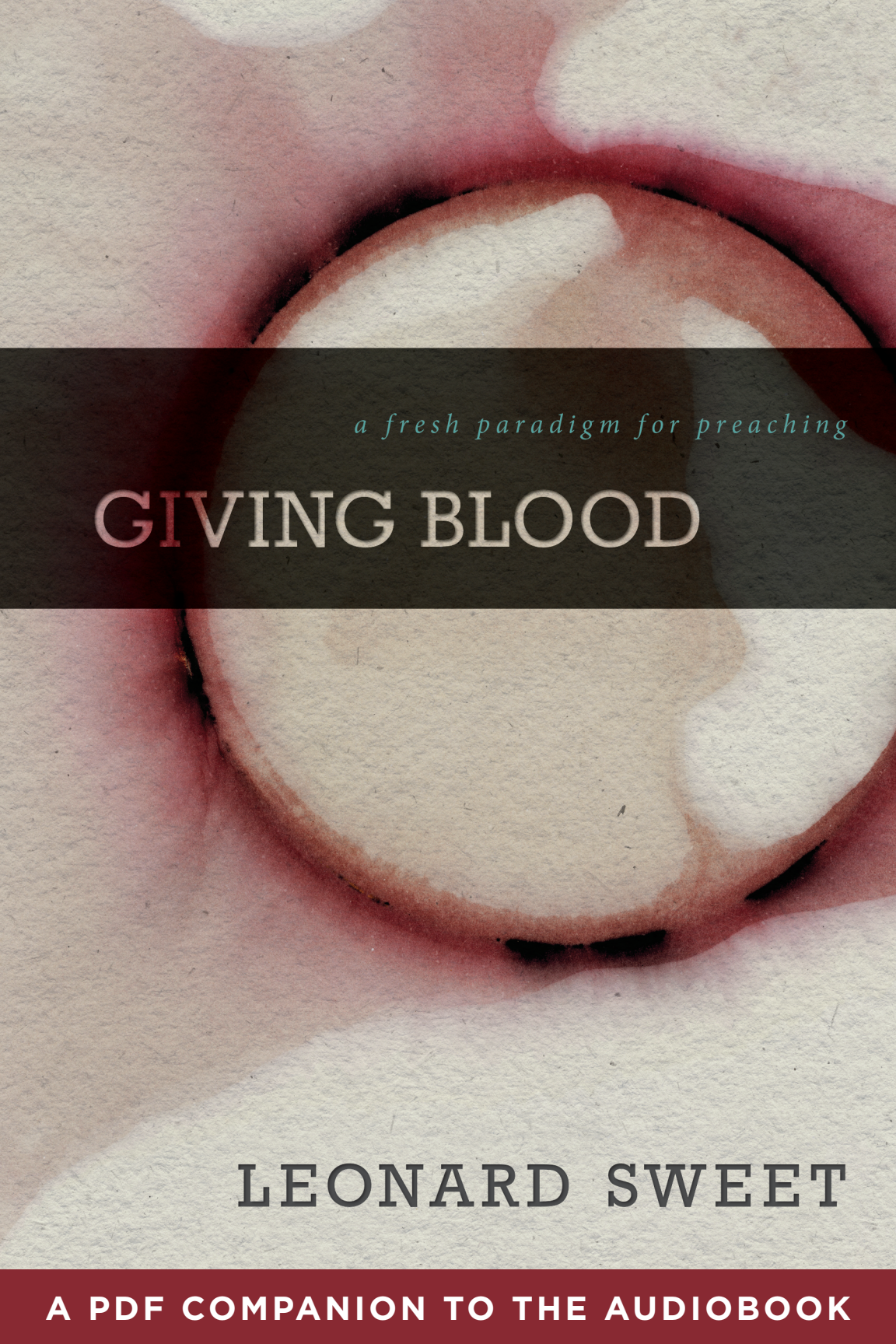




a fresh paradigm for preaching

GIVING BLOOD

LEONARD SWEET

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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Giving Blood

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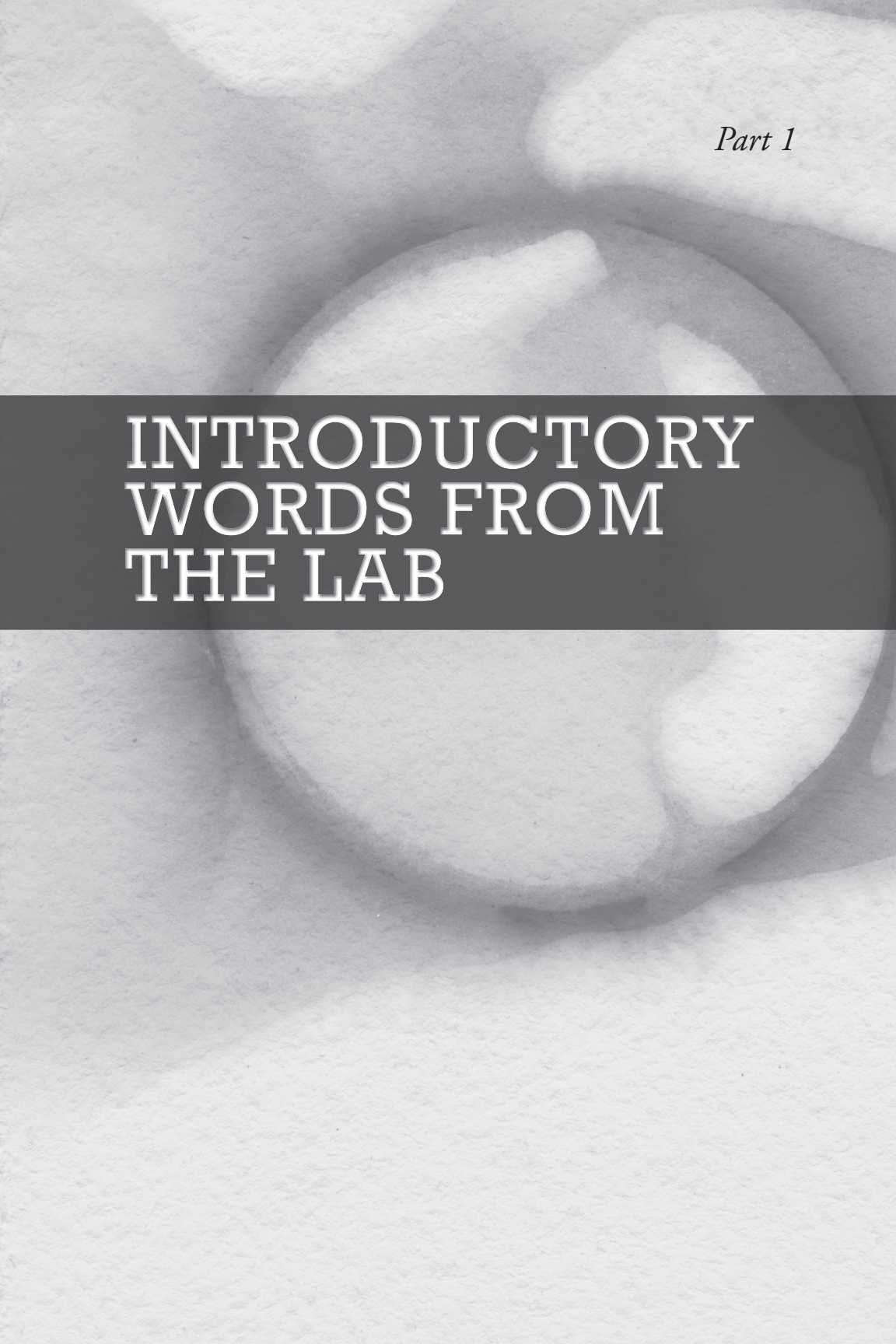
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Part 1

INTRODUCTORY WORDS FROM THE LAB

Under the Microscope: Preaching in a Google World

Slide A—The Image

“A Pelican’s Love Feast”: A Semiotic Exegesis of a Metaphor



Slide B—The Story

*“You Can’t Squeeze Blood from a Stone”: A Narrative
The Inspirational Story of Ken Medema and Briar Patch Music*



Blood and Water: Narraphor—The *Ars* *Combinatoria* of Narrative and Metaphor

The Sphinx and Oedipus Rex





Interactives

1. Watch the YouTube presentation on social media by Eric Qualman, author of *Socialnomics*, by searching for his name. What impact do you think social media has had on the church? How can you use social media effectively in order to make your sermons more EPIC?
2. Look at the first stanza of the lyrics below for the song "The Red Flag":

The people's flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our martyred dead,
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold,
Their hearts' blood dyed its ev'ry fold.

What is the metaphor of the song? What do you think it's about? How might you adapt this metaphor in a sermon about Christian faith?

<http://www.marxists.org/subject/art/music/lyrics/en/red-flag.htm>

3. Blood has had various cultural connotations. There used to be a thriving German trade in dried blood: "Dragon's blood (derived from trees in Africa and the Canary Islands); animal blood was used for various medicinal purposes; medieval pharmacopoeia also contained blood; unguents had potions made of powdered blood and human tissue, a witches' brew that might include rendered fat from executed criminals, and most notoriously mummia, powdered Egyptian mummy."

Although these types of practices may seem barbaric, the significance of blood in our culture has gained in popularity, as evidenced by the onset of vampire movies and books. In fact, there is a new energy drink called Blood Energy Potion (designed to increase the consumer's iron level) that looks like blood and comes in an IV bag. The Christian church has a long, blood-rich history in art and metaphor. And our highest ritual contains the language of blood and body. Why are churches today so squeamish about the language and metaphors of blood?

<http://www.xoxide.com/blood-energy-potion.html?gclid=COTEzNSo0KoCFUHc4Aoden7XmQ>

4. Fleming Rutledge, in her book *Help My Unbelief* (2000), compares her experience in the Connecticut Episcopal Church, where the rector didn't want her to mention blood, with her experience in a black Baptist church in South Carolina, where she says, "I was struck by the number of references in the songs to the cleansing blood of Jesus, and the unabashed way that the preacher referred to sin." Then she talks about the central theme of reconciliation of sinners in the black tradition – with "no squeamishness about the blood" and "their intense rejoicing that God in Christ is cleansing us, sanctifying us, counting us as righteous even in the midst of our sin." She goes on to say that is why forgiveness is so much a part of the black church.

Does her experience sound familiar to you? Why do you think there is such a dichotomy between black churches and Anglo traditions regarding blood? How can your preaching become more joyful about being washed in the blood of Jesus?

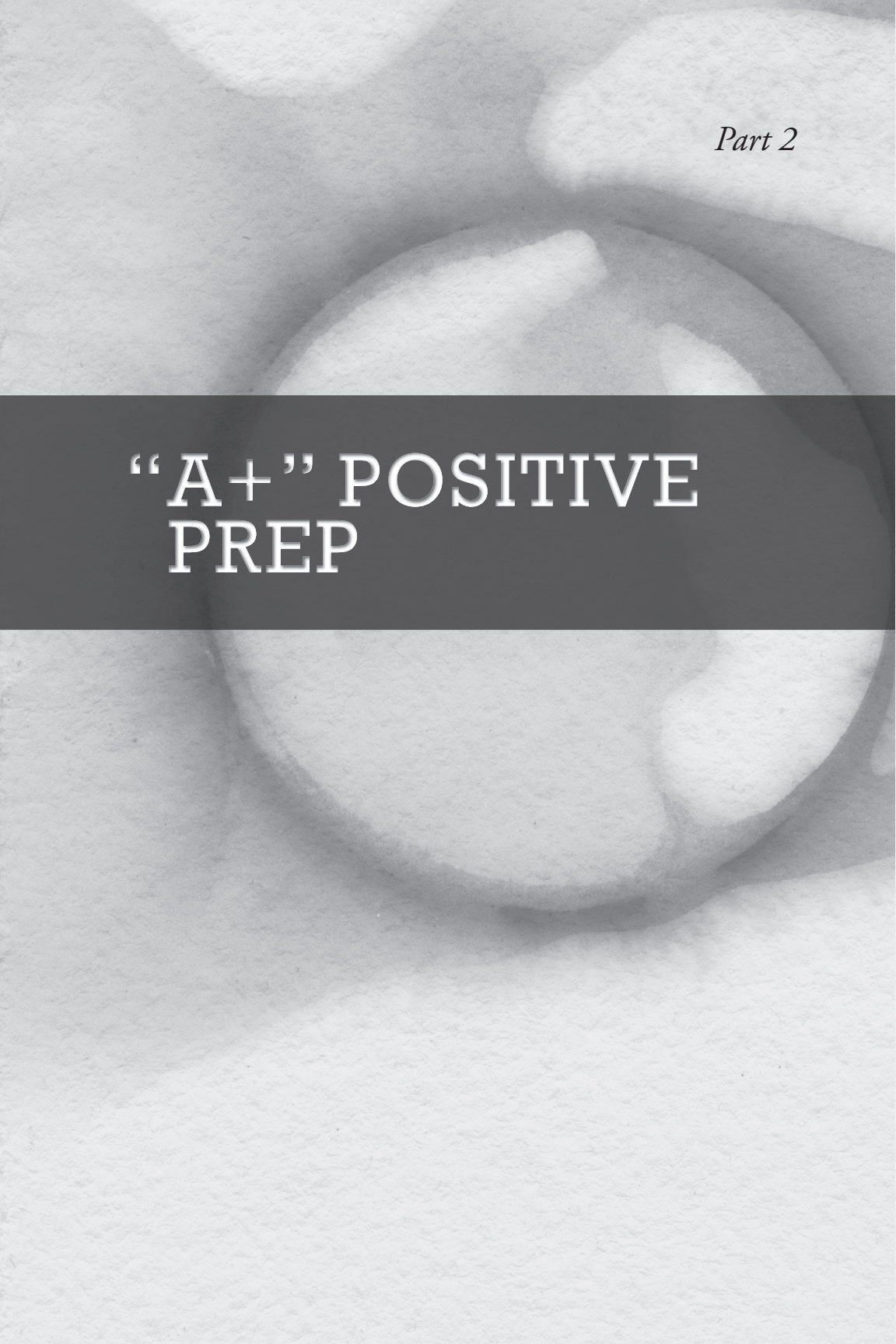
5. The words *blood* and *blessing* are related words. In fact, the word *blessing* is unique to the English language. The proto-Germanic word *blodam* meant "blood," or that which bursts out. *Blotthisjan* meant "to mark with blood." The Old English word is *blotham*, and the Old English *bloedsian* meant "to consecrate, make holy" ("to bless"). In the Old Testament Jacob and Esau story (Gen. 25), it is more correct to translate the "blessing" stolen from Esau as the "bloodline" (the covenantal privilege). Blood is the essence of the covenant, the sacred bloodline, and God's covenant was made with all flesh – that which has blood. In fact, the only proper way to make a covenant in the Hebrew tradition was to "cut the covenant," a process in which sacrificial blood was spilled.

Find the passage in the Bible in which God "cuts the covenant" with Abraham (Gen. 15). What do you think was the significance of this ritual? The Hebrew word *berith* means "covenant," and it was often "cut" with blood. What other significant covenantal rite in the Hebrew and Jewish tradition signifies this cutting and spilling of blood? What is its significance for us today?

6. The French words *fête itinérante* (“movable feast”) and *fête de l’amour* (“love feast”) represent two significant metaphors for the church. What are they? In what ways might they still be significant today?
7. Many Protestant churches, especially more recently built ones, are far more devoid of art, icons, stained glass, and symbols than the sanctuaries of older cathedrals and churches. What have we lost in not retaining those symbols and traditions? How can we learn imagery? How might we regain a better understanding of the metaphors, images, symbols, and stories of the early church today? In what ways can technology help us to do that?
8. In the book *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006) by Elizabeth Gilbert, a woman, confused and depressed with her life, goes searching in Rome for a place to eat. She takes the advice of a friend to visit a small Italian café and is accompanied by a new friend. In her experience of tasting the food, she undergoes a transformational experience. At the end of her meal, she says that in the mirror she sees “a bright-eyed, clear-skinned, happy and healthy face.”

What is the metaphor Gilbert has used so effectively? What themes of life and theses of transformation does this metaphor suggest? How can you connect with this story in a sermon? Go online and identify five to ten helpful resources for using this metaphor in relationship to Jesus.

9. Check out the lyrics to “Kryptonite” by Three Doors Down on their album *The Better Life*. Listen to the refrain: “I really don’t mind what happens now and then as long as you’ll be my friend at the end.” How can you relate this song to the need for EPIC experience?
10. Do you think George Bernard Shaw’s narraphor of preaching, “Some preaching is like wine: it has color and sparkle, but it does no permanent good; some is like drinking coffee: it stimulates, but does not nourish; some is like carbonated water: a fizzle over nothing; some is like pure spring water: good, but hard to get” is better than that of simply “Cana wine”? Or is there value in simplicity?



Part 2

“A+” POSITIVE PREP



Interactives

1. Mark Driscoll cut his homiletic teeth listening to Chris Rock tapes and videos while he wrote his sermons. It's "my therapy," he says, laughing. God uses all sorts of "instruments" to help us do the "blood work" of Jesus. What is your favorite time and place for sermon preparation? What's your favorite background music? In ten sentences or less, how would you describe yourself as a "called preacher of God"?
2. Sometimes when we get discouraged and disheveled in spirit, we need to "preach to ourselves." It's a spiritual practice preachers need to learn and even teach to their congregations. Jeremiah did this when he said, "This I call to mind and therefore I have hope." What are your practices of self-preaching? What faithful practices do you uphold to keep your passion for Jesus alive and vital?
3. Jesus instructed us not to put old wine into new wineskins. How can you prevent your sermons from being draped in heavily worn research and yet make use of adequate sources to support your message?
4. In the children's book *Stone Soup*, a simple stone is put into a pot, and all are invited to participate in the meal. Each contributor brings something for the pot: carrots, celery, potatoes, and so forth, until a very hearty soup is shared with all. Explain how your sermon can be that stone. What stone metaphors can you find in the Bible? Choose one, and tell about it. How can you use that metaphor as "stone soup"?
5. Choose a passage from the Bible that contains a metaphor. Find another two or three with similar themes or metaphors. Choose a psalm that reflects that metaphor. Now find three songs or hymns that also contain those images and metaphors. What visuals would you choose to go with your passage? What images stand out? How would you "exegete" those images?
6. Michael J. Prerau created a dance called the "Pas de Dieu." The dance, a type of ballet, features one human dancer and one virtual or "invisible" dancer. The dance is sublime and spirited.

<http://music.columbia.edu/~mike/projects/pasdedieu/>

Prerau says, “My goal for the music of this performance would be to create the illusion that the dance was choreographed to the music when in actuality it would be the music that would be dynamically fitting itself to the dance.” How can this metaphor describe the twenty-first-century sermon?

7. Using Scripture, give examples of how you might plan a sermon using the (1) deductive method, (2) inductive method, (3) abductive method, and (4) transductive (transincarnational) method. What would the sermon look like? What would it feel like? Act like? How would you describe the reception of each sermon?
8. Interactivity can be as simple as monitoring the reaction and resistance of your congregation with feedback loops like “I see some smiles” or “I feel some scowls out there.” Nonthreatening interactivity includes callbacks like “Will you repeat after me?” or “Turn to your neighbor and say ...,” or safe karaoke sermons like “letters from home,” pageants, or dramatic monologues and dialogues (“duet sermons”). Or it can include high-risk karaoke sermons like “brown bag sermons,” mediated sermons, talk-back sessions, sermon seminars, or what John S. McClure calls pre-sermon “roundtabling,” where the dynamics of roundtable conversation actually midwife the sermon. Break up into groups and share experiences you’ve had in your own ministry in which you have encouraged or experienced interactive preaching.
9. African-American novelist/playwright/poet James Baldwin’s (1924–87) most famous book-length essay, *The Fire Next Time* (1963), appeared first as an essay in the *New Yorker*. Its title? “Letter from a Region in My Mind.” Which title packs a bigger punch? Why?
10. Discuss David Buttrick’s critique of narrative preaching as follows: “I do not embrace the notion that preaching should tell stories because the gospel is essentially a ‘story.’ The language of faith is a ‘horizontal’ narrativity, but it is also ‘vertical’ symbolic-reflective language that grasps symbols within the hermeneutic of a ‘being-saved community.’ Thus, I stress the notion of plotted mobility rather than narrativity.”
11. Poet Robert Frost argued that metaphor was “the whole of thinking” and that it was the business of poetry to teach the science of metaphor.

Unless you are at home in the metaphor, unless you have had your proper poetical education in the metaphor, you are not safe anywhere. Because you are not at ease with figurative values: you don't know the metaphor in its strength and its weakness. You don't know how far you may expect to ride it and when it may break down with you. You are not safe in science; you are not safe in history.

Do you think Frost is taking poetic license here? Or is metaphor indeed “the whole of thinking”?

12. In 1667 church authorities in Bern, Switzerland, instituted the Bern Preacher Act, which required preachers to give their sermons extemporaneously. It stipulated “that they must not read the same in front of congregation from notes on paper, which is a mockery to have to watch and which takes away all fruit and grace from the preacher in the eyes of the listeners.” Have you ever tried preaching extemporaneously? Share your experiences.
13. What are the bestselling movies in the world? Three series: Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, and Harry Potter. All are epic stories, all are fantasy fiction, and all deal with basic issues of good and evil. Is there anything preachers can learn from this?
14. Biblical scholar Joel B. Green proposes a new biblical hermeneutic: he says, in place of a modern “scientific hermeneutic of neutrality, the effect of which was to objectify the biblical text in order to hold it at arm’s length for examination, the alternative I want to suggest is a hermeneutic of relationship or connection, oriented in relation to a theological affirmation concerning the nature of the Bible as Scripture.”

Have you been taught a hermeneutic of neutrality? If so, how has it affected your preaching? What are your reflections on this “hermeneutic of relationship”?

Part 3

“B+” BLOOD BUILDING

Chapter 11

Blood-Pumping EPICTivities: Pumping Up Preaching with Apps





Interactives

1. Take the following questionnaire to determine if you are left- or right-brain dominant. Discuss how your answer affects your sermon building. If you are left-brain dominant, how might you increase your right-brain functioning in order to increase your creativity, relationality, and communicative ability as a sermon builder? How might increasing your right-brain intuitive side affect your faith? Your semiotic awareness? Your effectiveness as an EPIC and transductive preacher?

http://www.intelliscript.net/test_area/questionnaire/questionnaire.cgi

2. Take this right/left brain visual test. Does this test agree with the first? Do you have the ability to focus one or the other side of your brain at will? What would be the advantage of that facility?

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/weird/the-right-brain-vs-left-brain/story-e6frev20-111114577583>

3. Discuss how the church can or should shift toward a right-brain focus in order to reach a new kind of twenty-first-century world. How can you build your sermons to create EPIC experiences?
4. Watch this video clip of Jill Bolte Taylor's "Stroke of Insight." What are the implications of Taylor's suggestion that using our right brains more effectively may make us more compassionate and empathetic people? What kinds of spiritual disciplines may encourage right-brain functionality? How can we encourage pastors and church leaders to take a step "to the right" in order to be the church in a twenty-first-century world?

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html

5. Why do you think Jesus chose to use story and metaphor so strongly in his teaching and preaching? Can you name three to five parables Jesus used and what metaphors and/or images he chose to use within them? What connections can you make between these

stories and current twenty-first-century culture and the everyday problems people face today? How would a left- or right-brain “reading” of these parables change their meaning? Their impact?

6. In the November 2011 issue of *Scientific American*, Keith Oatley notes in an article about storytelling that stories and images, especially fiction, have the power to change personality, influence people, and make people more compassionate and empathetic. Stories also increase one’s social skills. Discuss three to five reasons why you think this might be so. How can the church use storytelling more effectively? How can you build your sermons more effectively using narraphor, story, and images? What is the advantage of EPIC delivery to the narraphoric sermon? How can a semiotic reading of the Bible rather than a splice and dice reading of individual verses change the way we understand Scripture?

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=in-the-minds-of-others>

7. Scientists say children laugh approximately four hundred times per day, while adults laugh only 15 times per day. What do you feel are the advantages of laughter in everyday life? Can you name two or three times in the Bible when Jesus employed humor? Why and how do you think it would be an advantage to use humor in your preaching?
8. What kinds of “EPICtivities” have worked well in your ministry? Why are hands-on rituals important in experiencing Christ within the church body?
9. Watch this talk on changing educational paradigms. How do you feel this paradigm shift impacts the church? How can preachers adapt to a new paradigm? How can the church instill a Jesus identity while engaging people to become active and committed disciples?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U

10. Find five to seven uses of the metaphor of hair in the Bible. Compare the stories and images, the ways the metaphor is used, and in what contexts. How can you exegete this image to create your own sermonic narraphor?

11. Think about these questions regarding communication:

- How will people learn in the future?
- What are the right questions when deciding on a style of communication?
- How will we tell the story?
- Where is the “pulpit”?
- Do we have to assume that speaking is the only way of communicating or the primary way of communicating or the most effective way of communicating?
- Can content and delivery be independent of culture?
- When we force applications, do we rob people of the ability to be creative in their own situations?

12. Humor is contextual. Read the following jokes. In what context might you use these in one of your sermons? In what context would it be a mistake?

“I’m very pleased to be here. Let’s face it, at my age I’m very pleased to be anywhere.” – George Burns

“At my age, flowers scare me.” – George Burns

“Youth would be an ideal state if it came a little later in life.”
– Herbert Henry Asquith

“I don’t feel old – I don’t feel anything until noon. Then it’s time for my nap.” – Bob Hope

“Another good thing about being poor is that when you are seventy your children will not have you declared legally insane in order to gain control of your estate.” – Woody Allen

13. Humbert of Romans collected scriptural symbols for the preacher. Choose five of the following and exegete the images. How do these images apply to preaching? What messages do they hold? What theology do they embed?

“the Lord’s mouth”

“angels”

“the eyes and teeth and neck and breasts of the church”

“heaven”

“stars”

“doors of heaven”

“clouds”
“snow”
“thunder”
“precious stones”
“mountains”
“fountains”
“eagles”
“cocks”
“ravens”
“dogs”
“horses”
“oxen”
“standard bearers of the army of the king of heaven”
“the messengers of that Ahasuerus who is our joy”
“the strong men of David”
“the officers of the true Solomon”
“bricklayers”
“watchmen of the house of Israel”

14. I'll give you the image; you give me the person or people it's associated with (see the note for the answers). How many others can you add?

- a. rainbow
- b. milk and honey – Promised Land
- c. bulrushes – rod and plagues
- d. pillar of fire by night, cloud by day
- e. rebuilt wall
- f. uncut long hair
- g. big fish and withered gourd
- h. prostitute wife
- i. marred clay pot
- j. lions' den
- k. fiery furnace
- l. sewing needle
- m. sycamore tree
- n. wild honey and locusts
- o. coat of many colors

15. Think about the metaphor of the mirror. What does a mirror suggest to you? In *Snow White*, the mirror is an image of truth sounded through voice in contrast to the image the queen chooses to see. Many of our images of life are like that. We “see” and “hear” what we are conditioned and trained to see and hear. And even though we sometimes look something in the face that is different, still we see the same thing. This is the frustration Jesus must have had trying to get his disciples to see differently from what their upbringing, their laws, their culture, and their traditions trained them to see. Jesus used metaphors to create a shock effect through images. How can you apply the metaphor of the “mirror” and “image” to the church? What examples can you give?
16. Images define lives. Sometimes people see in their mirrors of themselves the images of their brokenness rather than the images of themselves as God sees them—as children of God. We also reflect these mirror images on others. How can we alter “bad” images and present “new” and “fresh” images of our relationship to God through metaphor? Give an example of how you can or have done this.
17. Canada decided to get down and dirty with their antismoking campaign. They featured full-color snaps of diseased body parts on tobacco products. Teenagers loved the gross-out and made the pictures collectors’ items.

Minnesota’s Thomas Lake Elementary School has as its logo a mean-looking tiger. School officials, worried about images of violence, decided to tank the tiger and introduce a new school logo: school supplies. That’s right: a picture of pens, pencils, and a ruler.

After reading the above descriptions, describe how each cultural “icon” embeds an identity. What is the identity of each? How is it manifested?
18. Paul’s image of the body in 1 Corinthians 12 was a brilliant choice of metaphor. This may not be the metaphor you want to use for your people. Can you think of another metaphor that conveys a similar message?
19. Try suggesting a sermon notebook in which congregants can keep notes for future reference as well as to help them concentrate, absorb content, and retain what they have heard. What metaphors

did they record? What stories and images stuck with them the most?

20. How come people never remember sermons? How many sermons can you remember? Drew theologian Wesley Ariarajah contends people aren't supposed to remember sermons. Rather, he says, sermons are like water that waters the plants. You don't remember the water. You look for the flowers that grow because of the water.

What do you think? Do you agree with Professor Ariarajah or not? Will people invest their time in something that is not memorable?

21. See who can talk the longest stretch without lapsing into metaphor.
22. In many ways, the typological reading, or in its extreme, the allegorical reading, is the most sophisticated left-brained reading of the text. Here is Jerome's allegorical take on the favorite Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God."

Quaintly, he maintains the imperviousness of deer to snake-bites. They never succumb to them, but they do, if bitten, feel raging thirst. There's hidden ecclesiology here. The deer is the Church: it cannot be killed by the ancient Serpent. Its children may be bitten, though, and if bitten will only long more for "flowing streams," the springs that slake their thirst. Which are? Jerome, citing Jeremiah 2:13; Baruch 3:12; and John 4:13, concludes surprisingly: "From the testimony of these texts, it is established beyond doubt that the three well-springs of the Church are the mystery of the Trinity," the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit (Homily 92).

How does this reading contribute to the meaning of the text? What does it miss?

Part 4

“AB+” GOING LIVE



Interactives

1. If you were asked to preach in an Asian church, how would your sermon be different than the way you would imagine it within your own congregation? How would you alter your “blood supply” to incarnate your sermon within the culture in which you find yourself? How might it be different if in a Hispanic church? On a college campus? In a prison?
2. Can you think of a time when you altered your preaching as the Spirit moved you? What happened? How did it alter your message? How was it received?
3. An example of interactive preaching might be this: “If you could invite any biblical character to be with us here this morning, who would it be and what would you ask him or her?” Play out this exercise with a partner or a group in your “lab.” What was your response to this question within your group? What happened when the entire group began speaking?
4. Language itself is metaphorical to the point that Friedrich Nietzsche argued, “What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses; coins with their images effaced and now no longer of account as coins but merely as metal.” In what ways is Nietzsche right? In what ways is he wrong?
5. Colin S. Smith contends that the challenge of preaching to this culture is this: “In the past ... preachers have been able to assume the basic building blocks of a Christian worldview.... You could take texts like John 3:16; Romans 5:8; and Isaiah 53:4-6 and hang them on the line of a Judeo-Christian worldview. The problem in trying to reach postmodern people is that there is no clothesline. So when we try to hang our texts, they fall to the ground in a messy heap....

The great challenge before the preacher is to put up the clothesline.” What do you think? Do you agree with this challenge of the clothesline?

6. In the medieval world, there was less speculation on “how many angels could dance on the head of a pin” than on “how many drops of blood did Christ shed in the passion?” Estimates ranged from 28,000 to 547,000. Discuss what it might mean for even an atheist like Christopher Marlowe (1564–93) in *Doctor Faustus* (1589) to say, “See, see, where Christ’s blood streams in the firmament a drop would save me, half a drop!”
7. Annie Dillard tells her writing students to approach a blank sheet of paper as if they were dying and their audience consisted solely of terminal patients. “What would you begin writing if you knew you would die soon? What could you say to a dying person that would not enrage by its triviality?” In what ways is this good advice for preachers as well? How does it not apply?
8. To what extent is preaching a “package deal”? Some studies contend that words convey only 7 percent of our message, tone of voice conveys 38 percent, and body language constitutes 55 percent of our communication. Does this seem extreme? How would you define “the total package”? Is preaching a whole-body art form? How can you make it so?
9. In the African-American song-speech tradition of preaching, there is “tuning” and “whooping.” The former is the singing of words; the latter is the saying of words. Henry Mitchell defines whooping as “the use of a musical tone or chant in preaching” as the preacher, usually toward the end of a sermon, moves from speech to song. Have you ever been a part of a worship experience that included “tuning” or “whooping”? If so, tell the story of “embodied preaching” as you’ve been a part of it.
10. Every preacher needs a homiletic hit parade. What are some of your best sermons?
11. New Zealand novelist Janet Frame (1924–2004) compared writing a novel to “not merely going on a shopping expedition across the border to an unreal land: it is hours and years spent in the factories, the streets, the cathedrals of the imagination, learning the unique functioning of Mirror City, its skies and space, its own planetary

system, without stopping to think that one may become homeless in the world, and bankrupt, abandoned by the Envoy.” Why not the same for a preacher crafting a sermon? What metaphor would you use to describe your craft?

12. A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, “And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?” Annie replied, “Because people are sleeping.” After having slept through a sermon, the poet Carl Sandburg was asked how he could offer an opinion on the sermon. “Sleep is an opinion,” Sandburg replied. If Jesus were boring, could he have saved the world? How would you ensure a sermon doesn’t evoke merely doze?
13. Evaluate this assessment of current homiletics from the late Calvin Miller: “Preaching is a polygamist with ugly consorts. Preaching is so married to liturgy, architecture, and popular detente that it spends all its energy in running from wife to wife. It doesn’t try to set things right, only to keep from getting things wrong. Sermons are often so dead that dying denominations seem the perfect place to deliver them.”
14. In a midrash on Genesis 17:9–13, it is revealed that Turnus Rufus, the Roman governor of Palestine in the early second century, asked the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Akiba this question: “If God dislikes a man having a foreskin, why did he create him with one?” Rabbi Akiba replied that God has created an incomplete world in order that human beings should have a role in bringing the world to perfection.

God gives us a mission to accomplish, not to complete. Moses’ mission was accomplished but not completed. Otherwise, why Joshua? “It is not thy duty to complete the work but neither art thou free to desist from it.”

What does it mean that God has given you a sermon to do, not to complete? And how do you know when you’re done?

Part 5

“AB-” DEALING WITH NEGATIVES



Interactives

1. Share an exercise of naming saints: create a “God’s advocate” and create a “devil’s advocate” to argue why this person should *not* be canonized. What images or narraphors resulted from this exercise? How could you use this exercise as fodder for sermon building?
2. Practice your storytelling skills. Take turns choosing a Bible story and then telling it in a new and creative way. What skills do you notice that you need to be a good storyteller? Write them down in your notes and discuss them around the table. What can you do to make your storytelling more exciting and more creative?
3. Have another colleague or partner choose a random Bible passage for you. You do the same for your partner. Take a few minutes to read the passages well. Come up with two or three possible sermon topics based on the metaphors, images, and narraphors you see there. Share them with your group. What additional ideas did your group have that you missed?
4. Describe a time when you have dealt with criticism either among your congregation or directly as the pastor or ministry leader. How did you handle it? Describe the pros and cons of your reaction. What might you do differently in the future?
5. Sometimes people can grow up with “bad stories” that color their vision of God. How can you help someone to “rewrite” that story into one that reveals God’s grace?
6. Have you ever felt the jitters when you were about to give your sermon? Construct a prayer to say before you speak that will put your sermon in the hands of Jesus.
7. The “four horsemen of the apocalypse of noncreativity” can impede your creative flow. Take a look at these common creativity killers:
 - criticism
 - a team of like
 - a team that only praises success
 - a team of me

Discuss how each of these “killers” can cause you “bad blood” and poor delivery. How can you overcome them?

8. Read the following definition: *Cubicle or carrel creativity: The size of your ideas is directly proportional to the space you have in which to think; your creativity is limited by the box you find yourself in.* How does this definition relate to what you know about creative preaching? How can you “break out of your box” and experience “resurrection” preaching?
9. Our current culture is filled with modern-day heresies. What are three ways that you can fit your sermon to the contemporary culture while still keeping the main thing the main thing?
10. What are some of the heresies you find among your parishioners? What misunderstandings do they struggle with? What heresies fascinate them and why? How can you address them?
11. Think of a time when you have heard a preacher platforming a personal agenda. What was the agenda? How did it make you feel? Think about the Scriptures used to justify that agenda. Did it feel like a valid justification? Why or why not? Often when someone platforms a personal agenda, he or she has something—or much—to gain. What might your speaker have to gain by platforming this agenda?
12. Today some churches are attempting to compete with movie theaters, coffeehouses, amusement parks, lounges—anything to “please people” into coming to church. The rise of consumerism in churches that are expected to meet the needs of people is becoming commonplace in our culture. Sadly, the one thing churches have to offer that nothing in the culture has, many are not offering: a relationship with Jesus. In fact, many churches don’t even seem to realize that they have something to offer that is the greatest “good news” of our lives! Discuss this dilemma among your group or colleagues. How can preachers disciple people to become better followers and better servants rather than catering to the needs of “fast-food” junkies?

Part 6

“O” HOMILETIC MISCELLANY



Interactives

1. Contemplate the following passage from Jeremiah. How is the prophetic voice a key to understanding the humility and humanity of the preacher?

If I say, "I will not mention his word
or speak anymore in his name,"
his word is in my heart like a fire,
a fire shut up in my bones.
I am weary of holding it in;
indeed, I cannot.

Jeremiah 20:9

2. I worry about preachers who know already why bad things happen or think they can treat hurt with words and pain with propositions. How does this relate to the humanity and humility of a preacher? How can "bad stories" affect the lives of people and their ability to trust in Christ? What can you do to ensure that you as a preacher are mindful of your humility and humanity when sharing the stories of Jesus?
3. How many peer and colleague relationships do you have in your life? How can you increase the connections you have with others in ministry?
4. Pastors need "safe places" where they can air frustrations, talk about personal issues, and get advice on confidential matters. Who are your "safe" people?
5. In my book *11*, I describe the eleven important and vital relationships every person needs in his or her life. Talk about how special relationships have nurtured your own life. Who are those people for you?
6. Name three ways you can elicit constructive feedback from your congregation. How can you discern feedback from pie in your face? How can you use these responses to move forward in your ministry and in your sermon building?

Part 7

FROM LAB TO LIFE



Interactives

1. Choose your favorite narraphor from the Bible. How does that narraphor provide food for the body? How will it sound the voice of mission to the world? How will it proclaim Christ's salvation and resurrection?
2. Listen to or read each other's sermons. Can you find evidence of the joy of the resurrection in them? Does the sermon leave you with hope?
3. David Barry Weber is a preacher, blogger, and Facebook friend. Here is one of his posts when one day the conversation turned to sermons:

I hear least-common-denominator sermons so often: platitudes without substance, empty (but pretty) phrases without application. I want to hear sermons that tear the scabs off our ignored wounds and take Jesus off the cross and put him where the blood from those open wounds needs cleaning. I want to hear Cormac McCarthy quoted in a sermon more than I want to hear C. S. Lewis again (much as I love him!). I want to see the colors of God in projections of Hubble pics, rather than sweet pink-satin pictures of Gap-clad children on Easter morning. I want to stop hearing all the words—all the 50 billion words on Sunday and the 25 billion on Wednesday nights—about Jesus, and actually see Jesus doing something! I want all the useless, gimme-gimme sermons on "Christian TV" put on Betamax tapes and taken to the dump. The sweeter-sounding that one calorie is, the more frenzied, it seems, the feeding. OK, I've gotta sit down now.

What parts of this post resonate? What parts don't?

4. Lawyers are now taught that the dark blue suit, white shirt, and red tie is what you wear when you want jurors to focus on you. When you are in a direct examination of your client or an expert, the proper outfit is softer earth tones. But the major ingredient in the new "power outfit" for trial lawyers is ... the *prop*.

Trial lawyers are now being taught that some form of visualization is imperative. Even something as simple as taking out a jelly doughnut and showing the jury how the disks that separate the vertebrae in the spine are just like jelly doughnuts ... then crush

it and the jelly (nucleus) will ooze onto your tie (nerves) and ruin our outfit (life).

What is the preacher's "power outfit"? Do you agree that the ultimate power now is the ability to choose the metaphors? What is your favorite "power outfit"?

5. Orchestras are experimenting with video and film to keep people coming to symphonic concerts. Check out video artist and sound architect Bill Viola's work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's "Tristan Project." Do you have any stories to tell from personal experience in which high culture is trying to transition to a screen culture?
6. Colleague and friend Clifford E. McLain often comes down from the front, stands with his people for the pastoral prayer, announces to his congregation, "The person next to you loves you. Reach out and hold his or her hand," and then proceeds to offer the morning prayer. Can you think of other relational twists to use for preaching and worship?