

How To Study The Passage (Part 1)

How To Prepare And Teach A Bible Study

Session 1

Introduction:

1. Teaching is a biblical mandate

2 Timothy 2:2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

- Teaching is to pass down what God has entrusted us
- Teaching is a way of multiplying disciples ("faithful men", "teach other")

2. Teaching is a great responsibility

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

3. Teaching require proper interpretation

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (ESV)

- R. C. Spoul astutely analogizes: "Historically the United States of America has a special agency that theoretically functions as the supreme board of hermeneutics for our land. That agency is called the Supreme Court. One of its primary tasks is to interpret the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution is a written document and requires such interpretation. Originally the procedure of interpreting the Constitution followed the so-called grammatico-historical method. That is, the Constitution was interpreted by studying the words of the document itself in light of what those words meant when they were used at the time of the formulation of the document."

"Since the work of Oliver Wendell Holmes the method of Constitutional interpretation has changed radically. The current crisis in law and public confidence in the nation's highest court is directly related to the underlying problem of method of interpretation. When the court interprets the Constitution in light of modern attitudes, it in effect changes the Constitution by means of reinterpretation. The net result is that in a subtle way the Court becomes a legislative rather than interpretive agency." (*Knowing Scripture*, p. 46)

- This illustrates the problem with biblical interpretation today. Instead of interpreting the Scriptures literally (in the mind of the authors), the modern trend has been to interpret it in light of modern attitudes (in the mind of the readers).

a. Our Attitude: Enthusiastic Diligence

- “Diligence” = Gr. *spoudazo* = zeal, relentless pursuit
- ie/ zeal of a linebacker, romantic suitor or hobbieist

b. Our Accountability: Sanctified Presentation

- approved = Gr. *dokimon* - pass the test
- ie/ lawyers, doctors, accountants, engineers, business men, teachers - have to take the boards - either pass or fail
 - we are tested according to the Scriptures and we must put our lives through the Scantron of the Scriptures to see if our life is right

c. Our Approach: Hardworking Effort

- The Greek gives a picture of a laborer or workman (*ergaten*) - word used of one who works for hire
- At the end of the day, the laborer must show his labor to the master for the reward

d. Our Actions: Unashamed Workmanship

- There is shame for faulty workmanship because we are not giving our best effort to the Lord.
- We insert our agenda that clouds God’s agenda in His Word
- We are lazy, not working hard and trusting God

e. Our Accuracy: Proper Interpretation

- *Orthotomeo*
 - *ortho* = straight (ie/ orthodontist, orthodoxy)
 - *tomeo* = to cut (ie/ appendectomy, tonsilectomy, uvalectomy)
- “People don’t often go heretical all at once. It is gradual. And they do not do so intentionally most of the time. They slip into it through shoddiness and laziness in handling the word of truth...All it takes to start the road to heresy is a craving for something new and different, a flashy new idea, along with a little laziness or carelessness or lack of precision in handling the truth of God.” (Robert Thomas, *Precision as God’s Will for My Life*)

4. There is only One interpretation that matters: God’s

- The question most commonly asked by those who do not understand the inspiration and authority of Scripture is: “Doesn’t the Bible have different interpretations?” Several denominations and diverse theologies seem to support the claim that the Bible can have various interpretations. Even a naïve Bible study leader can give credence to this notion by asking “What does the Bible mean to you?”

Yet, in hermeneutics, there is only one interpretation that matters. It is not the interpretation of the reader that counts, but the interpretation of the Author, Himself – God. Thus, the conclusion to the process of understanding the Bible is “What does this passage mean to God?”

- “The true object of interpretation is to apprehend the exact thought of the author”...“It is not the privilege of any interpreter to impose his own thought upon the words of an author, nor in any way to modify the author’s meaning.” (Lockhart, *Principles Of Interpretation*, cited by Rollin Thomas Chafer, “A Syllabus of Study of Hermeneutics,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume 91, October, 1934, p. 458)
- Howard Hendricks provides us a helpful reminder: “Is it really possible to come up with an accurate interpretation of the biblical text? Yes, it is.... But...even though a Bible has only one correct interpretation, you’ll always find two Christians who disagree about what that interpretation ought to be. That can be frustrating, but it’s inevitable. Two people may watch the exact same bank robbery, but in court they’ll describe it in completely different terms.

“Differences in interpretation are fine as long we keep in mind that the conflict is not in the text, but in our limited understanding of the text. God is not confused about what He has said, even if we are.” (*Living By The Book*, p. 207)

5. The study of Biblical Interpretation is called “Hermeneutics”

- *hermeneuo/hermeneia* is used 19x in the New Testament – meaning “explaining” or “translating”
- “The English word ‘hermeneutics’ comes from the Greek verb *hermeneuo* and the noun *hermeneia*. These words point back to the wing-footed messenger-god Hermes in Grecian mythology. He was responsible for transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp. He is said to have discovered language and writing and was the god of literature and eloquence, among other things. He was the messenger or interpreter of the gods, and particularly of his father Zeus. Thus the verb *hermeneuo* came to refer to bringing someone to an understanding of something in his language (thus explanation) or in another language (thus translation).” (Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 19)
- “**Hermeneutics** is the science and art of interpreting the Bible. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation.” (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 1)

6. The Need For Proper Interpretation

Acts 8:30-31 ³⁰So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

a. **Proper Interpretation Gives An Accurate Presentation Of God’s Expectation For Man**

- Some advocate that the Bible teaches that “God helps those who help themselves.” But that isn’t in the Bible. It is an assumption that presents a different expectation of God who delights in giving mercy to the helpless.
- Some misinterpret 1 Timothy 6:10 by saying that money is the root of all evil, when the actual root of evil is “the love of money”, not “money” itself.

b. Proper Interpretation Guards Against Doctrinal Error

- Misreading James 2:14-26 on the relationship of faith and works could give a false perception that works must accompany faith for salvation, whereas the passage teaches that “works” confirm the reality of “faith.”
- Taking Acts 2:38 apart from the rest of the Scriptures has led some to believe in baptism as the basis for regeneration.

c. Proper Interpretation Leads To Proper Application Of The Scriptures

- Yet if Acts 2:38 was seen in comparison to the rest of Scripture which teaches that salvation is by faith alone, that Paul denies baptism as a means of salvation (1 Cor 1:12-17) and that “for” could either mean “as the cause of” or “as the result of” – then by hermeneutical principles of grammar and comparison with Scriptures one can arrive at a proper interpretation that we are baptized as the result of the forgiveness of sins.

7. The Function Of Hermeneutics

- “Hermeneutics is like a cookbook. Exegesis is the preparing and baking of the cake, and exposition is serving the cake.” (Zuck, p. 22)

a. Hermeneutics – the rules for determining the meaning of Scripture

- “The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined.” (Zuck, p. 20)
- “Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied hermeneutics.” (Ramm, p. 11)

b. Exegesis – the determination of the meaning of Scripture

- “The determination of the meaning of the biblical text in its historical and literary context.” (Zuck, p. 20)

c. Homiletics – the rules for communicating the Scripture through preaching to others

- “The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning and relevance of the biblical text are communicated in a **preaching** situation.” (Zuck, p. 20)

d. Pedagogy – the rules for communicating the Scripture through teaching others

- “The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning and relevance of the biblical text are communicated in a **teaching** situation.” (ibid)

e. Exposition – the explanation of the meaning of Scripture to others

- “The communication of the meaning of the text along with its relevance to present-day hearers.” (ibid)

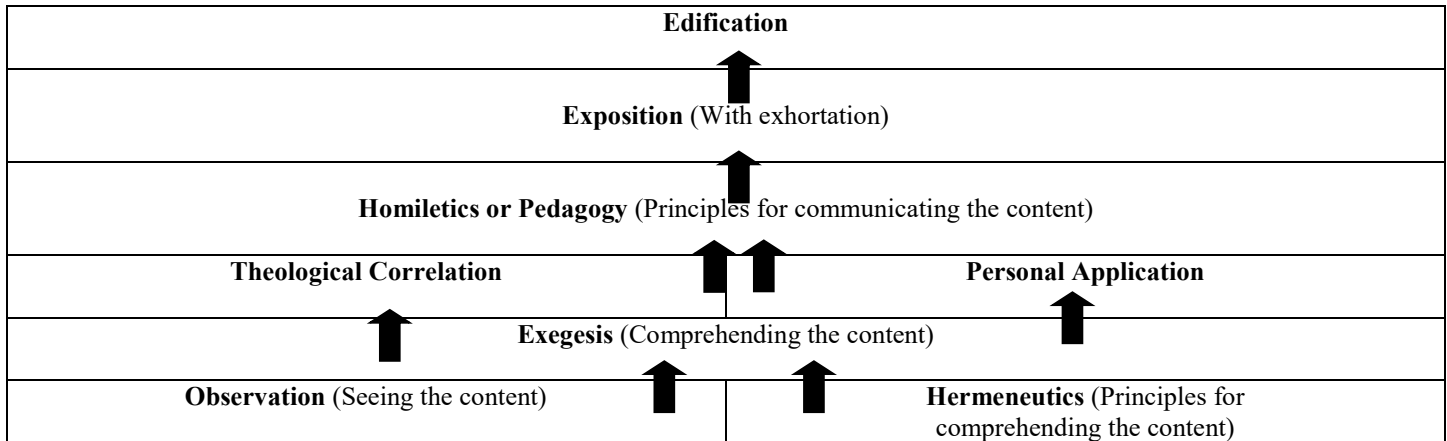


Chart from Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 21

- Ie/ Hermeneutics is like interpreting classical music. You play it straight and try to sense the original intent of the composer. There is personal flair that a musician can add, but that doesn't take away from the original intent of the composer. In contrast, jazz is free-flowing interpretation. To twist God's Word away from it's original intent would be to erase the authority, integrity and accuracy of God's truth to us.

Follow the rules in interpretation to ascertain the meaning that God intends and we will be blessed by the clarity of God's truth. Only one interpretation matters – that's God's interpretation.

8. The Assumptions In Hermeneutics

a. The Bible Is God's Inspired Word

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

- If we don't assume the Word of God is inerrant, then men do not need to be accountable to religious words of men.
- If we assume that the Bible contains the Word of God (where some believe that the Bible is fictional historically, inaccurate scientifically, but accurate when it comes to salvation – thus the Bible contains some of God's Word, but it is not all God's Word),

then we could not rely on the Scriptures because we wouldn't know what is God's Word or not. If the Bible is wrong historically or scientifically, how could we trust it when it comes to salvation?

- If we assume that the Bible is the inerrant, authoritative Word of God (based on revelation and consistency), then we will interpret the Word of God has the authority for man to live by before God.

b. The Bible Is God's Revealed Word

- *Sensus plenior* is the concept that God has a fuller meaning than what the prophets and apostles always understood.

c. The Bible Is God's Clear Word

- God intends the Bible to be clear and comprehensible (summed up in a theological term called "Perspicuity")

Luke 24:25-27 ²⁵Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

- 2 disciples - Cleopas & wife (Clopas & wife mentioned in Gospels)
- vv.25-27 rebuked - had all the evidences but did not know the Word
- **Tenach** - from 3 consonants of: **T**orah - Law, **N**ebhiim - Prophets (Former - Josh, Jdg, Sam, Kng; Latter – Major [Is, Je, Ez] & Minor), and **K**ethubhim - Writings (Poetics - Ps, Prov, Job; Megilloth [5 rolls] - SS, Ruth, Lam, Eccl, Esth; Historical - Dan, Ezra, Neh, Chron)

John 3:9-10 ⁹Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"

- Nicodemus is rebuked for not knowing the simple truths of Scripture, and he was a Rabbi!
- The *Perspicuity of Scripture* means that the Bible is clear and understandable.
 - Catholics believed that Scripture is too obscure for people to understand. Hence, the common people need the Church to understand the Scriptures through the clergy/priesthood/pope.
 - Martin Luther's avocation of *Sola Scriptura* included perspicuity.
 - "To Luther, the perspicuity of the Bible was coupled with the priesthood of believers, so that the Bible became the property of all Christians." (Ramm)

- Yet, if the Bible is meant to be clear and comprehensible, then why must we employ rules of interpretation?
- The answer is to bridge the gap between the ancient author and the modern reader.

9. The Reason For Hermeneutics (Bridging The Gap Of History, Culture And Language)

a. A Time Gap (Chronological)

- The earliest books were written about 3,400 years ago and the latest book circa 1,900 years ago
- Since we were not there and we can not interview the authors, we need to strive to see it as they saw it
- God's mercy for Ninevah in Jonah vs. God's wrath against Ninevah in Nahum can be understood by comprehending the historical situation of the Assyrians

b. A Space Gap (Geographical)

- Even if one has traveled to Israel, Egypt and Corinth, the modern day Bible reader still does not know what ancient Israel, Egypt and Corinth was like.
- The readers of Scripture in Bible times understood the plains of Megiddo, the fires of Gehenna, the obstacles of Canaan and the prisons in Rome.
- Modern readers must enter into the ancient geography so we can understand the significance of Jerusalem's height, Golgotha's description and the wilderness' barrenness.

c. A Customs Gap (Cultural)

- We're far removed from the Middle-East culture, much less an ancient Middle-Eastern culture.
- We are not familiar with ancient customs such as betrothal or covenants.

Ie/ Watching the cultural movie "Raise The Red Lantern" illuminated an ancient understanding of the concubine system in China. To comprehend the concubine system in the Old Testament times will help us understand situations that Abraham, David and Solomon experienced.

- "The web of relationships among husband, wife, concubines and children that existed in Abraham's time, has now been recovered from clay tablets. Abraham's treatment of Hagar is now seen as protocol in terms of these relationships." (Ramm, pp. 5-6)

d. Language Gap (Linguistic)

- Words meant different things in different languages, cultures and ages. The goal in bridging the linguistic gap is to understand the words and phrases of the Bible as the original author and hearers understood it.
- "To translate from Greek to English is not the simple task of finding an English word for each Greek word. The translator has to tack back and forth between languages that are

structurally different. He has the tricky job of trying to find equivalents in the English verb system of forms in the Greek verb system. Nor is it easy to find words in English that closely match the word in the Hebrew or Greek text.” (Ramm, p. 5)

10. Summary:

1. Scan The Text
2. Sort The Content
3. Survey The Context
4. Scrutinize The Communication
5. Spot The Colloquialisms
6. Scope What’s Coming
7. Solve The Conflicts
8. Specify With Certainty
9. Supplement Through Cross-Referencing
10. Submit To The Commands

I. Scan The Text

A. Pray for God to illuminate God’s Word for you

B. Read the passage several times

C. It is helpful to read it in several translations

New American Standard Bible: 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

New Living Translation: 1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. It is written to God’s holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. 2 May grace and peace be yours, sent to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Message: I, Paul, am under God’s plan as an apostle, a special agent of Christ Jesus, writing to you faithful Christians in Ephesus. I greet you with the grace and peace poured into our lives by God our Father and our Master, Jesus Christ.

D. Write down your observations

E. Write down your questions about the text or context

II. Sort The Content

A. Identify The Type Of Literature The Book Is

Genre	Characteristics	Examples
Apocalyptic	highly symbolic, dramatic conflict, prophetic, good vs. evil	Revelation
Biography	portrayal of person’s life - positive or negative	Abraham, David, Jesus

Exposition	organized, reasoned, logical argument, aimed for response	Letters from Paul, Peter, James
Narrative	historical accounts, focus on events & people	Genesis, Gospels, Acts
Oratory	persuasive sermon or speech intended to persuade	Serm. on Mt; Acts 7; Jn 13-17
Parable	short story illustrating one moral point	Prodigal Son, Good Samaritan
Poetry	verse intended for reading or singing, emphasis on cadence, sound of words, images, symbols, and parallelism	Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
Prophecy	forth-telling of God's warning; fore-telling of God's judgment	Isaiah - Malachi
Proverb	short statement of moral truth – parallelism, metaphors, etc.	Proverbs

In the Old Testament Christ is:	In the New Testament Christ is:
in shadow in pictures in type in ritual latent prophesied implicitly revealed	in substance in person in truth in reality patent present explicitly revealed

(N. Geisler & W. Nix – *A General Introduction To The Bible*, p. 22)

B. Observe Key Features In The Passage

ie/ Rudyard Kipling, *Just-So* stories:
I keep six honest serving men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

1 Point: What is the emphasis?

ie/ listen to emphasis of boss and make that a priority on your project because you know that is the first thing he will evaluate on your work
ie/ Proverbs - wisdom vs. foolishness
ie/ Mt 23 - religious hypocrisy
ie/ 1 Cor 8-10 - questionable matters
12-14 - spiritual gifts
15 - resurrection

2. Pattern: What is frequently repeated?

ie/ if teacher frequently repeats a term, you better figure that it will be on your test
ie/ Psalm 136 - "His loves endures forever"
ie/ Heb 11 - "By faith..."
ie/ Psalm 119 - the Word of God is mentioned in every verse

ie/ John - Jesus's "I Am..." - Bread of Life, Light of World, Door, Good Shepherd, Resurrection & Life, Way, Truth & Life, True Vine

3. **Parallel: What is similar?**

ie/ John 3 - Jesus describes physical birth to relate to spiritual birth

ie/ Matthew 5 - similar method by Jesus of cutting through external righteousness and demonstrating internal wickedness

- murder/hate, adultery/lust, oaths/lying

4. **Partition: What is contrasted?**

ie/ Ps 1:1-2 - not walk in counsel of ungodly, stand path sinner, sit seat scornful **but** His delight is in the Law of the Lord

ie/ **Galatians 5:16-26** - walk in Spirit vs. walk in flesh

- sins vs. fruit of Spirit (**But** used in v.22 as contrast)

5. **Principle: What is the truth being taught?**

III. Survey The Context

Old Spiritual: "The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone,
The thigh bone's connected to the hip bone,
The hip bone's connected to the tail bone,
Now hear the word of the Lord!"

- recognizes that the whole body is connected to each other

New Verse: "The word's connected to the sentence,
The sentence's connected to the paragraph,
The paragraph's connected to the chapter,
The chapter's connected to Bible book,
The Bible book's connected to the Testament,
The Testament's connected to the Whole Book,
Now hear the Word of the Lord!"

IE/ at Chr. bookstore find 2-part necklace, pendant is broken in half and divided into two necklaces that friends or lovers would wear, particularly when they're apart

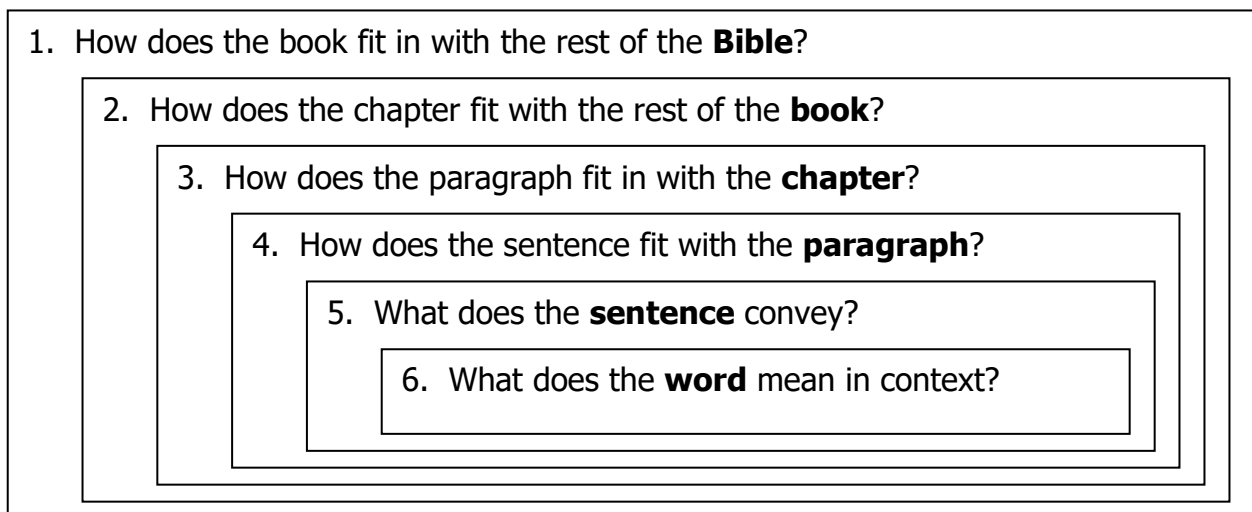
- verse quotes **Genesis 31:49** (the Mizpah Covenant) "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from another."
- this sounds like a nice warm sentiment between two friends being apart from each other
- but this verse is taken out of context
- check context to see that this was a covenant of **distrust** between Jacob and the devious Laban

IE/ people quote **Matthew 18:20** as proof for the effectiveness of a prayer meeting or an encouraging thought on a greeting card
"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."
- but his verse is taken out of context - the before and after passages are in the context of church discipline - where when 2 or 3 witnesses are involved in substantiating church discipline, God is involved in the discipline process

IE/ "The context in which a given Scripture passage is written influences how that passage is to be understood. Context includes several things:

- the verse(s) immediately before and after a passage
- the paragraph and book in which the verses occur
- the dispensation in which it was written
- the message of the entire Bible
- the historical-cultural environment of that time when it was written." (Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 77)

A. The Literary Context - How does the passage fit with the previous and subsequent passages?



IE/ **Romans 12:1** makes better sense in the context
Romans 9-11 - sovereignty of God in choosing Israel and choosing believers to salvation
- In light of God's sovereignty - we ought to offer ourselves a living sacrifice unto God which is our reasonable service
- "Therefore" - demands that we look at the previous context

ie/ J. Vernon McGee - "Whenever you see a *therefore* or a *wherefore* always check what it's there fore."

ie/ Galatians - written to attack false teaching of Judaizers who tried to add keeping the law to the grace of God - Paul's whole purpose is to attack this work-based salvation

- ie/ Isa - *before captivity* - Isa warns of a future captivity
 Jer - *at captivity* - written to warn Judea that they would be taken captive because of their sin
 - he warned them for 40 years without success - they were eventually taken captive
 Ezek - *in captivity* - written after Judea taken captive in Babylon to remind them of their sin that brought this judgment on them and give them hope of blessings as they stay obedient to God
 Ezra/Neh - *after captivity* - rebuild after return

1. Zoom Out: Identify The Literary Context

Distinguish Changes Of Themes And Types Of Writing

a. Alert yourself to conjunctions – “therefore”, “but”, “then”, “since”

Quoting J. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding And Applying The Bible*, pp. 113-4:

- Temporal or chronological: after, as, before, now, then, until, while
- Local or geographical: where, in
- Reason or causal: because, for, since, as, whereas
- Result: so, then, therefore, thus
- Purpose: in order that, so that, that
- Contrast: although, but, nevertheless, however, yet, otherwise, whereas
- Comparison: also, as, as...so, just as ... so, likewise, so also, moreover, than
- Emphatic: indeed, only

b. Note changes in subgenre

- Greeting
- Prayer
- Command
- Illustration
- Sermon
- Narrative

- Acts 1
 - Greeting (1-3)
 - Narrative (4-15)
 - Quote (16-17)
 - Parenthetical Information (18-19)
 - Old Testament Comparison (20)
 - Quote Continued (21-22)
 - Narrative Continued (23-26)

- Ephesians 1
 - Greeting (1-2)

- Doxology (3-14)
- Prayer (15-22)

c. Identify changes in location and time

- Several OT narratives could be sectioned off chronologically (in the year of a particular king)

2. Zoom In: Identify The Immediate Context

a. Analyze The Sentence

1) Identify The Main Thought

- Example: Ephesians 2:14-16

Ephesians 2:14-16 ¹⁴For He Himself is our *peace*, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making *peace*, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached *peace* to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

2) Identify The Subject

- Who or what is the main subject or thought?

Q: Who is the main subject in Eph 2:14-16?

- Noun: word that names something
 - person, place, thing, concept or idea, or an action
- Pronoun: word that substitutes for a noun
 - I, you, he, she, it
 - Who does the pronoun refer to?

3) Identify The Object

- Direct
- Indirect

Q: What is the object of Eph 2:14-16?

4) Identify The Action

- What is the main verb indication the action taken?

- Tense - past, present & future
- Voice - active & passive
- Mood - indicative, interrogative, imperative, or optative

IE/ Underline the verbs in this passage.

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5) Identify The Modifier

- Adjective – Describing the noun
- Adverb – Describing the verb

6) Identify The Relationships Of The Parts Of The Sentence

- Conjunctions
- Prepositions - goes with noun to form prepositional phrase
 - Zuck's examples from Ephesians
 - Means: *by* His blood
 - Accompaniment: *with* Jesus
 - Location: *in* Him; *on* the earth; *at* Ephesus
 - Benefit: *for* His glory
 - Motion: *to* heaven; *from* the dead
 - Direction: *toward* us
 - Origin: the Word *of* God
 - Characteristic: the Father *of* glory; the Holy Spirit *of* promise; the *day* of redemption
 - Identity: pledge *of* our inheritance
 - Position: *over* all; at His right hand
 - Permeation: *through* all
 - Entrance: *into* the lower parts
 - Opposition: *against* the devil's schemes
 - Conformity: *according* to the flesh
 - Time: *before* the foundation of the world

B. The Historical Context - *What was happening when this was written? Who does this passage address? What is the audience going through at the time of writing? What is the circumstance of the author?*

1. The Background Of The Author Of The Book

a. The Identification Of The Author

b. The Circumstance Of The Author

- What is God doing in the life of the author?
- Amos harvested fig trees in Tekoa (in Judah) but was called to preach to Israel, the Northern Kingdom.
- Jonah's hesitancy to go to Ninevah was reflective of his personal disdain for the cruel Assyrian people. We can identify more with Jonah when we relate this story to God wanting us to reach out to our murderous enemies.
- Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote 2 Timothy. His plea for Timothy to come to him was a plea to say goodbye in person as Paul anticipated his death. This would be a 90 mile trek for Timothy. Our heart reaches out to Paul when we understand his circumstance.

c. The History Of The Author

- Moses' life is divided by three periods of 40 years (40 in Egypt, 40 in Midian and 40 in the wilderness). To understand Moses' worldly success in Egypt, then obscurity tending sheep, we can observe how God prepared an 80 year old to lead Israel out of Egypt.
- Paul was a Roman citizen, so his imprisonments, trial and treatment ought to have been different than those who were not Roman. He was also a high ranking Jew, so we can comprehend his zeal for Israel.

d. The Comprehension Of The Author

- God is the Ultimate Author – What does the passage mean to God?
- God uses human authors – How did the human authors understand what they wrote?
- By understanding the historical, cultural, political and theological circumstance of the author and the audience (e.g. church – Ephesus, Corinth; individual – Timothy, Philemon; nation – Israel, Assyria), we can comprehend God's commands, interventions and warnings.

2. The Time Of The Writing Of The Book

Q: Why is it significant to know that Haggai wrote after the exile?

Q: Why is it significant to know that Jeremiah wrote before the exile?

3. The Place Of The Writing Of The Book

a. The *Location Of The Author*

Q: Why is it significant to know that Paul wrote Philippians in prison?

Q: Why is it significant to know the route of Joshua's conquest of Canaan?

b. The *Politics Of The Location*

4. The *Background Of The Recipients Of The Book*

- The *Identification Of The Recipients*
- The *Circumstance Of The Recipients*
- The *Culture Of The Recipients*

5. The *Occasion For The Writing Of The Book*

- Why did the author write the book? How is the occasion of the book applicable to the situation in our life?
- Corinth had problems with unity. Galatia struggled with false teachers. The seven churches of Revelation needed encouragement and/or rebuke.
- Observe Luke's purposes stated in Luke and Acts:

Luke 1:1-4 ¹Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Acts 1:1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach

6. The *Purpose For The Writing Of The Book*

Q: What is the significance of John writing Revelation in Patmos?

a. Read Through The Whole Book

- Note The "Who, What, Where, When and Why"
- Summarize The Book
- Comprehend The Purpose Of The Book
 - Galatians corrects false teachings of Judaism
 - Colossians corrects false teaching of Gnosticism

- 1 Corinthians corrects carnal attitudes in the church
- Matthew portrays Christ as the Messiah to the Jewish audience
- Luke portrays Christ as the Perfect Man to the Greek audience
- Job deals with the question of "Why do the righteous suffer?"
- Esther depicts the sovereignty of God in history
- Note The Plan For The Book
 - Proverbs had no formal plan
 - Matthew is topical
 - Luke is chronological

b. Determine The Themes, Topics Or Issues In The Book

- Summarize each theme and main point
- Acts

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- Jerusalem (1-7)
- Judea and Samaria (8-12)
- Ends of the Earth (13-28)
- Romans
 - Sin (1-3)
 - Salvation (4-5)
 - Sanctification (6-8)
 - Sovereignty (9-11)
 - Service (12-16)
- Ephesians
 - The Wealth Of The Believer (1-3)
 - The Walk Of The Believer (4:1 – 6:9)
 - The Warfare Of The Believer (6:10-24)

7. The Substantiation With The Revelation Of God

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son

- God reveals Himself in history
- God reveals Himself in "various ways" through history
- God reveals Himself through prophets who record his revelation in history
- Thus, history is significant in understanding the revelation of God

- "God's revelation in historical events may be compared to his revelation in nature: Both communicate something of God, but both are incomplete without written revelation." (David Howard Jr. – *Giving The Sense*, p. 41)
- "Divine revelation should be located in both historical events and the interpretative word which mediates these events to us." (V. Philips Long, cited by Howard, p. 41)

C. The Cultural Context - *How did the people think during the time of writing?*

- **How Do Cultural Customs Affect The Interpretation Of Certain Passages?**

1. Political

Q: Why did Paul refer in Phil 3:20 to a "citizenship in heaven"?

- Roman Emperor Octavius Augustus granted the Philippians "Italic rights" which are the same privileges as if their land was actually Italy, though they were in Philippi. Paul refers to a greater citizenship for the Christian in heaven.

Q: Why did Jonah not want to go to Ninevah?

- Ninevah - capital of Assyria - atrocious, cruel, beheaded leaders of opponents, piled up those heads, stretch out legs and arms of captives, skin them alive

- Jonah felt they deserved judgment

Q: Why did Boaz go to the city gate to talk with the town elders about Naomi's land (Ruth 4:1)?

- The city gates were places where legal business was done and court cases heard

2. Religious

Q: How does an understanding of ancient pagan religions in Bible times help us understand the biblical context?

Example: Why did Moses give the odd command "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk?" (Ex 23:19; 34:26; Dt 14:21)

- It was an ancient practice in Ugarit (now in Lebanon) which was a Canaanite ritual
- God may not have wanted a substance of life (milk) to be associated with death (cooking)

3. Legal

Q: Why did Elisha ask for a "double portion of spirit" from Elijah (2 Kings 2:9)?

- not wanting double his power
- but stated he wanted to be Elijah's heir in the sense of being a successor
- Dt 21:17 states that the firstborn in a family received a double share of his father's estate

D. **The Geographical Context** - *What impact does the location have on the text?*

- Because we weren't there when and where the Bible was written, we can benefit from the work of biblical historians, archaeologists and scholars to give us descriptions of buildings, cities and travels

Example: Thyatira and Revelation 2:18-29

- Location – 40 miles southeast of Pergamum – in West Asiatic Turkey
- History – founded by Seleucius I, one of Alexander the Great's 4 generals that succeeded him. Seleucius I founded the Seleucid dynasty
- Reputation
 - the smallest, youngest and least significant of the 7 cities
 - located in a valley – had little strategic importance
 - in the struggle between the kingdom of Pergamos and the kings of the east, Thyatira was thrown about like a pawn because of its insignificance
 - but it grew in commercial value – marketing black wool and purple dye
- Industry – garment makers, dyes, manufacturers, dying industries, tanners, potters and bronze workers
 - The purple dye came from the Madder plant – also called "Turkey Red" – this dye is still sold today
 - Lydia, "seller of purple" was probably from Thyatira selling their special purple dye to Philippi. She met Paul in Philippi in Acts 16:14
 - There were several trade guilds and manufacturing association for the industry workers. You couldn't practice your trade successfully unless you belonged to one of the guilds or unions. Each guild had its own pagan deity that it patronized with feasts, festivals and sexuality.
- Reputation
 - There were several trade guilds and manufacturing association for the industry workers. You couldn't practice your trade successfully unless you belonged to one of the guilds or unions. Each guild had its own pagan deity that it patronized with feasts, festivals and sexuality.
- Religion – Emperor worship or major temples to pagan deities were **not** the religious emphasis in Thyatira. They worshipped the local god, Tyrimnos (horse riding, ax wielding god). Fortune telling was also popular, with Sambathe, a female prophetess popular in that day. The trade guilds had their own little patron god that they worshipped.
- Church – no record of its founding, perhaps Lydia started it after she was saved through Paul in Philippi. Her family was converted so they were a stable nucleus for the church.
- Modern Day – Akhisar, Turkey

Revelation 2:20-21 ²⁰Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

In Light Of The Situation In Thyatira, We Can Understand Christ's Condemnation Of:

- Toleration Of False Teaching (20a)
 - They tolerated a false prophetess similar to Jezebel
 - Jezebel – pagan heritage
 - Jezebel enticed others to evil through sensuality (1 Kings 16:31-33; 21:25-26)
 - Practiced witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22)
 - Worshipped Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 16:32-33)
 - Enlisted hundreds of pagan prophets (1 Kings 18:19)
 - Attempted to silence true prophets of God (Elijah – 1 Kings 18:4)
 - So good at maintaining a threatening image that Elijah thought he alone was left (1 Kings 18:22; 19:10)
 - She was greedy in manipulating the acquisition of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) through murder and deception
 - Jezebel enticed others to evil through sensuality (1 Kings 16:31-33; 21:25-26)
- **Q:** What were those Jezebel type influences on the Thyatira church?
 - those guilds and unions that worshipped false gods and committed immorality
 - this individual perhaps propagated this apostasy
- Seduction Of Sexual Immorality (20b)
- Refusal Of Spiritual Repentance (21)

E. The Theological Context

- We must understand the theological context of the audience to grasp the context of the text.
- What was the relationship of the audience to God?
- What does God require of them for obedience?

Examples:

- Matthew wrote to those in a Jewish context (Christ is the expected Messiah). Mark wrote his gospel to those in a Roman context (remain faithful amidst the persecution in Rome). Luke wrote to the Greeks (Greeks sought perfection in humanity – Christ is it!). John wrote to everyone proclaiming Christ as the Son of God.

- The theological context of Hebrews sheds light when we understand that the Jewish believers confused the distinctions between Judaism & Christianity
- The Sermon on Mount was given to believers on how to live in the Kingdom of God, not to unbelievers on how to get to heaven.
- James wrote to believers, thus the discussion on faith & works was not talking to unbelievers on how to be a Christian, but to Christians to display their works to prove their faith.
- Why did God bring 10 plagues to Egypt?
 - "The gods and goddesses of Egypt were exposed as powerless by the devastating plagues that God brought on the Hebrews' oppressors. Three reasons for the plagues are given in Exodus: so Israel might know that "I am the Lord your God" (6:7); that Egypt might learn that 'I am the Lord' (7:5); and as a 'judgment on all the gods of Egypt' (12:12). It was clearly futile to depend on the gods that Egypt counted on to bring greatness and to ensure a life after death. Soon the limits of Egyptian magic were reached and the sorcerers admitted Moses' works were performed by God. Even this 'expert' testimony was rejected by Pharaoh." (Richards, *Bible Reader's Companion*)

Excellent Sources For Understanding The Historical Context:

Resource	Description	Type Of Bridge	Recommendations
Atlas	maps showing biblical locations & periods	geographic	Beitzel - <i>Moody Bible Atlas</i> , Pfeiffer - <i>Baker Bible Atlas</i>
Bible Dictionary & Encyclopedia	describes people, places, things, doctrines, cultures, and words (Encyclopedia is larger & more comprehensive than dictionary)	linguistic, cultural, geographic, chronological	Unger - <i>New Unger's Bible Dict</i> , Douglas - <i>New Bible Dictionary</i> , Zondervan <i>Pictorial Encyc.</i> (5v), <i>Int. Standard Bible Encyc.</i> (4v)
Handbook	overview of Bible books, chapters & background	linguistic, cultural	Ungers, Halleys, Richards, Scroggie
Commentary	scholarly description of verses and passages; provides words studies & context background	linguistic, cultural, literary, chronological	Walvoord & Zuck (ed.) - <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> (2v) Wiersbe - <i>Bible Exp. on N. T</i> (2v) <i>The Expositor's Bible Com.</i> (12)
Survey	summary of background, overview of book	literary	OT-Jenson; Geisler; Wilmington NT-Jenson, Gromacki, Wilm.
Introduction	details and defends background, purpose, authorship, audience, outline	literary, cultural	OT - Gleason Archer NT - Hiebert (3 vol); Guthrie
Expository Dictionary	defines words as used in original language	linguistic	OT - Theol. Wordbook of O.T. NT - Vines; Colin Brown (3 vol)
Concordance	find verses according to word	linguistic	KJV(Strong's, Young's), NIV, NAS
Topical	find verses according to topic	linguistic	<i>Naves Topical Bible</i>
Treasury	cross references every verse in Bible	linguistic	<i>Treasury of Scripture Knowledge</i>
Culture	explains biblical culture	cultural	Thompson - <i>Handbook of Life in Bible Times</i> , Wight & Gower - <i>New Manners & Customs of Bible Times</i>

Conclusion: The Good News When It's Hard, The Holy Spirit Will Help Us!!

a. The Holy Spirit Instructs The Believer In The Truth Of God's Word

John 14:26a But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things

- "Teach" = *didaxei* – from *didasko* which is the delivering discourse, the explanation of truth

b. The Holy Spirit Reminds The Believer Of The Truths In God's Word

John 14:26b And bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

c. The Holy Spirit Guides The Believer Through The Truth Of God's Word

John 16:13a However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth

- "Guide" = *hodegeo* from *hodos* which means "way" or "road" and means to "lead the way" or "guide the way along a road"
- Unfamiliar travelers down the knew highway of truth are led by the Spirit through this unacquainted territory.
- "All truth" does not emphasize one particular truth over the other, but that the Holy Spirit leads us through all of God's truth.

d. The Holy Spirit Proclaims To The Believer That The Truth Is Found In God's Word

John 16:15 Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

- "Declare" = *anangelei* – "to make known"

e. The Holy Spirit Reveals To The Believer What Is The Truth Which Is Found In God's Word

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 ¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God

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