

Class Overview

Part 1: introduction, presuppositions, definitions.

Part 2: hermeneutical philosophy, history, and specific hermeneutical issues.

Part 3: the practice of hermeneutics - the step-by-step process of biblical interpretation.

Part 1: Introduction, Presuppositions, Definitions

Introduction

Why do we come to God's Word?

devotion vs careful study

come every time to meet with the God of the Word!

Presuppositions

objectivity vs subjectivity

we come to study the Bible with some necessary pre-understandings:

1. This Is God's Word

inspiration - 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21- God-breathed. (dual authorship). every time we are studying "Paul's words" in the Scriptures we are studying God's Words! So when we come to the Word of God to get the God of the Word. verbal/plenary -the whole thing in all of its details. the words themselves are breathed out, and all of the Bible is the breathed-out Word.

2. We Need God's Word

Psalm 19

Limitations of General Revelation

3. God's Word Is Without Error

inerrancy - the Scriptures, in the original manuscripts, speaks truthfully in everything that it says; that is, the Scriptures do not err in anything that they say. not exhaustive. but true. the Bible claims inerrancy for itself. reflects the nature of God Himself. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Denial of inerrancy has consequences

God can and does lie

Can we trust any part of the Bible?

To deny inerrancy is to deny one of the Bible's own doctrines. The denial of inerrancy does not therefore merely affect scientific and archaeological accuracy; it affects doctrine as well.

Ultimately we become the standard for what is true.

4. God's Word Is Understandable

perspicuity - the clarity of Scripture. the Bible is revelation - that is, the Bible is the *revealing* of God's mind to us, not the *concealing*, contra gnosticism. The Bible was meant to be understood. God spoke so that we would hear and obey (ie, Deut 4:9). The words of Scripture are to be understood, meditated upon, and taught (Psalm 119:130).

5. God's Word Bears Authority

The Bible's own claim: these are the very words of God (contra neo-orthodoxy).

To disobey God's Word is to disobey God Himself.

6. Human Language Is Able To Convey Meaning

debate over whether it is even legitimate to invest words with meaning, or to expect to be able to extract meaning from words (signs and symbols).

"give me a hand" illustration

invite to dinner

IRS, neurosurgeon, nuclear physics

Genesis 3

7. God Is Able To Convey His Meaning Through Human Language

meaning- there is a meaning in this text, and it can be gotten! (McCartney and Clayton, 31)

"Deliberately misconstruing some text to misrepresent its author is a morally reprehensible act; it is a kind of lying, a 'bearing false testimony.'" - McCartney and Clayton - 33-34.

"We do not have the Scriptures unless we have the *meaning* of the Scriptures" -John MacArthur.

there is one meaning in a text - and we must get it.

8. Spiritual Life is Required for Spiritual Understanding

1 Cor 2:14

Definitions

1. hermeneutics - a set of principles for understanding texts.

2. exegesis - from gr. "to draw out" or "to explain". exegesis is the process by which we draw out the meaning of a passage. Exegesis is the application of hermeneutics. the very idea of exegesis calls for a literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

3. eisegesis - the errant practice of reading meanings *into* a text.

4. meaning - the truth intention of the author.

5. interpretation - an understanding of the truth intention of the author.

6. literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics - the set of interpretive principles used to analyze biblical texts which use the following areas of investigation to arrive at a text's meaning:

- the nature of *normal* language - the passage ought to be studied in view of the normal use of language - how is the word, phrase, clause, or section *normally* understood?
- the rules of *grammar* - parts of speech and grammatical constructions must be observed and analyzed - texts follow the rules of grammar, and meaning is determined by understanding those rules.
- the *historical* setting - what cultural, biographical, political, or social circumstances helped shape what is said in the text?

What do we mean by "literal"?

normal usage

plain sense

"The grammatico-historical sense of a writer is such an interpretation of his language as is required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history. sometimes we speak of the literal sense, by which we mean the most simple, direct, and ordinary meaning of phrases and sentences. By this term we usually denote a meaning opposed to the figurative or metaphorical." (Milton Terry, 203)

What do we not mean by "literal"?

The Importance of Diligent, Determined Investigation

Rule #1 **stay in your chair.**

you cannot expect to reap the rich rewards of Bible study unless you are willing to give concentrated attention to careful and sustained inquiry and investigation. This requires hunger *and* discipline (and they feed each other!).

Rule #2 **don't turn the page.**

stay in your passage.

Rule #3 **eat your own food.**

personal digestion is always better than somebody else's abc [already-been-chewed] food!

Rule #4 **no hovering.**

hermeneutics is about diving, digging into the text, not hovering over the text!

Rule #5 **no hop-scotch.**

don't jump from text to text looking for meaning. It's not going to hurt you to stay in your passage.

Rule #6 **be a determined detective.**

observation is the key to interpretation!

do you find yourself running to interpretation?

observation is the key to application!

do you find yourself running to application?

running to other passages?

running to theological systems?

running to ????

don't run - sit and soak!

("observation" and 1000+ English words compiled from its letters)

"One of the greatest weaknesses in the Bible study of many Christians is that they want understanding before getting acquainted with the passage. They want to know what God means before they know what He has said. so they read a passage through once, probably in a hurry, then try to figure out what it means.... First become thoroughly familiar with what the passage says." - Sterrett 40-41.

“Normal” Interpretation

We must approach the Bible with the intention of understanding what God *meant* by what He *said*. To do that we must seek to understand the Bible in similar fashion to the way we seek to understand other forms of communication. By “normal” interpretation, we mean that we are trying to understand the words of Scripture according the ways those words were “normally” intended and understood in their original setting. This approach leads us to the following commitments:

* commitment to literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics (normal sense, according to the rules of language, in its historical setting). Remember our definition of LGH hermeneutics:

literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics - the set of interpretive principles used to analyze biblical texts which use the following areas of investigation to arrive at a text’s meaning:

- the nature of *normal* language - the passage ought to be studied in view of the normal use of language - how is the word, phrase, clause, or section *normally* understood?
- the rules of *grammar* - parts of speech and grammatical constructions must be observed and analyzed - texts follow the rules of grammar, and meaning is determined by understanding those rules.
- the *historical* setting - what cultural, biographical, political, or social circumstances helped shape what is said in the text?

“The grammatico-historical sense of a writer is such an interpretation of his language as is required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history. sometimes we speak of the literal sense, by which we mean the most simple, direct, and ordinary meaning of phrases and sentences. By this term we usually denote a meaning opposed to the figurative or metaphorical.” (Milton Terry, 203)

This means we must study the laws of language, the meanings and usages of words, the relationships of words to each other, context. These things are important in everyday language, and they are important in studying the Bible as well. Languages are structured to convey meaning. This is why we will spend so much time working on sentence diagramming and block diagramming.

1 Corinthians 11:27

Ephesians 4:20-24

“Grammar may not always show us the actual meaning, but it will show us possible meanings. We cannot accept any meaning that does violence to it.” - Sterrett, 63.

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* commitment to authorial intent (Author and author).

we do not tolerate it well when people intentionally or unintentionally disregard *our* intentions with *our* words! how much more ought we to pay attention to God's intention with His Word?!

sometimes the author clearly states his intention or purpose for writing. sometimes this is more subtle and takes more work to discern.

John 20:31

Ecclesiastes governed by 12:13-14 and the repeated phrase "under the sun".
cf 3:19-22; 9:2

We must continually be asking the questions, "What did God mean by what He said?" and, "What did the [little-a] author mean by what he said?" To deviate from the intention of the Author/author is to deviate from the Scriptures themselves!

* commitment to the understanding of the original audience.

How would the original audience have understood this passage? How would the original audience have been expected to hear and apply this passage?

Genesis 1-11

Luke 9:23

What idioms, metaphors, and word pictures would have been familiar to the original audience that are unfamiliar to us? (we will discuss figures of speech in detail later...)

"argument doesn't hold water"

"out like a light"

"he ripped her to shreds"

"The first and primary meaning of a passage is what it meant in its historical and cultural context - that is, what it should have meant to the people living then. As best we can, we must understand that meaning." - Sterrett, 78.

We must "bridge the gap between our minds and the minds of the Biblical writers. People of the same culture, same age, and same geographical location understand each other with facility. Patterns of

meaning and interpretation commence with childhood and early speech behavior, and by the time adulthood is reached the principles of interpretation are so axiomatic that we are not aware of them. But when the interpreter is separated culturally, historically, and geographically from the writer he seeks to interpret, the task of interpretation is no longer facile. The greater the cultural, historical, and geographical divergences are, the more difficult is the task of interpretation." - Ramm, 4.

Watch out for interpretations that depend upon modern or post-modern understandings. Did God really communicate with the original audience in such a way that what He said would never be understood until the 20th century? watch out for modern or post-modern snobbery when it comes to interpretation! Being in the 21st century puts us as interpreters at a significant *dis*advantage compared to the original readers and hearers. But to read some scholars you would get the impression that the original recipients could never have understood a passage as well as we can today!

* commitment to the understanding of "normal" people. (not ivory tower 20th century scholars or astrophysicists)

God wrote to be understood, worshipped, obeyed. This did not require the expertise of highly trained specialists in technical fields - it required humble, personal, spiritual hearing.

(Deuteronomy 4:1,5,6,8,10,13,40; 6:4-9,17; etc)

* commitment to single meaning.
(double meaning? double entendre? intentional ambiguity? prophecy?)

2 Corinthians 5:14

Revelation 1:1

* commitment to context

Philippians 4:6a

Philippians 2:3a

Romans 3:23

Jeremiah 31

“Abnormal” Interpretation

Approaches to Scripture other than LGH hermeneutics abound. See Ramm (ch 2) for a summary of various approaches to interpretation through church history. The following is a list of some alternatives to LGH hermeneutics:

- **Reader-Reponse** - whatever it means to you is what it means. Meaning is wholly tied to the reader. This is a full-bodied post-modern approach to literature.
 - Why is the Mona Lisa behind glass and closely guarded?
 - Performer-Response Beethoven
 - Try this approach on your next tax filing!
 - Respond to a Reader-Response theorist by thanking him/her for affirming LGH hermeneutics - that’s what their work meant to you!
- **NeoOrthodoxy** (the Bible becomes the Word of God) - Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, etc. The Bible itself is not God’s Word, but when the Spirit of God makes it alive to a Christian, it then *becomes* the Word of God. Historicity is downplayed - the actual events behind the text are not critical - what matters is what the text means to you as you read it.
- **Liberal** (the Bible contains the Word of God) - Liberal theologians denied most, if not all, supernatural elements of the Bible’s narrative. But if you dig down beneath and behind what the Bible actually *says*, you can discover some wonderful and beautiful thoughts. The Word of God is really these nuggets of meaning buried beneath the myths and legends and well-told tales. If you work hard enough, you can “demythologize” the text and discover the truth.
- **Allegory** - the narrations of Scripture are allegories to be decoded, extended metaphors to be interpreted. The real meaning of a passage is not to be found in the bare, physical statements of plain language, but rather in the higher, secret meaning of the author, which is encoded beneath the plain sense. Wilderness wanderings are really about my battle with sin. The true meaning of the text is not to be found *in* the text.
- **Spiritualization** - a “spiritual” meaning must be found behind physical realities. The Song of Solomon is *really* about Christ and the church. The true meaning of the text is not to be found *in* the text.
- **Christocentric** - inappropriately making every passage be about Christ. The scarlet thread in Rahab’s window is really the blood of Jesus and a picture of redemption by the cross. (Theodore Epp and the elements of the Tabernacle)
- **Biblical Theology** (late 20th century meaning of BT - Pauline, Petrine, etc)
- The rise of **subjectivity** in hermeneutics (Osbourne’s Hermeneutical Spiral)

Words And Their Relationships

Getting at Context

Understanding, in any language, is dependent upon the meanings of words and the relationships that words have with other words. In order to understand any portion of God's Word, we must understand the words that are being used, and we must understand the relationships that those words have with each other.

semantics describes the ranges of meanings of words.

etymology describes the history of the development of a word's meaning.

syntax describes the relationships between words.

context ("with-text") describes the surroundings of words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.

(more on word study next time...)

*A Suggestion: analyze syntax *before, during, and after* word study. Careful attention to syntax will limit the semantic range of the words used in your passage, eliminating options and saving time.

Our commitment to the discovery of authorial intent demands that we pay attention to context!

analyze the context in expanding concentric circles. What are the circles of context?
phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, chapter, book, Testament, Bible.

Let's look at some examples where context helps us determine the meaning of some easily misunderstood passages:

- Philippians 2:3(a)

- Romans 2:5-10

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- Philippians 4:13

- John 9:3

- John 8:30

- Lamentations 3:22-23

- Jeremiah 29:11

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- Jeremiah 31:31

- Romans 3:23

- Psalm 137:4

- Luke 20:45-21:4

Studying The Words in a Text: **Common Pitfalls**

(see *Exegetical Fallacies* by D.A. Carson for a fuller treatment of many of these word-study mistakes. The following material is greatly dependent upon this work.)

These are some of the pitfalls interpreters can fall into regarding word-study:

- plugging in a definition of a word without thought to its context.
Psalm 19:9 See the word "fear".

- importing all or too much of semantic range.
consider the English word "board". We do not intend every semantic possibility whenever we use the word "board." And with the exceptions of figures of speech like puns, double entendres, etc. where multiple meaning is clearly intended, we never use even more than one semantic possibility for a word. We should not import multiple meanings into biblical words either.

- importing most exciting/favorite part of semantic range.
If I issued command "Have a ball!" in my home, two of my children would put on long fancy dresses and begin dancing, another would start looking around (i hope! - Emet has been known to join the girls in a round of "dress-up" - argh!) for a football, basketball, or some other sports equipment, and another good would just smile at you and drool. If my kids are not concerned with what *I mean by what I say*, they will be tempted to insert their favorite meaning for a word, rather than my intended meaning.

- root fallacy. This is the determination of a word's meaning by appeal merely to its component parts or etymology. Consider the English words "butterfly" and "pineapple".

Consider the word in John3:16 for "only begotten" (**monogenhz**). Consider its usage in Hebrews 11:17. The intended meaning is something like "one and only", "unique", or "special".

- anachronism. Applying a definition to a word that was not even available at the time the word was used. See the use of **dunamiz** “dynamite” in Romans 1:16. See also **ilaron** in 2 Corinthians 9:7.

- obsolescence. Using a definition for a word that is no longer in use at the time of writing. The English word “prevent” used to mean “to go before, to prepare the way or to assist someone” - now it means to hinder or obstruct.

kefalai - an appeal is made in egalitarian interpreters to Classical Greek rather than NT and Hellenistic Greek for the use of this word in 1 Corinthians 11. Classical lexicons will list “source” or “origin” as a possible meaning for **kefalai**. But no such definition exists for usage in Greek by the NT era.

- usage of unknown or unlikely meaning. **kefalai** - debatable 5th century BC source for determining the meaning “source” or “origin” (as of a river - while all other uses describing rivers referred to the “mouth” of the river).

- applying the fruits of successful word-study to every other usage of the same word. “justification” in James 2 and Romans 4.

- overdifferentiated or flattened-out synonyms

Consider the pallet of synonyms used for “sin,” in Psalm 51 or 32. Consider also the many Hebrew words available to describe “put to death” and the careful use of these synonyms. (see Tenney 193-194).

Consider also the various uses for **agapaw** and **agaph**.

Paying Attention to Literary Genre:

What *Type* of Literature Is It?

Prescriptive or Descriptive? A passage of Scripture may be telling its readers *what to do*. Another passage of Scripture may simply be telling its readers *what happened*. Be careful not to make a *descriptive* text become *prescriptive*.

Genesis 2:7-8

Genesis 29:1-30

Judges 6:36-40; 11:29-40

Where in the Progress of Revelation Does This Passage Lie?

Hebrews 1:1-2

Special Considerations for Narrative

- treat the narrative portions of Scripture as actual history (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1).
- pay attention to the narrator's (Judges 21:25).
- God Himself is the main character. Ask yourself: What is God doing in this text?

Special Considerations for Poetry

Hebrew Poetry occurs in much of the Old Testament - in the Psalms, Wisdom Literature, inside narrative sections, in prophetic books. Hebrew poetry uses noticeably different verb forms and conjunctions, and would have been readily recognizable to Hebrew readers. Many modern English translations of the Bible mark out poetry by indentation. Hebrew poetry is characterized not primarily by the rhyming of sounds but by the rhyming of ideas. Consider the following features of Hebrew poetry (and see the examples in Joel James, p.13ff):

- Synonymous Parallelism - two lines say the same thing, or the second line expands the idea of the first line. Isaiah 42:5,8; 43:25; 44:24; 45:22; 48:8-9,11; Psalm 18:1-6
- Antithetical Parallelism - two lines express a thought by approaching it from opposite angles. Proverbs 11:23; 10:12, 29.
- Literary Devices in Hebrew Poetry:
 - Chiasm ABCCBA (see Joel James p14) Isa 53:3; Psalm 18:30-32.
 - Simile - uses *like* or *as* to portray a relationship of similarity. Proverbs 10:26; Psalm 1:4; Hosea 6:4; 14:5.
 - Metaphor - a comparison is made without *like* or *as*. Psalm 18:31
 - Metonymy - an idea is presented by using a related item. Proverbs 10:21
 - Synecdoche - a part of something is used to describe the whole, or vice versa. Genesis 42:38

Watch out for the Abuse of Literary Genre!!!

- Genesis as myth (ANE parallels)
- Genesis 1-3 as Poetic (see RATE project and statistical analysis of Hebrew poetry)
- Suzerain Vassal-Treaties (Deuteronomy and Exodus and ANE parallels)
- Historical Accounts as theological polemics (Pentateuch - JEDP, Gospels - see Matthew 5-7; Matthew 10:5-42)
- Literary Dependence (Markan priority and the Synoptic "problem")
- Revelation as Apocalyptic - highly symbolic, metaphorical, undecipherable.
- Gospel of John as a Gnostic text

If the pursuit of a specific genre or sub-genre of literature pushes the interpreter to avoid the veracity of a text, get scared! Or if mountains of extrabiblical technical explanation are required to "understand" a text, get scared!

Read it Forward:

Understanding the Nature of Progressive Revelation

A reminder:

Let's not forget the basics: By God's transforming grace in the gospel we have become men who love God. Our devotion to Him finds expression in obedience to Him. And God has revealed Himself with great detail in His word. Therefore, as men who love God and desire to obey Him, we are dependent upon an interpretation method that allows God's word to speak to us all that God intended it to say. Mt 4:4!

The relationship between the whole and the pieces:

The one Author of the one Book He wrote has one primary message to communicate in His Book. But the way that God assembled His Book was through two testaments, each comprised of many human authors writing many narrative, poetry, prophetic and teaching sections with countless paragraphs, exhortations and instructions. What is the relationship between the message of the whole and the two testaments? What is the relationship between the message of the whole and the specific meaning of the pieces (stories, paragraphs, poems, instructions, etc.)?

The whole, the pieces, and proper interpretation:

If the plethora of individual texts from the older testament through the newer testament helps us assemble the one message of the whole, how much must each text be weighted with that one message of the Bible? If the message of the Bible is summed up as/in "Christ," how is He related to each text in the Bible? How will your method of interpretation be affected at the individual text level if each text must bear the full weight of the one message of the whole Bible (Christ)? Is Christ (the one message of Scripture) in every single text?

As you approach the Bible to rightly interpret it, you must strive to hold these two elements in proper relationship with one another: 1.) The unified message of the whole Bible, and, 2.) The unique meaning of individual texts. How do we hold these two elements in proper relationship?

1. Begin with the meaning of individual texts in order to move toward the message of the whole Bible. How can you understand the whole message of a book all at once??
2. Let the order or progression of revelation guide you: read/interpret texts in a forward fashion; be mindful of the progressive nature of revelation. God did not unfold everything at the beginning, but He did unfold His mind and being in successive steps.
3. Be mindful of where individual texts sit in that progression of revelation. OT or NT? Law? Prophets? History? Wisdom? Gospels? Acts? Epistles? Etc.
4. Properly isolate your individual text in such a way that allows you to hear most clearly its specific meaning more than the meaning of another passage or the message of the whole Bible. Momentarily suspend the meanings of other texts and the message of the whole.

- a. The passage that has the most authority concerning its meaning is the immediate passage you are interpreting.
 - b. Another passage does not have more authority over the passage you are currently interpreting (although it does have some complementary bearing).
 - c. Be very careful to not override the specific meaning of an OT text with the later message of the NT or meaning of a NT text. Would you override the meaning of a NT text with the prior message of the NT or meaning of an OT text?
5. Do not overly isolate your individual text so that you never consider that a later testament or later texts have come. In the end, don't forget the NT! Don't forget the first coming of Christ! Don't forget the second coming of Christ nor the eternal state!
 6. Always strive to summarize, develop, and refine the one message of the whole Bible. Read and reread the Bible! Work your way through key texts and themes (from OT to NT).

Christ-centered continuity of the Testaments (reasons to see only one Book):

According to Jesus and Paul, an organic union exists between Moses' writings and Jesus' words, John 5:39-47; Acts 28:23.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is rooted in Moses' writings and Law according to Jesus and Paul, Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 13:26-41; 17:2-3; 26:22-23; Galatians 3:8.

Paul saw his teachings united alongside the OT for the church's benefit (Peter did, too), 2 Timothy 3:10-17; 2 Peter 3:14-16.

Peter also saw his own teachings united alongside the OT for the church's benefit, 2 Peter 3:1-2.

Christ-centered discontinuity of the Testaments (reasons to see 2 testaments):

Jesus clearly declared John the Baptist's ministry to be a distinguishing line worth noticing, Luke 16:16.

Jesus acted and taught with an authority that authorized Him to inaugurate a new era and law (or regulation), Luke 4:18-21, 42-44; 7:22; 8:1; 9:11; 11:20; 17:20-21; 18:20-25; 20:1-2.

Jesus called His hearers to be specifically regulated by Him, Matthew 11:28-30.

Jesus displayed authority over Sabbath regulation in Mosaic Law, Matthew 12:1-14.

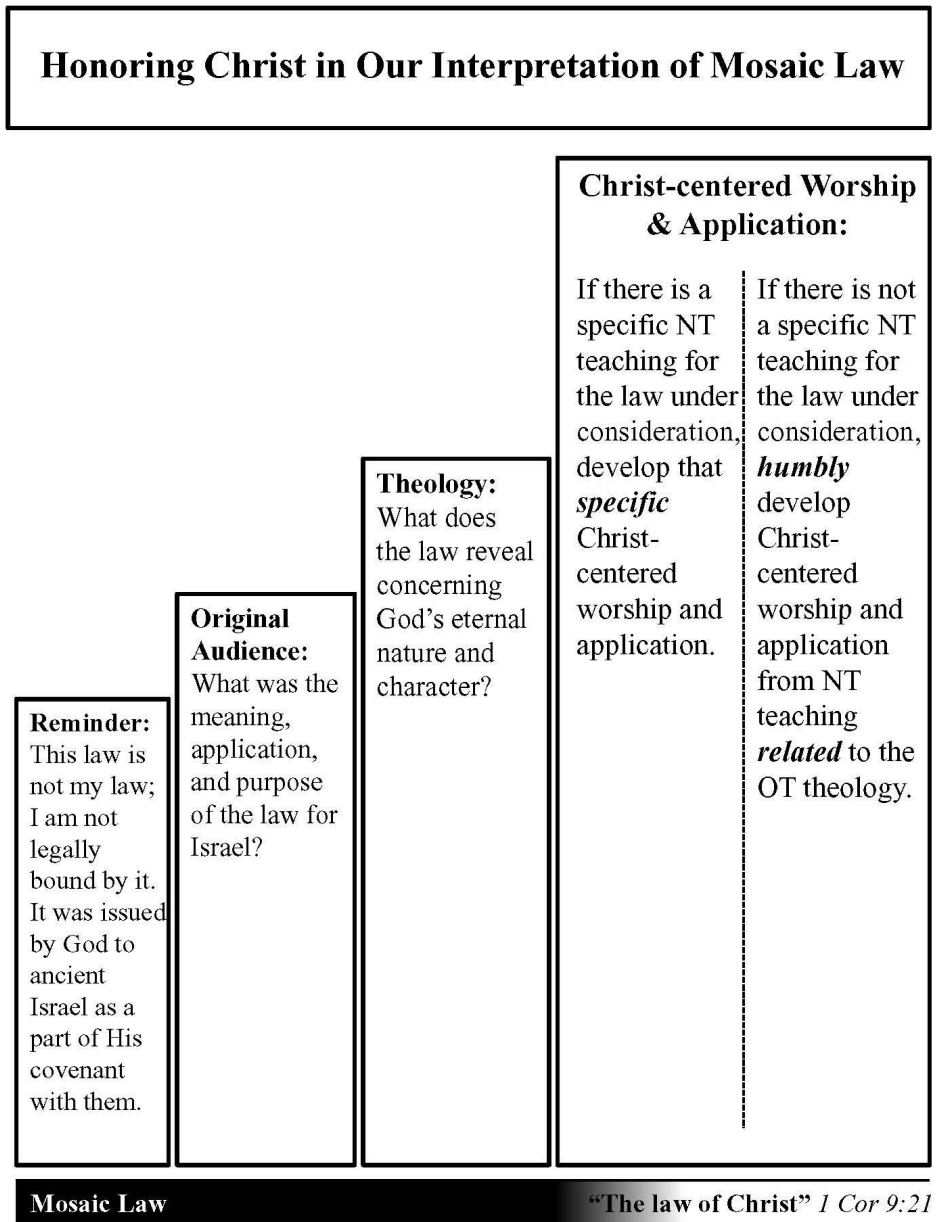
Jesus' authority reached beyond the regulation of Mosaic Law, Mark 7:14-23.

God eclipsed Moses and Elijah (the great representatives of the Law and the Prophets) with His own Son and His teaching, Matthew 17:1-18.

Jesus' authority in the Sermon on the Mount reaches beyond the authority of Mosaic Law, thus obligating all to obediently listen to His words, Matthew 5:-1-48; 7:24-27.

Jesus authoritatively advanced His commands into the nations through His Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:1-3.

A Christo-centric interpretation of Mosaic Law that attempts to hold continuity and discontinuity in relationship:



Quotes to chew on:

The sense of the OT text must be determined within its historical and cultural setting, and that sense is determinative for the NT fulfillment. This means that the OT economy must not be forced upon the New. There must be the allowance for genuine progress in divine revelation and salvation history. On the other hand, it is equally as grievous an error to impose the NT on the Old, as though there was some need to "christianize" it. If both Testaments are granted their integrity, their message will harmonize, since there is the single divine mind behind both. Paul D. Feinberg, *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 127

[T]he unity of the two Testaments does not require the uniformity of the two Testaments. Unity does not preclude diversity. The two Testaments may be unified just as certainly through discontinuity as through continuity. Both continuity and discontinuity are a part of the unity of the biblical revelation. There is both continuity and discontinuity between Israel and the church; and, if I understand Scripture correctly, there will be both continuity and discontinuity in the future between the church and Israel. Ibid, 128

Though Old Testament theology has a close relationship to the New Testament the two have discrete witnesses of their own. Therefore Old Testament theology must state the Old Testament's unique message before incorporating the New Testament perspective. The ultimate goal is still to produce biblical theology yet to unite the testaments at the proper moment. This procedure is sound on historical, canonical and exegetical grounds and will make scriptural unity plainer than starting from the opposite end of the canon. It will also help the Old Testament's unique value for theology be clearer. House, *Old Testament Theology*, 54

That is how Scripture differs from an encyclopedia. When I use an encyclopedia, I do not need to read other articles to understand the one I am reading at the moment. One article has no connection to another; there are no overarching themes. In the Bible, however, every passage is dependent on the whole, and the whole Bible is held together by interdependent themes that run through every passage like rebar, the steel rods that reinforce concrete. . . These themes give me a sense of identity, purpose, and direction that will fundamentally alter the way I think, desire, speak, and act. . . The sad fact is that many of us are simply not biblical in the way we use the Bible! Being biblical does not mean merely quoting words from within its pages. Being truly biblical means that my counsel reflects what the entire Bible is about. The Bible is a narrative, a story of redemption, and its chief character is Jesus Christ. He is the main theme of the narrative, and he is revealed in every passage in the book. . . Lasting change begins when our identity, purpose, and sense of direction are defined by God's story. Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*, 26-28

Biblical themes to progressively isolate one text at a time (for grasping the one message of Scripture):

- Promised seed/offspring (to Eve, to Abraham, to David). Why so many genealogies??
- Sacrifice
- An innocent substitute (and blood)
- Sacrificial lamb
- Priest (high)
- Tabernacle/tent/temple
- Sabbath rest (an example)
 - Genesis 2:1-3

- Does this passage call the 7th day the “Sabbath?” Is there a command here for man to do anything? The burden of the passage is about what God did, not what man should do in response to God.
- From the Fall to Mount Sinai (Genesis 2:15; 3:17-19; 3:15 and 5:28-29; 8:10, 12; Exodus 16:22-30)
 - It appears that the Creator’s “work” was entered into by Adam, Gn 2:15, but the Creator’s “rest” (Gn 2:1-3) was impossible to enter into after man fell, Gn 3:17-19 (work is cursed).
 - The most that the biblical data reveals from the Fall to Mt. Sinai is that man recognized a 7 day week cycle, Gn 8:10, 12. The idea of a “Sabbath rest” for man is strangely absent from Gen 3 all the way to Mt Sinai (or just prior to Mt Sinai, Ex 16:22-30). God made it clear in these same early passages that other important worship regulations like sacrifice, circumcision, and a tithe found their way onto the pages of Scripture. But a Sabbath rest didn’t. (Don’t read later revelation, i.e. Mt. Sinai, back into these earlier passages! Let them speak on their own!)
 - What we do see from the Fall on in Genesis is the thought of rest tied to the expectation of a “seed,” or “offspring.” Gn 3:15 combined with Gn 5:28-29 reveal an anticipation of an “offspring” who would come who was tied closely to man’s need for “rest.”
- Mount Sinai – an explosion of Sabbath/rests!
 - Exodus primarily reveals the Creator as the Redeemer of Israel, and, that the Redeemer has a “rest” to set before Israel to enter into. The “rest” of the Redeemer exists at different levels and cycles, so that Israel can see this “rest” everywhere before them. There is a weekly Sabbath; a Sabbath year every 7th year; and another year of “rest” every 50th year (year of Jubilee). One cannot read from Exodus through Deuteronomy without seeing obvious explosion of “rest” language and exhortation.
- The second generation to Joshua (entering the Land), Deuteronomy 12:8-10; 25:19; Joshua 11:23; 14:15.
 - In Deuteronomy, the Promised Land becomes tied inseparably to “rest” for Israel, Dt 12:8-10; 25:19. Even the land was said to be able to “rest” once the main battles were finished in the land, Josh 11:23; 14:15.
- King David, Psalm 95:6-11.
 - The writer of Hebrews attributes this Psalm to David (Hb 3:7). David says God was angry with the continual unbelief and rebellion of the first generation of Israelites in the wilderness, Ps 95:6-11. God “swore in [His] anger, truly they shall not enter into [God’s] rest,” Ps 95:11. David is using these words that God spoke (not an exact quote from Num 14 or Dt 1) to challenge the Israelites of his day. David is exhorting his contemporaries to hear God’s voice and current call to “rest.”
 - What is God doing calling David’s generation (through David) into God’s rest if in the wilderness they had an explosion of “rests” and if they already received the “rest” the land provided for them as well? Don’t they already have a high dose of “rest?” What “rest” is there that they need to fear they might not enter into?

Answer? God has a greater “rest” in mind beyond Sabbath rests expressed each week, every 7th year, every 50th year and beyond land “rest.”

- Jesus’ first coming and rest, Matthew 11:28-30; 12:6, 8.
 - Jesus arrives on the scene and grabs the word “rest” (which was very significant to the Israelites) and united it to Himself, Mt 11:28-30 (referring to the soul rest Jeremiah wrote of, Jer 6:16). The rest that could touch the weary soul—that the weekly, 7-year and 50-year rests couldn’t touch—is offered by Jesus. In the next chapter of Matthew, Jesus reveals that He is actually the Lord of the weekly Sabbath established at Mt Sinai. That weekly Sabbath rest was not the ultimate expression of rest God had in mind. His Son was/is. That weekly Sabbath rest had to take a place of submission under Jesus, Mt 12:6, 8.
- What the death of Christ accomplished, Colossians 2:16-17.
 - After detailing the life transforming work of the cross in the lives of believers, Paul makes it very clear that the Sabbath day regulation has come to an end. No one wants the shadow (Sabbath day rest) of the great Man when they can have the great Man (who is the ultimate salvation rest for the soul) Himself.
- A summary or conclusion thus far, Hebrews 3:11, 18-19; 4:1-11.
 - The writer of Hebrews believes that the Christians he is writing to need the same kind of exhortation that David gave the believers of his day. They need to make sure they are not missing the great salvation rest that is located in Jesus. Evidently believers of any era need exhortation in this matter. See Hebrews 3 and 4.
 - God’s ultimate rest is missed NOT by missing a day, a year, or the land, but by missing (disbelieving) Jesus. The concern of the writer of Hebrews for persecuted Christians is NOT that they are missing the observance of a day, but rather missing the rest that Jesus offers in Himself.
- Revelation 6:9-11; 14:13; 22:1-5 (esp. v. 3)
 - As great as the salvation rest is that we now experience on this side of heaven, there is an even greater rest with God after this life. Souls of those who were slain in the tribulation are told to “rest for a little while longer. . .” Rv 6:11. See also Rv 14:13.
 - Rv 22:1-5 reflects something of the original setting in Gn 2 (a tree of life; no curse). The “rest” that God entered into in Gn 2 appears to be entered into and enjoyed finally/ultimately by man in Rv 22.
 - King (Davidic)
 - Kingdom of God
 - Etc.

Summarizing the message of the whole Bible (an example):

The glory of God in the cross of Christ to bring about transformation of life by the Spirit. . .

The New Testament Use of the Old Testament

When the NT writers quote the OT, are they employing the principles of normal (literal-grammatical-historical) interpretation? or do the NT writers abandon L-G-H interpretation in favor of a different kind of interpretation? or are they *interpreting* at all?

Do we have a hermeneutic to imitate? Should we seek to interpret the OT in the same way the NT writers seem to be doing?

Does the NT meaning of an OT text disagree with the apparent meaning of the OT text? Does this mean that there can be more than one meaning in a text? Should we be looking for "fuller" meanings in OT texts in the manner of NT writers? What about when two NT passages quote the same OT text and arrive at different meanings?

- OT quotations are found in the NT somewhere between 250-300 times (Nicole says 295).
- Every NT book quotes the OT except Philemon and 1,2,3 John.
- 352 NT verses incorporate OT quotations.
- 278 OT verses are quoted in the NT.
- The most frequently quoted OT verse is Psalm 110:1 "The Lord says to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." [Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Heb 1:13; 10:13]
- OT allusions are far more frequent than direct quotations (some say there are as many as 4,105).

Observe the NT trust in the authority and divine authorship of the OT. Nowhere does a NT writer disagree or contend with an OT passage. NT writers ascribe OT passages to the authorship of God 56x. See Acts 1:16 and Rom 9:5 for NT recognition of dual authorship.

A NT writer will often change the wording of an OT text. Below are some of the types of changes you may find:

Changes made in NT quotes of OT

(taken from Zuck *Basic Bible Interpretation*, chapter 11 - pp254ff).

- Grammatical Changes (Ps 118:26 in Luke 19:38)
- Omitting Portions of Verses (Isa 6:10 in Mk 4:12)
- Giving Partial Quotations (Isa 61:2 in Lk 4:18-19; Zech 9:9 in Mt 21:5; Isa 56:7 in Mt 21:13; Joel 2 in Acts 2)

- Substituting Synonyms (Ps 40:6 in Heb 10:5)
- Supplying New Truth (Hos 2:23 in Rom 9:25; Deut 5:16 in Eph 6:2-3)

How do these changes affect our view of inspiration?

How do these changes affect our view of normal interpretive principles (literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics?)

How can the NT writers quote from the LXX, especially where it differs from the Hebrew OT (Ps 40:6 in Heb 10:5)?

Inspired Sensus Plenior Application

According to Robert Thomas, there are two different kinds of usages of the OT in the NT: one in which the NT writer observes the single meaning of the OT passage according to literal-grammatical-historical principles, and one in which the NT writer goes beyond the literal-grammatical-historical meaning of the OT text. Thomas calls the latter view ISPA, or Inspired *Sensus Plenior* Application.

[by “application”, Thomas is not referring to the way we “apply” the Bible to our own hearts and lives, as in “Observation, Interpretation, Application”. Thomas is referring to the *application* of a new meaning to the words of an older text by the newer passage. For instance, Matthew *applies* a new meaning to the words from Hosea 11:1 when he uses them in Matthew 2:15.]

ISPA is not a hermeneutic for readers to emulate. Rather it is the recognition that NT writers wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, even when they quoted from OT texts. The OT passage did not have a meaning other than that derived from L-G-H principles of interpretation until the time of the New Testament. But a NT writer may apply more meaning to the words of the OT passage than what the original author intended. Any NT passage that quotes an OT passage does so as the Holy Spirit of God breathes out (*theopneustos*) new revelation.

examples of NT “normal” use of OT

- Isa 7:14 in Mt 1:23
- Isa 11:1 in Acts 13:23
- Isa 53:7 in Mt 26:63; 27:12

examples of NT “ISPA” use of OT

- Isa 9:1-2 in Mt 4:12-16
- Romans 3:10-18 usage of Ps 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-3; 140:3; Prov 1:16; Eccles 7:20; Isa 59:7-8

- Hos 11:1 in Mt 2:15

Why is this not a “hermeneutic” to follow?

Remember: the “second meaning” of an OT passage is not the fruit of interpretation of that OT passage according to normal principles. Rather, it is the fruit of interpretation of the NT passage according to normal principles.

Consider the ways we use quotations today. Do we always intend to interpret the original meaning of those words when we quote them? Consider your own use of movie quotes or literary allusions. Are you trying to *interpret* the original author’s intended meaning every time you quote him? Do you intend to import your current meaning *back into* the original?

[“I feel the need... the need for speed”]

[“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means”]

[etc.]

Some guidelines for us:

- Apply the principles of “normal” interpretation to every passage (literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics), letting every passage speak for itself, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.
- Allow every Old Testament passage to mean what it meant to its original audience, including those passages that are quoted in the New Testament, no matter how a NT writer may use it.
- Allow every New Testament passage to mean what it means to its audience, including those that quote or allude to an Old Testament passage.
- Observe the trajectory of Scripture, keeping in mind the similarities and differences between the Testaments and the direction God is headed from beginning to end.

Resources for Further Study:

Basic Bible Interpretation by Roy Zuck (chapter 11, pp250ff.)

Commentary on The New Testament Use of The Old Testament edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson.

Evangelical Hermeneutics by Robert Thomas (chapter 9, pp241ff.)

Part II Exegesis Step-By-Step

Step 1: Pray

This is God's Word. You have come to God's Word primarily to meet with God. You are a dependent creature in need of the Holy Spirit's illumination. You and I are regularly beset by sin, particularly the sins of pride and independence. We are prone to come to God's Word for reasons other than communion with God.

So pray.

Pray to meet with God, to hear from God. Pray to be affected and changed by God through His Word. Pray for understanding of His Word. Pray for diligence to persevere in your study of God's Word. Pray for appropriate application of His Word to your own heart.

Pray through each step of the exegetical process.

(see Jer 2:8)

Step 2: Read Your Passage

A word about reading and studying: you need to be doing both as a regular course of life.

Keep a notepad handy to write down questions. Write down every question that comes to mind. What does this word mean? Why are the words in this order? To whom do the pronouns refer?

The goal at this stage is not to answer all the questions. Just begin to ask them. Seek to overturn every stone.

The importance of simply reading your passage: "One of the greatest weaknesses in the Bible study of many Christians is that they want understanding before getting acquainted with the passage. They want to know what God means before they know what He has said. so they read a passage through once, probably in a hurry, then try to figure out what it means.... First become thoroughly familiar with what the passage says." - Sterrett 40-41.

Read every word in your passage.

Read *every* word in your passage.

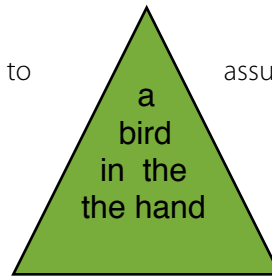
Read every *word* in your passage.

Read every word *in* your passage.

Read every word in *your* passage.

Read every word in your *passage*.

Read your passage over and over again. Try hard not to you read, ask yourself, "What is this passage *saying*?"



assume you know what it says. As

- Read the verses you are studying over and over again.
- Read outward from your passage in concentric circles of context.
- Read the chapter which contains your passage.
- Read (in one sitting) the book which contains your passage (skim if necessary).
- Read or skim the corpus of literature by the author of your passage (Peter's sermons in Acts, statements in the Gospels, and his letters: 1,2 Peter).
- Read your passage in several other versions (NIV, ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, HCSB, any non-English versions you can read). Notice where there are differences in translation - different words used, different verb tenses, different phraseology, different word order, etc. Write down these differences. These differences will help you see where further digging might be helpful.

Write down the things that you notice:

repeated words, unknown words, figures of speech, parallelisms, literary genre, indications of setting (time and location), unusual grammar, characters, etc.

Be a detective! Leave no stone unturned.

Resources for Step 2:

- your Bible.
- other Bible versions

Step 3: Observe Syntax

How is each word being used in a sentence, and how is each word related to the words around it?

- 🕒 Label each word's part of speech, and identify the function of each word in the sentence.
- 🕒 Identify all clauses in your passage.
- 🕒 Mark out all prepositional phrases and participial phrases.
- 🕒 Line Diagram each clause.
- 🕒 Diagram the relationships between the clauses.
- 🕒 Categorize the relationships between clauses, noticing conjunctions and identifying the type of clause being used.
 - coordination (normally introduced by a coordinating conjunction - "and", "but", "or", or "nor")
 - subordination (normally introduced by a subordinate conjunction or identified by the use of a relative pronoun). Here are some types of subordinate clauses (See Joel James, pp21-22):
 - relative
 - temporal
 - purpose
 - result
 - causal
 - contrast
 - conditional
 - comparison
 - concessive
 - sequential
 - noun
- 🕒 Identify the function of each participle and participial phrase. Here are some categories (See James, p23):
 - Purpose
 - Temporal
 - Causal
 - Conditional
 - Concessive
 - Instrumental

- Circumstantial

🗎 Determine the referent for every pronoun.

*for longer passages and narrative sections:

- Identify clauses or sections.
- Diagram the relationships between the clauses or sections.
- Categorize the relationships between clauses or sections.
- Determine the referents for pronouns.
- Consider applying more detailed study to significant portions.

Resources for Step 3:

Joel James *How To Study the Bible: A Course for Serious Bible Students and Teachers*

English Grammar Texts (I refer often to *Harper's English Grammar* by John Opdycke)

Greek and Hebrew Grammars - look up your verse in the index and read the sections that refer to it.

A.T. Robertson *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

W. Robertson Nicoll *The Expositor's Greek Testament*

Waltke and O'Connor *Hebrew Syntax*

a complete English dictionary will give you parts of speech and usages for English words.

Step 4: Investigate the Words

Remember: the meaning of a word is *significantly* determined by its usage in a context. This is why syntax is so important. A proper understanding of a word's function in a sentence will help us filter out some wrong usages of a given word.

(technology note: feel free to utilize the electronic resources available to you. These will certainly speed up the process! But be careful: sometimes the dependence upon an electronic resource may cause you to bypass some important information. Get familiar with the resources below. Compare them to what is available electronically. Then use what proves to be most helpful and accurate.)

- Select the key word(s) you wish to investigate from your passage.
- Identify the part of speech and function of this word in the sentence.
- Start with an **English dictionary** (an unabridged dictionary is preferable). The scholars who translated the Bible into English selected specific English words to represent the words of the originals. They selected the English words based on English usage. An unabridged English dictionary will give you a good start into understanding a word that is being used. Check your part of speech to make sure you are using the correct one.
- Use an **exhaustive concordance** to scan the uses of your word in your translation of the Bible. You can use a concordance for another translation to see if there are synonyms interchanged for your word. Catalogue the various uses of your word. Begin to get a feel for the range of meaning the Biblical authors gave to this word. Be sure to scan the entries for forms of the word other than the one in your passage. For instance, if the word is plural in your passage, don't neglect the singular usages; if it is a verb in the present tense, look at the other tense usages as well. Scan the related words. If your word is *sanctified*, be sure to scan *sanctification, sanctifies, sanctuary*, etc. Look up and read the passages that seem to give some help for understanding the word's occurrence in your passage. Pay attention especially to the uses of your word in the same passage, near context, same author, etc., outward in concentric circles of context.
- Use the **Strong's Number** to get to the Greek or Hebrew word behind the English word. The numbers are indexed in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible* and are utilized by many reference works. You can also utilize an interlinear Bible to discover the original words behind the English words.
- Once you have the Greek or Hebrew word you can look up the definition in an original language **lexicon**.

- The next step is the theological dictionaries (TDNT in the New Testament; NIDOTTE and TWOT in the Old Testament). These give much more lengthy entries for significant words. They do not cover every word in the Bible, or even most words. They select significant words and trace etymology, diachronic usage, extrabiblical usage, theological meaning, and more. These are significantly more interpretive than a lexicon, and not all entries are written by believers - so use discretion!
- You should now examine commentaries to see how they explain the usage of this word in your passage.
- You should compile and analyze all of your research. You can begin to sift out what is unhelpful, what is errant. If your word study has prompted more questions, write those down.

****Note to the overwhelmed - this probably seems like a lot to do. It is. Not every word is worth this kind of investigation. But digging deeply will produce fruit. Budget your study time. It cannot all be given to word study! Plan ahead, be as thorough as you can in the allotted time, and then move on.****

Resources for Step 4:

An Unabridged Dictionary

An Exhaustive Concordance in the translation from which you are studying.

An Interlinear Bible (Hebrew-English; Greek-English)

Vine's Expository Dictionary

A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker

The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon

NIDOTTE (New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis)

TWOT (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

TDNT (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament - affectionately referred to as "Kittle")

Word Pictures in the New Testament by A.T. Robertson

The Expositor's Greek Testament ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll

Step 5: Consider The Author and Audience

What biographical information can you discover about the author?

- Begin with the Bible itself. You can use an exhaustive concordance and/or a Topical Bible to discover every place in Scripture the author of your passage is mentioned. Read or skim the narrative portions of Scripture pertaining to your author. Read or skim any other portions of Scripture your author has penned. Ask lots of questions: When did this man live? Where was he born? When/How did he die? What was his conversion like? What was his upbringing like? His education? What significant experiences shaped this man's character, behavior, perspective?

- In a good study Bible, read the introductory notes to the book in which your passage is found. This is a good, concise resource for the author's biographical information.

- Next, read entries in Bible Dictionaries and Bible Encyclopedias.

- Next, you can turn to specialized works on the author you are reading. Much has been written on the Apostle Paul. *Twelve Ordinary Men*, by John MacArthur, contains biographical summaries and character sketches on each of the 12 Disciples.

- Finally, read through the introductions to several good commentaries. They will contain a section devoted to information about the human writer of your passage. You may want to check the introductions to commentaries of other books the author penned, so that you can fill in more biographical information.

What situational information can you find out about the author at the time of his writing?

- Ask the following questions: When was this book written? Under what circumstances? How did the human author get his information? Was it direct dictation, prophetic vision, eyewitness account, historical research, or “normal” writing of Scripture? Where was the author when he wrote? Was he in prison? Hiding out in a cave? In fear for his life? Secure in a palace? In a field with sheep? Did he have other resources at his disposal? Did he write under the eyewitness testimony of another person? Where was the author in relationship to his audience?
- Begin with your passage and the book it is in. Are there any clues in the text that might shed light on the author’s life situation at the time of writing?
- Read the introductory notes in a good study Bible. There will be a section devoted to the situation of the author at the time of writing.
- In a Bible Dictionary or Bible Encyclopedia, look up the name of the book in which your passage is found. There will often be some information given about the author’s situation at the time of writing.
- Finally, read the sections in the introductions of several good commentaries pertaining to the author’s situation at the time of writing.

What can you find out about the audience to whom your passage is written?

- Ask the following questions: Who was the intended original audience? Was it an individual, a group, a church, a group of churches, a nation? Was it a racially mixed audience? A gathered group? Were they spread out geographically?
- Begin with the Bible itself. What clues exist in the text that might shed light on the audience to whom it was written (or spoken)? Keep in mind that there may be multiple audiences to investigate (If you are studying a passage in the Sermon on the Mount [Mt 5-7] you will need to consider the crowds on the grass as well as Matthew's readership). If you are studying an Old Testament prophet, you will want to consider which kingdom the prophet was speaking to, and under what king(s) he prophesied.
- Use the introductory articles in several good commentaries and your Study Bible to investigate the audience to whom this passage was written.
- Some of your investigation of the audience will require digging up cultural, historical, political, religious, and archaeological data relevant to the time period. This will be covered next session.
- These investigations will help you ask and (hopefully) begin to answer interpretive questions, like: What occasioned the writing of this passage? What was going on in the audience that prompted the writer to pen this book? How did the Author/author intend the original audience to *understand* this passage? How did the Author/author intend the original audience to *apply* this passage?

Resources for Step 5:

An Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

The MacArthur Topical Bible or other topical Bible

The MacArthur Study Bible or other study Bible

The Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary

Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible

ISBE - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia or other Bible Encyclopedia

Unger's Bible Dictionary or other Bible dictionary

Introductions to the OT, NT, or Bible:

Introduction to the Old Testament by RK Harrison

A Survey of Old Testament Introduction by Gleason Archer

An Introduction to the New Testament by D. Edmond Hiebert

An Introduction to the New Testament by Carson, Moo, and Morris

Good Commentaries

Specialized works on human authors of Scripture (these are some examples):

Paul: Apostle of God's Glory in Christ by Schreiner

Twelve Ordinary Men by John MacArthur

Step 6: Dig Up The Historical Context

- What is the historical context of your passage? When in world history does your passage take place? What world historical events bear on the passage you are studying? What governments are in place? What nations or empires are in charge? What human rulers are present? What is attitude of government toward the characters or original readers of your passage?
- What geographical features bear significance on your passage? Investigate the geography and topography of travels in your passage. What does the phrase "from Dan to Beersheba" mean? Look up any place names on a map.
- What biographical information can you find out about the characters in the passage? Besides the author of your passage, what characters do you need more information on?
- Are there any cultural phenomena in your passage that you need more understanding on? Are there any cultural behaviors or customs evident in your passage that, if understood, could bring more clarity to your passage?
- What is the religious climate/situation at the time of your passage? What is the predominant spiritual climate among God's people during the time your passage was written? What about the original audience? and the world around them?

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BI 505
Hermeneutics

Your passage may dictate that you spend a significant portion of time digging up the historical, cultural, biographical, geographical, and political context in which it was written. Or you may spend virtually no time on this step. The key here is to ask questions of the text. Pay attention to your commentaries - they may tip you off that there is more research to be done. Read as broadly as you have time for, remembering to budget your study time well.

Resources for Step 6:

A History of Israel by Kaiser

The History of Israel by Noth

The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times by Gower

Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period by Neusner and Green

A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ by Schurer

Josephus

general works on ancient world history (Egypt, Israel, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome)

Bible atlases

The MacArthur Study Bible or other study Bible

The Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary

Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible

ISBE - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia or other Bible Encyclopedia

Unger's Bible Dictionary or other Bible dictionary

Introductions to the OT, NT, or Bible:

Introduction to the Old Testament by RK Harrison

A Survey of Old Testament Introduction by Gleason Archer

An Introduction to the New Testament by D. Edmond Hiebert

An Introduction to the New Testament by Carson, Moo, and Morris

good commentaries

specialized works on geography, biography, history, culture, archaeology

journal articles (BibSac, BAR, TMSJ, JETS, etc)

Step 7: Trace the Trajectory of Scripture

Ask the question: Where does this text fit in the trajectory of Scripture? Revelation has followed a progression of God's redemptive plan. How does this text fit in with the whole scope of Biblical redemptive history?

Think through the big picture of the Bible. Place your text on the timeline of what God is doing. To whom is God speaking and on what occasion? What is God up to in redemptive history.

It is really helpful in Old Testament narrative to ask the question, "What is God doing in this story?" Remember, God is always the main character, even when He is not mentioned. He is the great orchestrator of all events in time-space-history, and everything is headed toward and contributes to a very definite end.

Work your passage through the continuity-discontinuity grid. How is the setting of this passage similar to the settings of other passages with similar themes? How is it different? Where does this passage sit in relationship to the cross? Does it look forward to the cross? Does it look back on the cross? How is my situation similar to the situation of the original audience or the characters in this passage? How is my situation different than theirs?

Resources for Step 7:
A Lifetime of Regular Bible Reading
The Panorama of Scripture

A History of Israel by Kaiser

Charts and timelines of Biblical history in a study Bible

Scott Maxwell's preaching series on Leviticus

Jacob Hantla's small group

(develop your own timeline chart of Redemptive History)

teach the whole Bible in one sitting to your kids

Step 8: Cross Reference

Are there other passages that can help you understand this text? Cross-referencing other texts can help in understanding the text you are studying, if done well. But be careful! It is very easy to misuse and abuse cross-reference. Often we will leave a text we do not understand very well in hopes that we can make sense out of it by looking at other, perhaps unrelated, passages that we do not understand very well.

A cross-reference is a good one when there is a legitimate parallel to the text we are studying, and if we understand that parallel.

Cross-references can take be of several sorts:

- lexical - if a particular word is difficult to understand in our passage, we can examine how that same word is used in other passages. We essentially did lexical cross-reference in our word study above.
- syntactical - we can discover patterns in the way specific authors employed particular grammatical constructions. This might shed some light on an interpretive decision in our passage.
- synoptic - [syn + optic = looking together at the same event] two or more passages may describe the same event from different angles or different writers' perspectives. This is especially true between the "synoptic gospels" (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), but is also true of the relationship of the Gospel of John to the Synoptic Gospels, the book of Acts to things referenced in the NT Epistles, 1 and 2 Kings with 1 and 2 Chronicles, Davidic Psalms with events in Chronicles and Kings, OT Prophets with events in Kings and Chronicles, etc. [**Keep in mind that while the parallel passages may contain more information that helps fill out the details of a given event, the writer of your passage, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, included only the details that he included - and for specific reason.**]
- theological - other passages may speak to the same theological issue as the passage you are studying. (This is the kind of cross-reference we most easily abuse!) When you have finished your exegetical work on your passage, you will begin to see its themes in other places in the Bible, and the more you study, the more you will see recurrent themes and theological concepts interwoven throughout the Bible. Well-studied passage become great allies in cross-referencing. Poorly studied passages are dangerous cross-referencing tools. The goal of a good theological cross-reference may be to clarify something in your passage that is obscure, or to give another facet to a many-faceted theological diamond. But the goal of a good cross-reference is never to *erase* (we would rather say "balance out") what your passage is intending to say! We must let the text mean what it means by what it says in its context to its audience in the trajectory of Scripture and the flow of redemptive history!

Resources for Step 8:

Margin notes in your Bible or study Bible.

Harmony of the Gospels by Thomas and Gundry (or other Gospels Harmony)

Chronological Bible

Chain-Reference Bible

Topical Bible

Commentaries

Step 9: Read Commentaries

By this time you have already skimmed or read significant portions of the commentaries available to you. If you haven't done it yet, this is a great time to read them through. Take notes on places that commentators differ from each other. Take note of places that commentators differ from you. Commentaries are a great tool to keep you accountable - if you find yourself interpreting a passage in a manner that no one else in all of church history ever has, you might want to go back and check your work! A reading of good commentaries will help you overturn some stones you didn't think to turn over, to ask some questions that did not come to your mind, to think of possible solutions to interpretive questions that did not occur to you. This is an important step worth taking some time on.

There are a variety of types of commentaries. You should consult some of each:

- Big-picture commentaries - these are either very brief works on a book of the Bible, or they can be whole-Bible commentaries, or they can be the notes in a study Bible. These are an attempt to briefly summarize the meaning of a large section of Scripture. Economy of words is important in a commentary like this, so these can be helpful at getting the overall idea of a verse or section. (examples: *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (12 volumes))
- Devotional commentaries - these are geared toward ready application by the reader. These will be very light on technical discussions of grammar, word meanings, or theological difficulties. The aim of a devotional commentary is to bring the Word of God to bear on the hearts and lives of its readership. (examples: *The Cross and Christian Ministry* by DA Carson, The "Be" Series by Warren Wiersbe, *The Treasury of David* by Spurgeon)
- Homiletical commentaries - these are the printed versions of preached expository sermons. These commentaries "hide" most of the exegetical research of the author/preacher. They are the (often edited) transcript of sermons preached in a series through a book of the Bible. These are valuable for seeing how others have taught these passages and for how they outlined and organized their material. They can also be a great bibliographical resource. You can find out about other commentators from the men who have preached the passage you are studying. Keep in mind, however, that a pastor will have his own flock of people in mind as he organizes and delivers his material. His audience will be different than yours and will have different needs. He is therefore not going to explain all the details in the passage you are studying. He has included only those things which he thought would be most helpful to his audience when he delivered that message. (examples: *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series*, *Commentary on Romans* by D Martin Lloyd-Jones)
- Technical Commentaries - these commentaries deal with the original languages, grammar, text-critical issues, historical background, archaeology, literary context, etc. Many commentaries that thorough in

their dealing with the original languages and grammar can be very liberal in their theological perspective. Many technical commentaries outright deny the inspiration of Scripture! So be careful. There are good, conservative technical commentaries out there. (examples of pretty much good ones: *Galatians* by Eadie, *The Gospel of John* by DA Carson, *Colossians* by PT O'Brien, *NIGTC*)

Step 10: Problem Solving

If there are any yet-unsolved interpretive decisions to make, develop a plan to solve them. For each interpretive decision, write down all possible solutions. Under each solution, write down the arguments for (strengths of that position) and arguments against (weakness of that position). Include all pertinent information: lexical, syntactical, context, trajectory of Scripture, historical, cultural, theological, etc.

Select the best interpretive solution based on all the information you have at your disposal. You may not come to a satisfying answer. But don't simply assume that a satisfying does not exist. Don't give up too quickly.

Step 11: Develop an Exegetical Proposition

Ask and answer the question: "What is this passage all about?" Attempt to sum up your passage in one **a**ccurate, **b**rief, and **c**lear sentence. Write and re-write your exegetical proposition. Try to write a new exegetical proposition at every step in the hermeneutical process. Keep refining it all the way through your study. Can your exegetical proposition be understood by a 6th grader? If not, keep working!

The goal of an exegetical proposition is to say what the passage means in a summary statement. This is not necessarily a sermon thesis or an application to your life. This is a short answer to the question, What does this passage mean by what it says?

The development of a good **a-b-c** exegetical proposition will help you remember, apply, and teach this passage well.