form of the Scripture and sermon form. Mitchell (1993:233) asserts, “To select a form or vehicle different from the one inherent in a given text is to do violence to its divinely intended meaning, since meaning and form are inseparable. Thus a narrative parable text demands a narrative sermon form, and the purpose of the sermon should be the purpose of the text”

the same form as that of the text. Narrative may be the most obvious example. A narrative text requires a narrative sermon on most occasions. However, there may be some cases that are more subtle to reflect the form of the text into our sermon (Cahill 2007:61). When we preach a certain psalm, we may reflect the imagery and tone of the psalm in the sermon design. Or in the case we preach a certain text of Revelation, we may reflect its apocalyptic symbolism in our sermon design (Cahill 2007:61).

5.1.6.2.2 A Relationship of Variety

The present concern of the literary form also reminds us of the following fact: if God used the various forms to convey His message, preachers should also use a variety of forms to communicate the same message today (Cahill 2007:61). The Bible is full of various literary forms. If so, why should we take only one didactic or narrative form for our sermon? We should consider thoroughly flexible and various forms, whatever approaches we take for our sermon structure, so that we may reflect the various forms of the Scripture. Even though it is not always so easy to see how the form of the text can influence the form of the sermon, we, as preachers, should make some attempt to identify its ways in preparation of each sermon. By doing so, we respect the form of the text (Cahill 2007:63).

5.1.6.3 The Listening Patterns of the Audience

Sermon form is influenced not only by the biblical text, but also by the cultural situation of the audience. The Scriptures must have priority in our sermon design, but culture also has a role to play. Preachers must not only be the students of the Scripture but also of the culture in which they live. Preaching is not done in a vacuum. Sermons are different today than they were a generation ago. To a large extent, a sermon form is a reflection of changes in culture.

Out of many, the electronic media may be considered as the most crucial factor that has an effect on the listening patterns of contemporary people. Particularly, television has clearly had a major influence in the electronic era. Rogness (1994:24) mentions its primary role in creating a new kind of audience. It conveys pictures, not concepts; it combines verbal and non-verbal

communication. This is a more profound change than previous verbal stages of communication. Television combines seeing and hearing, but with a whole new set of dynamics which make it different from speaking or reading.

The primary change the electronic media have brought to preaching is a return to orality (Ong 1982:135). It has changed the way in which people prefer to communicate. This move toward orality will be required in sermon form. Story is particularly important for an oral culture. Inductive or narrative preaching will receive a better hearing in the electronic age. The electronic media have brought a new way of preaching, combining both the right brain and the left brain.¹³⁵

5.2 The Basic form of the Sermon

Every sermon has a form. There is no such thing as a formless sermon. As the body needs a skeleton, so the sermon needs a structure. Once a preacher has the content of the message, he or she must design its content into a sermon that will adequately carry its message. The most difficult part of any communication is not what to say but how to say it. The good news, however, is that the number of approaches to sermon design is limited.

The decision of where to place the big idea of the sermon leads the preacher to take one of the four basic structural patterns—a deductive, semi-inductive, inductive, or inductive/deductive form.

5.2.1 Deductive Sermon Structure

In a deductive sermon structure, the complete big idea is stated as part of the introduction to the sermon, and then the sermon develops out of that big idea. The sermon moves from the general to the particular of the idea. The sermon begins with the central idea and then raises questions about that idea. This approach works well to those who think in logical ways. It appeals to the mind, providing information on faith and affirming the proofs of thereof.

In outline form, a deductive pattern unfolds as follows:

¹³⁵ For different function of the right and the left brains, see section 5.3.1.

Introduction

- 1.
- 2.
3. Statement of the central idea—the full topic/assertion or question/answer statement

- I. Main Point 1
- II. Main Point 2
- III. Main Point 3

Conclusion

Table 5.1 Deductive Structure of the Sermon Outline

Just as any statement can be developed through explaining, proving (validating), or applying it, so sermon propositions demand explanation, validation, or application (Robinson 2001:118). The deductive approach, therefore, can take three different developmental designs: sermons that seek to explain, sermons that seek to validate, and sermons that seek to apply.

Since the deductive approach tends to be an analysis of the central idea, the main points of the sermon relate back to the central idea rather than to the preceding points. The main points will most often be written in parallel form with parallel logic. Often the order of the main points is interchangeable.

There are advantages to deductive preaching. First, deductive preaching presents a clear message. Second, deductive preaching is a good way to present foundational information. Third, deductive preaching tends to emphasize the Bible as the authoritative Word of God.

5.2.2 Semi-Inductive Sermon Structure

The semi-inductive sermon gives only the subject in the introduction, not the entire idea, and the main points complete the subject (Robinson 2001:124). Each main point presents part of the central idea. The listener is not given the

complete central idea until the last point. This subject-completed pattern of the sermon is one of the most common forms used in the pulpit today.

Both the deductive and the semi-inductive approach employ parallel logic. The main points are written in parallel form and each main point relates back to the subject in the same way. The order of the main points can often be rearranged without any loss of movement. This approach works well with a text that breaks down easily into parallel points.

How do we form subject-completed sermons? Look for passages with lists or which are capable of being formulated into a list. Are there a series of benefits listed? Are there three keys for effective prayer? Does the passage list four reasons not to worry?

The subject-completed form works especially well with topical sermons. Since topical sermons have almost unlimited flexibility in choosing content, it is relatively easy to identify three, four, or five parallel thoughts for a topical sermon (Cahill 2007:121).

Sangster (1990:25-32) provides an example of the subject-completed form of the sermon as follows:¹³⁶

Sermon text: Luke 24:26

Title: He dies. He must die.

Subject: Why it was necessary for Jesus Christ to be crucified

Complement: Because only a crucified Savior could reveal our sins, save us from our sins, and meet us in our agony.

- I. Jesus Christ had to be crucified because only a crucified Savior could reveal our sins.
- II. Jesus Christ had to be crucified because only a crucified Savior could save us from our sins.
- III. Jesus Christ had to be crucified because only a crucified Savior could meet us in our agony.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Cahill (2007:121).

This sermon gives three reasons why it was necessary for Christ to be crucified. It is a multiple complement sermon. Notice that the order of the second and third points could easily be switched. A disadvantage of the subject-completed form is that it can bore the listener when it is used continuously. In addition, as Robinson (2001:125) states, “There is a danger of imposing on the thought of the biblical writer what the writer himself is not saying.” We must not force the thought of the passage into a moulded pattern.

5.2.3 Inductive Sermon Structure

With the inductive approach, the argument of the sermon moves from specific instances to the complete statement of the central idea; whereas in the deductive approach, the argument moves from the complete statement of the truth to a specific truth. The primary difference between the two approaches is the position of the central idea (Hamilton 1992:97). In an inductive pattern, only the topic or question (what you are talking about) appears in the introduction. The complete central idea emerges later in the end of the sermon. This creates a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty as to how the issue raised in the introduction will be resolved. Questions are raised in the beginning and not answered until the end. A murder mystery on television illustrates well the difference between the deductive and inductive approaches. The deductive approach lets us know who the murder is right away, and the rest of the show gives the clues that prove to others what we already know. This approach moves from the general thought (who did it) to the specific clues. In the inductive approach, on the other hand, we do not know who the killer is. We are involved in the search to discover who he or she is. The conclusion (who did it) is not revealed until the very end of the show.

Inductive outline can be structured as following way:

(Introduction)

A. Subpoint

B. Subpoint

I. Main Point

- A. Subpoint
- B. Subpoint
- II. Main Point

- A. Subpoint
- B. Subpoint
- III. Main Point

Therefore: Central Idea

(Conclusion)

Table 5.2 Inductive Structure of the Sermon Outline

A sermon outline of the parable of the rebellious son in Luke 15 might appear as following (Litchfield 1992:168):

(Introduction)

- 1. We are unhappy with life.
- 2. We have forgotten God.
- A. Rebellion against God leads to unhappiness (pig sty).
- 1. We realize we need help.
- 2. We realize only God can help us.
- B. Repentance sets us in the right direction.

Central Idea: God will accept us back as faithful children.

(Conclusion)

In the inductive approach, each main point in the sermon relates to the preceding main point. The preacher relates his/her introduction only to the first point of the sermon. Following that point, he/she must raise another question, directly or indirectly for the audience to consider. His/Her second point, then, grows out of his/her first point. Only after all the main points have been developed, he/she will present the central idea of the sermon. Thus, the

transitions are crucial in an inductive sermon (Robinson 2001:127). An inductive sermon is concerned with the sequential development of the thoughts. Thus, transitions must show a clear logical connection between the successive points. Otherwise, listeners will be wandering around, trying to find their way home.

There are obvious advantages to the inductive approach. Inductive sermons create a strong sense of discovery in listeners. In the inductive sermon, listeners can have the experience of learning truth for themselves. Inductive approach can effectively cause the listeners to interact with the preacher's ideas. Listeners will feel that they have participated in drawing the conclusion. Like a good story, inductive sermons can capture the attention of the audience.

Inductive sermons are particularly effective with the hostile listeners. Through inductive reasoning, the preacher can present a sufficient number of specific instances of the truth that the audience will agree with until he/she comes to the conclusion (proposition), and they are called to accept it. The preacher will lead the audience to say yes to a number of things with which they agree before he/she presents a concept with which they will disagree (Robinson 2001:127).

The inductive sermon will usually begin with the need of the listener. It starts with a human problem and moves toward a biblical solution. The inductive approach is closer to a conversation than to a lecture. The listeners are invited into the sermon process. To make it work, preachers have to know how people actually think and act. Listeners have to feel "that could be me (Robinson 2001: 129)." Robinson (2001:129) rightly comments that "Inductive sermons work best when . . . we are talking about actual people, not about cardboard characters in tissue paper plots."

5.2.4 Inductive-Deductive Sermon Structure

Inductive and deductive forms can be combined in a sermon. In this sermon structure, the introduction and first or second main point will move toward the central idea. Once the central idea is presented, the remainder of the sermon proceeds deductively to explain, prove (validate), or apply the central idea (Robinson 2001:126). More detailed explanation on this sermon form will be given in the next section (5.3.3.2).

5.3 An Introductory Study of the Expository Narrative Preaching

5.3.1 The Need for the Expository Narrative Preaching

The form of the sermon should reflect the form of the text (Allen 1983:35). The literary form cannot be separated from the meaning of the text. What form then should a sermon from an OTN text take? The expository narrative form¹³⁷ provides one of the most appropriate forms for a sermon on an OTN text. The didactic sermon form tends to circle around a theme so that the narrative easily loses both its movement and experiential impact. Using an expository narrative sermon form for a narrative text, on the other hand, prevents us from imposing an alien, arbitrary outline on the text (Watts 1983:74).

In addition, the expository narrative sermon has a universal appeal and a common source of enjoyment through its story-like quality (Vos 2005:293). It informs the intellect, arouses the emotions, and challenges the will (Finkbeiner 1995:79). Developing the expository narrative sermon in the same form as the text “allows the hearers to be involved more holistically, to live into the message with their imagination rather than merely to reflect on it intellectually (Greidanus 1988:151).” All the people have nonrational and intuitive modes of perception as well as linear and rational modes of perception (Jensen 1980:123). These different modes of perception are related to the different brain hemispheres. The left hemisphere is related to logical and linear thought. The right hemisphere is relational, intuitive, and feeling-oriented. Sermons are for everyone, and preachers should reach out to the left-brained as well as to the right-brained listeners. “The best way to be all-inclusive is to mix the sermon’s content with good stories that illumine the precepts and to teach the precepts that apply the stories to the truth of the text (Miller 2006:149).” The expository narrative sermon thus enables the hearers to be involved more inclusively, not merely logically but also intuitively, not only intellectually but also emotionally (Greidanus 1988:151).

The expository narrative sermon also enables the preacher to reveal a clear

¹³⁷ For a definition of the expository narrative preaching, see next section (5.3.2).

proposition and application so that the hearers cannot miss the meaning and the contemporary relevancy of the message. Unfortunately, many proponents of the narrative sermon have unfairly criticized the propositional preaching and have presented the non-propositional and open-ended preaching as an alternative model. For example, Jensen (1980:130) says:

That at least is the purpose behind the best of the arts. At the end of a novel the novelist does not tell us, "Now the point of this novel is" At the end of a play the playwright does not come out and say, "Now the meaning of my play was" At the end of a provocative film the film-maker does not append an epilog saying, "What I was trying to get at was" The story, the novel, the play, the film, the painting, etc. is the preaching itself. In its most developed form a story sermon is also the preaching itself!

If a sermon is communicated indirectly and in an open-ended way, however, the listeners can hardly catch the point the preacher intends (Brooks 1983:49). Miller (1992:107) comments on this concern:

The narrative sermon may falsely assume that it can lead its hearers to supply their own life stories to arrive at their own conclusions. Some may not be motivated to see the connection between their own life story and that of the sermon. An even worse presumption is that when the story is concluded the sermon story will have led the hearer to a clear understanding of how the hearer's own story should be amended, challenged, canceled, or redirected. Even if the hearer consents to amend his or her life story, is there any guarantee that the hearer will reach the best *biblical* conclusion?

The majority of the listeners still think in a propositional mode (Allen 1983:38). Thus, they prefer narrative sermons with a clear proposition and clear applications. Mast (1994:201) supports this opinion:

Although narrative preaching will touch the imagination, emotions, and heart in a powerful way, that will seem incomplete . . . unless their minds are filled, unless a lesson is taught, unless truth is communicated in

propositional form in the sermon.

A narrative sermon, like a propositional sermon, needs clear logical connections between various parts of the sermon based on a big idea of the text. Otherwise, as Carl (1983:125) states, “The parishioners are mildly amused and entertained but lost. They leave the church knowing something has happened, but they are not sure what. Or they leave seeing before them a beautiful tapestry of words and images but not the gospel.” Narrative sermon without a proposition is not enough when it is the only communication tool preachers bring to the homiletic (Chapell 1996:16). A narrative sermon without a proposition produces ambiguous meanings in the minds of hearers. Meaning dependent upon personal experience alone cannot be dependable meaning (Chapell 1996:15).

The crucial issue, therefore, is not that of deductive, inductive, or narrative sermon form. The issue rather is the communication of the biblical truth. Any sermon form that cannot effectively carry the biblical message is inadequate to be a homiletical methodology. In biblical narrative, the truth is carried to us by the vehicle of the narrative form of literature. “In the Bible, narratives provide experiential reference for the meaning of propositions, even as the propositions provide conceptual and linguistic backgrounds for the narratives that give their shapes meaning. The narratives would have no personally transcendent meaning without the propositions, and the propositions would have not personally transferable meaning without the experiential accounts that provide vicarious interaction with Scripture’s truths (Chapell 1996:12).” The narrative sermon and the propositional sermon should not exclude each other, but rather they should work together to communicate the biblical message. Chapell (1996:15) confirms this opinion:

In contrast to the philosophies that make meaning subject to personal experience, the Bible contends it has freed us from personal vagaries and offers authoritative, communicable truth (Ps. 19; Col. 2:2-4). The truth in Scripture comes packaged in both propositions and narratives, suggesting that a theory that minimizes the importance of either is insufficient for communicating the Bible’s message. The theory that most closely corresponds to the Bible’s contours does not require an either/or choice between narratives and propositions, but rather

recognizes the value of each to serve differing purposes in the communication process.

The expository narrative sermon enables us to keep a suitable balance between simply narrating the biblical story and providing explicit propositions for the right understanding. Robinson (2001:130) affirms that a narrative sermon should still have a major idea:

Narrative preaching however does not merely repeat a story as one would recount a pointless, worn-out joke. Through the story you communicate ideas. In a narrative sermon, as in any other sermon, a major idea continues to be supported by other ideas, but the content supporting the points is drawn directly from the incidents in the story. In other words, the details of the story are woven together to make a point, and all the points develop the central idea of the sermon.

As Long (1988:18) comments, “if we preach only the insights, we end up with a propositional and scholastic form of the faith. If we preach only the stories, we end up with hopeless ambiguity. The rhythm between them must be preserved.”

5.3.2 The Definition of the Expository Narrative Preaching

Homiletics define narrative preaching in various ways. The difficulty of understanding the term “narrative preaching” leads to the need for a definition of narrative preaching. The author uses the term “expository narrative preaching” to distinguish from the use of the “narrative preaching” that excludes propositions from the narrative form of the sermon. The author defines the expository narrative preaching, as shown in Chapter one (1.1.2), as *the communication of a biblical concept discovered through a Holy Spirit-directed exegetical, theological, and homiletical interpretation of a biblical narrative textual unit, applied by the Holy Spirit through a preacher to a specific audience, and delivered in a narrative sermonic style*. This definition includes five key concepts comprising the expository narrative preaching.

First, the expository narrative preaching as a kind of expository preaching, therefore, requires an exegetical, theological, and homiletical analysis to

generate a timeless proposition of the narrative text and apply it into the particular situation of the listeners. Narrative sermon as well as didactic sermon must clearly reveal the big idea of the text so that the congregation cannot misunderstand its message (Greidanus 1988:225).

Second, the expository narrative preaching to be a relevant preaching emphasizes that the timeless proposition and purpose of the narrative text should be applied explicitly or implicitly to the life of the contemporary congregation. Open-ended sermons can easily lead the hearers to apply something that cannot be supported by the textual message.

Preachers, on the other hand, should not attempt to apply every detail in the narrative text. Otherwise, they will depart from hermeneutical faithfulness. Biblical narratives reveal the enactment of God's purposes in historical events. To keep hermeneutical faithfulness, therefore, the timeless principle derived from the text through exegetical, theological, and homiletical analyses must be applied.

Third, the expository narrative preaching needs a narrative text. Lowry uses the term *narrative* to refer to the form of a sermon. Lowry (1995:342) defines a narrative sermon as "any sermon in which the arrangement of ideas takes the form of a plot involving strategic delay of the preacher's meaning." For Lowry, a narrative sermon can be made of any biblical genre. However, the author uses the term *expository narrative preaching* to refer to a sermon which is created from a narrative text of the Bible.

Fourth, the expository narrative preaching as a kind of narrative preaching requires a narrative sermon form. To have a narrative sermon form, however, does not necessarily mean that the sermon has to be a form of story (Pieterse 1987:174; Craddock 2005:328). A sermon which has a structured outline (1, 2, 3 points) still qualifies as a narrative sermon, if it reflects the developmental movement of the text with the proper amount of anticipation (Craddock 2005:328). As Pieterse (1987:174) states, "For the sermon to be narrative, it does not have to be story from beginning to end. Narrative preaching concerns the correct understanding of a narrative text from Scripture and the narrative character which the sermon assumes in developing the sense of the story. One

should allow narrative elements in the story, such as plot and character, to feature in the sermon as well—indeed, one could even point them out to the congregation.”

Fifth, the expository narrative preaching emphasizes that “preaching is a transformative, spiritual exercise that absolutely depends on the power of the Holy Spirit, and no communication strategy can substitute for that dependence or that power (Willhite 2001:132).” Preaching is a supernatural enterprise in which God transforms our minds with His Word. Without the anointing of the Holy Spirit on our sermon, our exposition may be impeccable, our communication skill may be magnetic, but we will be dry, empty, and hollow.

5.3.3 Types of the Expository Narrative Preaching

Biblical authors use a variety of literary genres to communicate propositional truth. Biblical narratives are not like didactic literature that can be taken apart verse by verse or paragraph by paragraph. In a different way from didactic texts, biblical narratives communicate propositional truth through stories. The propositional truth of the narrative text can only be understood when one understands the entire story. Sermon form then must reflect not only the content of the text but also the form of the text (Loscalzo 1992:117). Therefore, the construction of the narrative sermon should be somewhat different from that of the didactic sermon.

How then can we construct the expository narrative sermons without violating the essence of the story in their presentations? There is an ongoing debate in homiletic circles as to what a narrative sermon looks like. However, there are ways of developing the expository narrative sermon that are propositional in its nature and narrative in its presentation. Larsen (1995:100) believes that both the propositional truth and the literary form of the narrative text can be combined together to create a narrative sermon:

The procedure for constructing the narrative sermon is similar, then, to any literary genre of Scripture except that more options are offered. Once having gained a perspective on “the big idea” or “the central point of reference,” the craftsman can use a “rhetorical strategy” that builds

on Act I, Act II divisions in the text, or on a more standard outline (especially a ladder or seek-and-find type of outline that builds suspense climactically), or on no identification of mains as the sermon moves through the narrative blocks.

As Larsen suggests, there are several available options in constructing an expository narrative sermon. Possibilities for expository narrative sermons are numerous. The attempt to enforce one style of sermon construction with only slight variations is “something akin to saying that all artists must paint like Leonardo da Vinci or that all musicians must compose like Beethoven. The beauty, richness, and craft of noble expression cannot be confined to one form (Chapell 1994:157).”

The beginner preacher, however, would do well to master a few basic forms of creating expository narrative sermons before experimenting with other forms. Below, the author will suggest three possible basic designs of the expository narrative sermon. Although these guidelines may initially seem constraining, the author’s intention is that beginner preachers will learn some basic skills that will allow them to prepare expository narrative sermons with knowledge and confidence. Once you have learned basic techniques on how to design expository narrative sermons, then you may try other forms to produce powerful messages. As Wiersbe (1981:32) wisely advises, “Homiletics is the science of preaching, and it has basic laws and principles that every preacher ought to study and practice. Once you’ve learned how to obey principles, then you can adapt them, modify them, and tailor them to your own personality.” Here are three different types of expository narrative preaching which most preachers can use as useful options for sermon construction.

5.3.3.1 Following the Sequence of the Text Model

“Following the sequence of the text” is one of the most commonly used forms for narrative preaching. Lowry (1989:38) calls this method ‘running the story.’ This sermon form can be preached in a number of ways. Still many homileticians believe that narrative sermons must be presented without clear proposition and application so that the hearers can figure out the message of the sermon for themselves.

The expository narrative preaching is concerned with carrying the correct meaning and the narrative character of the text (Pieterse 1987:174). In this model, the biblical story, interpretation, and contemporary application are all interwoven throughout the sermon (Cahill 2007:138). This approach basically takes an inductive development, but it does not necessarily need to take a story form from the beginning to the end (Pieterse 1987:174). The sermon usually starts from the particular experiences of the listeners, moves into the world of biblical narrative, and then works toward arriving at the central idea which is revealed at the end of the sermon.

In this approach, the biblical narrative is preached in a natural way by following the step-by-step development of the plot of the story. The shape of the sermon follows the shape of the text (Lowry 1989:38; Cahill 2007:138). As Deuel (1991:47) asks, “If the preacher’s goal is to be expository, what is more expository than preaching the text in its story-line form?” In this form, each main point (scene) is treated as a movement, and interpretation and application are woven into that movement. The sermon moves forward alongside the biblical narrative and preserves the tension and the suspense of the plot (Linares 2000:177).

While the proposition is not clearly stated until the end of the sermon, it is important that each movement (or main point) should be tightly connected to the big idea and proceeds toward it. Often, it is helpful to introduce the theme of the message at the beginning. By doing this, the congregation is guided to think along the direction of the big idea. The theme may be introduced as a question which the big idea will answer, or as a general statement about the subject which the big idea will complement (Linares 2000:179).

The author quotes Mathewson’s sermon (Mathewson 2002:162-170) “The Greatest Thing You Can Do for Your Kids” as an example of “the following the sequence of the text” type of expository narrative sermon (see Appendix 1).

5.3.3.2 Inductive-Deductive Model

The inductive-deductive pattern can be used as a useful form of the expository

narrative sermon. There are many variations on this form but all have the basic inductive and deductive development. In this model, the first part of the sermon is assigned for an inductive story telling of the text in a series of moves to explore the big idea of the biblical story, and then the second part is for telling the contemporary stories that serve as an application of the big idea. This approach will work best with a skeptical congregation about the biblical message. To effectively use this form of sermon, the preacher must make great efforts not only to understand the contents of the text, but also the mindset of the contemporary audience. As Yearley (2005:332) states, “This model requires the skill of making the Bible text contemporary as you’re explaining it, the skill of drawing out the line of thought through the entire passage, and the ability to abstract from a larger passage of Scripture two to four application principles.”

In this approach, the biblical story is told in a series of moves according to its natural progression. This will take ten to fifteen minutes. As the preacher goes through a narrative passage, he or she first connects the listeners to the biblical text, and then explains the passage in colloquial language so that they can follow the author’s train of thought. As the preacher explains the narrative text, he or she often uses contemporary stories and illustrations to connect between the world of the text and the world of the audience. “In this manner, the story is not overshadowed by the instructive material nor is it treated in a piecemeal fashion. To the contrary, the description and explanation of the story establish the groundwork for the lessons to be learned in the second half of the sermon (Linares 2000:171).”

When the big idea is clearly stated, it functions as the transition point into the second part of the sermon. Thus, the preacher begins the second part of the sermon deductively on the basis of the big idea. After telling the biblical story and arriving at the big idea, the preacher can develop the second part of the sermon with the big idea by explanation (which answers the question, What does this mean?), validation (which answers the question, Is it really true? Why should I believe it? Give me some proof.), or by application (which answers the question, So what? What difference does this make?) (Mathewson 1997:430; Robinson 2001:115-124).

After ten to fifteen minutes of walking through the narrative passage, the

preacher has twenty to twenty-five minutes to talk about the life principles. At this second part of the sermon, the preacher talks about the practical life lessons naturally drawn from the big idea of the text. Now the sermon must be focused on the practical application of the big idea. Instead of making some comment about the text, the preacher must make a comment about the listeners' lives. Each point is put in user-friendly language that anyone, regardless of whether he or she is Christian, can understand and appropriate.

Mathewson (2002:118-119) provides an example sermon outline of the inductive-deductive pattern as follows:

Suppose a preacher decides to preach the following big idea from the book of Esther: *Even when you can't see or hear God, he is still in control of your destiny.* Ordinarily, the preacher will work through the story inductively, and this big idea will emerge at the end. However, a preacher may determine that the hearers will not readily buy into this idea. Maybe several teens from their church died in a bus accident. Or perhaps listeners live in a community where God has never done anything dramatic. No revival has taken place there. No Christian leaders or missionaries have arisen from the congregation. The preacher may sense the need to tell the story, let the idea emerge about halfway through the sermon, and then go back to point out more specifically from the story that circumstances don't stop God from controlling one's destiny. God is still in control despite the insensitivity of people around you. He's still in control even though you face impossible people in prominent places. What's more, he still guides your destiny when unpredictable events take place. And finally, God remains in control in spite of circumstances that no human being can change.

This arrangement is inductive-deductive because the first part of the sermon tells us the story inductively, while the second part spends time developing the idea. In this case, the development takes the form of validation.

Mathewson (1997:429) offers an inductive-deductive sermon outline from the book of Esther as following:

Introduction:

I. Story

Move 1 (Scene: Esth. 1-2)

Move 2 (Scene: Esth. 3-4)

Move 3 (Scene: Esth. 5-9:19)

Move 4 (Scene: Esth. 9:20-10:3)

II. Big idea: You can't see or hear God, but He controls your destiny!

Is this really true?

- A. He controls your destiny in spite of the spiritual insensitivity of people around you.
- B. He controls your destiny in spite of impossible people in prominent places.
- C. He controls your destiny in spite of unpredictable events.
- D. He controls your destiny in spite of circumstances no person can change.

Conclusion:

Table 5.3 An Example Outline of the Inductive-Deductive Model

Borden's sermon (Borden 2002:190-199) "The High Cost of Lamb" provides an example of the "inductive-deductive model" of expository narrative sermon (see Appendix 2).

5.3.3.3 Problem-Solution Model

This sermon form reflects the natural plot conflict and resolution pattern of the narrative text, and is sometimes called as the *conflict-resolution model*. Preaching this way enables the listeners to feel the story as drama. Baumann (1972:79-80) suggests the simplest structure of this approach:

Introduction

I. Statement of the problem

II. Statement of the solution (proposition) and its application

Conclusion

Table 5.4 Basic Structure of the Problem-Solution Model

In this model, the first half of the sermon seeks to develop the problem with its increasing tension. The sermon begins with a contemporary story that reveals a problem that the listeners need to solve. The preacher reveals how his/her listeners relate, interact, and struggle with the same spiritual problem. He/She then connects the story of the listeners with the biblical story and follows the plot development closely. He/She picks those aspects of the story that enable him/her to illustrate the problem that he/she is presented. Rather than thinking of which verses do this, he/she must demonstrate how the plot, character development, scenes, actions, design, tone, and so on develop the spiritual problem (Borden 1998:78). During this first part of the sermon, parallels and applications are made to show how contemporary people are also confronted with similar difficulties (Linares 2000:172).

The second half of the sermon reveals the solution to the problem. In this part, the preacher's task is to prove "how God's people successfully or unsuccessfully embraced the divine remedy for their spiritual sickness (Borden 1998:79)." Here the divine remedy (the preaching idea or proposition) means "the precise answer to a specific need, problem, or difficulty in life (Borden 1998:78)." Therefore, whether the narrative story has a good ending or a tragic ending, it can still be incorporated into the problem-solution scheme. The problem that was brought up in the first half of the sermon is resolved in the second half of the sermon (Linares 2000:174). In this case, the resolution reflects the big idea of the sermon. This resolution should be explained clearly, so that the congregation learns how to respond properly to similar problems. The second part of the sermon should offer hope and guidance to the congregation through a specific suggestion of divine resolution (Linares 2000:174).

In the conclusion, the preacher uses the closing minutes to demonstrate the

implications of accepting or rejecting God's remedy. He or She shows how acceptance brings spiritual health, while rejection brings further spiritual illness. He or She appeals to people to choose health (life) over disease (death) (Borden 1998:79).

The problem-solution model is an appealing sermon form, but it does not fit to every narrative text. If this pattern of the sermon is preached regularly, in addition, it will lose its power. Linares (2000:175-176) comments on this concern as follows:

This pattern (i.e., *conflict-resolution*) works exceedingly well with some narratives, but it should never be imposed when the narrative story itself does not divide so even-handedly into such generic categories. To force every narrative into this problem-resolution mold is exegetically unjustifiable. Furthermore, while such sermons are interesting and suspenseful, when the congregation hears this recipe all the time, it loses its appeal. Thus, while this method is a good option to have, it should be used with discernment and moderation.

Mathews' sermon (Mathews 2002:216-222) "What Do You Do When the Roof Caves in" serves as an example of the "problem-solution model" of expository narrative sermon (see Appendix 3).

5.4 Developing an Expository Narrative Sermon

At this point we can point out the abiding meaning of a specific OTN text and continuing significance for all believers of all times. As a resultant product of the exegetical, theological, and homiletical analyses on an OTN passage which was stated in previous chapters, we can delineate a sermon proposition, a sermon purpose, and a sermon outline. We can also denote what should be the mood of the sermon and the categories of application through the audience analysis. However, this basic homiletical product is not yet a sermon. As the skeleton needs flesh and muscle, so the sermon outline needs the expansion into a complete sermon. Now the preacher must ask himself: How can I develop this homiletical product into a sermon to accomplish the purpose I determined based on the homiletical proposition. How do I expand this

homiletical product into a complete sermon?

To preach an Old Testament narrative effectively, preachers must wrestle with the most effective means of shaping their sermon. In this section, therefore, we will examine the developmental process of the expository narrative sermon.

5.4.1 Draw up a List of Possible Sermon Components through Brainstorming

A sermon must be designed to complete the sermon task. The sermon task is to communicate the central idea and to accomplish the purpose of the sermon. The first step of shaping the sermon, therefore, is brainstorming to draw up a list of what must be said and done in order to complete the sermon task for a particular congregation (Cahill 2007:110). The list will be drawn from the exegetical study, the theological reflection, the analysis of the audience, and so on.

Remember that you are brainstorming at this point; not thinking critically. Write down every idea and thought as much as it occurs to you. Go back over your study notes, looking for important ideas. In brainstorming, explore the biblical narrative and the contemporary audience. And ask about what needs to be said and done to complete the sermon task. *How will the sermon say and do to accomplish what the text says and does? How much textual detail will I include? What key events in the narrative need to be highlighted? What will be the mood of the sermon? Will my treatment of the text be heavy on explanation, proof, or application? Will I make use of other Scripture passages? How can I make this sermon Christological? How much contemporary material will I include? Will I use any current stories? Do I have any examples of how the central message of the sermon has worked in today's lives? Are there problems of interpretation, or questions people might have about the text?* Some of these ideas might already have occurred to you in the interpretive stage. Write down everything that you can think of. At this point, there is no such thing as a bad idea. You will have time for editing later. Once you have completed the initial brainstorming, you can have a list of ideas, many of which will be included in your final sermon design.

5.4.2 Adjust and Refine the Sermon Outline in Terms of the Sermon Form

Once you have finished the initial brainstorming, you must decide on taking the sermon form in which you are going to package a series of sermon components. Sermon form serves to enhance communication. You cannot present a sermon only with a list of things to do. You already know the basic idea and the developmental movement of the text. Now you must think about the best way to get that idea across to a congregation. That is where the sermon takes its form and shape.

How should we sequence the movement in a sermon? In exegesis, we start from the beginning of the text and work our way through to the end. But our discussion on sermon construction cannot be limited to talking about how the text forms the sermon; we must also talk about the listeners and how they help to shape the sermon and sequence the movement. Most often our sermon sequence will reflect the sequence of the text, but it does not need to be identical with the text. Rhetorical considerations for our audience may guide us to choose a different sequence than the biblical writer. Therefore, there are two tensions we face: we must be true to the biblical text, but at the same time we must be true to our audience. Our audience as well as our text helps to shape the sermon (Robinson 2005:326).

At some point a decision must be made about a particular type of narrative sermon form we will use. Various narrative sermon structures are available. However, beginner preachers may choose one of the three basic expository narrative sermon forms mentioned in the previous section of this chapter. Knowing that there are many ways to develop an expository narrative sermon helps us in the sermon design process. That initial sermon form may be rearranged or refined several times in the sermon designing progress, but having an initial form with which we will work is a good place to begin.

Once we have determined the basic expository narrative sermon form we will use, we need to think of sequence (Cahill 2007:137). Consider together your list of brainstorming and the initial narrative sermon form that you will use, and then rearrange your sermon outline, asking what the best shape to accomplish the

purpose of the sermon for your particular congregation is. Ask again yourself, *What is my purpose in this sermon? What am I trying to accomplish? Why am I preaching this sermon? Where in the biblical flow of thought will I place the central idea of the sermon? Where in the biblical flow of thought will I place the contemporary application?* Then sketch out briefly what you want to do in the conclusion. You may have to sharpen it later, but now you know where you are going. Then determine how you want to start. Ask yourself, *How can I connect my audience to the text?* Once you briefly determine your conclusion and introduction, then ask, *What is the first thing I have to say? From all the study I have done, what is the first thing I have to say? What is the next thing? And the next thing?* In this way, you can get the sequence of your sermon development.

The sermon form should be congenial both to the text and to the expectations of the audience. To rearrange sermon outline, thus, is to create a proper sermon form (in the light of your homiletical idea and purpose, and the rhetorical situation) that will say and do for your audience what the biblical narrative said and did for its audience (Cahill 2007:137). So we must ask, *How can I develop this sermon to be true to the text, yet do it in the most interesting and engaging way to my audience* (Robinson 2005:326)? You may try several times before finding one proper sermon form that works both for your narrative text and for your audience. It will be a creative retelling of the biblical story. This will be your sermon structure.

5.4.3 Locate the Application

Once our sermon outline is refined into a developmental movement in terms of sermon form, we must decide where we will locate the contemporary application. We can place the application where it is necessary. Basically, the selected sermon form will affect the location of the application. We can intersperse the application through the whole sermon (e.g., in case of following the sequence of the text model) or locate it at the end of the sermon (e.g., in case of problem-solution model). When we decide the location of the application, the following factors must be considered: the proposition of the sermon, the purpose of the sermon, and the form of the sermon (Richard 1995:115). If we place our application at the end of the sermon, we should not account it to be a mere appendix to the sermon. The application must be given at a proper time and place (Richard 1995:115).

5.4.4 Expand Each Main Point

Having chosen an appropriate narrative sermon form for our message, having refined the sermon outline into a developmental movement in terms of sermon form, and having decided the location of the contemporary application, we are now ready to amplify each main point. Amplifying a main point (scene) is a matter of shaping the material we have. This phase of the sermon process assumes we have done the hard work of exegetical, theological, and homiletical studies, the making of a list of sermon components through brainstorming, as well as the decision of a sermon form. Therefore, we have already several pages of notes, thoughts, and illustration ideas to shape a sermon. What is needed at this point is a process that will allow the main points of the sermon to grow and develop out of the preaching passage. Through this process, we can choose the materials that will be used in the development of the main points (Cahill 2007:142-143).

Remember that we are not writing a precisely organized full sermon now, but we are still only making notes that will be refined later. Do not try to find the exact wording you will use in your sermon, but simply note general ideas and thoughts that you will refine later.

We need to take time to select the necessary material for each main point (or scene) in order to communicate the central idea of the sermon to the audience. Not all the materials we have gathered in our analysis will need to be used. Some materials are selected in and the others are selected out. When we choose the materials that will shape each scene, it will be helpful to ask ourselves, what material will help my listeners accept the central idea of this message and apply it to their lives?

Through expansion and visualization of each scene, we must turn the biblical scenes into pictures that can catch the listeners' imaginations (Mathewson 1997:432). "Sermons on biblical narratives succeed or fail with the preacher's ability to present the scenes of a story in vivid color (Mathewson 1997:432)." As Osborne (1991:363) comments, "Paint pictures that will capture the imagination and help motivate the congregation in the direction of the sermonic goal."

5.4.4.1 Organize the Necessary Biblical Material for Each Main Point

Consult the study notes on each scene and choose the necessary biblical material that is useful in amplifying the central idea and purpose of the sermon as well as each main thought of the scenes (or main points). Selected material is used to picture each scene in the light of the homiletical idea, purpose, and the rhetorical situation. Picture the characters in each scene. How do they look, act, and talk? Describe the locale. Is it in the country, or the city, in the mountains or by the shore? Use the historical, geographical, and cultural materials you have discovered to picture each scene. “As you add the historical and cultural details to each scene, the skeleton will get up and walk around (Robinson & Robinson 2003:54).”

5.4.4.2 Expand Each Point by Asking Developmental Questions

Once you have determined the necessary biblical material for each point, you can then develop each point by asking developmental questions.¹³⁸ When you develop a sermon, you must take into consideration the audience’s inability to agree with or accept or apply the sermon. As the sermon unfolds, listeners raise several questions. If your listeners stand and raise questions during your sermon, what questions might they raise concerning this point? Try to think of the sermon from the listener’s perspectives. Ask following questions: *How should I develop this sermon to accomplish the purpose of the sermon and present the central idea of the sermon to make an impact on the lives of the listeners? What might listeners say they don’t understand? What statements might they question in terms of validity? Does the listener buy what I am saying?* This is an important way of inviting the listener into the sermon design process. If we think carefully, we can identify potential congregational questions to the main point with which we are working (Cahill 2007:144).

While there are many ways to arrange developmental questions, they can all be categorized into the three essential areas of *explanation* (understanding), *validation* (belief), and *application* (behaviour) regarding the biblical assertions (Robinson 2001:140; Sunukjian 2005:338). As you ask developmental questions of each assertion in each main point (scene), you can find “what needs to be said further about each point to make it intelligible, convincing, and practical to your contemporary listener (Sunukjian 2005:339).”

¹³⁸ These questions are called developmental questions because they help us to develop the sermon.

Explanation is the process of making something clear or plain so that your listeners can understand it (Fasol 1989:73). Through explanation, you must address unspoken concerns of the thoughtful listener. You must try to explain the nature of the biblical writer's argument. Furthermore, try to say what God wants to say from the chosen text. To determine what material needs to be explained, simply ask, *What do I need to explain? What will not my listeners understand?* Asking these questions will help you avoid explaining things in your sermon that do not need to be explained. Much of your explanation will be taken from the exegetical and theological study on your sermon text.

Explanation involves such things as defining terms, restating the truth in other ways, narrowing the concept by saying what it does not include, putting the text's thought in its theological context, and using word pictures, analogies, or images that clarify meaning (Scharf 2005:138). As Vines and Shaddix (1999:178) say, "Regardless of which means you use, explanation always should be presented in an appealing, nonpedantic manner with the intent of increasing the listener's understanding of the text."

Validation in preaching aims to persuade the audience to change an attitude or an action. To some listeners, understanding the meaning of the text is not enough. The fact that people understand something does not mean that they necessarily believe it. The reason they are not yet obeying biblical truth is not because they do not know it, but because they do not yet accept it as an authoritative truth for their lives. Consequently, along with our explanation we should begin to probe whether they accept it.

To determine what aspects of the passage need to be argued, ask yourself, *What assertion will my audience not immediately agree with? Why does the cause-effect relationship hold true? What could cause my audience not to accept or act on this statement? Do I need to prove or defend this statement* (Sunukjian 2005:338)? As you ask these questions, be sure not to raise objections that no one else would raise. Whereas most of your explanation is taken from your exegetical and theological studies, argumentation is normally built upon logical reasoning (Vines & Shaddix 1999:179). Determine always to show respect and consideration for those who may hold views contrary to your own.

Application, as we defined in the previous chapter, is the rhetorical process by which truth is brought to bear directly and personally upon individuals in order to persuade them to respond properly to it. The Bible is relevant to us at all times (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “But the Bible’s being relevant does not guarantee that every person understands its relevancy (Vines & Shaddix 1999:181).” The problem of relevancy in the sermon is not on the Bible, as we already discussed in Chapter four (4.2.1), but on the audience.

Our discussion on the application of the Bible is not limited to the conclusion or the end of a message. “Instead,” as Sunukjian (2005:347) states, “this question focuses on a relevancy that pervades the message; all through the message our listeners see the concepts in terms of everyday life.” Remember that our ultimate goal in preaching is not to teach the Bible. Rather, our ultimate goal is to teach how the message of the Bible fits our lives.

Application involves showing the listeners how to live up to particular biblical truths in a specific situation. Sunukjian (2005:347) explains this guideline in more detail as following:

Relevance occurs when the listener sees how the biblical truth applies to a specific situation. The word sees should be highlighted, underlined . . . Unless listeners have a mental picture—a video running in their minds—of some real-life situation, the biblical truth remains an abstraction, vague and unhelpful. The message has no apparent bearing on their lives until they visualize some person, event, or circumstance in their everyday world.

This concrete visualization may tell them “how to know God, how specific problems can be solved, how to grow spiritually, how to perform Christian service, or how to live a better life (Vines & Shaddix 1999:181).” To determine what aspects of the passage need to be applied, ask yourself, *What difference does this statement make in our lives? What does it look like in everyday situations? Where does it show up in real life? How exactly, would my listeners carry this out in the daily events and circumstances of their lives? How can I specifically visualize this for my listeners? What ought to happen? What ought to change?*

The whole task of expanding each point by asking developmental questions can be divided into two primary steps (Willhite 2001:81-86):

Step one: Answer the developmental questions related to the audience

Step two: Decide which developmental question will dominate in the sermon

Willhite (2001:82-84) provides an example of expanding a sermon by asking developmental questions. To begin with, he introduces his Developmental Questions Chart in which the three developmental questions are broken down into sub-questions to ask himself about his audience (Figure 5.1).

What does that mean?	Is that really true? (Do they 'buy' it?)	What difference does that make? (So what?)
What did the author explain that my audience understands?	What did the author prove that my audience already accepts?	How did the author practically apply the proposition?
What did the author assume his audience would understand?	What did the author assume his audience believed?	How will I need to practically apply the proposition?
What will I need to explain to my audience?	What will I have to validate (prove) for my audience?	Where does the big idea show up in real life?
What can I assume my audience will already understand?	What can I assume my audience will already accept?	What changes or affirmations does this idea demand (in beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviours)?
	What will it take to validate the big idea for this audience?	How can I concretely visualize this idea for my audience?
	What competing ideas	

	need to be refuted briefly?	How can I help my audience feel this idea?

Figure 5.1 A Chart of Developmental Questions

It will be helpful to know that he already finished his exegetical, theological, and homiletical analyses before expanding his sermon by using developmental questions as follows:

Sermon text: 1 Kings 18

People: My church; I know them well. I know that they are challenged regularly by religious pluralism in schools, in the workplace, and at home.

Purpose: The listeners will believe that the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus is the only true God.

Proposition: Trust God alone, for He is the one and only true God.

Sermon outline:

- I. *Exposition:* To understand this account, we must understand a little about Baal worship, idolatry in Israel. And the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel.
- II. *Conflict:* Elijah challenges the people to waver no longer but to choose God or Baal (v. 21).
- III. *Complication:* Things get tougher as the account includes prayers and efforts of priests of Baal, Elijah's taunting, Elijah's preparations to demonstrate God's power (soaking the altar), and Elijah's prayer (vv. 25-37).
- IV. *Climax:* When God burns the altar, the climax to the account is very vivid: Elijah's God is the one and only true God (vv. 38-39).
- V. *Denouement:* The people cannot waver any longer. They must worship God alone. Like them, we must worship God alone (v. 40).

By using his church, as the first step mentioned above, Willhite then answers the developmental questions for his sermon text (Figure 5.2).

What does that mean?	Is that really true? (Do they 'buy' it?)	What difference does that make? (So what)
What did the author explain that my audience understands?	What did the author prove that my audience already accepts?	How did the author practically apply the proposition? <i>The people worshiped God immediately</i>
What did the author assume his audience would understand? <i>Baal worship</i>	What did the author assume his audience believed? <i>That they could waver in their faith</i>	How will I need to practically apply the proposition? <i>Visualize situations in which we are tempted to waver and must believe that our God is the only true God</i>
What will I need to explain to my audience? <i>A brief account of religious pluralism in the Ancient Near East</i>	What will I have to validate (prove) for my audience? <i>That God is still the only true God even though we don't see Him send fire from heaven</i>	Where does the big idea show up in real life? <i>Every time we face temptation and must choose between obedience or sin; when people challenge us to be religious pluralists for the sake of tolerance</i>
What can I assume my audience will already understand? <i>Challenges to God</i>	What can I assume my audience will already accept? <i>That Elijah represents God</i>	What changes or affirmations does this idea demand (in beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviours)? <i>Unequivocal trust in God</i>
	What will it take to validate the big idea for this audience? <i>A brief apology (defense) for God's Word related to personal experience</i>	How can I concretely
	What competing ideas need to be refuted briefly? <i>All religions are really</i>	

	<i>the same, all these gods are the same thing</i>	visualize this idea for my audience? <i>Describe how the change in our lives brought by Jesus Christ's work is even more powerful than the fire on Elijah's altar; we are visual testimonies of God's power</i> How can I help my audience feel this idea? <i>Ask them about the wavering in their own hearts; ask them to recall times in their lives when God's work was so real that it seemed as if God had sent fire from heaven</i>

Figure 5.2 An Example of Answering to Developmental Questions

After answering three developmental questions, he sees promise in and needs for validation and application. Some explaining will be necessary, but explanation will not drive his sermon. This is the second step of expanding the sermon by asking developmental questions.

5.4.4.3 Fill in Each Main Point with the Supporting Materials that Explain, Prove, Apply, or Amplify the Idea

We can use a variety of supporting materials to explain, prove, apply, or amplify our ideas and make them understandable and appealing (Robinson 2001:140). The goal of this step of sermon preparation is to fill in each main point with the supporting materials that enable us to tell the story well.

5.4.4.3.1 Restatement

Restatement is saying the same thought in different words.¹³⁹ According to Robinson (2001:140-142), restatement serves at least two purposes. First, it helps the preacher make a concept clear. Sermon listeners, unlike readers, must get what you say when you say it. If at first the listeners do not understand you, you must say it again in different words. Otherwise, they will miss your point. Second, restatement impresses on the listener's mind an idea. If you say something once, it can be ignored, but if you repeat it several times, it will influence a hearer's thoughts and feelings. In general, key ideas should be restated for emphasis.

5.4.4.3.2 Definition and Description

We can use definition and description to help our listeners understand the information in a particular sermon. A definition establishes limits. It sets down what must be included and excluded by a term or statement (Robinson 2001:142). Preachers must define terms in such a way that they make sense for their audience. Often they will contrast or compare a term with other terms to provide a meaning (e.g., agape v. eros v. philia).

Description is a way of explanation. We can use description to explain a word, a scene, a character, or a situation in such a way that listeners are better able to understand the text. To help our listeners' understanding, for example, we can describe the Passover service, an ephod, the geography of Palestine, the Holy City, covenantal ceremony, ancient Canaanite religion, and so on.

For effective communication, preachers must know their audience well. If we do not know our audience, we can easily assume that our listeners immediately understand what we are talking about. The more familiar we are with a subject, the less aware we may be of a congregation's ignorance of it. Most people in the pews live in a different intellectual world from their pastors (Robinson 2001:143).

5.4.4.3.3 Factual Information

¹³⁹ Restatement differs from repetition. Repetition says the same thing in the same words; restatement expresses the same thing in different words.

Sometimes factual information can reinforce the idea of the sermon. “Facts consist of observations, examples, statistics, and other data that may be verified apart from the speaker (Robinson 2001:144).” Factual information can be used to explain or prove a statement. When facts are used correctly, they secure respect for the speaker. *Observations* about the content of a passage (e.g., grammatical features) are factual because hearers can see for themselves what the Bible says. Preachers can use necessary *historical-cultural information*, too. *Statistics* enable us to survey a large amount of territory very quickly. We must use statistics sparingly. Also, we must use them as simply as possible without sacrificing accuracy.

5.4.4.3.4 Quotations

We can use quotations to add impressiveness and authority to the sermon. Quotations should be used sparingly. They should also never be more than a few sentences long or at the most a paragraph. Long quotations often become unclear and hinder communication. Generally speaking, quotations are used for the introduction or the conclusion of a narrative sermon. Usually, they do not harmonize well with the flow of the story.

5.4.4.3.5 Narration

Narration means communicating biblical story with imagination, and imagination reflects the insights of faith (Robinson 2001: 151). Narration, retelling the biblical story, is usually used to explain or apply the meaning of the text.

5.4.4.3.5.1 Explanatory Narration

Some details in a biblical story require explanation by retelling them. Preachers can use narration in a sermon to explain the background of the text by filling in on the history, setting, or the actions and spotlighting the personalities involved. In a sermon of Joshua 6, for example, some preachers will need to explain about siege warfare at that time. You could introduce the information by saying, “Based on archaeological data, Bible scholars can accurately describe how the ancients conducted siege warfare.” However, there is a more effective way. Mathewson (2002:143) provides an example of explanatory narration that carries the information in a more interesting

way:

The city of Jericho is tightly shut. That's what you expect, but it's not what you want to hear. It's tough to attack a fortified city once the gates have been closed and people are holed up inside. Perched high upon the walls are guard towers or stations with guard ready to shoot arrows, pour hot oil, and dump boulders on you if you get close to the wall. Guards watch the entrance from their towers. Since the gate system is potentially the weakest part of the wall, the entrance consists of a series of two or three gates. Punch through one, and you still have one or two left. So you hope to get some battering rams close enough to start whacking at the wall. But punching a hole through can take weeks, even months. Scaling the wall is horrible difficult, too. Like General Custer, you'll be wearing an arrow shirt before you climb very far up the wall.

5.4.4.3.5.2 Applicative Narration

Preachers can also paint pictures of what the truth looks like, fleshing it out in a listener's life. We can employ applicative narration either to raise questions or to offer solutions (Mathewson 2002:143). Mathewson (2002:143) gives an example of an applicative narration from a sermon on Judges 4. Through following narration, he relates the listeners to Barak and shows what Barak's approach to his unique situation looks like, and then leads the listeners to face their own unique situations.

It's easy to be passive like Barak when we receive God's commands. For Barak, the command was to lead the Israelite army against Jabin's army. For you, it might be God's call for you to discipline your children, to train up your children in the way of wisdom. But you slink from the task. You're afraid to set boundaries. You're reluctant to hold your child to standards. You don't have the courage to say, "We're not going to watch this television program in our home." You hesitate to say, "There's a song on this CD we're not going to allow in our home." There's no way you're going to announce, "You can't go out with this boy or with this girl."

5.4.4.3.6 Images, Stories, Examples, and Illustrations

Try to think visually and preach images. *Images* are crucial to good preaching. An image is a word picture remembered by the head and the heart. It makes abstract ideas concrete. Miller (2006:137) comments on the need for the image-driven preaching as follows:

We speak with words, but we store in pictures. Our minds are not huge dictionaries and lexicons filled with definitions. They are galleries in which hang the images and pictures that we have derived from all we've seen in stories, movies, novels, news reports, sightseeing drives, etc. Jesus' sermons were full of images. . . . But it must be remarked that if the Son of God preached image and picture, it must be a reasonable homiletic method . . . In fact, not only is an image-driven homiletic good, but it is not bad occasionally to take some artifact or picture or book which gives the image reality.

While images can be effective in sermons, a *story* works better. "Stories even more than images provide impact through their plot, conflict, resolution, curiosity, human interest, climax, life, and surprise (Larson 2005:488)."

Examples are cases in point. They are a snapshot of life. Sometimes preachers will use a series of examples (most often three) to form one image in the mind of the listener. When Cahill (2007:151) prepares a sermon on Exodus 3:10-4:17, he uses a series of examples to form an image of inadequacy in his listener's mind as following:

- Maybe you have been asked to teach a children's class and felt inadequate.
- Or you were asked to lead a small group and you responded by saying, "Who am I?"
- Or you were asked to help with the youth group and came to the conclusion that you didn't have what it takes.

In an OT narrative passage, the story carries its own weight. A narrative sermon may not need an illustration to add interest or stir emotion. However, *illustrations* can help a preacher explain, validate, or apply ideas by relating

them to tangible experiences (Mathewson 2002:144). The root meaning of the verb *to illustrate* is “to shed light upon” or “to illumine.” Thus, until our illustrations shed light on something, they fail to illustrate because there is no clear connection between them and the intended object. Paradoxically, however, illustrations often outshine the object to which they refer. Since the most remembered parts of most sermons by most people are usually the illustrations, we will seek to illustrate the most important points in the sermon. In most cases, the illustrations you choose work most effectively when they come out of your own reading and your real-life experiences. Illustrations lifted out of illustration books usually sound stale.

5.4.5 Write a Beginning Draft

Once the expansion of each main point is done, we are now ready to write a beginning draft of the sermon. Write out your sermon word for word. The purpose of sermon writing is to phrase our thinking on paper, what will come out of our mouth when we preach the OTN we have prepared. Through the writing process, thus, we can formulate our thinking in the right order and be intentional about our oral expression. Sermon draft must be written in an oral style. What we produce should resemble a transcript of our real sermon as the listeners hear it.

5.4.5.1 Elements of Style in Sermon Writing

How can preachers develop a sermon writing style that draws the hearer’s attention into the sermon? To grow in this aspect of sermon preparation, you must know your audience. Remember, you are writing your sermon for them. Think through their experiences to determine what will help you communicate with power. Ask yourself what you want your audience to hear from your sermon and how you want them to hear it. Then develop your style accordingly.

Writing a narrative sermon is a creative art-form, so rules need to be bent at times. Nevertheless, there are general rules that preachers should follow. Preachers should master the basic rules before bending them.

5.4.5.1.1 Use Concrete and Specific words

General words, like *a tree*, name a large class of things. Specific words, like *a mulberry tree*, name items or subsets within the class. General words fail to grab the listener's interest. If you choose concrete and specific words when possible, on the other hand, your message will seem more lively and clear. Litfin (1981:286) comments on the importance of using concrete and specific words in preaching as follows:

The more abstract a word is, the more ambiguous it is and the more likely it will be misunderstood . . . The more abstract a word is, the less interesting and memorable it is. Abstract words tend to be bland because of their generality. They arouse no images in the listener's mind. But conversely, as language becomes less abstract, it grows more concrete, more specific—and the more concrete and specific it is, the more likely it is to strike flint in the memory of your hearer.

Therefore, use specific verbs to avoid unnecessary abstraction. Instead of saying, for instance, "David said," try "David shouted," "David blurted," "David cried," "David whispered," or "David mumbled." Nouns as well as verbs can be made more specific. Litfin (1981:287) lists some examples as following:

Instead of saying	Try this
a few men	five astronauts
a long time ago	in December of 1876
many foreign cars	52 percent of all Datsuns and Toyotas
in the near future	two weeks from tomorrow
some vegetables	corn, peas, and carrots
a weapon	a heavy lead pipe
reference books	dictionaries and atlases
a lot of flowers	five hundred yellow roses

5.4.5.1.2 Use an Active Voice Rather Than a Passive Voice and Verbs Rather Than Nouns

Another way to make our message more interesting is to enliven it with an active

voice rather than a passive voice and verbs rather than nouns. The following sentence is hard to understand because of the improper passives and nouns:

An improvement in speaking that has too heavy a dependency on nouns can be achieved by making a note of each noun and posing a question to yourself as to whether a replacement of it with a verb could be made (Sunukjian 2007:258).

Using an active voice instead of a passive voice and verbs instead of nouns provide clearer message.

To improve speaking that depends too heavily on nouns, note each noun and ask yourself if you can replace it with a verb (Sunukjian 2007:258).

5.4.5.1.3 Avoid Excessive Modifiers and Use Short Sentences

Keep modifiers in a minor role. An overuse of adjectives and adverbs tends to clutter the story. Unnecessary modifiers must be removed. Rather than “This is absolutely and positively essential,” try “This is essential.” Instead of “completely unique,” try “unique.” Farmer (1942:61) advises:

Ruthlessly cut out any adjective which is not absolutely essential to, and part of, the truth which you wish to convey. The superfluous adjective is to your message what barnacles and seaweed are to the clean straight lines of a ship designed to cut through the water like the edge of a knife. . . . Much of the loss of confidence in the pulpit comes from our careless use of modifiers.

To be clear, keep your sentences short. Weed out the clutter. Rather than allowing dependent clauses to delay the important information, put the key concepts at the start, and use several short sentences.

5.4.5.1.4 Use Simple and Familiar Words

Some preachers write in an entirely different style from their speaking style. Learn from the newscasters on television. They deliver their message by using simple words and uncomplicated sentences. They speak in a colloquial style so that

everybody can easily understand. Likewise, try to use words that your listeners know and with which you are comfortable. Stay away from clichés, on the other hand, which are too familiar to have impact.

5.4.5.1.5 Create Conversations, Have Characters Dialogue, and Use Quotation Marks

Conversations can add interest, vividness, and intensity to a narrative sermon. People naturally like to eavesdrop on interesting conversations (Long 1989:73). So when you tell a story that uses the actual words of the characters in dialogue, it makes everybody want to listen in. Sunukjian (2007:260) uses a dialogue to help bring the story alive:

As Israel exits Egypt for Canaan, they find themselves on an uncharted journey in the opposite direction of Canaan, their promised destination (Exod. 13:17-22). To keep them from becoming discouraged as they head away from their promised destination, God provides the people with a continual reminder of his good intentions—a coffin containing the bones of Joseph. Four hundred years earlier Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear that they would take his bones with them when God took them out of Egypt into the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24-26). His coffin reminds the nation of God's commitment to place them in their own land.

Notice how conversation and sentences in quotations help explain the text and convey the applications.

As they leave Egypt and head toward the Red Sea, the coffin that contains the bones of Joseph leads the way. And I can hear some little kid turn to his mother and say, "Why are those men carrying that box?" "That's not a box, honey. That's a coffin." "What's a coffin?" "Well, it has the bones of a dead man in it." "Oh—gross! But why are we taking it with us?" "Well, honey, we're taking it to Canaan." "But we're not headed to Canaan." "Yes, we are—Yes, we are. That coffin's going to Canaan."

5.4.5.1.6 Use Sensory and Image-Laden Words

Your words must appeal to the senses. “Communication that taps into a listener’s experience appeals to both mind and feelings. We learn about the world around us through hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. To get your listeners to experience your message, therefore, you must appeal to their senses (Robinson 2001:193).”

Sensory and image-laden words raise curiosity and bring immediacy. Let your sermon, therefore, throb with colour, sound, taste, odour, and feel. Instead of standing between listeners and the story by telling them what to think, a preacher can appeal to the listener’s senses by showing them what happened. Consider Mathewson’s (2002:141-142) following example:

A preacher describing David’s feelings in the guard tower waiting for a report on the battle against Absalom could say, “David was extremely nervous as he waited to hear what had become of his son. He was impatient as he waited with a city guard in the little guard room between the two city gates leading into Mahanaim.” But the preacher will do better to show David’s emotions by telling the story like this:

David paced, sweated, fumed, and fumbled with his shoelaces. He was accompanied by a city guard in the little guard room between the two city gates leading into Mahanaim. This guard was driven nuts by David! The guy must have dropped five pounds scaling up and down the rungs that led to the top of the guard tower. Like a little boy or girl in your back seat on vacation who asks, “Are we there yet?” every ten minutes, David would keep asking, “Do you see anybody yet?” The guard would scan the countryside and holler down, “Nope. Nobody’s coming.”

5.4.5.2 The Parts of a Sermon

An expository narrative sermon is composed of certain necessary components. All sermons, generally speaking, divide into three movements—introduction, body, and conclusion. Each component plays a crucial role in bringing God’s revealed truth to carry on the lives of listeners. The process of writing these movements separately and together makes for the full manuscript.

5.4.5.2.1 Body of the Sermon

The most reliable tool for filling in on each main point is writing a manuscript. The process of writing helps us to think through the development of the point. The draft of each main point is composed of several paragraphs and transitions between developmental paragraphs, all in such a way to continually move forward.

5.4.5.2.1.1 Developmental Paragraphs

One main point (or scene) in an expository narrative sermon consists of several developmental paragraphs rather than parallel subpoints. And one developmental paragraph consists of explanation, proof (validation), and application. To explain, prove, or apply, as mentioned in the previous section (5.4.3.1.3), the developmental paragraphs make use of narrations, quotations, images, stories, examples, illustrations, and so on.

Remember that the purpose of the expansion of main points is not just to lengthen a sermon outline into a sermon, but to elaborate the big idea of the sermon and to accomplish the purpose of the sermon. Developmental paragraphs in each point must serve to elaborate one main idea in its point in the light of the big idea and the purpose of the sermon in the mind of the listener. Additionally, each developmental paragraph that is one unit of developmental paragraphs must unfold one aspect of the main idea of the point in order to explain, validate, or apply the idea. At the same time, each developmental paragraph should move the big idea of the sermon ahead in some significant way without hurting the whole story plot.

Each main point will usually have two to four developmental paragraphs. In relation to the length of a developmental paragraph, there are no rigid rules. Four or five minutes seem to be sufficient to develop an idea without losing the listener's attention.

5.4.5.2.1.2 Transitions between Developmental Paragraphs

Each developmental paragraph of the main point must be naturally connected with the other.¹⁴⁰ If we have the chosen proper narrative sermon form and kept it in mind while writing a beginning draft, transitions almost take care of

¹⁴⁰ Transitions between the introduction and the body of the sermon, between the main points of the body, and between the body and the conclusion will be examined later.

themselves (DeLeers 2004:168). We know the logical relationship of one developmental paragraph to another, and so it is not at all difficult to make the transition from one to another.

In preparing a sermon on Exodus 3:10-4:17, Cahill (2007:148-149) structures the message around Moses' five objections to God's call. Part of his developmental structure provides an example of what developmental paragraphs look like:

1. Excuse #1: I am inadequate.

Development A: Moses was inadequate.

Congregational Block: If we are honest, we all struggle with a sense of inadequacy.

Development B: God responded to Moses' inadequacy.

Illustration: J. Hudson Taylor quote

Application to our inadequacy

Close: That was Moses' first excuse: I am inadequate.

2. Excuse #2: I don't know enough.

Development A: Moses' request was reasonable—he needed to know more.

Development B: God's response to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM."

Application to life

Close: Moses didn't know enough.

3. Excuse #3: I might fail.

Development A: Moses feared failure.

Development B: God responded by demonstrating His power.

Illustration: Story of a missionary candidate

Application to our fear of failure

Close: Moses feared failure.

The structure in this sermon flowed from the structure of the text: Moses' objections and God's responses.

5.4.5.2.2 Introduction and Conclusion of the Sermon

The most vulnerable and dangerous times for airline flights are the takeoffs and

the landings. Those actions require more skill, more concentration, and more attention than any other part of piloting an airplane. Sermons share these similar points of vulnerability. The preacher may have a “can’t miss” sermon from an OTN text, but if he or she fails to gain his or her listeners’ attention with an appealing introduction, they will close the shutters in their minds for the rest of the message. If the preacher does not know how to bring the sermon to a conclusion, on the other hand, the purpose of the message will not be achieved. As Robinson (2001:165) reminds us, “Introductions and conclusions have significance in a sermon out of proportion to their length.”

5.4.5.2.2.1 Introduction

The introduction will be the initial part of the sermon that you deliver, but it will be one of the final steps in building your sermon. Well-prepared introductions create interest, establish rapport, and prepare to guide.¹⁴¹ The introduction plays a crucial role in helping preachers gain a hearing. According to Chapell (1994:229), “Today’s communication researchers say that audiences generally decide within the first thirty seconds of a presentation whether they are interested in what a speaker will say.” So Willhite (2001:44) advises, “Rather than assume that people will discern the relevance of the biblical passage, the sermon needs to begin where people are and then *create an appetite* for God’s Word.” There are five basic elements to shape relevant narrative sermon introductions.

1. Begin with the People

At the beginning of a sermon, listeners should recognize that the preacher is talking to themselves. The people in the pew to whom a preacher preaches stand in the need of a sermon introduction. The sermon as well as the sermon introduction is for their benefit. Willhite (2001:45) states, “Preaching is talking to people about themselves from the Bible rather than talking about the Bible” So begin by talking to people directly about what’s going on in their lives and then take them to the Word of God. A personal comment on the listener’s specific

¹⁴¹ These three are inspired by Cicero’s famous advice, “Arouse interest, secure favour, and prepare to lead,” as quoted in Blackwood (1948:109).

experiences builds rapport.

2. Develop the Listener's Need

An effective introduction must tell listeners how the sermon will speak of a particular need in their lives. Developing the listener's need in the introduction helps the preacher contemporize his/her sermon with his/her audience. As Robinson (2001:168) comments, "When you start, the people listen because they ought to listen, but before long, you must motivate them to listen because they can't help but listen." By putting the listener's need in the introduction, therefore, you must change the listener's voluntary attention into involuntary attention.

What particular need should be raised in the introduction? And where does the preacher get the ideas for the listener's need? Developing the listener's need must be drawn from the purpose of the sermon. As Richard (1995:104) says, "The best way to help an audience sense a need is by asking questions around the theme of the central proposition in relation to the purpose of the sermon." People often do not come to the church with the need that will be dealt with in the sermon on their minds. We have to help them feel that particular need (Willhite 2001:48). The Bible speaks of needs that are far more significant than most of the needs that people have identified in their lives. Thus, we must raise the need that the message will address and develop that need a bit so that people think about and feel that need. In developing the listener's need, we will touch upon the subject of the sermon (Willhite 2001:48).

3. Secure the Listener's Interest

We cannot assume that our listeners will be automatically interested in what we are going to say. Listeners are by no means automatically interested in our sermon. Nonvoluntary attention arises only as the listener's interest is gained. Gaining the listener's interest is imperative. DeWelt (1957:115) states, "If a sermon is not interesting they are not going to listen—regardless of how well organized or scriptural it might be. If they do not listen—and I mean with the inner ear Jesus spoke about—then why preach? It is not just a good plan to have the attention and interest of your congregation, *it is an imperative!*"

Edwards (2005b:373) says, “People give their attention to what they perceive is important to them.” So we can get the listener’s interest by showing them why this particular sermon is important to their lives—“relating a personal story, referring to a recent event, making a startling statement, exploring a contemporary issue, probing a common need, promising some benefit, addressing some contradiction, offering to resolve some biblical difficulty—the list is almost endless (Sunukjian 2007:193).” As Awbrey (2008:104) writes, “The chances of gaining interest will be greatly enhanced if the preacher establishes the relevancy of the sermon in the minds of his listeners.” To create an interest in the minds of the listeners, preachers must present them an arresting thought that draws them away from apathy and makes each person say, “Hey! I need to hear this (Chapell 1994:229).”

4. Move from the People to the Subject

Gaining the listener’s attention is just the beginning. The listener’s interest must be connected with the subject of the sermon. Sunukjian (2007:199) writes, “Once you’ve engaged the listeners so that they’re interested in the message and wanting to hear more, their next concern is, ‘OK, where are you going with this message? What’s it about? What am I supposed to get from it?’” At least, when the introduction is complete, listeners need to know what they are about to hear. One way of relating the listeners to the subject, for example, is that specific problems of people are described in the introduction and the solutions to the problems are given through the exposition of the text.¹⁴²

5. Match the Mood of the Introduction with the Mood of the Sermon

¹⁴² Edwards (2005b:373) writes, “In deductive sermons, the introduction will contain a clear statement of the biblical idea. By the end of that introduction, the audience should know not only what the preacher is going to talk about in the sermon, but how the idea will be developed (whether the idea will be explained, proved, or applied). In an inductive sermon, however, the introduction is structured much differently. Rather than telling the audience exactly what they can expect, these introductions intentionally create tension in the mind of the listener through an exploration of the subject of the sermon. The complement(s) will not be revealed until much later in the sermon. An effective introduction of this type of sermon will compellingly lead the audience to the first point.”

Like all good sermons, an expository narrative sermon must be designed and delivered to make listeners understand, feel, and act. In the same manner, an expository narrative sermon should reflect not only the central theme and movement of the text but the mood of the text. Reviewing the identified mood of the text (see 2.5.1.4) and the mood of the sermon (see 4.4.2), therefore, begin to create the mood of the sermon from the beginning of the sermon.

The first words (the introduction) the preacher speaks in the sermon are the beginning of a new experience. These first words of the sermon should not only arrest the listener's attention but also begin to mould the mood of the sermon reflecting the mood of the text. If the text invites listeners to accept what Jesus asserts as truth, for example, the introduction must create the mood of invitation instead of demand. In addition, the mood roused up in the introduction must command the overall mood of the message.

5.4.5.2.2.2 Conclusion

Like the final bars of a symphony, the sermon conclusion attempts to arrive at a grand finish (Mathewson 2002:150). Usually, conclusions are planned after the body of the sermon is completed. To form conclusions, the preacher can use the same material that forms introductions: stories, illustrations, quotations, questions, poems, song lyrics, personal experiences, or visual aids (Mathewson 2002:150). Like introductions, effective conclusions require careful craftsmanship. How the narrative sermon concludes will be as varied as the messages themselves and will be limited only by the creativity of the preacher. But good conclusions demand two basic tasks.

1. Summarize the Main Idea of the Sermon

The conclusion should briefly summarize the main idea of the sermon by restating it in some fresh way. Without re-preaching every single aspect of the sermon, we concisely review the broad strokes of the message that have brought us to this point (Sunukjian 2007: 242). As Chapell (1994:245) writes, "A summary that goes over two or three sentences is much too long. One sentence of concise recap will serve. Concluding summaries should sound like hammer strokes, not sonatas."

2. Focus on the Final Challenge

We do not want to end the message with just a look back. We want to urge the listeners to carry its truths forward. In the conclusion, we are to urge our listeners to live on what the message has already made clear. Usually we do not put new applications in the conclusion. In many cases, the application has already occurred earlier in the message. In the conclusion, we must rather encourage, or exhort, or motivate our listeners to base their lives on the truth they have heard (Chapell 1994:246; Sunukjian 2007:243). There are a variety of ways that the conclusion can be presented. There may or may not be some action for the audience to do. Sometimes a rhetorical question can be effectively presented, which prompts the listeners to wrestle with how they will make their own response to the thrust of message. “There may, instead, be a promise for them to embrace, a gift for them to enjoy, a divine work for which they can increasingly be thankful, or a forgiveness in which they must always be secure. But one way or another, we are pressing God’s good Word into the way they will live in the future (Sunukjian 2007:243).”

5.4.5.2.3 Major Transitions

Transitions between the introduction and the first main movement of the body, between the body and the conclusion, and especially between the main movements of the body of the message work well to communicate clearly and to help listeners follow the flow of the thought (Willhite 2001:76). Listeners cannot see our sermon outline or manuscript. They hear our sermon only as a series of sentences. Transitions, thus, function as road signs to point out where the sermon has been and where it is going (Robinson 2001:187).

Major transitions will usually review the major points already covered, show the logical connection between the main points,¹⁴³ and then introduce the next major concept (Robinson 2001:187; Cahill 2007:153). This review/preview

¹⁴³ Cahill (2007:153) comments, “This (second) function is especially important in inductive sermons, which progress sequentially, but is less important in deductive preaching since each main point relates back to the central idea in the same way.”

transition reminds the listener where they are in the big picture of the sermon unifying the parts into the whole (Willhite 2001:77).

The key is to write out the manuscript in conversational language. In writing our sermon draft and especially in writing transitions, we should write in the way we speak. When we do that, one thought flows smoothly into the following thought and making transitional statements will not be difficult at all (Cahill 2007:155).

5.4.5.2.4 Title

The final stage of writing a sermon draft is to choose a title. Your title must catch the listener's attention. Just as artists give titles to their works, the sermon title is the identity you give to a sermon. In planning sermon titles, we need to remember a few basic principles.

1. Titles Should Reflect the Content of the Message

The title must be related closely to the content of the message. Do not promise more than what your text can provide. Make the title reflect what the text will say. Preachers will lose credibility if the content of their message cannot fulfill the enormous claims of the title.

2. Titles Should Grab the Listener's Attention

The primary purpose of the title is to attract and interest the listeners. A good title makes the listeners ready to hear. For instance, titles showing how a biblical principle meets the real needs of people will attract the listeners. Braga (1981:94) asserts, "To be interesting, the title must be in keeping with life situations and needs of the listeners."

3. Titles should be Clear and Short

Without additional explanation, titles must stand on their own. Ask yourself, Does this title clearly communicate what the sermon is about? In addition, a brief title is usually more effective than a lengthy one. A brief title is apt to catch

the listener's ears (or the reader's eyes) and easier for people to remember than a lengthy one.

5.4. 6 Develop the Final Manuscript

We need to take time to look back over the sermon manuscript we have written. We have written out a beginning draft. Then we return to the sermon draft to edit. Sermon writing is a very work-in-progress process. In this final stage of sermon writing, we are concerned with clarity and oral language (Cf. Vos 2005:334).

5.4.6.1 Clarity

The success of a message depends on its clarity. If the message is not clear, the listeners will soon lose interest in our speech and will not grasp our intended meaning (Willhite 2001:122). Clarity of expression can be achieved by writing and editing. Therefore a preacher should examine his or her manuscript to make sure that the words, sentences, and paragraphs are clear. Some basic guidelines to achieve greater clarity of the message are as follows:

1. Stick to Your Proposition and Purpose of the Sermon. Remember that the clarity of the sermon arises from clarity of thought, not in the mouth. Clear sermons grow out of a clear sense of the proposition and the purpose of the sermon. First of all, check the logical clarity of your manuscript in terms of your proposition and purpose of the sermon.
2. Check the Choice of Words and Sentence Structure. Change jargons, specialized words, and long words into clear and simple words. Then keep sentence structures simple and short. Make sentences as uncomplicated as possible. Clarity increases as sentence-length decreases (Flesch 1946:38-39).
3. Use Restatement and Repetition to Emphasize Important Ideas. Restatement is saying the same thought in different words. Restatement gives the listener the same information but in a different way. Repetition expresses the same thought using the same words. Whenever you come to one of the key sentences in your message, repeat or restate it. Restatement and repetition

increase the clarity in oral communication.

5.4.6.2 Oral language

Preaching is an oral event. It must be geared to the ears instead of eyes. So the use of oral language is essential in preaching. Read your manuscript aloud several times and revise it in the way you talk in a conversation with another person, not the way you write an essay (Vos 2005:331).

5. 5 Delivering the Expository Narrative Sermon

Up to this point we have talked largely about the content and the shape of the expository narrative sermon. Now it is time to shift our concern to the sharing of the sermon with listeners. How you say something is as important as what you say. An effective delivery gives life to your words and ideas. The preaching event culminates in the actual presentation of the message. The fact that the effect of our preaching wholly depends on the work of the Holy Spirit does not eliminate our efforts for the clear delivery of the sermon. No sermon, however effectively prepared, will accomplish the intended purpose unless it is delivered well. Narrative preaching requires natural delivery. Here are some practical guidelines for effective sermon delivery.

5.5.1 Preach without Notes

We have written a sermon manuscript and polished it. Writing a sermon manuscript gives us several advantages. The manuscript, however, is not written to be taken into the pulpit. Using notes undercuts the effectiveness of oral communication. Oral communication demands eye contact, and the best way for eye contact is to use no notes. Following suggestions will be helpful to preach without notes.

5.5.1.1 Write a Well-Organized Sermon Manuscript

Organize your sermon so simply and clearly that the flow is easy to remember. Then write out a full word-for-word manuscript. Writing a manuscript enables you to carefully craft each part of the sermon into one unified message. It will

allow you to complete your thinking with vivid and exact wording and will provide you a surety to engage listeners. A well-organized manuscript will act as memory clues when you preach it.

5.5.1.2 Internalize It but Do Not Try to Memorize It

The best way of sermon delivery is one presented without manuscript or notes, and, most effectively, without memorization (Brown 1981:40-41). The outline and ideas must be memorized. But preaching from memory will be “as impotent as one that is read (Brown 1981:41).” There is always the danger of lapses in memory as well. You may be afraid to forget some details while you are preaching without your manuscripts or notes. Your listeners, however, will never recognize when you forget an image or some details.

To preach with freedom, read your manuscript out loud several times until you can internalize it and become comfortable with it. A well-organized narrative sermon which has coherence and dynamic tension is almost impossible to forget. The goal is not to memorize the manuscript but to absorb it until you can deliver it free from the use of notes.

5.5.1.3 Rehearse Your Sermon Presentation

Rehearsing your sermon in front of a full-length mirror is very helpful. This practice enables you to see yourself and to see how you will appear to the audience. Sunukjian (2007:302) says, “This gives you an audience—you, the person in the mirror—to speak directly and urgently to and helps you see your level of energy and animation. As you watch yourself in the mirror, add intensity and expressiveness until you like what the mirror is doing.” Practice your eye contact, your movements, and your gestures in front of the mirror. While you are rehearsing your sermon, you can also test the structure and style of your message. Feel free to change the progression of the ideas in your manuscript into a more natural flow or to alter words or phrases into more effective ways of expression.

The goal of rehearsal is to become comfortable with your speech so that you can deliver it in the most natural way. When you rehearse, read the introduction

of the manuscript and present it two or three times until you get it right without a manuscript. Then move on to your first main point. Practice it by itself two or three times until you can present it with freedom. Then move on to the second main point. Continue the process until you have completed the conclusion. Just rehearse one section at a time. Once you have moved through the entire sermon, section by section, go back to the introduction and practice it again. When you can present it with freedom, add the first main point to your introduction. Then go through the combined sections two or three times until you feel satisfied. Then add the second main point to your cluster. Then add the next point. Continue this process until you can master the whole sermon without notes. Mastering your sermon means much more than the mastery of speaking without notes. Mastering the sermon presentation means not only knowing what to say but also how to control your body, voice, and emotions. Once your sermon is mastered, you are ready to deliver your sermon with freedom.

5.5.2 Do Not Hide Yourself behind a Pulpit

Preaching from a pulpit has no communication advantage. If you preach from a pulpit, most of your body will be hidden from the listeners. The large pulpit interferes with your communication. Rather than hiding yourself behind a large pulpit, replace it with a small music stand, or stool to put your Bible when you are not holding it or using it. Beecher (1892:32) described the problem with pulpits more than a hundred years ago as following:

You put a man in one of those barrelled pulpits, where there is not responsibility laid upon him as to his body, and he falls into all manner of gawky attitudes, and rests himself like a country horse at a hitching post. He sags down, and has no consciousness of his awkwardness. But bring him out on a platform, and see how much more manly he becomes, how much more force comes out. The moment a man is brought face to face with other men, then does the influence of each act and react upon the other.

5.5.3 Deliver Your Sermon by Using Your Voice and Body Effectively

Voice and body are the primary tools of our delivery. Our delivery consists of the sound of our voice, the way we speak our words, our personal appearance, and all the nonverbal signals we send during our preaching. The effectiveness of preaching depends not only upon the content of the message, but also upon the skilful presentation of the sermon. A persuasive presentation is not helpful if the message is poorly prepared. At the same time, a well-prepared message can fail to communicate if the delivery is poor (Metcalf 1998:322).

Today's communication environment emphasizes natural delivery. The great challenge for today's preachers is to maintain the natural expression of both vocal and visual presentation to enhance the effectiveness of sermon delivery. As Metcalf (1998:323) says, "Vocal and visual delivery are equally important when you present a speech. If one channel is blocked, communication can be significantly altered." In this section, we will briefly discuss ways to use your voice and body to communicate effectively.

5.5.3.1 Using Your Voice Effectively

Your voice is the most important instrument that helps convey the meaning of your message. How your message comes across to your audience depends a great deal on the adequacy of your voice. It will help to determine whether your listeners will continue to pay attention to what you are saying or not. Just as you react to the voices of the preachers you hear, your listeners react to your voice and make judgments based on it. When listeners hear your voice, they decide whether to tune in or tune out. In addition, they listen for clues to your credibility and to your attitudes and feelings. To communicate our message effectively, we must learn how we can use our voice *correctly*, *variously*, and *attractively*.

5.5.3.1.1 Use Your Voice Correctly

To improve the quality of your voice, you must understand how vocal sounds are made. Good voice control depends on controlled breathing. Some preachers do not produce enough air, and therefore their voices lack force. Other preachers use mainly their chest muscles for breathing rather than their diaphragm; this tends to tighten the throat and restrict the vocal cords. To breathe efficiently, you should expand your abdomen instead of the chest. The

best breathing for speaking is abdominal breathing. To breathe properly, breathe after each long sentence during your preaching.

Some preachers sound dull, because their mouths are not fully open while they are speaking. Opening your mouth more widely than usual goes a long way towards eliminating the problem of a monotonous delivery. Television presenters may look perfectly natural, for example, but they do in fact tend to open their mouths more widely than most people typically do.

Some preachers produce poorly resonated sounds which result in a voice that is too nasal. Excessive nasality occurs when the breath-stream is permanently directed into the nose. In English there are only a few sounds that are normally made with nasal resonance—*m*, *n*, and *ng*. Some preachers, however, pronounce many other sounds with extreme nasal resonance. Becoming conscious of the difference in nasal and nonnasal (or oral) resonance will often enable you to make the correction almost automatically. When preachers speak as if they have a permanent cold it is probable that there is in fact some congestion in the nasal area. It could be that the adenoids are enlarged, and if so, they will need medical treatment. Most of the voice problems can be corrected by exercising correctional training which basic texts on speech supply.

5.5.3.1.2 Use Your Voice Variously

Spice up your preaching by adding some variety to your voice. You need to use a wide range of vocal inflection to communicate many thoughts and feelings presented in your sermon. Voice variation gives color, texture, and meaning to your speech. Monotone prevents effective sermon delivery. It makes your listeners bored. Your listeners need voice variation to renew their attention and interest regularly (Litfin 1981:319). You can keep your audience interested throughout your preaching by varying your volume, rate, pitch, pauses and so on. When your voice is pleasantly unpredictable, your audience will not know what is coming next, and they will stay alert to find out. In addition, voice variation adds immediacy to your words that can bring you closer to your audience by making your preaching sound more like a vivid conversation. For example, some preachers always shout when they emphasize their points. But emphasis comes through variety. Sometimes dropping your voice to a mere

whisper is more effective than a loud shout (Robinson 2001:216). Record your preaching and listen critically until you can use voice variation with freedom. You may also ask your spouse for help.

5.5.3.1.3 Use Your Voice Attractively

Your voice must be attractive to your listeners. They should find your voice pleasant to listen to. Attractive use of voice depends largely upon six factors: volume, rate, pitch, quality, enunciation, and pauses (DeVito 1987:332).

5.5.3.1.3.1 Volume

Volume refers to how loudly you speak. As a preacher, naturally, you want to be heard easily and comfortably by the audience. The distance between speaker and listener, the size of the room, and the amount of competing noise call for adjustment of your volume (DeVito 1987:333; Osborn & Osborn 1997:362).

Volume poses three kinds of problems. The first problem is volume that is too soft or too loud. No presentation is effective if the audience cannot hear you. Similarly, your presentation will not be successful if you overwhelm listeners with a voice too loud. When you start your preaching, adjust your volume by speaking to the person farthest away from you. Then take your cues from audience feedback. Osborn and Osborn (1997:362) state, "If you are not loud enough, you may see listeners leaning forward, straining to hear. If you are speaking too loudly, they may unconsciously lean back, pulling away from the noise."

The second problem is fluctuating volume: using the same low-loud-low pattern repetitiously throughout the preaching. Although there is a variation in the pattern, the repetition of the same pattern becomes totally predictable after a very short time. This will have the effect of sending your audience to sleep. Vary the pattern to keep your audience awake.

The third problem is losing volume at the ends of sentences. Some preachers start their sentences loud enough, but end sentences (particularly long sentences) with the last few words delivered in an extremely low and often

garbled manner. Fading away at the ends of sentences is particularly disturbing. Be particularly careful when finishing sentences; they must be heard by the audience at an appropriate volume.

5.5.3.1.3.2 Rate

Rate refers to the speed with which a person speaks and is usually measured in the number of words or syllables spoken per unit of time, usually per minute (DeVito 1987:334). Communication is hindered when you speak too fast or too slow, or with too little variation or if it becomes too predictable (DeVito 1987:334). The average speaking rate is roughly 125 to 150 words per minute (Quicke 2003:191). If you are describing a thrilling scene, a rapid rate of speech is appropriate. If you are introducing a hard-to understand concept, a slow pace is preferred. The rate of speaking does not mean that you must keep uniform speed throughout the preaching. You need rate variations in your preaching to add emphasis and variety. Like volume, rate variations call the listener's attention to certain points. You also need a variety in your rate so as not to sound boring and monotonous.

5.5.3.1.3.3 Pitch

Pitch refers to the highness or lowness of your voice. It can be thought as the placement of your voice on a musical scale. Each individual has a natural pitch level at which he or she is most comfortably speaking. Whether your natural level is high or low, flexibility of pitch will give a natural tonal variety to your preaching. Pitch changes should come naturally from the sense of what is being said. Speakers who do not vary their pitch speak in a monotone. Monotonous pitch pattern causes a problem in which some words fail to receive the emphasis they deserve. A monotone sounds boring and unemotional because it lacks inflection, variations in pitch that convey meaning. When every word carries the same pitch, listeners quickly grow uninterested. They also have difficulty detecting the speaker's attitudes or feelings toward the ideas being expressed. To avoid speaking in monotone, find your natural pitch level and then use it with full inflection (Litfin 1981:322). Litfin (1981:322) emphasizes the variations in pitch:

This variety in the pitch of your voice is the *vocal inflection* Too much vocal inflection produces a false, overly dramatic impression, but the failure to use enough inflection is surely the more common error. It produces a dry, boring, monotonous style of speaking. Since varied inflection is probably the single most important contributor to an interesting and attractive vocal style, you should try to use as much of your natural vocal range as you can.

5.5.3.1.3.4 Quality

Voice quality relates primarily to the sound or timbre of the voice. Vocal quality refers to such characteristics as thin or resonant, breathy or full, nasal or clear, harsh or mellow. It can contribute to or detract from your preaching. The most common problems with vocal quality are excessive nasality, breathiness, and hoarseness. The voice quality of most adults is usually established by long-term vocal habits. Frequently, however, some bad habits that cause unpleasant voices can be corrected through tension-reduction vocal exercises. A good voice and diction coach can be consulted for treatment.

5.5.3.1.3.5 Enunciation

Enunciation refers to the way you pronounce words in context. Enunciation consists of articulation and pronunciation. *Articulation* is defined as the ability to pronounce the letters of a word correctly, whereas *pronunciation* is the ability to pronounce the entire word correctly.

Articulation refers more specifically to making vowel and consonant sounds clearly and distinctly as you speak. There are three common causes of articulation problems: omission, substitution, and addition of sounds or syllables (DeVito 1987:338). These articulation problems are relatively easy to correct by becoming conscious of our own articulation patterns, listening carefully to the articulation of prominent speakers (for example, broadcasters), and practicing the correct patterns (DeVito 1987:338). Practice articulating each syllable of each word clearly in ordinary conversation.

Pronunciation involves saying words correctly. It includes both the use of the

correct sounds and the proper accent on syllables. To be an effective communicator, you must form sounds carefully and meet audience expectations regarding acceptable pronunciation. Incorrect pronunciation may distract the audience's attention from your ideas and undermine your credibility as a preacher. If you are not sure how to pronounce a particular word in your manuscript, consult a good dictionary in advance.

5.5.3.1.3.6 Pauses

When you read printed material, writers use punctuation marks to help you make sense out of your reading—commas tell you when to pause, periods when to stop, etc. In a speech, there are no punctuation marks; listeners must rely on oral cues to guide them. One of these cues is the pause, which lets your listeners know when you have finished one thought and are ready to go to the next. A pause is more than just a way to vary your speaking rate. Pauses are intended silences interjected into the normally fluent stream of speech (DeVito 1987:339). You can use pauses effectively in a number of places to add emphasis and meaning to the selected ideas or sentences. DeVito (1987:339-340) provides a few examples of places where pauses—silences of a few seconds—can be used effectively in public speaking.

1. *Pause at transitional points.* This will help to signal that you are moving from one part of the speech to another or from one idea to another and to help the audience separate the main issues you are discussing.
2. *Pause at the end of an important assertion.* This will allow the audience time to think about the significance of what you have said.
3. *Pause after asking a rhetorical question.* This will provide the necessary time so that the audience can think of how they would answer the question.
4. *Pause before an important idea.* This will help signal that what comes next is especially significant.

Like most good things, pauses can be overdone. Used in moderation, however,

they can help you to separate thoughts and provide the audience with some time to grasp your ideas.

5.5.3.2 Using Your Body Effectively

Body language is the second indispensable component of sermon delivery that helps you communicate your message nonverbally. Body language influences how the listeners respond to your message. Just as the listeners do with your voice, they look to your body language for clues about the meaning of your message and for clues to your credibility and competence. Communication with your listeners begins before you ever open your mouth. Your facial expression, personal appearance, body movements, and air of confidence all convey a message.

We cannot avoid sending non-verbal messages. For effective communication, your body language must reinforce your verbal language. Gregory (1990:262) writes, “Let your body confirm that you believe in what you are saying and that you want your audience to accept your ideas.” To deliver your message effectively, the four elements of your body language must be in harmony with your words and your voice. These include eye contact, facial expression, gesture, and movement.

5.5.3.2.1 Eye Contact

Eye contact is probably the most effective means of bodily communication (Robinson 2001:211). When you have eye contact with the listeners, you indicate to them that you are addressing each and every one of them; that you are interested in making them listen. You engage with them, and involve them in what you are saying, making the presentation more like a dialogue than a one-way event. All this will make your presentation come across more forcefully and have more impact on your audience.

Eye contact with your audience serves several positive functions for the preacher. First, eye contact creates an important bond of communication and rapport between you and your audience. Eye contact sends a nonverbal signal that you are interested in your listeners. In turn, your listeners will be more

inclined to be interested in you and your message. Eye contact enables you to hold the attention of the listeners. If you do not have direct eye contact with the listeners, they will feel ignored and will drift off into their own thoughts. As Robinson (2001:212) says, “Almost without exception, a congregation will not listen attentively to speakers who do not look at them.” Second, eye contact enhances your credibility as a speaker. If you do not maintain enough eye contact, listeners may think that you are an unfriendly and less trustworthy speaker. Third, eye contact enables you to get audience feedback. Looking directly at individuals in your audience makes you determine whether they understand what you are saying, whether they are interested, and whether they enjoy the sermon enough to continue listening. As an alert speaker, you will adjust what you say—for example, adding explanation or illustrations—as you interpret those responses (Robinson 2001:212).

5.5.3.2.2 Facial Expression

Facial expression is an important tool in communicating emotions. The face is the area at which most people look to observe and evaluate the emotional responses of another person. Your facial expression should confirm the feelings expressed by your verbal message. If you are nervous, you may not relax sufficiently to allow your emotions to come through. But with time and practice you will relax, and the emotions you feel will be displayed appropriately.

5.5.3.2.3 Gesture

Gestures are expressive movements of some part or parts of the body, such as a hand or the arms, or of the whole body. Gestures emphasize ideas and hold the attention of the listeners. To be effective, your gestures should be spontaneous springing naturally from the message itself. The playwright George Bernard Shaw once said, “I am the most spontaneous speaker in the world, because every word, every gesture, and every retort has been carefully rehearsed (Snyder 1990:121).” Like Shaw, you can plan your gestures as you rehearse your sermon delivery. Consider which gestures will help you communicate the meaning of your message and the feelings you want to convey.

5.5.3.2.4 Movement

Every movement you make while you are preaching can be either distracting or beneficial, depending on how you use it. From the audience's perspective, the movements you make can indicate how close you feel to your listeners. Movements can also indicate how confident you are, and they can signal a transition from point to point or section to section in your speech. If you wander back and forth without purpose on the platform, however, it will distract the effectiveness of your sermon presentation.

Because your movements on the platform always draw the listener's attention and carry significance in preaching, you should make them intentionally and deliberately to create the effect you want. Too little, too much, and too patterned movement hinders effective communication. The basic principle is that the content of the message should motivate movement (Robinson 2001:208). When you preach, establish the "home base" at the centre of the platform. Once "home base" is established at the centre of the platform, any movement away from that position should be connected with a change in sermon content (McDill 1999:96). Use gross movements to emphasize transitions and to signal changes in mood or content. However, to avoid distracting your listeners, do not move as you explain a complex point or during an emotional moment.

Actors carefully plan their movements on the stage. They realize that their movement on the stage is part of their interpretation of the role they play. They do not move without purpose from one point of the stage to the other. There must be a reason for movement. In the same way, preachers also must plan and make their movement deliberately (Miller 2006:190).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Reflection and Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, the author has attempted to complement the weaknesses which the contemporary narrative preaching and the traditional expository preaching show us when we create sermons from the Old Testament narrative texts.

The homileticians who belong to the New Homiletic school, emphasizing personal experiences in preaching, oppose the proposition in preaching and propose an open-ended sermon without application. Narrative preaching, thus, allows individuals the freedom to experience the sermon by themselves, to draw their own meaning and application, and to feel their own feelings. But narrative preaching, since it takes an indirect structure in communication and is open-ended, cannot always deliver the intended meaning and relevant application of the text.

In the preaching of narrative texts, on the other hand, the meaning of the text and the narrative form are all important. Since form and meaning cannot be separated from each other in the biblical text, preachers should also respect both the meaning and the form of the text in his/her sermon construction. Therefore the traditional three point sermon, which neglects the literary form of the narrative, also does not fit well with the Old Testament narrative texts.

The above observation led the author to the research problem of this study: How can preachers preach properly the Old Testament narrative texts with the authority of the Bible and the relevance to the hearers? What is a proper homiletical methodology for the Old Testament narrative texts containing propositions and relevant applications in narrative forms? To answer these questions, the author suggested the expository narrative preaching as a genre-sensitive biblical sermonic methodology in the interpretation and the communication for the Old Testament narrative.

The task of the preacher is to connect two different worlds, that is, the world of the ancient text and the world of the audience. A paradigm is required to fulfill this task. There are three practical preaching paradigms. The 'Bridge-building model' does not explain how the connection between the two worlds happens. The 'Merging model', on the other hand, does not protect the interpreter from misunderstanding of the text. As an alternative, the author suggested a 'Full 360 degree model' in the preaching process, following Timothy Warren, and applied it to the Old Testament narrative genre.

The expositional process (exegesis—theology—homiletics) moves from the meaning of a passage in its original setting to the theological principle, usually not expressed explicitly, and to the specific application of that truth recontextualized for the current situations of the particular audience. Although this overview of the expositional process comes as a sequence, the actual process from text to sermon is retroductive and includes a few U-turns to check and balance among exegetical, theological and homiletical processes.

In sermon preparation, exegesis comes first. In the exegetical process, the preacher scrutinizes the meaning of the text in the original context. Exegesis focuses on the original audience of the text and the meaning that the text had for them. As a result of the exegetical process, the preacher describes the exegetical products such as proposition, purpose, and outline of the text. The exegetical products use the language of the text just as it is, such as the characters of the story and the names of cities.

The theological process begins only when the preacher has grasped explicitly and confidently the meaning of the text through the exegetical study. In the theological process, the preacher does not attempt to discover the meaning of the text in the original context. He now tries to unearth the universal theological principle which is applicable to the timeless universal audience. Through this process, the preacher produces the theological proposition, purpose, and outline of the text. The theological products disclose the timeless theological truth that the text intends to show, which has a form applicable to both the original situation of the text and the present situation of today's audience.

The third stage in the sermon preparation is the homiletical process connected

to a sermon which needs to be delivered. In this process, the preacher applies the original meaning of the text to the particular situation today. Homiletical process focuses on the specific audience as the target of the sermon. The specific applications, which carry the authority of exegesis and theology, will be different from one audience to another.

The preacher is ready to start sermon construction and delivery only after he/she brings forth the homiletical products such as homiletical proposition, purpose, and outline. Every sermon necessarily requires a kind of form. There cannot be a sermon without a form. The sermon needs a structure just as the body needs a skeleton. When the preacher gets the content of the message, he/she should prepare a sermon structure so that he/she may properly deliver the message.

The Bible contains various literary forms and they are important for the understanding of the text. If we are to be faithful to the Bible in our preaching, thus, we must give consideration to its literary form as well as its content in the biblical interpretation and the sermon design. The traditional homiletics did not pay enough attention to the literary forms of the Bible. The homiletical process was managed to concentrate on exegesis which they tried to obtain the central idea of the text, and then the literary form was ignored. Preaching takes its authority and principal content from the Bible. In preaching we are not merely to make a speech but try to deliver the meaning of the biblical text. Here is a relationship between the biblical text and the sermon. This relationship includes not only the relationship between the content of text and of sermon but the relationship between the literary form of the text and sermon form.

The sermon form should reflect the textual form. As mentioned above, the literary form cannot be separated from the meaning of the text. Then what kind of sermon form should we take if we are to preach from the Old Testament narrative texts? The expository narrative sermon form provides us with one of the most adequate forms when we try to create a sermon on an OTN text. The didactic sermon form, since it moves around one subject as if it draws a circle, makes the sermon easily lose the movement and experiential impact which narrative genres have. On the other hand, using the expository narrative sermon form on a narrative text prevents us from offering an alien and

unsuitable outline to the text. Moreover, the expository narrative sermon has a universal appeal because it bears a story-like characteristic. It will appeal to intelligence, provoke feelings, and challenge the will. The expository narrative preaching also helps the preachers draw clear propositions and applications from the narrative texts so that the audience can not miss the meaning of the message and the relevance to their situations. Unfortunately, however, many proponents of the narrative preaching have criticized unfairly the preaching with proposition and suggested the open-ended preaching without proposition as an alternative.

The primitive issue in the sermon construction is not on the form of deductive, inductive, or narrative, but rather on the effective communications of the biblical truth. If a sermon form cannot deliver effectively the biblical message, it may be an improper sermonic methodology although it seemingly looks great. In the narratives of the Bible, the truth is delivered through the means of a literary narrative form. Narrative preaching and propositional preaching are not exclusive to each other, but should rather cooperate in order to deliver effectively the biblical message. The expository narrative preaching guides preachers in keeping a proper balance between merely narrating the biblical stories and providing explicit propositions for appropriate understanding.

There are various available ways in constructing the expository narrative sermon. The beginner preachers, however, should master several basic forms on the construction of the expository narrative sermon before they experiment with other forms. The author suggested three available basic methods for the construction of the expository narrative sermons for the beginners (see 5.3.3).

In the construction of the expository narrative sermons, the first process is to make a list through brainstorming of what is to be said and what is to be done in order to fulfill the sermon task for the specific audience. This brainstorming list is made on the basis of exegetical study, theological meditation, audience analysis, etc.

Once we have taken the brainstorming list, we need to decide the sermon form which carries a series of sermonic components. Sermon form serves to enhance communication between the preacher and the congregation. We

cannot only preach with a list of what to do. We already know the central idea and the developmental movement of the text. Now we ought to think of the best way that will allow the idea to be delivered to our congregation. This is the reason why a sermon should take a certain form.

Once our sermonic outline has been put into the developmental stage in terms of the sermon form, we should determine where we should place the contemporary applications. We can put the application in the appropriate place it needs to be. Basically, the chosen sermon form will affect the location of the application.

When we have chosen a proper narrative sermon form for the message, have converted the sermon outline to the developmental movement of the sermon form, and have decided the location of contemporary application, we are now ready for amplifying each main point. Amplifying a main point (or scene) is a matter of organizing the materials we have. We need to take time to select necessary materials for each main point (or scene) in order that we may deliver the central idea of the sermon to our audience. Not all the materials we have gathered through the previous study will be used. Some will be chosen, but the others will be excluded. It will be helpful to ask the following questions when we select the materials for each main point: Which material will help my listeners accept the central idea of the message? Which material will help my listeners apply the central idea of the message to their lives?

Once we complete amplifying each main point, we are now ready to write the first draft of a sermon. Write out all the words you will preach word by word. The aim of writing a sermon is to phrase our thinking on paper; what will come out of our mouth when we preach the OTN we have prepared. Through the writing process, we can organize our thoughts in the right order and check beforehand whether the oral expression in our sermon is appropriate. The sermon draft must be written in the colloquial style. Our sermon manuscript should be the same as our manner of speech at the actual preaching.

Once we complete writing out the first draft of our sermon, we need to take time to look back over the sermon manuscript we have written. Sermon writing is a work in progress. At this final stage of sermon editing, we are concerned with

clarity and colloquial style.

When we have given the final touches to the content and construction of the expository narrative sermon, it is time to shift our concern to the sharing of the sermon with the audience. How we say something is as important as what we say. The effective delivery gives life to our speech and idea. Our preaching comes to a climax at the time we actually deliver the message. The fact that the effect of our preaching absolutely depends on the work of the Holy Spirit does not exclude our effort to communicate clearly our message. Unless our sermon is delivered well to our congregation, no matter how effectively prepared it may be, we will not achieve the intended purpose through our sermon. The expository narrative sermon requires natural delivery.

Through this dissertation, as what has been said thus far, the author was trying to show the full process of the expository narrative preaching from the selection of the text to the sermon presentation based on the OTN. For busy pastors, in fact, it will be difficult to apply all the processes of the methodology presented in this dissertation to their sermon preparation. Nevertheless, it is important that preachers should understand the whole procedures for the sermon preparation as a unified system. After they comprehend the whole process, they may use selectively the usable stages for them, or they may even develop their own modified methodology. Omitting the whole process of the exegetical analysis, for instance, the busy preacher may consult with the commentaries to find the exegetical proposition, purpose, and outline of an OTN passage, and then move forward the theological stage.

At this juncture, the author would like to make clear that in principle he opposes the open-ended preaching and supports the preaching with the clear applications. However, he does not deny the occasional use of the open-ended sermon. Biblical texts such as the book of Jonah and Jesus' parable sermons support the possibility of the open-ended sermon. The author just stresses that the application in the narrative sermon "should never be allowed to be unconditionally free (Janse van Rensburg 2003:64)." If the message of the sermon is supported by sound exegesis, however, the preacher may finish occasionally his or her sermon with implicit application or open-ended form.

All things considered, the author would like to finish this study by saying that the preacher needs to make constant efforts not only to understand the message of the Bible properly but also to be an excellent communicator for his/her audience in order that he/she can deliver that message effectively. Neither the traditional expository preaching nor the expository narrative preaching will be everlasting. In the next generation, another sermon form may appear to meet the need of that generation. There is no eternal sermon form. What does not change permanently is that preaching must be a vehicle to deliver effectively the biblical truth. Considering the literary form of the Bible is important in sermon construction. However, what the preacher should not forget is that he/she is not called to convey a certain literary form of the Bible, but is called to deliver the eternal life-giving message of the Bible.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Study

The author has developed Warren's four-phase preaching methodology to apply it to the Old Testament narrative genre. He believes that this same methodology can be applied to several other biblical literary genres. He would like to see other dissertations apply the same methodology to other different biblical genres such as NT Parable, NT Apocalyptic, OT Law, OT Poetry, OT Wisdom, OT Prophecy, and OT Apocalyptic.

APPENDIX 1

An example of “following the sequence of the text” type of expository narrative sermon (5.3.3.1)

Title: The Greatest Thing You Can Do for Your Kids

Text: Genesis 22:1-19

Sermon Proposition: The greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids¹⁴⁴

Sermon Manuscript

When a child enters your life, your life begins to revolve around your child. Remember when your son or daughter was born? You immediately started packing six times the baby's weight in paraphernalia. Every time you went to visit friends or family, you lugged along items such as a stroller, a swing, a baby seat, a backpack, and a high chair. I could hardly cram all the necessities in the car when our first daughter was born. Then, when we had twins, I threatened to buy a utility trailer.

As your little Timmy or Susie grows older, you're still packing necessities: bicycles, skiing equipment, and band instruments. You do it because life revolves around your child. You allow your home to become a sports complex and an activity center for slumber parties and Super Bowl parties. Suddenly, your calendar revolves around Little League, piano lessons, skiing lessons, soccer, 4-H meetings, Girl Scouts, hunter safety, and swimming lessons. Then, to capture these precious moments, you plunk down cash for a camcorder. Your life revolves around your child, so you've got to capture her cuteness and his exploits on video.

One day, your teen is ready to take driver's education. At this point, you get the shock of your life when your insurance premium skyrockets. But you'll pay it for Tim. You'll pay it for Sue. It's a joy and a privilege to center your life around your children's lives. You don't want to deprive them of anything.

¹⁴⁴ This sermon was prepared for Father's Day.

But this quest to give our children everything has its downside. As a believer living in a culture where kids rule, a time will come in your life when you face a conflict. If you are a Christian father or mother, and if your life revolves around your child, you may find yourself facing a dilemma. It's the same dilemma faced by a father who lived in the ancient Near East. I want to tell you his story this morning.

This father had a son, and life revolved around that son. The father's name was Abraham, and his son's name was Isaac. The story is in Genesis 22. Please find the story in your Bibles.

You can't blame Abraham for revolving his life around Isaac. You can't blame him for doting on this boy. After all, Isaac was Abraham's miracle baby. When Abraham was seventy-five years old, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. But when Abraham celebrated his eightieth birthday, he still had no child. In Genesis 15:3, Abraham, then known as Abram, said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." God said, "A son coming from your own body will be your heir." But at eighty-five, Abraham had no son. He finally got so desperate that he followed the custom of his day and fathered a son through his wife's maidservant, Hagar. Instead of producing the God-promised heir, Abraham created a whole new set of problems. At ninety, Abraham had no son by his wife, Sarah. At ninety-five, Abraham had no son by his wife, Sarah. At age ninety-nine, Abraham still had not fathered a son by his wife, Sarah.

In Genesis 17, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God appeared to Abraham and said, "You and your wife are going to be the proud parents of a son." What was Abraham's response to that? He found it humorous. He fell down and laughed. Why, he and Sarah were thinking about checking into a nursing home, not about what color to paint a nursery! There was no way he was going to be a father when he turned one-hundred years old. In Genesis 18, God reappeared to Abraham and said, "Next year at this time, Sarah, your wife will have a son." Sarah overheard this, and she laughed, too. Like Abraham, she laughed in disbelief.

But God got the last laugh. As the narrator tells us in Genesis 21, God was

gracious to Sarah, she became pregnant, and she bore Abraham a son in his old age. And per God's prior instructions (Genesis 17:19), Abraham named him "Isaac." Guess what the Hebrew name Yitzhak, or Isaac, means? It means "laughter." Now Sarah was laughing in joy and wonder, not in disbelief. Genesis 21:6 records her words: *God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.* I imagine that every time Abraham and Sarah called "laughter" in for supper, they remembered how God had turned their laughter of disbelief to laughter of joy. What a happy ending!

But then we come to Genesis 22. What we read next catches us off guard. Look at how the narrator begins the story: *Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about"* (22:1-2).

Oh my! God's instructions to Abraham catch us off guard and shock us. They resemble a telephone call at 3 A.M. The ringing phone jolts us from our sleep, and the caller shatters our world with bad news. There's nothing in the story of Abraham that prepares us for God's stunning command. In fact, this is so disturbing that the narrator prefaces the account by telling us what God is doing. He's testing Abraham. We know from the Old Testament that God condemns child sacrifice. Some of the pagan cultures were doing that, but God detests it. He doesn't intend for Abraham to take Isaac's life. He wants to test him. But Abraham doesn't know what we know as readers of this story.

I can only imagine the anguish Abraham felt as he listened to God's instructions. He must have been floored! He must have been crushed! You can feel the tension mount as each phrase in verse 2 gets more specific and narrows the focus. The Hebrew text of verse 2 says, "Take your son . . . your only son . . . the one you love . . . Isaac." Incredible! Here is the boy for whom Abraham and Sarah waited for twenty-five years. They rejoiced at his birth. And now God says, "I want you to sacrifice him as a burnt offering." How devastating.

Now, what's the nature of this test anyway?! What is God after? Well, offering a sacrifice is all about worship. God's test will force Abraham's hand and find out

whom Abraham will worship. This test will force Abraham to choose between worshipping God or Isaac. At this point, there's no way Abraham can do both. He will have to say, "I won't offer Isaac. I've waited twenty-five years. God, you must understand, everything in my life is wrapped up in this boy. I can't worship you by offering him as a sacrifice." Or Abraham will have to say, "Alright, God, I'll worship you and offer Isaac as a sacrifice."

I believe this is the same dilemma Christian parents face today. Will we worship Jesus Christ, or will we worship our kids? That dilemma is bound to rear its ugly head in a culture where kids rule. Now, I'm thankful that our culture places a premium on children. That's one of the good things about our culture. Our children are our future. So we revolve our lives around them. Isn't that true of your family? Your lives revolve around your children, don't they?

But sometimes our culture crosses the line. It conditions us to worship our kids instead of worshipping God. And so, God has to test us periodically to find out where our allegiance really is. Make no mistake about it, God will test you in this area just as he tested Abraham. You can miss the test, though, because it happens so subtly—unlike the mega-test that Abraham faced.

God may be testing you with the opportunity for your son to get involved in an all-star baseball league. The problem is, this opportunity will force your son and you to miss the next eight Sunday morning worship services. You may not like to admit it, but you are being forced to choose between worshipping God and worshipping your child.

Or God may test you in the area of finances. You need to cough up four hundred bucks to send your child with her science class for a dream trip to Florida to see the space shuttle and to visit NASA. You don't have the money. But four hundred dollars happens to be the monthly amount you give to God as part of your worship. If you took one month's offering, you could pay for the trip. After all, you might glorify God by helping your child better understand God's universe, right? You may not like to admit it, but you are being forced to choose between worshipping God and worshipping your child.

Perhaps your son or your daughter wants to go steady with a good-looking

junior in his or her algebra class. But you know the good-looking junior is not a believer in Jesus Christ. He or she holds values that butt heads with your Christian values. However, you don't want to alienate or offend your child and say, "I will not give you permission to go steady with this boy or girl." Why, this might turn them off to Christianity, and then you would have a problem. But like it or not, you are being forced to choose between worshiping God and worshiping your child.

Friends, God tests his people by forcing them to choose between worshiping him or worshiping the children he has given to them. Abraham faced it. And you face it too. So what choice did Abraham make?

The story continues in verse 3: *Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you (22:3-5)."*

Now, I've been on some miserable camping trips, but nothing that would rival this. Imagine taking a camping trip and knowing that arriving at the destination will mean the loss of your child's life! The trip from Beersheba was about fifty miles, roughly a three-day journey. God in his sovereignty must have planned it this way to give Abraham some time to think, some time to change his mind. But Abraham had made a choice. Did you catch the statement Abraham made to his servant, recorded in verse 5? *He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."* What an amazing statement. Apparently, Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac back from the dead, because Isaac was the promised heir. But I'm just as intrigued by his first statement, when he says, "We will worship." The Hebrew term translated in your Bibles as "worship" means "to lie face down on the ground in front of a superior." Today, we do standing ovations to honor people. In Abraham's day, you hit the ground. Abraham realized that he was being asked to worship God, even at the cost of his son's life. He was prepared to do it because he was committed to worship.

Verse 6 says, *Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife.* Talk about foreshadowing what is about to happen!

Finally, Isaac asks the dreaded question. You just knew this young man would say this. It must have broken Abraham's heart. Look at the end of verse 6: *As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together (22:6b-8).*

Do you feel the tension building? As the story continues to unfold, the narrator piles up action verbs, hurrying up the story towards the anticipated, awful moment: *When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son (22:9-10).* This flurry of verbs brings us to the awful moment where Abraham severs Isaac's carotid artery with the slice of the knife blade.

But something happens before Abraham presses the steel of the knife blade against the flesh of Isaac's neck. Verse 11 says, *But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.* For the second time in this story, God interrupts and calls on Abraham. For the second time, Abraham says, "Here I am." Talk about a welcome interruption! "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. *"Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided" (22:12-14).*

God intervenes. He provides an alternative. But most important of all, he says, "Abraham, you passed my test. You get an A+. Now I know that your worship for me is unlimited and unqualified. You have not held anything back, not even the most important person in your life. Abraham, you feared me rather than fearing

the consequences of sacrificing your child.”

That's a problem in our culture, isn't it? We fear the wrong things. Last week, Priscilla and I stopped at Taco Bell to grab something to eat. The Taco Bell in Bozeman is about the size of your hall closet, so our table was about the length of a taco from another table where a dad and his two boys were seated. His two sons reminded me a lot of our boys, Ben and Luke. The younger son, who looked to be eight or nine asked his father a question that we couldn't help overhearing. He said, “Dad, are you going to report the accident?” Now that got my attention. I sipped my Coke and pretended not to be listening. But, of course, I was! There was no response, so the little guy asked his dad the question again: “Dad, are you going to report the accident?” This time, the dad mumbled, “Well, I might call the insurance company and check with them, but there wasn't any damage done.” This man feared the consequences of acting in integrity more than he feared the consequences of not acting in integrity. By contrast, Abraham feared God. Whatever fears he had about sacrificing Isaac—and you know that he had them—he was more afraid of not putting God first than he was afraid of not putting Isaac first. So Abraham made the choice to worship God, not his child, Isaac.

Perhaps, as you listen to this story, you are wondering if it's really the way to go. If there are times in my life when saying yes to God means saying no to my child, is there a payoff?

Look at the conclusion to this story, beginning in verse 15: *The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba (22:15—19).*

What's the payoff for worshiping God instead of your kids? Is it going to hurt their future? No. God said, “Abraham, because of your obedience, your

commitment to worship me, your son will be better off. You've just assured my blessing on your descendents. You've positioned yourself so that your son will be better off." Fathers, make no mistake about it. **The greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids.**¹⁴⁵ Your culture says, "You've got to give your kids this experience, that opportunity, those lessons . . . whatever the cost, or they won't succeed in life."

Of course, your children are important. But they were not designed to fit the throne that God alone is fit to occupy. In our culture, kids rule. But God demands our allegiance. Remember Deuteronomy 6:4-9, one of the greatest statements in the Bible on child rearing? It begins with, "Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God . . . Yahweh alone. Love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Then you'll have something to give your children. You'll put your children in a position where God can bless their lives and use them in his kingdom program.

Mark it well, God is going to test your allegiance. He's going to see how committed you are to worshiping him. And he may put you in situations where you have to choose between allegiance to his son, Jesus, or allegiance to your kids. When that happens, **the greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids.** Yes, your son or daughter will be better off if you say, "I'm sorry. Although I want you to play in the all-star volleyball league so that you get some looks for a college scholarship, it would be wrong to duck out on corporate worship for the next two months just to let you play."

Yes, your son or daughter will be better off if you say, "I'd love to send you with your class to Florida to visit NASA. But we don't have the funds. Even if we can't earn them some other way, we're not going to rob God of the money we've committed to give to his kingdom work."

Yes, your son or daughter will be better off if you say, "I'm sorry, but I will not give you permission to go out with the gorgeous girl or the hunk of a guy you met in your algebra class. Your relationship with God is too important to sacrifice for a romance that isn't right."

¹⁴⁵ Mathewson uses bold print to identify the statements of the sermon's big idea.

Yes, **the greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids.** I can't tell you how God will honor you. Perhaps your daughter will get another opportunity to develop her volleyball skills. Perhaps God will intervene at the eleventh hour and provide money for your son to take the Florida trip to visit NASA. Or maybe God won't. He may have another opportunity in mind. He may be protecting your son by not letting him go. The possibilities are endless. Perhaps your son or daughter will get angry at you for a season when you put the damper on their chance to have a high school flame. But you'll protect them. You'll teach them.

But there's one more question you may have this morning. How can you muster up the strength to do this? What God is asking you to do is hard. He's asking you to go against the commitment your culture has made—to put our kids first no matter what. How can you do this? How did Abraham do this? Wouldn't you like to know how Abraham maintained his resolve to worship God first before his child, even when it meant putting his child's life on the line? What was Abraham's secret?

Abraham's secret was a conviction he held. Go back to verse 8 for a moment. Remember Abraham's answer to the gut-wrenching question that Isaac asked? Dad, where is the lamb for the burnt offering? *Abraham answered, "God himself will provide."* Literally, "God himself will see to it." After the fact, in verse 14, Abraham called the name of the place "*Yahweh Yireh*," that is, "Yahweh will see to it." The LORD will provide. *And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."* Friends, that's the conviction that will give you the courage to worship God instead of your kids when it seems unreasonable to you and to your kids. "God will see to it" is the conviction that will help you keep your worship priorities straight when your kids don't understand and end up getting mad at you. It's the same conviction that got you started walking with God in the first place. In the larger story of the Bible, Genesis 22 foreshadows the provision of another sacrifice. The same God who provided a sacrificial lamb so that Isaac might live provided the ultimate sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ, so that God's people might live. The same God who invited you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to receive eternal life may test your trust. He may test you to see if you really

trust him to provide when worshiping him puts you in a tight spot with one of your children.

On this Father's Day, we could spend time talking about parenting tips and techniques that could help both dads and moms. There's a place for that. But what you need most is a commitment to worship God first. The bottom line is, walk with God first, then you'll be a better parent.

In one of the early scenes in the movie *Forrest Gump*, Forrest's mom, played by actress Sally Field, visits Mr. Hancock, the principal of the Greenbough County Central School. Mrs. Gump wants to enroll her son, but the principal informs her that the state of Alabama requires a minimum IQ of eighty to attend public school. Forrest has an IQ of only seventy-five. But Mrs. Gump insists on enrolling Forrest in the Greenbough County Central School. She says, "My boy, Forrest, is going to get the same opportunities as everyone else. He's not going to a special school to learn how to retread tires. We're talking about five little points. There must be something that can be done." There is. Forrest's mom ends up in bed with the principal, Mr. Hancock. Later, the principal tells Forrest, "Your mama sure does care about your schooling, son." That scene reflects the philosophy of our age: "If the kid gets his chance, it doesn't matter what it takes."

Genesis 22 says, Dead wrong! You better believe it matters. The most important thing you can do for your son is not to worship him. The greatest thing you can do for your daughter is not to worship her. The greatest thing you can do for your children is to worship their Creator, the living God who provides for those who fear him.

APPENDIX 2

An example of “inductive-deductive model” of expository narrative sermon (5.3.3.2)

Title: The High Cost of Lamb

Text: 2 Samuel 11-12

Sermon Proposition: Believers must learn to accept what the grace of God has given them and what the grace of God has not.

Sermon Manuscript

Most of us remember the great sins of history. We recall that Brutus killed Caesar, that Henry VIII killed Thomas More so he could marry Anne Boleyn, and that Benedict Arnold betrayed his country. We remember the assassination of Abraham Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth, the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, and the serial killers of our own time. Somehow these major events seem to stick in our minds. They are the sins we remember.

I find that when I talk to people both in and outside the church, they also remember the great sins of the Bible. They remember that Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and God put a curse on the earth. I must admit that every time I have to mow my lawn I get angry that Adam sinned! We remember how Aaron created the golden calf and how Israel celebrated a drunken orgy around that idol. We think of Belshazzar's feast—the night he took the vessels that had been seized from the temple in Jerusalem and then basically blasphemed God. We think of Peter's denial and Judas's betrayal. But when it comes to the great sins of the Bible, there is one that gets remembered the most. I want to talk to you about this event.

About a year before this event occurred, David and his commander in chief, Joab, had begun to fight a major war that almost cost them the nation. In fact, when you read Psalm 60, David describes the nation like a boxer that is up against the ropes and has taken too many blows. We are not sure whether he is going to stand or even win the match. You see, Israel had fought a two-front war. Joab had taken half of the army and gone one direction, and David had taken the other half and gone the other direction. Because of God and because

of the ability of Joab and David as generals, Israel came out victorious. Winter set in, and the fighting stopped. In those days, armies did not fight in the winter. Then spring came. David said to Joab, “We have some mopping up operations to do. I want you to take the army out and begin to finish the battle we really won last fall.”

One day, after hard work running the affairs of state, David went up to the roof of the palace. Perhaps, as other kings, he had gardens up there. It would be cool, a place to rest and to relax. And since the palace was built on a high part of the city, he could look two or three blocks all around the palace and see the homes where people lived. As David walked along the roof that night, he looked down into a courtyard and saw by the cistern a beautiful woman taking a bath. He liked what he saw, and so he sent to find out who the woman was.

When word came back that she was Bathsheba, David knew her. After all, Uriah, her husband, was one of the leading men in his army. Uriah and Bathsheba probably had been at state dinners. They had attended palace parties. David had probably seen Bathsheba close up, not only at a distance. So he called for her. That night she came and snuck into the palace, and David and Bathsheba slept together. She went home early in the morning and nothing happened for several months, until one day when a messenger arrived at the palace with a personal message for David's eyes only. When David opened the message, he learned that Bathsheba was pregnant and that she had not slept with anyone else because her husband had been away fighting a war.

I imagine that when David read that message, his heart turned to stone. You see, he understood that under the law of Israel both he and Bathsheba were to be executed. They had committed a capital offense—adultery.

David sent word to Joab who was out mopping up the battle left over from the year before, and he said, “Send Uriah back and let him bring a report of what's been happening on the battlefield.”

So Uriah came back to the palace and gave David his report. That night, David said, “Uriah, would you please stay until I can compose a message for your

commander. I'll send you back tomorrow." Of course, David hoped that Uriah would go down and sleep with his wife. Several months later, when the baby was born, they could pin that child on her husband, Uriah. But Uriah didn't sleep with his wife that night. In fact, he slept with the servants. The next morning when David asked why, he said, "Well, I can't go home and enjoy my marriage bed when my men are sleeping in tents."

So David said, "Uriah, you need to stay another day. I need to gather more data to send back to Joab." And that night he threw a banquet at the palace. He made sure that the wine flowed freely, he made sure that the servants constantly filled Uriah's glass. Uriah became drunk that night, and of course, David hoped that in that drunken state he'd go home and sleep with his wife. But Uriah did not. So the next morning, Uriah received a message to take back to his commander in chief. He didn't realize it, but this message literally carried his own death warrant. For you see, David had given Joab instructions to plan a strategy in battle that no wise general would ever plan. When he returned to the battle, Uriah was to take a handful of men and lead an attack against the city they were trying to take. He was to go in close to the wall with the support group behind them. What a poor military strategy! As the warriors came close to the wall, people standing on the wall could shoot arrows, throw spears, and even drop rocks. They could easily kill the defenseless men who were down at the base of the wall.

Joab went ahead with the plan, and Uriah and the other soldiers were killed. So Joab wrote back to David and told him what had happened. David sent a reply back and said, "That's the way it is in war. Sometimes you live, sometimes you die."

The period of mourning ended for Bathsheba, and David took her into his harem. She lived in the palace, and a few months later the baby was born. David probably assumed he had covered over the problem of the adultery. Even though a few servants could probably count the months on their fingers and not make it to nine, David figured that the sin had been covered.

One day Nathan the prophet asked for an audience with King David. And as he stood before the king, he said, "I have a story to tell you. In our land there is a

very rich farmer. He has flocks and herds and more money than he knows what to do with. One day a guest came to visit him and stayed for dinner. Instead of taking one of his own sheep and killing it for dinner, the rich man went down the road to the place of a poor farmer who had only one sheep. In fact, this sheep had become the household pet. The rich farmer took that sheep, tore it away from the poor man, took it back and killed it, and served it to his guest."

When David heard that, he stood up from his throne and said, "That man has shown no pity. He must be destroyed, and he must pay."

Nathan looked at David and said, "David, that's you. You're the man. What you did to Uriah and with Bathsheba is exactly what I've been talking about." David's sin was exposed by Nathan that night.

But I would submit to you, that behind this event which changed the life of David, and behind all the sins that went with it—the sins of treachery and lying and murder and adultery—behind all these sins there was a greater sin. In fact, it is the sin that you and I are tempted to commit. Often we look at the story of David and Bathsheba and say, "That has no relevance to me. I've never committed adultery. I've thought about murder, but I don't think I will carry it out."

God said to David, "Your life will be changed because behind the murder, behind the adultery, behind the lying, there's a greater sin." In fact, if you look at 2 Samuel, everything David does from chapters one through ten turns to gold. And everything he does from chapters thirteen through the end of the book turns to dust because of what happened in 2 Samuel 11–12.

In fact, we have to ask why was this sin so different, because David had committed great sins before this. In 1 Samuel, David had lied, and because of his lie, all the priests except one had been killed. David said, "It was my fault." Also in 1 Samuel, David had left the land when God had told him to stay, and for sixteen months he lived by his own wits as a liar and a con man. God punished him, but not like he did after 2 Samuel chapters 11–12. You see, behind the murder, behind the adultery, behind the lying, behind the treachery there was a greater sin that David committed.

To see what that sin is, I would like you to turn with me to 2 Samuel 12:9. This is what Nathan says to David: *“Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites; now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own. This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’”*

First, notice that Nathan didn't separate the sins. He didn't see it as the sin of murder and the sin of adultery and the sin of lying and the sin of treachery. He said, “It's just one big package.”

Second, notice that he says, “In committing this package of sins you despised me. You despised my word. Because of that, your children will kill each other. Your own son will plan a coup and will kill many of your best men. And your own son will take your wives and your concubines, and he'll put them in a tent on the palace roof. And one by one he'll go in and sleep with them, because you despised me and you despised my word.”

That's an interesting statement. Here's David who wrote many of the Psalms and who wrote the Word of God himself. How did David despise God and his Word? Look with me at verse 7: *Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all of this had been too little, I would have given you even more.”*

Notice what God is saying: “David, I took you and made you king. David, I gave you might. David, I gave you an army. David, I even gave you a harem. I gave you everything. And you know what, David? You weren't happy with what I gave you. You wanted what I hadn't given you, and you went after it ruthlessly. David, do you despise my grace? Do you despise my grace? To

go after that which is not yours, that which I haven't given you to make it your own, it will change your life.”

Have you ever gone to a wedding in the summertime? You are standing there at the reception. The bride and groom are up front, and people are laughing and talking and having a good time. Somebody from a distance has come to the wedding, someone you don't know. As this well-groomed man or beautifully dressed lady walks into the room, you notice this person is dressed in white. The man has on a white suit and white shoes and white tie. Or the lady has on a nice white dress and white shoes. Everyone turns as they walk through the room. And as they go by you, you notice that right on the back of the suit coat or on the back of the dress is a big black spot. When you go home, what do you talk about? You don't talk about how great the tie looked. You don't talk about how great the dress looked. All you focus on is, “Didn't they know they had that black spot? What did they do, did they rub up against something? Why didn't somebody tell them?” All you can talk about is that black spot.

That's often the way life is. We don't talk about who we are and what we have. Sometimes, all we ever think about are the black spots. We talk about what we don't have. We forget all the things God has given us and just focus on what we don't have. Commercials reinforce these feelings of inadequacy. Every Christmas, Radio Shack tells you that if you don't buy your child that thousand-dollar computer, she's not going to make it in life.

When our first son was born, he was over ten pounds. When I first saw this hunk of a child, my first thought was, “I've got to feed him for the next eighteen years!” My second thought was, “Ten pounds . . . he's going to be a quarterback. He's going to hit some home runs. He's going to score the winning basket.” I couldn't wait for the day that my son said, “Dad I want to play Little League. Dad I want to go to football practice. Dad I want to play basketball.” But after one year of Little League, he said, “Dad, I think I want to play the trumpet.” Then our daughter came along, eight pounds, long and thin. And I thought, “Gymnast, volleyball, basketball player.” But she decided to be in the color guard. If it hadn't been for a wise mother, I would have missed the gifts and talents God gave my children. Because he

didn't give them the gifts and talents I wanted, all I could focus on were the black spots. What they didn't do, what they couldn't do, what they didn't want to do. I'll never forget the night I stood on the floor of Mile High Stadium in Denver. It was my son's senior year. He played and won the state championship for band, and I had tears in my eyes. I was so proud of my son, but I almost missed it.

You see, God in his grace often gives us good gifts. But because we focus on the black spots, because we're taught to be dissatisfied, because we're taught to be competitive, we often only want what it is that we don't have. The Scripture tells us to be satisfied with what we have. I don't know if you have thought about what that means, but imagine taking all the stuff you own—your house, your cars, your clothing, your ranch, your machinery, your toys, your television sets, your appliances—and putting it all out on a big field and drawing a circle around it. God says, “What-ever's inside the circle, be content with it.” Now that doesn't mean you can't acquire things outside the circle if you have the means to secure them. But it means you don't spend your life saying, “I want a house like they have. I want a car like they have. I want my ranch to be like that person's ranch. I want to have the implements they have. I want to wear the clothes they wear.”

If that's what we focus on, the day will come when we ignore the grace of God and we will go after that which God in his grace has not given us. David's life was changed. God said, “I've given you a kingdom, I've given you might, I've given you power, I've even given you wives. If you had wanted more, I would have given it to you. But David, you went after that which was not yours to have.” Friends, when you commit that sin, God says, “It despises my grace.”

Now after hearing this, some of you are thinking, “Oh, I feel so bad. Paul you've done a good job making me feel guilty. What do I do about it?” I want you to notice what David did. Look with me, in verse 13, at what happens when Nathan finishes speaking: *Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.” In*

other words, he's saying, "David there must be payment, and the payment will be that the baby will die. But even though you committed adultery and premeditated murder—both capital offenses—you won't die."

Now I don't know why God did that. I think some of it had to do with David's response. Every time in Scripture when God confronts him, David doesn't make excuses. David doesn't say, "I'm sorry God. Let me tell you about my background. Let me tell you about my upbringing. Let me tell you about how abused I was as a child. Let me tell you that I'm codependent." David never did that. Every time God says, "David, you're wrong," David replies, "God, you're right. I am wrong. Forgive me." When we take that position, that's when God can be merciful. David said, "God, I throw myself into your hands. You're right, I'm wrong." God said to David, "When you take that approach, I will be merciful. You will not die."

Several years ago, I was in California and was going to speak at a church. The pastor of the church at that time was on the board of Denver Seminary. I really wanted a day to myself, so I took some time off before I met with this pastor on Saturday. On Saturday evening, while we were having a conversation, he asked me about some things I had done. I answered him, but I didn't want him to know that I had just taken the day off. On Sunday afternoon, when I got on the plane and was flying back to Denver, a thought struck me: "Paul, when this pastor asked you if you'd done this, this and this, you said yes when really you hadn't. That's a lie."

I thought, "Now wait a minute, God. Seminary professors don't lie. I didn't lie. I mean, I didn't tell him everything, but I didn't lie."

And God said, "Yes, you lied." And for about the next month, every morning when I woke up, God said, "When you met with that man you lied to him."

"Oh no, God, I didn't lie. Will you get it straight?! I just didn't tell him everything."

"No, Paul, you lied to him."

Finally, I couldn't stand it any more. One morning I walked into my office, waited until he'd be in his office, and I picked up the phone. I got Tom on the line and said, "Tom, do you remember when I was at your house about a month ago."

He said, "Yes."

"Do you remember on Saturday night you asked me this, this, and this?"

He said, "Yes."

"Remember I told you this, this, and this. Well, I lied. I did something else."

Tom said, "Oh, okay, good."

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "It's nice to know somebody else lies. I forgive you."

I hung up the phone and I never felt so good. That's what God wants! God is looking for men and women who will come to him and admit they have forgotten his grace. God is looking for men and women who will say, "God, you are right, I'm wrong."

David was forgiven, but in the process he learned a hard lesson. David and Bathsheba's baby got sick. David began to weep and pray and fast. He was praying that somehow God would spare the baby. When the baby died, the servants were so afraid that they said, "David is in such an emotional, fragile condition that we can't tell him his baby died." But when David heard the news, he got up, washed his face, quit praying, quit crying, and asked for something to eat. The servants said, "This doesn't compute. Why now, since the baby died, are you acting normal?"

Notice David's response in chapter 12, verse 22: *He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The LORD may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast?"*

Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.” Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah.

Notice David's statement, “I prayed and asked God to be gracious and let the child live.” And when God wasn't gracious, when the child died, David said, “That's okay; I've come to learn that I can accept the grace of God. When God gives me good gifts, I'll accept them. And when God doesn't give me a good gift, that's okay too.” David learned to trust the gracious gifts of God.

When I pastored a church in Trenton, New Jersey, I made friends with a man who is still my friend today. He had only two years of college, but before I got to Trenton, he got a job with IBM. He started out at the bottom. But as IBM was growing, he progressed through the ranks. After I left Trenton, I still kept in touch. Often I asked him, “Bill, how is it going?” He'd tell me about this promotion and that promotion and about how he liked his work. One day, he told me that he had now reached a new level in the company. He was proud that he had reached this level even though he didn't have a college degree. Six months later I was visiting Bill, and I asked him how his new position was going. He said, “Oh, I don't have that anymore.”

I asked, “Why not?”

He said, “Well, Paul, when I got this new promotion, I didn't realize that they wanted more than extra hours. They wanted my soul. They wanted me there on Saturdays, Sundays, and at nights. Oh, they paid me well, but they wanted me to give my soul to the company. So about three months ago, I went into my boss and said, ‘Is it possible for me to go back to the position I had before this promotion?’ My boss thought I was crazy, and he said, ‘Don't you realize that if you go back to that position you'll never be promoted again? Oh, you'll have job security, but you'll never be promoted again.’ I said, ‘Yes I understand that. I enjoy working for IBM, but I also enjoy my family. I enjoy my daughter. I'm also involved in our church, and I have commitments and

responsibilities there. I'm not going to sacrifice my family or my commitment to Jesus Christ and the church so I can make more money with IBM.' My boss said, 'I don't understand it, but I'll work it out.' So about two months ago I went back to my old position. Now, I put in my forty hours and I come home. I have time for my family, I have time to be involved in the church, and I have time to be what God wants me to be."

That's a man who understands the grace of God. God in his grace had given him a family. God had given him responsibilities in the church. God had given him a good job. He was not so dissatisfied with his lot in life that somehow he had to sell his soul to the corporation.

David's life was changed when he sinned by taking Bathsheba as his wife and killing her husband, because he despised the grace of God to go after that which was not his. The good news is that God forgave him. And David learned that when the baby died, God saw fit at that point not to be gracious. But it was okay with David. He would focus on the good gifts God had given him.

There's a military general who served his God well. He served his commander in chief well, and he served his nation well. In the midst of war, his chief executive said, "Would you come back and give us intelligence reports?" Then, when this general did it, his commander in chief told him to take some R and R.

But he refused. He said, "I can't." And when the chief executive asked him why he couldn't take some R and R, this is what the general said: "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing."

If anyone understood the grace of God, it was Uriah. He was no summer soldier. He had seen men die. He had seen men wounded. But he understood that when God called him to be involved in battle, that was his job. He knew that he could not go back and enjoy that which was not his to enjoy. And it cost him his life. But in 2 Samuel 11–12, in God's eyes, the

hero is Uriah. He was a man who understood that he needed to be happy with what God in his grace had given him at that time in his life, and not to go after that which was not his to have. David failed. Uriah was the hero.

APPENDIX 3

An example of “problem-solution model” of expository narrative sermon (5.3.3.3)

Title: What Do You Do When the Roof Caves in?

Text: Isaiah 7:1-14

Sermon Proposition: God with us can change the meaning of any stressful situation if we respond in faith.

Sermon Manuscript

What kind of week have you had? Pretty good? Pretty bad? Somewhat stressful? Just plain fun? Most of us move through each week with a mixture of the pretty good and the pretty bad, the somewhat stressful and the just plain fun. Life usually comes at us that way: It's a mixed bag.

What is it that causes stress? We can often identify what causes us stress because it's the thing that wakes us up at 3 A.M. and keeps us from going back to sleep. Or it's what keeps us from focusing productively on the things we know we need to do. We all experience stress to some degree. Stress comes from that nagging concern, that gnawing worry that takes its toll on our sleep, on our concentration, and sometimes on our relationships.

Then there are also those times when life seems to give us a pounding with both fists. We feel pummeled by the worst things that can happen.

In 1994, my husband Randall and I were faced with a major decision. We had settled into retirement in Denver, Colorado, when I received a job offer from a seminary on the East Coast. We wrestled with the fact that accepting the job would mean selling our Denver house and moving far from all that was familiar to us—our friends, our family, and our church. We had lived in Denver for fourteen years, but the situation in Philadelphia seemed to be God's next step for us. So we talked. We prayed. We took two months to make the decision to move east.

We put our house on the market, and eight days later we had a contract on

it—so fast that we had to move into temporary housing for two months before the major move east. Moving is stressful. If you've done it, you know what it involves. But a job change is also stressful. I found myself wondering if I'd be able to do what I was being hired to do. Would I meet the expectations of people we hardly knew?

We organized our lives from the big move east. And in the midst of the move came the phone call from France telling us that our only son had just been killed by a drunk driver. With our stateside daughters, we immediately made the long journey to France to deal with the horrible aftermath of a grisly accident.

To say that the roof had caved in on top of us feels like an understatement. The move was very stressful. The imminent job change was highly stressful. Now came the ultimate stress: the death of our only son.

I know as I stand here this morning that I am not alone in facing this level of stress. Many of you have stood at a graveside, overwhelmed by the stress of deep loss. We all live with small stresses every day, and times come when we're raked and harrowed with the pain of major stress. How do we handle such times? Where do we turn? How do we manage?

Back in 1978, two stress researchers named Pearlin and Schooler published the results of a broad research project on how people handle stress. They found that Americans tend to handle stress in one of three different ways.

Some people handle stress by changing the situation. If you're stressed by debt, you change the situation by cutting your spending to the bone until your debts are paid off. If you're stressed by a stubborn habit in your life, you practice saying no to it until the habit is altered. You do what you have to do to change any situation that causes you stress. The problem is that it's not always possible to change the situation. Some situations are beyond our control. How, for example, do you change the situation of an incurable illness or the loss of someone you love deeply?

A second way that some people handle stress is that they manage their emotions about the stressful situation. Managing our emotions means that we

try to talk ourselves out of feelings we're experiencing. We try to convince ourselves that we're not angry when we are. We deny that anything is bugging us and we paste on a happy face. That's the way we try to manage our emotions about situations that cause us stress. The problem with this option is that it's very hard to maintain, and it's also not effective. It's really a bad choice, though many of us use it to cope with stress.

The third way people cope with stress, according to the researchers, is by changing the meaning of the stressful situation. What do the researchers mean by that? What is it to change the meaning of a situation?

There's an intriguing story buried in Isaiah 7 that gives us a case study in major stress. The story is about a king named Ahaz who ruled the tiny kingdom of Judah, made up of two Israelite tribes, Judah and Benjamin. A couple hundred years earlier ten of the twelve tribes of Israel had split off as a separate nation, and the two tribes in the south became the nation of Judah, with Ahaz as its king at the time of our story.

As the narrative opens in Isaiah 7, Ahaz faces a desperate situation: two kings—Rezin from Syria and Pekah from the northern ten tribes known as Israel—have joined hands to overpower Judah. In fact, they have marched up to take Judah's capital, Jerusalem.

In Isaiah 7:2 we read, *So the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.* That's stress with a capital S. Little Judah was besieged by two much more powerful nations. The situation looked hopeless, and Ahaz had no resources with which to change the situation. He faced major stress. In fact, he was quaking in his royal sandals.

God, however, was not blind to the situation. In Isaiah 7:3–6 we see God speaking to the prophet Isaiah with a message to be delivered to the terrified king. God said to Isaiah, “*Go out, you and your son, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. Say to [Ahaz], ‘Be careful, keep calm, and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood. . . . [It's true they] have plotted your ruin, saying, ‘Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves,*

and make the son of Tabeel king over it.”

If you think about it, it almost sounds as if God is counseling Ahaz to manage his emotions about the situation. He said, "Be careful, keep calm, and don't be afraid." Imagine how you'd feel if you had been Ahaz that day. Perhaps you'd hear him saying, "Yeah, sure, keep calm!? You can say that, but you're not about to be torn apart and divided between two cruel conquerors! This is a CRISIS. It's not time for managing my emotions about the situation!"

But this wasn't all God said to the king that day through the prophet Isaiah. He went on (in Isaiah 7:7–9): *Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says, “It will not take place, it will not happen, for the head of Aram [Syria] is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim [Israel's northern ten tribes] will be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only [Pekah]. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”*

That was good news for the king. God offered Ahaz an opportunity to change the meaning of this major stress in his life: he could know that Rezin and Pekah would not triumph over him. In effect, God told Ahaz, "Get some perspective on this situation, Ahaz! Your enemies aren't as powerful as they look! But Ahaz, there is one condition: if you don't stand firm in your faith, you won't stand at all."

The Bible doesn't tell us what Ahaz said or did that day, but from what follows we can make a good guess. The narrator tells us in verses 10-12, *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, “Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”*

Note what happened here. God offered Ahaz a chance to name his terms, any terms, for proof that what he had been told was true. But Ahaz refused! Of course, he couched his refusal in pious language, saying, "I won't put the Lord to the test." But his pious language masked his lack of faith.

What followed shows us an interesting side of Isaiah who is now furious with the king for refusing God's offer. You can hear the prophet's anger in verses 13 and 14 as he responds to the faithless king: *Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

All right, Ahaz. If you won't ask for a sign, you'll get one anyhow: "A virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." God's sign to a quaking king was a miracle, the miracle of Immanuel—God with us. Ahaz faced a stressful situation, one he could not change by his own power. It was a situation so stressful that he couldn't manage his emotions about it either. God offered him the opportunity to change the meaning of the situation: GOD is here. God is with us. Immanuel.

What difference should Immanuel have made for Ahaz? Did he believe the Sovereign Lord that Rezin and Pekah were really nothing to worry about? It didn't look like that. But God had changed the meaning of the situation. He told Ahaz, "There's NOTHING to worry about. So get things into perspective. GOD is with you. What more do you need?"

You can't always change your situation, but Immanuel makes it possible for you to change the meaning of your situation—any situation. How does this work?

A central truth of the Bible is that the sovereign Lord, the creator of the heavens and earth, has power beyond all principalities and powers, and he uses that power for his purposes on behalf of his people.

We see this in God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt against impossible odds.

We see it in God's intervention as Joshua fought against the five kings of the Amorites. God caused the sun to stand still in the heavens so Joshua could finish the battle.

We see it in God's help when David went out against the giant Goliath with only a slingshot and faith in the Lord.

Ahaz must have known his people's history—that the God who is greater than the surging Red Sea, even greater than the sun and moon in the heavens, and certainly greater than the great giant the Philistines could put up against Israel—that God was with Ahaz. Would that enable this king to change the meaning of his situation?

God had told Ahaz, “If you don't stand firm in your faith, you won't stand at all.” Ahaz missed the meaning of the sign, and he missed the opportunity to change the meaning of his situation.

If any of us missed God's sign to Ahaz in Isaiah 7:14, none of us as followers of Jesus Christ could miss it when we read the same words again in Matthew 1:23. Here the gospel writer quotes Isaiah's prophecy verbatim in reporting the angel's conversation with Joseph about Mary's pregnancy: *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they will call His name Immanuel, which is translated 'God with us.'*

Seven hundred years after Ahaz, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of another baby, the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again the people of God were under great stress. Rome occupied and ruled their land, often with arbitrary cruelty. It had been four hundred years since the people had heard the voice of God's prophet in the land. Religion had become a series of empty legalisms and many of the leaders were corrupt.

What could it have meant to the first-century Jews that a baby was born, a baby named Immanuel—God with us? Could that new Word from God change the meaning of their situation?

From John 1:11, we learn that this baby *came unto his own, but his own received him not.*

His own—they knew the history of their people and the miracles of their God.

His own—they knew the Scriptures.

His own—they knew Isaiah 7:14.

But they did not receive him. They missed the opportunity to change the meaning of their situation.

You and I face stressful situations at the turn of the century and of the millennium. Is there a word of hope and promise for us as there was for a faithless king or a faithless people more than two thousand years ago? The gospel writer John wrote that *He [Jesus Christ, the Word] came to his own and his own did not receive him, . . . BUT as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name*. If you and I have been joined to the family of God by faith, this promise is for US: God is with US.

Immanuel, God with us, can change the meaning of every situation if we respond in faith. That hasn't changed over the centuries. God had told Ahaz, "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all." First-century Jews like the seeking Pharisee Nicodemus learned from Jesus' lips that eternal life from the eternal God could not be his apart from faith in the Christ who was sent into the world as Immanuel, God with us.

Faith in the savior of the world—Immanuel, God with us—is still the prerequisite today. If we do not stand firm in our faith, we will not stand at all. When stress pummels us and we find ourselves down for the count—when everything looks hopeless—then faith in the promise of Immanuel can make the important difference.

The fact that God is with us doesn't necessarily change the situation, but it does change the meaning of the situation. No situation is ever the same if you believe that God is with you in it. But it's not enough to say, "God is with US." We must each remind ourselves that God is with ME.

Israel's greatest king, David, knew stress:

- He lost a child in death.
- Another son rebelled against him and enlisted others in a rebellion.
- He was betrayed by a close friend.
- He was chased by a jealous king and treated as an outlaw for ten long years

Yet this king—dogged by severe stresses during much of his life—wrote a great affirmation: “The Lord is MY shepherd . . . Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, FOR THOU ART WITH ME.”

Do you believe it? Do you really believe it? God is with US. God is with ME. Whatever you go through, you can know the promise. But you must make it personal: God is with ME. The promise of God's presence changes the meaning of every stressful situation. And that reality changes the meaning of all of life. It's a fact that makes a radical difference in the living of our days.

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