

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

**The Paradigm of Personal Application:
A Method for Cross-Generational Sermon Application at Cambria Baptist Church**

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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God tasked pastors with the command to preach the Word to conform God's people to His image. In completing this task, pastors seek to apply God's Word to God's people. The unique context of each congregant's life complicates this task. As a healthy, rural church in southern Michigan, Cambria Baptist Church maintains a multigenerational congregation. Because a broad age group attends the Sunday service, the pastors at Cambria cannot specifically apply the sermon to each situation. Therefore, the purpose of this DMIN action research project was to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon. The study combined the disciplines of homiletical grids and listening theory to create and implement the paradigm. The goal was that each congregant would arrive at specific applications from the message using the paradigm. The project's thesis statement was that if the paradigm of personal application was taught and applied, then the congregants of each generation could effectively apply the sermon to their personal life. After four weeks of training in sermon application and using the paradigm, the twenty-six participants representing the multigenerational church used the paradigm in the worship service. The study used questionnaires, group discussions, and interviews to test the paradigm's effectiveness in leading to specific sermon applications across generations. The study resulted in a working paradigm that can be adapted to multiple situations to enhance specific sermon applications across all generations.

Keywords: sermon application, applicational grid, listening theory, multigenerational, self-talk, application paradigm.

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Abbreviations

CBC	<i>Cambria Baptist Church</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
GED	<i>General Educational Development</i>
HURIER	<i>Hearing, Understanding, Remembering, Interpreting, Evaluating, Responding</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
MATERRS	<i>Mental stimulus, Awareness, Translation, Evaluation, Recall, Response, Staying connected</i>
PPA	<i>Paradigm of Personal Application</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Preaching stands as the center of the Christian worship service. Through His Word, God commands His representatives (both prophets in the Old Covenant and elders in the New Covenant) to herald His Word to His people. Throughout history, God's representatives stood before God's people and spoke God's words. Further, God expected His people to listen intently to these words.

However, this heralding holds a specific purpose. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul informs Timothy that Scripture's purpose in the believer's life is to create an understanding of doctrine, reproof against sin, correction to understand how to overcome this sin, and instruction in living a righteous life. Peter informs the church that the Word contains everything needed for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). From these texts, the Christian concludes that life change and conformity to Christ stand as the purpose for heralding God's Word.

In light of preaching's purpose, the minister must intentionally seek to help God's people apply the message presented in their life context. Nevertheless, each lives in a unique life context. Thus, the specific application of the message varies from person to person. As a result, the preacher cannot cover every possible application in his presentation. The preacher's task must work further to help the individual understand the method to rightly apply God's Word to their specific context.

Many Christians do not understand how to accomplish the task of application rightly and are thus left to hope that some turn of phrase will inspire them and create conviction in their life.

This thesis project presents a different training method for Christians at Cambria Baptist Church through a helpful paradigm for biblical application. Using this paradigm will create self-talk in the Christian through the message resulting in a thoughtful application.¹

Ministry Context

Cambria Baptist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ through instruction, teaching, ministry, and fellowship and to declare God's glory to all people. As such, the church seeks to build itself around God's Word in every aspect of ministry. When the church gathers for corporate worship, they center the liturgy around singing God's Word, praying God's Word, reading God's Word, preaching God's Word, and picturing God's Word in the ordinances for the purpose of living God's Word.²

History of Cambria Baptist Church

Established in 1899, Cambria Baptist Church has maintained a gospel presence in Hillsdale County, Michigan, for over 120 years. Located in a small village, the church struggled through the first half-century of its existence, rarely consisting of more than forty members. Through this time, a series of pastors led the church, with few staying more than five years.

In 1949, the church absorbed the neighboring Frontier Gospel Chapel and appeared to stabilize. However, a fire destroyed the church building two years later. Undeterred, the membership rebuilt the church in a new location across the street. This determination to worship God as a family continues to be a hallmark.³

¹ Self-talk is the inner conversation that takes place while listening. See Definitions below.

² D. A. Carson, ed., *Worship By The Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 106.

³ The information for this section can be found in Hugh Dunton, *Historical Facts and Stories about Cambria Township* (Cambria, MI: The Mother's Auxiliary of Boy Scouts Troop 248, 1961).

Unfortunately, the continual series of short-term pastors continued for another two decades. Nevertheless, despite the fluctuating leadership, the church continued to survive. When a second fire destroyed the rebuilt church in 1962, the church, characterized by a determination to worship God, again remained steadfast and rebuilt.⁴

In 1971, the Reverend Donald Harkey accepted the call to pastor the Cambria Baptist Church. Remaining in that position until 2016, he provided the much-needed stability the church lacked over the years. Numerical growth and grand building projects marked Reverend Harkey's ministry. Through his ministry, the church became one of the largest churches in the county.

God gifted Reverend Harkey with a gift for evangelism. The church grew through his four decades of ministry due to new believers and the excitement for this evangelism. At the height of attendance, any given Sunday would see up to four hundred people sitting in the pews. Reverend Harkey's heart for the gospel provided the stability needed to see the church begin to thrive.

A fantastic by-product of this fervent evangelism was a multi-generational church. As Reverend Harkey did not discriminate against age when sharing the gospel, the church grew in every age group. Often, extended families would attend together, from grandparents to grandchildren. Through this, the church avoided the age-centric problem which marks many churches.

Unfortunately, two church splits that gutted the membership also marked his ministry. Those who endured the splits share that a lack of understanding of the authority and application of God's Word was the leading cause. Consequently, those who remained through the splits developed a desire to learn to apply God's Word rightly so they could overcome any future conflict.

⁴ "Four Units Battle Church Blaze, Save Rest of Cambria," *Hillsdale Daily News*, November 24, 1962.

These church splits set the table for the project. With a strong desire to apply God's Word, the congregants long for deep preaching. Further, they intensely desire the ability to take that preaching and make a direct connection to their lives and spiritual growth. However, the splits reveal that they did not understand how to apply Scripture directly to their context in the past properly. They need tools to help them understand the practical implications of the biblical message.

The project moderator arrived as the church's pastor in 2017. When he arrived, he discovered several essential characteristics of Cambria Baptist Church. He discovered the multi-generational nature of the church. He also discovered a church in crisis from the last split. Furthermore, he discovered a church with a strong desire to learn and apply God's Word due to their survival of the split. As a result, he spent the first five years of ministry focusing on discipleship, training in application, and shoring up the ministry.

Through his first years of ministry at Cambria Baptist Church, the project moderator discovered a tension in preaching that he desired to address. Due to the historical instability of the church, the lack of profound theological teaching and training, and the splits under the previous pastor's tenure, the congregants do not naturally make proper direct connections from the biblical text to their daily lives. The preacher must fulfill his role to equip the saints for application.⁵ As a result, the pastors seek to make as many applications as possible in the message to address the text to the broadest group of people. However, the church's demographics present an insurmountable challenge in this endeavor.

⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 549.

Demographics of Cambria Baptist Church

Located in Hillsdale County, Michigan, Cambria Baptist Church contains unique education and age demographics. These demographics challenge the preacher's ability to apply God's Word to each individual's situation. Without understanding these demographics, the minister cannot shepherd his people. Though Cambria Baptist Church presents a unique situation, the solution to application in this church may be helpful for other churches.

Although Hillsdale County is the home of Hillsdale College, Cambria Baptist Church historically served as the church home for those who have not sought ongoing education. In line with the county census statistics, only 14 percent of the regular attendees hold advanced degrees.⁶ However, all the adult attendees hold a GED or high school diploma. Many members have been trained in their industry through various company training programs.

The education of the average church member impacts the method of application the preacher must employ. As most of the church has not received training through advanced degrees, most have not received training to analyze and apply what they read. This challenge is compounded by the reality that few congregants enjoy reading and do not spend significant time reading literature. Consequently, they have not strengthened their ability to comprehend what they read. As a result, they do not naturally connect themes and applications through the Bible. Therefore, the preacher must walk the congregants through the steps to analyze and apply God's Word.

Further, accustomed to evangelistic-style messages, the members are not grounded in theology. Many hold only a surface-level understanding of the theological themes in Scripture. Most do not see the grand story of Scripture. Instead, they view biblical texts as detached from

⁶ "2020 Census Quick Facts," US Census Bureau, last edited July 1, 2022, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/hillsdalecountymichigan>.

one another. They often fail to apply Scripture properly without the training to connect thoughts in the text and draw those thoughts into their life. Consequently, they fall prey to the temptation to twist texts towards applications that fit their understanding of their life without regard to the text's context in the broader segment of Scripture.

The age demographic represents the most important demographic for this project. Cambria Baptist Church represents a multi-generational church with 167 regular attendees in 2023. Numerous grandparents attend with their children and grandchildren. Children under eighteen represent the largest generation in the church, representing 32 percent of the congregation. Those over the age of sixty comprise the next largest group consisting of 22 percent of the congregation. The generation consisting of those between the ages of thirty-one and forty represents 15.5 percent of the congregation. Young adults between the ages of nineteen and thirty represent 11 percent of the congregation. Those between the ages of forty-one and fifty represent 10 percent of the congregation. The congregation is rounded out by the generation between the ages of fifty-one and sixty, representing 9 percent of the congregation. As one can observe, the congregation is evenly distributed between the age groups.

This unique multi-generational nature of Cambria Baptist church pictures the church's health and determination, which marked the ministry through the fires and splits. Further, each generation cares deeply about the other. It is not unusual to see an elderly member sitting with and talking to a child. The youth seek to minister to the adults. The adults graciously and generously give their time and finances to ensure the children and youth ministries thrive. Often, older men and women counsel new parents through their struggles. The young child worships next to the elderly saint. The congregants maintain a cross-generational love, respect, and care for one another.

As a result, the church does not cater to any single age demographic. Instead, the church intentionally seeks a multi-generational ministry. While the church employs some age-targeted ministries with those under eighteen, most of the ministry remains intentionally multi-generational. Those age-targeted ministries are marked by multi-generational staff leading the ministries.

One must understand the unique multi-generational facet of Cambria Baptist Church to understand the need for and nature of this thesis project. As the minister proclaims God's Word to the church, the audience consists of a broad array of age groups. Thus, the minister faces the impossible task of seeking to apply the selected text to the entire multi-generational congregation. Focusing on one specific generation naturally leaves out 80 percent of the gathered group. Any attempt to address the text specifically to each generation creates an unwieldy length to the message.

Finally, the Sunday morning worship service serves as the central gathering of the church body. While the church offers a children's church for elementary and preschool-aged children, many families choose to keep their children in the service. As a result, the Sunday service will encapsulate the entirety of the congregational age range. The preacher presents his message to the retired saint, the middle-aged saint, the new parent, the newly married, and the minors with the same words. This ministry context leads to the problem presented for the project.

Problem Presented

The act of preaching holds a central role in the church. While conveying information to the audience consists of a portion of the preaching event, this is not the goal.⁷ Whenever a faithful pastor prepares a message, he desires that the Word impact the everyday life of his

⁷ Murray Capill, *The Heart Is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014), 12.

congregation.⁸ As a rule, congregants agree with this desire. God's people expect spiritual growth as a result of the preaching of God's Word.⁹

Healthy churches consist of congregants from all walks of life.¹⁰ Because a healthy church consists of multiple generations, the applications of the sermon vary significantly between the diverse congregants. The even age distribution of attendees at Cambria Baptist Church challenges the preacher as he seeks to apply the message across various demographics. The eighty-year-old grandmother has little in common with the nineteen-year-old college student. The twenty-five-year-old new parent is at a different stage of life than the fifty-five-year-old member thinking about retirement. As a result, the pastor cannot apply the message to every situation in every sermon. The onus for application then falls upon the individual listeners.

One does not need to serve as a pastor long before understanding that few congregants possess any framework for applying the sermon each Sunday. Because he cannot address every application for a multi-generational congregation, the pastor hopes that some carefully crafted statement will capture listeners' attention and prick their conscience.¹¹ Cambria Baptist Church is like every multi-generational church. The problem at Cambria Baptist Church is that the multi-generational congregation does not understand how to apply sermons to their situation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon. The healthy church

⁸ Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 62.

⁹ Lori J. Carrell, *Preaching That Matters: Reflective Practices for Transforming Sermons* (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 48.

¹⁰ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 83.

¹¹ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 70.

consists of many generations engaging in the preaching event. The text's direct application varies widely between each generation. As the pastor cannot directly apply the text to every situation in a multi-generational context, research must explore another avenue by which the pastor may assist the congregation.

This DMIN project seeks to supply the congregants with a paradigm of personal application to train them to listen carefully to the message and properly apply it to their direct context. The project moderator will train the participants to use the paradigm and evaluate its effectiveness. This paradigm of personal application creates self-talk in the listener throughout the sermon resulting in conscious and intentional application to their situation. Further, this paradigm creates specific applications rather than general truth platitudes.

This tool consists of insightful, thought-provoking questions and categories for the congregant to answer as they listen to the message. Through these questions, the congregant will remain engaged throughout the message and move from a passive observer to an active listener. Using the questions will train the congregant in analyzing and applying literature. It will demonstrate the practical nature of every text of Scripture. As a result, it will bring out the glorious purpose of Scripture to produce a life-change in the believer's heart.

Further, this question paradigm will apply to all faithful messages preached from the Word of God. The paradigm's structure will allow the user to transition the paradigm between every encounter with God's Word. Thus, the paradigm can be translated to every aspect of the church's preaching and teaching ministry and used in the believer's private study. When used properly, the paradigm will assist the congregant in each encounter with God's Word for a proper, specific application.

Basic Assumptions

The most concrete underlying assumption of the project was that the congregants of Cambria Baptist Church would joyfully support and engage in the project. This support would consist of volunteering to participate in the project. Further, the congregants would fulfill the requirements of the research questionnaires. Finally, the church would grant the project moderator the time to complete the project in addition to his regular ministry duties.

Second, this project assumes the authority of Scripture. That is, the Bible has the final and authoritative word on all life matters. When Scripture is read, the very words of God are read. As such, those words hold significance and authority over all else that one might deem authoritative.¹² Neither science, feeling, human experience, nor any other document is allowed to precede God's Word.¹³

Because God's Word is the authority over the believer, this project further assumes that those who hold God's Word as authoritative desire to conform their lives to God's Word.¹⁴ The Apostle John reveals that the desire to walk in the light (live in truth) marks God's people (1 John 1:5). A desire to live in sin is incompatible with the Christian life.¹⁵ Claiming to be a Christian is not enough for eternal life. Instead, for Christians to stand confident in their relationship with God, they must live in light of the truth of God's Word by applying it to their life.¹⁶ Therefore, John reveals that a desire to apply God's Word rightly marks a genuine believer.

¹² Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Publishing, 1948), 119.

¹³ Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means For You and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2016), 43.

¹⁴ Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 13.

¹⁵ Ian Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 109.

¹⁶ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 63.

Third, this project assumes that expositional preaching is the best way to provoke application in the believer's life. John Stott argues, "It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching."¹⁷ By its very nature, preaching must include an explanation of the text, which explains its meaning and applies it to the believer's life. This is expository preaching.¹⁸ Further, preaching that rightly exposits the Word exalts Christ in the believer's life.¹⁹

In addition to expository preaching, this project assumes that the Holy Spirit illumines the believer for application. The Apostle Paul reveals that the non-Christian cannot understand the things of God contained in His Word because they can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit who dwells within the Christian (1 Cor 2:14-16). Natural reason and human intellect cannot understand God's ways, purposes, and desires. Only the Holy Spirit reveals divine realities.²⁰ However, as the Holy Spirit dwells within the believer, the Apostle Paul explains that the Holy Spirit reveals God's truth to the believer through His Word.

However, a fifth assumption of this project is that different generations view life and Scripture differently. Because each individual holds unique life experiences due to age and background, these experiences color the believer's approach and application of God's Word. While the general application of Scripture might be the same for every believer, the specific outworking of the application will vary from person to person. The married middle-aged adult caring for their aging parents will not apply the command to honor one's parents like the pre-teen

¹⁷ John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 91.

¹⁸ John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1992), 11.

¹⁹ John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 51.

²⁰ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 98.

child will apply the command. Thus the preacher must be aware of the wide range of specific applications of each text he preaches.

Finally, the assumption that Christians lack the necessary insight and tools to conclude these specific applications complicates the preaching event. Many believers perceive a great gulf between God's Word and their lives.²¹ As a result, Stott notes that the preacher must be aware that the congregant may be unable to ask the right questions to correctly apply the text.²² This inability creates tension for the minister to explain the text but also to apply the text as broadly as possible. This project seeks to answer this tension by moving the onus for application from the preacher to the congregant through a paradigm of personal application.

Definitions

This project seeks to assist the congregants of Cambria Baptist Church in Hillsdale, Michigan, to thoughtfully analyze and apply the preaching and teaching of God's Word to their context. Throughout this project, some terms are used, often interchangeably, to describe the process of this analysis and application and the significant reasons this process fails to happen naturally. Key terms used in this project include paradigm, personal or biblical application, self-talk, listening theory, and other terms significant to this research thesis. It will become evident that each of these terms has some overlap and points to one another in some form.

Awareness. Awareness in the listening process is the process by which the listener actively engages with the message and interacts with the concepts.²³ The listener receives the audio stimulus and moves from passivity into activity as they acknowledge the stimulus they

²¹ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 102.

²² *Ibid.*, 103.

²³ Debra L. Worthington and Margaret E. Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, Second (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 54.

receive. Numerous stimuli bombard the individual throughout every moment. However, awareness only occurs when the individual moves to acknowledge the individual stimulus.

Biblical or Personal Application. The aim of preaching is application. When preachers speak of personal application, they speak of the linking of deep theological and biblical insights to the circumstances of the congregant's everyday life.²⁴ Biblical application indicates that this linking aligns with the biblical author's intended meaning of the text. The preaching and teaching ministry of Cambria Baptist Church identifies biblical application as the primary goal of its ministry.

Demographics. Demographics stems from two Greek words: *demos*, meaning people, and *graphos*, which means characteristics. In technical language, then, demographics identifies and categorizes a group of people into smaller units according to specified shared characteristics such as age, education, or economics.²⁵ Related to Cambria Baptist Church, demographics refers specifically to the categorical breakdown of the age and educational experience within the congregation.

Discipleship. Numerous books on discipleship have confused the definition of discipleship. Some hold that discipleship can be defined in multiple ways.²⁶ However, defining a word or concept in multiple ways does not provide helpful clarity. Therefore, this thesis agrees with Greg Ogden's definition of discipleship. Ogden defines discipleship as "An intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the

²⁴ Daniel Cardó, *The Art of Preaching: A Theological and Practical Primer* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 73.

²⁵ Amlan Roy, *Demographics Unravelling: How Demographics Affect and Influence Every Aspect of Economics, Finance and Policy* (Chichester, West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 1.

²⁶ Andrew Hayes and Stephen Cherry, eds., *Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now* (London: SCM PRESS, 2021), 9.

disciple to make disciples who make disciples."²⁷ Over the previous five years, the leadership of Cambria Baptist Church placed a particular focus on discipleship.

Life Change. Although the term life change seems to be self-explanatory as any change in an individual's life, the tenant of this thesis surrounds biblical application from the preaching event in the church. As a result, this thesis does not refer to any life change, whether good or bad. Instead, this thesis uses the term as a simplified statement for sanctification. Sanctification is the continual change of life that causes an individual to reflect the image and character of Christ.²⁸ Life change then is "bringing what you do, say, and even feel into line with what, in fact, you already are [as a Christian in Christ]."²⁹

Listening. Scholars struggle to arrive at a concrete consensus definition of listening. One scholar discovered over fifty different definitions.³⁰ The challenge to defining listening lies in the disagreement surrounding the place of comprehension in the listening process. Must the individual comprehend what they hear for the task to be defined as listening? Ultimately, the International Listening Association arrived at a consensus definition that this project will use. Listening is "the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or non-verbal messages."³¹

Listening Theory. Listening theory is the scientific study of the processes by which humans receive, analyze, and interpret verbal communication. Listening theory views the act of

²⁷ Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect, 2018), 3.

²⁸ Jim Berg, *Changed into His Image: God's Plan for Transforming Your Life* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2000), 5.

²⁹ Dane Calvin Ortlund, *Deeper: Real Change for Real Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 15.

³⁰ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*

listening as a multifaceted integration process.³² Further, studies into human listening seek to theorize their findings into systems that reflect how humans receive and process auditory information.³³ This thesis uses advances in listening theory and applies these advances to the application of the sermon event. Listening theory then undergirds the creation of the paradigm of personal application.

Multi-generational. The term multi-generational refers to a context comprising representatives from multiple generations. This composition results in perceived generational gaps between the representatives due to differences in values, ethics, and life experiences. Scientists generally break down the generations based on their years of birth into the following categories: Baby Boomers (1943-1960), Generation X (1961-1980), Millennials (1981-2000), and Generation Z (2001-2022).³⁴ The multi-generational construct of Cambria Baptist Church creates a unique situation for the problem and intervention addressed by this thesis.

Paradigm. Paradigm is a technical name for organizing thoughts and forms into a coherent structure. Deiwald and Politt define paradigms as "A tool for describing the structures in which inflectional forms are organized."³⁵ This thesis centers on creating a paradigm that structures applicational questions into a broadly workable system that stimulates self-talk in the listener leading to biblical, personal application.

Preaching. While preaching can be topical or expositional, faithful preaching exposes God's Word to God's people in a systematic way that faithfully proclaims the message of the biblical text. Preaching is an accurate, theological, verbal exposition that seeks to shepherd those

³² Judi Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, Sixth (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 52.

³³ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁴ Joshua B. Lowe, Erin S. Barry, and Neil E. Grunberg, "Improving Leader Effectiveness Across Multi-Generational Workforces," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 14, no. 1 (2020): 46–52.

³⁵ Gabriele Diewald and Katja Politt, *Paradigms Regained. Theoretical and Empirical Arguments for the Reassessment of the Notion of Paradigm* (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2022), 1.

who choose to listen in sanctification.³⁶ Further, preaching consists of speech whose purpose seeks more than proclamation but demands a verdict. Preaching demands a response and calls the listener to action.³⁷ Preaching comprises the most significant role in the worship services at Cambria Baptist Church.

Preconceptions. Preconceptions are the ideas already contained in listeners' minds that impact their understanding of the message received. Every individual holds interests and desires that "color their understandings."³⁸ Further, Moyers notes, "Individuals draw upon their collective experiences and knowledge to make sense of the encounter. It is so natural that one is hardly ever conscious of doing it unless difficulty arises in understanding."³⁹ This project creates a paradigm that acknowledges and challenges the listener's preconceptions to spur biblical application and life change in the congregants of Cambria Baptist Church.

Schema. Like preconceptions, a schema describes the organization of those preconceptions into a pattern the listener understands. Good listeners acknowledge and understand their schema. Nemtchinova notes, "Essential to successful comprehension are the listener's background knowledge and its influence on perception and memory. These are usually described in terms of the schema theory, which is based on the idea that all the knowledge that people carry in their minds is organized into interrelated patterns, or schemata (the plural of schema)."⁴⁰

³⁶ Randal E. Pelton, *Preaching with Accuracy: Finding Christ-Centered Big Ideas for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2019), 17.

³⁷ J. Josh Smith, *Preaching For a Verdict: Recovering the Role of Exhortation* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2019), 11.

³⁸ Tony L. Moyers, *Reading Responsibly: A Basic Guide to Biblical Interpretation* (Boulder, CO: University Press of America, 2016), 187.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴⁰ Ekaterina Nemtchinova, *Teaching Listening* (Alexandria, VA: Tesol Press, 2020), 6.

Self-talk. Sometimes referred to as self-listening, self-talk refers to the inner conversation which takes place as the individual listens to the auditory message. This conversation involves listening to one's preconceptions, thoughts, and feelings resulting from what one hears. Brownell notes, "Only when we listen well to ourselves and recognize our values, beliefs, prejudices, and needs can we listen to others with insight and sensitivity."⁴¹ Listening is never passive. Listening involves an inner conversation that resonates with one's soul.⁴² Research demonstrates that the most effective form of listening involves inner conversation combined with understanding others' perspectives and points of view.⁴³ As a result, the paradigm of personal application created through this thesis seeks to create biblical self-talk in the listener's mind during the preaching event resulting in a sound biblical application.

Limitations

As part of this study, the project moderator asked the congregants to volunteer to participate in a study that measured the effectiveness of the paradigm of personal application. Research limitations include the study's sample size, as the researcher relied on volunteers, and not all Cambria Baptist Church members volunteered to participate. Additionally, research limitations include the participants' limited education, as not all participants hold advanced degrees and may not have previous training in methods to move from written text to application. The time constraint expounds this limitation to bring the congregants to full competency through training. A further research limitation resides in the inconsistent attendance of the volunteers in Sunday school and the Sunday worship service due to illness, emergency, or other personal

⁴¹ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 19.

⁴² Adam S. McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 18.

⁴³ Jack Zenger et al., *Mindful Listening* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2019), 32.

reasons. A final research limitation consists of the honesty of the congregant in the project. As the nature of the project relates to personal application, the personal nature may tempt the participant to embellish or hide the application drawn from the sermon.

Delimitations

This project also contains several delimitations. The study consists only of congregants of Cambria Baptist Church who volunteer to participate in the study. Further, the volunteers must have attended Cambria Baptist Church for at least six months to participate in the study. In addition, this study consists of adults only. While this project seeks to assist cross-generational sermon application, the study's private and personal nature discourages the study from questioning minors. However, while this study does not include minors, the study does include representation from every other generation at Cambria Baptist Church.

Further, the time frame for this project is also a delimitation. This project will consist of no more than five weeks of training confined to the Sunday school hour, followed by no more than a four-week study of responses and applications to the message. The final week will consist of a feedback meeting in which the volunteers will address the strengths and weaknesses of the paradigm. The training portion of the study will be limited to the Sunday school hour at Cambria Baptist Church. The action survey for this study will be limited to the primary worship service at Cambria Baptist Church on Sunday mornings. These sermons will be recorded and made available to the study participants when they cannot attend the worship service. The training will focus on the need for and methods of application and will not include hermeneutics training.

The method with which the moderator questions the participants presents the following delimitations. Following training in using the paradigm for personal application, the research will be conducted only through anonymous questionnaires to encourage honesty and specificity. An

independent assistant will contact volunteers who do not turn in their questionnaires by the Tuesday following the Sunday service. To be recorded, the questionnaires must be turned in by the Thursday following the Sunday service. Finally, the questionnaires will provide the opportunity for a general or specific answer. The project's success can be measured through the specificity of the answer.

Thesis Statement

Pastors spend hours carefully and prayerfully preparing sermons to assist their congregants in pursuing spiritual growth. Despite the hours spent, pastors observe members failing to apply the message to their context.⁴⁴ Attempts to help the pastor in this endeavor often consist of application grids to apply the sermon directly to as many congregants as possible.⁴⁵ However, some congregants' contexts are left out in a multi-generational context. Time constraints and the preacher's limited understanding of the congregant's specific life context limit the pastor's ability to properly apply every text to every congregant.

In order to see an effective application happen to a broader percentage of the congregation, researchers must attempt another plan. Individual members should understand a method by which they can carefully listen to each sermon and analyze its impact on their life. When they carefully listen and analyze the text's impact on their life, they can properly apply it to their situation. Proper training in a paradigm given through the handouts of each sermon supplies this method and allows each member to analyze and apply the message to their life context. This method moves the primary task of application from the minister to the congregant.

⁴⁴ Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 1.

⁴⁵ Carrell, *Preaching That Matters*, 153.

Congregants often fail to apply Scripture to their context because they have not learned how to listen to a message for life change. Further, they have not learned how to analyze and apply what they read to their context. Given tools, they stand a better chance at properly applying Scripture to their context. Therefore, if the paradigm of personal application is taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation can effectively apply each sermon to their personal life.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

When a contractor constructs a house, the most critical element is a solid foundation. If the foundation crumbles, the house falters and fails. However, when the workers lay a strong foundation, the house can survive storms and the ravages of time. In like manner, a helpful doctor of ministry project thesis must take place upon a solid foundation. This solid foundation consists of three crucial aspects: a useful literature review, a precise understanding of the theological foundations, and a thorough insight into its theoretical foundations. The literature review provides a starting point for the project that follows. As the project leader understands the history of thought surrounding the topic, he can then understand and build on the success and failure of others. As God's Word must direct all faithful ministry, the theological foundations provide the authority and guidance to ensure the project furthers the work of God's kingdom in ministry. Finally, the theoretical foundation provides the thought and focus for the project's success.

Proper sermon application stands as the goal of preaching. The problem at Cambria Baptist Church is that the multi-generational congregation does not understand how to apply sermons to their situation. Therefore, the framework presented stands as the basis for creating and implementing a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon. Through the foundational principles of the paradigm, the training in and use of the paradigm will result in proper sermon application across all generations.

Literature Review

To produce a doctor of ministry project thesis which provides new insight into the chosen topic, the researcher must conduct a comprehensive review of precedent literature. When the researcher understands the topic's history, the researcher may build upon the information gleaned through previous publications and research. This process seeks to understand the advances made in research conducted. However, the literature review also seeks to identify gaps in the literature that the project can then address. Through a study of relevant, scholarly works, the following literature and topics impacted the project's course.

Every sermon's goal must be to see life change in the individual congregants.¹ Nevertheless, Murray Capill, Dean of Ministry Advancement and professor of Pastoral Ministry at Reformed Theological College, notes that many preachers do not understand how to help their congregants apply the sermons over which they diligently labor.² Further, the healthy congregation's diversity creates an environment that challenges the pastor's ability to apply the message to each context.³ Numerous methods exist to help the pastor apply the text's message. However, the pastor cannot address every situation.⁴ This literature review addresses the topic and gaps in sermon application in the preacher's sermon preparation and delivery and investigates the help that scholarly literature regarding listening theory provides.

The Pastor's Role in Sermon Application

The pastor must, of necessity, play a vital role in sermon application. As the messenger delivering God's message, the pastor seeks to connect that message to the everyday life of

¹ Sally A. Brown and Luke A. Powery, *Sunday's Sermon for Monday's World: Preaching to Shape Daring Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 60.

² Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 14.

³ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 69.

individual congregants.⁵ The preacher's goal in delivering God's Word each Sunday is life change through spiritual growth.⁶ Seeing this goal accomplished requires understanding several aspects of the sermon process.

First, the preacher must understand God's role in sermon application through His Word and the Holy Spirit. Writers agree that the power for life change flows from God's Word. Scott Gibson reminds the preacher that God's Word describes itself as milk and meat which nourish the soul, a sword that performs surgery on the believer's heart, a lamp that guides the believer's steps, and a fire that purifies the believer's life.⁷ When the preacher opens God's Word to God's people, the Word opens their hearts to the message of change.⁸ God's Word holds power for life change.

At times this power may appear dormant. However, the process of change through the Word continually happens in the believer's life. At times, the Word changes lives suddenly. At other times it changes lives incrementally. In every case, the Word changes lives.⁹ Noted preacher and theologian John Piper notes that even when the Word does not appear to accomplish life change, it may harden the unbeliever's heart in an active work of God's judgment.¹⁰ Sally Brown, professor of practical theology at Princeton University, notes that through preaching God's Word, the believer understands God's Word, and God uses it to conform their thinking to His thinking.¹¹

⁵ Terry G. Carter, J. Scott Duvall, and Daniel Hayes, *Preaching God's Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 97.

⁶ Carrell, *Preaching That Matters*, 48.

⁷ Scott M. Gibson and Bryan Chapell, eds., *The Worlds of the Preacher: Navigating Biblical, Cultural, and Personal Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 93.

⁸ McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 90.

⁹ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 10.

¹⁰ John Piper, *Take Care How You Listen* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Foundation, 2012), 13.

¹¹ Brown and Powery, *Sunday's Sermon for Monday's World*, 60.

The Word does not work in a vacuum. God's Spirit serves as the life-giving breath behind the message of God's Word. Strangely, most books on homiletics ignore the power-instilling aspect of the Spirit's work to apply the sermon to congregants' hearts. Capill rightly notes that one cannot assume the Spirit's power in the message. The preacher must earnestly seek and expect this work as the promise of Christ for gospel advancement.¹² In this effort, as the preacher prepares the message, the Holy Spirit guides, directs, and empowers the minister for the holy task of preaching.¹³

Second, the preacher must understand his task under the influence of the Holy Spirit to use God's empowered Word. The preacher must avoid the two ditches of preaching. One ditch fails to apply the Word out of a concern for biblical faithfulness. The other ditch skims over God's Word to be practical and apply the message.¹⁴ The preacher must be convinced that God's Word matters and that it is the message the congregants need to hear. The preacher must recognize that music and fellowship alone do not satisfy the believer's soul. God ordained the faithful preaching and application of God's Word as that which primarily satisfies.¹⁵ Thus the preacher must seek to bridge the Word to today's world. He must take both God's Word and the congregant's world seriously.¹⁶

Third, to bridge this gap, the preacher must seek to understand the congregant's world. The church contains a myriad of individuals with diverse lives. Gender and generations view life differently as a result of different life experiences.¹⁷ This diversity means that every member

¹² Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 31–32.

¹³ Carter, Duvall, and Hayes, *Preaching God's Word*, 99.

¹⁴ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 10–12.

¹⁵ Carrell, *Preaching That Matters*, 20.

¹⁶ John Stott and Greg Scharf, *The Challenge of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 36.

¹⁷ Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 121.

approaches the sermon differently.¹⁸ As a result, pastors need to be strategic in presenting applications for life change in a gender-diverse, multi-generational audience.

The preacher must get to know the various congregants to understand their stage of life. Some congregants arrive with the feeling that their world is falling apart. Others arrive with discontent over continual change.¹⁹ Abraham Kuruvilla notes, "This particular facet of the preacher's task calls for an intimate knowledge of the flock, its spiritual state and its growth, so that the theology of the text may be relevantly tailored to the lives of listeners in application."²⁰ As a result, the preacher must understand his congregation to address their situation.

Most authors suggest ongoing observation and interaction with the congregants to understand their life situations. Preachers should continually take note of the marriage and family crisis that occurs in the congregation. Further, they should seek interaction in their businesses, sports, and hobbies.²¹ Scott Gibson suggests a novel approach by suggesting preachers discuss the upcoming sermon with congregants to gain suggestions for possible applications. He calls this concept "feed-forward" because the preacher receives the information before the message instead of after the message.²²

Once the preacher understands the audience, he can craft the message to best impact the audience.²³ The wise preacher understands that there is no single application for the multi-generational audience. So, they must do the work to understand the specific needs of the people

¹⁸ Ferdi Kruger, "Recognition as the Spark in the Exchange of Ownership of a Sermon," *Ecclesiology* 15 (2019): 193.

¹⁹ F. P. Kruger and B. J. De Klerk, "Homiletical Perspectives on Preaching the Truth to Post-Pandemic Postmodernist Listeners with Reference to the Emotional Appeal of the Text," *In Die Skriflig* 55, no. 1 (2021): 4.

²⁰ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 61.

²¹ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 57.

²² Gibson and Chapell, *The World's of the Preacher*, 95.

²³ Brown and Powery, *Sunday's Sermon for Monday's World*, 6.

to whom they are speaking.²⁴ This practice moves the message from a theological lecture to a sermon impacting congregants.²⁵

At this point, authors differ widely in methodology. The diversity of opinion exists because authors recognize the tension surrounding the preacher's limitations in addressing every situation of a diverse congregation. No sermon can cover every possible application. Kuruvilla suggests that the preacher seeks relevant application to his life because others will be in the same situation.²⁶ Brown suggests drawing application from the "tradition of Christian witness which precedes them."²⁷ Capill suggests applying the text to current events.²⁸ Voelz suggests asking numerous questions in the sermon to prick the conscience.²⁹ In the end, Kuruvilla provides a pragmatic solution by instructing the preacher to discover one application that applies to 30 percent of the audience.³⁰ However, this suggestion implies that the preacher will not apply the message to 70 percent of the audience.

The Listener's Role in Sermon Application

The listener does not sit idle as the minister presents the message. Instead, most literature acknowledges that the listener must play a role in sermon application. The pastor can assume that the listener's presence means they desire to see a change in their life.³¹ They believe that God

²⁴ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 82.

²⁵ Kruger and De Klerk, "Homiletical Perspectives on Preaching the Truth to Post-Pandemic Postmodernist Listeners with Reference to the Emotional Appeal of the Text," 2.

²⁶ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 63.

²⁷ Brown and Powery, *Sunday's Sermon for Monday's World*, 60.

²⁸ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 33.

²⁹ Richard W. Voelz, "Questions for Conversational Preaching," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 75, no. 2 (2021): 140.

³⁰ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 70.

³¹ Gibson and Chapell, *The Worlds of the Preacher*, 93.

gave the Bible so that they will internalize its message and conform themselves to it.³² Thus the minister must be mindful of the listener's role in the application.

As the minister considers the listener, he should consider several aspects of their being. Capill notes that the minister must fully embrace the listener's participation by considering their interpretation of the message.³³ Thus the minister must be aware of the listener's preconceptions as he presents the message. The sinful struggles, trauma, and crises the listener experiences impact the reception of the message preached.³⁴ The schema by which each listener processes the message then changes from person to person. As a result, the same message results in various interpretations and applications.

The listener must also be aware of these challenges and resist allowing the heart's passions to rule the ear in the message.³⁵ McHugh notes that this resistance requires humility, surrender, trust, and hope in the listener's heart to understand the proper biblical application.³⁶ As the listener understands the bias they bring to the message, they can proceed beyond that bias and allow the Word to form their framework. Only through this process can the congregant move into a practical application.

A second aspect in the listener's life relates to their familiarity with the text and the minister. As the listener hears the Word, they can quickly run to simplistic application and meaning due to a perceived understanding of the text they bring to the process.³⁷ At times, this occurs in response to a modern culture that bypasses the author's intended meaning in favor of

³² Kruger and De Klerk, "Homiletical Perspectives on Preaching the Truth to Post-Pandemic Postmodernist Listeners with Reference to the Emotional Appeal of the Text," 2.

³³ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 41.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁶ McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 96.

³⁷ Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*, 41.

the reader's response as meaning.³⁸ The minister must assist the listener in understanding the original intended meaning for proper application.

Further, familiarity with the minister causes challenges to the listener's comprehension and application. Scripture calls the minister to exhort, advise, teach, and mentor his flock.³⁹ However, as the minister continues to serve in the same pulpit, the listener begins to expect the minister's standard approach and naturally begins to distance themselves from the message.⁴⁰ Familiarity with the minister and his preaching style creates a natural tendency to tune out the message. Though the listener begins to fall into a rut, they can be rescued through variety in presentation. In today's postmodern world, many listeners no longer desire a lecture-style message but seek involvement in the application process.⁴¹

How can the minister help the listener understand and apply the message presented? If the listener desires to participate in the application process, the minister will do well to contemplate a solution. This question is particularly poignant when one considers the diversity of the congregation. Unfortunately, while authors acknowledge the need to bring listeners into the application process, a gap exists in the literature relating to the actual practice.

Some pastors like John Piper seek to fill this gap with a practical message series regarding sermon listening. In this series, he makes suggestions to the congregation about carefully listening.⁴² He suggests they meditate on the Word, refrain from worldly entertainment, enter with a teachable spirit, focus their mind as they enter the auditorium, and desire truth more

³⁸ Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*, 42.

³⁹ Gibson and Chapell, *The Worlds of the Preacher*, 93.

⁴⁰ Brown and Powery, *Sunday's Sermon for Monday's World*, 6.

⁴¹ Kruger, "Recognition as the Spark in the Exchange of Ownership of a Sermon," 188.

⁴² Piper, *Take Care How You Listen*, 14.

than life.⁴³ While these suggestions can help, they do not give informed instructions on the actual act of application. Instead, these suggestions prepare the heart to receive instruction.

Some seek to answer this gap by leaving the gap untouched. Richard Voelz suggests that the minister refrain from concrete interpretations and expect the listener to fill in the gap.⁴⁴ However, the author assumes that the listeners will participate and not simply walk away frustrated.⁴⁵ Moyers suggests that the minister should not lead the congregation to affirm or reject anything simply because Scripture does so but rather should invite the listener to question the text.⁴⁶ However, one must question how this approach would accomplish anything more than frustration in the listener's heart as the minister undercuts Scripture's authority. In the end, no author satisfactorily fills this gap in the literature.

Listening Theory and Sermon Application

The answer to the gap in literature may be found in the scientific study of listening theory. Listening with comprehension is a complicated process requiring a set of innate tools ready for communication.⁴⁷ To assist listening comprehension, scientists examine the processes by which people listen. As the lecturer and listener understand these processes, scientists propose theoretical methods to aid the listener in comprehension and application.⁴⁸ Professors have used

⁴³ Piper, *Take Care How You Listen*, 21–26.

⁴⁴ Voelz, “Questions for Conversational Preaching,” 137.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁶ Moyers, *Reading Responsibly*, 238.

⁴⁷ Haiping Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension Through Listening-to-Summarize Cloze Tasks* (Shanghai: Springer, 2018), 23.

⁴⁸ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 7–9.

these methods in the classroom to aid in teaching.⁴⁹ Further, therapists have used these methods in counseling to assist in mending broken relationships.⁵⁰

To understand the impact of listening theory on sermon application, one must understand several advances in the study of listening theory. First, like the theological authors, listening theorists understand preconceptions' role in the listener's mind. Preconceptions filter the message the listener hears.⁵¹ As the message enters the listener's mind, their schema filters it so the listener can make sense of the information. The mind directs the listener's attention to certain aspects of the incoming message and "provides a basis for predicting what will be said next."⁵² Through this, the mind often stores the overview of the message rather than the actual words stated.⁵³

As listeners filter the incoming information through their schema, they do so in two ways. Theorists describe the first process as bottom-up processing. In this way, the listener subconsciously analyzes the grammar, vocabulary, and tone with which the speaker presents the message. They then compare the event with past experiences to help interpret their responses and move from the text or lecture up to their preconceptions.⁵⁴ Second, theorists describe the process as top-down. In this process, the listener filters the information through their ideas and life experience. Thus, they move from their preconceptions down to the text or lecture.⁵⁵ Because everyone's preconceptions vary based on life experiences, a broad application of the message

⁴⁹ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 1.

⁵⁰ Michael P. Nichols and Martha B. Straus, *The Lost Art of Listening*, Third (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2021), 2.

⁵¹ Nemtchinova, *Teaching Listening*, 6.

⁵² Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 54.

⁵³ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 25.

⁵⁴ Nemtchinova, *Teaching Listening*, 8.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

cannot work for every listener.⁵⁶

To help the lecturer and listener work through the variety of preconceptions that cloud communication, listening theorists instead focus on the second aspect of listening theory and comprehension: the listening process. If the lecturer and listener can understand how the listener receives, stores, and applies the information, the information can significantly impact the hearer.⁵⁷

The listening process begins with the purpose of listening.⁵⁸ The purpose of listening steers the listener to specific cues, symbols, meanings, and parts of the story which resonate with the listener.⁵⁹ The listener then, to a large extent, hears what they expect to hear. Judi Brownell, a professor specializing in listening theory at Cornell University, notes, "You create your own reality through the stimuli you consciously or unconsciously choose."⁶⁰

To overcome the natural tendency to ignore information perceived as unimportant, the effective listener actively engages his mind in the listening process.⁶¹ He must engage because communication is a two-person process. While the process requires clarity on the speaker's part, it also requires engagement on the listener's part.⁶² To comprehend and apply the message heard, the listener cannot remain passive or go through the motions of listening.⁶³

Listening theorists encourage engagement through a variety of methods. These methods seek to capitalize on and enhance the natural listening experience. Examining listening theory

⁵⁶ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 144.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁸ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 292.

⁵⁹ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 54.

⁶⁰ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 48.

⁶¹ Nichols and Straus, *The Lost Art of Listening*, 2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 164.

reveals three primary views regarding the listening process and provides solutions for effective listening. These processes contain numerous similarities, which reveal the key aspects of good listening. The message can be effectively applied when speakers and listeners understand these essential aspects.

Listening MATERRS Model

Through careful study, Worthington and Fitch-Hauser developed a theoretical model describing the aspects of effective listening. They desired to visually demonstrate the relationships between the various steps of effective listening to help the student gain the greatest possible benefit from their lectures.⁶⁴ Many sounds bombard the average individual throughout the day, which they ignore. As a result, using the acronym MATERRS, these professors chose to focus on what happens when the listener becomes aware of the auditory stimuli. They then sought to trace the process from the moment of recognition to effective application.⁶⁵

The MATERRS process begins with mental stimulus. Each individual is bombarded with uncountable sounds every day. The human mind naturally sorts through the sounds and accords value to each sound. It naturally discards those sounds to which the mind assigns little value. However, when the mind assigns a high value to a sound, the individual consciously chooses to listen.⁶⁶ This choice begins the listening process.

Once the active choice to listen happens, the individual moves into awareness. In this step, the individual consciously chooses to continue listening or disregard the sound as unimportant.⁶⁷ Worthington identifies several factors in this choice, such as the motivation to

⁶⁴ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 12.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

listen, the number of distractions, and personal bias towards the information received. The wise listener mitigates the distractions, which Worthington identified as cognitive load (or mental distraction), cognitive filtering (or the mental process of filtering out other noises), and environmental factors (distractions provided by the surrounding environment).⁶⁸

Once the listener determines that the auditory stimulus deserves attention, they move from awareness to translation. In this step, the listener interprets what they hear and filters the message through their schema.⁶⁹ Worthington divides the translation process into two aspects: affective processing, in which the listener filters the emotional components of the stimulus, and rational processing, in which the listener filters the rational nature of the stimuli.⁷⁰

As the listener translates the auditory stimuli, they move into evaluation. Through this evaluation, the listener filters the message through their schema to determine its veracity. As the listener evaluates the message, they determine the value of further listening.⁷¹ If the listener determines that the sound they hear is not of value to their schema, they disregard the sound and move on to other stimuli. However, if the listener determines that the sound is of value to their schema, they move to the next step of the listening process.

At this point in the listening process, identified as recall, the listener engages in two actions. First, the listener determines the essential aspects of the message to commit to memory. Second, the listener assesses what response the message requires.⁷² The response will also determine the location of the memory in which the listener stores the information. If the listener determines that the message requires a significant response, they will likely store the information

⁶⁸ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 13–14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷² *Ibid.*

in long-term memory. Conversely, if the listener determines that the message requires little response, they will store the information in short-term memory.⁷³

Once the listener evaluates and recalls the message, they will react to it. The listener's reaction may be adverse because they ignore the message. The response may also be positive because the listener determines a significant response to the stimuli. The listener determines the level of response through the level of significance they have placed on the message through the evaluation step.⁷⁴

Finally, the listener determines the level to which they will stay connected to the message. At this stage, the listener determines if the message will be in one ear and out the other or if they will significantly change due to the message.⁷⁵ Further, the listener determines if the message requires ongoing engagement. At the foundational level, ongoing engagement with and life change stands as the goal of the preaching event. However, ongoing engagement cannot happen without the previous steps.

HURIER Model

Judi Brownell presents a more general listening theory model called the HURIER Model. This acronym stands for hearing, understanding, remembering, interpreting, evaluating, and responding.⁷⁶ Although more general, this model contains many similarities to the listening MATERRS model. Nevertheless, the subtle differences between the models provide some necessary clarity in the listening process.

The HURIER model states that the listening process begins with hearing. This step

⁷³ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 15.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁶ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 61.

combines the first two aspects of the MATERRS model. However, Brownell provides clarity regarding levels of listening. First, the listener participates in the primary level of voluntary listening. At this level, the listener intentionally hears and tunes in to the stimuli.⁷⁷ Second, the listener participates in involuntary listening. This kind of listening results from stimuli the listener does not intentionally hear. This stimulus is the stimulus the automatic nervous system detects and brings to the listener's attention.⁷⁸

Tied closely to the hearing process is the attention process. This process controls the listener's awareness of the stimuli heard. When the listener gives attention to the stimuli, the event moves forward in the listening process. However, when the listener ignores the stimuli, it is as if it never happened.⁷⁹ Tying hearing and attention into the same step of the listening process presents a weakness of this model, as the two naturally create a two-step process.

Once the listener hears and gives attention to the sound, they move into understanding the stimuli. Without understanding the sounds, communication cannot occur. One must understand words for effective listening.⁸⁰ When the listener hears the sounds, they begin to evaluate their catalog of sounds to provide meaning to what they hear. This meaning contains both definitive and connotative meanings. Words contain proper dictionary definitions. However, they also contain innate emotional response definitions based on the listener's experience with the word.⁸¹ The good listener seeks to evaluate the sounds and understands the words in their proper context. Brownell rightly notes that the speaker's ideas are never replicated precisely in the listener's

⁷⁷ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 82.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

mind.⁸²

After understanding the message, the listener then determines to remember the message. The listener works to place the message into immediate memory, short-term memory, or long-term memory.⁸³ Brownell gives several practical actions the good listener takes to remember the message. For immediate memory, the listener focuses their attention and does not allow their attention to wander. Further, they engage with the information to determine the vital aspects to maintain.⁸⁴ Often, the information rolls over into the listener's short-term memory. However, three actions prove helpful if the listener desires to maintain the information in short-term memory. First, the listener should repeat the information silently multiple times. Second, the listener should group the items to create a system of "chunking." Finally, the listener should identify logical patterns to assist in memory.⁸⁵

The listener's long-term memory provides the schema through which the listener evaluates life.⁸⁶ In order to move a message to long-term memory, the listener is wise to engage in several strategies. First, the listener should associate the information with a foundational aspect of their schema. Through this, the listener creates a link to that memory. Second, the listener should categorize the memory for quicker and better recall. Third, Brownell suggests that the listener use mediation techniques with the information. Finally, the listener should associate a visual with the information. Through these methods, the listener can remember the message.⁸⁷

Brownell suggests that the next step in listening addresses the process of interpretation.

⁸² Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 120.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 162–63.

However, one must question why this step occurs after remembering and not before remembering. Inverting these steps creates a weakness in the theory. Without interpreting the information, the listener will not determine the need to remember the information. Nevertheless, interpreting the information remains a foundational aspect of the listening process.

Brownell rightly notes that the method of interpreting any communication is culture-specific. Interpretation covers both verbal and nonverbal communication. As the listener engages in the message, they will use the speaker's nonverbal communication to assist in interpreting the importance and meaning of the message. Therefore, a good listener takes intentional note of the nonverbal cues given by the speaker. These nonverbal cues include tone and volume.

Further, the listener will carefully evaluate the verbal cues given by the speaker. In this evaluation, they will examine the specific words and structures the speaker chooses to use. They will evaluate how verbal communication interacts with non-verbal communication.⁸⁸ Through this evaluation, the listener seeks to interpret the speaker's intended meaning correctly.

Once the listener interprets the message, they then evaluate the message. Good listening is critical listening.⁸⁹ As the listener evaluates the message, they seek to determine several important things. First, they seek to determine the message's veracity. As good listeners hear a message, they actively determine the validity of each part of the message. In this evaluation, they seek to differentiate between fact and opinion.⁹⁰ Good listening does not receive any message without scrutiny.

⁸⁸ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 216.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

Finally, the listener responds to the message. Brownell rightly notes that the individual's purpose for listening plays an integral role in the listener's response.⁹¹ Brownell uniquely avoids positive and negative responses in favor of assertive and passive responses. Through an assertive response, the listener assertively shares with the speaker and self their evaluation of the message. This assertiveness does not include rudeness but honesty.⁹² Further, a good listener responds supportively. Even in disagreement, the listener should not become defensive. Instead, the listener should support and seek to understand the speaker's message.⁹³

Cloze Tasks Model

Dr. Haiping Wang tested various listening theory methods and tasks for listening comprehension, primarily among those for whom English is a second language. His work added to the field of listening theory in two primary ways. These two advancements in listening theory provided necessary foundational elements to assist professors in lecture comprehension. Further, pastors can use these advancements to better understand necessary elements for congregant sermon application.

First, Dr. Wang addressed the concepts of bottom-up and top-down listening processes. Most experts view listening as a bottom-up process. The listener receives the input and then builds upon it by assigning meaning to what they hear.⁹⁴ However, newer advances in listening theory identify listening as a top-down process. Researchers argue that the listener's schema presents a meaning already assigned to the input, and the individual acknowledges this meaning

⁹¹ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 292.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 295.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁹⁴ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 23.

as they receive the input.⁹⁵ Wang acknowledges this new view of listening theory and examines the various models to demonstrate its reality.

The top-down model holds that the listener is bound by their comprehension capability. Thus, tasks that create interaction in communication become vital for comprehension and application.⁹⁶ The challenge for the speaker is creating tasks by which the listener can correctly replicate the lecture concepts. When the speaker and listener discover the proper tasks to assist in the listening process, the listener arrives at a higher state of cognition.⁹⁷ When the lecture ceases to become a monologue but moves into dialogue through the inner discourse in the listener, the listener gains greater understanding, memory, and application from the lecture.⁹⁸

Second, using the top-down listening theory, Wang argues that a series of organized tasks in the listening process, known as cloze tasks, will allow the listener to realize maximum comprehension.⁹⁹ Cloze tasks are a series of tasks given to the listener to help them fill the informational gaps in their thinking.¹⁰⁰ Given to the students, these tasks call the students to identify the critical aspects of the lecture, define unfamiliar words and phrases, and make inferences and deductions from the given information.¹⁰¹ Through this process, the listener moves from passivity to activity.

Further, the call for comprehension moves from the speaker to the listener. The tasks call the listener to ask questions about the information received and further the lines of thought.

⁹⁵ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 23.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Adrian Staub et al., "The Influence of Cloze Probability and Item Constraint on Cloze Task Response Time," *Journal of Memory and Language* 82 (2015): 1.

¹⁰¹ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 35.

Through this active listening, comprehension increases. As comprehension increases, the opportunity for proper application also increases. Wang discovered that discourse construction through questions and note-taking significantly increased the self-talk in the listener resulting in advanced comprehension.¹⁰²

Listening Model Evaluation

Each model examined contains strengths and weaknesses. However, viewed as a whole, researchers may arrive at a strong structure for comprehension and application. Each model recognized the role that the listener's preconceptions play in the listening process. The listener's background, personality, and experiences will always impact their interpretation of what they hear.¹⁰³ While the speaker fills the message with his schema, the listener cannot escape his background.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the speaker must understand the listening process and guide the listener in proper comprehension and application.

Brownell provides the most general overview listening model. The model provides strength in its simplicity. However, as the model combines several aspects of the listening process, it remains too weak to provide a stable foundation for an application process.

The Listening MATERRS model provides the most robust model. The model's detailed orientation provides a clear view of the listening process. The model maps out the crucial steps for listening comprehension. Through this detail, researchers gain the necessary insight to assist their audience.

While the Cloze Task model does not provide detailed insight into the listening process, it does provide the necessary tools to help the speaker when combined with the other models.

¹⁰² Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 136.

¹⁰³ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 54.

¹⁰⁴ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 43.

When the speaker understands the listening process through the other models, the Cloze Task model provides the practical steps to help the listener comprehend and retain the message heard. Primarily, this process occurs through tasks that create intentional self-talk.

Self-Talk and Sermon Application

The most significant contribution made by listening theory to the discussion of sermon application lies in the concept of self-talk. When congregants listen to a message, they filter it through their schema. The process through which this filter occurs is self-talk.¹⁰⁵ Each model recognizes the importance of this self-talk in the application process.

To a large extent, listeners hear what they expect and want to hear. As they receive the message from the speaker, they then converse with themselves to assess how the message fits or alters their existing schema.¹⁰⁶ When the listener ceases to engage the self-talk occurring in their mind with the message's content, they begin to occupy the self-talk with other items of interest unrelated to the message at hand.¹⁰⁷ However, when the information at hand resonates with the listener, they engage in it through an inner conversation that seeks to address it in their life.¹⁰⁸ As the listener engages with the message, they begin to build a relationship with it, resulting in a greater awareness of its intricacies and implications.¹⁰⁹

When the listener recognizes and acknowledges the inner conversation, they can understand the message's implications on their lives. Only when the listener begins to listen well to their inner conversation can they become good listeners to others.¹¹⁰ The inner conversation

¹⁰⁵ Kruger, "Recognition as the Spark in the Exchange of Ownership of a Sermon," 194.

¹⁰⁶ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 48.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰⁸ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 54.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹¹⁰ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 121.

reveals to the listener that the message profoundly applies to them.¹¹¹ This revelation then directs the listener to the message's aspects, creating an emotional response and eliciting a desire for change.¹¹²

The listener must engage in intentional tasks to capture self-talk and drive it towards necessary application and change. Listening is a complicated cognitive process that requires intentional action for comprehension.¹¹³ Successful listeners identify ways through self-talk to contextualize the message they hear and apply the message to their life for rapid recall.¹¹⁴ A primary tool to engage in profitable self-talk is asking questions about the message received. These questions probe the message's meaning and hold the mind's focus on the message.¹¹⁵ The questions also allow the listener to fill the gap between their schema and the speaker's schema resulting in greater understanding and empathy.¹¹⁶

Effective messages should consider the self-talk occurring in the listener and invite the listener into more profound reflection on the possible applications.¹¹⁷ Traditional preaching models encourage the minister to do so through probing questions.¹¹⁸ Listening theory forces the speaker to consider the self-talk already occurring in the listener and invite the listener to ask the application questions for themselves.

¹¹¹ Kruger, "Recognition as the Spark in the Exchange of Ownership of a Sermon," 203.

¹¹² Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 54.

¹¹³ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 23.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹¹⁵ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 124.

¹¹⁶ Wang, *Testing Lecture Comprehension*, 102.

¹¹⁷ Voelz, "Questions for Conversational Preaching," 137.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

Conclusions

As revealed in the theological foundation section of this project report, the goal for all preaching and ministry is life change in the believer. The preacher plays a vital role in this process. Therefore the preacher cannot fail to apply the Word out of a concern for biblical faithfulness. Nor can the preacher skim over God's Word to be practical and apply the message.¹¹⁹ The preacher must stand convinced that only the faithful preaching and application of God's Word produces growth through the Word's power.¹²⁰ Thus the preacher must seek to bridge the Word to today's world. He must take both God's Word and the congregant's world seriously.¹²¹ He needs to be strategic in applying God's Word to God's people.

A gap in the literature appears since no consensus for application methodology exists. Most literature acknowledges that no single method covers the entirety of generations present in the congregation. Instead, the various methods expect that the listener will fill the gap.¹²² However, no precedent literature exists which brings a method of application into the listener's sphere. The literature appears content to allow the onus for application to remain on the preacher alone.

Listening theory holds helpful elements to fill the gap in the literature and assist the preacher in moving the responsibility for application onto the listener in addition to the preacher. Listening theory acknowledges preconceptions' role in the listener and seeks to alert the listener to those preconceptions.¹²³ Listening theory then seeks to alert the individual to the self-talk

¹¹⁹ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 10–12.

¹²⁰ Carrell, *Preaching That Matters*, 20.

¹²¹ Stott and Scharf, *The Challenge of Preaching*, 36.

¹²² Gibson and Chapell, *The Worlds of the Preacher*, 93.

¹²³ Nemtchinova, *Teaching Listening*, 6.

occurring during the lecture. The inner conversation assesses the message's role in their life.¹²⁴ The listener becomes distracted when the self-talk turns to topics other than the lecture's message.¹²⁵

Therefore, a potential fill to the gap in the literature surrounding the listener's role in the application would be to create a method to engage the self-talk occurring in the congregation during the message. This project will then seek to create an applicational method that engages the listener in the application process through the listening theory concepts.

Theological Foundations

As the goal of preaching and ministry is life change in the believer, the foundations for the methods used to procure that life change must be grounded in sound theology. When one considers the need to apply the Scripture to every circumstance of life, seemingly every text calls for that change. Nevertheless, some texts more clearly demonstrate the relationship between Scripture, the preaching event, and life change in the believer. In order to understand the need for sound methodology in the application, a brief sketch of these texts follows.

2 Peter 1:3-4

As Peter writes to the church to combat the heresy invading, he begins his second epistle with the reminder that God has granted the believer everything needed to conform to the image of Christ. These heretics claimed that Christ would not return and that no future judgment awaited.¹²⁶ As a result, Peter opens the second epistle with these vital words:

¹²⁴ Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 48.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 277.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire (2 Pet 1:3-4, English Standard Version).

Peter reveals that God, through Christ's divine power, granted to the believer everything needed for life change. At the outset, Peter reminds the reader that life change comes not through personal will but through God's divine power. Most importantly, the believer must recognize that this divine power cannot be defeated or frustrated.¹²⁷ God accomplishes what He purposes to do.

God's divine power grants the believer everything needed for life and godliness. First, Peter notes that God grants the believer everything needed for life. Through this statement, Peter points to eternal life and mortal life. As the heretics of Peter's day denied the reality of eternal life and judgment, Peter points to God's sovereignty as a reminder that eternity awaits. Further, God grants the believer this eternal life even now while the believer awaits Christ's second coming and eternal life in the future.¹²⁸ Today's life impacts every individual's eternal destiny.

Further, because an eternal destiny awaits all, so too, eternal judgment awaits. As a result, God also grants the believer everything needed for godliness. Barclay notes, "Jesus Christ tells us what life is and then enables us to live it as it ought to be lived."¹²⁹ Further, the believer must note that this godliness cannot be sourced in their power or will but in Christ's divine power. Actual change originates only through the knowledge of Christ.

God's glory and goodness reveal Christ through the great and precious promises given to the believer in Christ. Scripture contains the sum of these promises to the believer. Specifically, these promises contain the promise of sharing in the divine nature. Peter refers not to the ability

¹²⁷ William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 342.

¹²⁸ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 292.

¹²⁹ Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, 342.

to become gods. Instead, these promises refer to conformity to Christ and restoration of God's image in the believer.¹³⁰ As a result, when the believer reads the promises in the Word for life change, they may claim them for themselves.¹³¹

As the preacher considers the purpose of Bible proclamation, he cannot help but conclude that a primary purpose for proclaiming the precious promises of God is life and godliness. Through biblical application to life situations, the believer escapes the defilement by the world and will stand before God in obedience on the day of judgment (2 Pet 2:20). Further, from this text, the believer understands that knowledge of God cannot be for the sake of knowledge alone. Instead, God's divine power grants the believer this knowledge for the sake of life and godliness.

2 Timothy 3:16-4:2

While Peter reveals that God's divine power has given the believer everything he needs for life and godliness through the knowledge of Christ, Paul reveals that this knowledge arrives through the proper proclamation, interpretation, and application of the inspired Scripture. In His second letter to Timothy, Paul reveals the purpose and place of God's Word and its proclamation in the Christian life.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching (2 Tim 3:16-4:2, ESV).

Paul begins by explaining that all Scripture is God-breathed. By Scripture, Paul refers to the γραφή (graphe - sacred writings), which he spoke of in verse 15. Γραφή (graphe) was a word that had been used to refer to the Old Testament. However, by the time Paul wrote this letter, it also

¹³⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 294.

¹³¹ Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, 343.

came to be used of the Apostles' inspired writings. All that had yet to be written of the completed sacred writings were the writings of the Apostle John.¹³² By this time, Christians recognized these books and letters as sacred writings from God. Peter agreed with this sentiment through his statements in 2 Peter 3:14-16 acknowledging these writings as γραφή.

Further, Paul identifies these writings as God-breathed (θεόπνευστος). This unique word appears only here in the Greek New Testament and is found rarely in pre-Christian literature.¹³³ This word statement claims that the entire Bible owes its origin and contents to God. The Holy Spirit guided the human authors so they wrote what God wanted them to write. Thus, Scripture originated in God's mind and was communicated from God's mouth by God's breath, so it is rightly called the Word of God.

When God exudes His breath, divine and powerful things happen. In the beginning, God created all things by the word of His mouth, but when He created man, He breathed out into man, and man became a living soul (Gen 2:7). In Acts 2, God breathed out His Spirit on His disciples. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul informs Timothy that God breathed out His Word. Because every act of God's breath is powerful, the Word of God is powerful. As a result, Christians believe that the Bible is God's Book.

God gave His Word for a specific purpose. Paul explains this purpose through four statements. These four statements provide two categories: What the Christian should believe and how the Christian should act.¹³⁴ First, the Scripture reveals what a Christian should believe. Paul reveals that the Scripture explains doctrine. This means that the primary function of the Bible is

¹³² George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 445.

¹³³ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 565.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 570.

instruction. It is not a motivational book. It is not a self-help book. It is a book that teaches the Christian what to believe. Paul explains the idea of instruction in further detail in Romans 15:4, where he states that Scripture was written to teach the believer so that they might have hope in their walk with God.

Second, the Scripture reproves (ἐλεγμὸν) the believer. This word ἐλεγμὸν (elegmon) refers to the Scripture's ability to convict by refuting error and rebuking sin.¹³⁵ Thus, Scripture serves to warn the believer. "Warnings, based on the word, must be issued so that errors in doctrine and conduct are refuted in the spirit of love."¹³⁶ In so doing, these Christians use the Scripture for its God-given purpose.

Third, the Scripture corrects (ἐπανόρθωσιν) the believer. This word ἐπανόρθωσιν (epanorthosin) is used only here in the Greek New Testament. It refers to the Scripture's ability to help individuals restore their belief or personal practice to the proper state before God.¹³⁷ "The word, especially when it is used by a consecrated servant of God who is diligent in the performance of his pastoral duties, is restorative in character."¹³⁸ Thus a primary purpose of Scripture proclamation is to apply the message to restore the believer's faith.

Finally, the Scripture instructs (παιδείαν) the believer. This word παιδείαν (paideian) is often translated as discipline. In Ephesians 6:4, Paul uses the word to refer to a system of discipline a parent uses to help their child develop a godly character. In this text, Paul uses the

¹³⁵ Cleon L. Jr. Rogers and Cleon L. III Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 506.

¹³⁶ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 303.

¹³⁷ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 237.

¹³⁸ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, 303.

word to describe a system of discipline to lead to a holy lifestyle.¹³⁹ Thus, a regular regimen of Bible study serves to discipline the believer in a holy life. Used properly, the believer applies the Word received into action for life change.

The four-fold purpose of Scripture results in a fully formed and mature believer. Paul concludes chapter three with the statement that the fourfold purpose of Scripture makes the believer complete and fully supplied to accomplish all that God calls him to accomplish. Stott notes, "At all events, it is only by a diligent study of scripture that the man of God may become complete, equipped for every good work."¹⁴⁰ God uses His Word to equip His People for His work.

For this reason, Paul commands the pastor to preach the Word faithfully. Using the word κήρυξον (kērysson), Paul charges the pastor to herald and proclaim the Word out loud. Further, the imperative mood makes this heralding a priority for the pastor. Paul then gives the content of this proclamation: the Word. This proclamation is not simply motivational speaking but a proclamation of God's inspired sufficient Word.

As the pastor heralds the Word, Paul instructs the pastor on the reasons and methods of this proclamation through three vital terms. First, the pastor is to reprove. As shown earlier, the purpose of the Word is to refute error and rebuke sin. Thus, the pastor must highlight this purpose in the proclamation of the Word. The believer must be conscious of his sin so that he may repent.¹⁴¹ It means that the herald applies the Word of God to sinners and that their sin is pointed out as a violation of God's standard and will through this application. The message of sin is not popular. However, the pastor's role is not to determine what the congregants perceive as

¹³⁹ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 237.

¹⁴⁰ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 103.

¹⁴¹ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, 311.

felt needs and then to meet those needs. This reproving is the faithful proclamation of the Word of God which allows the Word of God to confront sin.

Similarly, the pastor must also rebuke. This word ἐπιτίμησον (epitimēson) occurs 29 times in the New Testament, but only here in Paul's epistles. It is a strong word used for Jesus' rebuke of the demons.¹⁴² It consists of a verbal challenge, whereby one is openly or publicly charged with error or sin. The seriousness of sin must not be toned down. As the pastor preaches God's Word, the issues must be so clearly drawn that the erring Christians and the unconverted can see their own dreadful, sinful condition.¹⁴³ In short, Christians should not always walk away from the presentation of God's Word feeling good about themselves.

Finally, the preacher must herald God's Word for exhortation. The idea of exhortation means that with pertinent reproving and rebuking, there must be tender encouragement.¹⁴⁴ Exhortation means that those who have been rebuked need encouragement. Each person must be shown how sin can be forgiven, and their spiritual life strengthened. To rebuke without instruction is to leave the root cause of the error untouched. Faithfully applying God's Word brings the grace necessary into the sinner's life to encourage conformity to Christ's image.

This text demonstrates that God's Word reveals God's message to God's people for life change. Therefore, God's heralds must present the Word with these goals in mind. Life change through faithful application represents the purpose for which preachers herald God's Word. This application takes the form of doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, rebuke, and exhortation.

¹⁴² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 574.

¹⁴³ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 601.

¹⁴⁴ Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 506.

James 1:21-25

As James addresses the newly formed church scattered throughout the Roman Empire, he seeks to address an ongoing challenge of carnality in the church. Some claimed that a simple statement of faith precluded any need for life change. However, James seeks in his epistle to reveal that faith requires works to be true faith. He anchors the argument for a faith that works in the purpose of God's Word.

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing (Jas 1:21-25, ESV).

James calls the believer to remove himself from the stain of sin and to change his life through the reception of God's Word. Immediately, James reveals that life change occurs only when God's Word is implanted into the believer.¹⁴⁵ Richardson notes, "In the early history of the church, the word preached was that instrument of transmission from Scripture to heart and mind."¹⁴⁶ The early church viewed life change as the purpose for preaching.

Further, James instructs the listener to receive the Word. One cannot simply listen to the message. Instead, the message must be considered and applied. Christians reveal their faith by humbly accepting God's Word as their authority and guide for life.¹⁴⁷ Thus receiving the implanted Word and allowing the seed to grow, the believer can bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

¹⁴⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert, *James* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2002), 116.

¹⁴⁶ Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, The New American Commentary, vol. 36 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 92.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *James*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 16 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 85.

The believer who receives the implanted Word becomes a doer of the Word, not merely a hearer. The reader should note that the goal of preaching is not hearing. If the Christian satisfies himself with only hearing the Word, preaching God's Word does not accomplish its goal.¹⁴⁸ The implanted Word can only flourish in the soil of a heart that longs to obey.¹⁴⁹

James then uses two illustrations to picture the need for life change through God's Word. First, James relates an illustration of the forgetful hearer. This hearer listens to the proclamation of God's Word, beholds his spiritual state, and walks away without application. James compares this man to someone who looks in a mirror and does not act upon what he sees. His hair remains out of place. The stains of filth remain on his body. Beholding himself in the mirror accomplished nothing.

However, James also relates an illustration of the Christian who hears and applies God's Word to their life. This man is like the one who looks in the mirror and makes the necessary changes to better his visage. The one who hears and applies the Word experiences life change. Through viewing God's Word and applying the message, they strengthen their walk with God, thus accomplishing the goal of Bible proclamation.

In this text, James reveals the purpose of biblical proclamation. Preaching the Word so crowds merely hear does not accomplish God's purposes. Instead, the goal is hearing for life change in the listener's heart. Nevertheless, one should note that God places the onus of acting on the heard Word on the hearer. Thus, the preacher would be wise to assist the hearer in applying God's Word.

¹⁴⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 88.

¹⁴⁹ James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 82.

Matthew 5-7

Christ illustrated the need for and method of applying the biblical message. Most poignantly, Christ demonstrated the purpose of proclamation for life change in the Sermon on the Mount. As the reader examines this message, he notes the diversity with which Christ applied the message to the listening crowd. Thus, the Sermon on the Mount presents a pattern for the pastor.

As Christ began His message with the beatitudes, He revealed the impact of principled application to the listener. When the listener hears God's Word and seeks to apply the principles in specific ways to his life, Christ reveals that the result is satisfaction. While translators tend to translate μακάριοι (makarioi) as blessed, fortunate, or happy, one should note that the context dictates that this word means more. Instead, this term reveals that God grants these individuals grace, satisfaction, and peace when they apply the Word to their life.¹⁵⁰

Christ then turned to the importance of God's Word. Christ informed the listener that God's Law is unending and binding.¹⁵¹ Christians must obey and apply God's Word to find greatness in God's kingdom. Matthew 5:20 presents an exciting addition to this thought as Jesus demands perfection. "The lifestyle God demands is of the heart, lived out in daily actions."¹⁵² However, in light of the cross, the Christian must remember his righteousness in Christ and live in light of that righteousness.

The remainder of the Sermon on the Mount reveals the picture of the practical outworking of Bible application. Jesus addressed the incomplete obedience which marked the

¹⁵⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 168.

¹⁵¹ Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: Clark, 1985), 45.

¹⁵² Osborne, *Matthew*, 189.

Jews of His day. As He walked through the various commandments found in the Law, Christ did so with a specific pattern: "You have heard . . . But I say." Through this pattern, Jesus reveals that obedience to and applying His Word from the heart requires specificity. All too often, Christians seek to obey the letter of God's Law. However, Jesus reveals that application from the heart must go beyond the mere principle and into the specific application for each life.¹⁵³

The pastor experiences the challenge in the preaching event to help the listener move beyond general principles into specific applications. Nevertheless, this section of the Sermon on the Mount reveals that every part of Scripture applies to the everyday life of God's people in a specific way. As Christ addresses the Law to the people, He highlights five commands and moves the application from the general to the specific. Through these illustrations, Christ demonstrates the need for a specific application.

First, Christ brought to the listener's attention the command to refrain from murder. Most individuals skim over this command as they apply it generally. They are not tempted to kill someone and move to the subsequent text. However, Christ revealed that the specific application of this text moves well beyond refraining from ending an individual's life. Instead, all who are angry with others, insult others, or fail to forgive others are guilty of murder. As the individual considers the ramifications of this truth, the applications move beyond the courtroom and into the home, work, and church environments.¹⁵⁴ Interpersonal conflict takes on much more significance.

Second, the call to refrain from adultery certainly applies to the married. However, the Sermon on the Mount reveals that the specific application of the text moves well beyond the general principle. Anyone, whether married or single, who looks at another with lust breaks the

¹⁵³ Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew - Luke*, ESV Expositors Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 119.

¹⁵⁴ Osborne, *Matthew*, 196.

command prohibiting adultery.¹⁵⁵ Suddenly the lingering look of an adult at their co-worker becomes convicting. The teenager discussing the girl across the room with his friends stands in adultery. Through the specific application, the general rule becomes applicable to all people.

Third, Christ addresses the issue of divorce. The Jews of His time created a system where no-fault divorce became a norm. They twisted Scripture to justify their sin.¹⁵⁶ However, Christ reveals that one cannot manipulate the application of Scripture to fit an individual's thinking. In this, Christ addresses the need for Scripture to form the individual's framework.¹⁵⁷ The original context of the command by Moses only allowed divorce in the instance of immorality. Christ further revealed that God hates divorce and considers illegitimate divorce to be adultery. This command reminds the believer that the application must align with God's revealed Word.

Fourth, Christ addressed the proclivity for people to break contracts or oaths. As with today, the people of Christ's day often did not honor their commitments. The leaders taught that the commitment was no longer binding if someone did not swear in God's name.¹⁵⁸ However, as Christ addressed the issue of using God's name to convince others that the individual would fulfill their commitment, He revealed that the application went much deeper than swearing by something other than God. Instead, the individual should stand with such integrity that they do not need to swear. Their word would be trustworthy.¹⁵⁹

Finally, Christ addressed the issue of retaliation. While many took the command of an eye for an eye to mean that they had the right to retaliate against any injustice, Christ revealed that they should instead understand the history of biblical theology. God did not intend for this

¹⁵⁵ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 82.

¹⁵⁶ Osborne, *Matthew*, 206.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁵⁸ Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 83.

¹⁵⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 213.

command found in Exodus 21:24 to encourage retaliation but to limit it.¹⁶⁰ Instead, the individual should practice the love revealed in Christ. Individuals should show love to their enemy and commit to God's justice.

As the preacher examines this section, he understands that the Scripture's commands move beyond general commands and platitudes into specific applications. However, the listeners will not always understand the principles behind the general commands. Failing to understand the principles, they fail to move beyond the general command into a specific application to their life. The tendency for the individual to force their framework onto the text further complicates the issue. The pastor cannot address every framework and every application. The challenge then sits upon the hearer to examine how the general principle applies to their life.

Biblical application must also happen with proper motivations. When one applies the Word so that others will observe their obedience, they miss the mark. Instead, an obedient heart views God as the observer. When one seeks to obey the text for human approval, they receive human reward only. However, when one seeks to obey the text for God's glory, they lay up for themselves heavenly treasure. Jesus carefully pointed out that earthly rewards fade, but heavenly rewards are eternal. Moreover, where one places their treasure reveals their heart for or against holiness. Thus, the obedient heart seeks life change for the sake of conformity to Christ.¹⁶¹ Once again, Jesus revealed that preaching seeks life change in the listener's heart.

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount using nature to illustrate the need for obedience to Christ. Through illustrations of plants, birds, natural decay, and fruit trees, Jesus points to the goal of preaching. As with James, Jesus reveals that God granted His Word to His

¹⁶⁰ Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 84.

¹⁶¹ Doriani, *Matthew - Luke*, 119.

people for their life change. As a result, he demonstrates that the believer should seek God's kingdom and righteousness first. Proper preaching exhorts the believer in this endeavor.

Taking the cue from Jesus, the preacher should seek to proclaim application and explanation. Further, the preacher should assist the listener in understanding the specifics of life change. Like Jesus, they should speak in a principled way and expect the listeners to apply the message to their hearts specifically. However, while the sermon's purpose is life change, the responsibility for that life change lies with the hearer.

Nehemiah 8:1-8

Jesus did not institute a new method of preaching. The Book of Nehemiah contains a similar account that reveals the need to help listeners apply the Word to their life circumstances. When the Jews finished rebuilding the wall under the oversight of Nehemiah, they gathered to dedicate the work to God.¹⁶² Nehemiah 8 contains an account of this dedication and reveals the importance of application in preaching.

The chief priest, Ezra, erected a platform in front of the water gate. As the people gathered together to praise God for His provision of the new wall, Ezra presented God's Word to them from this platform. Several aspects of this event are of note. First, the preaching event occurred over a long period. This event took place throughout the day. Second, Ezra placed God's Word central in this worship. When the people gathered, Ezra read God's Word to His people. Third, God's people were eager to hear His Word. They listened attentively and honored His Word by standing when it was read.¹⁶³ These aspects remind the believer of the centrality of

¹⁶² Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 12 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 113.

¹⁶³ F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 171.

God's Word in worship and the desire of God's people to hear His Word. As a result, the preacher should not rush through the presentation of God's Word.

Further, Ezra instructed the other priests and the Levites to explain the Word to the people. It appears that when Ezra completed reading God's Word, the other leaders took the time to help the individuals understand the Word and apply it to their context.¹⁶⁴ Ezra did not remain content with reading alone but sought life change through God's Word.

Two phrases reveal the importance of application. First, the leaders helped the people understand the Law. Some commentators believe that not all of the Jews spoke Hebrew. As a result, they did not understand the reading. The leaders would then translate the reading into their spoken language so that they could understand.¹⁶⁵ Ezra's goal was that all would understand God's Word.

Second, the leaders gave a sense of the Law. Ezra did not satisfy himself that the people heard the Word in their language. Instead, he desired that they understand how the Word applied to their context. He desired that the priests clearly explain what the text meant. Further, the means for translating and explaining were planned out in advance.¹⁶⁶ The application remained the central purpose for the proclamation of God's Word.

Conclusion

God informs the Christians that He has given them everything they need for life and godliness in His Word. God's Spirit inspired this Word rendering it sufficient for application to the Christian's life. Thus, the preacher's task is to faithfully apply this Word to the hearer. James

¹⁶⁴ Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 116.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ T. J. Betts, *Nehemiah: A Pastoral and Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 107.

reveals that the listener is also responsible for being a doer of the Word. Only listening to the Word accomplishes nothing. Christ also reveals that the Word's application must go beyond the general principle and into the specific aspects of life. Finally, Nehemiah reveals that application is a primary aspect of the preaching event. Scripture reveals that the preacher should seek to train and assist the listener in sermon application. However, the onus for application to the specific aspects of life and obedience in that application also lies at the feet of the listener. On this ground, the paradigm of personal application receives its theological foundation.

Theoretical Foundations

Recognizing the call for life change through the sermon application, ministers struggle with equipping the body to apply sermons to their specific life circumstances correctly. A variety of ministers attempt different approaches to accomplish this task. These approaches can be broadly categorized into grid and conceptual approaches. However, listening theory provides needed insight into the mental process of the congregants toward the sermon. As a result, for this project, volunteers from Cambria Baptist Church follow a theoretical framework that blends a grid approach and listening theory into a new approach toward sermon application labeled for this study as a listening theory approach.

A Grid Approach to Application

Through the years, ministers created several grids to assist them as they prepared sermons to make sound, relevant applications to their congregants. The purpose of these grids is to place the minister into the minds and lives of the congregants. The theory is that these grids keep the minister from making the same applications week after week and cover the broad spectrum of life circumstances in the congregation. This study will focus on four specific grids.

Between Two Worlds Grid by John Stott

Through most of the twentieth century, John Stott stood as a giant in evangelicalism. As an Anglican rector and a prolific author, John Stott recognized the importance of faithful preaching for the modern church. Through his book, *Between Two Worlds*, Stott gifted the church with tremendous insight into the challenges of bringing the ancient text into the modern life of the congregant. He sought to train the pastor through the book to bridge the gap between the ancient text and modern life.¹⁶⁷

Stott presented a four-fold approach to application. First, the preacher must apply the text seeing Christ as the fulfillment "of every human need."¹⁶⁸ He believed the preacher must refrain from preaching Christ simply as a historical figure who lived and died. Instead, the preacher must help the congregant understand that he meets every variety of human needs today. The preacher must identify the congregant's relationship with Christ as primary importance.

Second, the preacher must apply the text to ethics.¹⁶⁹ As Stott considered ethics, he divided the concept into three categories. First, Stott considered individual ethics. However, he warns the preacher from focusing on micro-ethics (such as amusements, clothing, and appearance). While these issues are essential, Stott challenges the preacher to focus on macro-ethics (morality, repentance, and faithfulness).¹⁷⁰ Second, Stott considered church ethics. In this, he pointed to the calling in Titus 2 for the older men and women to teach the younger men and women. He desired the pastor to reveal how the text applied to church life.¹⁷¹ Finally, Stott

¹⁶⁷ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 111.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 116.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 117.

turned to domestic ethics. Here, Stott sought to have the congregant consider the ramifications of the text in the home.¹⁷²

The final two areas Stott challenged the preacher to apply the text are political and social issues. Stott encouraged the preacher not to shy away from addressing the Christian's responsibility to the government.¹⁷³ Further, the preacher must address "questions which affect our behavior in the community at large."¹⁷⁴ In this section, the congregant asks how the text impacts his relationship with those around him.

Stott adds some helpful categories for the preacher to consider as he seeks to assist his congregants in applying the text to life. Observing Stott's categories provides insight into the need to include ethics, Christ, and social interaction applications into the paradigm of personal application. Although Stott discourages using micro-ethics, this paradigm will encourage the congregant to examine the text's application to their life in micro-ethics.

Text-Driven Preaching Grid by Daniel Akin

Serving in various roles in seminaries, Daniel Akin studied, practiced, and trained in sermon preparation for many years. He grounds his grid in the concept that practice always echoes belief. Further, he emphasizes James 1:21 and the call for believers to live out the Word, not just hear the Word. He believes that the preacher holds a two-part responsibility in the sermon: he must correctly exposit the text, and he must correctly apply the text.¹⁷⁵ Akin challenges the minister to weave the application throughout the sermon.

¹⁷² Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 119.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Daniel Akin, David Allen, and Ned Matthews, eds., *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 269–70.

Two primary principles drive Akin's view of sermon application. First, Akin states, "Your application should be Theo/Christocentric."¹⁷⁶ Second, understanding God and Christ should lead to distinct implications in the believer's life in response to grace.¹⁷⁷ With these principles in mind, Akin believes the preacher should seek to make specific calls to action to the hearers.¹⁷⁸

Akin borrows from Hanz Finzel's thinking and sets apart four categories with consideration for each category. First, the preacher must challenge the listener's relationship with God. Considerations include a truth to understand, a command to obey, a prayer to express, a challenge to heed, a promise to claim, and a fellowship to enjoy. Second, the preacher must challenge the listener's relationship with himself. Considerations include a thought or word to examine, an action to take, an example to follow, an error to avoid, an attitude to change or guard against, a priority to change, a goal to strive for, a personal value to hold up, and a sin to forsake. Third, the preacher must challenge the listener's relationship with others. Considerations include a witness to share, an encouragement to extend, a service to do, a forgiveness to ask, a fellowship to nurture, an exhortation to give, a burden to bear, a kindness to express, a hospitality to extend, an attitude to change or guard against, and a sin to forsake. Finally, the preacher must challenge the listener's relationship with Satan. Considerations include a person to resist, a device to recognize, a temptation to resist, a sin to confess, and a piece of spiritual armor to wear.¹⁷⁹

The theory behind adding considerations will be added to the paradigm of personal applications. Adding thoughts under the broad categories will drive the listener to proper self-talk through the message. Further, the considerations will allow the paradigm to apply to every

¹⁷⁶ Akin, Allen, and Matthews, *Text-Driven Preaching...*, 275.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁷⁹ Hans Finzel, *Unlocking the Scriptures: Three Steps to Personal Bible Study* (Portland, OR: Victor, 2003), 64.

text of Scripture as it provides multiple thoughts and areas of application. However, the number of considerations Akin raises under each category may prove unwieldy.

Christ-Centered Preaching Grid by Bryan Chapell

Bryan Chapell serves as the Pastor Emeritus at Grace Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Illinois, and the President Emeritus of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He continues to conduct pastoral training worldwide, serving churches in assisting their pastors to become faithful, expository preachers. His seminal work on preaching, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, contains a helpful paradigm for sermon application.

Chapell believes that application is the primary purpose of the sermon.¹⁸⁰ He states, "If there is no apparent reason for listeners to absorb exegetical insights, historical facts, and biographical details, then the preacher cannot expect what seems inapplicable to be appreciated."¹⁸¹ As a result, Chapell places great emphasis on application in the sermon. He divides the application into two categories: Attitude and behavior.¹⁸²

Chapell's paradigm consists of four questions. First, the preacher must seek to help the congregant ask, "What does God now require of me?"¹⁸³ This question comes after the faithful exposition of the text. In essence, the preacher asks the congregation, "So what?" This question demands that the preacher understands the text's demands on the original readers and places those demands into the modern day.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 213.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Second, the preacher must seek to help the congregant ask, "Where does He require it of me?"¹⁸⁵ This question moves the principle from a generic idea into a specific application.

Chapell illustrates that the command to love one's neighbor then moves into the place of loving the member of opposing political persuasions.¹⁸⁶ Chapell offers the preacher categories to aid in this endeavor, including relationships, finances, besetting sins, resources, and trials.¹⁸⁷

Third, the preacher must seek to help the congregant ask, "Why must I do what He requires?"¹⁸⁸ This question causes the congregant to examine their motivations. However, Chapell warns against solely motivating congregants with Law. As an illustration, he points to the incomplete obedience of the Pharisees. Instead, Chapell encourages the minister to motivate with grace.¹⁸⁹

Finally, the preacher must seek to help the congregant ask, "How can I do what He requires?"¹⁹⁰ Chapell warns the preacher against raising questions he does not answer. Instead, he encourages the minister to give practical steps the congregant may take to see life change. Further, the minister should remind the congregant of God's enablement to obey through the Holy Spirit.¹⁹¹

Several aspects of Chapell's grid provide a foundation for the paradigm of personal application. First, the theory of behavior driven by motivation proves helpful in creating a paradigm for congregational use. Second, the theory of asking questions to prick the conscience

¹⁸⁵ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching...*, 216.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 217–18.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

creates self-talk in the congregant as they work through the paradigm. Finally, finding the solution in Christ provides a necessary category to the paradigm.

9 Marks Preaching Grid by Mark Dever

Mark Dever serves as the Pastor of Capital Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC, where he founded the ministry 9 Marks to assist pastors in building healthy churches. In the book from which the ministry gained its name, Dever emphasizes the importance of expositional preaching.¹⁹² He encourages the pastor that God leads His people through His Word.¹⁹³ As a result, preaching the Word sanctifies the believer and assists his conformity to Christ.¹⁹⁴

Under the 9 Marks label, David Helm published a book built on the concept Dever presents. Helm encourages the preacher to ask several important questions for application. First, the preacher should ask, "Am I preaching for an internal change of heart?" Second, "Am I reticent to call for repentance?" Finally, "Is my message more than merely intellectual?"¹⁹⁵ These critical thoughts stand as the foundation for Dever's application grid.

The grid Dever provides through 9 Marks encourages the preacher to make application throughout the sermon.¹⁹⁶ The left side of the grid consists of the sermon outline. The columns consist of the various areas of application for the preacher to consider. Each of these topics places the preacher in the mind of the various congregants. However, the preacher must understand that not every category applies to every text.

¹⁹² Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 42.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁹⁵ David R. Helm, *Expositional Preaching: How We Speak God's Word Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 103.

¹⁹⁶ Mark Dever, "Sermon Application Grid," 9 Marks, <https://anglicanexpositor.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/application-grid.pdf>. Accessed 2/3/23.

The categories consist of unique salvation history, non-Christian, public, Christ, unity in diversity, work, gender/marriage/family, individual Christian, and your local church. The categories prove general and require the preacher to bring in the specific application. However, Dever presents important categories which can be translated directly to the paradigm of personal application. Also, Dever reminds the congregant to make applications throughout the sermon. As a result, the paradigm will encourage ongoing application throughout the sermon.

A Conceptual Approach to Application

While grid approaches to application exist throughout the literature, they can prove too unwieldy and inefficient. As a result, some preachers pursue a more conceptual approach to application. This approach appears in three primary ways: no application, application in the preacher's life, and application for a select group of the congregation.

These approaches provide a theoretical foundation for this study for two reasons. First, these approaches reveal the tension in application to the whole congregation. As noted in the literature review, some believe the preacher should take the way the text applies to his personal life and present that application to the congregation.¹⁹⁷ Others believe that the preacher should ask numerous questions to prick the conscience.¹⁹⁸ Still, others suggest drawing applications from history.¹⁹⁹ This diversity of opinion reveals that the grid method cannot be sufficient in sermon application as many congregants leave the service without the word applied to their specific situation.

Second, these approaches acknowledge the need for the listener to take an active role in sermon application. Cappill notes that the preacher cannot spend the entirety of the sermon on

¹⁹⁷ Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 63.

¹⁹⁸ Voelz, "Questions for Conversational Preaching," 140.

¹⁹⁹ Brown and Powery, *Sunday's Sermon for Monday's World*, 60.

the application, for this makes a weak sermon.²⁰⁰ He further expounds that the Holy Spirit must implant the application in the believer's heart for life change to take root.²⁰¹ Any paradigm this study employs should seek to drive the congregant to engage with the Holy Spirit in the application and listen to the Holy Spirit's conviction. Therefore, this study will seek to move the application responsibility to the congregant and the minister.

A Listening Theory Approach to Application

Listening theory moves the primary application responsibility from the speaker to the listener.²⁰² By focusing on self-talk, listening theory recognizes that the listener must engage with the message for the message to impact the hearer.²⁰³ For life change to occur, the listener must challenge their preconceptions of the message through this self-talk.²⁰⁴ The tension with sermon application lies in the fact that the minister has not placed the onus for application on the congregant. Instead, the minister seeks to set the application into the congregant's mind through the grids and concepts. The paradigm of personal application seeks to shift the movement from the preacher only to cooperation between the preacher and congregant.

Worthington and Fitch-Hauser present a listening model whose theory fits with the purposes of this study. Identified as the Listening MATERRS Model, this model comprises critical elements needed for application in the paradigm of personal application.²⁰⁵ First, the model recognizes the importance of awareness in the listening process. In this process, the

²⁰⁰ Capill, *The Heart Is the Target*, 10.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰² Brownell, *Listening: Attitudes, Principles, Skills*, 19.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁰⁴ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 54.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

listener actively engages with the message and interacts with the concepts.²⁰⁶ The paradigm of personal application seeks to engage the listener's awareness through understanding the self-talk taking place in the individual.

The Listening MATERRS Model also recognizes the importance of translation and evaluation in the listening process. The translation process connects the emotion with the message. Further, the translation process assesses the validity of the message.²⁰⁷ Therefore the paradigm of personal application seeks to engender an emotional response and a quest for honesty through the self-talk that the categories and questions raise. The self-talk should then lead to the evaluation process in which the listener seeks the message's relevancy to their situation.²⁰⁸ The paradigm assists the listener in identifying the specific ways in which the message calls for change or re-enforces positivity in the congregant's life.

Finally, the model calls for a response.²⁰⁹ Through self-talk and proper evaluation, the listener understands the specific application of the text to their life. The Holy Spirit then takes the application and begins to aid the believer in living out the application through His convicting work. In this way, the congregant understands the specific response necessary from the sermon.

Using the categories and ideas from the grid model of application, the paradigm for personal application brings the listener into the text with specific areas of life change in mind. Using the conclusions from the conceptual application model, the minister understands that he cannot address every application area. Further, he understands the role the Holy Spirit plays in sermon application. Understanding listening theory equips the minister to move the application process from singular to binary. The congregants become intimately involved in the sermon

²⁰⁶ Worthington and Fitch-Hauser, *Listening: Processes, Functions, and Competency*, 13.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

application process. This study operates on the theory that a tool to provoke helpful self-talk in the congregant and training to wield that tool will result in the congregant correctly applying sermons to their life.

Conclusion

The unique setting at Cambria Baptist Church sits in its multi-generational makeup. However, this blessing from God also challenges the minister as he seeks to apply the sermon to each situation. The problem at Cambria Baptist Church is that the multi-generational congregation does not understand how to apply sermons to their situation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon.

The literature review reveals a hole in the literature surrounding sermon application. The literature places the responsibility for application on the minister while recognizing the minister's inability to address every life circumstance in the congregation. Sadly, the literature acknowledges this inability without addressing solutions. Listening theory provides the solution to the applicational challenge by equipping the minister with a tool for the congregant to use in sermon application.

The theological foundations of the study reside in the necessity of biblical application. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge does not produce life change. Therefore, God gave the Word to His people for life change. The proclamation of the Word must therefore engender this life change. Any preaching which does not seek application falls short of the biblical model and purpose of preaching.

The study's theoretical foundations reside in combining the grid model, conceptual model, and listening theory into a workable paradigm of personal application. The paradigm

takes the concepts and categories from the various grids and sorts them into an understandable grid for the average congregant. Through the conceptual model, the paradigm acknowledges the need for the Holy Spirit's conviction in the individual congregant. Therefore, the paradigm roots itself in listening theory to create self-talk in the congregant throughout the message resulting in a response toward life change. For these reasons, if the paradigm of personal application is taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation can effectively apply each sermon to their personal life.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Many Christians do not understand how to accomplish the task of sermon application rightly and are thus left to hope that some turn of phrase will inspire them and create conviction in their life. The congregants of Cambria Baptist Church are no different. The multi-generational makeup of the congregation at Cambria Baptist Church further compounds the challenge. Due to the congregation's diversity, the pastors cannot adequately present applications that will apply to each generation. This thesis project offered a different training method for the congregants of Cambria Baptist Church through a helpful paradigm of personal application. This paradigm applied to all generations in the congregation and moved the sermon application process from the minister alone to a partnership between the minister and the congregant.

Intervention Design

This thesis project created a paradigm that the average congregant may use to assist them in sermon application. The intervention design was to present, train in the use of, and evaluate the use of the paradigm of personal application. Using volunteers from the congregation, they participated in a four-week training program and a three-week action study of the paradigm. The process concluded with a debriefing meeting in which the participants discussed the effectiveness and weaknesses of the paradigm in a group setting. They also gave ideas and insights into ways the paradigm can be improved and then implanted into other aspects of the ministry at Cambria Baptist Church. The goal of the paradigm was that when the congregants use

it, it will create self-talk in the Christian through the message resulting in a thoughtful application.

Table 3.1. The Paradigm of Personal Application

In what specific ways did the sermon impact/change my thinking in my relationship with:	
<p>God (Father / Jesus Christ / Holy Spirit)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoughts of God's actions or attributes • God's expectations of me • My expectations of God <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>	<p>Myself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes I need to examine • Sins I need to forsake • Anxieties I need to commit to God <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>
<p>Family</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to picture the gospel in my attitudes and actions with my spouse • How to shepherd my children in godliness • How to honor my parents in the Lord • How to interact with my siblings • How to interact with my grandchildren in godliness <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>	<p>School / Work / Retirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to grow in a God-honoring work ethic • How to manage time properly • How to worship in my current situation • How to interact with others honorably (authorities and peers) <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>
<p>Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelize the lost • Reflect Christ in my interactions • Interaction with others with integrity <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>	<p>Entertainment / Hobbies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mortify the flesh • Redeem my time • Honor Sabbath rest <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>
<p>Finances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheerful giving to the Church • Steward God's gracious gifts • Invest in heavenly treasure <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>	<p>Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provoke others to love and good works • Confront and receive confrontation of sin • Fulfill Scripture's "one another" commands • Serve joyfully • Worship passionately <p>Specific actions I need to take: Encouragements I received:</p>

The intervention centered on the paradigm of personal application. While many grids exist for preachers to use in sermon preparation, none exist for the congregant to use for themselves. Instead, the widespread expectation is that the pastor will present solid application in the message for the congregants. However, the pastor cannot give every possibility in a multi-generational context. Therefore, the project moderator created the paradigm using the best ideas from various application grids available.

This paradigm consisted of a thought-provoking opening question followed by eight broad areas of life for application. These eight broad areas centered on the central themes of life. As all of Scripture speaks to man's relationship with God, the paradigm began with the congregant's relationship with God. Further, the congregant should also arrive at a proper view of self. Therefore, the second category was the congregant's relationship with self. The final eight areas sought to cover the majority of life situations the congregants faced regardless of age.

Under these eight broad areas, the paradigm presented several thought-provoking statements designed to create self-talk in the congregant's mind throughout the message. Each thought-provoking statement stood in Scripture's themes in these areas of life. Further, the thought-provoking statements were not intended to be all-inclusive but to create self-talk in the congregant. Each area also had a place to record a specific change they should make. It also contained an area to record the encouragement they received from the message. The moderator intended the paradigm to be all-inclusive while refraining from overwhelming the congregant.

In order to conduct the study, the researcher obtained IRB approval through Liberty University. The researcher outlined the intervention's design and implementation, including the safety measures presented in this report. The IRB determined that the study did not meet the

government's definition of a human research project. Therefore, the IRB approved the presented study.¹

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The project consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of four weeks of training in the purpose and use of the paradigm of personal application. The second part consisted of three weeks of "in-the-field" paradigm use. The final week consisted of a debriefing meeting in which the volunteers gave feedback on the paradigm's effectiveness and evaluated the theological ideas surrounding the skills they developed through the program.

Two weeks prior to the beginning of the project, the project moderator announced an overview of the project during the Sunday Worship Service. This overview contained the general purpose of the study, which was to help the congregant better apply the sermons to their context through the created paradigm of personal application. The project moderator explained that the study consists of four weeks of training and three weeks of using the paradigm of personal application in the Sunday Worship Service. The moderator also explained that he would ask the participants to fill out questionnaires each week to evaluate the effectiveness of the paradigm. He invited any interested in participating in the study to attend Sunday school on the day the project began.²

Throughout the two weeks prior to the beginning of the project, the moderator also recruited several participants through conversation and personal invitation. These conversations occurred among the church board, Sunday school classes, and one-on-one interactions. Through this method, the moderator sought to secure participation from every generation represented in

¹ See Appendix I for IRB Approval Letter.

² The announcement appears in Appendix A.

the church. These conversations further allowed the moderator to address any questions surrounding participation in the study. However, the moderator took pains to ensure that the conversations did not manipulate individuals into participating in the study by outlining several reasons they may not want to participate. He mentioned that absence from the church at this time would limit their ability to participate. Therefore they should not participate if they have any vacations scheduled. The moderator also noted that they could listen to the training sessions without volunteering for the study. As a result, if any chose not to participate, there would be no negative repercussions.

Training in the Paradigm of Personal Application

The first part of the project consisted of training in the purpose and use of the paradigm of personal application. This training occurred during the Sunday school hour (9:30 a.m.) at Cambria Baptist Church.³ For this project, all adult Sunday school classes at Cambria Baptist Church combined in the chapel for the seven-week project duration. The Young Adult Sunday School Class contained members in the 18-30-year-old range. The Berean Sunday School Class comprised members from the 30-70-year-old range. The Chapel Sunday School Class consisted of the 50-90-year-old range. Combining the Sunday school classes gave the best chance for a broad multi-generational spectrum of volunteers from the Cambria Baptist Church body, as the class consisted of congregants from each generation. Conducting the project during the Sunday school hour also created the best chance for a high volume of volunteers as this is a time the individuals already attended. The structured timeline for the intervention implementation plan was as follows:

³ Lesson plans for this training appear in Appendix B.

Table 3.2. Intervention Implementation Plan

<p>Week 1 – Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the project's purpose and thesis. • Explain the project in detail. • Explain the expectations in detail. • Complete volunteer sign-up and waivers (Appendix A) • Assign survey numbers.
<p>Week 2 – Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical foundations of application (1 Pet 1:3; 2 Tim 3:16-4:2; Jas 1:21-25) • Principles for preparing to receive applications throughout the week. • Introduce the application grid concept.
<p>Week 3 – Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the listening process (listening MATERRS). • Teach the self-talk concept. • Introduce the PPA.
<p>Week 4 – Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the topics and thought prompts in the PPA. • Illustrate using the PPA with a message.
<p>Week 4 – Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to use the PPA in the Sunday Worship Service • Complete response survey
<p>Week 5 – Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to use the PPA in the Sunday Worship Service • Complete response survey
<p>Week 6 – Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to use the PPA in the Sunday Worship Service • Complete response survey
<p>Week 7 – Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present final response survey • Collect feedback and recommendations for the PPA. • Discuss possible implementations of the PPA across CBC ministries.

In the first week of training, the project moderator began with an introduction, presenting his longing for the congregation to take the sermons and apply them directly to their context. Preaching stands as the central aspect of the worship service. God commanded the pastor to equip the saints through the preaching of the Word. This preaching holds the specific purpose of

application. The moderator also turned to 2 Timothy 4:1-4 to further support this concept, explaining that, for the moderator to accomplish his God-given role, he must assist them in correctly applying God's Word. This project aimed to accomplish this task.

The moderator then introduced the project's problem, purpose, and thesis. The problem was that the multi-generational congregation did not understand how to apply each sermon in specific ways to their context. Instead, they sought for some aspect of the sermon to speak to them in some way. The pastor could not address every possible application for each member. To illustrate this challenge, the moderator pointed to the generations represented in the room. He asked how a message on the love of the world would apply differently between the twenty-year-old single and the seventy-year-old married couple.

The moderator then informed the class that this DMIN action research project aimed to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation could effectively apply the sermon. At this point, the moderator handed out copies of the paradigm and briefly introduced the concepts to the class. He explained the significant aspects of the paradigm. The moderator pointed to the heading for each section, explaining that these sought to cover the significant areas of life. He then pointed to the thought-provoking statements and briefly explained how they should be used to create conversation in the listener's mind throughout the sermon. Finally, he pointed to the sections which called for application. He spent time explaining the difference between general and specific applications. The project moderator also mentioned that in-depth training would occur over the next three weeks.

Finally, the moderator informed the class of the project's thesis, which was that if the paradigm of personal application was taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation would effectively apply each sermon to their personal life. They would also have the role of helping the moderator refine the paradigm through the feedback and critique they provided. He

asked them to be brutally honest throughout the process as a gift to the congregation in the refining of the paradigm. He presented the opportunity for the volunteers to impact the broad ministry through the project as they would give ideas for bettering the paradigm and instituting it into the other ministries at Cambria Baptist Church. He then explained the project by presenting the methodology in the prospectus with the week-by-week plan. He explained the broad topic categories for each week of training and the hope for positive and negative feedback in the final meeting. He also explained that each training session would be audio recorded to ensure accuracy and clarity in the evaluation process.

Further, in this first meeting, the project moderator presented the expectations of the volunteers for the project. They were expected to attend all the training sessions, use the paradigm of personal application in the three-week study period in the Sunday Worship Service, and complete the weekly questionnaires promptly. In order to participate in the study, they would need to have attended Cambria Baptist Church for at least six months so that the study could consist of volunteers who were committed to and understood the teaching ministry at Cambria Baptist Church. Finally, the volunteers were expected to give honest positive and negative feedback.

After explaining the project, the moderator called for questions to clarify any issues in the congregant's thinking. The only question asked surrounded an elderly member who is hard of hearing. After each class, the moderator committed to working with that member individually to ensure that he understood the material presented. The moderator then invited those who would like to participate in the study to sign up on the sign-up sheet, which was passed around at that time.⁴

⁴ The Volunteer Sign-Up Sheet appears in Appendix C.

The moderator then introduced the project secretary, who used this sign-up sheet to assign anonymous survey numbers to the volunteers. He informed them that the secretary would contact the volunteers with their numbers in the next two weeks. The moderator explained that during the three weeks of the paradigm's field use, he would send the volunteers a questionnaire online and a hard copy. These questionnaires would be anonymous as they would not contain a place for names but only for the number given. The project moderator would not be aware of the numbers assigned. The moderator instructed the volunteers to return the hard copy questionnaires to the project secretary or the church office, who would pass them on to the project moderator.

Twenty-six participants across all the adult generations signed up for the study. Six volunteers were between the ages of twenty and thirty. Six volunteers were between the ages of thirty and forty-five. Seven volunteers were between the ages of forty-five and sixty-five. And seven volunteers were over the age of sixty-five. Finally, after working through the Informed Consent Waivers with the volunteers, the moderator asked the volunteers to sign and return the Informed Consent Waivers for participation in the study.⁵ The project moderator will keep these waivers on file in a locked cabinet at Cambria Baptist Church for one year after the study's completion.

⁵ The Informed Consent Waiver appears in Appendix D.



CAMBRIA
BAPTIST CHURCH

Lesson 1 – Study Introduction
May 14, 2023

Why are we doing this class?

- The central role of preaching
 - God calls the pastor to preach the Word faithfully.
 - This preaching serves to equip the saints for life.
 - 1 Timothy 4 reveals that this equipping primarily occurs through the presentation of God's Word.
 - Thus, God calls the pastor to train the congregation to apply God's Word correctly to their situation.
- The study's problem, purpose, and thesis
 - The problem – we have a multi-generational congregation which makes it impossible for the pastor to address every application.
Question: Why would applications differ between generations?
 - The purpose – This study aims to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon.
 - The thesis – The thesis is that if the paradigm of personal application is taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation will effectively apply each sermon to their personal life.

What is this study?

- Topics we will cover
 - Week 2 – The need for biblical application
 - Week 3 – How people listen
 - Week 4 – The Paradigm of Personal Application
- Expectations for participation
 - Attend all training sessions and use the paradigm of personal application in three worship services (June 4, June 11, and June 18).
 - Complete all questionnaires by Thursday each week.
 - Must have attended Cambria Baptist Church for at least six months so that the study can consist of volunteers who are committed to and understand the teaching ministry at Cambria.
 - Give honest positive and negative feedback.
 - Call for questions to clarify any issues.

Figure 3.1. Lesson 1 Handout

The second week of training focused on the biblical call for sermon application. The moderator presented the theological basis of sermon application from 2 Peter 1:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2, and James 1:21-25 as found in the theological foundation's section of this thesis project report. The moderator began by outlining 2 Peter 1:3-4. He noted that the Bible provides all Christians need to live a life pleasing to God, reflecting Christ. He noted that the text informs the Christian that God grants the believers everything they need for these things through His great and precious promises. He then asked the group where they would find these promises. This question led to the importance of Bible study.

The moderator then turned to 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2. In this section, the moderator presented the primary purposes of God's Word. God granted the believer His Word to instruct the Christian in proper belief. God's Word then reveals to the believer the areas in which their life does not align with this correct belief. Next, the Word instructs the believer in the ways to correct their wrong actions and beliefs. Finally, the Word helps the believer maintain the right actions and beliefs.

In order to fulfill his obligations to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, Paul instructs the pastor to fulfill this obligation primarily through the proclamation of God's Word. As the preacher proclaims God's Word, he is to pattern that proclamation around the purposes of God's Word. He is to reprove the Christians by revealing their wrong beliefs and actions. He rebukes the Christians, calling them to correct their wrong beliefs and actions. Moreover, he is to exhort the believers to maintain correct beliefs and actions. Thus, the purpose of the preaching event is life change, not just information exchange.

However, the moderator then turned to James 1:21-25. In this text, he revealed to the volunteers that the onus for life change rests upon the listeners in the preaching event. As the preacher seeks to implant the Word in the listener's heart, this implantation occurs only when the

listener analyzes the message and faithfully applies the lessons to their life. They are responsible for becoming doers of the Word, not hearers only. Thus, the preacher must seek to train the listener in sound methods for sermon application.

Following this explanation, the moderator invited discussion from the group on the challenges they faced in applying the sermon. First, the moderator initiated a group discussion around the question, "How do you go about making applications from the sermons at this point?" The moderator then led a discussion around the questions, "Why do we struggle to apply the Sunday sermon to our lives the rest of the week?" and "What specific things create a distraction for us in the sermon?" These questions aim to help the volunteers understand their heart struggles in the application and the distracting self-talk that occurs in the sermon.

The moderator then presented principles to practice throughout the week to prepare their hearts to apply the Sunday sermon. These principles included reading the biblical text of the upcoming sermon throughout the week.⁶ The principles also included getting a good night's sleep on Saturday night, creating enough time on Sunday morning so that the family is not rushed to get to church, listening to Christian music on the way to church to place our minds in a proper spirit, arriving early to church and fellowshiping with fellow believers, and putting electronic devices away in the worship service. The moderator gleaned many of these principles from the works of John Piper.⁷ The week concluded with an opportunity for questions, thoughts, or feedback from the lesson and prayer.

⁶ As the pastors at Cambria Baptist Church preach verse by verse through the various books of the Bible, the congregation is aware of the subsequent text.

⁷ Piper, *Take Care How You Listen*.



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**Lesson 2 – The Need for Biblical
Application**
May 21, 2023

1. Theological Foundations for Application
 - 2 Peter 1:3
 - God has granted believers everything they need for life change in His Word.
 - Godliness is sourced in God's divine power, not our will.
 - We find this divine power in God's good and precious promises recorded in His Word.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2
 - All Scripture is breathed out by God
 - All Scripture is to be faithfully proclaimed by the pastor.
 - James 1:21-25
 - God calls believers to remove themselves from the stain of sin.
 - God reveals that this stain is removed by implanting God's Word in the believer's heart.
 - When the Word is implanted in the believer's heart, they become doers of the Word. Application is the goal of implantation.
2. Group Discussion Questions
 - How do you go about making applications from the sermons at this point?
 - Why do we struggle to apply the Sunday sermon to our lives the rest of the week?
 - What specific things create a distraction for us in the sermon?
3. Principles to prepare your heart to receive God's Word
 - Read the biblical text of the upcoming sermon throughout the week.
 - Get a good night's sleep on Saturday night.
 - Create enough time on Sunday morning so the family is not rushed to church.
 - Listen to Christian music on the way to church to place our minds in a proper spirit.
 - Arrive early to church and fellowshiping with fellow believers.
 - Put electronic devices away in the worship service.
 - Review the paradigm of personal application Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Figure 3.2. Lesson 2 Handout

The moderator presented the concept of listening theory in the training's third week. This lesson consisted of a lecture on listening through an introduction to Worthington and Fitch-Hauser's Listening MATERRS Model. The moderator presented the model's acronym: Mental Stimulus, Awareness, Translation, Evaluation, Recall, Response, and Staying Connected. The moderator very briefly explained each aspect of the model. However, the moderator focused more closely on the concepts within this model of awareness, emotion, honesty, and response in listening.

The concept of awareness touched on the need to discipline the mind to remain engaged throughout the sermon. Often the congregant fails to apply the message because their mind wanders, and they fail to listen to it. Therefore, the congregant should actively use the necessary means to remain aware of the message taking place. The concept of emotion reminds the congregant to react to the message given. When the Holy Spirit convicts the believer through the message, the believer should acknowledge the emotion, whether anger or sorrow. The moderator instructed the participants as congregants to consider the base emotion they feel during the sermon. They should then ask why they feel that emotion of agreement, disagreement, or even anger.

The congregant must then evaluate the message with honesty. First, this means that the congregant must determine the sermon's veracity. They should question the sermon's tenants against the Word of God while it takes place. Second, once the congregant acknowledges the sermon's truth, they must evaluate the root of their emotional response to the message and if the emotions signal a need for change. This step requires the congregant to be honest about their life struggles in the topic addressed in the sermon. Finally, the listener must come to specific, concrete responses to the conclusions to which they have arrived. If the congregant has completed the previous steps, they will respond either with agreement and change or

disagreement and rejection. The agreement responses include positive encouragements and specific action changes that must occur.

The moderator noted that the preceding process is concurrent with the sermon through self-talk. This self-talk already takes place in the congregant's mind. However, self-talk sometimes distracts the listener by moving them into other thought topics (like the lunch menu). When the congregant is aware of self-talk, they can use it to advance their ability to listen to the message through non-verbal participation. No listener sits in passivity. Unless they are asleep, an inner conversation occurs around some topic. The disciplined listener uses this inner conversation to advance the reception and evaluation of the sermon.

To assist the participant's understanding of self-talk, the moderator led a group discussion surrounding the question, "What kind of conversations do you have with yourself while the sermon takes place?" This discussion aimed to reveal the need for good self-talk and measure the amount of good self-talk already taking place. To further illustrate the self-talk occurring in each mind, the moderator also asked, "When do we find our minds wandering while a sermon takes place?" This question revealed the distracting conversations taking place in the listener's mind. Finally, to set the table for the paradigm of personal application, the moderator asked how the participants brought their minds back into focus on the sermon.

Lastly, the moderator will re-introduce the paradigm of personal application. With this re-introduction, the moderator illustrated how he designed the paradigm to create positive self-talk in the congregant throughout the message. As the congregant became familiar with the topics and thought-provoking statements, they began asking themselves how the sermon applies to their situation in each category.



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Lesson 3 – How People Listen May 28, 2023

Good listening involves awareness of the things going on in our minds.

1. Awareness in sermon listening.
 - We must discipline our minds to remain engaged in the message.
 - Ask questions about the message presented.
 - Take written notes to stimulate your mind.
 - Bring back your mind to the topic at hand when your mind wanders.
2. Emotion in sermon listening.
 - Why do you react negatively to things that are said?
 - Why do you react positively to things that are said?
 - Acknowledge the emotion and determine the root cause of the emotion.
3. Honesty in sermon listening.
 - The listener must determine the veracity of the message against God's Word.
 - When the root cause of the emotions becomes evident, the listener must honestly evaluate if the emotions signal a need for change.
 - The listener must honestly evaluate their life and emotions against the message of God's Word.
4. Response in sermon listening.
 - Listening creates a natural response within the hearer.
 - The listener accepts the message presented and changes for the better.
 - The listener rejects the message and ignores the change needed.
5. Self-talk in sermon listening.
 - Good listening seeks to control the conversation taking place in the mind to advance comprehension.
 - Good listening controls the inner conversation through good questions regarding what is being heard.
6. Group Discussion Questions
 - What kind of conversations do you have with yourself during the sermon?
 - When do we find our minds wandering while a sermon takes place?
 - How do we bring our minds back to the sermon taking place?

Figure 3.3. Lesson 3 Handout

The fourth week of training consisted of an in-depth examination of the paradigm of personal application. This week, the moderator introduced the paradigm's eight categories and explained each category's importance. He looked at biblical support for each category and thought-provoking statements. The moderator then initiated a group discussion centered on the question, "What topic in the paradigm of personal application is most important to you and why?" This discussion measured the participants' state of life and helped determine each generation's differing life states. The older generations focused on family and their relationships with them. The younger generations focused on the categories of God and Myself. After this discussion, the moderator asked if anyone had questions to clarify any of the categories and statements of the paradigm.

The moderator spent the remaining time playing a short sermon clip from YouTube by H. B. Charles, Jr., entitled *Trust God* on Proverbs 3:5-6. The moderator used this sermon to demonstrate how he used the paradigm of personal application. He began the sermon at the three-minute and five-second mark as the beginning of the sermon covers Charles' thankfulness for the opportunity to speak. As the video-recorded sermon progressed, the moderator paused the sermon to explain the self-talk that should occur in the congregant's mind by explaining the self-talk that occurred in his mind. He used these pauses to illustrate how he thought through the categories and identified the specific applications and encouragements he took away as the sermon progressed.

The moderator first paused the sermon at the six-minute mark. At this point in the message, Charles completed the introduction. The moderator revealed that the introduction pointed his thinking toward two specific areas he knew the sermon would challenge him: God and Myself. As Charles presented the material in the introduction, the items first revealed that the sermon would challenge the moderator's expectations of God—namely, the expectation for

God to do what the moderator expected. Thus, the sermon would also address the anxieties the moderator needed to give to God. The moderator used this opportunity to explain that no sermon would cover every category of the paradigm. Instead, the listener should zero in on one or two categories for an application.

The moderator next paused the sermon at the eight-minute and twenty-second mark. At this point, Charles concluded by addressing the first phrase in the text, "Trust God with all your heart." The moderator revealed that the conversation occurring in his mind shifted to the question, "What does trusting God look like in practical actions?" He then revealed that he worked through four categories in the inner conversation: Myself, Family, Work, and Finances. With each of these categories, he sought to understand how he failed to trust God and the practical steps he could take to give the anxieties he harbored to God.

The moderator paused the sermon for another conversation at the eleven-minute and forty-second mark. In this discussion, the moderator revealed that the conversation in his mind had now shifted to the question, "What things (other than God) do I put my trust in?" Here he focused on three areas that he idolized: Myself, Family, and Finances. He revealed that he asked himself what specific changes he needed to make to eliminate these idols.

The fourth week concluded with a time for questions about using the paradigm of personal application in the Sunday Worship Service following the Sunday school hour and prayer. The moderator again explained the weekly questionnaire they would fill out following using the paradigm for personal application in the worship service. He requested that they return the questionnaire no later than Thursday. He revealed that he had sent the questionnaire link to their email and handed out hard copies to the four who requested them.



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Lesson 4 – Explaining & Using the Paradigm

June 4, 2023

Introduction and description of the topics and thought-provoking statements in the paradigm

- God
 - What a person thinks about God is the most important thing about them.
 - Every message is a message about God at its core.
- Myself
 - Because I can only control myself, the application must begin in my heart and life.
 - I must examine my attitudes, actions (sins I need to forsake), and emotions (anxieties I need to commit to God) in every message.
- Family
 - My family is my closest social circle.
 - My walk with God must be reflected in my relationship with my family.
- School / Work / Retirement
 - Genesis 2:1-17 reveals that God created man to work (school and retirement for the respective generations).
 - I worship in the way that I work.
- Others
 - I am called to make disciples of all people.
 - I am called to reflect Christ to all people.
- Entertainment/hobbies
 - Ephesians 5:1-14 instructs the believer to mortify the flesh and run from sin. Therefore, my hobbies and entertainment should not promote sin.
 - Ephesians 5:15-16 instructs the believer to make the best use of their time. Therefore, my hobbies and entertainment should hold eternal value.
- Finances
 - James 1:17 reveals that everything we own is a gift from God. Therefore, we are to be good stewards of God's gifts.
 - Matthew 6:19-21 reveals that we are investing in earth or eternity through our finances. Therefore, we should seek to use our finances for eternal treasure.
- Church
 - Romans 6 reveals that through salvation, God baptizes us by His Spirit into a covenant community called the church for our good.
 - God filled Scripture with "one another" commands we are to practice.

Figure 3.4. Lesson 4 Handout

As the next two weeks of the study consisted of "in the field" use of the paradigm of personal application (PPA), there was no formal training regarding the project during Sunday school hours. However, the Sunday school classes remained combined as the moderator began the two weeks by answering any questions that arose as the study progressed. The moderator's fellow elder taught a lesson during the Sunday school hour as he usually does outside the study.

Using the Paradigm of Personal Application

Following the training hour in the study's fourth week, the volunteers took the paradigm into the Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. for "in the field" use. They used the paradigm to assist in their sermon application of the sermon presented. They sought to take the lessons they learned in the four weeks of training and put them to use. The "in the field" use occurred in weeks four through six.

The reader should note that the project moderator creates a year-long sermon calendar for Cambria Baptist Church. The sermon calendar for Cambria Baptist Church did not change for this study. Instead, the scheduled pastor preached the sermon he was scheduled to preach on the Sundays of this study.⁸ In this way, the project was based on messages usually preached at Cambria Baptist Church. The moderator, Pastor David Locke, preached the first two "in the field" weeks of this study from Galatians chapter 2. Pastor Christian Brown preached the final "in the field" week of this study from Galatians chapter 3.

Alongside the "in the field" use of the paradigm of personal application in weeks four through six, the study volunteers also completed a weekly questionnaire to analyze the paradigm of personal application's effectiveness.⁹ The volunteers had two methods by which they were

⁸ Outlines of the sermons preached appear in Appendix E.

⁹ The weekly questionnaire appears in Appendix F.

able to complete the weekly questionnaires. First, the moderator emailed weekly questionnaires to each volunteer using Survey Monkey. They were able to complete the questionnaire anonymously online, and the moderator received the questionnaire results in his Survey Monkey account. Second, the moderator gave the volunteers a hard copy of the weekly questionnaire each week. As the study included many from generations who lack technological proficiency, a hard copy questionnaire allowed these individuals to participate. The volunteers placed the questionnaires in a provided sealable envelope and turned them in to the church office or gave them to the project secretary. The church office and project secretary then passed the sealed questionnaires to the project moderator to preserve anonymity.

Each Sunday in the Sunday School hour of the "in the field" portion of the study, the moderator provided hard copies of the questionnaire in envelopes to the volunteers who did not want to complete the questionnaire online. The moderator also emailed the link to the questionnaire through Survey Monkey to each volunteer on Sunday morning. On Wednesday of each week, he contacted the project secretary with the anonymous questionnaire numbers he had received. She then contacted the volunteers who had not completed the questionnaire and encouraged them to complete them at their earliest convenience.

The questionnaire consisted of several important questions. "What is your level of agreement to the following statement: 'The paradigm of personal application helped me make specific application to my life from this week's sermon.'" The answer options were "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." This question provided a baseline to analyze the volunteer's attitude towards the paradigm of personal application.

Second, the questionnaire asked, "How did the paradigm of personal application help you arrive at specific applications from this week's message?" This question illustrated how the

participants used the paradigm and gave insight into its effectiveness. Third, the questionnaire asked, "In what ways was the paradigm of personal application hard to use?" This question gave insights into weak aspects of the intervention and areas in which poor training took place. Fourth, the questionnaire asked, "In what ways was the paradigm of personal application distracting?" This question measured the effectiveness of the intervention in creating focus versus creating a distraction. Finally, the questionnaire asked for the volunteer's application from this week's sermon. The moderator then analyzed whether the application was specific or general. If the application was general, the moderator concluded that the paradigm of personal application did not accomplish the goal of a specific sermon application. If the application was specific but was an application that the preacher made in the sermon, the moderator concluded that the paradigm of personal application did not play a role in the application. However, if the application was specific and was not given by the preacher, the moderator concluded that the paradigm of personal application played a role in the application.

Evaluating the Paradigm of Personal Application

The study's final week consisted of a debriefing meeting during the Sunday school hour. The moderator handed out a final response questionnaire in this meeting.¹⁰ He also emailed the questionnaire to the volunteers through Survey Monkey on the morning of the final meeting. The questionnaire consisted of questions designed to analyze the paradigm's effectiveness. Further, these questions pointed to the possibility of the paradigm's future use in the preaching ministry at Cambria Baptist Church.

The first question, "How likely are you to use the paradigm of personal application in the future?" revealed the participant's feelings regarding the paradigm. If they were unlikely to

¹⁰ The final response questionnaire appears in Appendix G.

continue using the paradigm moving forward, changes would be needed to make it more palatable. However, if the volunteers remained likely to use the paradigm moving forward, a pathway towards broader use in the ministry would be opened.

The second question, "How would you use the paradigm of personal application moving forward?" revealed the volunteer's understanding of the paradigm. The answers to this question revealed the training session's effectiveness. The answers also revealed the participants' creativity in adapting the paradigm to their unique situation. These creative ways can be adapted into future training and use.

The third question, "What did you learn from the process you participated in the last seven weeks?" revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the designed training and implementation of the paradigm of personal application. This question also revealed the thought process and growth of the participants by revealing the essential things they learned.

The fourth question, "What would you change about the process you participated in in the last seven weeks?" allowed the participants to voice their struggles with the process. It also allowed the participants to provide input into future training in the paradigm. The question brought out the creativity and insight the volunteers provided to the study through the answers given.

The fifth question sought to learn the areas the study got right. The question, "What strengths do you see in the paradigm of personal application?" allowed the participants to express how the study encouraged them in their sermon listening. The answers to this question also allowed the moderator to identify the areas of the study to build around in the future.

The next series of questions sought to identify the participant's thoughts regarding the paradigm apart from the training. First, the questionnaire asked, "What weaknesses do you see in the paradigm of personal application?" This question allowed the participants to express the

challenges they experienced using the paradigm in the Sunday worship service. This question revealed the areas where the paradigm fell short of their thinking process. The purpose of the question was to reveal areas of the paradigm which needed to change.

The previous question led directly to the next question, "What would you change in the paradigm of personal application?" This question allowed the participants to use their experience and creativity to strengthen the paradigm of personal application. The moderator sought to draw out of the participants their ideas and input into a final product they could own. Through this question, the paradigm of personal application could become a centerpiece of the ministry at Cambria Baptist Church.

When a new system arrives, the natural tendencies are upset. This can create unforeseen distractions in how the participants listen to the sermon. For this reason, the questionnaire again asked, "In what ways was the paradigm distracting to you as you listened to the sermon and made application?" Over the study's course, the participants expressed how the paradigm of personal application was potentially distracting. Including this question in the final questionnaire allowed the moderator to track the changes to the answer throughout the study to reveal how familiarity with the paradigm mitigated distraction.

Understanding that each experience differs, the questionnaire next asked, "What challenges in making sermon applications do you experience that the paradigm does not address?" This question sought perspectives the moderator did not consider when creating the paradigm. Through this question, the participants added to the potential categories and thought-provoking statements that the paradigm of personal application could incorporate into future renditions.

The final part of the questionnaire evaluated the training process through the questions, "What did you find difficult about the four-week training process?" and "What would you

recommend changing in the four-week training process?" These questions allowed the participants to voice the challenges they experienced in the training process. The moderator learned the aspects of the study that required more or better training. He also was able to discover unnecessary parts of the training sessions.

The moderator also used this meeting to discuss the experience. He asked if anyone would be willing to share what they learned from the process they participated in the last seven weeks. He also asked several questions designed to evaluate the training process and the paradigm of personal application. First, the moderator asked, "What did they find difficult about the process?" This question granted insight into the training process. The question allowed the moderator to understand any confusing, poorly explained, or challenging aspects of the training in the paradigm of personal application.

Second, the moderator asked, "What would they recommend changing in the training process?" This question allowed the participants to gain ownership of any future training. Through this question, the moderator allowed the participants to alter the training process and correct weaknesses creatively. This question resulted in a more refined product.

The moderator then moved to questions surrounding the paradigm. He asked, "What do they like about the paradigm of personal application?" This question allowed the participant to point out the aspects of the paradigm that helped them in the sermon application process. This question further allowed the moderator to strengthen the weak points of the paradigm around these areas. Finally, this question helped the other participants understand how the paradigm could be used in ways they may not have already identified.

Next, the moderator asked, "What would they recommend changing in the paradigm of personal application?" This question allowed the participants to voice the paradigm's weaknesses. However, this question also allowed the participants to provide possible solutions.

The concept surrounding the question was that if the participants assisted in providing the solutions, they would be more inclined to continue using the paradigm of personal application. Further, the adjustments made to the paradigm would be more substantial due to the many ideas involved in the process.

Finally, the moderator asked, "How would they use the paradigm of personal application moving forward?" The final question led to a group discussion about the possible ways to implement the paradigm of personal application in the broader ministry at Cambria Baptist Church and their families. The moderator asked if a regular training session would be helpful. He also asked if there is a way to condense the paradigm into something that can be handed to individuals without training. Finally, he asked, "How can you use the paradigm of personal application to encourage sermon application in their families?" This question led to a discussion surrounding the need for parents to teach their children how to apply sermons. Through group discussions, the volunteers took ownership of the application process in the church and advanced the program to the church body.



CAMBRIA
BAPTIST CHURCH

Debriefing Meeting

1. Lessons from the process of training in application.

2. Questions to make the process better.
 - What did you find most difficult about the training process?

 - What would you recommend changing in the training process?

 - What did you like about the paradigm of personal application?

 - What would you recommend changing in the paradigm of personal application?

 - How will you use the paradigm of personal application moving forward?

 - How can we use the paradigm or a modification of the paradigm of personal application in the church?

 - How can you use the paradigm of personal application to encourage sermon application in your family?

Figure 3.5. Debriefing Meeting Handout

In order to accomplish triangulation in data gathering, the moderator conducted a series of six interviews surrounding the questions in the final questionnaire over the final week of the study.¹¹ He interviewed participants from each generational category to help determine the paradigm's effectiveness across all generations. These select interviews also allowed the moderator to interview individuals who understood the preaching ministry goals at Cambria Baptist Church. The moderator covered the questions from the debriefing meeting and the final questionnaire in these interviews.

Finally, the moderator maintained a reflective journal throughout the project. This journal recorded his thoughts and reflections following each training session and group discussion. It also recorded his thoughts and reflections after gathering questionnaires each week of "in the field study." The journal recorded the thought processes behind his conclusions throughout the study. The journal maintained his thought process regarding the effectiveness of the intervention as the study progressed and his ideas regarding the intervention's broader applications for the ministry at Cambria Baptist Church.

¹¹ Questions for the final personal interview appear in Appendix H.

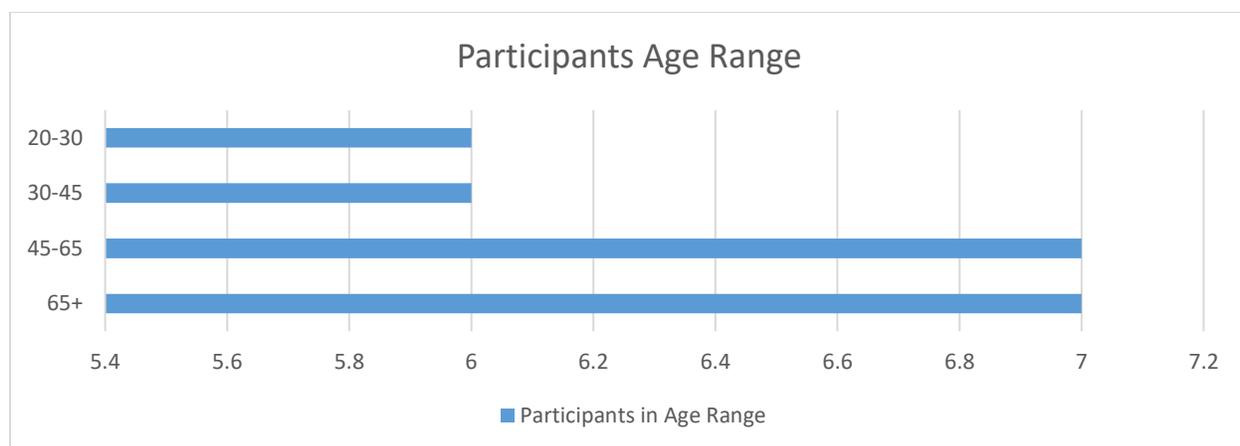
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

In any study, the results provide the most critical aspect. However, the results remain subject to interpretation in studies involving human actions. As a result, this report seeks to provide both the results and the moderator's interpretation of these results. In so doing, the reader will be able to observe the results and draw conclusions regarding the interpretation of those results.

Twenty-six participants across all the adult generations signed up for the study. Six volunteers were between the ages of twenty and thirty. Six volunteers were between the ages of thirty and forty-five. Seven volunteers were between the ages of forty-five and sixty-five. And seven volunteers were over the age of sixty-five. One eighty-year-old participant dropped out of the study after the first week due to health challenges. Twenty-five participants completed the course of the study.

Table 4.1. Participants Age Range



In this study, the moderator sought three outcomes. Thus, these outcomes provided the criteria for evaluation. First, the moderator sought data demonstrating how congregants apply each sermon to their lives. As a result, the questionnaires contained a question regarding the congregant's applications to observe their specificity. The moderator examined the applications provided for specificity. Examples of generality were "I need to be more focused on God throughout the day" and "I need to stop struggling with the fear of man." Examples of specificity were "I created a list of ways that I need to extend more grace to others" and "I need to be overwhelmed by God's grace more. Therefore, I will sing more throughout the day and spend dedicated time in prayer."

Second, the moderator sought a demonstration that the paradigm for personal application provided the means for the specific application the congregant made from the sermon. The questionnaires and final group discussion addressed ways the paradigm assisted the congregant toward specific applications. Through these venues, the moderator asked, "Did the paradigm assist you in arriving at specific applications from the sermon?" "Please describe specific ways the paradigm assisted you in sermon application." And "How can the paradigm be improved to assist you in sermon application?"

Third, the moderator sought to demonstrate that the paradigm can accomplish the above goals efficiently. Therefore, the group discussions and final questionnaires asked about the paradigm's efficiency. "In what ways was the paradigm distracting to you as you listened to the sermon and made application?" "What challenges in making sermon applications do you experience that the paradigm does not address?" and "What would you change or improve in the paradigm of personal application?"

The moderator analyzed the intervention's effectiveness by gathering the answers to these questions. He examined the perceived weakness and determined if they were weaknesses with the paradigm or training in the paradigm. He determined if the paradigm created the desired effect of a specific sermon application. Moreover, the final group discussion revealed how much the moderator can apply the intervention to the broader ministry.

Therefore, at the outset, the moderator identified two possible outcomes as successful. First, the paradigm of personal application resulted in the congregant making specific sermon applications to their lives from the sermon. If this did not occur, an alternate successful outcome would be the participants' input resulted in a modified paradigm or method which assists the congregants in making specific sermon applications. The following results reveal the accomplishment of these goals.

Training Session Discussion Questions

To establish the need for the intervention and to provide context for the various aspects of the intervention, the moderator asked a series of discussion questions throughout the four weeks of training. The discussion confirmed the challenge the participants faced in applying the sermon. The discussions also provided a foundation upon which the intervention could be built. Finally, the discussions created an environment of openness for the data gathering, which occurred throughout the study.

In the second week, the moderator initiated a group discussion around the question, "How do you go about making applications from the sermons at this point?" The first answer pointed to the use of the provided sermon handouts. The participants take the handouts, fill them out, and review them throughout the week. About half the group raised their hands when asked how many use this method. A second answer was that the participants attempted to intentionally listen

carefully so that the specific points would stick with them. About one-third of the group agreed with this method. A third answer is that they attempt to summarize the sermon's message in a sentence. They then take that sentence, discuss the topic with their saved co-workers during the week, and think about it during their daily quiet time. Only around five participants stated that they use this method. A final way that some mentioned was that they listened for something new they did not know in the message or something they had forgotten. Around 80 percent of the group agreed that they also use this method.

The discussion revealed there was intent to apply the sermon in some ways. However, there was no consensus on how to arrive at a thoughtful application. The moderator built on the discussion by asking how many would say they rely on some concept to strike them from the sermon. About three-quarters of the group felt that this was true. The discussion revealed various ways that the group sought to apply the sermon. It also revealed an ongoing desire to apply the sermon. However, it lastly revealed who had received no training or clarity on arriving at an application.

The moderator then led a discussion around the question, "Why do we struggle to apply the Sunday sermon to our lives the rest of the week?" One individual pointed to the reality that conviction is sometimes hard to handle. Sometimes the sermon convicts the listener, and they would instead run from the truth. A second insight was that perhaps application was not their focus or intent (priority) at the time. The affairs of life crowd out the sermon's message. The idols of their hearts cloud their desire to apply the message.

Finally, the moderator asked, "What specific things create a distraction for us in the sermon?" It was fascinating that the first response pointed to the self-talk that occurs in the listener. The participant mentioned that the preacher would say something that would capture his

attention, he would begin to think about it, and then would realize he missed several things said. Another mentioned the distractions of people moving around during the service. The conversation was helpful as it pointed to the awareness many already had about the self-talk occurring in their minds during the sermon.

In the third week, to assist the participant's understanding of self-talk, the moderator led a group discussion surrounding the question, "What kind of conversations do you have with yourself while the sermon takes place?" The participants gave a variety of answers. One mentioned that they found themselves replaying conversations from earlier in the day in their mind. Over half the group agreed with this conclusion. Another mentioned that they noticed those not in attendance or what people wear in the service. Around 80 percent of the group agreed that this was true in their experience. Another answer was that they began to think about the things in their life. Again, more than half the group agreed with this statement. Finally, one participant mentioned that the conversations sometimes surrounded the sermon's topic. This discussion revealed the ongoing conversations occurring in the listener's mind during the sermon.

To further illustrate the self-talk occurring in each mind, the moderator also asked, "When do we find our minds wandering while a sermon takes place?" One mentioned that repetition could cause their mind to wander. Another mentioned that they struggle with their mind wandering when they are tired. These answers demonstrated the need for focus to keep minds from wandering and the tiredness that dulls that focus.

Finally, to set the table for the paradigm of personal application, the moderator asked how the participants brought their minds back into focus on the sermon. One mentioned that they looked and listened with more intent. Another mentioned that they wrote down the thought that had captured their mind so that it freed their mind to return to the topic at hand. Overall, there

were not many answers in this discussion. This lack of interaction revealed the need for training and a tool to keep the mind focused.

In the final week of training, the moderator initiated a group discussion centered on the question, "What topic in the paradigm of personal application is most important to you and why?" The discussion revealed a difference between the generations. The older generations appear to be much more focused and concerned about their families. They expressed concern about the grandchildren that were not saved or were making bad decisions. They appreciated the sections of the paradigm focused on family and others. The younger generations tended to focus on the topics of myself and God. If nothing else, this revealed the difference in the generations. The older generation appeared to focus on the relational aspects of the paradigm. In contrast, the younger generation appeared to focus on the personal aspects of the paradigm. The discussion revealed the need for various categories in the paradigm and the difference in sermon application between the generations.

Weekly Questionnaires

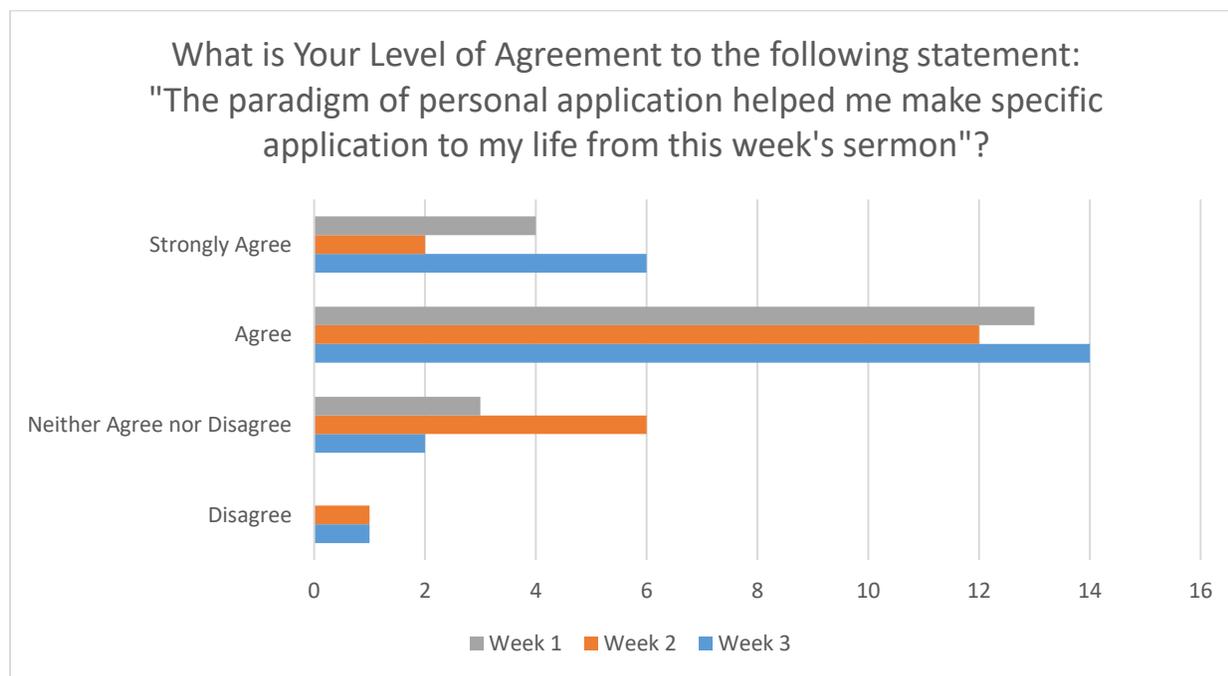
Following the four weeks of training, the participants engaged in three weeks of using the paradigm in the Sunday worship service. The first week, Pastor Dave Locke preached a sermon from Galatians 2:11-21. The second week, Pastor Locke preached a sermon from Galatians 2:20. By the preacher's admission, this sermon was not a good sermon. He attempted to cover too much material in one message and overwhelmed the listeners. However, the poor message provided the opportunity to analyze the paradigm's effectiveness in overcoming a poor sermon. In the third week, Pastor Christian Brown preached a message from Galatians 3:1-9.

Following each service, the participants completed an anonymous questionnaire to evaluate the paradigm's effectiveness. The moderator then collected the questionnaires and

analyzed the data. In the first week, twenty participants completed the questionnaire. In the second week, twenty-four participants completed the questionnaire. Moreover, in the final week, twenty-three participants completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire's first question asked, "What is your level of agreement to the following statement: 'The paradigm of personal application helped me make specific application to my life from this week's sermon'?" The possible answers given were: "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." In the first week, four strongly agreed, thirteen agreed, and three neither agreed nor disagreed. In the second week, two strongly agreed, twelve agreed, six neither agreed nor disagreed, and one disagreed. In the final week, six strongly agreed, fourteen agreed, two neither agreed nor disagreed, and one disagreed.

Table 4.2. Question 1 Cross-Section

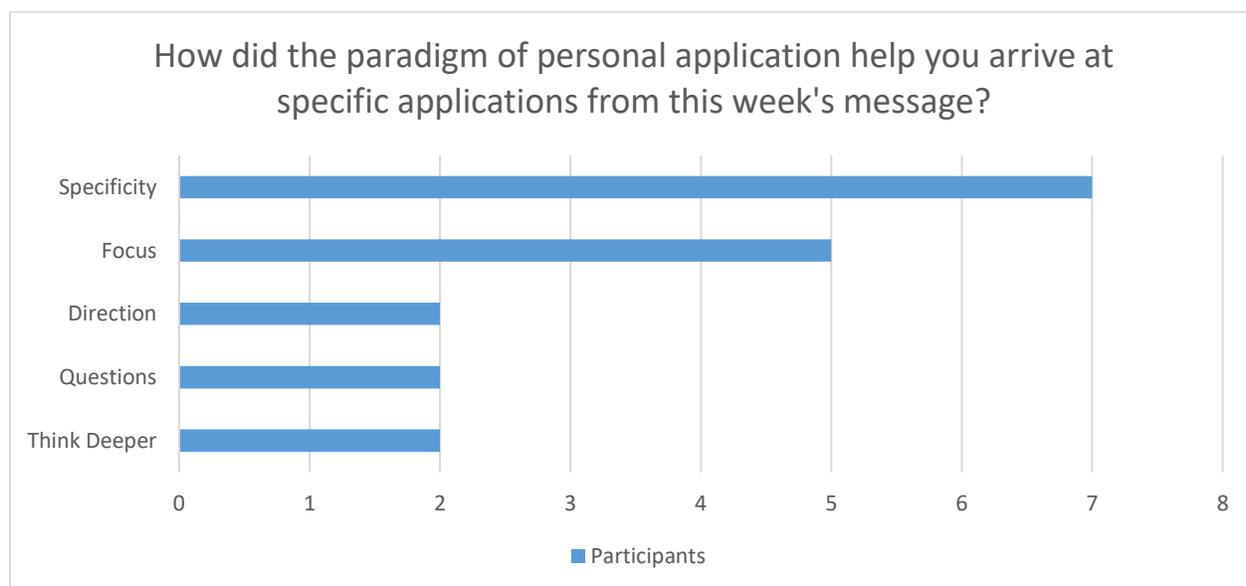


Over the three-week study, the level of agreement rose slightly, while the level of strong agreement rose significantly. The number of participants who neither agreed nor disagreed that

the paradigm of personal application helped them in application rose significantly in the second week due to the nature of the sermon preached. Two different participants disagreed with the statement in the final two weeks.

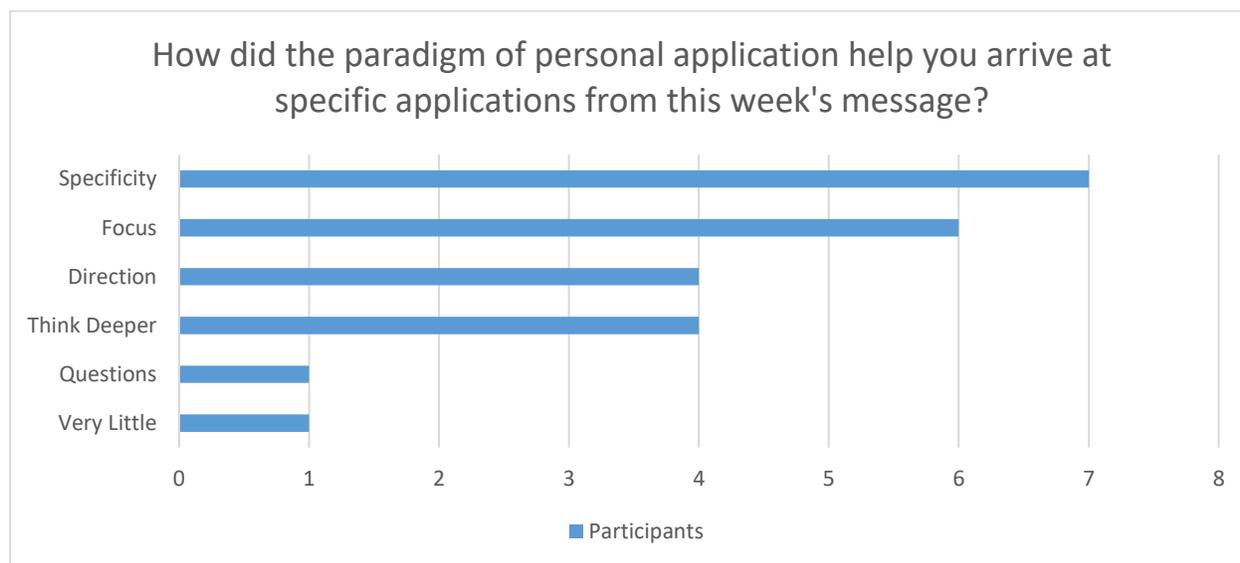
The questionnaire's second question asked how the paradigm of personal application helped the participant arrive at specific applications from that week's message. The moderator compiled the variety of answers into like topics for analysis. In the first week, seven participants noted that the specific categories provided direction for application. Five participants noted that using the paradigm helped them remain focused on the message for application. Two participants noted that they used the paradigm to give them a general direction toward making an application. Two participants noted that they used the thought-provoking statements to ask questions about the sermon for application. Furthermore, two participants noted that the paradigm forced them to think deeper about the sermon.

Table 4.3. Week 1, Question 2



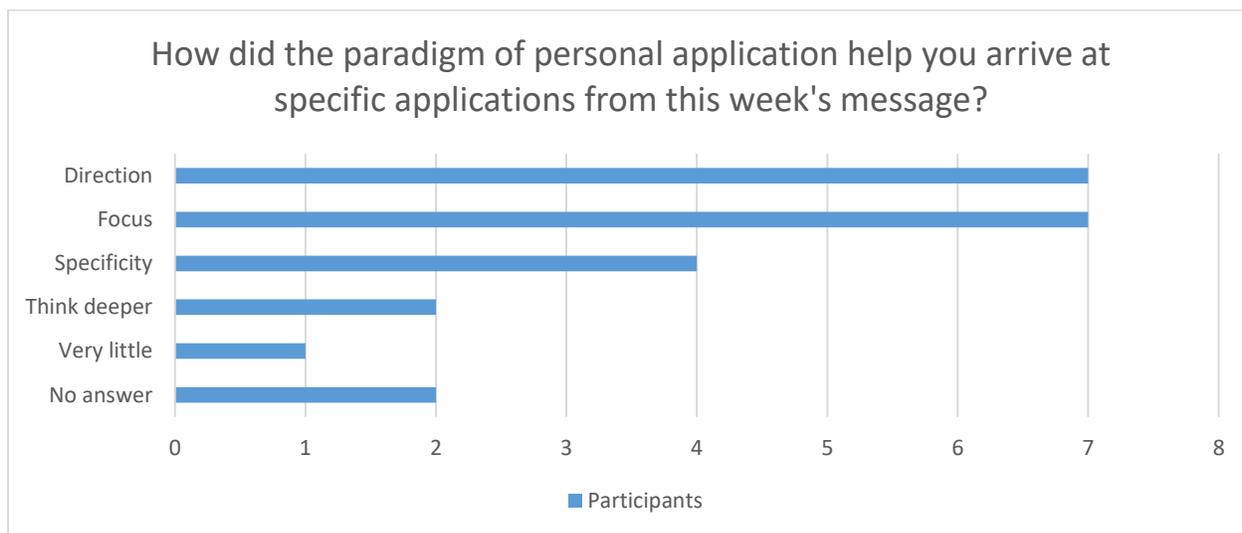
In the second week, seven participants noted that the specific categories provided direction for application. Six participants noted that using the paradigm helped them remain focused on the message for application. Four participants noted that the paradigm forced them to think deeper about the sermon. Four participants noted that they used the paradigm to give them a general direction toward making an application. One participant noted that they used the thought-provoking statements to ask questions about the sermon for application. Moreover, one participant noted that the paradigm helped them very little.

Table 4.4. Week 2, Question 2



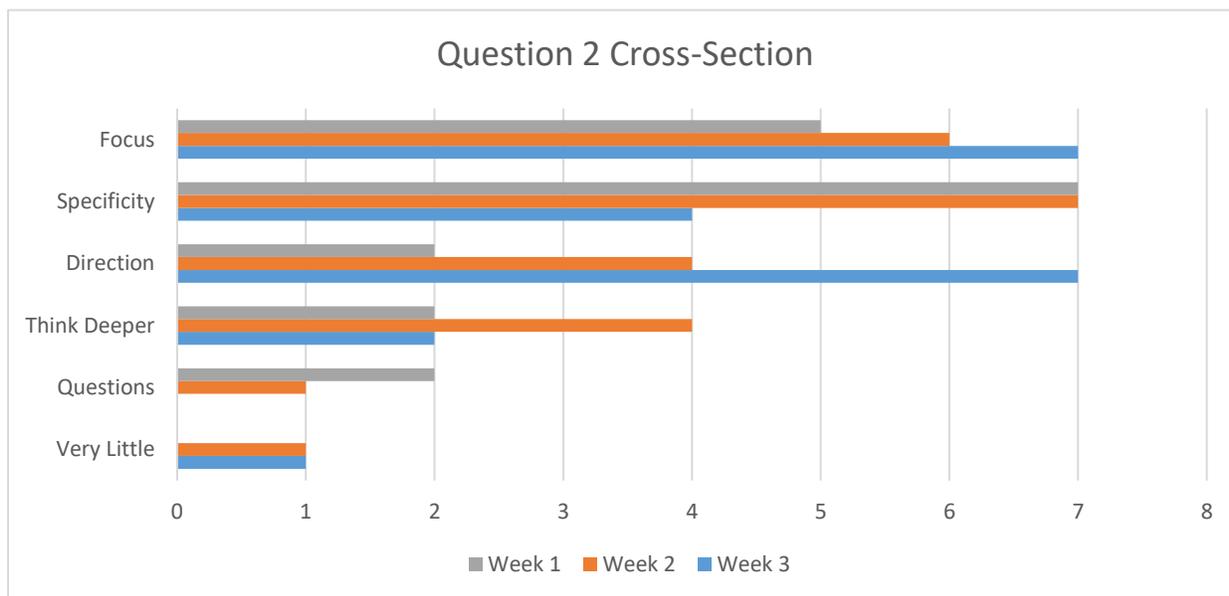
In the third week, seven participants noted that they used the paradigm to give them a general direction toward making an application. Seven more participants noted that using the paradigm helped them remain focused on the message for application. Four participants noted that the specific categories provided direction for application. Two participants noted that the paradigm forced them to think deeper about the sermon. Furthermore, one participant noted that the paradigm helped them very little. Two participants chose not to answer the question.

Table 4.5. Week 3, Question 2



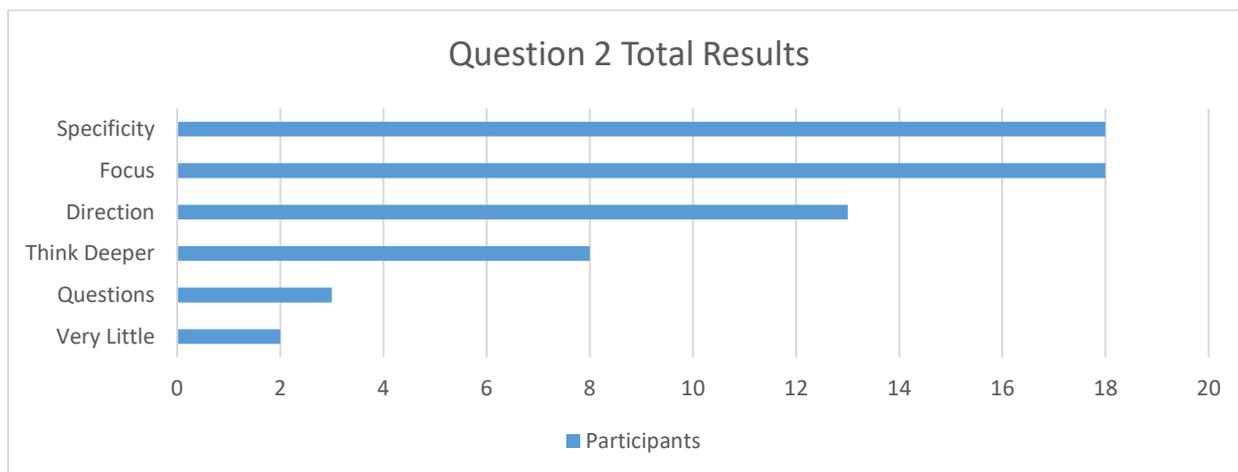
Over the three weeks of use, a handful of trends emerged. The number of participants who cited the paradigm as a helpful tool to keep them focused on the application grew weekly. To a greater extent, the participants that used the paradigm to help them find general direction in applying the sermon grew each week. While the number of participants that found the specific categories helpful remained the same in the first two weeks, it dropped off in the third week. The reader should also note that the participant who found the paradigm of little help in the second week differed from the one who found the paradigm of little help in the third week. Finally, the reader should note that the number of participants who found the paradigm helpful to cause them to think deeper about the message spiked in the second week. This spike may relate to the sermon topic for that week.

Table 4.6. Question 2 Cross-section



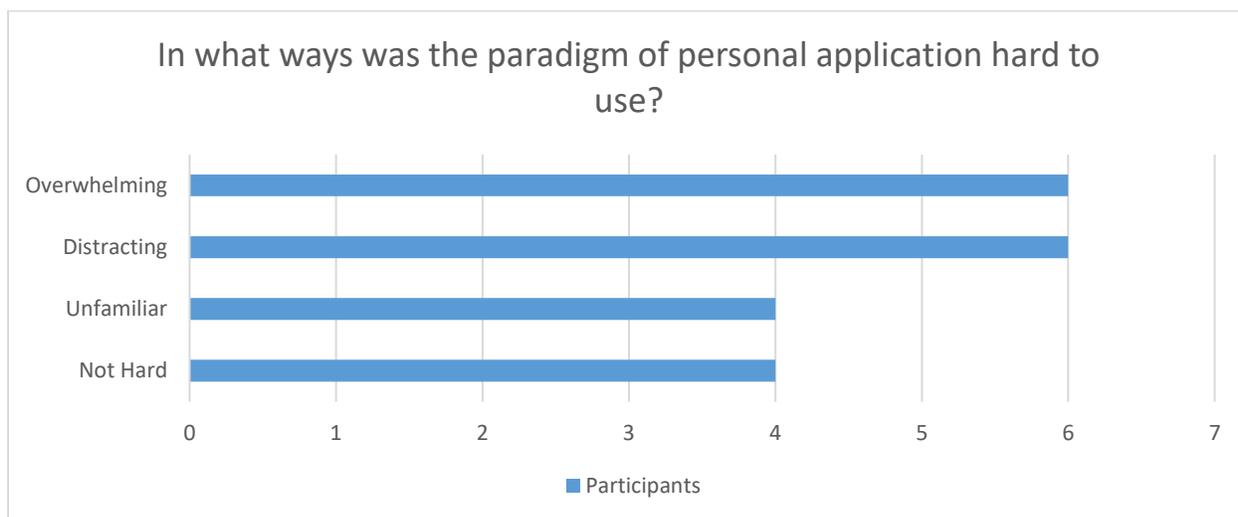
Overall, the participants found the paradigm's specific categories and the way the paradigm helped them focus during the sermon to be the most helpful elements of the study. Participants cited both categories eighteen times over the three weeks. Participants stated that they used the paradigm to give them a general direction toward making an application thirteen times over the three weeks. Participants stated that the paradigm helped them think deeper about the message eight times over the three weeks. Three times the participants stated that the paradigm helped them ask good questions about the sermon. Two times, the participants did not find the paradigm helpful.

Table 4.7. Question 2 Total Results



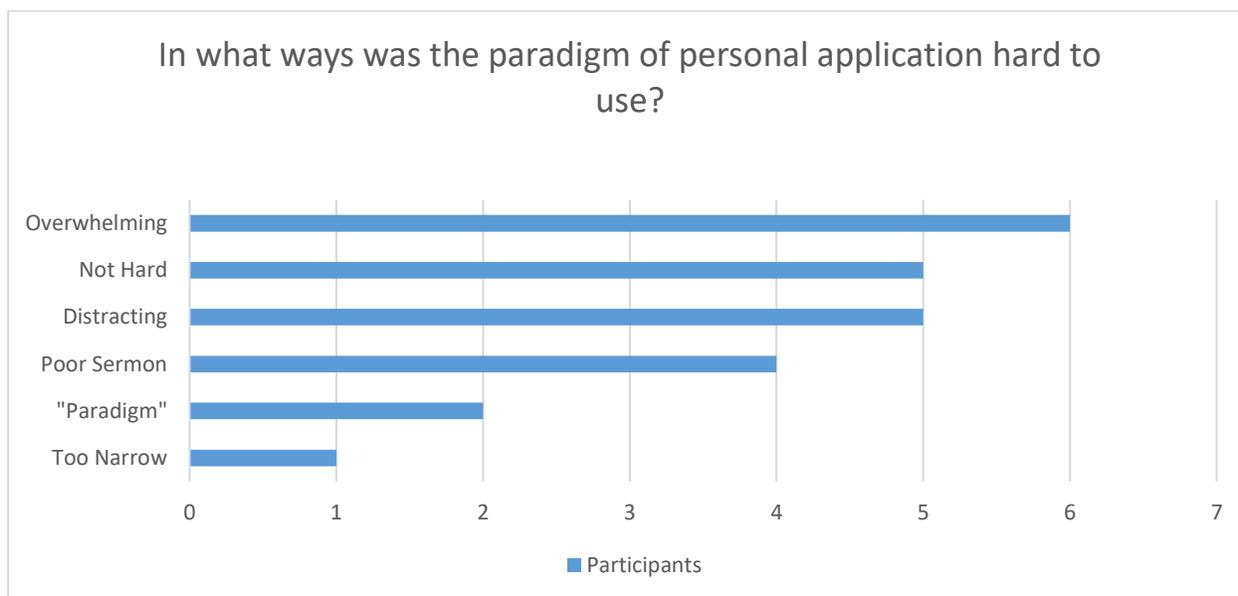
The third question asked, "In what ways was the paradigm of personal application hard to use?" Again, the moderator compiled various answers into like topics for analysis. In the first week, six participants stated that they found the number of categories in the paradigm overwhelming. Six participants found that thinking about the paradigm distracted them from the sermon. Four stated that the paradigm was hard to use because they were still unfamiliar. Moreover, four participants stated that the paradigm was not hard to use.

Table 4.8. Week 1, Question 3



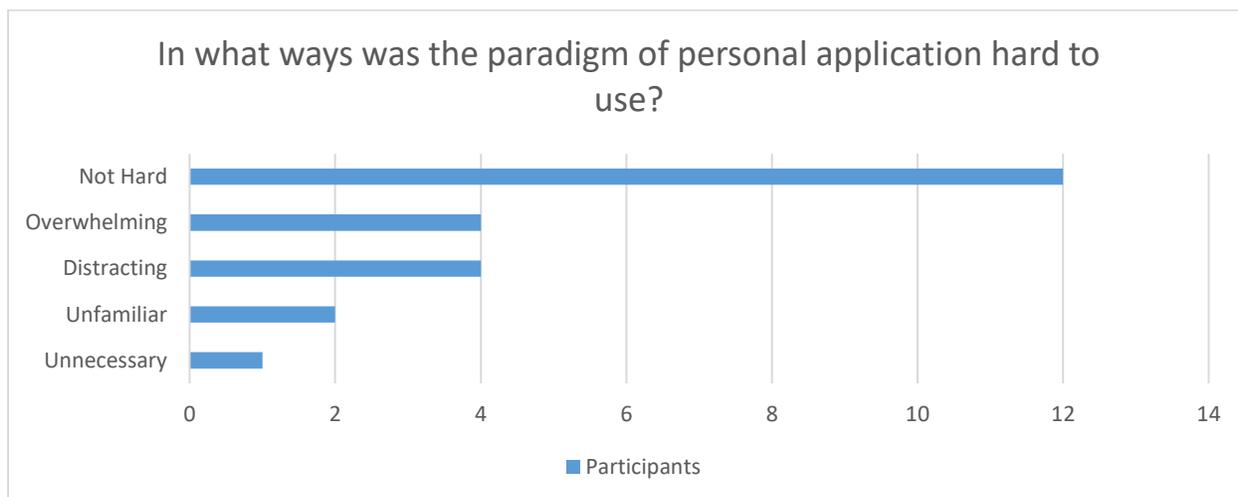
In the second week, six participants stated that they found the number of categories in the paradigm overwhelming. Five participants found that thinking about the paradigm distracted them from the sermon. Five participants stated that the paradigm was not hard to use. Four participants noted that the poor sermon created a challenging environment to use the paradigm. Two participants noted that they continually got stuck on the word “paradigm” as they did not know what it meant. Furthermore, one participant felt that the paradigm's categories were too narrow.

Table 4.9. Week 2, Question 3



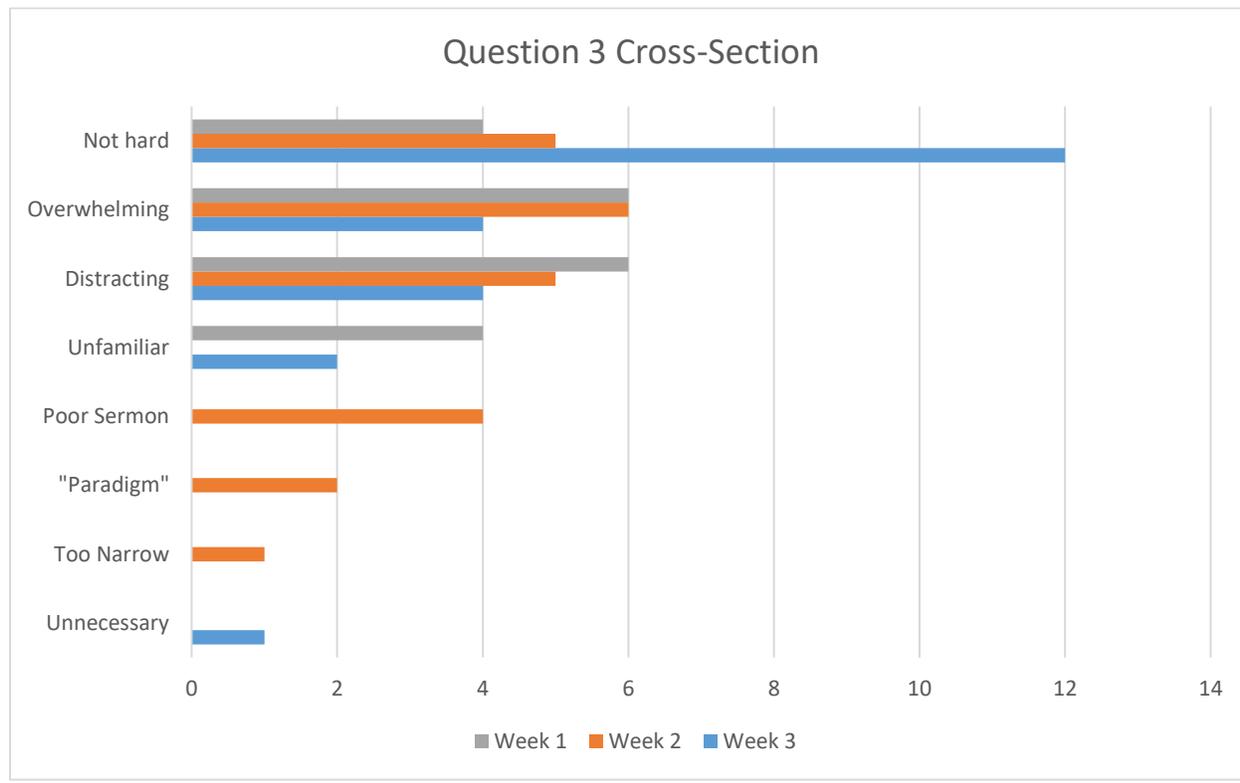
In the third week, twelve participants stated that the paradigm was not hard to use. Four participants still found the number of categories in the paradigm overwhelming. Four other participants found that thinking about the paradigm distracted them from the sermon. Two participants stated that they still struggled with a lack of familiarity with the paradigm. Moreover, one participant felt that the paradigm was unnecessary.

Table 4.10. Week 3, Question 3



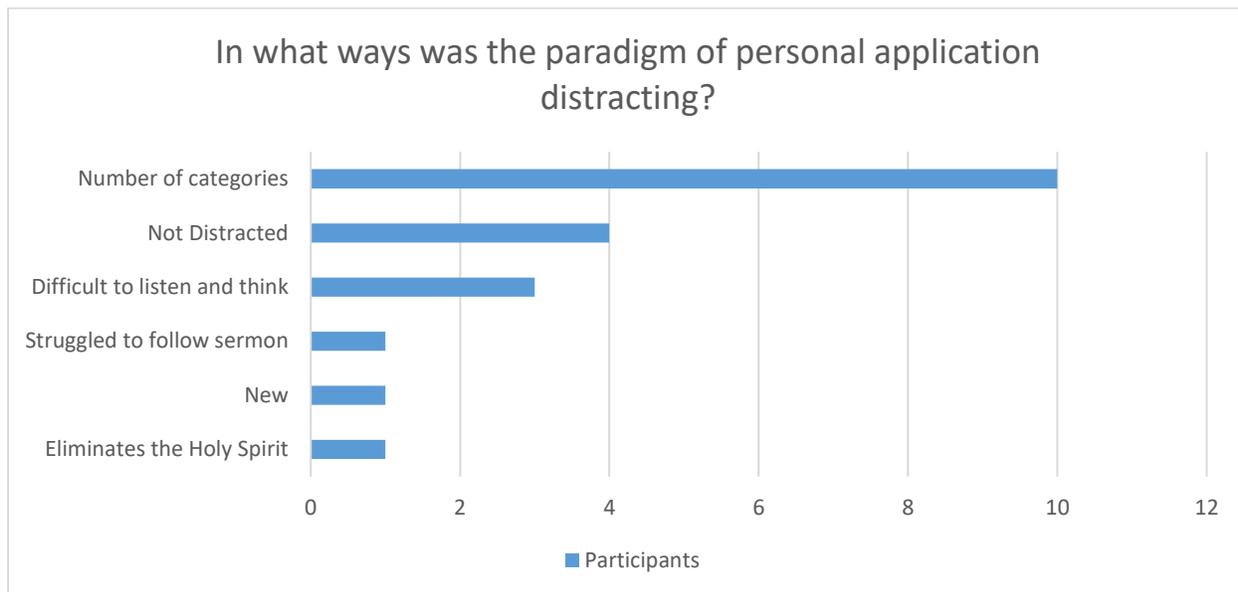
Over the three weeks of use, the number of participants who found the paradigm difficult to use decreased significantly. While the same number found the paradigm overwhelming over the first two weeks, two fewer participants answered that they found it overwhelming during the third week. The number of participants who found the paradigm distracting during the message also decreased each week. The reader should also note that the challenge of a poor sermon only occurred during the second week. The remaining answers also occurred only one week. Two struggled with the name "paradigm" and found that to be distracting. One found the paradigm too narrow. Furthermore, one participant found the paradigm unnecessary.

Table 4.11. Question 3 Cross-Section



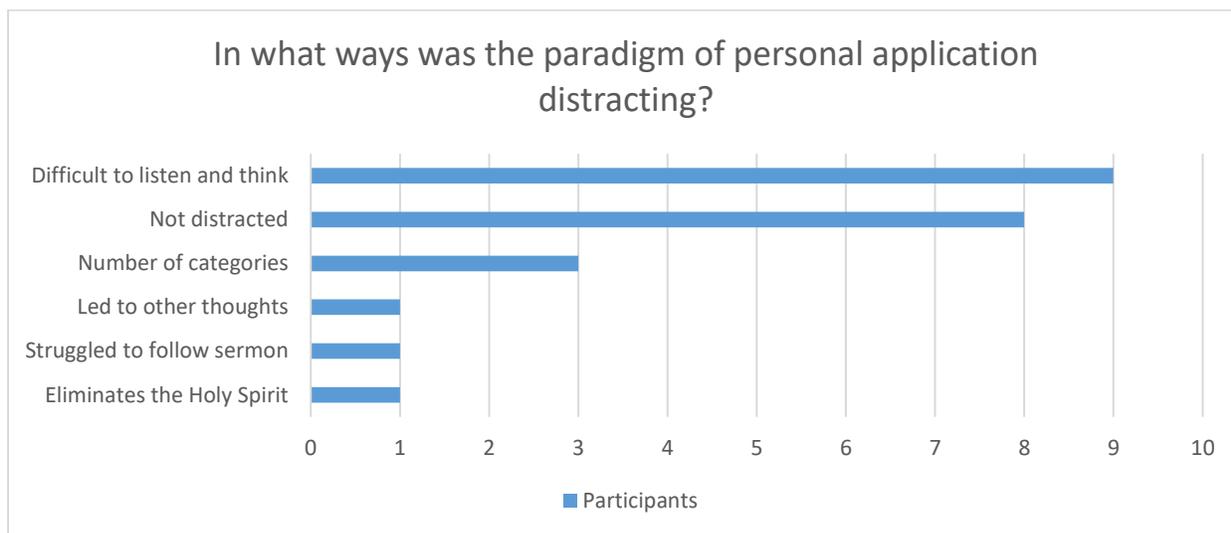
The questionnaire's fourth question asked how the paradigm of personal application was distracting. Again, the moderator compiled various answers into like topics for analysis. In the first week, ten participants stated they were distracted by the number of categories in the paradigm. They repeatedly reviewed the paradigm because they could not remember all the categories. Four participants stated that they did not find the paradigm distracting. Three participants stated that they found it challenging to read through the paradigm, listen to the message, and think of the applications simultaneously. One participant stated that the newness of the paradigm distracted them in the sermon. One participant struggled to follow the sermon's thoughts. Moreover, one participant felt that the paradigm distracted from the Holy Spirit working in their heart.

Table 4.12. Week 1, Question 4



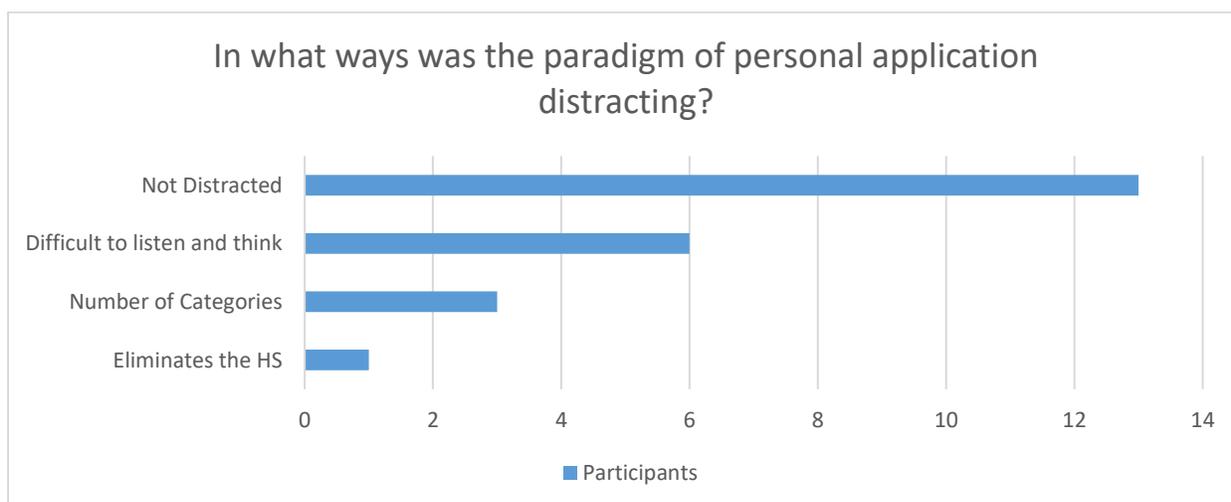
In the second week, nine participants stated that they found it challenging to read through the paradigm, listen to the message, and think of the applications simultaneously. Eight participants stated that they did not find the paradigm distracting. Three participants stated they were distracted by the number of categories in the paradigm. One participant struggled to follow the sermon's thoughts. One participant felt that the paradigm led to other thoughts which distracted them from the message. Furthermore, one participant felt that the paradigm distracted from the Holy Spirit working in their heart.

Table 4.13. Week 2, Question 4



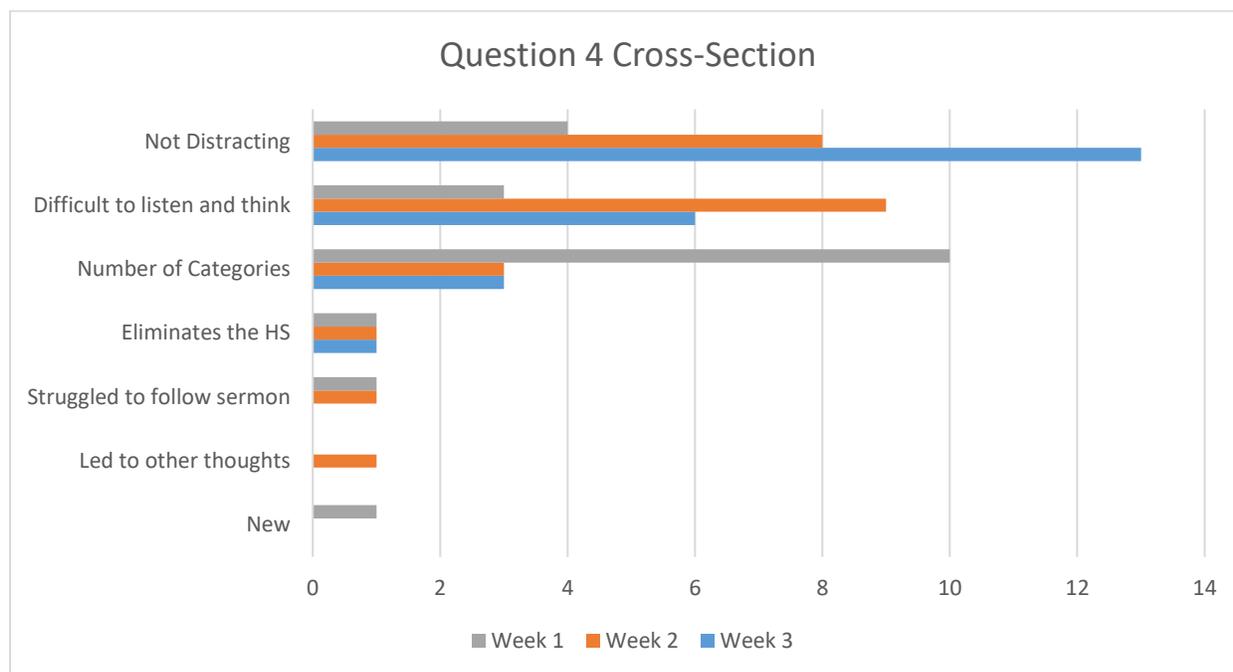
In the third week, thirteen participants said they did not find the paradigm distracting. Six participants found it challenging to read through the paradigm, listen to the message, and think of the applications simultaneously. Three participants stated they were distracted by the number of categories in the paradigm. Moreover, one participant felt that the paradigm distracted from the Holy Spirit working in their heart.

Table 4.14. Week 3, Question 4



Over the three weeks of use, those who found the paradigm distracting decreased steadily due to familiarity with the paradigm of personal application. The issue of listening and thinking through the paradigm remained unresolved throughout the study. The issue spiked in the second week due to the nature of the sermon. The same participant answered all three weeks that they felt the paradigm eliminates the role of the Holy Spirit in the application. At the same time, one participant struggled to follow the sermons' thoughts throughout the study, which appeared unrelated to the paradigm.

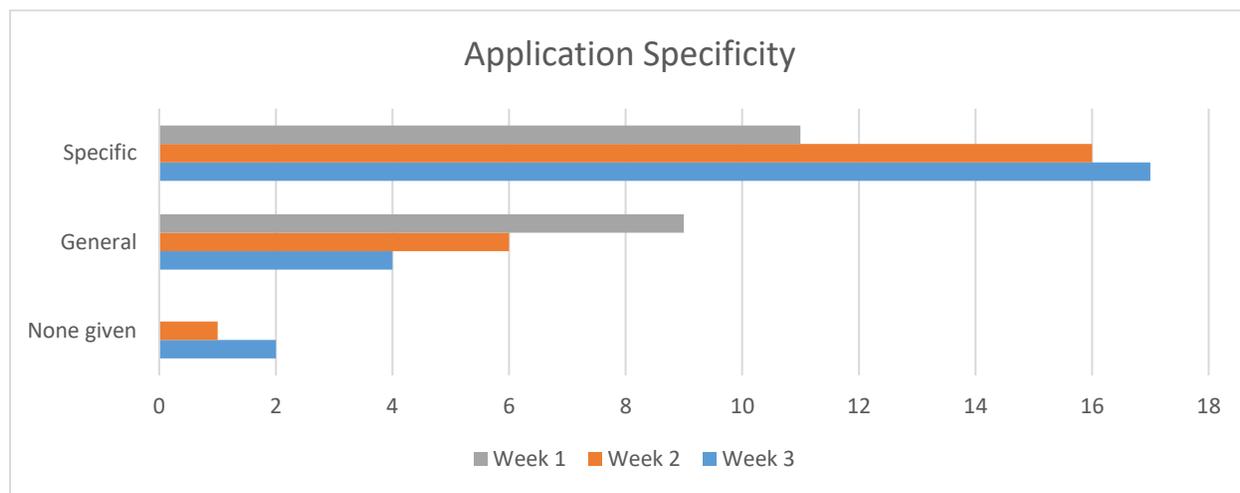
Table 4.15 Question 4 Cross-Section



The questionnaire's final question sought to gauge the specific application level to which the paradigm led. To gauge the specific application level to which the paradigm led, the questionnaire asked, "What was one application you made from this week's sermon?" The moderator then analyzed the answers and labeled them general or specific. Examples of generality were "I need to be more focused on God throughout the day" and "I need to stop

struggling with the fear of man." Examples of specificity were "I created a list of ways that I need to extend more grace to others" and "I need to be overwhelmed by God's grace more. Therefore, I will sing more throughout the day and spend dedicated time in prayer." In the first week, eleven participants made specific applications. Nine participants made general applications. The second week saw an increase in specific applications as sixteen participants made specific applications, and six made general applications. One participant did not list any applications. The final week saw another increase in specific applications as seventeen participants made a specific application from the sermon. Four participants made a general application. At the same time, two participants did not list an application.

Table 4.16. Question 5 Cross-Section



Final Results Data Collection

Following the study, the moderator sought to collect data in three ways. First, the moderator conducted a debriefing meeting with all the participants, which used group discussion to evaluate the training process, the paradigm of personal application, and the paradigm's future use at Cambria Baptist Church. Second, the participants completed an anonymous final

questionnaire which allowed them to express their opinions privately. Finally, the moderator conducted a series of six interviews consisting of representatives from each generation. The interviews allowed the moderator to gain the thoughts of select individuals who understand the methods and goals of the preaching ministry at Cambria Baptist Church.

Debriefing Meeting Discussion Questions

The moderator conducted a final debriefing meeting to discuss the experience in training and the use of the paradigm of personal application. The goal of the meeting was to provide ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of the paradigm. Further, the meeting allowed the participants to recommend ways the paradigm could be implemented in the ministry at Cambria Baptist Church.

The moderator began the meeting by asking if anyone would be willing to share what they learned from the process they participated in the last seven weeks. The participants shared that the process revealed the need to have more conversations with one another about what each individual learned from the sermons. An essential aspect of Christian fellowship is discussions centered on the Word of God. They also shared that the paradigm revealed the need to pay more attention to the service. The process forced the participants to focus on the service, which demonstrated the failure to focus in the past. Finally, one participant shared that they found the lesson on how people listen helpful. It made the participant more aware of how they listened so they could avoid distraction.

The moderator then asked several questions designed to evaluate the training process and the paradigm of personal application. First, the moderator asked what they found difficult about the process. The participants shared that they found the process of self-reflection required in the study challenging. While self-reflection is an essential aspect of spiritual growth, it is a

challenging thing to do. Another participant shared that they found understanding what they should do with the paradigm challenging. As a result, they recommended at least one more week of illustration in the paradigm's use.

The moderator asked what they would recommend changing in the training process. While there was little interaction on this question, the responses included the need to explain better the paradigm's use. As a result, they recommended adding at least one week of training. More time with the paradigm would also familiarize the individuals with the categories so they would not constantly scan the paradigm during the service. Another suggestion was to have a follow-up meeting a month after the training to examine how the participants used the paradigm of personal application.

The moderator then moved to questions surrounding the paradigm. He asked what the participants liked about the paradigm of personal application. The participants said they liked that it challenged them in several different areas. The variety of categories reminded them to look broadly at how God's Word applies to them. They also appreciated the thought-provoking statements under each category. They expressed that these statements helped them focus on specific applications.

Next, the moderator asked what they would recommend changing in the paradigm of personal application. One participant expressed that the "Others" category was too broad. They recommended breaking that category into several smaller categories, to be specific. Along with this idea, a participant suggested that the thought-provoking statement should be made into simple bullet points for more application.

The last questions related to the paradigm specifically. The moderator asked how the participants would use the paradigm of personal application moving forward. The group centered

on three specific answers. First, they would use the paradigm to ensure they applied the message across all areas of their lives. Second, several expressed that they would keep it in their Bible and use it as a checklist as they listened to the sermons in the future. Finally, some expressed that they would use the paradigm during the week to review the sermon and the ways the Holy Spirit convicted them.

The previous question led to a group discussion about the possible ways to implement the paradigm of personal application in the broader ministry at Cambria Baptist Church and their families. One participant suggested training in the paradigm in a small group setting. Overall, the consensus was that the paradigm could be used in two ways. First, the participants suggested laminating the paradigm and putting it in the pews. In this way, the paradigm would be available for all to use each Sunday. Second, they recommended putting a condensed version of the paradigm in the weekly sermon handout. This condensed version would consist of three to four areas focused on the specific topics of the sermon. They also recommended that the children's ministry leaders teach the paradigm to the kids so that they can learn to listen in the service.

This final suggestion led to the last discussion question surrounding the need for parents to teach their children how to apply sermons. The thoughts include using the paradigm to spur conversation with one another on the way home from the service. The participants also recognized the need to set an example by using the paradigm to apply the message. One participant also recommended that parents take the initiative and teach their kids how to use the paradigm in the service and learn how to listen to the message.

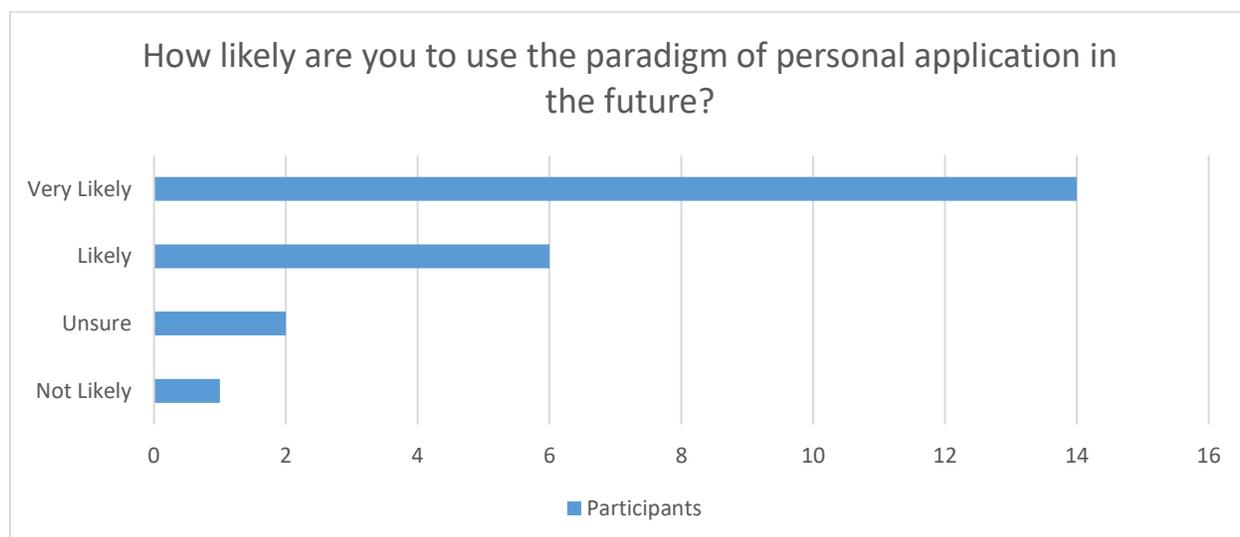
The debriefing meeting revealed weaknesses and strengths in the training and the paradigm. The discussions also revealed a path forward in the ministry. The participants expressed how the paradigm helped them focus on the message and identify how it applied to

them. They appreciated learning the listening process so that they could avoid distractions. However, the training needed to explain better how to use the paradigm and to emphasize that not every message applies to every category. Finally, the discussion revealed excitement about using the paradigm in the future.

Final Questionnaire

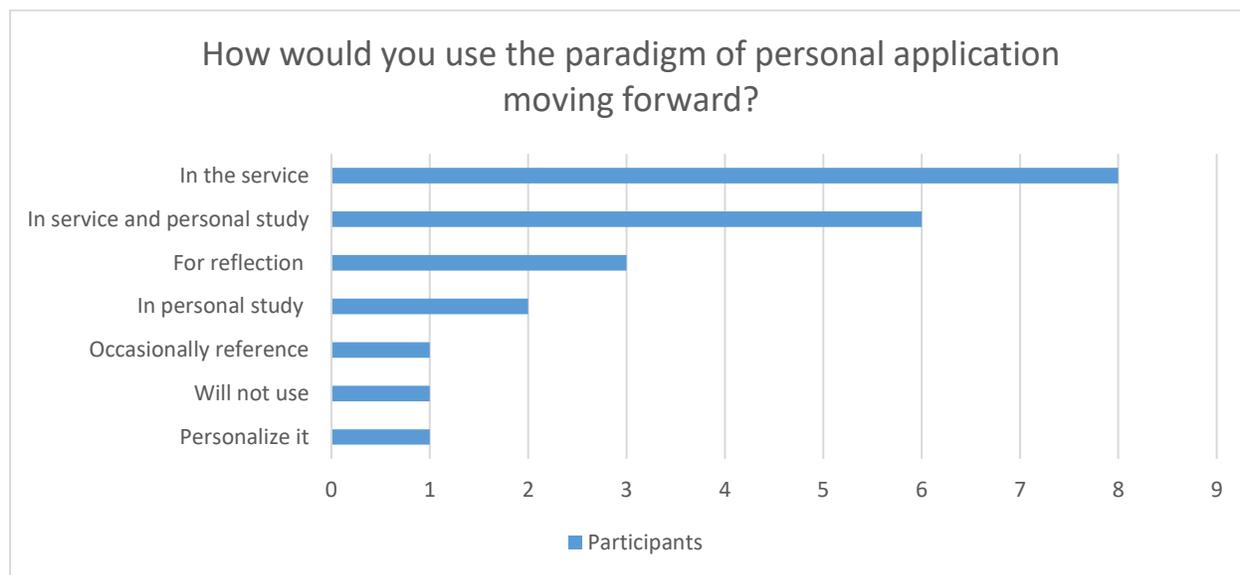
In the study's final week, the participants completed a questionnaire that allowed them to share their experiences and make recommendations to change the study and the paradigm to make them more effective. Twenty-three of the participants completed the final questionnaire, while two refrained. The questionnaire first asked how likely the participant was to use the paradigm of personal application in the future. Fourteen participants stated that they were very likely to use the paradigm in the future and planned to use it. Six of the participants stated that they were likely to use the paradigm in some way in the future. Two participants stated that they were unsure if they would use the paradigm in the future. Moreover, one participant stated that they were not likely to use the paradigm in the future.

Table 4.17. Likelihood of Future Use



Next, the questionnaire asked how the participant would use the paradigm of personal application moving forward. Eight participants indicated they planned to keep a copy of the paradigm in their Bible during the services. Six more participants indicated they planned to use the paradigm in the service and their personal Bible study time. Three participants indicated they planned to use the paradigm after the service during the week to reflect on the sermon. Two participants indicated they planned to use the paradigm in their Bible study time. One participant stated that they would use the paradigm how it worked for them. One participant indicated that they planned to reference the paradigm occasionally. One participant indicated they did not plan to use the paradigm moving forward. Furthermore, one participant chose not to answer.

Table 4.18. Method of Future Use

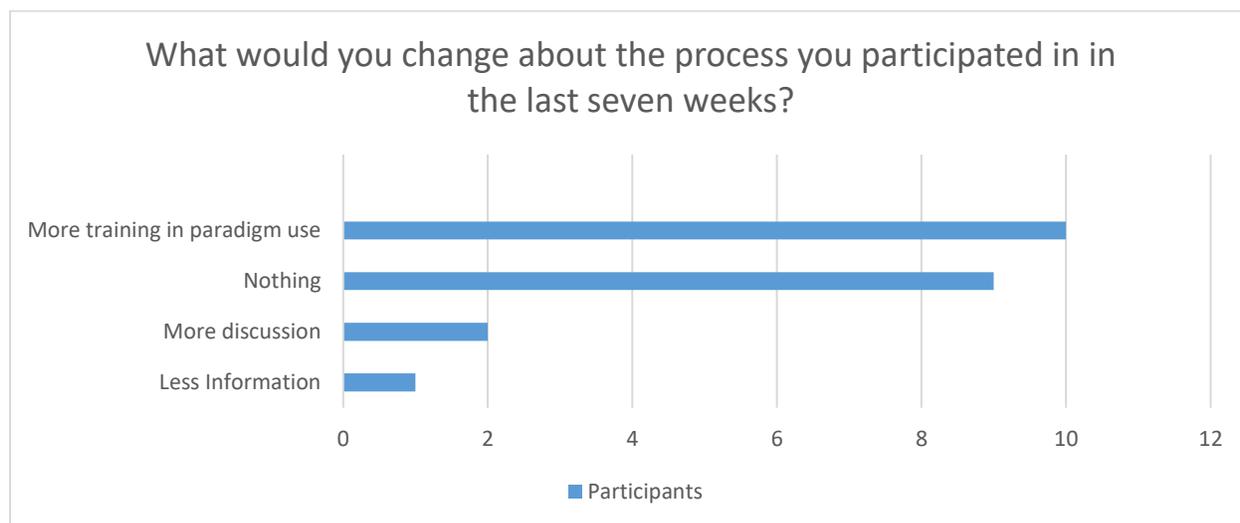


Third, the questionnaire asked what the participant learned from the seven-week study. Eight participants stated that the process taught them how to make applications from the sermon they heard. Six participants stated that they learned to listen better in the service. Other answers included that they learned to ask questions about the sermon and how to listen. Two participants

responded that they learned that application is an action, not just a thought. Others responded that they learned of the Holy Spirit's role in the application and that learning, in general, is good.

The questionnaire then asked what the participant would change about the seven-week study. Nine participants stated that they would not change anything about the study. However, ten participants said they would add at least one more week of training to use the paradigm. Two participants stated that they would have liked more group discussions. One stated that there was too much information in the study. Moreover, one participant declined to answer.

Table 4.19 Recommended Study Changes



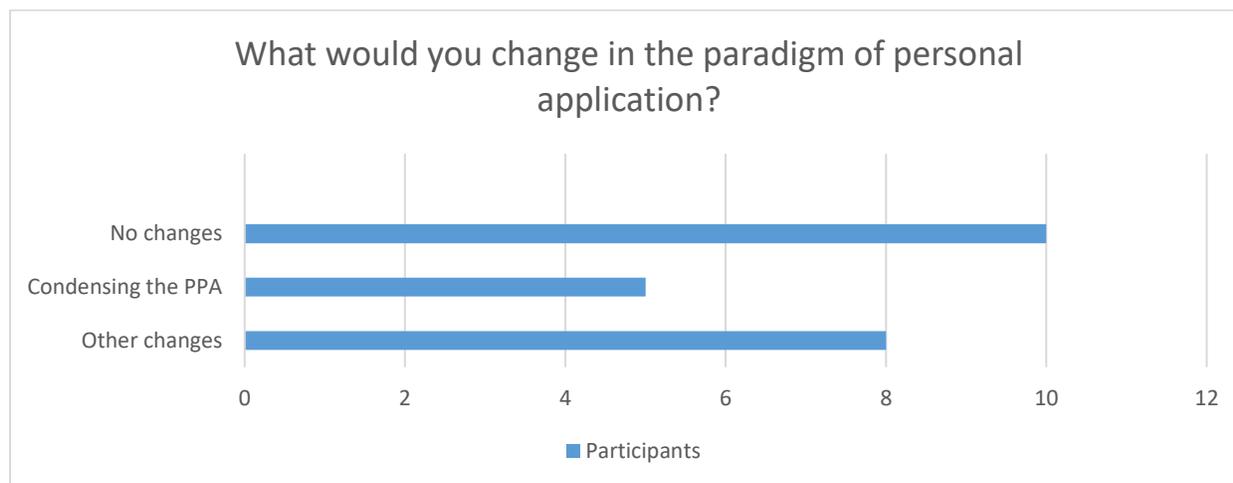
The questionnaire then moved to questions regarding the paradigm. The questionnaire asked what strengths the participant saw in the paradigm of personal application. Seven participants believed that the paradigm helped them focus better on the service. Seven more participants believed that the variety of categories in the paradigm represented a strength as it caused them to think about various areas of life. One participant felt the thought-provoking statements served as an asset to the paradigm. Furthermore, two more participants said they liked the variety of categories and the thought-provoking statements. Three participants felt that the

paradigm's strength lies in how it initiates change in those who use it. Other answers included that the paradigm provoked thinking in the service and was easy to use.

The questionnaire also asked what weaknesses the participant saw in the paradigm of personal application. Seven participants stated that they did not see any weaknesses. Six participants stated that the paradigm could be a distraction from the sermon. Four participants felt that the paradigm contained too much information. Interestingly, two others felt that the paradigm was too limiting and did not cover enough areas. One other participant also felt that there needed to be more thought-provoking statements. Other answers included that the name "paradigm" is confusing and that the paradigm could not change lives (only the Holy Spirit can change lives).

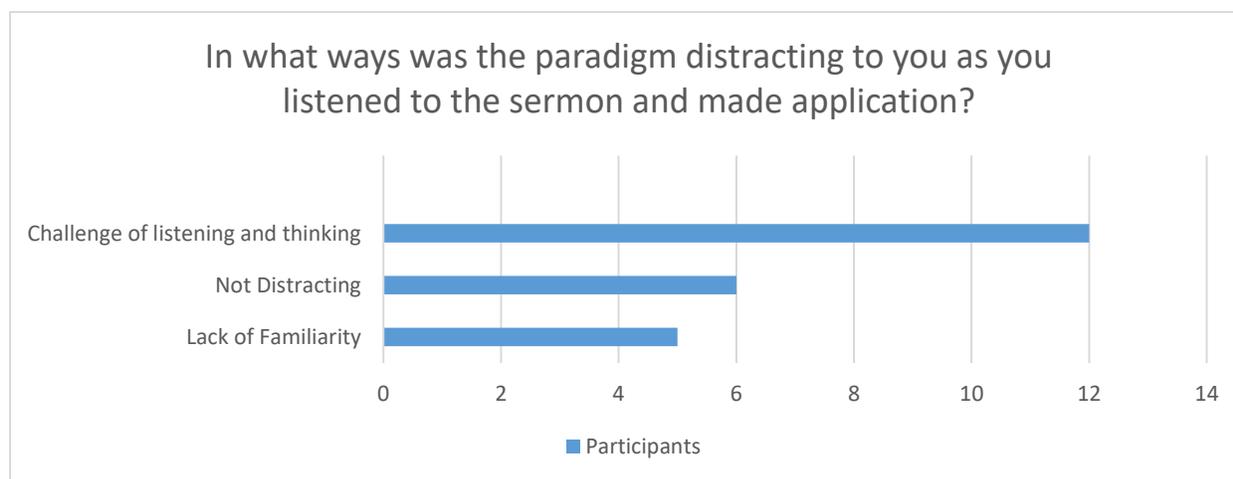
The previous question led directly to the next question, "What would you change in the paradigm of personal application?" The answers to this question fell primarily into two categories covering fifteen of the twenty-three responses. Ten participants had no changes to suggest or stated that the paradigm is good as presented. Five participants recommended condensing the paradigm into a smaller, more practical form. Other participants suggested expanding the "Others" category, changing the name of the paradigm of personal application, turning the paradigm into a checklist, adding categories and more thought-provoking statements, and supplying an age breakdown for the paradigm.

Table 4.20. Recommended Paradigm Changes



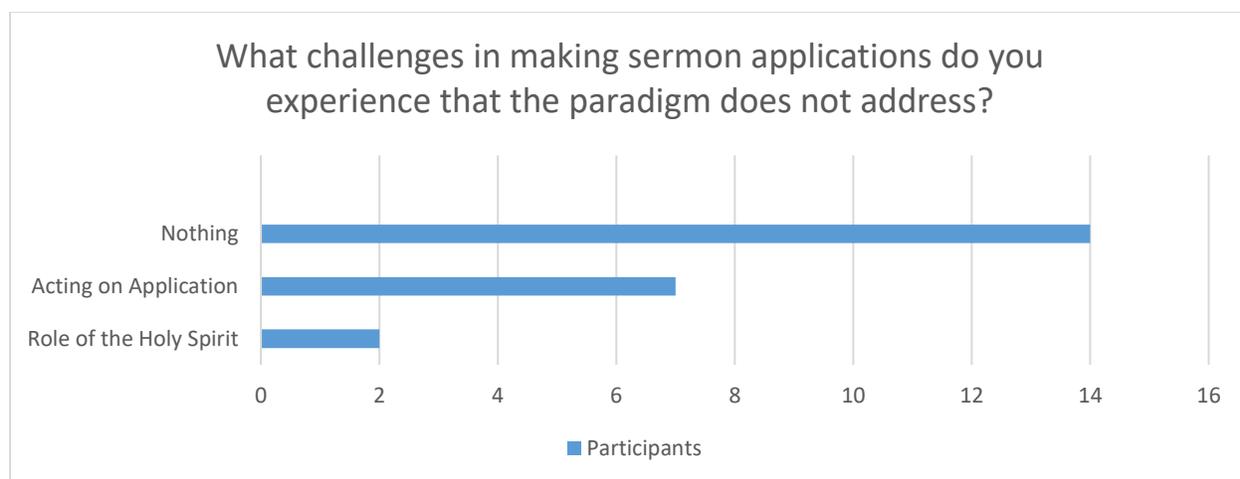
For this reason, the questionnaire again asked how the paradigm was distracting as the participant listened to the sermon and made application. The responses to this question fell into three categories. Twelve participants stated that they found listening to the sermon, reading through the paradigm, and thinking of applications distracting from the sermon. Six participants stated that they did not find the paradigm distracting. Five of the participants felt that they were distracted because they lacked familiarity with the paradigm of personal application. However, as their familiarity with the paradigm grew, the level of distraction from the sermon waned.

Table 4.21. Ways the Paradigm is Distracting



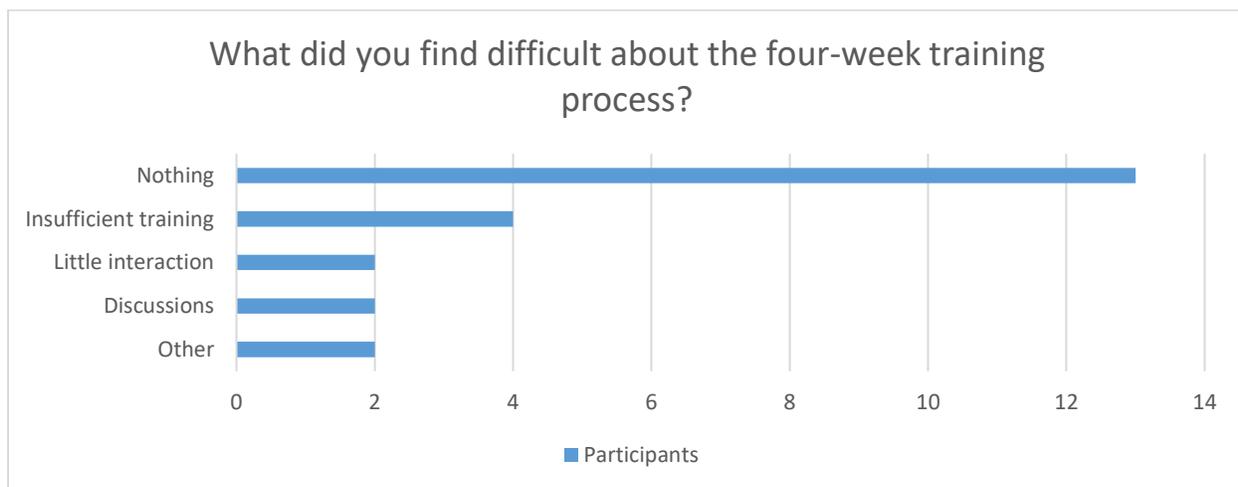
Understanding that each experience differs, the questionnaire next asked what challenges in making sermon applications the participant experienced that the paradigm did not address. Fourteen participants could not think of an area the paradigm of personal application did not address. However, seven participants noted that the paradigm could not make them act on the applications they make. Further, two participants noted that the paradigm could not replace the convicting and empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

Table 4.22. Unaddressed Areas



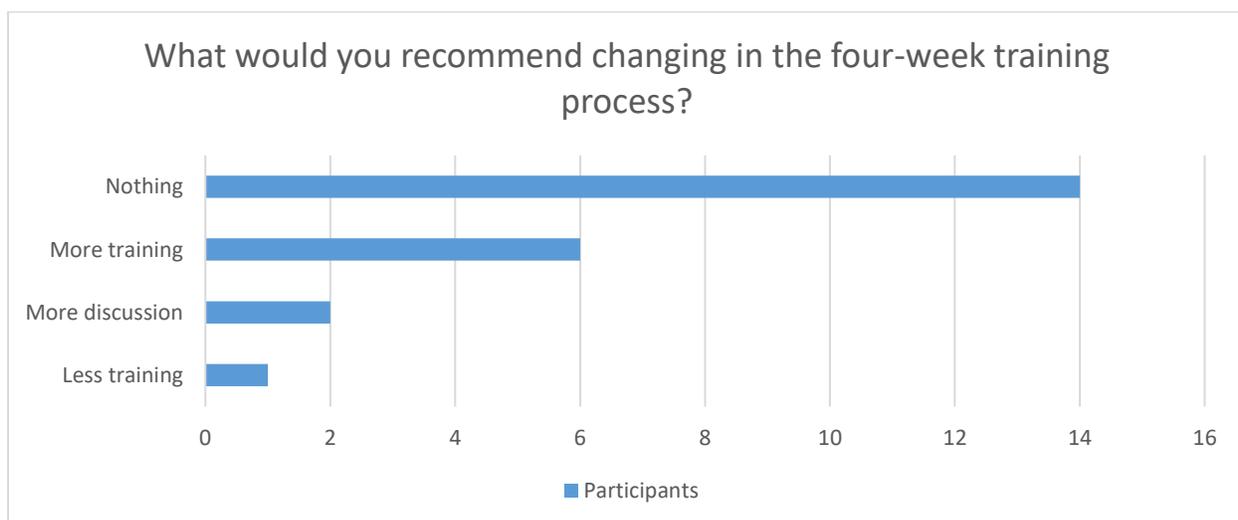
The final part of the questionnaire evaluated the training process through two questions. First, the questionnaire asked what the participant found challenging about the four-week training process. Thirteen participants did not find anything difficult in the four-week training process. Four participants felt that more weeks of training would have been helpful. Two participants felt that there was a lack of class interaction. In contrast, two other participants felt that the discussion questions were difficult. One participant found remembering the material difficult. The final participant felt the generational diversity in the class made it difficult.

Table 4.23. Training Process Challenges



Finally, the questionnaire asked what the participant would recommend changing in the four-week training process. Fourteen participants said they would not change anything during the four-week training period. However, six stated they would add at least one more training session specifically in using the paradigm of personal application. Two participants would like to see more group discussion in the training. Moreover, one participant felt the training was too long and needed condensing.

Table 4.24. Training Process Changes



Personal Interviews

During the final week, the moderator interviewed select participants to gain foundational direction. The criteria for the interview selection consisted of two elements. First, the moderator chose long-time members who understood and supported the focus at Cambria Baptist Church on the primacy of the Word and expositional preaching. Second, the moderator chose individuals from a cross-section of the generations. This selection allowed the moderator to observe the difference in responses between the generations.

In each interview, the moderator asked a series of ten questions. First, the moderator asked what they learned from the overall study. The two individuals from the over sixty-five generation answered that they did not learn anything new. Instead, they were reminded of the importance of thinking through the sermons and examining where they fit into their everyday life. The two individuals from the forty-five to sixty-five generation answered that the study taught them to be more intentional about drawing personal applications. The two individuals from the twenty to forty-five generation answered that they were reminded that every sermon directly applies to their life.

The moderator next asked what they found challenging about the training process. The individuals from the over sixty-five generation responded that they were overwhelmed by the amount of information. As the process progressed, they were able to sort through the information. However, at the beginning of the process, the paradigm overwhelmed them. They offered that much of the reasoning behind these feelings was the newness of the process. Further, they struggled with the questionnaires and distinguishing between the questions. One individual from the forty-five to sixty-five generation expressed that figuring out how to use the paradigm took time. At the same time, the other individual stated that there was no challenge in the

training process. They were able to track through the entire training. The individuals from the twenty to forty-five generation expressed that they felt a couple more weeks of training would be helpful.

The moderator understood the challenges and asked what they would change in the training process. The individuals from the over sixty-five generation expressed that they would not change anything in the training process. Although they struggled initially, they felt that the training process was sufficient. The individuals from the forty-five to sixty-five generation and the twenty to thirty-five generation recommended more training in the paradigm's use. They recommended playing at least one more sermon and pausing it while using a case study to illustrate using the paradigm.

The moderator then moved to questions regarding the paradigm. He asked the participants what they liked about the paradigm of personal application. The individuals from the over sixty-five generation expressed that they liked how the paradigm caused them to focus on specific categories. They also appreciated the thought-provoking statements to guide them in those areas. One individual from the forty-five to sixty-five generation expressed the same sentiment stating that they loved the format. The other individual from that generation liked receiving it as a physical paper. The individuals from the twenty to forty-five generation expressed that they liked how the format forced them to think through several categories they might not have considered. This action helped them then relate the sermon to their life.

To create a better product, the moderator asked the participants what weaknesses they observed in the paradigm. The individuals from the over sixty-five generation and the twenty to forty-five generation expressed that they felt overwhelmed by the number of categories in the paradigm when they first started to use it. One individual from the forty-five to sixty-five

generation expressed that while the paradigm points to applications, it cannot make the individuals live out the applications. Another individual from the twenty to forty-five generation felt that the "Others" category was too narrow.

Understanding the weaknesses, the moderator then asked what changes the participants recommended making to the paradigm. Individuals from the over sixty-five generation recommended that providing modified paradigms for each sermon with fewer categories would be helpful. The categories could be geared specifically for the topics covered in the sermon. While one individual from the forty-five to sixty-five generation did not recommend any changes, the other recommended removing the sections to write down the applications to a single spot at the bottom of the paradigm. The one from the twenty to forty-five generation recommended expanding the "Others" section.

In line with the questionnaires, the moderator asked the participants if the paradigm distracted them as they listened to the sermon and made applications. All the individuals from each generation expressed that the paradigm distracted them the first time they used it. However, they were less distracted each week as they became more familiar with the categories. They felt that the distractions related more to their familiarity with the paradigm than the paradigm itself.

To gauge the paradigm's usefulness, the moderator asked the participants how likely they were to use it moving forward now that the study was concluding. Every individual forcefully responded that they planned to continue to use the paradigm. They expressed that they found it to be a helpful tool. They further expressed a desire to see others continue to use the paradigm.

As all the individuals planned to continue using the paradigm, the moderator asked how they planned to use it moving forward. All the individuals expressed that they planned to keep it in their Bibles during the messages. The individuals from the over sixty-five generation

expressed that they planned to use it to maintain focus during the messages. One individual from the forty-five to sixty-five generation expressed that they planned to use the paradigm as a checklist for application. The individuals from the twenty to forty-five generation expressed that they planned to use the paradigm in their Bible study and keep it in their Bible for the Sunday sermon.

As the individuals interviewed understood the philosophy and mission of Cambria Baptist Church, the moderator asked if they had ideas about how the church could use the paradigm or a modification of the paradigm in the broader church body. One individual from the over sixty-five generation recommended regular small group training in the paradigm of personal application. The other individual recommended training the youth in the paradigm. One individual from the forty-five to sixty-five generation recommended putting the paradigm on the church website with training videos. This would allow the congregants to print off copies of the paradigm and direct others to train in the paradigm. The other individual recommended printed copies in the church foyer. The individuals from the forty-five to sixty-five generation and the twenty to forty-five generation recommended laminating the paradigm with instructions and putting them in the pew hymnal racks. They also recommended including portions of the paradigm in the weekly sermon handouts.

Data Analysis

Examining the data, several trends continue to arise. The group discussion questions and subsequent comments in the results revealed that many Christians do not think about application as they listen to the sermon. Very few individuals have given time to examine their thought processes and how they relate to sermon listening. Many others do not understand how to move

from the sermon to the application. This tool was successful in providing a framework for the application to begin.

The questionnaires, interviews, and final discussion revealed several essential aspects. First, the paradigm of personal application became overwhelming at times. The participants struggled to listen to the sermon, read through the paradigm, and think of an application. As the study progressed and the participants' familiarity with the paradigm increased, the distraction from the sermon decreased. As a result, adding one or two more training sessions exemplifying the paradigm's use is recommended.

Related to the paradigm's overwhelming nature, time should be spent condensing the paradigm into a smaller product. Some gave the idea to include two or more categories to which the sermon relates instead of the entire paradigm. At times, presenting the paradigm as a checklist may prove more useful. By condensing the material, levels of application can be increased incrementally.

The results also revealed that time should be spent addressing the role of the Holy Spirit in the application. Some appeared to take a mystical stance towards the Holy Spirit's role, eschewing the ordinary means of grace. However, others seemed to take the paradigm and move toward a more works-effort in the application. Training should be conducted to teach the participants how the Holy Spirit empowers and uses the ordinary means of grace.

As the participants used the paradigm, they became more familiar with the paradigm. As the familiarity grew, the specificity of the applications also grew. Some related this specificity to the increased focus given toward application. Regardless, the paradigm resulted in increased, specific applications. Further, the paradigm did an adequate job of overcoming a poor sermon resulting in a solid application.

Conclusion

Two key results point to the study's overall success. First, the increase each week of specific applications pointed to the paradigm's ability to cross generations in sermon application. Each group used the paradigm towards application. Second, the high likelihood indicated by the participants that they would continue to use the paradigm revealed that the paradigm created a workable tool towards life change through sermon application. With some modification, this tool can be used throughout the ministry at Cambria Baptist Church.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In churches worldwide, pastors labor to present God's Word faithfully to their congregations. They pray that the sermon will change the lives of their congregants. However, congregants often fail to apply the Word to their life for sanctification. As a result, two lines of thinking emerge in various pastors. Some refrain from any application, relying solely on the supernatural work of the Spirit apart from ordinary means of grace. At the same time, others spend the majority of their time making as many applications as possible for their congregants. However, the moderator believes that a third way exists whereby the pastor can make an appropriate adjustment in which the onus of application moves from the pastor alone to the pastor and congregant.

The moderator conducted this study to create a tool whereby congregants from every generation could apply the Sunday sermon. Through the training and implementation of the paradigm of personal application, the moderator sought to equip the congregants with the understanding and tools necessary to make specific applications from every sermon, regardless of the applications the pastor addresses in the sermon. As Cambria Baptist Church is a multi-generational church, the intervention sought to allow the same message to apply specifically to each congregation member without the minister spending most of his message making the application.

The training in and use of the paradigm of personal application moved the responsibility to discern the sermon's application from the preacher alone to the preacher and the congregant. Understanding the paradigm placed the congregant into a state of mind to actively seek applications from each sermon. The question, categories, and thought-provoking statements created positive self-talk in the congregant throughout the sermon. Finally, the intervention reminded the congregant of the God-given applicational purpose of God's Word.

The study sought to impact the congregants of Cambria Baptist Church so that they would take the message of God's Word from the Sunday sermon and practically live it out in their lives, resulting in sanctification. The preaching power of God's Word would be magnified. Moreover, the congregants would gain a greater appreciation for God's Word as they saw its practical use in their life. Finally, God would be glorified as His Word proved powerful.

Research Implications

At the study's completion, several implications resulted from the research. These various implications validate the research through the results. However, these various implications also point toward further research and needs. Identifying these implications creates the foundation for further steps towards equipping the average congregant to apply the sermon to their lives.

From the first discussion in the training session to the final interviews, the congregants strongly desired to apply God's Word and its preaching to their lives. The initial training discussion revealed that the congregants applied various methods to arrive at applications for themselves.¹ However, these approaches often left them without sound applications. The congregants lacked direction because they had not received intentional training or teaching that

¹ The results of the discussion surrounding the various sermon application methods used can be found in the Training Session Discussion Questions section in Chapter Four.

equipped them to assess the message from God's Word, consider their lives, and apply the Word appropriately.

While the Holy Spirit had worked through the various approaches to grow the believers in their walk with God, the congregants revealed that the paradigm of personal application grew their ability to identify proper applications of God's Word. Each week the congregants indicated that the training and the paradigm created a focus in the sermon they lacked. The paradigm also provided them with a direction toward application.² The Holy Spirit used the ordinary means of a tool to spur thoughtful contemplation and application of the sermon.

The study also revealed the preacher's application challenge in a multi-generational context. In the group discussion, the congregants acknowledged the vast difference in application between the generations. In the opening meeting, the congregants noted the difference between the twenty-year-old single and the seventy-year-old married couple.³ The difference between the generations could also be noted in the group discussion surrounding the parts of the paradigm of personal application that they appreciated. The older generations focused on relationships, while the younger generations focused on God and self.⁴ As the pastor seeks to traverse these differences, he cannot address the various applications. The paradigm of personal application traversed the generations and resulted in specific applications across the generations.

The initial research for the study discovered the importance of self-talk in listening and application. The study results confirmed this importance. Before any training in listening theory, as the group discussed the distractions in the service, the participants noted the self-talk occurring in the sermon. As they discovered listening theory, the participants became more

² See Table 4.6.

³ For this discussion, see Training in the Paradigm of Personal Application in Chapter Three.

⁴ For this discussion, see Training Session Discussion Questions in Chapter Four.

aware of the distracting self-talk and sought to corral it into helpful self-talk. Initially, the paradigm created confusion in self-talk. However, the questionnaire results indicated that the confusion subsided, and positive self-talk increased toward proper application as the participants became familiar with the paradigm.⁵

Similarly, the research indicated that listeners could only handle a limited amount of stimuli before becoming distracted and apathetic.⁶ The study results confirmed that the average congregant could only handle a limited amount of stimuli before becoming frustrated and distracted. As the participants used the paradigm of personal application in the Sunday service, the questionnaires revealed that they regularly struggled to listen to the sermon, think through the paradigm, and draw out application simultaneously. To an extent, this issue remained unresolved throughout the study. However, the distractions were minimized for some as they became more familiar with the paradigm.⁷ Others adapted to this challenge by using the paradigm while contemplating the message throughout the week.⁸

Indeed, some participants indicated that they viewed the paradigm as a tool for considering the Sunday sermon throughout the week. Others indicated that they plan to continue using the paradigm by viewing it as a tool for their personal Bible study. These responses implied that the paradigm of personal application holds potential use beyond the Sunday worship service. Through adaptation, the paradigm directed the participants towards applications in multiple venues.

A negative implication from the study results, which this report will also address in the "need for further research" section, relates to the role of the Holy Spirit in sermon application

⁵ See Table 4.15.

⁶ See Literature Review section in Chapter Two.

⁷ See Table 4.15.

⁸ See Debriefing Meeting Discussion Questions section in Chapter Four.

and the methods He uses. Congregants do not understand the Holy Spirit's role in the application nor the methods He uses to accomplish His work. Some participants felt that the paradigm minimized or eliminated the Holy Spirit's role in the application.⁹ This view stemmed from a mystical view of the Holy Spirit's methods, whereby the only method He uses is to impress the applications on the listener's heart. However, as the theological foundations indicate, the listener plays an active role in drawing out the applications and acting on the sermon heard.¹⁰

On the other hand, some participants appeared to view the paradigm as a checklist of works that accomplish sanctification in their lives. The danger exists that they will overemphasize their role in sermon application and devalue the power and work of the Holy Spirit. As the literature review indicates, the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in sermon application.¹¹ The listener must carefully balance his efforts and the Holy Spirit's illumination, conviction, and power.

Finally, the study projected that the paradigm of personal application would result in more specific sermon applications across generations.¹² The moderator made this projection based on the theoretical foundations supplied by listening theory and the grid application method. As the participants became aware of how they listened to a message and the self-talk taking place in their minds, they were motivated to listen intently. The grid approach to application provides the direction for that intent listening. Thus, the paradigm of personal application would result in more specific sermon applications across generations. The study's results indicated that specific sermon applications across generations did indeed happen. Each

⁹ See Table 4.15.

¹⁰ See Theological Foundations section in Chapter Two.

¹¹ See Literature Review section in Chapter Two.

¹² This projection stands as the project's thesis. See Thesis Statement section in Chapter One.

week the specific applications occurring increased significantly. By the final week of use, the specific applications far outweighed the general applications.¹³

Research Applications

The leadership at Cambria Baptist Church plans to apply the results of this research in various ways. Through these applications, the paradigm of personal application may become a fixture in the ministry to spur the spiritual growth of its members. The research revealed a myriad of possibilities for these applications. As a result, some of these applications may be modified in the future.

To facilitate ease of use, the paradigm of personal application will be available to the congregants in various ways. First, the paradigm of personal application will be condensed into a half-sheet of paper. Instructions for its use will be placed on the back of the paper. The paper will be laminated for durability. Then, it will be placed into the hymnal rack in the pew back.¹⁴

The paradigm will be condensed into a half sheet of paper through the following methods. The section in each category which states "Specific actions I need to take" and "Encouragements I received" will be moved to a single place at the bottom of the page. Some thought-provoking statements may be condensed or removed. Further, the paradigm will be renamed the "Sermon Application Grid."¹⁵ Finally, the font will also be minimized to allow the paradigm of personal application to fit on a half sheet.

The instructions will cover the essential elements of the paradigm. First, the instructions will note that the paradigm lists possible areas the sermon may address in the congregant's life.

¹³ See Table 4.16.

¹⁴ This comprises a compilation of suggestions from the debriefing meeting and the personal interviews.

¹⁵ Renaming the paradigm accomplishes two results. First, the name is more efficient in size. Second, the name eliminates the challenge of the word "paradigm," as demonstrated in the research data.

Not every sermon will address every area. The congregant should peruse the categories and identify which best apply to them. The congregant should pray and ask the Holy Spirit to assist them in understanding how the biblical text applies to their life. As the congregant listens to the sermon, they should consider how the text applies to them in those categories. Finally, as the Holy Spirit convicts and after the sermon, the congregant should note either one specific action they need to take to apply the sermon or one encouragement they received from the sermon.

Second, the church lobby will have a full-page paradigm with the preceding instructions.¹⁶ Congregants will be encouraged to take a copy each week, as needed. Providing a paper copy of the paradigm will allow the congregant to make personal notes on the paradigm each week. It will also replace worn, battered, lost, or forgotten copies as the congregant enters the auditorium. The church website will also make the paradigm available with the sermon handouts.¹⁷ Video-recorded training sessions in the paradigm's use may also appear on the church website in the future.

Third, a modified version of the paradigm of personal application will appear at the bottom of the sermon handout each week. The first two categories ("God" and "Myself") with the accompanying thought-provoking statements will appear each week as all of Scripture is about God and is profitable for the Christian. The pastor tasked with preaching each particular week will choose one to two other categories with accompanying thought-provoking statements to which the text most closely applies.¹⁸ This method will expose every congregant to the paradigm of personal application.

¹⁶ Suggested in the personal interview data.

¹⁷ Suggested in the personal interview data.

¹⁸ This idea is modified from the suggestion in the final debriefing meeting.

Fourth, the church will hold regular training programs on the paradigm's use in various venues. These training programs will occur during the small group midweek studies and in Cambria Baptist Church's new member classes.¹⁹ The studies will consist of one week on the importance of sermon application; one week on the Holy Spirit's role and methods in sermon application; one week on listening theory; and two weeks of illustration and case study using the paradigm of personal application.

The church will also create a modified training program in the paradigm for use in the children's and teen's ministry.²⁰ This training will cover the same topics but will address these topics in an age-specific way using illustrations and visual media. As the children may not comprehend the entire paradigm, the training will present the categories in the paradigm but will only use a modified form in the lesson handouts. The parents will be encouraged to use the paradigm in their discussion with their children about the lessons and the Sunday sermon.

The study results also indicated that the paradigm may be useful in personal study. As a result, the Cambria Baptist Church leaders will encourage the congregants to use the paradigm in their personal Bible study. As the pastors train the congregants in personal Bible study through small group lessons, they will reference and use the paradigm to teach application. The paradigm will be available to all congregants in the church foyer to use at home.

As the paradigm of personal application proved effective in stimulating specific sermon applications across all generations, the intervention should also apply to other congregations. Regardless of the congregation's makeup, the paradigm of personal application should translate to the ministry context. The paradigm's general nature allows the paradigm also to cross denominational boundaries. The moderator encourages pastors to consider modifying the

¹⁹ This idea is modified from the suggestion in the personal interview data.

²⁰ Participants raised this suggestion in both the final debriefing meeting and the personal interviews.

paradigm and training to fit the construct of their ministry. Educated, urban, and suburban congregations may be able to handle a more robust paradigm. Rural congregations with limited education, like Cambria Baptist Church, may need to condense the paradigm to make it more palatable. However, some form of the paradigm will benefit the congregation.

Research Limitations

In addition to the limitations iterated at the outset of this report, several limitations revealed themselves as the study progressed. These limitations held significant importance in the study's results. These limitations also consisted of both issues that the study could have and could not have avoided if the moderator had been aware of their existence at the outset. One of the issues will result in an area of recommended further research.

The study included seven individuals over sixty-five years of age. Of that group, four individuals were between the ages of eighty and ninety. As the study progressed, the physical frailty of this age group presented a limitation. One individual has hearing loss, and the moderator accommodated this issue. Following each training session, he met with this individual to ensure he understood the material. One other individual dropped out of the study due to illness which kept him homebound. One final individual did not participate in the questionnaire portion of the study as his frail hands prevented him from writing, and his computer literacy prevented him from completing the questionnaire online. However, he actively participated in the group discussions and the debriefing meeting.²¹

In the initial limitations, the moderator noted that, as not all participants hold advanced degrees, the participants may not have previous training in moving from written text to

²¹ This participant revealed this fact in a personal conversation with the moderator at the study's conclusion.

application.²² However, the limitation surrounding the advanced education of the participants also revealed itself in the study's questionnaire portion. As only six of the participants hold advanced degrees, most of the participants struggled to understand the nuance of the questions in the questionnaire. As a result, the moderator spent the beginning of every Sunday school hour during the study's questionnaire portion explaining the difference between the questions. If the moderator had anticipated this limitation, he would have reworded some questions for clarity. Further, the participants struggled to understand the reasoning behind filling questionnaires with identical questions three weeks in a row to track changes in response.

Another limitation occurred when the moderator preached a sub-par sermon in the second week of the study's "in the field" portion.²³ The moderator attempted to cover too much material in one message. The moderator should have divided the single sermon into two parts. The sermon length and the sermon topic's deep nature created a challenging environment for the participants to use the paradigm of personal application. As seen in the results, the paradigm appeared to help overcome the challenge of a poor sermon. However, some results spiked during that week due to the sub-par message.²⁴

As the study progressed, various views appeared regarding the Holy Spirit's nature and work in sermon application. The improper views of the Holy Spirit's methods resulted in an unexpected limitation. As noted, some participants hold a mystical view of the Holy Spirit, which expects the application only to occur as the Holy Spirit impresses a thought on their hearts. Others minimize the Holy Spirit in the application, trending towards a works approach to sanctification. These views presented a limitation as the moderator designed the paradigm with

²² See Limitations in Chapter One.

²³ The notes for this sermon appear in Appendix E.

²⁴ See Table 4.11 and Table 4.15.

the concept of Holy Spirit-empowered effort in mind. Relying only on the Holy Spirit to mystically work eliminates the need for the paradigm. Relying only on human effort drains the paradigm of any power.

The final limitation relates to the nature of the study itself. The study's academic nature prevented the moderator from altering the study. As the participants made evident in their responses, the study's training portion needed at least one more week of training and case studies to illustrate paradigm use. Although the moderator recognized this need as the training concluded, he could not add another week of training.

Further Research

The study's results and conclusions reveal four areas that require further research. First, this study revealed the need for more understanding regarding the balance between distraction and focus in the sermon event. As the participants used the paradigm of personal application, they struggled to read it, listen to the message, and think of an application. However, the participants also noted that the paradigm helped them focus better on the sermon. Each pastor recognizes the challenge of distraction in the sermon event. However, research identifying the point at which an intervention focuses a listener's attention on a message or becomes a distraction would be helpful.

Second, the study revealed the need for further research on the relationship between one's view of the Holy Spirit's work and how the individual applies the sermon. The study revealed that some viewed the Holy Spirit's work in a mystical sense, requiring them to detach themselves from any action and allow the Holy Spirit to impress the application upon them. On the other hand, some participants appeared to negate the Holy Spirit's work and view the application as a solely human endeavor. As the pastor seeks to assist the congregant in applying the sermon, he

would do well to understand this relationship. Further research would help identify if, indeed, that relationship exists. Also, if the relationship exists, further research would help identify methods to assist the congregation in recognizing a biblical view of the Holy Spirit's work and method.

Third, the study revealed the need for further research on the relationship between balancing law and grace in application. This relationship is closely tied to the previous point. The tendency in the application is to make a list of life changes that the individual must make. However, there is also a reality of the believer's position in Christ through which the believer stands forgiven. The challenge is to help the believer understand that their applications result from God's favor. These applications do not cause the listener to receive God's favor, provided they are in Christ. Research which helps the pastor understand how to transfer this knowledge to the congregation would be most helpful.

Finally, the study revealed the need to balance the dual role of Scripture. Scripture primarily exists to reveal God to man. However, Scripture also informs man how to obey God (2 Tim 3:16-17). As the study progressed, the moderator felt the pressure to ensure that the participants did not turn the Bible into a book about themselves while applying the message to themselves. Thus, research which reveals methods that would help the pastor and congregant maintain this balance would be helpful.

Conclusion

At the outset, this study noted that preaching stands as the center of the Christian worship service. However, this heralding holds a specific purpose. Through the theological foundations, the moderator built this study on the premise that Scripture's purpose in the believer's life is to create an understanding of doctrine, reproof against sin, correction to understand how to

overcome this sin, and instruction in living a righteous life. Thus, life change and conformity to Christ stand as the purpose for heralding God's Word.

The preacher must, therefore, intentionally seek to help God's people apply the message presented in their life context. However, with the multi-generational nature of the healthy church, the specific application of the message varies from person to person. Each sermon holds numerous applications. As a result, the preacher cannot cover every possible application in his presentation.

The understanding that many Christians have not learned how to accomplish the application task further compounds the preacher's challenge. Current literature fails to address this challenge adequately. As a result, the moderator created an intervention in the paradigm of personal application that sought to train the congregant in sermon application and provide a tool that would stimulate congregants from all generations to proper application.

In this study, the moderator sought three outcomes. First, the moderator sought data demonstrating how congregants apply each sermon to their lives. Second, the moderator sought a demonstration that the paradigm for personal application provided the means for the specific application the congregant made from the sermon. Third, the moderator sought to demonstrate that the paradigm can accomplish the above goals efficiently.

Therefore, at the outset, the moderator identified two possible outcomes as successful. First, the paradigm of personal application would result in the congregant making specific sermon applications to their lives from the sermon. If this did not occur, an alternate successful outcome would have been the participants' input resulting in a modified paradigm or method which assisted the congregants in making specific sermon applications. If either or both of these outcomes occurred, the moderator would deem the study successful. Achieving these outcomes

would prove the thesis: If the paradigm of personal application is taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation can effectively apply each sermon to their personal life.

The results reveal that both outcomes occurred in this study. First, each week the specific applications made by the participants increased. Further, the number of participants who agreed that the paradigm assisted them with these specific applications also increased. Second, the participants' input resulted in a modified paradigm which will also be used in the ministry at Cambria Baptist Church. Thus, the moderator identifies this study as successful and the thesis as proven true.

Scripture calls the preacher to herald God's Word effectively. Scripture further calls the listener to heed the heralding of God's Word and apply it to their life for sanctification. However, there is often a disconnect between heralding God's Word, listening to God's Word, and applying God's Word. This study sought to mend that disconnect and provide a tool for life change. In the end, this project's thesis statement was affirmed: If the paradigm of personal application is taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation can effectively apply each sermon to their personal life.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

As many of you know, Pastor Dave is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree through Liberty University. He is pursuing this degree to serve you as a congregation better and fulfill his role as your pastor. He entered this program because it requires addressing an area of need in our congregation. He has chosen to address the area of sermon application. The pastors know that you desire to grow in your walk with God and to apply the Sunday sermons to your life. To that end, Pastor Dave has created a system to assist you in accomplishing that desire effectively. Over eight weeks, he desires to test the effectiveness of that system and needs your help. This study will begin during the Sunday school hour on May 14. Beginning that day, all the adult Sunday school classes will be combined so that you can participate. Pastor will provide four weeks of training and group discussion surrounding sermon application. Following the four weeks, for the next three weeks, you will be asked to use and report on a tool he created for sermon application in the worship service. In the end, you will help create a helpful tool for sermon application. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please see Pastor Dave. We look forward to seeing you in Sunday school on May 14.

APPENDIX B

PARADIGM OF PERSONAL APPLICATION TRAINING LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1 – Setting the Foundation

1. Introduction with the need for the intervention
 - The pastor's role (Ephesians 4:11-14)
 - The pastor is God's gift to the congregation.
 - God tasks the pastor with equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.
 - 1 Timothy 4 reveals that this equipping primarily occurs through the presentation of God's Word.
 - Thus, God calls the pastor to train the congregation to apply God's Word correctly to their situation.
 - The project's problem, purpose, and thesis
 - The problem – we have a multi-generational congregation which makes it impossible for the pastor to address every application
 - Point out the multi-generational nature of the room.
 - Point out that the specific application of the Bible is different for every one of them.
 - The purpose – This DMIN action research project aims to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon.
 - The thesis – The thesis is that if the paradigm of personal application is taught and applied, then the congregant of each generation will effectively apply each sermon to their personal life.
 - Hand out a copy of the paradigm of personal application to those in attendance.
 - Reveal that this intervention has the potential to appear in multiple parts of the ministry.
 - Reveal that the individual's participation in the project can impact the final product and better the church as a whole.
2. Present the intervention's details.
 - Give all in attendance a copy of Table 3.2 detailing the weekly specifics of the project.
 - Present the broad weekly topics of the project.
 - Present the participant expectations and the consent waiver.
 - Attend all training sessions and use the paradigm of personal application in three worship services.
 - Complete all questionnaires promptly.
 - Must have attended Cambria Baptist Church for at least six months so that the study can consist of volunteers who are committed to and understand the teaching ministry at Cambria.
 - Give honest positive and negative feedback.
 - Call for questions to clarify any issues.
3. Volunteer sign-up
 - Invite anyone who wants to participate to place their information on the sign-up sheet.
 - Instruct all who sign-up to complete and turn in the consent waivers.

Lesson 2 – The Need for Biblical Application

4. Theological Foundations for Application

- 2 Peter 1:3
 - God has granted believers everything they need for life change in His Word.
 - Today's life impacts our eternal destiny.
 - Godliness is sourced in God's divine power, not our will.
 - We find this divine power in God's good and precious promises recorded in His Word.
- 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2
 - All Scripture is breathed out by God
 - Scripture teaches the believer what to believe.
 - Scripture reproves the believer through conviction of wrong.
 - Scripture corrects the believer and helps them restore their belief and personal practice to their proper state before God.
 - Scripture instructs a believer in the pattern of a holy lifestyle.
 - These result in a fully mature Christian.
 - All Scripture is to be faithfully proclaimed by the pastor.
 - As the Word reproves, the pastor is to reprove the congregation from the Word.
 - As the Word rebukes, the pastor is to rebuke the congregation from the Word.
 - As the Word instructs, the pastor is to exhort the congregation from the Word.
- James 1:21-25
 - God calls believers to remove themselves from the stain of sin.
 - God reveals that this stain is removed by implanting God's Word in the believer's heart.
 - When the Word is implanted in the believer's heart, they become doers of the Word. Application is the goal of implantation.

5. Group Discussion Questions

- How do you go about making applications from the sermons at this point?
- Why do we struggle to apply the Sunday sermon to our lives the rest of the week?
- What specific things create a distraction for us in the sermon?

6. Principles to prepare your heart to receive God's Word

- Read the biblical text of the upcoming sermon throughout the week.
- Get a good night's sleep on Saturday night.
- Create enough time on Sunday morning, so the family is not rushed to church.
- Listen to Christian music on the way to church to place our minds in a proper spirit.
- Arrive early to church and fellowship with fellow believers.
- Put electronic devices away in the worship service.
- Review the paradigm of personal application Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Lesson 3 – How People Listen

7. A brief introduction to listening theory and the Listening MATERRS model

- Everyone has a process by which they listen.
- Good listening involves awareness of the things going on in our minds.

8. Awareness in sermon listening.

- We must discipline our minds to remain engaged in the message.
 - Ask questions about the message presented.
 - Take written notes to stimulate your mind.
 - Bring back your mind to the topic at hand when your mind wanders
9. Emotion in sermon listening.
- Ask what your gut reaction is to the message given.
 - Why do you react negatively to things that are said?
 - Why do you react positively to things that are said?
 - Acknowledge the emotion and determine the root cause of the emotion.
 - Does this emotion signal a need for change in your life?
10. Honesty in sermon listening.
- The listener must determine the veracity of the message against God's Word.
 - When the root cause of the emotions becomes evident, the listener must honestly evaluate if the emotions signal a need for change.
 - The listener must honestly evaluate their life and emotions against the message of God's Word.
11. Response in sermon listening.
- Listening creates a natural response within the hearer.
 - The listener accepts the message presented and changes for the better.
 - The listener rejects the message and ignores the change needed.
12. Self-talk in sermon listening.
- When individuals listen to others, a conversation takes place in their minds.
 - Good listening seeks to control the conversation taking place in the mind to advance comprehension.
 - Good listening controls the inner conversation through good questions regarding what is being heard.
13. Group Discussion Questions
- What kind of conversations do you have with yourself during the sermon?
 - When do we find our minds wandering while a sermon takes place?
 - How do we bring our minds back to the sermon taking place?
14. Self-Talk and the paradigm of personal application
- Throughout the message, the listener seeks to answer the questions in the paradigm.
 - The listener creates inner dialogue during the sermon using the topics and thought-provoking statements.

Lesson 4 – Examining the paradigm of personal application.

3. Introduction and description of the topics and thought-provoking statements in the paradigm
- God
 - What a person thinks about God is the most important thing about them.
 - Scripture reveals God to man.
 - Every message is a message about God at its core.
 - Thus, every message should impact our view of God.
 - Myself
 - James 4 explains that all conflict arises out of our hearts.

- Because I can only control myself, the application must begin in my own heart and life.
 - I must examine my attitudes, actions (sins I need to forsake), and emotions (anxieties I need to commit to God) in every message.
 - Family
 - My family is my closest social circle.
 - Genesis 2:18-25 reveals that the family is the foundation of creation.
 - My walk with God must be reflected in my relationship with my family.
 - School / Work / Retirement
 - Genesis 2:1-17 reveals that God created man to work (school and retirement for the respective generations).
 - Thus, I worship in the way that I work.
 - Others
 - God created us as social beings.
 - I am called to make disciples of all people.
 - I am called to reflect Christ to all people.
 - Entertainment/hobbies
 - Ephesians 5:1-14 instructs the believer to mortify the flesh and run from sin. Therefore, my hobbies and entertainment should not promote sin.
 - Ephesians 5:15-16 instructs the believer to make the best use of their time. Therefore, my hobbies and entertainment should hold eternal value.
 - Genesis 2:1-3 reveals that God created rest for our worship. Therefore, my hobbies and entertainment should make God look as good as He really is.
 - Finances
 - 2 Corinthians 9:7 reveals that we are to give back to God with a cheerful heart.
 - James 1:17 reveals that everything we own is a gift from God. Therefore, we are to be good stewards of God's gifts.
 - Matthew 6:19-21 reveals that we are investing in earth or eternity through our finances. Therefore, we should seek to use our finances for eternal treasure.
 - Church
 - Romans 6 reveals that through salvation, God baptizes us by His Spirit into a covenant community called the church for our good.
 - God filled Scripture with "one another" commands we are to practice.
 - Implementation Questions
 - We are to seek to apply every message to the appropriate areas of our life.
 - We are to take encouragement in our victories in the appropriate areas of our lives.
4. Group discussion question
 - What topic in the paradigm of personal application is most important to you and why?
 5. Play *Trust God* by H. B. Charles
 - Pause to discuss the self-talk taking place in the congregant's mind at the main point changes.
 - Discuss the ways the paradigm of personal application points to necessary changes in life.
 6. Instruct participants in the questionnaire for the week.
 - The questionnaire can be filled out via Survey Monkey.
 - The questionnaire can be filled out via hard copy.
 - The questionnaire must be completed by Thursday.

APPENDIX C
VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET

After you have signed your informed consent waiver, please provide your contact information below for the study.

Name	Phone #	Email Address
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____
11. _____	_____	_____
12. _____	_____	_____
13. _____	_____	_____
14. _____	_____	_____
15. _____	_____	_____
16. _____	_____	_____
17. _____	_____	_____
18. _____	_____	_____
19. _____	_____	_____
20. _____	_____	_____
21. _____	_____	_____
22. _____	_____	_____
23. _____	_____	_____
24. _____	_____	_____
25. _____	_____	_____
26. _____	_____	_____

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT WAIVER

Title of the Project: The Paradigm of Personal Application: A Method for Cross-Generational Sermon Application at Cambria Baptist Church

Principal Investigator: David B. Locke, Doctoral Candidate, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Co-investigator: Dr. Jeff Johnsen, Doctor of Ministry, Faculty Sponsor, John W. Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be at least 18 years of age and have attended Cambria Baptist Church for at least six months. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to create and implement a paradigm by which congregants of each generation can effectively apply the sermon.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Attend and actively participate in four weeks of training in the chapel at 9:30 am during the Sunday school hour at Cambria Baptist Church from May 14 to June 4, 2023. These training sessions will take approximately one hour each. These training sessions will be audio recorded.
2. Use the paradigm of personal application in the worship service at Cambria Baptist Church for three weeks from June 4 to June 18, 2023, and complete an anonymous questionnaire about your experience by no later than the Thursday of each week. These questionnaires will be conducted in a way to preserve your anonymity. The questionnaires will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
3. Attend and actively participate in a final debriefing meeting in the chapel at 9:30 am during the Sunday school hour at Cambria Baptist Church on June 25, 2023. This debriefing meeting will take approximately one hour. This debriefing meeting will be audio recorded.

4. Complete a final questionnaire the week of June 25, 2023, and turn in the questionnaire no later than the Thursday of that week. The final questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
5. Some participants may be asked to participate in a private interview regarding their experience in the study. These interviews will be audio recorded.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include an increased understanding of the methods to correctly apply biblical sermons to their life. They should also expect to increase their ability to apply biblical sermons correctly to their life.

Benefits to society include the possibility that the methods employed in this study may be used in other churches to increase that church's ability to apply biblical sermons correctly.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm yourself or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses to the weekly questionnaires and the final questionnaire will be anonymous. Participant responses in the focus group discussions will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Electronic data will be stored on a password-locked computer. Physical data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the Lead Pastor's Office at Cambria Baptist Church.

After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.

- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. The researcher and members of his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as Lead Pastor at Cambria Baptist Church. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, data collection will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Cambria Baptist Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the surveys without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is David B. Locke. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jeff Johnsen, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX E
SERMON OUTLINES

Week 1 Sermon: Sunday, June 4, 2023

Pastor Dave Locke

Galatians 2:11-21 – Fight for the Truth

INTRODUCTION

The first few chapters of the book of Daniel are full of lessons we all need. If I were to give a one sentence summary of Daniel and his three friends, it would be they stood for truth.

Daniel and the food (Daniel 1)

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the furnace (Daniel 3)

Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6)

In this passage, we find three reasons why we, as believers, must stand up for what is right. These three reasons are the key truths found in this passage.

- 1. Godly people do not always do right**
 - a. Godly people still sin (12)**
 - i. What Peter did
 - b. Godly people still struggle with the fear of man (12)**
 - i. Why Peter did it
 - c. Godly people's sin has a strong impact on others (13)**
 - i. What happened because of what Peter did
- 2. Error left unchecked diminishes Truth**
 - a. Believers must address one another's sin (11)**
 - i. What Paul did
 - b. Public sin which leads others into error must be addressed publicly (12-21)**
 - i. Why Paul did it
 - ii. 5 doctrines denied (from Warren Wiersbe)
 1. Unity of the church (14)
 2. Justification by faith (15-16)
 3. Freedom from the Law (17-19)
 4. The content of the Gospel (20)
 5. The grace of God (21)
 - c. Godly people respond to rebuke and repent**
 - i. How Peter responded
- 3. The cross of Christ demands that we hold to the true Gospel (19-21)**

So What?

1. Are you willing to do right regardless of the consequences?
2. Is obeying God really important to you?
3. Are you willing to say hard things to your friends for their good and growth in Christ?

Week 2 Sermon: Sunday, June 11, 2023**Pastor Dave Locke****Galatians 2:20 – The Gospel Changes Us****1. Through Christ's death, we have been placed in Christ****a. Being in Christ affects our position**

- i. Elect and called of God
- ii. Redeemed by God
- iii. Reconciled to God
- iv. Sheltered eternally under the blood of Christ
- v. Forgiven all trespasses
- vi. No longer condemned
- vii. Sanctified forever
- viii. Perfected forever
- ix. Made the righteousness of God
- x. Free from the law
- xi. Seated in the heavenly places in Christ
- xii. A citizen of heaven
- xiii. Of the family and household of God
- xiv. Complete in Christ

b. Characteristics of these positions

- i. Invisible
- ii. Not subject to human feeling or experience
- iii. Apprehended by faith
- iv. Contested
- v. Unmerited
- vi. Unchangeable
- vii. Eternal

c. Being in Christ affects our possessions

- i. A new standing in Christ
- ii. A new life in Christ
- iii. A new presence and power of the Spirit
- iv. A new inheritance
- v. A new enemy
- vi. A new access to God
- vii. The Word of God

d. Being in Christ affects our safe-keeping**e. Being in Christ affects our associations**

- i. With God the Father
- ii. With God the Son
- iii. With the Spirit of God
- iv. With Satan
- v. With the World
- vi. With Fellow-Believers

2. **Through Christ's death, Christ now dwells in us.**
 - a. **Christ's indwelling gives us new divine life**
 - b. **Christ's indwelling gives a new hope**
 - c. **Christ's indwelling gives us a new enabling power**
3. **Through Christ's death, Christ empowers us for godly living.**
 - a. **Christian character**
 - i. The sin nature is not controlled by eradication
 - ii. The sin nature is not controlled by rules
 - iii. The sin nature is controlled by the Spirit
 - b. **Christian conduct**
 - i. The Fruit of the Spirit

So What?

1. Allow yourself to be overwhelmed by the power of the Gospel.
2. Submit to the change that God is accomplishing in your life.
3. Seek to walk in the Spirit through faith.

Week 3 Sermon: Sunday, June 18, 2023

Pastor Christian Brown

Galatians 3:1-9 – By Faith Alone

Paul presents two arguments for why justification is by faith alone:

1. Argument #1: The Spirit is received by faith. (vv. 1-5)

Paul calls the Galatians irrational for adding works to salvation.

Paul tells the Galatians that they have been bewitched or put under a spell.

- **Evidence 1: Christ crucified**

This is a past historical fact with ongoing ramifications in the present into eternity.

Paul calls them back to the gospel they first received when he was with them.

- **Evidence 2: The Galatians' experience**

They received the Spirit by faith, not by the works of the Law.

They continued in the Spirit by faith, not by the works of the Law.

The Spirit starts salvation in us, and the Spirit finishes salvation in us.

What are you trusting in for salvation and sanctification?

2. Argument #2: Salvation has always been by faith (vv. 6-9)

- **Example 1: Abraham**

Abraham's right standing with God resulted from faith in God (Genesis 15:6).

- **Example 2: Abraham's children**

Those of faith are the sons of Abraham.

The blessings promised to Abraham are for the Jews and Gentiles.

So What?

1. Proclaim Christ crucified!
2. Trust in the power of God's Spirit.
3. Praise God for the gift of salvation!

APPENDIX F
WEEKLY ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Anonymous Questionnaire Number _____
2. What is your level of agreement with the following statement: “The paradigm of personal application helped me make specific application to my life from this week's sermon”? Please select one answer:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

3. How did the paradigm of personal application help you arrive at specific applications from this week's message?
4. In what ways was the paradigm of personal application hard to use?
5. In what ways was the paradigm of personal application distracting?
6. What was one application you made from this week's sermon?

APPENDIX G
FINAL ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Anonymous Questionnaire Number _____
2. How likely are you to use the paradigm of personal application in the future?
3. How would you use the paradigm of personal application moving forward?
4. What did you learn from the process you participated in in the last seven weeks?
5. What would you change about the process you participated in in the last seven weeks?
6. What strengths do you see in the paradigm of personal application?
7. What weaknesses do you see in the paradigm of personal application?
8. What would you change in the paradigm of personal application?
9. In what ways was the paradigm distracting to you as you listened to the sermon and made application?
10. What challenges in making sermon applications do you experience that the paradigm does not address?
11. What did you find difficult about the four-week training process?
12. What would you recommend changing in the four-week training process?

APPENDIX H

FINAL PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn from the process you participated in the last seven weeks?
2. What did you find difficult about the training process?
3. What would you recommend changing in the training process?
4. What do you like about the paradigm of personal application?
5. What weaknesses do you see in the paradigm of personal application?
6. What would you recommend changing in the paradigm of personal application?
7. In what ways was the paradigm distracting to you as you listened to the sermon and made application?
8. How likely are you to use the paradigm moving forward?
9. How will you use the paradigm of personal application moving forward?
10. How can we use the paradigm of a modification of the paradigm of personal application in the church?

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

April 13, 2023

David Locke
Jeff Johnsen

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY22-23-1387 The Paradigm of Personal Application: A Method for Cross-Generational Sermon Application at Cambria Baptist Church

Dear David Locke and Jeff Johnsen,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your project is not considered human subjects research because it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office