CLASS 204
Intro to Hermeneutics
An Exegetical Approach to Reading, Interpreting, & Applying Scripture

GROWING UNIVERSITY
A Discipleship Ministry of FBC Mt. Sterling
Be diligent to present yourself approved to God,
a worker who does not need to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15

Dr. Chris Dortch, Editor

Cover: The Prophetess Anna (cf. Luke 2:36-38)
By Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn in 1631 (Public Domain)
(On display in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.)
WELCOME TO CLASS 204
INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

What is hermeneutics?
Hermeneutics is the study of correct methods of interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts. 2 Timothy 2:15 suggests there is a correct manner to interpret Scripture, “rightly dividing the word of truth.”

What is exegesis?
Exegesis is the process of interpreting a text of Scripture. Conservative interpreters of Scripture agree that the Bible is its best interpreter. “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more plainly.” –Westminster Confession of Faith

What is illumination?
Illumination is the ministry of the Holy Spirit helping the believer to understand and apply the truth of the Bible.

THE BASIS FOR THIS CLASS
This course is an introduction to the basic principles of biblical interpretation and hermeneutical procedures. We believe the Bible is true and trustworthy. We also believe the Bible is authoritative and is the final rule of faith, belief, and practice. Therefore, the aim of the course is to equip believers in developing the skills to read, interpret, and apply Scripture. Our studies should prompt us to praise our Savior and to motivate us to fulfill the Great Commission.

THE GOALS OF THIS CLASS
Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand the relationship and process of reading (observation), interpretation, and application.
2. Understand how to study and observe Scripture.
3. Understand how to study and interpret Scripture.
4. Understand how to study and apply Scripture.

PRIMARY SOURCES FOR THIS CLASS
This workbook was developed from class notes, assignments, and lectures from courses through Liberty University. “Grasping God’s Word” by Duvall and Hays was the primary source for the process and illustrative examples. Their book also provides a much more detailed explanation than what is provided in this workbook. The bibliography is a short list of suggested books for additional personal study that have also influenced the development of this material.
### ABBREVIATIONS

#### BIBLE NAME ABBREVIATIONS

**OLD TESTAMENT (OT)**
- Gen. Genesis
- Exod. Exodus
- Lev. Leviticus
- Num. Numbers
- Deut. Deuteronomy
- Josh. Joshua
- Judg. Judges
- Ruth Ruth
- 1 Sam. 1 Samuel
- 2 Sam. 2 Samuel
- 1 Kgs 1 Kings
- 2 Kgs 2 Kings
- 1 Chr. 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chr. 2 Chronicles
- Ezra Ezra
- Neh. Nehemiah
- Esth. Esther
- Job Job
- Ps. Psalms
- Prov. Proverbs
- Eccl. Ecclesiastes
- Song Song of Songs
- Isa. Isaiah
- Jer. Jeremiah
- Lam. Lamentations
- Ezek. Ezekiel
- Dan. Daniel
- Hos. Hosea
- Joel Joel
- Amos Amos
- Obad. Obadiah
- Jonah Jonah
- Mic. Micah
- Nah. Nahum
- Hab. Habakkuk
- Zeph. Zephaniah
- Hag. Haggai
- Zech. Zechariah
- Mal. Malachi

**NEW TESTAMENT (NT)**
- Matt. Matthew
- Mk. Mark
- Lk. Luke
- Jn. John
- Ac. Acts
- Rom. Romans
- 1 Cor. 1 Corinthians
- 2 Cor. 2 Corinthians
- Gal. Galatians
- Eph. Ephesians
- Phil. Philippians
- Col. Colossians
- 1 Thess. 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thess. 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Tim. 1 Timothy
- 2 Tim. 2 Timothy
- Tit. Titus
- Philem. Philemon
- Heb. Hebrews
- Jam. James
- 1 Pet. 1 Peter
- 2 Pet. 2 Peter
- 1 Jn. 1 John
- 2 Jn. 2 John
- 3 Jn. 3 John
- Jd. Jude
- Rev. Revelation

#### LATIN ABBREVIATIONS
- c. Latin *circa* “around” or “approximately.”
- cf. Latin *confer* “confer” or “compare.”
- e.g. Latin *exempli gratia* “for example.” Literally “for the sake of example.”
- etc. Latin *et cetera* “and others” or “and the rest.”
- ff. Latin *folio* “and the following” (verses, paragraphs, pages, etc.). Literally “on the next page.”
- i.e. Latin *id est* “that is.” Literally, “that is to say.”
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PART ONE

Observation

2 Timothy 2:15c, “rightly dividing the word of truth,” suggests there is an appropriate way to study Scripture. As believers, we have a responsibility to read (or observe) Scripture carefully. Paul is speaking to Timothy as a young pastor in Ephesus. Paul is encouraging Timothy to study God’s Word. If Timothy properly studies God’s Word, it will demonstrate God’s call on his ministry. While we are not all called to the office of pastor, we are all called to the work of ministry. Our ability to “rightly divide the word of truth” will serve as evidence of God’s activity in our life and ministry.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15
Study Resources

I. Study Bible

A study Bible includes the full text of Scripture and additional features to help the student of God’s Word understand and apply the passages. In many cases, much of the work of hermeneutics has already been done and the commentary is there to help us understand and apply what we have just read in Scripture.

1. Determine your purpose...
   a. __________ study. If your purpose is for personal study, then use a general study Bible such as ESV Study Bible, HCSB Study Bible, NIV Study Bible, or the NLT Study Bible. These study Bibles will assist with cultural background, word studies, geography, and more. The ESV and HCSB focus more on helping the reader understand the original meaning. The NIV Study Bible and Life Application Study Bibles tend to focus more on application for the reader.
   b. __________ study. Unless you are a small group leader of a “niche” group, then it is best to stick with a general study Bible. For example, John Maxwell’s Leadership Bible is an excellent study Bible, but the focus is extremely narrow, unless you are teaching a leadership group. Likewise, John Baker’s Celebrate Recover Study Bible is great for those in a CR small group, otherwise the focus is too narrow for in-depth study. There are some target audiences within a niche group. For example, the Teen Surfer Bible. Unless you are leading a small group Bible study for surfers, just stick with a Teen Study Bible.
   c. __________ study. If your purpose is to read every verse in the Bible pertaining to a particular topic, that’s the purpose of the Thompson’s Chain Reference Bible. It is organized around the idea of systematic theology. There are roughly 8000 topics identified and an easy to navigate index.

2. Consider trusted scholars...
   a. DISCLAIMER: People are human. We make mistakes. I have personally observed those called of God make a single mistake that cost them a thriving ministry. I know of a retired minister who was in his eighties when he made a decision that destroyed his reputation and legacy. It is risky to list names of “trusted” scholars who are living. However, that being said, even if these individuals commit a grave sin tomorrow, it does not mean we should throw out all they have done for the Kingdom of God.
b. ___________________________________ is the founder of “Turning Point” Radio and Television Ministries and Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in San Diego, California. He followed in his father’s footsteps, who was also a Baptist pastor. The Jeremiah Study Bible provides over 8000 study notes as well as hundreds of word studies and historical insights. His focus is to help the reader grasp the text in light of its original context. He has also created an online supplement that includes a video introduction of each book of the Bible that summarizes the book’s core message along with its historical and spiritual background. You can visit www.jeremiahstudybible.com.

c. ___________________________________ is the featured teacher with “Grace to You” media ministry and Pastor-Teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. The MacArthur Study Bible provides over 20,000 study notes as well as an extensive concordance. His focus is to help the reader grasp complex doctrines by understanding culture, geography, history and language.

d. ___________________________________ is a professor and founder of Ligonier Ministries. The Reformation Study Bible includes notes of 75 respected scholars such as J.I. Packer, James Boice, and Wayne Grudem.

II. Other Believers (Your Small Group)

Don’t overlook the importance of Bible study with others. It is important to dialogue about the things you are learning. Your small group can be a wealth of support and information.

III. Strong’s Concordance

The most popular concordance is Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance. It is the most complete, easy-to-use, and understandable concordance for studying the original languages of the Bible. This resource is for the serious student and requires a little more effort than the Vine’s Expository Dictionary.

IV. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary

While the average church member does not know Greek and Hebrew, nor do they have a desire to learn the languages, they do appreciate the languages and desire to have some knowledge. The Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary is a dictionary, commentary, and concordance all in one. This resource allows you to understand Hebrew and Greek words without having to learn the language.

V. Nave’s Topical Bible

Nave’s Topical Bible contains more than 20,000 topics with more than 100,000 Scripture references.
VI. Halley's Bible Handbook

Halley’s Bible Handbook is the “almanac” of biblical information. Complete with archaeological information, maps, photographs, church history, and more.

VII. Hitchcock’s Bible Names

Biblical names are important. Hitchcock’s Bible Names contains more than 2500 Bible names and their meanings. It was written in 1869 and is now public domain and available free online.

VIII. Wiersbe Bible Commentary 2 Volume Set

Commentaries are expensive and expansive. Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe has provided a 2 volume set (i.e. Old Testament and New Testament volumes) with verse-by-verse commentary. Wiersbe provides insights into difficult passages without using academic language.
Bible Translations

I. How do I know which translation to buy?

When you consider biblical translation philosophy, there is a continuum (see chart below).

A. **Formal Equivalence** (word for word): The goal of these translations is pure accuracy. To get as close as possible to one English word for one Greek word (e.g. New American Standard, Revised Standard Version).

   **Problem:** It can be very difficult to read a translation that is primarily focused on formal equivalence. It’s a great translation, but it can be a challenge to read in public worship services.

B. **Paraphrase** (thought for thought): The goal of the paraphrase is to capture the thought. We read the words of Paul in Greek and we ask the question, “What’s the best way to translate this into English?” It’s not always a correspondence to words or even sentences, it is thought for thought. Paraphrases are also great interpretations (e.g. The Message, Children’s Bibles). They are great for children. They are great for reading large passages of the Bible.

   **Problem:** They are probably not the best choice for study.

C. **Dynamic Equivalence:** The goal of the dynamic equivalence is to strike a balance between the two extremes. The most popular that fits into this category is the New International Version (NIV). It largely follows a word-for-word, but employs English idioms to match Greek idioms.

**Examples:**
- Matt. 1:18
  “she having in the belly” = “she was pregnant”
- Matt. 10:27
  “what you hear in your ear” = “what you hear in secret”
- Acts 28:27
  “they hear heavily with their ears” = “slow to understand”

As a pastor, student, and teacher of God’s Word, I find myself most comfortable with the Formal Equivalence [e.g. New King James Version (NKJV), English Standard Version (ESV)].
II. Determine Your Goal

When you purchase a Bible at your local Christian bookstore, you can rest assured that each translation is a good translation. The Bible is absolutely trustworthy. Therefore, your goal should determine which translation(s) to get.

• Follow along with the pastor: NKJV.
• Personal in-depth study: ESV
• Devotional and personal application: NLT / Life Application
• Reading to your children: The Message or a Children’s Bible
How to Read the Text

Words

I. Word Study Fallacies

Words are important. Before we begin to examine how to approach word studies, here is a list of pitfalls to avoid concerning word studies. Your awareness of these challenges will help you avoid them in your personal study of God’s Word.

A. The English-Only Mistake

a. A single word in Hebrew or Greek can be translated using a variety of English words. For example, the Greek word *paraklesis* has twelve different word variations in English within the NIV: “comfort, encouragement, appeal, be encouraged, consolation, encourage, encouraged, encouraging message, exhortation, greatly encouraged, preaching, and urgently.”

b. Different words in Hebrew or Greek can also be translated into English using the same English word. For example, the English word “comfort” is used for six different Greek words.

c. The major concern here is that a word study that is based entirely on English words can lead us to unreliable and misleading conclusions.

B. The Root Word Mistake

a. Etymology is the study of the origin of words. The context of a word will often do more to assist our understanding of a word than a robust examination through etymology.

b. Consider how misleading our conclusion might be if we examined the root of the following English words: butterfly, pineapple, or sawhorse.

C. The Time Frame Mistake

a. We must be careful not to impose a modern definition of a word onto a biblical use of the word. For example, the Greek word *dunamis* (from which we get the word “dynamite”) is translated “power.” However, Alfred Nobel did not invent dynamite until 1866.

b. The Apostle Paul clearly did not have dynamite in mind when he wrote, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power (dunamis) of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” Romans 1:16.

D. The Overload Mistake

a. As stated earlier, a single word can be translated into a variety of English words. In addition, a single word can have multiple definitions. For example, consider the
following words and their possible range of definitions: spring, cast, gross, or mug.

b. We must be careful not to impose all meanings of the word each time the word is used. Instead, allow the context to determine the proper meaning. Which meaning for “spring” would you suggest for the following sentence, “He has a spring in his step.”

E. The Word-Count Mistake

a. We must be careful not to assume that a word is going to have the same meaning each time it is used. For example, a word can have the same meaning 9 out of 10 times, but that does not demand the tenth usage is the same as the other nine. Context is important.

b. Galatians 3:4 provides us an example. “Have you experienced/suffered so much in vain – if it really was in vain.” The word “suffer” has a negative association. The context suggests a positive experience. They had many positive experiences and now they are turning to the law.

F. The Word-Concept Mistake

a. Word searches through software make it easy to believe that when we study all of the passage of a single word, we have studied an entire concept. For example, you can do a search on the word “church” (ekklesia) and conclude that you have a comprehensive study of the church (120 occurrences in the NKJV). However, the concept is larger than the word.

b. We must broaden our concept beyond a single word. The New Testament also uses such phrases as “body of Christ” and “household of faith.”

G. The Selective Evidence Mistake

a. This fallacy occurs when people intentionally ignore passages that contradict their personal views.

b. When we study God’s Word, we must recognize it is more important that we support the biblical evidence rather than the biblical evidence support our views. We must resolve that we are the one that needs to adjust and not the Scriptures.

II. Word Study Process

Not every word within a particular passage will require in-depth study. Most words are going to be straightforward and clear in their meaning.

A. Choose the Proper Words

a. Look for the ______ _________ of the passage. These words will often be the nouns or verbs and bear the weight
of the meaning of the text.
b. Look for ______________ words. These words often indicate the major theme of a passage.

c. Look for ______________ of ______________. These words demand additional study. They may be a metaphor, idiom, or personification.
d. Look for words that are _______ or _______. These words may be essential to understanding the entire passage.

Observation Activity 1 (Words)
In the passages below, underline which words you would identify for further study. Write your reasons for choosing each word in the margins (e.g. key word, repeated word, figure of speech, difficult, etc.).

Romans 12:1-2
1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Matthew 28:18-20
18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.
Observation Activity 1 (Words) Possible Solutions

Below are possible solutions for the previous page activity.

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech [key verb] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies [key noun] of God, that you present [key verb] your bodies a living sacrifice [figure of speech], holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [difficult]. 2 And do not be conformed [key verb] to this world, but be transformed [key verb] by the renewing [key verb] of your mind, that you may prove [difficult] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority [key noun] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples [key verb] of all the nations [key noun], baptizing [key verb] them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching [key verb] them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age [difficult].” Amen.
B. Determine Possible Meanings of the Word (Semantic Range)

a. ___________________. Look up the original Hebrew or Greek word in an exhaustive concordance.

b. ___________________. The context of a word is more than the other words in the same passage (i.e. immediate context). Using your concordance as a guide, find other passages that use the same word and compare.

1. ___________________ Context. Consider the words in the immediate context of the passage. This should be given the greatest weight.

2. Same ___________________. Consider the words in the context of the entire book. Who was the book written to and what were the circumstances?

3. Same ______. Consider the words and how the same author uses those words in other books he has written.

4. ___________________. Consider the words and how they are used within New or Old Testament.

5. ___________________. Consider the words and how they are used within all of Scripture.

6. ___________________. Consider any geographical, historical, or cultural backgrounds that may assist with understanding context.

C. Determine Actual Meaning of the Word in the Focal Passage

The context determines the meaning of the word. Here are additional questions to help identify the actual meaning.

1. Did the author provide a comparison or contrast that will assist with understanding the word?

2. Does the subject matter or theme of the passage demand a particular meaning?

3. Did the author’s use of the word elsewhere clarify the best meaning?

4. Does the author’s overall purpose of the book help clarify the best meaning?

5. Does the historical situation provide insight to the meaning of the word?
Word Study Activities

Use a concordance to determine the answers to the following questions.

**Genesis 39:14**

14 that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, “See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. (NKJV)

14 she called her household servants. “Look,” she said to them, “this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. (NIV)

1. What is the range of meaning for the bold and underlined words above?

2. Could there be another meaning given the subject matter in the immediate context of the passage?

**Acts 1:8**

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

1. Write out the English transliterated form of the word translated “power” in Acts 1:8. ______________________

2. How many times does this word occur in the NT? _____

3. Identify the passages in Acts that translate this word as “power.” (Write your answer in the margins.)

4. Identify the passages in Acts that translate this word as “miracles.” (Write your answer in the margins.)

**James 1:2-3**

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

1. What is the Greek word that is translated “trials” in James 1:2-3?

2. What is the English transliterated form of the word?

3. How many times is the word used in the New Testament?

4. Make a list of the different ways the Greek word is translated.

5. Can you find this word in the Old Testament?

6. Who wrote the book? Who was he writing to? What circumstances prompted the book?
7. What is the word’s range of meaning?

8. Based on your study of the word as used in the context of James 1:2-3, what do you believe the meaning of the word “trials” to be and explain why you think the word carries that meaning in James 1:2-3.

Matthew 6:25

25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

1. Using a concordance, find the Greek word that is translated as “worry” in Matthew 6:25. What is the G/K number of the word?

2. Now find that number in the “Greek to English Dictionary and Index” and write out the transliterated English form of the word.

3. Make a list of all the variations that Greek word is translated into English.

4. Look up each of the variations above and identify how many times each is used and write down the passages in which they are found.

5. Examine each occurrence in context and develop a range of meaning. Here are some questions that can help you...
   a. Make a list of the thing we are told not to worry about as found in Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-26.
   c. Compare and contrast the context of Luke 10:41 with Matthew 6:25. How does the contrast help define the meaning of Martha’s worry?
   d. What is the context usage in 1 Corinthians 7?
   e. Compare and contrast the contexts of 1 Corinthians 12 and Philippians 2.
   f. What is the context usage in Philippians 4?

6. Based upon your studies of the word “worry,” describe the semantic range of the word. (Hint: there are at least two major senses of the word.)

7. Identify the best meaning of the word “worry” as found in Matthew 6:25. Explain.
Sentences

I. Repeated Words
Look for words that are repeated. Sometimes words are repeated within the same sentence. However, it would be wise to examine the sentences around your focal passage and determine if there are repetitious words in the larger passage.

As a group, have someone read the following passages and determine the repetitious words and how many times they are used. Are there any modifiers to the words?

- 1 John 2:15-17
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

II. Contrasts
Contrasts focus on differences. Look for items, ideas, individuals that are contrasted with one another. As we will discover later, this is a common practice in Hebrew poetry.

As a group, have someone read the following passages and determine the contrasts being made. Once you identify the contrast, how does it help us understand the meaning better?

- Proverbs 14:31
- Proverbs 15:1
- Romans 6:23

III. Comparisons
Comparisons focus on similarities. Look for items, ideas, individuals that are compared with one another. As we will discover later, this is another common practice in Hebrew poetry.

As a group, have someone read the following passages and determine the comparisons being made. Once you identify the comparison, how does it help us understand the meaning better?

- Proverbs 25:26
- James 3:3-6
- Isaiah 40:31

IV. Lists
A list must have at least three (3) items. When you discover a list, explore the significance. Are they arranged in a particular order? For example, is there a progression or a digression?

As a group, have someone read the following passages and identify the list. Is there a progression or digression?
• 1 John 2:16
• Galatians 5:22-23
• John 15:1-17

V. Cause and Effect
Biblical writers often use cause and effect to help us move toward personal application. In fact, cause-and-effect relationships are important to identify for the Christian to make proper application.

As a group, have someone read the following passages and identify the cause and effect relationship.

• Proverbs 15:1
• Romans 6:23
• John 3:16

VI. Figures of Speech
Figures of speech is a literary form in which images are used to convey the meaning more vividly. They often use concrete images to help with abstract ideas.

As a group, have someone read the following passages and identify the figures of speech? What is the abstract idea that is being illustrated?

• Psalm 119:105
• Isaiah 40:31
• Matthew 23:27

VII. Conjunctions
“School House Rock” taught many of us the song “Conjunction Junction” and the purpose of conjunctions. The imagery of the train cars being connected is a great visual. A conjunction connects words, phrases, and clauses. The three most common are: and, but, and or. “And” adds to the list (e.g. “this and that”). “But” offers a contrast (e.g. “not this but that”). “Or” offers an option (e.g. “this or that”). There are many others found in Scripture. “Therefore” and “so” often precede a conclusion based on previous arguments. Others to consider are “since” and “because.”

As a group, have someone read the following passages and identify the conjunctions and their purpose.

• Romans 6:23
• Romans 12:1
• 2 Timothy 1:7-8
VIII. Verbs

Verbs communicate the action of the sentence. The verb tense is important for us as well. Is the verb past, present, or future tense (e.g. I went, I go, and I will go)? Imperative verbs, such as “go” are often God’s commands for us.

As a group, have someone read the following passage and identify the imperative verbs.

- Ephesians 4:2-3

Verbs can also be passive or active. Active verbs are those where the subject is actively doing something (e.g. “The batter hit the ball.”) Passive verbs are those where the subject is acted upon (e.g. “The batter was hit by the ball.”).

As a group, have someone read the following passage and identify the active and passive verbs.

- Colossians 3:1
- Ephesians 1:11
- Genesis 12:3

IX. Pronouns

A pronoun takes the place of a noun (e.g. I, you, me, she, herself, it, etc.). The antecedent is the word in which the pronoun refers. For example if we substituted pronouns for the nouns, “Please give the book to Carson,” it would read “Please give it to him.” “It” is the pronoun for the antecedent “book.” “Him” is the pronoun for the antecedent “Carson.”

As a group, have someone read the following passage and identify the pronouns and their proper antecedent.

- Ephesians 1:3
- Philippians 1:27-30
Observation Activity 2 (Sentences)

Consider all of the observations that can be made about words and sentences. Make as many observations as possible from the passage below.

Here are additional passages to observe:
- Acts 1:8 (Can you make 30 observations?)
- 1 John 1:5-7
- Deuteronomy 6:4-6
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- Matthew 28:18-20

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
Observation Activity 2 (Sentences) Possible Solutions

Below are possible solutions for the previous page activity.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 I [pronoun – who?] beseech [key verb - active] you [pronoun – who?] therefore [conjunction presenting a conclusion], brethren [figure of speech - who?], by the mercies [key noun] of God, that you [pronoun – who?] present [key verb - active] your bodies [plural] a living sacrifice [figure of speech - irony], holy, acceptable [repeated word 1st occurrence] to God, which is your [pronoun – who?] reasonable service [difficult] [singular]. 2 And do not be conformed [key verb – negative imperative] to this world [figure of speech] [difficult], but [conjunction comparison] be transformed [key verb] by the renewing [key verb] of your [pronoun – who?] mind [the way to be transformed] [cause] [singular], that you [pronoun – who?] may [effect] prove [difficult] what is that good [list – 1st word] and [conjunction] acceptable [repeated word 2nd occurrence] [list - 2nd word] and [conjunction] perfect will of God [list – 3rd word].
Paragraphs

A paragraph is a distinct section of writing that usually addresses a single theme. “Paragraph” is usually the term associated with the letters and “episode” is usually the term associated with narrative.

I. General to Specific

The biblical writers often use the literary feature of introducing a subject with a general statement and then moving into more detail as the narrative progresses. The overview is an introductory statement of the main idea.

In Galatians 5:16, Paul provides us with two “general statements” and then the details will follow. As a group, can you identify the two general statements and the details pertaining to each in the verses that follow?

Romans 12 is a general to specific paragraph. Can you identify the general statement and details?

Keep in mind that sometimes the author will reverse the order and move from specifics to the general statement.

II. Questions and Answers

On occasion the biblical author will present a question and then provide the answer. Paul and Mark are noted for using this literary feature. There may be only one question or even a series of questions. Consider the number of questions, who asked the questions, and how are the questions answered.

As a group, have someone read the following passages and determine the questions and answers accordingly.

- Romans 6:1-2
- Mark 2:1 – 3:6
- Mark 11:27 – 12:40

III. Dialogue

Some of the “question and answer” literary passages are also dialogue, but not all. When an author employs dialogue, there are several questions to consider.

1. Who are the participants in the dialogue?
2. What is the setting?
3. Who else is present at the scene?
4. Are those present at the scene listening?
5. Are those present at the scene participating in the dialogue?
6. Is the dialogue a discussion, argument, or lecture?
7. Is the dialogue casual conversation?
8. What is the point being made through the dialogue?
You may find it helpful to color code your Bible with who is speaking within a dialogue passage.
• John 4
• John 13
• Numbers 22

IV. Purpose Statements
Purpose statements are phrases that describe the reason, result, or consequences of a particular action. They are often identified with the words: so that, in order that, or that.
As a group, see if you can identify the purpose statement(s) within each of these passages.
• John 15
• Ephesians 2
• John 3

V. Means
When an action, result, or purpose is given, search for the means that brought about the outcome.
As a group, have someone read the following passages and answer the corresponding question.
• How do we put to death the misdeeds of the body? Rom. 8:13
• How can a young man remain pure? Psalm 119:9

VI. Conditional Clauses
Conditional clauses are usually identified with the words “if ... then...”
As a group, have someone read the following passages and identify the “condition” (i.e. if) and the “result or consequence” (i.e. then) of each passage.
• 1 John 1:6
  o Condition: __________________________________________
  ______________________________________________________
  o Result or Consequence: ______________________________
  ______________________________________________________
• 2 Corinthians 5:17
  o Condition: __________________________________________
VII. Actions of People and the Actions of God

It is important to identify what actions people take and what actions God takes. When possible, identify specifically whether an action of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. Compare and contrast the actions of people to the actions of God.

As a group, have someone read the following passage and identify the actions and make connections between the two.

• Ephesians 5:1-2

VIII. Emotional Terms

Don’t overlook words that convey emotional overtones.

As a group, have someone read the following passage and identify which phrases convey an emotional connotation.

• Galatians 4:12-16
• Jeremiah 3:19-20

IV. Tone

Words can also convey tone. These may be tied to the emotional terms. The passage may convey anger, sorrow, or a scolding tone.

As a group, have someone read the following passage and identify the tone intended.

• Colossians 3:1-4
• Galatians 3:1-4
• Matthew 23:33-35
• Lamentations 3:1-6
Observation Activity 3 (Paragraphs)

Consider all of the observations that can be made about words, sentences, and paragraphs. Make as many observations as possible from the passage below.

Here are additional passages to observe:

- Colossians 1:3-8
- Philippians 2:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- Colossians 3:1-4
- Psalm 1:1-3
- Matthew 6:25-34

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 (NKJV)

1 "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.'
Observation Activity 3 (Paragraphs) Possible Solutions
Below are possible solutions for the previous page activity.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3 (NKJV)

1 “Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2 that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.'
Discourses

I. Connections Between Paragraphs

Once you have made observations at the sentence and paragraph levels, it is important to consider how the paragraph/episode relates to and connects with other paragraphs/episodes you are studying.

The same clue words that we used at the sentence level are going to indicate connections between paragraphs/episodes. Look for connections such as “cause and effect.” Search for conjunctions between paragraphs (not just within sentences). If you are reading a narrative, pay close attention to the sequence of events within a timeline of each episode.

As a group, have someone read the following passage and determine the three episodes within the narrative. What observations can be made?

- Mark 8:14-30 (hint: three episodes)
- Colossians 1:3-14 (hint: two paragraphs)

II. Major Breaks and Pivots

Within the letters, a shift in topics is called a “major break.” Within the narrative, a shift is called a “episode pivot.”

Major breaks can often be identified by observing the change in verbs. For example, in Ephesians 1-3 Paul uses a high number of “explanatory” type verbs. His focus is to explain doctrines. In Ephesians 4-6 Paul shifts to imperative verbs. His focus is the last three chapters is on application of the doctrine. The verb change actually indicates a major shift in the middle of the letter.

The same type of major shift occurs between Romans 1-11 (doctrinal) and 12-16 (practical application).

2 Samuel is a good example of a episode pivot. The first half of the book focuses largely on the successes of David and his rise to power. The second half of the book focuses largely on challenges that David faced. What “episode pivot” do you think occurs in the middle of this book? The pivot event is found in 2 Samuel 11-12.

III. Interchange

Interchange is a literary device that is primarily used within narrative. Interchange involves a comparison and contrast as two narratives unfold. The narrative may move back and forth between the two, one may split the other two, one may simply follow the other.

As a group, discuss why Luke uses interchange in Acts. What was he trying to accomplish?

IV. Chiastic Structures

Chiasm is a literary feature that is seldom used in English, but often employed by the biblical writers. It is commonly seen in Hebrew poetry. For an illustration of a chiastic structure, read the following:

I got up this morning, got dressed, and drove to the church. I worked on my sermon and prepared for Sunday. Afterward I drove home, put on my PJs, and went to bed.

A chiastic structure is going to have parallels. The first line is identified as a and the corresponding parallel line is identified as a'.

- a  I got up this morning
- b  got dressed
- c  drove to the church
- d  worked on my sermon
- d' prepared for Sunday
- c' drove home
- b' put on my PJs
- a' went to bed

Chiasms range from short and simple to lengthy and complex. Examine Matthew 13:13-17 and fill in the chiastic structure below.

- a  __________________________________________________________
- b  ____________________________
- c  ____________________________
- d  ____________________________
- d' ____________________________
- e  ____________________________
- f  ____________________________
- g  ____________________________
- g' ____________________________
- f' ____________________________
- e' ____________________________
- d' ____________________________
- c' ____________________________
- b' ____________________________
- a' ____________________________
Examine 1 Corinthians 13:7 for a short chiastic structure.

a ____________________________
  b ____________________________
  b’ ____________________________
 a’ ____________________________

Notice the chiastic structure allows us to better understand how to interpret the verse.
Observation Activity 4 (Discourses)

Consider all of the observations that can be made about words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses. Make as many observations as possible from the passage below.

Nehemiah 1:1-11 (NKJV)

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.

It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, 2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.”

4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5 And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You [b] and observe Your [c] commandments, 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father’s house and I have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.

8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; [d] 9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.’ [e] 10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. 11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

For I was the king’s cupbearer.
Study Questions (Part 1):

- Define what is meant by formal equivalence.
- Define what is meant by dynamic equivalence.
- Explain the English-only Fallacy of word studies.
- Explain the Root Word Fallacy of word studies.
- What are four things to observe when searching for key words to study.
- Define what is meant by Semantic Range.
- What observations should be made when studying sentences?
- Define what is meant by the terms “compare and contrast.”
- What additional observations should be made when a list (3 or more) is discovered?
- What observations should be made when studying paragraphs?
- What observations should be made when studying discourses?
- Define what is meant by “episode pivot” and where are you most likely to observe one? Can you give an example?
- Define what is meant by an interchange.
- Define what is meant by a chiastic structure.
Bible study is not easy. As believers, we have a responsibility to do the difficult work of interpretation. “Study” is not the work of the unskilled, careless, or lazy. For the one who has done the hard work of biblical hermeneutics, there is no shame. Their task is to handle the Word of God with such faithfulness that God’s hand is seen clearly upon the one who does the work.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15
Interpretation

I. Step 1: Understanding the _____________ Audience
What did the text mean to the biblical audience?
As a student of God’s Word, much time will be spent making observations. It is important to examine and understand words, sentences, paragraphs, and discourses. Through your observations, you will learn much about the historical background and the literary context of passages. All of the observation that you have done has been for the purpose of determining the meaning of the text as it was intended for the original audience.

II. Step 2: Understanding the _____________ between Our Culture and the Original Audience
What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
Before we make an attempt to apply Scripture to our own lives and situations, it is wise to know the distance between the original biblical audience and ourselves. These differences include: culture, language, situations, time, and covenant. When you study a particular passage, identify the major differences. For example, I am not Joshua leading the nation of Israel into the Promised Land.

III. Step 3: Understanding the Theological _____________ of the Passage
What is the theological principle in this text?
The theological principle of the text is the bridge that will lead you to application within our situation. The task is not to create the principles, but to identify them from the meaning of the text. While the distance focuses on the differences, the principles identify the similarities. For example, while I am not the leader of Israel on the brink of invading the Promised Land, I do want to obey the will of God and accomplish what He has commanded me to do.
The theological principle should then be examined in light of the whole of Scripture.

- The principle must be reflected in the text.
- The principle must be timeless and not tied to a specific situation.
- The principle must not be culturally bound.
- The principle must correspond to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
- The principle must be relevant to both the biblical and the contemporary audiences.
IV. Step 4: Understanding the Theological Principles in ______ Culture

How should Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?

While there will be only a few theological principles, the application can have numerous possibilities. With the theological principles identified, we are ready to step onto the bridge, cross into our modern context, and make personal application in our lives. We will examine the process of application more thoroughly in the final section of our workbook.
How to Interpret the Genres

A “genre” is a form of text that is characterized by a particular format, structure, or subject matter. Understanding the various genres of Scripture can assist with understanding meaning and interpretation. The main genres found within Scripture are: law, history, wisdom, poetry, narrative, epistles, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature.

OT: The Law

I. Introduction

The Books of the Law are the first five books of the Old Testament (i.e. Pentateuch). However, these books also contain historical narrative. Much of the legal material is found in Leviticus, most of Deuteronomy, about half of Exodus, and a portion of Numbers.

a. 

b. 

c. 

d. 

e. 

II. Traditional Approach

1. ___________ Law

2. ___________ Law

3. ___________ Law

The traditional approach to interpreting Old Testament Law has been to emphasize the distinction between moral, civil, and ceremonial laws. It is largely suggested that the moral laws are those that are timeless truths regarding God’s intention for human behavior. For example “Love your neighbor as yourself” has long been viewed as a moral law (Lev. 19:18). Civil laws are those that are concerned with the nation’s legal system such as the courts, economics, land, crimes, and punishment. For example, “at the end of every seven years you must cancel debts” is identified as a civil law (Deut. 15:1). Ceremonial laws are those that dealt with sacrifices. For example, “celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress” is an example. Using this three-part distinction between moral, civil, and ceremonial laws allows the believer to embrace the moral laws as timeless and apply the civil and ceremonial laws to ancient Israel.
III. Contextual Approach

1. Consider the ______________ Context

2. Consider the ______________ Theme

The challenge with the traditional approach is that the three distinctions are not always easy to identify and appear to be arbitrary. The text will even move from one to the next without making the distinction. For example, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18) is followed by “do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material” (Lev. 19:19). While the traditional approach has been historically helpful, we might consider other observations that can be made. A close examination would discover that the running theme of Leviticus is the holiness of God. If the overarching principle is God’s holiness and separation, then we might understand the verses differently. Since clothing was a symbol of the atonement, mixing two different fabrics was forbidden. It was a statement of God’s holiness. Atonement is not accomplished through faith and works (two fabrics), but rather we are saved by grace through faith alone. Since the law genre is woven through an historical narrative, it is important to give consideration to the overall narrative. For example, the Ten Commandments are in Exodus 20 and fall in the midst of historical narrative. In addition, the Hebrew people are observing laws that relate to the covenant they made with God. As Christians, we must remember we have a New Covenant and we should understand how the Old Covenant helps us with interpretation and application today.

Remember, when we read the law and “cross the bridge of theological principles,” we must consider how the New Testament impacts the theological principles.
OT: Historical Narrative

I. Introduction

The Books of History are the next twelve books following the Pentateuch. Keep in mind these are not the only books that use historical narrative. These twelve books provide the historical timeline of events, while the other books (wisdom and prophets) will be placed into this timeline.

a. __________________
b. ________________
c. ________________
d. ________________
e. ________________
f. ________________
g. ________________
h. ________________
i. ________________

Narrative history is the literary practice of communicating actual events in a story-based form. The traditional approach focuses on the chronological order of historical events that involve a plot, setting, and “characters.”

I often shy away from using the term “Bible story” or “Bible characters” because those terms can make the narrative seem as though they are not real and merely “stories.” I prefer “Bible events” or “Biblical person/people.”

Rather than telling us how to live, the historical narrative provides examples of what to do or not do.

II. Advantages of Narrative in Communicating Theological Truths

1. Narratives are interesting for all ages.
2. Narratives engage the listener into the action.
3. Narratives often depict real life scenarios that prompt us to consider how we would respond.
4. Narratives can make complex subjects easier to understand.
5. Narratives are easy to remember.
6. Narratives allow us to see things from the perspective of others and observe resolution to conflicts.
7. Narratives can reveal the character of God through His words and actions with others.
III. Disadvantages of Narrative in Communicating Theological Truths

1. Narratives can be subtle and the casual reader can overlook the meaning of the passage.
2. Narratives can be so engaging that the reader gets caught up in the story and forget to observe theological principles.
3. Narratives can be perceived as merely history and overlook theological relevance.
4. Narratives can be perceived as merely allegory and overlook the historical significance.

IV. Literary Features of Historical Narrative

1. ________. When you explore the “plot,” you should ask “What?” and “How?” questions. The plot often has three components.
   a. ________. This is the introduction of the narrative. Ask, “What is the story about?”
   b. ________. The conflict can often be between God and a rebellious people. The conflict usually escalates (the climax of the narrative). Ask, “What is the main conflict?” and “How does the tension develop?”
   c. ________. This is where the conflict is resolved. Ask, “How is the conflict resolved?”

2. ________. When you explore the “setting,” you should ask “When?” and “Where?” questions. For example, you might read “in the days when the judges ruled.” Discover what can you know about the “when” and “where” of this phrase.

3. ________. When you explore the “people,” you should ask “Who?” questions. People move the plot forward. Observe how they interact, respond, disobey, etc.

4. ________. When you explore the “viewpoint of the narrator,” you should ask “Why?” questions. The author has a purpose behind the narrative. His purpose is often implicit and only discovered as observations are made of the plot, setting, and people. The narrator will occasionally offer insight. For example, “All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them out of Egypt” (2 Kg 17:7).

V. Observations of Historical Narrative

1. ____________________________. During the “observation” stage of interpretation, make sure you use comparison and contrast while reading historical narrative. Are there two parallel stories? Are there two contrasting characters?

2. ____________. During the “observation” stage of interpretation, make sure you take note of irony. Irony is employed to make the meaning much more intense. It a commonly used method of historical narrative authors.
OT: Poetry and Wisdom

I. Introduction

The Books of Wisdom are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. A large portion of the wisdom literature is poetry. Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Lamentations are almost entirely poetic. However, poetry can also be found in the prophetic books. Nearly every book of the Old Testament contains some poetic feature.

II. Literary Features of Poetry

1. ______________. While the historical narrative is known for long and descriptive sentences, poetry is much more concise.

2. ______________. Poetry does not always employ sentence and paragraph prose. Instead, they use lines and verses. Keep in mind that punctuation is not as important in poetry as it is in narrative.
   a. ______________. Parallelism is the dominant structural feature of Old Testament poetry.
      i. ______________. Within synonymous parallelism the author will use two, three, or occasionally four lines to convey a single thought. The second line repeats the same idea as the first using similar words.

      Consider Psalm 19:8...

   ii. ______________. Developmental parallelism means that the second line builds upon the idea of the previous line. Developmental can also be in a question/answer format.

      Consider Psalm 121:3...

   Consider Psalm 119:9
iii. Illustrative parallelism conveys an idea in the first line and then illustrates the idea in the next line. Line B illustrates the truth of line A.

Consider Psalm 140:7...

iv. Contrastive parallelism employs the use of contrast. Line B is contrasted with line A.

Consider Psalm 1:6...

v. This is the “catch all” category of parallelism. The connection between lines has more to do with metric considerations.

Consider Psalm 2:6...

b. Acrostics are easy to spot if you are familiar with the Hebrew alphabet. However, because our English words do not correspond to the Hebrew alphabet, the acrostic cannot be observed in English. If we were to write an English acrostic, the first word of the first line would begin with the letter “A.” The first word of the second line would begin with the letter “B.” The first word of the third line would begin with the letter “C” and so forth.

Consider Psalms 25, 34, 111, 112, and 145...
Consider Proverbs 31:10-31...

Consider Psalm 119...

Perhaps the most intriguing acrostic is Psalm 119, every first word in each of the first eight verses starts with the beginning letter of the Hebrew alphabet, aleph. This continues eight lines at a time through the entire chapter and covers the entire Hebrew alphabet (i.e. aleph, beth, gimel, daleth, he, waw, etc.).

c. __________. Chiastic structures follow a symmetrical pattern often diagramed as A, B, B', A'. Chiastic structures can also be more complex (cf. Prov. 1:20-33).

Consider Proverbs 1:20-33

(Hint: A, B, C, D, E, D', C', B', A')

III. Figurative Imagery of Poetry

1. Figures of Speech Involving __________. The idea here is that the figure of speech is drawing analogies between two different items. This is accomplished several ways...
   a. Simile. A simile makes a comparison using the words "like" or "as."
   b. Metaphor. A metaphor makes a direct analogy between two items without the use of "like" or "as."
   c. Indirect Analogy. This comparison doesn’t mention both parties being compared, but assumes the reader can figure it out (cf. Ps. 22:13).
   d. Hyperbole. Hyperbole is a conscious exaggeration to illustrate a point (cf. Ps. 42:3).
   e. Personification / anthropomorphism / zoomorphism. Personification is giving human characteristics to non-human entities (cf. Isa. 44:23). Anthropomorphism is the representation of God with humanlike features or characteristics (cf. Ps. 27:8). Zoomorphism is when nonhuman or animal-like images are used to describe God (cf. Ps. 91:4).
2. Figures of Speech Involving __________.
   a. Effects and Causes. Instead of emphasizing the desired cause, the author substitutes the effect for the cause. For example, if I am at a baseball game and I yell, “Come on batter, make me happy!” I could have said, “Come on batter, hit a home run!” However, I chose to substitute the effect in place of the cause. The reason for the substitution is often to convey the intensity of the emotions (cf. Ps. 51:8; Pr. 19:13).

   b. Representation. Parts of the whole can be representative of the whole. For example, Washington, DC can be a figurative representation of the United States. In the same way, “Judah” or “Jerusalem” can be used to represent the whole southern kingdom. Feet can represent the whole person.

3. Figures of Speech Involving __________. Apostrophe is used when the author addresses a person or entity who is not actually present.

   Consider Psalm 2:10; 6:8; 24:7; 114:5…

4. Figures of Speech Involving __________. When the author conveys his meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite. This can often involve sarcasm and has a humorous effect.

   Consider Job 38:18-21; Isaiah 41:22-23…

5. Figures of Speech Involving __________. Unfortunately these do not translate into English because they rely heavily on the sound of the words involved.

   Consider Jeremiah 3:22…
IV. Unique Features of the Wisdom & Poetry Books

1. _______. Job is one of the better known stories of Scripture. However, grasping the meaning is not easy. The principles are subtle and not as easily identified as they are in Proverbs.
   a. The key to interpreting Job is to remember that it is written in narrative form and therefore everything has a context. When verses are pulled from the context of the narrative is when major misinterpretation is at risk.
   b. Here is a contextual outline to assist with your study:
      i. Job 1:1 – 2:10, Job is afflicted.
      ii. Job 2:11 – 37:24, Job and his friends search unsuccessfully for a rational answer.
      iv. Job 42:7 – 17, Job’s friends are rebuked and Job is restored.

2. _______. The Book of Psalms served as a hymn book for the Hebrew people. The book was not written to offer doctrinal teaching. Instead, it is an expression of how to worship and express our deepest emotions and needs to God.
   a. The Musical Terminology in Psalms
      i. Alamoth: female voices or a stringed instrument (46)
      ii. Gittith: wine press or vintage song; musical instrument from Gath (8, 81, 84)
      iii. Jeduthun: a choir leader in David’s day (39, 77)
      iv. Maschil: a meditative, didactic, or skillful psalm
      v. Michtam: a golden psalm or an atonement psalm
      vi. Mismor: to pluck an instrument, pizzicato
      vii. Neginoth: a stringed instrument (4, 5, 54, 55, 61, 67, 76)
      viii. Nehiloth: a wind instrument (5)
      ix. Selah: a musical interlude which some take as a pause for meditation
      x. Sheminith: an eighth or octave; male voices
      xi. Shiggayon: wandering or irregular music (7)
      xii. Shir: a song in general (can be sacred or even secular)
      xiii. Tehillah: praise (145)
      xiv. Tehillim: praises, psalter
      xv. Tephillah: prayer
   b. A Topical Classification of the Psalms
      i. Messianic Psalms: Psalms that either depict or predict the life and ministry of Christ (See previous outline heading).
ii. Praise Psalms (Hallel Psalms): Psalms that focus on praise. All five divisions end with a psalm of praise. The entire final chapter (150) is a psalm of praise. Hallel means praise.

iii. Petition Psalms (Intercessional Psalms): Psalms that plea for God’s help for self or others.

iv. Penitence Psalms: Psalms that deal with sin and forgiveness.

v. Pastoral Psalms: Psalms of God’s care for His people.

vi. Precept Psalms (Wisdom Psalms): Psalms that guide His people to righteousness

vii. Profession (of faith) Psalms: Psalms that are not addressed to God, but are about God.

viii. Royal Psalms: Psalms that deal with the spiritual role of kings in their worship of YHWH.

ix. Thanksgiving Psalms: Psalms that offer thanksgiving to God.

x. Wisdom Psalms: Psalms that emphasize God’s wisdom.

xi. Pilgrimage Psalms (Psalms of Ascent): Psalms that would be sung by the people of Israel as they went to Jerusalem for holy days. These were songs of celebration and reverence.

xii. Imprecatory Psalms: Psalms that call down a curse on Israel’s enemies.

1. The judgment called for is based on divine justice and not on human grudges (cf. Ps. 109:4-5).

2. The judgment is expressed in the thought patterns of the day. For the Hebrews there was no sharp distinction between the sinner and his sin. Further, a man and his family were considered a unit. They stood or fell together (cf. Noah, Achan).

3. The New Testament emphasis on judgment after death and ultimate justice helps minimize the need to anticipate or explain judgment in more immediate and earthly terms.

4. The phenomenon of imprecation is not unique to the Old Testament. Jesus urged His disciples to curse cities that did not receive the gospel (cf. Matt. 10:14). Jesus called down judgment on Tyre and Sidon (cf. Matt. 11:22). Paul declared anathema any who did not love the Lord Jesus (cf. I Cor. 16:22). Even the saints in heaven are pictured as beseeching God for vengeance on those who killed the martyrs (cf. Rev. 6:9-10).
5. All imprecatory psalms are a longing for justice that aspire for Christ and His righteous kingdom (cf. Rev. 20). All judgment has been given to the Son (cf. John 5:22).

3. Proverbs is perhaps the easiest of the wisdom books to read because it relates to everyday life (e.g., work, friendship, marriage, speech, money, integrity, etc.).
   a. Perhaps the most important thing to remember when interpreting and making application of Proverbs is that the individual proverbs reflect general nuggets of wisdom, not hard and fast certainties.
   b. Proverbs 10:4, “He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” The idea is that hard work pays off. We must be careful not to insist that the passage says that all hard work will lead to prosperity.

4. Ecclesiastes is a difficult read. The book is a commentary on the observations of life. The commentary is filled with sarcasm, is largely cynical in nature, and borders on bitterness.
   a. The key to interpreting Ecclesiastes is making sure the context of the entire book is taken into consideration.
   b. The book does not reveal a glimpse of hope until the end. The true meaning of life is then revealed in the closing words of the book. Therefore, any attempt of interpretation of earlier parts of the book must be understood in light of the conclusion of the book.

5. Perhaps one of the most shocking books of the Bible because of the explicit language associated with sexuality.
   a. The church has struggled with how to interpret this book. Some have suggested an allegorical approach with the book describing the relationship between Christ and His church. However, the overt sexual themes seem awkward.
   b. The book is organized into three sequences.
      i. The Courtship (1:2 – 3:5)
      ii. The Wedding (3:6 – 5:1)
      iii. The Life of Love (5:2 – 8:14)
   c. Perhaps the hermeneutic bridge to cross is found in a frank discussion of the joys associated with marital intimacy.
I. Introduction

The prophetic books include the five major prophets (i.e. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel), as well as the twelve minor prophets (i.e. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

II. The Meaning of Prophecy

1. Prophecy (Broad Definition): The word prophecy means “to forth-tell.” Forth-telling involved insight into the will of God. This type of prophecy exhorted people to change their behavior.

2. Prophecy (Narrow Definition): The word prophecy means “to fore-tell.” Fore-telling involved foresight into the plan of God. This type of prophecy predicted the future. While many people think of prophecy as fore-telling it is forth-telling that is much more common in the Bible. However, in the instances where fore-telling is used it is compelling evidence that the Bible is in fact the Word of God.

3. Prophet: The word prophet comes from the word meaning “to announce.” A prophet was God’s mouthpiece or the human instrument through which God declared His message to men.

III. Literary Features of Prophetic Books

1. _______________. The books are primarily a collection of short messages. They are usually oral messages that the prophets have proclaimed publicly to the people of Israel or Judah. They are not organized according to chronology. Nor are they organized according to themes. For the most part, a tight thematic unity is absent. This makes outlining these books very difficult.

2. _______________. What are the themes of the prophets? Theologically the prophets proclaim their message from the context of the Mosaic covenant, primarily defined in Deuteronomy. The themes of Deuteronomy are therefore woven into the fabric of the prophetic books.

   a. You have broken the covenant, you had better repent!

   The prophets stress how serious the nation’s covenant violation has become and the extent to which the people have shattered the covenant. There are three indictments brought against the people.
i. ______________. The central covenant formula in the Old Testament is the statement by the Lord that “I will be your God, you will be my people. I will dwell in your midst.” Idolatry rejects that relationship. Idolatry is replacing God’s rightful place with something or someone else (even ourselves).

ii. ______________. The Lord was concerned with social justice for everyone, and He was especially concerned with how weaker individuals in society were treated. Social injustice is when those who cannot care for themselves are neglected. Application of this truth is often difficult today because frequently political affiliations and regional cultural outlook play greater roles in shaping the American Christian’s view of social justice than biblical theology does. The biblical interpretive challenge for us is not to have Republican or Democrat views, but rather Christian views, views that are anchored in biblical theology rather than secular culture.

iii. ______________. The people often forgot that the rituals are evidence of a relationship, not a substitute for the relationship. Ritualism is neglecting a relationship with the Lord and replacing it with religious activity.

b. No repentance? Then judgment!

The prophets plead with the people to repent. Neither Israel nor Judah repent, therefore much of the prophetic books warn of the immanent judgment coming (i.e. Assyrians and Babylonians).

i. ______________ Invasion. The Assyrian Invasion (722 BC) invaded the Northern Kingdom.

ii. ______________ Captivity. The Babylonian Captivity (605-535 BC) conquered the Southern Kingdom.

c. Yet, there is hope beyond the judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

i. The prophets never lose sight of hope. For Isaiah, there will be new Exodus. Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant. Ezekiel and Joel point us to a new presence of the Lord’s indwelling Spirit. The future will be characterized by forgiveness and peace and the emphasis will be on relationship over ritual.

ii. Christ is the perfect fulfillment of this glorious and future restoration.
NT: Gospel Accounts

I. Introduction

________________________ means “good news.” There are not four Gospels. There is one Gospel with multiple accounts. Furthermore, it is not Matthew’s Gospel, Mark’s Gospel, Luke’s Gospel, or John’s Gospel. Rather it is the Gospel of Jesus According to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John!

________________________ __________________ is a reference to the first three gospel accounts (i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke), because they are similar (syn means together, and optic means see). John takes a different approach from the other three altogether.

a. __________________
b. __________________
c. __________________
d. __________________

II. Interpretive Considerations

1. __________________ ________. It is important to understand that the Gospels are not only ancient biography, but are Christological biography. The author’s goal is to point us to Jesus the Christ. The authors also give us insight by the way that link stories together. Therefore, we should ask two questions concerning interpretation.

   a. What does the small story tell me about Jesus?
   b. What is trying to be communicated about Jesus in the way the author has woven the surrounding stories together?

2. __________________ ________. As you read about a specific event, use the following questions to guide your observations and interpretation.


      • Who? (people)
      • What? (story line)
      • When? (time)
      • Where? (place)
      • Why? (reason)
      • How? (means)
b. __________ ______________. Look for interpretive instructions from the author himself. These can be found before or after the event and occasionally within parenthetical comments from the author.

- Luke 14:7
- Matt. 5:1-2
- Mark 7:19

c. ______________. Take special note of anything that is repeated in the story.

d. ______________ ______________. Take special note when the story shifts from the narrator speaking to the people speaking. Go through and read only the direct quotes found in Mark 4:35-41. The direct discourse provides the story in a nutshell.

- V. 35 ______________________________
- V. 38 ______________________________
- V. 39 ______________________________
- V. 40 ______________________________
- V. 41 ______________________________

3. ______ of _________. The second interpretive question expands the context beyond the singular event to the surrounding stories/events/episodes.

a. ______________. Look for connections between stories. Compare the people involved from one event to the next. Consider Mark 4:35-41 again...

- How does this passage connect with the larger unit?
- What principles can we draw from this passage?
  - Principle 1: Life is hard. People experience the threat of death, satanic attack, disease, and death itself.
  - Jesus is sovereign over forces that are hostile to God. First-century people feared some of the same things that we fear: the storms, the demonic, disease, and death. Jesus has power over these.
  - We should trust Jesus in the midst of the desperate situations of life. The common thread running through each episode is the hopelessness of each situation. Jesus calls us to faith.

b. ______________. Once principles have been identified, we can move into application.

- Application to Principle 1: Christians should not expect to be exempt from difficult situations such as disease and death.
• Application to Principle 2: Not every disease is cured. Not everyone is healed. However, each instance is a picture of the ultimate healing that is coming. We get to see glimpses of what life will be like when He returns.

• Application to Principle 3: We are called to a life of wholehearted faith in Christ even in the midst of dire circumstances. Yet, even if we are not provided the healing we desire (a glimpse of the future restoration), our faith will not be shaken.

III. Literary Features of the Gospel Accounts

1. __________ and __________. When interpreting metaphors and similes, identify the intended point of comparison. The comparison usually has a simple and direct meaning and should not be pressed beyond what the context demands.
   a. Read Matt. 5:13. Is it a simile or metaphor? What is the intended meaning?
   b. Read Matt. 23:27. Is it a simile or metaphor? What is the intended meaning?

2. ______________. Jesus used hyperbole to communicate the seriousness of His message.
   a. Read Matt. 5:29-30. What is the intended meaning?
   b. Read Luke 14:26. What is the intended meaning?
   c. Read Mark 10:24b-25. What is the intended meaning?

3. __________. Irony is intended to make a contrast between what is expected to happen and what actually happens.
   b. Can you think of the ultimate example of irony recorded in the New Testament?

4. ______________ Questions. Jesus asked questions to make a point rather than to retrieve an answer.
   a. Read Matt. 6:27. What was the point?
   b. Read Matt. 5:46. What was the point?

5. __________. Just like in Hebrew poetry, the gospel accounts contain parallelism.
   a. ______________. The lines say basically the same thing (cf. Mark 4:22).
   b. ______________. The second line contrasts the previous line (cf. Matt. 12:35).
   c. ______________. Each subsequent line builds on the previous (cf. Matt. 10:40).
6. __________. One of Jesus’ favorite forms of communication. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly truth.

   a. Begin with Christ’s interpretation. This may be found in the introduction of the conclusion. If Jesus offers a clear explanation of the parable, we need not look further. We should also look to Jesus’ interpretation of His own parables as a pattern for interpreting His other parables.

   b. Look for one central truth. Don’t force an interpretation of the parable onto the story. There is usually one central truth and the details will support the main point. We might ask how the central truth fits into the larger narrative of the whole of Scripture and the Gospel.

   c. Look for Jesus. We may aspire to be the “Good Samaritan,” but we are not the Good Samaritan in the parable… Jesus is. We are the one who needs to be rescued and bandaged.

   d. Don’t press the details, but don’t minimize the details. The details should help us understand the whole and without them the parable would be deficient. Don’t make the details say more than the passage itself.

   e. Consider the context and the culture. What was the setting in which Jesus shared the parable? Who was present? What prompted the parable? The central truth is going to parallel the current events. Each parable has its own lesson, which is based on the original intent of the Lord. The meaning is going to be reinforced by the similarity between the event and the story’s proper interpretation.

   f. While a parable has one interpretation, it can have many points of application. Look for one main point for each person in the story.

   g. The parable should prompt us to think differently and to focus on living for the Kingdom of God as opposed to the kingdoms of the world.
NT: Acts

I. Introduction

The Book of Acts is a continuation of Luke’s gospel account. Luke and Acts are really a two-volume set telling a single story. While the gospel account is a theological biography, the Book of Acts is a theological history. Acts picks up with the events where Luke’s gospel account ends. What Jesus began to do during His earthly ministry, He now continues to do through His Spirit-empowered followers.

Luke-Acts was written to a recent convert to Christianity named Theophilus, so “that you [Theophilus] may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:4).

II. Interpretive Considerations

1. __________ ____________. Look for what Luke intended to communicate to his readers.

2. __________ ____________. Look for positive and negative examples in the people of the narrative.


4. ____________ vs. _____________. Look to other parts of Acts to clarify what is normative (prescriptive). For example, some in the early church sold their possessions and lived in commune with other believers. Is this for all Christians (prescriptive) or is it simply telling us what this particular group did (descriptive). The answer can be found by making observations found in other parts of Acts.

5. ____________. Look for repeated patterns and themes. Repetition can help identify what is normative.

6. ____________. This passage serves as the backdrop for understanding what is taking place throughout the entire narrative.

III. Major Themes in the Book of Acts

1. _______________________

2. _______________________

3. _______________________

4. _______________________

5. _______________________

6. _______________________

7. _______________________

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NT: Letters

I. Introduction

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Luke-Acts was written to a recent convert to Christianity named Theophilus, so “that you [Theophilus] may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:4).

II. Characteristics of New Testament Letters

1. When compared to other ancient letters, the letters of the New Testament are considerably longer. The average length of a Graeco-Roman letter was 87 words. The Pauline letters average 2495 words. Most secular letters of the time were simple letters that were largely informal between family members or friends. Some were business contracts or civic records. Some secular letters were meant for public presentation and were more formal. The New Testament Letters do not fit neatly into these categories. There are both formal and informal letters and have intent to be shared with others.

2. We often write letters as a substitute for personal presence today. The same is true with the New Testament letters. Yet, in addition to being a substitute these letters carried authority with them.

3. New Testament letters were often written to address specific situations or problems. The letters might address doctrinal problems, offer clarity, or confront the readers about their behavior. The subject matter was determined by the situations at work in the community to which the apostle wrote.

4. Many of the New Testament letters were hand written by secretaries and the apostles told them what to write.

5. There was a sophisticated postal service in the first century, but those letters were limited to government use. The apostles then depended upon trusted ministry friends who would travel and deliver the letters.

6. The letters were meant to be read publicly again and again to specific congregations. Some Christians would not be able to read and were dependent upon public readings.
III. The Form of New Testament Letters

1. ______________. The introduction will often give you four pieces of information: name of the writer, name of the recipient, a greeting, and an introductory prayer. This information will be helpful in making observations.

2. ______________. The body is where the writer addresses the specific situations facing the church community. The body can include instructions, persuasion, rebuke, exhortation, and much more.

3. ______________. The conclusion can vary greatly in content.
   a. Travel plans
   b. Commendation of coworkers
   c. Prayer
   d. Prayer requests
   e. Greetings
   f. Final instructions and exhortations
   g. Holy kiss
   h. Autograph
   i. Benediction
   j. Doxology

IV. Interpretive Considerations

1. ______________. Always begin with making observations and find answers to questions. Bible dictionaries and commentaries can help answer questions. It’s important to ask these questions about each New Testament letter...
   a. Who was the author?
   b. What was his background?
   c. When did he write?
   d. What was the nature of his ministry?
   e. What kind of relationship did he have with the audience?
   f. Why was he writing?
   g. Who was the biblical audience?
   h. What were the circumstances?
   i. How was their relationship to God?
   j. What about their relationship to the author and to each other?
   k. What was happening at the time the book was written?
   l. Are there any historical-cultural factors that might shed light on the book?
2. ______________. Measure the distance between yourself and the original audience. While they were Christians, just like us, they sometimes deal with issues that are foreign to us.

3. ______________. Cross the bridge at the point of identified principles. Write out the theological principles of the text. The author of the letters often make theological principles quite obvious and spelled out. If a principle is given within the text, know why it was given.

4. ______________. Consider how the principle can be applied in our situations today.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2 and take the interpretive journey.
I. Introduction

The last book of the Bible is self-described as a “revelation of Jesus Christ.” The word “revelation” (apokalypsis in Greek) means that something that was once hidden is now being revealed.

We are going to hear about Christ and we are going to hear from Christ. There are not multiple “revelations,” there is a singular focus and that is the person of Jesus Christ. The Book of Revelation is the “final chapter” of the Gospel narrative, and the focus remains on Christ.

II. Historical Context

1. __________. First century Christians were under heavy persecution. It has been sixty years since the crucifixion of Christ and He has yet to return. For an historical understanding of the persecution, consider the reading the sources of Pliny, Tacitus, and Seutonius. The end of the first century was characterized by the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD) who wanted to be addressed as “dominus et deus noster” (“our lord and god”). Domitian reign was savage, cruel, devious, sexually immoral, mad, and evil. When Christians refused to worship the emperor, they were considered disloyal to the state and faced strong persecution.

2. __________. Not every Christian was standing strong against the persecution. While many remained faithful and even died for their faith, some were openly denying Christ or reverting back to Judaism to avoid trouble. The messages to the seven churches are filled with warnings for those who are tempted to abandon their faith and embrace the worldly systems.

III. Literary Genre

Revelation is a unique book because it is a combination of three different genres: letter, prophecy, and apocalyptic.

1. __________. The book begins with a typical letter introduction (1:4-5) and concludes with a benediction (22:21). This suggests that the book as a whole is a letter intended to be circulated among seven specific churches in Asia Minor. Keep in mind that letters tend to be “situational” and this one is no exception. Letters address a problem or situation. The churches are enduring persecution. The letter offers comfort for those who are being persecuted and challenges those who are compromising.

2. __________. The book is also a prophetic letter (1:3; 22:6-7, 10, 18-19). This suggests that the book contains both a prediction of the future and a proclamation of God’s truth for the present.
3. ______________. The book is an apocalyptic letter. The Jewish people were already familiar with apocalyptic writings (e.g., Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah). The main characteristic of apocalyptic literature is the use of visual images that are foreign to our daily experiences. In order to understand the images, it is important to grasp the purpose of Revelation.

IV. The Purpose of Revelation

The world around us is filled with persecution. When we can remove ourselves from the current situation and see things from God’s perspective, we will discover that God wins! Revelation makes it clear that in spite of current circumstances (how things appear), Caesar is NOT Lord. Ironically, Revelation paints a picture of reality, not fantasy... those who do not compromise with the pagan world will see God’s future and be filled with hope in the present. When you see the future, you will know that Jesus is Lord and not Caesar!

V. Traditional Approaches for Interpreting Revelation

There are four traditional approaches to interpreting the Book of Revelation.

1. __________. This view suggests that the events are specific to first century and have already taken place. John’s audience would have understood the imagery and we do not.

2. __________. This view suggests that the events are a map outlining church history from the first century until the return of Christ.

3. __________. This view suggests that the events are all future tense and will commence immediately preceding the end of history.

4. __________. This view suggests that the events are not real, but merely a symbol of the continuing battle between good and evil.

However, there is no reason to suggest that the strengths of these views cannot compliment one another. (Preterist) Undoubtedly, we must consider the first century audience just as we do other books. However, we should not leave them in history and not search for application to our own culture. (Historicist) Likewise, there is an undeniable correspondence to church history and the seven churches. (Futurist) The book itself proclaims to be a prophetic letter. There are events that have yet to take place such as the return of Christ, great white throne judgment, and the arrival of the holy city. (Idealist) There is no reason to dismiss the reality of the events simply because the battle between good and evil is taking place.
VI. Additional Considerations for Interpreting Revelation

Here are some suggestions for understanding and interpreting Revelation.

1. _____________. Revelation is not easy. Interpreters get into trouble when they become dogmatic about one of the four traditional approaches. We must approach Revelation with a humble attitude and be willing to adjust our view to match the biblical evidence.

2. _____________. Always search for the meaning to the original audience. Consider the historical context. The book had meaning for the first century Christians, it has meaning for us, and it will continue to have meaning if Christ tarries for another 1000 years. Begin with, “What was John trying to communicate to his audience?” If our interpretation doesn’t make sense for first century Christians, then we’ve missed the meaning of the passage.

3. _____________. Don’t become dogmatic that Revelation is a precise chronological sequence of events. For example, the sixth seal takes us to the “end of the age,” yet when the seventh seal is opened there are a whole new set of judgments and the seventh trumpet that takes us to the “end of the age” again. There are sequences, but the book as a whole moves around.

4. _____________. When most people say that Bible is to be understood “symbolically” they want to deny the reality of a scriptural truth or an historical event. Symbolism is an important part of understanding the Christian faith, but that does not mean we reject history or for that matter prophecy.

5. _____________. Pay close attention to the images that John uses and see if he offers an interpretation of the image. For example, the golden lampstands are the churches, the dragon is Satan, and the wife of the Lamb is the Church. When images are repeated, the same interpretation can be understood.


7. _____________. Always start with the big picture and then work toward the details (not the other way around). Focus on the main idea of the passage and you will discover that the details should then support the bigger picture.
VII. Application of Revelation

In Revelation 2-3 we find messages from Jesus Christ to seven churches in Asia Minor. Make a chart showing the message to each of these churches in terms of Jesus' (1) commendation or praise, (2) complaint or rebuke, (3) warning, and (4) promise. Then add an eighth church to the chart – our church! What do you think Christ would say to your church in terms of commendation, complaint, warning, and promise?
Study Questions (Part 2):

- What are the four steps of the interpretive journey?
- What interpretive considerations should be made for the genre of the Law?
- What are literary features of historical narrative?
- How can we identify an acrostic in Scripture?
- What is a chiastic structure? Can you give an example?
- What is the key to interpreting Ecclesiastes?
- What is idolatry?
- What are the Synoptic Gospels?
- What are the literary features found in the gospel accounts?
- What verse serves as a backdrop for interpreting the book of Acts?
- What does it mean to say that the New Testament letters were "situational"?
- What makes the literary genre of Revelation unique?
Our study is not complete without application. When we apply God’s Word into our lives, the result will be the very activity of God in our lives. “Present yourself approved to God” is not a showcase of what you have done. Nor is it an attempt to gain God’s “approval.” When you study (i.e. observe, interpret, and apply) God’s Word; it will naturally be seen by others as evidence of God’s activity in your life.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God,*
*a worker who does not need to be ashamed,*
*rightly dividing the word of truth.*

2 Timothy 2:15
Application

We cannot apply the Bible without knowing what it means, and we cannot know the Bible without applying what it says. Observation and interpretation without application is an unfinished process. Knowledge of Christian truths without action upon those truths is the greatest blunder humanly possible. We must keep in mind that knowing the process of application and the act of application itself are not the same. Therefore, while this final section will focus on the processes of application, the implementation falls to each individual.

The fourth and final step of the interpretation process is application. Let’s recap the fourth step and then we will break it down into three sub-steps.

**Step 4: Understanding the Theological Principles in _____ Culture**

How should Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?

While there will be only a few theological principles, the application can have numerous possibilities. With the theological principles identified, we are ready to step onto the bridge, cross into our modern context, and make personal application in our lives.

I. **Sub-step 1: Observe how the principles address the ______________ situation.**

Philippians 4:13 is a frequently misapplied Scripture.

The key elements are:

1. A Christian (Paul)
2. A Christian who is experiencing a variety of trying circumstances as a result of following Christ faithfully (Paul is in prison because of his service in the cause of Christ).
3. Christ will give the Christian strength to endure whatever the circumstances.

II. **Sub-step 2: Identify a ___________ situation in a modern context.**

A “parallel” situation must contain all of the key element. Otherwise, the application becomes superficial.

For example:

Phileippians 4:13 has become a popular theme verse for Christian athletes in American society. Assuming that Paul and the athlete are both Christians (element 1 above) and they both look to Christ for strength (element 3 above). Paul and the athlete have radically different understandings of the
expression, “I can do everything.” A close look at the literary context of Philippians 4:13 reveals that the word “everything” refers to a variety of trying circumstances. At this point in his life, Paul is experiencing a trial of need rather than a trial of plenty. When Paul says he can “do anything,” he is referring to being content or enduring rather than conquering. There is a big difference between “trials” of athletic competition and the trial of being imprisoned for your faith.

Can you think of a parallel situation in which an athlete might use the verse Philippians 4:13?

Can you think of a parallel situation in which Philippians 4:13 might be an appropriate application?

III. Sub-step 3: Make your applications _______________.

What might be some action steps for the athlete in the parallel situation?

What might be some action steps for the other parallel situation?

The theological principle should then be examined in light of the
Who Determines the Meaning?

I. Author or Reader

There is a great debate in secular literary circles concerning who controls the meaning of the text. Does the author determine the meaning or does the reader determine the meaning? This debate has drifted from secular literary circles into the field of biblical interpretation.

Secular example: L. Frank Baum’s “The Wizard of Oz.”

1. _______ ________. The position that stresses the author in the determination of meaning.
2. _______ ________. The position that focuses on the reader as the main character in the determination of meaning.

II. Communication

Which approach is appropriate for Scripture, authorial intent or reader response? The answer lies within communication.

If Cheryl wrote a love letter to me, I would be consumed with wanting to know her meaning behind every word. I would want to know exactly what she wanted to communicate.

If however, I found a love note while walking on the beach. Its words were beautiful and the author is not identified. I find it especially meaningful because of its relevance to my life. In this scenario, I may not care what the author intended.

Sometimes we may even know the author and the intent and still change the meaning. In the 60s, John Lennon of the Beatles wrote, “With a Little Help from My Friends.” The lyrics begin, “What would you do if I sang out of tune?” His response is that he gets by with a little help from his friends. Lennon is using the word “friends” as a substitute for “drugs.” Since, I don’t take my philosophical guidance from John Lennon, I simply take the word friends at face value and ignore authorial intent.

Authorial intent can sometimes have consequences if we ignore them. We may choose to interpret the red stop sign as “tap your breaks and roll through the intersection if no one is coming.” However, the police officer is going to interpret a STOP sign according to authorial intent.

If your electric bill is $111.00, do you have the option to determine the meaning of $111, and only pay $1.11? You can pay $1.11 but your electricity will likely be cut off.
The issue of communication lies at the heart of one’s decision about how to interpret a text. If you, the reader, see the text as a communication between the author and yourself, then you should search for the author’s intended meaning. If however, you see your personal interpretation as more relevant than the author’s intent then you are free to use “readers response,” but in some cases there may be negative consequences for such an approach.

If you approach the Bible as “moral guidance,” then you might ask the interpretive question, “What does this text mean to me?”

If you approach the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, then you might ask the interpretive question, “What is the meaning God intended in this text?”

The latter is a viewpoint that the Bible is God’s revelatory Word to you and that the Scriptures function as communication from God to you, and therefore you should interpret the Bible by looking for the meaning that God, the Author, intended.

III. Definitions

a. _____________. When we speak of authorship of biblical text, there is a dual-authorship intended. There is an involvement of both human authorship and divine authorship at work simultaneously.

b. _____________. When we speak of the meaning of the biblical text, it is to refer to that which the author wish to convey. In biblical interpretation meaning is not determined by the reader. Meaning is what the author intended to communicate when he wrote the text.

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

c. _____________. What the reader does with the meaning is application. It would be incorrect for us to ask in Bible study, “What does this passage mean to you?” The correct question sequence is, “What does this passage mean? How should you apply this meaning to your life?”
Can There Be More Than One Meaning?

I. Introduction

Does the Bible have different levels of meaning? That is, after we have seen the so-called surface meaning, is there any other deeper spiritual meaning?

As with any subject, there are extreme views that can distort the original meaning and the reaches are only limited by imagination.

II. Typology (Biblical View)

There are many passages in the Old Testament that describe things that point to what Christ ultimately fulfills. This is known as typology. The Book of Hebrews tells us that Christ is the ultimate sacrifice. Typology can make connections with Christ and sacrifice of the Old Testament (e.g. death, blood, without blemish, etc.), but does not speculate on the minute details (as allegory does). The New Testament usually sheds light concerning the events, persons, or institutions that are seen as typology. Typology is the only exception to “more than one meaning” of the text.

III. Spiritualizing (Post-Modern View)

Spiritualizing is a “reader response” approach to interpretation of Scripture. The idea is less concerned with the original meaning and more concerned with a personalized spiritual meaning. For example, hell is not a literal place, but rather a symbol of torment. Satan is not a real being, but rather a personification of evil.

IV. Allegory (Catholic View)

The allegorical approach to interpretation sees everything as symbolic. Once again, this approach tends to ignore the original meaning or a literal translation and emphasizes representations. For example: some suggest that Jerusalem is an allegory for the church of Christ or the soul of a person. Sometimes Jerusalem is simply Jerusalem. The Bible does make use of allegory, but it is not the method for interpretation of all Scripture (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7).

V. Bible Codes (Conspiracy View)

There are Bible codes that have been developed in which people suggest that the Bible is to be interpreted through special codes such as “Equidistant Letter Sequencing.”
The Holy Spirit’s Role

I. Introduction
The Holy Spirit has a role within interpretation that moves beyond the mechanics of the process. God gave us His Word to communicate with us, He gave us His Spirit to help us understand what He said.

The Holy Spirit’s work within the life of a believer, ensures that your relationship to the Bible is not reduced to a set of interpretive steps.

II. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author
The term inspiration refers to the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of the human authors of Scripture with the result that they wrote what God wanted to communicate.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

III. The Holy Spirit and the Non-Christian Interpreter
Can a non-Christian understand God’s Word? Yes and no.

Yes, the non-Christian can grasp at a cognitive level.

No, the non-Christian is spiritually discerned and unable to understand beyond a superficial reading (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14).

The Holy Spirit has a pre-conversion role to illuminate Scripture even to the non-believer. The Holy Spirit will illuminate Scripture to help the non-believer understand the Gospel.

IV. The Holy Spirit and the Christian Interpreter
a. Not ____________. The Holy Spirit does not mean that you need not study. The Holy Spirit is a teacher and will help us remember (cf. John 14:26). However, we cannot “recall” something that has not first been studies. We are expected to study (2 Tim. 2:15).

b. Nothing ___________. The Holy Spirit is not going to give you a new revelation. The canon of Scripture is closed. The Holy Spirit will help you understand the meaning of God’s Word.

c. We ____________. The Holy Spirit and God’s Word do not change. We are the ones to change. The Spirit brings conviction. The Spirit illuminates the meaning of Scripture. The Spirit works in our hearts to help us apply Scripture.
Study Questions (Part 3):

- What are the three sub-steps of “Step Four” of the interpretive journey?
- Define what is meant by “authorial intent”?
- Define what is meant by “typology”?
- Define what is meant by “spiritualizing”?
- Define what is meant by “allegory”?
- Define what is meant by “Bible codes”?
- What role does the Holy Spirit have concerning Scripture and the non-believer?
GLOSSARY
OF PEOPLE AND TERMS

Acronym: a word made up of the initial letters of other words (e.g. Spiritual H.A.B.I.T.S.).

Acrostic: a literary form in which the first letter of the first word of each line form a word or they are arranged alphabetically.

Active Voice: a form of a verb expressing action by the subject rather than upon it.

Adjective: a classification of words that describe or modify nouns.

Adverb: a classification of words that describe or modify verbs.

Allegory: a literary form in which items are used symbolically.

Anthropomorphism: a description of God that implies human attributes.

Apocalyptic: having to do with the unveiling of Christ’s glory (usually end times related).

Axiom: fact or an idea taken for granted as self-evident or universally known.

Authorial Intent: the position that stresses the author in the determination of meaning.

Chiasm / Chiastic: a literary form that repeats a series of words, images, or ideas in reverse order. Named for its X-shaped structure, in which the main point of the passage appears at the center of the parallelisms.

Christological: relating to the theology concerned with the person, attributes, and ministry of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a Christological Hermeneutic is a method of interpreting Scripture that is concerned with the person, attributes, and ministry of Jesus Christ. The Bible is to be interpreted and understood with a view that Christ is the central personality of all Scripture.

Christology: the study of the theological doctrine of Christ.

Christophany: a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ.

Conjunction: a word that joins words, phrases, or clauses.

Cooper’s Golden Rule of Interpretation: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.” Here is an abbreviated paraphrase of his rule: “when the literal sense makes good sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense.”

Cultural Context: the cultural environment from which the narrative or its subject or grammar emerges.

Didactic: having to do with or having the purpose of teaching or instructing.

Eisegesis: literally, “reading meaning into” a text or narrative, i.e. interpreting subjectively.
Exegesis: drawing meaning out of the text itself.

Etymology: the study of the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history.

Fallacy: a mistaken belief.

Genre: a literary classification such as poetry, narrative, or apocalypse.

Gospel: literally, “good news,” usually a reference to salvific message of Christ.

Hebraic: having Hebrew characteristics, as in a Hebraic phrase.

Hebraism: a spelling or idiom derived from Hebrew.

Hermeneutic: concerning interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts.

Historicity: the quality of having actually occurred in history.

Holistic: viewing something as a whole rather than focusing on parts or subcategories.

Idiom: an expression peculiar to itself grammatically (often not to be understood literally) or to its culture of origin.

Illumination: the Holy Spirit’s role to aid in understanding and applying Scripture.

Implicit: the intended meaning is suggested without being directly expressed.

Linguistic Context: the grammatical and lexical context of a given word or statement.

Noun: a part of speech that names a person, place, or thing.

Parable: an earthly story with a heavenly truth.

Parallelism: a common literary feature of Hebrew poetry in which subsequent lines contrast or amplify the idea of the first line.

Passive Voice: the form of a verb which indicates the subject is affected by, rather than initiating, the action.

Pronoun: a classification of words that substitute nouns.

Prophecy (Broad Definition): The word prophecy means “to forth-tell.” Forth-telling involved insight into the will of God. This type of prophecy exhorted people to change their behavior.

Prophecy (Narrow Definition): The word prophecy means “to fore-tell.” Fore-telling involved foresight into the plan of God. This type of prophecy predicted the future. While many people think of prophecy as fore-telling it is forth-telling that is much more common in the Bible. However, in the instances where fore-telling is used it is compelling evidence that the Bible is in fact the Word of God.

Prophet: The word prophet comes from the word meaning “to announce.” A prophet was God’s mouthpiece or the human instrument through which God declared His message to men.
Prophetic Aorist Tense: a past tense, often used in prophetic pronouncements, declaring future events as though already accomplished.

Reader Response: the position that focuses on the reader as the main character in the determination of meaning.

Semantic Range: the wide range of meanings that a word may convey.

Spiritualize: to give a mythical and subjective meaning, rather than a literal one, to a textual passage.


Syntax: the study of the arrangement of words in a sentence and of how word order affects meaning.

Textual Criticism: the study and comparison of ancient manuscripts in the hope of determining as accurately as possible the author’s original wording.


Translate: to convey the meaning of words in a different language.

Transliterate: to change the letters of a word into the corresponding letters of a different language.

Typology: a person, thing, or event that foreshadows its more important future counterpart.

Verb: a classification of words that expresses an action.

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