

Understand the different genres.

Poetry – Structure related to thought not rhyme; the parallel structure is the key to interpretation (Synonymous, Antithetical, Synthetic); identify figurative language; express central truth; do not push the details.

Prophecy – Historical context is crucial; focus on central truth of the whole oracle, not details; there are often multiple fulfillments (check immediate context, O.T. parallels, Jesus' teachings, N.T. parallels); messianic prophecies have a focus (the Incarnation & the 2nd coming); the prophets often recorded more than they understood (authorial intent of the Holy Spirit is the key); it is often very hard to interpret. Careful with dogmatism!

Proverb – Look for application to daily life; parallel passages are more helpful than context; identify figures of speech; the truth expressed is usually general in nature.

Revelation – Apocalyptic (common genre in Jesus' day; root found in O.T. prophecy (Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, & parts of Isaiah); literary works from the beginning (visions, dreams, images, & cryptic language); images are often fantasy; very formally stylized; numbers used not as literal but for purpose of telling the tale; original authorial intent & recipients' understanding is crucial; watch for John to interpret images & build from there; purpose transcends a detailed chronological account of the future; careful not to press details.

The Gospels – Immediate context is more helpful than parallel gospels; focus on why the selection, adaptation, & arrangement; identify thought units; New Testament epistles interpret & apply the Gospels; focus on obvious & clear statements amidst the hard & ambiguous; these are not western biographies, but evangelistic tracts; parables can be tricky (context! context! context!); central truth; do not usually push details; some parables emphasize similarity & others emphasize contrast; look for those things that would startle original hearers; require us to change the way we think and act about spiritual things; do not build doctrine solely on parables.

Letters & Historical Narratives – focus on context (historical & literary); the central truths of the literary unit and/or paragraph are the stepping stones to understanding (never interpret less than a paragraph).

You wouldn't read your vehicle owner's manual the same way as a love letter.

Utilize research tools.

Use research tools last. Best used after you have engaged with the text yourself.

Start with historical setting resources: Bible introductions; Bible encyclopedias, handbooks, & dictionaries; introductions in Bible commentaries; study Bible notes.

Use several types of commentaries: Practical (Tyndale, Zondervan Study Guide Commentary, etc.) Technical (The New International Commentary, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, etc.) Devotional (Matthew Henry, Griffith Thomas, etc.)

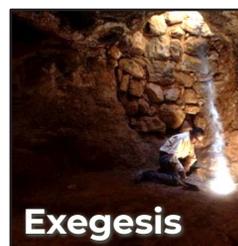
Use supplementary specialized material: Word study books; cultural background books; geographical books; archaeology books; apologetics books

Use Systematic Theology Resources for big picture interpretations.

Pastor Tim is most willing to help put some resource packets together for you to help with your next exegetical study.



To continue the conversation, email
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"We must replace the emphasis on coverage and the audit of results with the need for selectivity, depth, and the demonstration and display of accomplishments. The "less is more" principle calls for the curriculum to eschew coverage and to replace that seductively simple virtue with the exploration in depth, variation, and richness of the essential questions and central ideas." Lee S. Shulman

Exegesis:

The careful systematic study of Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning.

The attempt to hear the Word of God as the original recipients heard it.

To find out the original intent of the words of the Bible.

Reading the Bible carefully, asking the right questions of the text.

"Because the Bible is God's Word, it has eternal relevance; it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is God's Word, we must listen – and obey. But because God chose to speak his Word through human words in history, every book in the Bible also has historical particularity; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written." Fee & Stuart

The Exegete must:

Recognize the essential link between faith and Scripture.

Romans 10:17
Romans 16:25-27
2 Timothy 3:16-17

Embrace the responsibility to study.

1 Peter 2:5-9
Romans 1:17
Hebrews 5:11-14

Purpose to walk in the understanding given.

Romans 1:17
James 1:22-25
Psalm 1

Commit to diligence and excellence in exegesis.

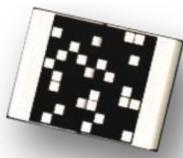
2 Timothy 2:15
Mark 12:24
Acts 18:24-25

Enjoy fellowship with God in his revelation.

John 5:38-40
John 14:23-26
Hebrews 8:10

Recognize that all of us are historically conditioned.

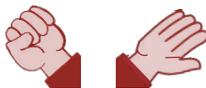
We view the Bible through a partially obscured grid established by our:



- Personality type (ESTJ, INFP)
- Learning style (Visual, Aural, Read/Write, Kinesthetic)
- Spiritual type (Apophatic/Cataphatic, Heart/Mind)
- Personal worldview
- Spiritual gifts
- Place/time of birth
- Parental training
- Denominational training
- Personal sin
- Etc.

If we can identify our biases, we can control their influence to some degree.

Work to counteract our historical conditioning.



- Discern the irreducible minimums of the Christian faith.
- Cling to the major truths and discuss the peripherals in love.
- Realize that maturity will make one less dogmatic and judgmental.
- Analyze and attempt to isolate your presuppositions.

In the essentials, unity; in the peripherals, freedom; and in all things, love.

Mind the borderland between the older and newer testaments.

"I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment, that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you." 1 John 27-8



Something happened through the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus that marked a distinct change in the way God primarily chooses to reveal himself. The exegete must adapt to a dual layer perspective for interpreting and applying God's Word. In every scripture passage we are invited to engage God's revelation of his metanarrative – that overarching storyline that sweeps from eternity to eternity fulfilling his purpose; as well as God's revelation of the personal narrative – that grassroots intimacy as he walks amidst his people. We look for the peculiarities and the correlations between God's sovereignty and our responsibility. In the metanarrative, God's purposes have not changed, making both Testaments inseparable. Yet at the grassroots level, God seems to have profoundly transformed the way he reveals himself, marking an undeniable distinction between the two. In the Old Testament, though intensely and intimately involved in both the daily grind and the eternal inheritance of individual lives, God primarily reveals himself in the sweeping strokes of historical, geographical, physical, and national sagas. Lessons are learned as truth is revealed through generations of slavery, epic migrations, empirical narratives, and the rise and collapse of entire people groups. In the New Testament, though actively sustaining and influencing generational habitation within the physical creation, God primarily reveals himself in the inner spiritual workings of the individual life. Like the bow fisher who stalks his prey from above the water's surface, the Christian scholar must account for the refraction between these two testaments. We welcome the hunt for archetypal metaphors in the historical accounts of the Old Testament, taking confidence in knowing that throughout all of time God's revelation remains consistent. Yet, we must carefully account for the refraction of the New as we render those sweeping temporal strokes of external revelation into the intended application amidst the intimacy of God's eternal work within.

Be ever committed to the covenantal perspective.

"I will bless you... so that you will be a blessing." Genesis 12:2
"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27-28



"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth." Isaiah 55:10-11
"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:18

Through scripture, God desires to accomplish good works in you and through you.

Study from different translations.

"I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text."



William Tyndale (from the introduction to his 1530 translation of the Pentateuch. Martyred 6 years later.)

Word for Word ————— Dynamic Equivalent ————— Paraphrase

YLT	KJV	RSV	NRSV	NIV	TEV	PHLP	LB
NKJV		CSB		NAB	GNB		CEV
NASB	ASV	ESV		NEB	JB		

Study from at least two translations from different points on the spectrum.

Ask the right questions of the text.

What does the passage say?

- Read the passage several times.
- Look for (and write down): repeated words, themes, grammatical constructions, difficult sayings, major theological terms, author, recipients, location, direct commands or promises, comparisons, contrasts.



What does the passage mean?

- There is only one correct interpretation for any passage! All study must be in context (never less than a paragraph).
- Define key words; synthesis with the immediate and larger context; explore what the author says elsewhere on the subject; search out what other bible writers say on the subject; watch for the reaction of the original hearers.
- Outline the passage summarizing the plain meaning of the text.

What must I do in response?

- What are the personal and ecclesiastical implications?
- How does this truth apply to my life?
- What steps do I need to take to carry out those changes?
- How can I cooperate with the Holy Spirit in drawing near to God through Christ?

How will I be accountable?

- The Christian life is designed to be transferred relationally and journeyed together. You need to "rope in" – brother to brother and sister to sister – on a weekly basis so that together we can draw near to God and join him in his kingdom work.

This is an exploration – commit and prepare for a long and rewarding journey.