Making His Story Our Story: Application from Old Testament Narrative
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INTRODUCTION

Old Testament narrative cries out for proclamation today. Narrative represents the most common of the biblical genres.[1] It comprises nearly one-third of all Scripture. The sheer bulk of narrative in God's revelation compels the expositor to render a high priority to preaching it effectively. Further, contemporary audiences are more and more drawn to stories as means of understanding.[2] Their ability to captivate mind and heart oblige us to bring the stories of Scripture to bear on our hearers' lives. Yet with this treasure of revelation comes a trap.

Narrative literature by its very nature communicates subtly. Propositional statements do not thrust meaning to the surface. Instead, the message emerges from the story itself, through characterization, plot development, narrator comments and other communication tools in the writer's box. Any narrative presents this challenge, but biblical narrative carries an additional complexity.

Inherent narrative subtlety melds with historical-cultural distance to multiply the traps of biblical story. Moses never logged on to CNN.com to read the latest on stem cell research. Our hearers have never had a priest assess the mold growing on the kitchen backsplash. At times, it seems as if the two worlds never intersect. Yet they do. Our hearts cheer the underdog to slay Goliath and grieve the loneliness that threatens widowed Ruth.

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[1] Daniel Block, "Tell Me the Old, Old Story" in *Giving the* Sense (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), p. 409.

Old Testament narrative cannot remain enigmatic. We cannot acknowledge its power then ignore it because of its perplexity. We must proclaim the largest portion of the larger testament as part of the whole counsel of God. Neither can we proclaim it as stories of people like us in vastly different situations that may yield occasional practical tidbits for today. We must proclaim Old Testament narrative as an authoritative and relevant message for today. The key question is how can an expositor insure that the message is both relevant and authoritative. A substantial part of the answer lies in how we develop contemporary applications from these ancient texts.

This paper seeks to aid the clarity of our proclamation of Old Testament narrative by strengthening our application construction. First, it will assess the gap between conventional homiletical training and current common practice and second, will suggest models for relevant and authoritative application.

CONVENTIONAL APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE APPLICATION

The basic interpretation and application scheme among evangelicals flows from the venerable historico-grammatical approach. It may be pictured as follows:

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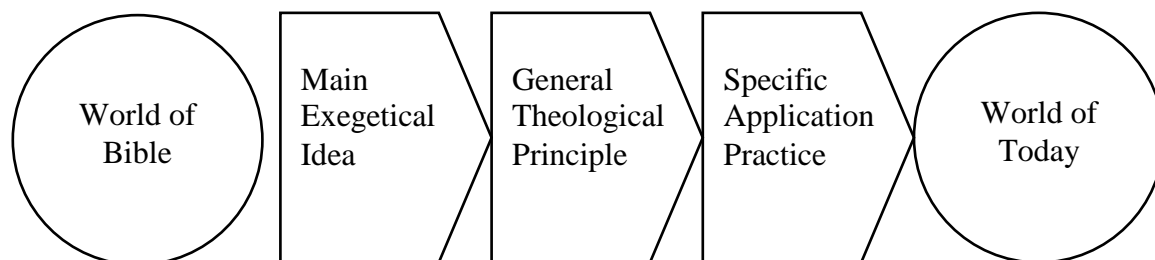
[2] See the discussion of the power of stories and on narrative preaching (which is different than preaching from narrative) in Calvin Miller, "Narrative Preaching," *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), pp. 103-116.

In this model, the first goal is to discover the main exegetical idea of the text.[3] The expositor

considers essential aspects such as lexicography, word usage, grammar, syntax, genre, historical-

cultural background and literary context. The expositor seeks to uncover and formulate the single

main idea of the passage.

Once the expositor uncovers this main exegetical idea, the goal shifts to principlizing this

idea into a universal statement.[4] This statement serves as a bridge from text to today. It must be

equally true for the original audience as it is true for us. Specific applications flow from this

general principle. All applications in this model stem from the main principle. While this

represents the accepted approach in the majority of interpretation and preaching books, much

current biblical exposition does not consistently follow this pattern.

The handling of the David-Goliath pericope (1 Sam 17) illustrates this disconnect

between accepted theory and current practice. Most scholars understand the main thrust of this

pericope to be part of the demonstration of God's choosing and establishing David as king over

Israel.[5] One would expect then that applications would flow from this main idea of God's

choosing and David's establishment. However, respected expositors have suggested the

following applications from this text:

- In reference to Goliath coming out to challenge Israel forty days: "How applicable to any 'giant' we encounter! That's the way with the giants of fear and worry, for example.

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[3] For discussion, see Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 66-70. Steven Mathewson (*Art of Preaching the Old Testament Narrative*, Baker, 2002, pp. 98-103) also follows this basic approach to application.

[4] Robinson breaks this step of the process down into formulating the homiletical idea and determining the sermon purpose. *Biblical Preaching*, pp 103-112.

[5] See for example, David Howard, *Introduction to the Historical* Books (Chicago: Moody, 1993), pp. 146-7; Ronald Youngblood, "1 Samuel," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) p. 558; William LaSor, David Hubbard and Frederic Bush *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 176-7.

They don't just come once; they come morning and evening, day after day, relentlessly trying to intimidate."[6]

- In reference to David choosing the five stones (17:50): "In my imagination I see David kneeling at the brook to select stones for his sling. The text doesn't say he knelt…but he must have knelt to select the stones…. Are we going to live this life from our knees, imaginatively and personally?"[7]

- On David's conversation with Eliab, his brother (17:28-31): "David knew who to fight and who to leave alone. We need to choose our battles wisely."[8]

- On Saul not fighting Goliath: "When people are out of fellowship with God, they can lead others into defeat."[9]

- On David not taking Saul's armor (17:38-39): "The way we do our work is as important as the work we do. Means must be authentic, true, appropriate to our prayers and proclamations."[10]

- On David's trip to the battlefield: "David lived an ordinary life and armed himself with ordinary things…. Take some time to examine an ordinary day."[11]

- "Doing battle is a lonely experience. No one else can fight for you. Your Goliath is *your* Goliath."[12]

- On David taking Goliath's sword (17:54): "Winning battles is a memorable experience. We're to remember the victories of our past. We're to pass on our lion-and-bear stories…our own Goliath victories."[13]

If the main idea of the passage revolves around God's work in establishing David on the throne,

how can one account for this wide range of applications? Must all applications directly flow

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[6] Charles R. Swindoll, *David: Man of Passion and Purity* (Nashville: Word, 2000), pp. 62-3.

[7] Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall: Earthly Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997), p. 40, 42.

[8] Swindoll, *David*, pp. 70-1.

[9] Warren Wiersbe, *Expository Outlines of the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Victor, 1993), accessed electronically through Libronix Digital Library.

[10] Peterson, *Leap*, p. 42.

[11] John R. Bisagno, *Principle Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), p. 87.

[12] Swindoll, *David*, p. 79.

[13] *Ibid*, p. 80.

from the passage's main idea and its appropriate abstractions?[14] Or do applications that ring true

to our experience also reflect God's authority? Acceptable exposition must not improperly

restrict applications and yet it must not proclaim applications lacking biblical authority.

The seeming disconnect between traditional approaches taught and current expositional

practice reveals the need for more detailed examination of application development. This need

also surfaces in the relative lack of detailed attention given to narrative application development.

Some preaching books develop the interpretation and delivery at length, yet deal little with the

details of application.[15] Others devote much discussion to the importance of connecting to the

audience need, but do not demonstrate how to insure biblical accuracy in application.[16]

This paper proposes models for narrative application that insure this application carries

the weight of biblical authority to the hearts of modern hearers. The primary concern will be to

model how applications can be validated biblically. The models described below represent an

attempt to acknowledge both the validity of traditional main idea applications and of some

ancillary applications.

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[14] Haddon Robinson calls the principlizing process climbing a "ladder of abstraction." "Heresy of Application," *Leadership* (Fall 1997), p 23. Cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 166.

[15] Mathewson's work (*Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*) contains 260 pages of text, yet spends only pages 98-103 on developing application. Two of those pages decry poor application development. Also, recent chapters on preaching narrative focus on interpretive technique much more than application (Block and Kaiser in *Giving the Sense*. 409-454; Keneth Mathews, "Preaching Historical Narrative," *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle*, ed. by George L. Klein [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], pp. 19-50).

[16] *Principle Preaching* by Bisagno best exemplifies this approach. He stresses that exegesis is important, but does not show how it drives the choosing of applications.

VALIDATING APPLICATION FROM OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE

The interpretive process must drive the expositional practice. Every model of validation that follows builds on foundational exegesis. The steps of interpretation provide all the raw material these models utilize to produce five types of application.[17]

CENTRAL APPLICATIONS

The central source of validation for narrative application remains the key idea of the passage. Employing the above-mentioned standard tools of exegesis in conjunction with narrative-specific interpretive principles[18] will substantiate applications with biblical authority. Thus these applications are supported in the sermon by showing the specific results of interpretation. This foundational model may be illustrated as follows:
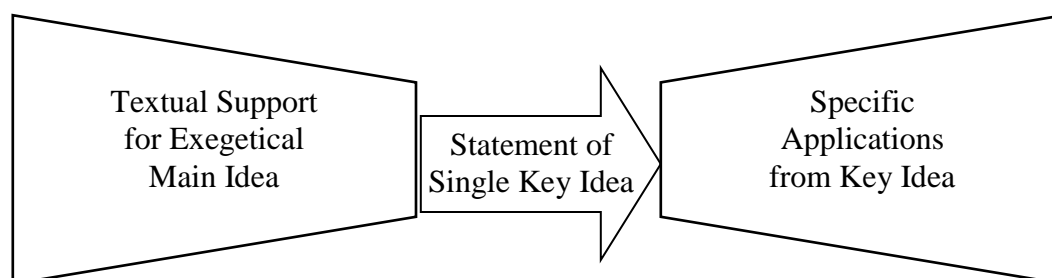
Applications of this type are validated by biblical authority to the extent the expositor has rightly synthesized the main idea of the passage and has properly drawn the relevant applications from that idea.

While this model effectively funnels textual data into a summary statement which then can provide a solid basis for authoritative application, it may not provide the sole basis for

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[17] Many books exist on basic exegesis. Good sources include Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton: Victor, 1991); Grant Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1991); and Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980).

authoritative application. As seen in the above illustrations, many applications made by

expositors today clearly do not stem from the main exegetical idea. Does this mean that those

applications carry no biblical weight? Perhaps the interpretive model itself provides means for

discovering and supporting other types of legitimate applications and eliminating illegitimate

ones.

PATTERN APPLICATIONS

A second source of authoritative applications is the contextual setting of the narrative. A

supporting element of a narrative may represent one thread in a pattern woven through a series of

related narratives. The prevalence of the element suggests it plays more than a supporting role

within a single pericope. In fact, the recurring element itself may contain an important message

for the reader. This model may be illustrated:
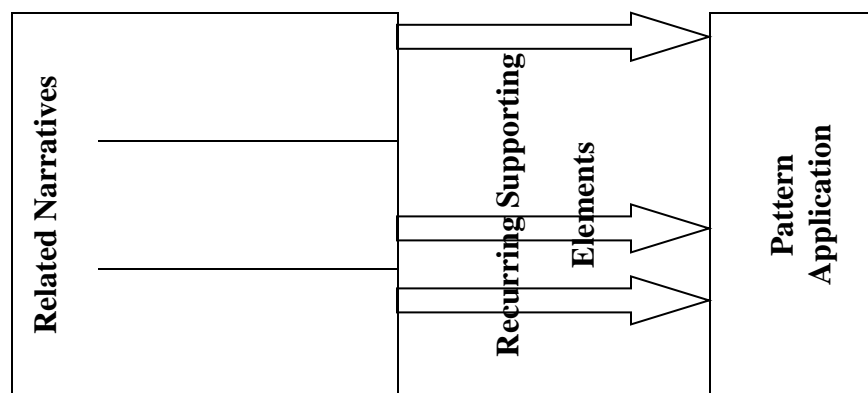
An example of pattern application is seen in the contrast of reality and appearance in the

David and Goliath pericope. This aspect continues a theme already established in 1 Samuel.

Hannah appeared to Eli to be drunk in the house of the Lord (1 Sam 1:14), but in fact she was

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[18] See the summary of basic principles for interpreting Old Testament narrative in the appendix.

appearing before Yahweh to voice her earnest plea (1 Sam 1:10-11). Hannah was not drunk, but

devoted. Saul had a handsome appearance and literally stood out among the people because of

his height (1 Sam 9:1-2). Saul, however, had the heart of a spiritual midget. His height meant

nothing as he desperately grasped for Samuel's robe, begging him to worship with him so that

Israel would believe Yahweh remained with Saul (1 Sam 15:26-31). In fact, the mention of Saul

as the biggest of the Israelites later subtly condemns him when he cowers before the biggest of

the Philistines (1 Sam 17:4). Appearance also deceived in the case of Eliab, David's oldest

brother. Samuel saw his impressive stature and concluded that he was viewing the next leader of

Israel (1 Sam 16:6). Eliab's heart revealed however an angry coward (1 Sam 17:28-29). Of

course, these elements served to highlight David's underwhelming appearance, yet

overwhelming heart for Yahweh (1 Sam 16:12; 17:45-47).[19] An expositor could rightly conclude

from this latent pattern that outward appearance often deceives in spiritual matters.[20] From this

example, application may draw from supporting elements of a pericope. These elements serve

both to clarify the main idea of the passage and to extend a pattern in the broader narrative

framework. Either can produce valid applications.

The weight of biblical authority for pattern applications is relative to the breadth of

contextual support and to the correlation to broader biblical revelation.[21] The more contiguous

narratives that contain the pattern and the more prominent the pattern in those narratives, the

more confident the expositor may be that application reflects biblical perspective.

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[19] The Hebrew term here translated "youngest" (קָטָן), may also be translated "smallest," providing a contrast to the physically larger brothers and more subtly to the failed king Saul. See "קָטָן" *NIDOTTE* 3:910-912.

[20] The basis of this application is significantly strengthened by the fact that Yahweh voices this principle to Samuel at the choosing of David (1 Sam 16:7).

[21] Correlation to broader biblical revelation and other qualifiers will be discussed under "Application Filters."

THEMATIC APPLICATIONS

Thematic application broadens the above pattern until it encompasses the whole of Scripture. Like pattern principles, thematic applications flow from supporting elements of a narrative rather than the main thrust. However, rather than locating its substantiation from related narratives, a thematic application represents a recurring theme scattered throughout the Bible in otherwise unrelated passages. Thematic applications surface shared elements concerning the nature of life and humanity. These elements bridge cultural and covenantal gaps to connect all mankind. Their location in a variety of biblical contexts serves to prove their universal nature. The model may be illustrated:
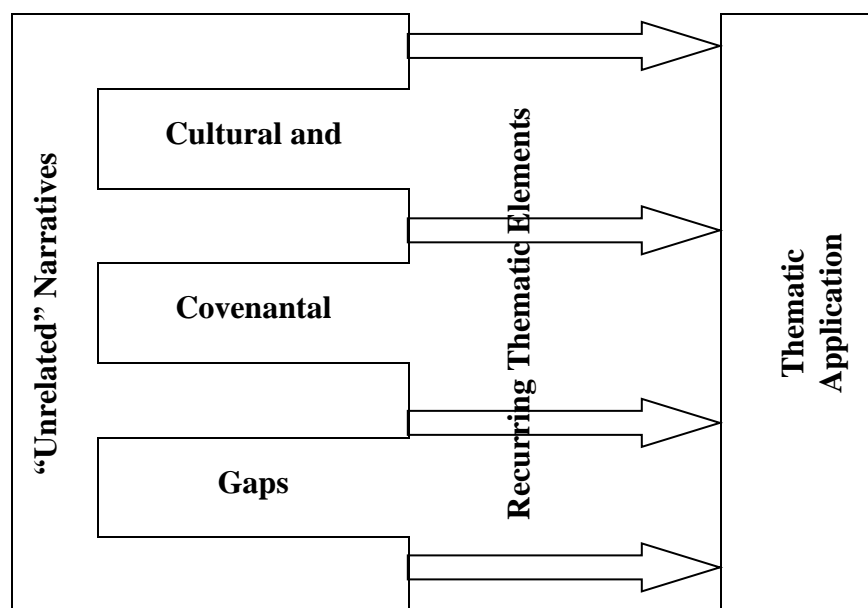
An example of a thematic application is the truism that bad things sometimes happen to good people. The Scripture records the death of Abel, the imprisonment of Joseph, the catastrophic loss for Job, the sickness of Hezekiah, the famine that struck the church in Jerusalem, and many others. These disastrous events do not represent specific cause-effect formulas based on personal actions. In fact, the message of Job answers exactly the opposite.

They do show the Bible's revealing a maxim in life. Sometimes good people are innocent victims of another's sins (Abel's murder by Cain, for example). Other tragedies become avenues of blessing from God (Joseph's imprisonment). Still others are left without explanation in this life (Jerusalem famine). Believers today may not know why a particular tragedy has fallen upon them, but they can find encouragement from the multitude of biblical saints who have shared the path and found God's grace at the end.

At this point, caution must be exercised concerning thematic applications. Often preachers mingle sage observations concerning life with biblical applications. In the David-Goliath examples noted above, one expositor concludes that "We're to remember the victories of our past." Substantiation of this could come from passages such as the command to memorialize the crossing of Jordan (Josh 4:1-8) and the command for believers to memorialize the death of Christ (Lk 22:19). This may represent a legitimate thematic application. However, of the same David-Goliath pericope, the interpreter surmises: "Doing battle is a lonely experience. No one can fight for you. Your Goliath is *your* Goliath" (emphasis his). This seems to be a wise observation from a mature believer, but not necessarily an application bearing the weight of biblical authority. In fact, that battle was supposed to be Saul's to fight, yet David fought in his place (1 Sam 9:16). David later says the battle was not his, but Yahweh's (1 Sam 17:47). Further, no biblical pattern exists that suggests that believers must face battles alone. In fact, Scripture highlights the necessity of the believing community supporting each other. So what seem to be two equally important statements in fact are one application distilling a theme throughout Scripture and another distributing a personal (though perhaps wise) opinion. Though both applications may find audience acceptance, our calling compels us to focus on those application principles that find root in Scripture.

Thematic applications carry biblical authority to the extent they represent a genuine broad-based motif. The more varied the historical, cultural and covenantal settings in which the thematic element is found, the more certain the application represents a universal theme.
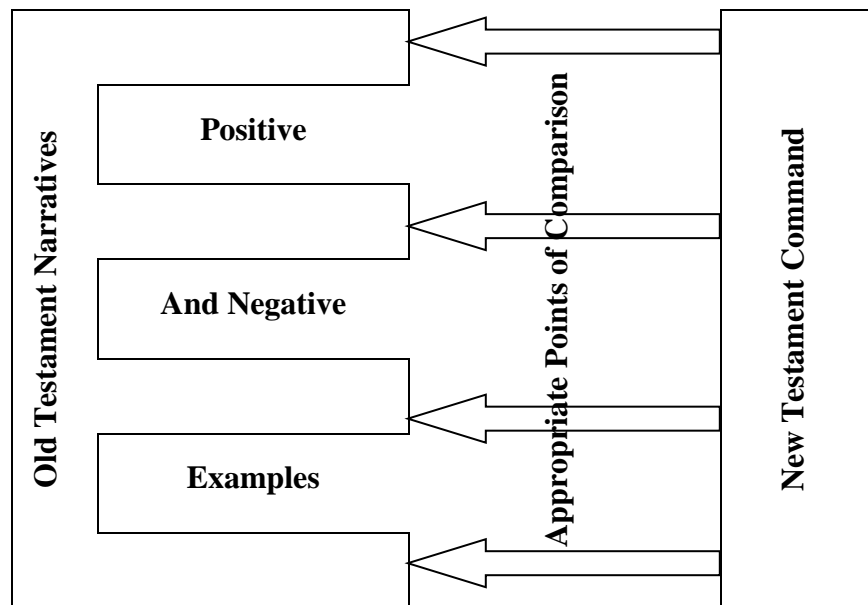
THEOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS

Though here considered as a separate category, theological applications essentially represent thematic applications stemming from the nature of God. Theological applications do not here refer to foundational theological affirmations of God's holiness, sovereignty, etc. Rather they represent insights into God's nature, especially in His dealings with His people. Narrative often nuances foundational truths concerning God.

An example of a theological application is God's tendency to choose a weaker or unexpected person to accomplish His work. Though the cultures of the biblical period gave highest honor and primary responsibility to the firstborn son in the family, God often overturned this cultural practice. Abel over Cain, Jacob over Esau, Joseph and David over their brothers, the list could go on. Further, God used shepherd Amos, fisherman Peter and murderer Paul to accomplish His great work. Woven extensively in biblical fabric are Jael, Josiah, Jonah and John Mark. For the blue-collar worker in the pew and the blue-blood academic in the university, the reality that God utilizes quite ordinary tools to accomplish quite extraordinary feats serves both to encourage and humble.

Theological application grants appropriate insight into God's dealings to the extent that it echoes His ways throughout Scripture. Like thematic application, the more varied the settings of the occurrences, the more clearly the principle represents a biblical truism.

ILLUSTRATIVE APPLICATIONS

Illustrative applications reverse the typical flow of Old Testament exegesis. Normally an expositor moves from discerning the main exegetical idea in its original context to checking for agreement with broader biblical revelation. However, New Testament writers often began with spiritual virtues and turned to Old Testament narrative to exemplify them. Paul turned to Israel's ignoble history to illustrate his warning for the Corinthians to avoid idolatry, immorality, and discontent (1 Cor 10:6-11). Also, the fact that long before Sinai Abraham received righteousness through faith (Gen 15:6) serves as a key piece of Paul's argument for salvation through faith apart from the Law (Rom 4:9-15). The writer of Hebrews gathers a host of examples to demonstrate enduring faith in chapter eleven. An expositor focusing on the main exegetical idea in those Old Testament contexts might not come to the same applications as the New Testament authors did. However, these narratives do serve to illustrate key New Testament truths.

Old Testament Narratives

Positive

And Negative

Examples

Appropriate Points of Comparison

New Testament Command

Some scholars have dismissed this application use as less than valid,[22] but two key

passages demonstrate that Old Testament narrative can serve legitimate illustrative purpose. Paul

writes in Romans 15:4 that the Scripture record was written for our spiritual benefit. The written

events of the past serve to instruct and encourage believers so as to produce endurance that

fosters our Christian hope. This statement follows Paul's quote of Psalm 69:9, but broadens the

significance to include all of the Old Testament.[23] Paul's extensive illustrative use of the Old

Testament and his general assertions concerning Scripture (i.e. 2 Tim 3:16-17) further bolster

this perspective.

In the second key passage, Paul declares the value of examples specifically from Old

Testament narrative. Twice in 1 Corinthians 10 Paul states that Old Testament narrative serves to

guide believers by example:[24] "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting

our hearts on evil things as they did" (10:6 NIV) and later "These things happened to them as

examples and were written down as warnings for us" (10:11 NIV). Paul here seizes the

analogous nature of God's people, Israel and Church, to warn his readers that evil can infiltrate

the believing community with dire consequences. Paul's purpose here was to make application

by way of biblical illustration.

An example of modern illustrative application may be found in the Joseph narrative.

Though the broad narrative focuses on Yahweh's continued working out of His promise against

numerous human obstacles, Joseph's story in Potiphar's house adds a human moral dimension. If

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[22] Compare David Deuel's comments in "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching of Old Testament Narrative" (*Master's Seminary Journal* vol. 2 no. 1, Spring 1991), pp. 45-60.

[23] For elaboration, see Everett Harrison, "I Corinthians," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 152 and Gordon Fee, *I Corinthians* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 199-200.

the narrative only served to show how Israel became enslaved in Egypt or how Yahweh turned

evil into good (cf. Gen 50:20), then the emphasis on Joseph's sexual purity was superfluous.

Instead, Judah's immorality in chapter 38 served as a foil to highlight Joseph's purity. Joseph

stands as an admirable model of what the Law and the New Testament would later command

(Exo 20:14,17; 1 Cor 6:18). An expositor therefore may appropriately apply illustrations from

Old Testament narrative.

The certainty of biblical authority behind an illustrative application depends upon the

clarity of connection between the Old Testament example and the New Testament command.

While the above Joseph narrative fittingly exemplifies the purity commanded elsewhere, some

command-example links are not as lucid. For example, Paul commands believers not to be drunk

with wine (Eph 5:18) and the ancient Recabites maintained lives without wine for generations

(Jer 35:6). However, the command-example does not correspond rightly. Neither Ephesians nor

the New Testament forbids drinking wine, while the order of the Recabites did. Further, the

Recabites received honor from Yahweh because of their honoring their father's commands, not

just because they refused wine (35:18). The commands included prohibitions on living in houses

and planting fields as well (35:7). So then the expositor must examine both Old and New

Testament contexts to insure that behavior modeled in the narrative accurately exemplifies the

moral command.

SUMMARY OF APPLICATION MODELS

This paper has discussed five models for validating applications from Old Testament

narrative. The exegetical model (central applications) follows the standard approach of

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[24] Some scholars see the meaning of τύποι as referring to more than examples or analogies, understanding instead that the OT events typologically prefigured the believers at Corinth. See John Murray, *Romans*, NICNT, pp. 451-453 for discussion.

determining the main exegetical idea, generalizing the theological principle from it, and then extending applications from this center. The next three models (pattern, thematic and theological) draw validation from broader biblical context. Thus application flows from a supporting element of the text, but that element represents a prominent motif in related narratives or throughout the Bible. The fifth model (illustrative) substantiates application from Old Testament narrative by linking it to New Testament moral commands. Each of these five models provides the expositor a means of communicating specific relevant applications that still carry biblical timeless authority.

The suggested additional models (pattern, thematic, theological and illustrative) work because of three key constants through Scripture: the nature of man, the nature of God and the nature of God's work.[25] These constants allow an expositor to connect ancient saints to modern believers through timeless truths.

Though these models can aid in discovering and evaluating potential narrative applications, some additional qualifiers must be added. For example, one could argue that Old Testament narratives present polygamy as a pattern. Many Old Testament saints had more than one wife and it passes seemingly without condemnation in the narrative. One could establish this substantial pattern and propose multiple personal applications! Even what seems to be a theme in a large number of narratives might not represent a biblical standard. To help in the assessment of possible applications, some filters must be employed.

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[25] For fuller discussions of these constants, see Ramesh Richard, "Application Theory in Relation to the Old Testament" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October-December 1986), pp. 304-310. See also Daniel Block's series of application questions in "Tell Me the Old, Old Story: Preaching the Message of Old Testament Narrative" *Giving the Sense* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), p. 434.

APPLICATION FILTERS

In order to avoid abuse of application from Old Testament narrative, recognition of key differences between the testaments must be made. Beyond the above polygamy example, the prominence of war in the Old Testament could also lead to disastrous applications. One need only recall the Crusades. These differences necessitate filters to clarify narrative applications.

COVENANTAL FILTER

Even if a substantial pattern exists (animal sacrifice for example), there may remain a factor that requires the expositor to filter, qualify in some way, the application. This filtering here involves distinguishing the timeless elements of the pattern (the necessity of vicarious sacrifice which is support throughout all of Scripture) from the covenant-specific elements (use of animals for sacrifice).

The very presence of two distinct testaments (Old and New) demonstrates a significant level of discontinuity between the covenants.[26] The expositor must ask if the apparent application rising from the narrative has been shaped by the former covenantal requirements. This not only includes animal sacrifice, but also practices such as ritual cleansing, land promises, Aaronic priesthood, and other elements unique to the Old Covenant.

ADMINISTRATIVE FILTER

Administrative filters are closely related to covenantal filters. The reality of the covenantal differences between Israel and the Church necessitate an acknowledgement of how

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[26] For further discussion, see Elliott Johnson *Expository Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 245-254; John and Paul Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993), pp. 34-40; and John Feinberg, ed. *Continuity and Discontinuity* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1988).

the associated administrative distinctions modify the proper application of certain Old Testament narratives. Not only do the covenants differ, the execution of them also differs.

Administrative differences include that fact that Israel represents a single national entity while the Church a universal entity. The relationship of Gentiles to Jews in the Old Testament starkly contrasts with their relationship in the New (Eph 2:11-3:13). Any application drawn from Old Testament narrative concerning Gentile and Jew relationships must reflect this change in association. Further, Israel was a national-political entity where the Church stands as international and separate from human government.[27] Therefore, guides for a righteous national government within Israel must be applied through New Testament filters such as Romans 13. In the Old Testament, Jew and Gentile stood separated while religion melded with government. In the New Testament, Jew and Gentile unite while Christianity stands separate from human government.

This administrative filter addresses for example the issue of war in the Old and New Testaments. Because Israel was both a religious and national body, it fulfilled its God-ordained purposes at times through military means. Yahweh commanded the conquest of Canaan as part of the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (Josh 1:2-9). Israel also often called to arms to defend its territory. Nowhere in the New Testament, however, does God command the Church to militarily defend a physical land. In fact, Paul states that the Church's enemies are not human, but spiritual in nature (Eph 6:12).
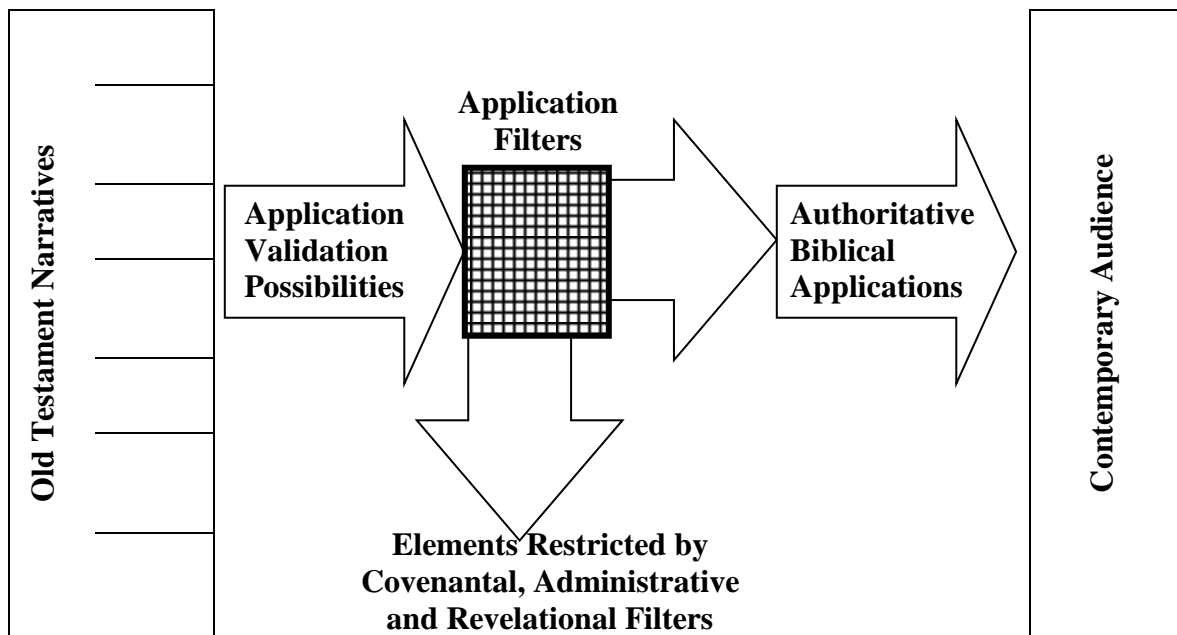
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[27] Related issues such as theonomy are discussed in the works cited for discontinuity in the previous footnote.

REVELATIONAL FILTER

Certain elements of Old Testament narrative constitute a significant pattern or theme which might support authoritative application, but are qualified in some way by direct New Testament statement. These elements stand outside the covenantal and administrative elements discussed above, but nevertheless meet modification in later revelation.

Leviticus 19:12 commands honest oaths that honor Yahweh. David provides a worthy example when he swears an oath of kindness to Jonathan's family (1 Sam 20:12-17) and then faithfully adheres to his promise (2 Sam 9:1-7). Christ, however, raises this ethic to a new level. A believer's speech is to be marked by such integrity and honesty that swearing an oath becomes unnecessary (Matt 5:33-37).

Therefore, the reality of discontinuity between the testaments necessitates application filters. The process of validation unavoidably requires evaluation and sometimes elimination of potential application principles. The relationship of the filters to the validation may be portrayed:

Old Testament Narratives

Application Validation Possibilities

Application Filters

Authoritative Biblical Applications

Contemporary Audience

Elements Restricted by Covenantal, Administrative and Revelational Filters

CONCLUSION

This paper has not attempted to sabotage current expositional practice nor undermine accepted exegetical process. Instead, it has proposed models to help bring the two closer together. It has recognized the foundational role of the traditional exegetical goal of determining the central idea of the text in the original context. Yet it has also recognized that elements of the interpretive process (contextual study for example) may serve not only to clarify the main idea, but also to suggest and support additional legitimate applications. The models also serve to assess applications and sometimes eliminate the invalid. An expositor ought to discard some applications because they are filtered out by covenantal, administrative or revelational factors. Other applications become dross because, though insightful and likely acceptable to audiences, they simply do not bear the weight of biblical authority.

These models call for a raised awareness of the interpretive process and its potential for producing application. Rather than challenging traditional interpretation process, the models challenge expositors to maximize its potential to validate and communicate biblical truth.

APPENDIX
PRINCIPLES FOR NARRATIVE INTERPRETATION[28]

Allow Scenes to Divide and Unite the Narrative
Scenes often perform a similar function to paragraph markers in didactic literature. They serve to delineate key sections and movements between sections. Returning to an earlier scene may also serve to unite a series of events in a narrative.

Try to Determine How the Author Has Formed the Plot.
Meaning in a story is often transmitted through growth of the plot. The details, events and characters and how they all related together communicate the message. A simplified plot structure includes four basic elements:
1. Background   2. Crisis (climax)   3. Resolution   4. Conclusion

Notice How the Author Paces the Story
Authors hint at what is significant in a story by the amount of narrated time devoted to it. Through slowing down the narrative to provide more detail, speeding up to hurry over other events, or leaving out things entirely (gapping), an author tips to the reader what is significant.

Ponder the Author's Point of View
Another important part of a narrative is the perspective from which the story is told. Which character receives the most attention, which character(s) does the author reveal their thoughts or motives, the presence of background information unknown to the characters (dramatic irony), and other elements reveal the authorial point of view.

Look for Structuring Devices
The way an author arranges scenes may indicate his emphasis. Reordering of the chronology of events, chiastic arrangements, and other devices give insight to the intended meaning of a passage.

Focus on How the Author Portrays Key Figures
Note how the protagonists (key characters) and antagonists (characters opposing the protagonists) are depicted by the author. Their names, words, actions, and comments by others about them all serve to communicate their role in the narrative. Also note how foils are used to highlight (through comparison or contrast) traits of key characters.

Observe What the Characters Say

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[28] These suggestions are discussed at length in Steven Mathewson, "Guidelines for OT Narratives" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (Oct-Dec 1997): 410-435; V. Philip Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Zondervan, 1994); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Indiana University Press, 1987); Walter Kaiser, "Narrative," *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (Broadman & Holman, 1995), 69-88. Other good resources include Robert Alter *Art of Biblical Narrative* (Basic Books, 1981); Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman, *Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Zondervan, 1993); and Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Belknap Press, 1987).

Speeches often lend understanding of a character's personality and nature. Speeches may also summarize key aspects of the story or section.

Analyze the Author's Use of Repetition

Repetition is often used rhetorically to structure a narrative, to link key events, or to emphasize a theme. Repetitions of commands, promises, speeches should be compared closely. Often the repetition adapts the original in some way, such as adding or subtracting words, enlarging or shrinking, exchanging key terms or altering the order of the words. These adjustments can be significant clues to discovering the meaning of the narrative. Sometimes, an author does not repeat words, but rather themes or scenes.

Notice Authorial Comments

Often, a key interpretive element resides in the evaluative and explanatory statements an author adds to the story. These lend insight into a character or interpret an event for the reader.