

Introduction

- If main goal of preaching is biblical faithfulness, then proper exegesis hits the mark. Lots of truth.
- But if **main goal is God's Word changing lives (conversion and sanctification)**, then much more is needed than just biblical faithfulness. Application is necessary.
- Effective preaching is biblical faithfulness + insightful application
- Paul states goal of preaching, the word of God comes with power, with Holy Spirit and deep conviction (1Th. 2:13; 1:5). Simply speaking truth is too little. Goal is people **encounter God himself. It will change the way they live.**
- **Most preachers say application is weakest part of their preaching.**
- Preaching truth without application leaves people in hard place. They heard truth but not helped by it much. Hasn't strengthened faith or warmed hearts or drawn them close to God. Didn't stir us up. People don't want to criticize sermon full of truth but reality is that it didn't make much difference.
- Preachers struggle to apply sermon because they think it's something we should add to the text. It's how we finish it off, the few suggestions at the end. But explanation and application are two crucial parts of preaching. Another reason application is poor is because it is hard work. Hard to be fresh. Hard to both wound and heal, sing and sting. Hard to speak to many kinds of people.
- So most preachers use the "bolt on" application stuck at the end. Vague, predictable. "more". Love more, serve more, pray more etc. Problem is that this does injustice to richness of God's word. Plus, it distorts the gospel. Most preachers are not taught *how* to apply the text. Most have a huge exegesis toolbox but a very small application toolbox. If application works, great, but often it doesn't.
- Others are afraid to put too much emphasis on application. They don't want to improperly apply. They then just trust the HS to apply it. But this is wrong, as the HS uses means.
- Others say application is too culturally inappropriate. How dare us tell others what to do!
- Others over-intellectualize the truth. It's all about knowing truth.
- Lecturing is about information; preaching is about transformation. The latter applies, pressing truth into people's lives. Explanation vs. proclamation. But in any field, the best teaching is like preaching, with infectious passion. Sparks an interest, not just facts.
- Holistic application is the goal. Not just leaving with a script for medication but a plan for eating, resting, exercising. **Whole sermon is geared toward people walking away saying God has dealt with them. Challenged, convicted, changed them.** We don't just appeal to the will but the whole person.
- You need to change your mindset for holistic application from beginning to end. Must learn how to drill truths down into people's lives. This is not only for a few preaching giants.

1. Beginner's Guide to Application

1. Application means to make use of something. People need to feel the sting and taste sweetness during preaching. Not detached.
2. Good illustration: Dt. 5:2-3, God made a covenant with us at Horeb. But not really, it was with forefathers who died in wilderness. But point was that what was said then was for us now.
3. The preaching of prophets and Jesus always directly at people he was addressing. They are occasional sermons, always to people at hand. Paul's sermons were distinct because of different audiences. Biblical preaching is truth applied.
4. Distinction between practical application and heart application. Former addresses how to live. Latter deals with underlying attitudes, motivations etc.
5. **Preaching usually only flourishes in a loving, holy, evangelistic, prayerful, Spirit-filled community. Where the Spirit is, preaching will succeed.**
6. Preaching is proclamation of the truth of the text applied holistically to the lives of those that hear it. Addressed to whole of person. Needs Spirit.
7. Formula: when preaching, (1) spend much time in the there and then aspect of text. What it meant then. (2) then timeless truths. "You shall not murder". Not same as Lev. 19:27 and hair cutting. Just move up one or two levels of abstraction. If too many levels, sermon is always about the glory of God.

8. Haggai 1 is good illustration. After learning point of chapter, applications could get out of hand and too broad. At the very least, application is that priorities often go awry. Timeless truth. Right priorities? Text needs there and then, a timeless truth but also a here and now. Three parts. Thesis: "God challenges our priorities because Christ's glory is at stake."

2. The Living Word: It has Work to Do

1. What makes a good sermon? Complex. Aristotle's three marks helpful: logos, ethos, and pathos (all three in 1Th. 1:5!, see Chappell).
2. How should we start preparing sermon? Prayer, word studies etc?
3. Process is not so much us working on the text but the text working on us.
4. What does God's word do? teach, rebuke, correct, and train (2Tm. 3:16); rebuke and encourage and correct (2Tm. 4:2); strengthen, encourage and comfort (1Co. 14:3); penetrate, judge (Heb. 4:12-13); highlights sin (Rm. 7). Four core purposes of Bible:
 1. **Teach/rebuke**: this is still application. All truth is practical but not always immediately so. Child learning times tables doesn't quickly know its application. Some truth is immediately practical, like "crocodiles in river" while in river.
 2. **train for godliness**: this is often "how to". Not just we must pray, but how to pray. Jesus did this. Don't pray this way, but pray this way. Give practical ways to love wife. Not just give to church, but practical ways like budgeting, planned giving, specific ways etc, like Paul does in 2Cor. 8-9.
 3. **Test state of hearts and convict**. Probably most neglected, though long a hallmark. Using "tests" is immense value in helping people examine own hearts. "How is your prayer life? Is it growing and healthy? Have you been slipping back?" These are fine, but will have greater traction if backed by tests. Give marks of a healthy prayer life so people can test themselves. or indicators of early stages of backsliding so people can examine their own experience. Most important is test for genuine conversion. "How do I know I am saved?" plus genuine work of HS, doer not just hearer. E.g. **"Check yourself against these genuine marks of humility"**. First, you readily confess sin. Second, constant sense of unworthiness. Third, in every day situation you are prepared to serve others. Fourth, you listen to others. You listen to their problems, advice, opinions.
 4. **Encourage/exhort**: This is most common. Paul urged to exhort (1Th. 5:14). Easier for preachers to sing rather than sing. We've got to hit people hard. We don't want to be people-pleasers in pulpit. DMLJ said if people don't misunderstand you're preaching of the gospel as to a free license, you should check your preaching. Author says kids always did piano best when he was positive. Tell your congregation how much you love them and how much you appreciate their growth etc.
5. **Ask the text what it is doing: teaching, rebuking, training, warning, convicting, testing, comforting** etc. Texts usually have one or two of these. Romans 8:28-30 teaches and encourages. Dt. 16:1-8 commands and exhorts. Jn. 13:35 is a test. 1Tm. 3:1-7 teaches and urges us to strive.
6. So application is not *adding* to the text but drawing out from the text. Application has two sides: truth to teach and errors to rebuke; negative and positive. Haggai 1 yields a good time to give tests. Psalm 73 is another good example. Find timeless truth (thesis). This is teachable (true satisfaction are found not in lifestyle of ungodly but relationship with God." More here and now though. Preaching proposition should be more narrow: "We'll never find satisfaction when we chase after things in this world, but only when we chase after closeness to God." There is training, correcting and teaching in this passage.
7. Homiletical rules are servants, not masters.
8. Make sure you find the general tone and now miss it with focusing on warning etc. Eph. 1:3-14 is very didactic. Timeless theme same as original. "Praise Trinity for including us in his glorious plan." **Don't use it to test and convict** (Are you praising God enough?)
9. So, first stage of preaching process is discerning the intended purpose of the passage, which will help us apply.

3. The Life of the Preacher: A Full Reservoir

1. Sermon takes years to prepare. STAGE ONE is the Living Word. STAGE TWO is the Life of the Preacher. Two inputs to sermon, the text and the preacher. If our reservoir is large, brimming with ideas. Possibilities buzz. We make all kinds of connections to books, life, doctrine etc. Keller says many of the best sermons are discovered, not developed.
2. Ever wondered how great preachers of the past were able to preach six, eight, ten times a week? We struggle with two. Reservoirs were huge.
3. Filling the tank
 1. Filled with walk with God. Brooks says that spiritual vitality is so important that it can bring great preaching despite a poor sermon and also vice versa. Stalker: "There are many rules for praying in public, and a competent minister will not neglect them; but there is one rule worth all the rest put together, and it is this: Be a man of prayer yourself; and then the congregation will feel, as you open your lips to lead their devotions, that you are entering an accustomed presence and speaking to a well-known Friend." Eugene Peterson encouraged the "unbusy pastor" that doesn't see his worth in being busy, but rather praying, preaching and listening. If we don't do this, our soul withers. If our walk is slight and superficial, our preaching will be too.
 2. Experience life richly. Adam put in garden, not a desert. Animals, exotic fruit, sex. Enjoying life helps our preaching and connects us to congregation. Jesus' parables came from the world.
 3. Close observers of life. Everything is grist for preaching mill. People go to those that understand life. Go to preacher how to live life well, how to live and die well. Older writers call this experimental preaching.
 4. Knowledge of theology, culture and church.
4. When these four happen, sparks fly. Text takes off. Peripatetic sermon prep.
4. **The Lives of Our Hearers: the Heart is the Target**
 1. STAGE THREE: The Lives of the Hearers. When we love God with heart, soul, strength and mind, we love God with everything. End goal of all of preaching is to draw people to love God with all of their heart.
 2. How do we preach to the heart? Heart has many faculties: mind, conscience, will, passions. Mind-->bottom is passions; between is conscience and will.
 3. Parts of Heart:
 1. Mind: Rational center. Unregenerate mind is lost; We must speak intelligently to mind to edify
 2. Conscience: smoke alarm of the heart. The more we reject conscience, the more it will dampen alarm. The truth enters the heart via the mind and must be pressed on the conscience.
 3. Will: Choices are function of the will. Always reflects state of our heart. Most preachers go straight to the will. They only tell people what to do.
 4. Passions: Feel things deeply. it can overwhelm reason, like the gambler that can't stop. Advertisers appeal to our passions, not our minds.
 4. Heart change:
 1. Danger of only mind: arid intellectualism
 2. Danger of only conscience: manipulation
 3. Danger of only will: legalistic, decisionism
 4. Danger of only passions: empty emotionalism
 5. Order: Mind first appeals to conscience and will, then the passions.
 6. We don't merely *want* the right things. We want them to feel the right thing. Not just know sin but to feel a burden for sin.
 7. When people come to hear preaching they don't just want information. They want to *feel*. They want to be encouraged and inspired, to have love for God kindled and hearts reordered.
 8. How do we do this? No shortcuts. We need to ask questions. Is the text: teaching/rebuking, training/correcting, testing/convicting, exhorting/encouraging?
 9. Mind questions are: what are truths mind must believe? How can I explain them clearly?

10. Conscience questions. What part of the text convicts and challenges? What must they feel conviction over? How do people have seared conscience on this? How can I bring conviction?
11. Will questions: what response do I want? How should it look? But if no imperative, don't force into pray more, love more applications.
12. Passion questions: how should this text make us feel? How should this stir and inspire us?
13. One text will not address all of these. That would be overwhelming.
14. Go after the idols of the heart, anything that rules me over God. Very subtle. Can be good things. Demand sacrifices, time, money, focus. Could be our image, entertainment, money etc. They grow over time. Appetite increases. They always fail us. Don't satisfy. Aftertaste is appalling. Left feeling empty and cheated. We must probe the heart to find these?
 1. What excites people? What motivates them? What gives them a reason to live?
15. without conviction (conscience), there will be no incentive to change (will). Urge true repentance which consists of confession and change. Must help people to smash their idols.
16. Good example of the four items applied to Haggai 1 and Psalm 73 (challenge chief idol today: glamour of a carefree, moneyed lifestyle...')
17. Must resist tendency to make application simply telling people what to do

5. **The Lives of Our Hearers: One Size Doesn't Fit All**

1. The variety of people in our churches is astounding and diverse. Various conditions of the heart too.
2. No virtue in being dated. Not spiritual to be old-fashioned or culturally-anachronistic.
3. Perkins spoke of seven categories of hearers. Bridges spoke of 5 categories of hearers. (1) infidel, (2) ignorant, (3) self-righteous (rich young ruler), (4) false professor, (5) under conviction. Needs milk, not meat. Keller gives lots of kinds of Christians: (1) new, (2) mature and growing, (3) afflicted, (4) tempted, (5) immature, (6) depressed, (7) backslidden. Knowing what category will help us apply.
4. There's another spiritual condition grid: not doing well and knows it (needs biblical teaching and motivation), not doing well and doesn't know it (they need to be shaken up to repentance), doing well and doesn't know it (they need consolation and encouragement), doing well and knows it (encourage them to continue on).
5. The way to speak to different people is by saying directly who you are speaking to. Also, tell stories.
6. Paul knew the spiritual conditions of the churches he visited. Not the same letter or sermon. Same with John with seven churches; one receives no commendation; some no criticism.
7. In Antioch Pisidia, mostly Jews so gives lots of OT. In Acts 14, totally different. Doesn't quote any Bible verses. Again, Acts 17 totally different. Speaking to philosophers that love debate. Builds bridges. He didn't flatter or give them what they wanted to hear. Don't hawk your favorite sermon and multiple churches. Slapping standard call at each.
8. Haggai 1 is a perfect example of people not doing well and they don't know it. In Psalm 73, he's not doing well and knows it. Backsliding. Jealous. There's also the arrogant unbeliever. Envied by Psalmist. Trendy clothes. Third group is doing well and knows it. Ask people which category they are in.
9. Now, NINE ways of making applicatory truth sting and sing, nine ways to make all these applications really live.

6. **Applications that Live: shooting sharp arrows**

1. Don't take short-cuts, moving right from explanation to exhortation. (1) state it, (2) ground it, (3) impress it, (4) apply it.
2. Great illustration of pastor who explains texts and says: "Isn't that encouraging. If it doesn't encourage you, you don't know grace!" Well, you can't command encouragement. Comfort me, don't tell me to be comforted. But how do we impress truth?
3. Lewis says, don't say something is terrible, describe so it is terrifying. Don't say delightful, make us see the delight. How?
4. Ways:
 1. Appeal to People's Own Judgment: call on conscience as witness. "I'm sure you all agree that..." or "don't you find that..."

2. Anticipate and answer objections: this increases our cred; we know their world; we're not afraid to answer hard questions.
3. Give reasons, motivations, and incentives: preachers shouldn't nag, berate or scold. Ask, why should we do this? What rewards will come? How will this aid the church? what will this disobedience bring? Motivations (1) people will take you more seriously, (2) engage their minds, (3) more reasonable, (4) shows consequences, both positive and negative
4. Be specific, pointed and direct: just speaking of sexual temptation is general enough that it won't sting audience. Be specific. Be careful to give range of options, don't force application to: you must get rid of TV or you must have prayer journal. Do you get your applications together in a hurry? Do you use vague applications?
5. Use illustrations for both clarity and impact: Nathan used an illustration (story) effectively with David. Jesus and Paul did this all the time.
6. Provide Testimonies to the truth: In general, self-deprecation works and self-congratulation doesn't.
7. Show what it looks like in practice: create a video in their mind. "Picture Tom...
8. Use fresh, vivid words: there is a difference between oral and written communication. (1) remove hard to understand words, (2) use words in short sentences, (3) assigned yourself banned words, (4) use descriptive words (rusted, blue, ford escort), (5) use analogies and images. One way to help you with this is preaching from a manuscript. Write it and then discard it at preaching.
9. Speak personally and passionately: "The best matter will scarcely move them, if it be not movingly delivered." Olyott: "Spiritual urgency is the fruit of a single conviction..." "It is that I have the truth that men and women need to hear." Love the people. Paul said the people were his joy and crown.

5. Full preaching model on p. 172

7. **Preaching the Kingdom**

1. Amazingly sad stat about the porn industry on p. 180.
2. All believers are called in three way. To faith, to holiness and to particular life circumstances.

8. **Engaging with stories**

1. Pros and cons of preaching narrative.
2. Challenge to apply narratives. Descriptive, not prescriptive.
3. God is the hero of every story, so be theo-centric in your reading. Don't always look for examples to follow but at God's action.
4. Great example of God-centered interpretation in Judges 13 and Manoah and his wife. Be Christocentric and find redemptive historical view.
5. Four great themes:
 1. Conflict; struggle, discipline; triumph.
 2. Great example in pp. 209-213; 7 applications from the Judges 13 text.

9. **Preaching the "Ives"**

1. Indicatives invite us to enjoy God and what he has done
 1. Preach God. World needs it.
 2. Great page on p. 219. Life is hard. (1) Show the wonder of God's works. (2) Find the implications. "If this is true, it implies that..." Implications from Rom. 8:28-30 is that we need not fear if people wrong us. (3) use "can" illustrations. Instead of "you must love, honor, tell etc.", say "you *can* do these things because of the indicatives."
2. Imperatives call for obedience
 1. Lots of doctrine in early parts of Romans and Ephesians; lots of imperatives in second half. Indicatives first, then imperatives. Always connect the two.
 2. Exhort boldly and frequently. Urge constantly.
3. Subjunctives teach us to work together with others for Christs

10. **Prepare Holistically**

1. Author recommends 12 hours per sermon for prep. Most spend majority of time on exegesis, and much smaller time on writing manuscript. Almost no time for application. We end of lecturing. Application should be priority.

2. We must find the here and now and not just there and then. Most commentaries do the latter.
3. "If you can pray a passage, chances are you can apply it." (239).
4. Four Sources of Applicatory Material
 1. God's Word --> (1) Teach/rebuke, (2) train/correct, (3) test/convict, (4) Encourage/exhort
 2. Preacher's life --> (1) walk with God, (2) life experience, (3) Observation, (4) knowledge
 3. Heart of the hearer --> Mind, conscience, will, passions
 4. Spiritual condition of hearer --> going well/not going well grid
5. "Structure is not the end game. Impact is." (241)
6. Three key elements:
 1. Engagement: build rapport from first sentence onward. Usually done with the here and now. Today's issues and then work back. Fire a few arrows in intro. If intro doesn't address question: "what difference does all this make?"
 2. Proportion: if 90% is there and then, little impact. Congregation doesn't care much about exegetical details. Want to see the house and some building highlights, not timber prices etc. Ratio?: Intro mostly HAN, main points about 1/3 HAN, and conclusion mostly HAN. Clearly worded main points are invaluable. Simple, second person, imperatives, connected to main point. Make the main point preach.
 3. Progression: apps increase in breadth, depth, intensity, passion as sermon progresses.
 4. "When I'm listening to a good sermon, there comes a point when I lose track of all the people around me. As the preacher speaks, I experience God talking to me about me. The time for explanation has passed; the time for application has come." (Haddon Robinson, 246)
 5. Writ as if preaching.
7. Applicatory Delivery
 1. Clear mind: crystal clear main point.
 2. Clear conscience: confess sin
8. If goal is faithful explanation of the text, then exegetically sound sermon is good sermon. But it's more than that. Must be faithful to preacher's calling to proclaim the truths of the text in the right way, rebuking, exhorting etc. Good preaching will always bring a response. Careful of how you measure results and fruit.
9. Six Levels of Application (from more obvious of exhorting to more complex of stirring godly passions)
 1. What to do (e.g. pray often)
 2. How to do it (praying out loud, prayer list)
 3. What it looks like (example of Elijah)
 4. Why you should do it (reasons for hard work in prayer)
 5. Where you are (tests to measure prayer life)
 6. What drives it (prayers not driven by fear or pride)
10. Thesis: living application is practical, penetrating and varied.

Read:

- Doriani: *Putting the Truth to Work*