

# Class Notes

*BIB104—Bible Study Methods*

*BIB 348—Hermeneutics*

*BIB 509—Biblical Interpretation*



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*Part One:*  
**SEEING**



## ***Four-Step Bible Study***

There are four steps to the method of Bible study that we will be exploring in this course. Each of these four steps address a particular question which is important to our understanding and use of the Bible (see chapter four [p. 21-30] of *Read the Bible for a Change*). The four steps are:

### **1. Seeing**

Seeing asks the question, “*WHAT DOES IT SAY?*”

1.1 Seeing means paying close attention to what the text says, being careful to observe what the author has said, and being careful not to make the text say something it doesn’t in fact say.

1.2 This step entails a heightened respect for the voice of God, which is speaking to us through the text. This requires that we are alert to the most finely nuanced details yet refrain from assigning our own meanings to it.

### **2. Understanding**

Understanding asks the question, “*WHAT DOES IT MEAN?*”

2.1 Understanding involves processing all of the information that we have identified and assembled in the first step, Seeing.

2.2 This step is about identifying the author’s intended *meaning*, looking especially at the questions of “Why?” (*Why* did the author write—what purpose is he trying to accomplish through writing this text?) and “What?” (What is he talking about—what ideas and values is the author promoting to me?).

2.3 In other words, here we are seeking to identify the author’s purpose, main ideas, and what he is saying about those main ideas.

### **3. Sharing**

Sharing asks the question, “*WHAT TRUTHS IS IT TEACHING?*”

3.1 Every single passage in the Bible has a purpose (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) and aims to teach us something. Sharing is concerned with identifying the message of the author for readers, both past and present, in light of the established intended meaning of the author which he has communicated through the text. In this step, we meet the author on his own “wavelength,” receiving what he has given to us.

3.2 The truth a given biblical author had in mind is *eternal* and *universal*; it isn’t just for a certain people at a certain time. These truths are “shared” with us, as readers, and thus they are not our own, privatized property, but are held in common with all other believers.

3.3 Ultimately, the message that the author *shares* with us, we are to *share* with others. Reading and interpreting the Bible was not intended to be solely (or even primarily!) and individual act; Sharing is about recognizing that the truth of Scripture does not hinge on me personally, but instead, I am merely a part of a much larger community which spans centuries and continents and cultures: the community of intended readers of God’s Word.

## 4. Responding

Responding asks the question, “*SO WHAT?*”

4.1 The final step, Responding, acknowledges the demand of the Bible that we *respond* to its message. When an author communicates his message, part of his intent is to provoke a particular *response*. We honor the author’s intent by responding in appropriate ways to the truth he tells us.

4.2 This step is about much more than just “applying” the Bible, which tends to create the expectation that the Bible’s primarily (or only) purpose is to reform my actions. This is true of some passages, but surprisingly, a large amount of Scripture isn’t telling us to do anything in particular. Along with the external, there is also inward dimension to responding faithfully to God’s Word, and we cannot afford to leave this out.

4.3 In the fourth step, the goal is to become the ideal “conversation partner,” seeking to become an “ideal” reader of the Word of God. This requires our entire being—heart, soul, mind, emotions, actions, and imagination. Involving our whole self, the aim is to cooperate completely in the precise ways that would delight the divine Author, God himself.

## ***Steps to Seeing & Understanding a Book or a Large Passage***

-Identify the <b>TYPE</b> of literature: <i>Narrative Poetry Discourse</i>
-Identify the <b>GENRE</b> of literature: <i>Apocalyptic Epistle Gospel Prophecy Psalm Story Wisdom/Proverbial</i>
-Determine the major <b>DIVISIONS</b> -Give each division a title or short description -Subdivide into <b>UNITS</b> : <i>Narrative = Scenes Poetry = Strophes Discourse = Paragraphs</i>
-Identify the <b>FORMS</b> of literature
-Identify <b>REPETITIONS</b> : phrases and words -Identify <b>KEY WORDS</b> and decide on their meaning
- <i>Discourse</i> : Determine <b>SUBJECT</b> and <b>MAIN VERB</b> of each sentence
-Identify the <b>FIGURES OF SPEECH</b> and decide on their meaning
-Note <b>CONNECTING WORDS</b> -Determine how the <b>SENTENCES</b> are <b>RELATED</b> to each other
-Identify <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b> between <b>UNITS</b> -Revise subdivision and division <b>TITLES</b>
-Determine how the major <b>DIVISIONS RELATE</b> to one another
-Decide upon the <b>MAIN IDEA</b> of the entire book or passage
-Decide upon the <b>PURPOSE</b> of the entire book or passage

## *Seeing What Is There*

A very helpful way to approach the Bible and seeing all that is there is to ask all the standard news reporter's questions.<sup>1</sup> *The basic questions to ask yourself when reading any passage of Scripture are: Who? What? When? Where? and How?*

### **1. Who?**

- 1.1 Does it say who wrote the book?
- 1.2 If so, under what conditions?
- 1.3 To whom is the author speaking or writing?
- 1.4 Who are the characters involved?
- 1.5 Is the author quoting someone else?
- 1.6 Is somebody or some group of people being described?

### **2. What?**

- 2.1 Is the passage about events (narrative) or ideas (discourse, poetry)?
- 2.2 What is the main idea being discussed?
- 2.3 What is the author saying about the main idea?
- 2.4 What is the author saying about each of the characters?
- 2.5 What is the overall plot?
- 2.6 What conflicts are presented in the text?
- 2.7 What key events take place?
- 2.8 What other important themes are present?
- 2.9 What key words or phrases can you identify?

### **3. When?**

- 3.1 Does the passage say when the book was written?
- 3.2 Does it describe the circumstances of its writing?
- 3.3 When does the action take place?
- 3.4 Does the text refer to the past, present, or future?
- 3.5 What words indicate time factors or time changes (e.g., "3 days," "then," "tomorrow," "before," etc.)?

### **4. Where?**

- 4.1 Where was the author at the time of the writing of the book?
- 4.2 Where do the initial readers of the book live?
- 4.3 Where does the action of the story take place?
- 4.4 What nations, regions, or cities are mentioned?
- 4.5 What buildings, structures, or landmarks are referred to?
- 4.6 Do these buildings or places have special theological significance (e.g., the temple, the wilderness, Babylon, Zion, etc.)?

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<sup>1</sup> See John Hayes & Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982): 24.



## 5. How?

- 5.1 How would you describe the tone of writing?
- 5.2 What literary style, genre(s), and forms does the author employ?
- 5.3 How does the author portray each of the characters?
- 5.4 How does his characterization contribute to the message he is trying to get across?
- 5.5 How would you describe the pace of the story (e.g., hurried, suspenseful, deliberate, jerky, etc.)?
- 5.6 How does the pace effect the story impact and meaning?
- 5.7 What figures of speech are used? What is their effect?
- 5.8 What important words or phrases are repeated? Why?
- 5.9 Are any motifs or type-scenes employed (i.e., expressions or situations which are found elsewhere in the Bible—e.g., miraculous birth to a previously childless couple, storm at sea, thunder and earthquake on a mountain, etc.)? If so, what is the significance of these parallels?
- 5.10 What kind of literary devices does the author use (e.g., symbols, parallelism, chiasm, inclusio, etc.)?
- 5.11 What kinds of literary relationships exist in the passage (e.g., contrast, pivot, condition, result, etc.)?
- 5.12 What strategies does the author employ to convince or persuade you as the reader?

# *The Bible as Literature*

## ***Three Important Points for Reading the Bible:***

Point #1: Every piece of literature belongs to a particular **category**, and therefore has a particular form.<sup>2</sup>

Point #2: The **category** we think we are listening to affects the way we understand it.<sup>3</sup>

Point #3: The Bible contains **MANY** different categories of writing, so we must properly recognize the form of each passage we read in order to understand it correctly.

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Actually, the whole Bible belongs in a literary category all by itself: it is **REVELATION** (or “proclamation”), i.e., it announces a message from God to us, and it demands a personal response on our part. Within this “mega-category,” it is helpful to identify three additional **levels** of literary categories in the Bible.

1. The first level is **TYPE** of biblical literature, of which there are three:

1.1 **NARRATIVE**: a text that makes its point primarily by telling a story.

1.2 **POETRY**: a text where normal language is modified to intensify its impact. Various poetic devices are used that affect how sentences are structured, and there is usually a high concentration of figures of speech (word pictures).

1.3 **DISCOURSE**: a text that presents a logical sequence of ideas.

2. The second level is **GENRE**.<sup>4</sup> There are seven of these in the Bible:

2.1 **APOCALYPTIC**: highly symbolic, universal text focusing on end-times

2.2 **EPISTLE**: a New Testament letter

2.3 **GOSPEL**: “Good news” story specifically about Jesus and his mission of salvation

2.4 **PROPHECY**: a message given directly from God (not necessarily a prediction)

2.5 **PSALM**: a poetic song

2.6 **PROVERBIAL** (Wisdom): “insights for living” gained from observing the world around us

2.7 **STORY**: the telling of an event or series of events

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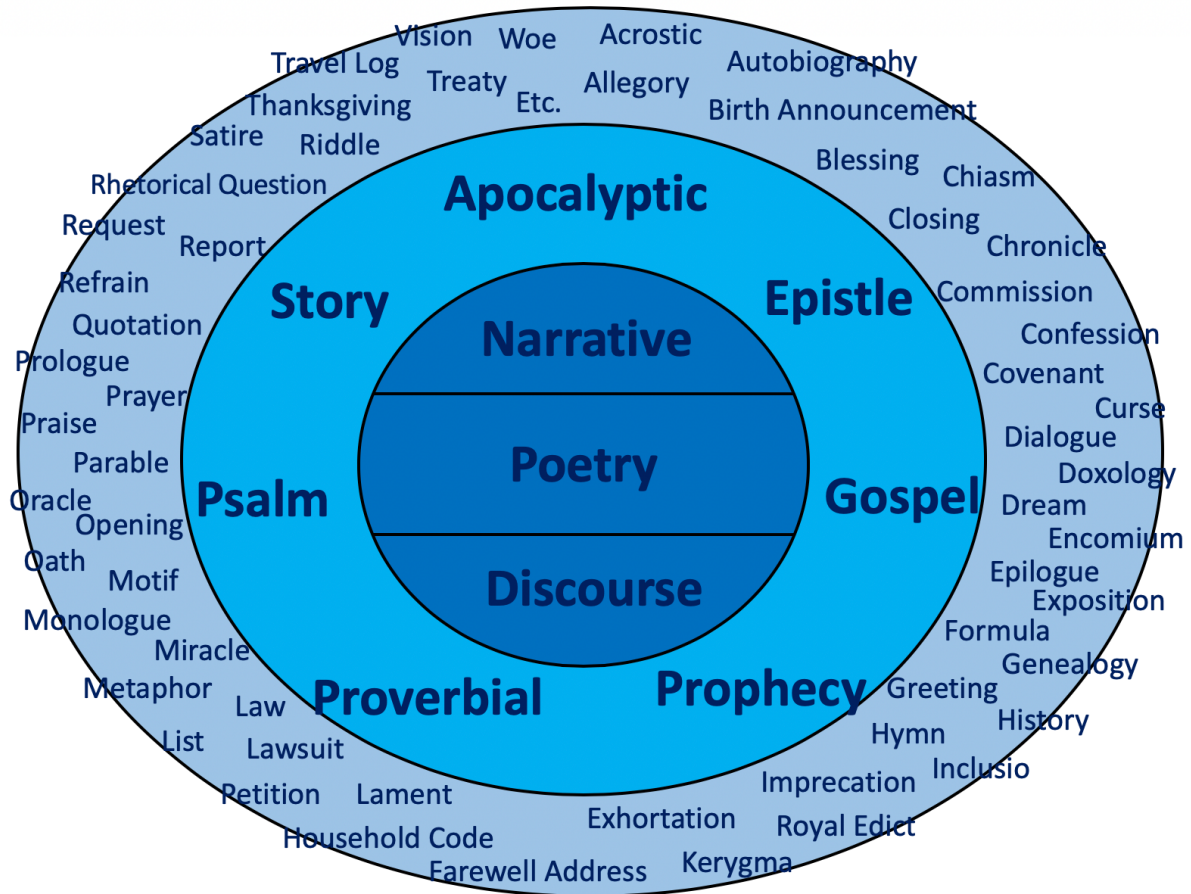
<sup>2</sup> “All understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound” (E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* [New Haven: Yale, 1967]: 76).

<sup>3</sup> “Those who are well-read have a greater, more refined reservoir of expectations. Knowing what to expect, they often come away from a story with a greater understanding and appreciation than one who has little idea of what stories are about” (John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992]: 12).

<sup>4</sup> A *genre* is a recognizable category of writing which follows certain rules and patterns.

3. The third level contains the **FORMS** of biblical literature.<sup>5</sup> These are smaller-level structures within a passage that give clues to the author's patterns of thought.

3.1 There are *many* forms in the Bible. Most of these are listed and defined in the textbook (see "Forms of Biblical Literature" in the Appendix of *Read the Bible for a Change*, p. 217-31). These forms include, for example: Announcement of Birth, Blessing, Chronicle, Covenant, Dialogue, Exhortation, Farewell Address, Genealogy, History, Lament, List, Miracle, Oracle, Parable, Proverb, Quotation, Satire, Thanksgiving, Travel Log, Treaty, and Woe.



**NOTE:** As we are reading our Bibles, we should be looking for different things in each one of these types, genres, and forms.

<sup>5</sup> "Genres are usually distinguished from literary forms on the basis of length and complexity. Whereas literary forms can be short and structurally simple, [genres] are longer pieces that may themselves contain a number of shorter literary forms" (James L. Bailey & Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* [Louisville: W/JKP, 1992]: 13-14).

## *Reading Biblical Stories: Relationships*

Units of Scripture (e.g., paragraphs, scenes, etc.) are related to other units in many different ways. The following list identifies many of the more common relationships.

- 1. Change of time:** the scene shifts from one time period to another. There are several ways this may occur:
  - Progress* (normal movement ahead): Mat. 28:1; Luke 4:1-2
  - “Flashback”* (scene from an earlier time): Acts 11:4-17; 13:16-31; 1 Sam. 28:3
  - “Preview”* (a look at the far-ahead future): Gen. 15:13-14; Deut 30:1-3; Luke 3:16; John 2:22; 6:64, 70
  - “Freeze”* (action stops): Jonah 2:2-9; Luke 3:23-38
- 2. Change in Location:** any change of setting.
  - One place to another:* Mat. 19:1
  - “Zooming”* (focusing in on a small area): Acts 7:57-58; 19:32-33, 34-35ff.
  - “Wide-angle”* (widening to a large area): Acts 1:8; 5:10-11
- 3. Change of Person:** a change of speaker or in audience.
  - Different speaker:* Ps. 3:2; 4:6
  - Different audience:* Ps. 23; 30:3-4
- 4. Repetition:** use of the same words, phrases, ideas, events, scenes, motifs, etc. Repetition is used for three purposes:
  - To emphasize:* Phil. 3:1; 4:4; Ps. 136
  - To divide units:* Ps. 42-43
  - To connect units:* Judg. 2:9; 4:5; 10:1; 17:1,8; 18:2; 19:1,16 cf. 1 Sam. 1:1
- 5. Parallelism:** a poetic device in which similar ideas are grouped together (“thought-rhyming”). See class notes and the relevant chapter in the text book on biblical poetry.
- 6. Chiasm:** Like inverted parallelism (see class notes and textbook) the same ideas are repeated, but in a different order. Chiasm can occur in narrative as well as in poetry (Ps. 30:8-10; 2 Sam. 21-24; Luke 1:42-45).
- 7. Inclusio:** the repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning and end of a unit (Ps. 146-150).
- 8. Comparison:** Two or more things are placed near one another to highlight their similarity (Prov. 30:15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 24-28).
- 9. Contrast:** Two or more things are placed near one another to highlight their differences (Ps. 1; Acts 4:36-37; 5:1-10; Hebrews [passim]).
- 10. Introduction:** the author provides necessary background information to prepare the reader for what follows (Job 1-2; Luke 1:5-10).

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- 11. Intercalation:** the author interrupts the flow of the passage for either of two reasons:
  - Explanation* (necessary for understanding): John 18:40; Acts 8:27-28
  - Delay* (to build anticipation and suspense): Mark 5:21-43
- 12. Summary:** a restatement or conclusion of the main point or the story being told (Judg. 21:25; Eccl. 12:13-14).
- 13. Statement of Purpose:** the author states the reason why the book or passage was written (Luke 1:1-4; John 20:31; 1 John 5:13).
- 14. Dialogue:** a discussion between two or more characters using direct, quoted speech (John 4:7-26).
- 15. Question-and-answer:** a question is posed, then the answer is given. This can take two forms:
  - Conversational* (one person asks, another answers): John 3:4,9; Mal. 3:6-15
  - Rhetorical* (one person answers his own question): Rom. 10:14-31
- 16. Citation:** the use of another passage of Scripture to make a point (Ps. 86:15→Ex. 34:6; Acts 13:32-33→Ps. 2:7).
- 17. Condition:** describes the conditions that are necessary for something to take place, often using the words, “if” or “unless” (Josh. 1:8; John 3:3; Rom. 10:9; Rev. 3:20).
- 18. Result:** describes what happens as a consequence of certain conditions, often using or implying the words, “therefore” or “then” (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:1; 1 John 1:9).
- 19. Generalization:** moving from one particular idea or person to a general idea or a large group of people (Luke 1:46,50; 10:37; 1 Cor. 9:7-10; Mat. 5:21-22).
- 20. Particularization:** moving from a general idea or a large group to a specific application or to an individual case (Luke 1:68-76; Gal. 3:6-9).
- 21. Continuation:** simply builds on or extends what is already being said (Eph. 5:18-33).
- 22. Interchange:** two or more stories are interwoven into a single narrative (Hannah & Samuel vs. Eli & sons [1 Sam. 1-4]; John the Baptist & Jesus [Luke 1-2]).
- 23. Pivot:** a reversal of the movement of the plot. There are two kinds:
  - Negative* (from good to bad): 2 Sam. 1-10 (+); pivot v. 11; 12-24 (-)
  - Positive* (from bad to good): Ps. 73:1-16 (-); pivot v. 17; v. 18-28 (+)
- 24. Climax:** the conclusion or resolution to a series of events or ideas (Ruth 4:13-17).

NOTE: Two passages may be connected by more than one of these relationships (perhaps a number of them). Relationships may also exist between units which are not right next to one another; these are called “non-adjacent” or “non-contiguous.”

## *Reading Biblical Stories: Irony*

### **1. Question: Why Study Irony?**

Because irony is found all over in the Bible, especially in Bible stories and in the prophetic books.

“The use of irony in the Hebrew Bible is so deep-seated and prevalent that little of its narrative can be read without becoming aware of the ironizing distance between the narration and narrated characters.”<sup>6</sup>

### **2. Question: What is Irony?**

It has been said that “irony, like love, is more readily recognized than defined.”<sup>7</sup> *Irony is a literary technique used by speakers and authors to communicate something **different** from what they actually say.*<sup>8</sup> Several things occur in irony:

2.1 There exists two levels of meaning—one on the surface and one at a deeper level.

2.2 The two levels of meaning are in opposition to one another.

2.3 Because it is possible to take the surface meaning “innocently” at face value, those who recognize the deeper meaning feel somewhat superior.

### **3. Question: How Do You Interpret Irony?**

3.1 First, the reader/listener has to decide that there is something wrong or inappropriate or unacceptable about what the words are actually saying.

3.2 Next, the reader must come up with a theory about what was said, and decide which of these options is the most likely, based mostly on experience with that author.

3.2.1 The author/speaker was too foolish or ignorant to know that (s)he has made a mistake—the author is incompetent.

3.2.2 The author is deliberately lying.

3.2.3 The author is saying something sincere, but I as the reader don’t understand what (s)he is saying—I the reader believe that I am too incompetent to understand the author.

3.2.4 The author is using deliberate irony.

3.3 If readers decide that there is irony, they then must construct what they think the author *really* means, based on clues from the text.

3.4 The final step is to determine *why* the author chose to use irony in that particular context rather than straightforward communication.

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<sup>6</sup> R. P. Carroll, “Is Humour Also Among the Prophets?” in Yehuda T. Radday & Athalya Brenner [eds], *On Humour and Comic in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1990): 170.

<sup>7</sup> Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Almond, 1965, 1981): 13.

<sup>8</sup> Wayne Booth asserts that irony “cannot be understood without rejecting what [it] seems to say” (*The Rhetoric of Irony* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974]: 1).

#### 4. Question: What Kinds of Irony Are There in the Bible?

Irony<sup>9</sup> occurs whenever:

4.1 There is a discrepancy between what is actually said and what is meant.

e.g., “Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings—boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do,” declares the Sovereign Lord. (Amos 4:4-5)

Obviously, from what we know about God, He does not *really* want them to sin, but is using sarcastic irony to denounce what they are already doing.

4.2 What occurs is the opposite of what you expect.

e.g., Elijah calls down fire from heaven and kills 450 prophets of Baal, only to run away from one angry woman. (1 Kings 18-19)

4.3 Circumstances bring about a reversal: important people are humbled, lowly people are honored.

e.g., The prisoners Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai are given privileges, while the ruling king in each case (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar & Belshazzar, and Artaxerxes) are perplexed and foolish without them.

4.4 Certain characters know more than they let on.

e.g., When Jesus tells the Samaritan woman to come back with her husband, she says, “I have no husband,” to which Jesus replies, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.” (John 4:16-18)

Here Jesus knew the answer even before he asked the question, and asked the question not to gain new understanding but to force the Samaritan woman to “deal with her issues.” Other examples: God questioning Adam (Gen. 3) and Cain (Gen. 4); Samuel questioning Saul (1 Sam. 15); etc.

4.5 You the reader know more than the characters in the story (called *dramatic irony*)

e.g., the reader knows about the discussion between God and Satan and why Job experiences his suffering, but Job never does get “clued in.”

4.6 A character’s words carry far *more* meaning or truth than s/he realizes.

e.g., Caiaphas saying that “it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” (John 11:50)

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<sup>9</sup> For further study, see Wayne C. Booth, “The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Irony: Or, Why Don't You Say What You Mean?” in Don M. Burks [ed], *Rhetoric, Philosophy and Literature: An Exploration* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue Univ., 1978): 1-13; Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the OT* (Sheffield: Almond, 1981): 13-38; David Marcus, *From Balaam to Jonah: Anti-prophetic Satire in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995): 1-27; & R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983): 165-180.

## 5. Question: Why Do Biblical Authors Use Irony? Isn't It Really a Deceptive Way of Talking?

Irony is a very effective form of communication for a number of reasons.

5.1 Authors inevitably attempt to shape and manipulate the way they want you the reader to view a particular character, and irony is an effective way that an author can cause you *to view a character negatively*. Herod, Pilate, Judas, Pharaoh, Satan, Pharisees, Saul, etc.—all of these biblical “bad guys” are depicted ironically in the Bible.

5.2 Irony frequently makes us laugh—and *when we are laughing, we are more vulnerable* to agreeing with the author—he “charms” us into adopting his opinion by appealing to our humor.

5.3 Causing us to laugh about the stupidity of someone else who happens to be guilty of the same sin or weakness as ourselves is *an indirect and less offensive way of criticizing our behavior*.

5.4 Irony, satire, and sarcasm are *the language of scorn and ridicule*—and since sin is so offensive to God, these become a prominent way in which God expresses his displeasure with human sinfulness (especially in the prophets).<sup>10</sup> “The prophecy which seeks to instruct, amend, and reform also seeks to offend.”<sup>11</sup>

5.5 Irony *creates a bond between the author and reader*—a “secret code” that they share with one another. Irony is a very risky tool for an author to use. The more likely it is to be misunderstood by a gullible reader, the more “superior” a reader feels when they “get the joke.” The trade-off is between (a) everyone understanding the point, but without much impact; and (b) fewer understanding the point, but being powerfully moved by it.

“Even though some readers or listeners may be left by the wayside, those who come along will be clamped inescapably into the author’s patterns—they will in fact have the illusion of having built each point for themselves.”<sup>12</sup>

5.6 Irony also wins us over because it convinces us that *the author is clever* enough not only to see life at a deeper level than most, but can also use subtle humor in describing it—a wise person indeed!

## 6. Question: What Other “Clues” Do Biblical Authors Use to Indicate That They’re Using Irony?

Irony is frequently signaled by other literary devices, such as:

6.1 A sudden change in style:

e.g., an especially long or short sentence, a switch from story to poem (or vice versa), from storyline to speech, from statement to question or command, etc.

6.2 Direct information given to the reader of which the characters are unaware.

e.g., Job 1-2, Mark 1:1

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<sup>10</sup> See in this connection Thomas Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets* (Louisville: W/JKP, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Jemielity, *Satire & the Hebrew Prophets*: 41.

<sup>12</sup> Booth, “The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Irony”: 11. Marcus observes, “Since satire almost always pretends to be something other than what it really is, it sometimes succeeds so well that readers miss the satiric intention entirely” (*From Balaam to Jonah*: 4).



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- 6.3 When a speaker in the story says something you know is wrong.  
e.g., Pilate saying, “Don’t you realize I have the power either to free you or to crucify you?” (John 19:10)
- 6.4 When the author shows you the reader someone in the story who misunderstood  
e.g., “...Do you still not understand?” (Mark 8:17-21); Nicodemus’ misunderstanding of “born from above/born again” (John 3)
- 6.5 When the author uses “stock” characters (stereotypes) and reverses our expectations
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| -a foreign, evil’ king who does good (Cyrus)           | -a false prophet                          |
| -a righteous sufferer (Joseph, Job, Jesus, Paul, etc.) | -wicked priests                           |
| -a wicked king over God’s people                       | -scribes and Pharisees                    |
| -God’s chosen people being wicked                      | -the poor (widows, orphans, lepers, etc.) |
- 6.6 When the author uses “stock” actions (melodrama): a familiar event in which the opposite or unexpected happens  
e.g., Jesus is “crowned” as king—but with thorns, and by mocking enemies
- 6.7 When the author uses “stock” scenes (type-scenes) and the opposite occurs  
e.g., abundant food and water in the wilderness or desert, blessing while in a foreign land (i.e., outside the land of blessing), etc.
- 6.8 Use of “stock” language (clichés) which don’t fit the circumstances  
e.g., Pilate presenting the beaten and seemingly helpless Jesus to the Jews with the comment, “Here is your king!” This is a case of double-irony, since it is truer than Pilate realizes (John 19:14)
- 6.9 Use of a genre or form which especially lends itself to irony  
e.g., story, prophecy, gospel; commission, dialogue, lament, oracle, rhetorical question, etc.

“I think the question leads us into the whole problem of how we recognize a literary kind—a genre—when we see one. Because the best final security in deciding whether a word or sentence or paragraph is ironic is knowing the nature of the whole work to which the part contributes.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Booth, “The Pleasures & Pitfalls of Irony”: 9.

## *Sentences & Parts of Speech*

Each of the three main types of biblical literature requires a different study approach to understand it. Narrative teaches us about God through EVENTS. Poetry presents God through IMAGES. *Discourse communicates ideas through GRAMMAR.*<sup>14</sup> So to understand the discourse material of the Bible (such as the NT epistles), we must have a working knowledge of the basics of grammar.

### **1. Paragraphs**

A paragraph is a group of sentences centered around one basic idea. What it is talking about is the *TOPIC*. What it says about the topic is called the *THEME*.

### **2. Sentences**

Every sentence has two main parts: (1) it has a *SUBJECT* (what is being talked about); and (2) it has a *PREDICATE* (what it is saying about that subject). Take, for example, the following simple sentence: “Jesus wept.” (John 11:35)

What is being talked about is Jesus, i.e., the *SUBJECT*. The word “wept” describes what the subject did, and therefore is the *PREDICATE*.

*Definition of a Sentence:* A sentence is a group of words with a subject and a predicate that expresses a complete thought. A sentence may be made up of one clause (as in the example above) or of several clauses.

### **3. Clauses**

A clause is a group of words with a subject and a verb that is used as part of a sentence. There are two kinds of clauses.

3.1 A *MAIN CLAUSE* contains a subject and a predicate and expresses a complete thought by itself. E.g., “*And they were amazed at him.*” (Mark 12:17)

3.2 A *DEPENDENT CLAUSE* contains a subject and a verb, but does not express a complete thought by itself. E.g., “*As the Father has sent me*” (John 20:21)

In this clause, the subject is “the *Father*,” while the verb is “[has] *sent*.” Yet it doesn’t contain a complete thought until it is combined with a main clause.

3.3 E.g., “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*” This is now a complete sentence, with the subject being “*I*” and the predicate being “*am sending*.”

Most sentences in biblical discourse contain more than one clause, and it is not unusual to find several clauses in a single sentence. E.g., “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that *YOU MAY BECOME* blameless and pure...in which *YOU SHINE* like stars in the universe as *YOU HOLD OUT* the word of life in order that *I MAY BOAST* on the day of Christ that I *DID* not *RUN* or *LABOR* for nothing.” (Phil. 2:14-16)

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<sup>14</sup> “No one can follow the thread of Paul’s arguments if the syntax and grammar of the text are not understood. If one cannot diagram a Pauline text, then one will have difficulty in tracing the argument of that text. The ability to diagram the text and the ability to follow an argument go hand in hand.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, Guides to NT Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990): 97.

Only the first clause is a main clause (with the implied subject being “[YOU]” and the predicate being “DO”). The others all have a subject and a verb, but do not express a complete thought.

#### 4. Phrases

A phrase is a group of words expressing an idea without a subject and verb. There are three different kinds of phrases (prepositional, infinitive, and participial). For example:

“in all” “of my prayers” “for all” “of you” “with joy” (Phil. 1:3) [Prepositional]

“I have learned *TO BE CONTENT*” (Phil. 4:11) [Infinitive]

“...we dealt with each of you as a father deals...*ENCOURAGING, COMFORTING, and URGING YOU...*” (1 Thes. 2:11-12) [Participial]

#### 5. Words (Parts of Speech)

5.1 A *NOUN* is the name of a person, place or thing.

Examples: *brother, heaven, forgiveness*

Particular people or places that are capitalized are called *PROPER NOUNS*.

Examples: *Abel, Jerusalem*

5.2 A *PRONOUN* is a word used in the place of a noun.

Examples: *he, she, it, that, which, who, them*

5.3 An *ADJECTIVE* is a word which describes a noun or pronoun.

Examples: “*ONE* body,” “*CHOSEN* people,” “*GOOD* works”

5.4 A *VERB* describes an action or state of being.

Examples: “He *GAVE* his life for us,” “We *ARE* the sheep of his pasture”

5.5 An *ADVERB* is used to describe a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

Examples: “Those who have served *WELL*” (verb)

“Even so, come *QUICKLY*” (verb)

“he had preached *FEARLESSLY*” (verb)

“a *FULL* forty days” (adjective)

“I will return *VERY* soon” (adverb)

5.6 A *PARTICIPLE* is a verb which is used as an adjective to describe a noun, or as an adverb to describe a verb.

Examples: “because of the *SURPASSING* grace God has given you” (→ noun)

“It grew in numbers, *LIVING* in the fear of the Lord” (→ verb)

5.7 A *CONJUNCTION* is a word that connects other words, phrases, or clauses.

Examples: *and, or, but, even, also, neither*

5.8 A *PREPOSITION* is a word used to show the relationship of a noun or a pronoun to some other word in the sentence.

Examples: *about, above, according to, across, against, along, around, as, because, below, beneath, beside, between, by, down, except, of, for, in, into, like, near, next to, of, on, onto, out, out of, outside, over, through, throughout, to, toward, under, up, upon, with, within, without*

## ***Basic Guidelines for Diagramming Sentences***

### **Step 1: Identify the subject, main verb, and object of each sentence.**

1.1 *Place these on a horizontal line over at the left margin.*

| [You] place these...  
s. vb. obj.

### **Step 2: Identify subordinate words, phrases, and clauses.**

2.1 *When the subordinate element comes AFTER the word being modified, place these UNDER the word which is being modified. Draw a vertical line UP to the word being modified.*

| [You] draw a vertical line  
↑ up to the word  
↑ being modified.

2.2 *When the subordinate element comes BEFORE the word being modified, place these ABOVE the word, and draw a vertical line DOWN to it.*

When the subordinate element comes  
↑ before the word  
↑ being modified  
| [You] place these...

### **Step 3: Identify all conjunctions and connecting words.**

3.1 *Write these vertically beside the vertical lines.*

| [You] identify all  
and | conjunctions  
connecting words

## Grammatical Analysis

1. Here's the basic idea behind these grammatical analyses: On the far left-hand side, put (1) the subject; (2) the main verb; and (3) the object (if there is one) of the main clause.

| I saw you. (subject  $\rightarrow$  verb  $\rightarrow$  object)

2. Also on the same line would be any simple adjectives:

| I threw **THE RED** ball.

3. Phrases and dependent clauses are placed directly above or below the word they modify.

E.g., “I drove because no one else was going.”

| I drove  
↑ because no one else was going.

E.g., “If you are going to the store, bring some milk.”

↓ If you are going      ↑ to the store  
| [you] bring some milk.

E.g., “You can wash your car over there in the corner of our yard under the tree.”

| You can wash your car  
↑ over there  
in the corner      ↑ of our yard  
under the tree.

E.g., “You can wash the car that you borrowed from Mike at the car wash.”

| You can wash the car  
↑  
at the car wash.  
↑ that you borrowed  
↑ from Mike

E.g. “The reason I decided to go should be obvious.”

| The reason...should be obvious.  
 ↑[that] I decided      ↑to go

E.g. “The sports I like best are basketball and football.”

| The sports ... are                      and       | basketball  
|     ↑ [that] I like best                  | football.

## *Grammatical Analysis of Colossians 1:3-7*



# *Discourse Analysis: Introduction & Evaluation*<sup>15</sup>

## 1. Basic Principles of Discourse Analysis<sup>16</sup>

1.1 Assumes the text must be read as a holistic unit.

1.2 Language operates on a multi-tiered system of structure.<sup>17</sup>

<b>Text (Discourse)</b>
<b>Major Units (Macrostructure)</b>
<b>Subunits</b>
<b>Paragraph</b>
Sentence
Clause
Phrase
Word
Morpheme (Microstructure)

1.3 The “rules” governing the structure of the larger levels override the “rules” smaller structures.

1.3.1 *Example:* “Play ball!”

This sentence is grammatically analyzed as follows:

**Subject:** You (understood)

**Predicate:** play (active imperative verb)

**Direct Object:** ball (noun)

When imbedded in a larger structure (a bigger sentence), however, the analysis changes: “For me, Spring begins with the first, ‘Play ball!’”

**Subject:** Spring (noun)

**Predicate:** begins

‘Play ball!’ functions together as a single grammatical item: as the **object of the preposition** in an adverbial prepositional phrase.

Here the grammar of the larger unit overpowers the grammatical function of the smaller unit.

1.3.2 *Example:* In Genesis, most current scholars recognize the strategic placement of the phrase, “*this is the account of...*” (*tôlê dôth תולדות*): 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1,9; 37:2.

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<sup>15</sup> This is an edited form of a paper presented at the NW regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society in April 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Also called *compositional analysis*; in Europe discourse analysis most often goes by the name *text linguistics*.

<sup>17</sup> For a fuller explanation of this kind of hierarchy, see Robert Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983): 269-336.

While this word has a grammatical function in each sentence where it occurs within Genesis, the *real* function of the word is actually both larger and more important: to indicate the major divisions of the text. In other words, it not only introduces the sentence, but a *macrostructural unit*.

1.4 A knowledge of discourse level structures and features is necessary to correctly analyze any text.

Since traditional grammars deal with syntactical relations only as large as the sentence, a whole new kind of “grammar” is needed to describe how language works at the larger (and more significant) levels. Determining paragraph boundaries, typical paragraph markers, relationships between paragraphs, the relationships between sentences, what kinds of linguistic markers signal the “peak”<sup>18</sup> of a narrative, etc. are seen as necessary to understanding any text. How does the author indicate elements such as opening (“incitement,” “aperture”), conflict, climax, suspense, resolution (“denouement”), suspense, conclusion? In essence, how do these linguistic forms communicate meaning at the sentence and larger-than-sentence levels?

It has been usual in most linguistic theories to consider the SENTENCE as the maximum unit of description.... We hope to show in this book that these approaches are inadequate.... [U]tterances should be reconstructed in terms of a larger unit, viz that of TEXT ... what is usually called a DISCOURSE.<sup>19</sup>

[A] sentence grammar will not work unless it is part of a discourse grammar, because certain factors are needed for the understanding of elements in sentences that are not available within those sentences themselves but only elsewhere in the discourse.<sup>20</sup>

It is being increasingly realized that the study of isolated sentences out of context is scarcely worth being called the study of language.<sup>21</sup>

1.5 Discourse analysis limits its focus to the “world” of the text, not the real world outside the text.

1.5.1 *Example:* When I was growing up, a friend showed me a “stupid pet trick” with his dog and cat. Whenever he suddenly pointed somewhere, his dog would immediately look in the direction where he pointed, trying to find the object of interest. His cat, however, was intrigued by the curious hand movement. For the cat, his hand *was* the object of interest. Discourse analysts study the text like the cat, unconcerned with what object(s) outside the text it “points to.”

1.5.2 *Example:* The TV series M\*A\*S\*H\* has as its setting a U.S. military medical post in South Korea during the Korean War of the early 1950’s. Yet the humor, the characters, and the ideology of its producers reflect a liberal, anti-war agenda and cinematic style and techniques reflecting its 1970’s Hollywood “world.”

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<sup>18</sup> Because texts usually indicate the peak with certain changes in the linguistic patterns (e.g. much shorter sentences, absence of scenic description, change of verb tense, etc.), Longacre refers this feature as a “zone of turbulence” (*The Grammar of Discourse*: 25).

<sup>19</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* (New York: Longman, 1977): 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Grimes, *The Thread of Discourse* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975): 8.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Longacre, “The Discourse Structure of the Flood Narrative” *SBL Seminar Papers* (1976): 235.



**Question:** Which of these two is the *real* “world” (*sitz im leben*) of M\*A\*S\*H\*? The discourse analyst would deem the question irrelevant. M\*A\*S\*H\* communicates its message by creating its own, autonomous world, and *that* world is the only one they are interested in studying.

1.5.3 *Example:* A discourse analyst would study the Flood Narrative of Genesis 6-9 *as a narrative*.<sup>22</sup>

(S)He would not address issues such as “Did the Flood actually occur?” “If so, when?” “Was it universal or local?” “Was the ark described adequate to keep that many animals for that period of time?” “Would the ark have been seaworthy from an engineering standpoint?”

Instead, the discourse analyst’s questions would be: “How has the author opened the story?” “What kinds of sentence elements are typical of scenic description versus storyline action?” “What kinds of ‘markers’ (e.g. repeated phrases, unusual word order, verbal aspect or mood, etc.) signal a paragraph break?” “What techniques does the author use to heighten reader involvement and response?”

1.6 Discourse grammar is concerned with what words mean *in the context of that text*, not with how the same words are used in other texts.

1.7 Discourse analysis raises the question of why the author chose the particular genre, kind of sentence, or terminology used in a given text rather than some other alternatives. Thus the “range of options” available to the author becomes a significant factor.<sup>23</sup>

1.7.1 *Example:* The statement, “Play ball!” as shouted by an umpire communicates a concept.

The discourse analyst would ask why *those* particular words were chosen to communicate that idea rather than, for example, “Let’s get started” (cohortative), “May the game commence” (subjunctive command), or “Shall we begin playing baseball?” (interrogative), “These pitches count” (indicative), etc. This is called a *syntagmatic* approach, in contrast to the *paradigmatic* approach. In the latter, the word “ball” would be looked up in a dictionary or lexicon for its meanings: “sphere,” “globe,” “a projectile shot from a firearm or cannon,” etc. The paradigmatic approach has been favored in biblical studies for years, but has been sharply criticized from many angles in recent decades.<sup>24</sup>

1.7.2 *Example:* In 1 Tim. 2:12, the *NIV* reads: “I do not permit a woman to teach or *to have authority over* a man.”

The discourse analyst would ask, “Why has Paul chosen to use the (*hapax legomenon*) term

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<sup>22</sup> See Robert Longacre, “The Discourse Structure of the Flood Narrative” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47 (1979): 89-133.

<sup>23</sup> For a good, brief introduction to this type of study, see the Introduction section of Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida [eds], *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988): vol. 1: vi-xx.

<sup>24</sup> The flagship of these critiques was James Barr’s, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961); many have followed in his footsteps in pointing out the inherent fallacies of etymologizing, use of cognate languages, root fallacies, and atomistic and/or paradigmatic word studies.

ἀυθενταῖν [“to control in a domineering fashion”<sup>25</sup> or “to murder”<sup>26</sup>] rather than some other form of expression (e.g., ἐξουσιάζω, κρίνω, κυριεύω)?

1.8 Linguistic analysis is critical to interpreting a text because a text’s form (structure) and its content (meaning) are essential to one another. The better an interpreter can articulate accurately the form of the text, the better is their grasp of the meaning of that text.

## 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of Discourse Analysis

### 2.1 Strengths

2.1.1 It rests on widely-recognized features of modern linguistic theory concerning uniform patterns in written communication.

2.1.2 Its textual orientation is built on presuppositions which are not hostile to a high view of the biblical text.

2.1.3 Essentially, discourse analysis (text linguistics) is a highly-refined way of describing what we call “paying attention to the context.” What it offers are the tools and terms to do this with far greater precision.

### 2.2 Weaknesses

2.2.1 The technical jargon is daunting to any novice.

2.2.2 Its application to biblical studies is still in its very early stages.<sup>27</sup> At this point I am not aware of any book-length text grammars specific to either biblical Greek or Hebrew.

2.2.3 It does not address the issues of either authorial intention in a given text or the “real-world” referents. It consciously and deliberately restricts itself to describing features of the text.

2.2.4 Its chief value is limited to the form and structure of the text rather than its meaning (though it must be conceded that the distinction between these two is at least blurry and at most wholly artificial).

## 3. Bibliography for Discourse Analysis

Robert D. Bergen, “Text as a Guide to Authorial Intention: An Introduction to Discourse Criticism” *JETS* 30/3 (1987): 327-336.

Robert de Beugrande & Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (New York: Longman, 1981).

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Peter Cotterell & Max Turner. *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989): 230-292.

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<sup>25</sup> Louw & Nida: 1:474, #37.21.

<sup>26</sup> s.v. “ἀυθενταῖν” in Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985): 275.

<sup>27</sup> At the Nov. 1993 SBL meetings in Washington, D.C. the *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics Section* held a symposium, presided over by D.A. Carson, entitled “Discourse Analysis and Philippians.”

## Part 1: Seeing

- David Deuel, "Discourse Analysis: A Tool for Biblical Exegesis?" Unpub. ETS paper, San Francisco, Nov. 19, 1992.
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- W. Pickering, *A Framework for Discourse Analysis* (Dallas: SIL, 1981).
- Moises Silva, *God, Language and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990).
- Jerry Vines & David Allen, "Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Proclamation" *Criswell Theological Review* 1/2 (1987): 309-334.

## *Identifying Logical Relationships Within Discourse*

Paragraphs, sentences, and clauses may be related to each other in many different ways. Some of the more important of these ways are listed here.<sup>28</sup>

### **1. Repetition**

Repetition is the single most-important device used by authors in organizing a text. It may involve recurrence of the same word, phrase, clause, idea, sounds, or grammatical construction. Repetition is used for three primary purposes.

#### 1.1 To *emphasize*

e.g., “*flesh*” and “*spirit*” in Romans 7-8 (word)

“*by faith*” in Hebrews 11 (phrase)

“*some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists...*” in Ephesians 4:11 (grammatical construction)

#### 1.2 To *divide* units

e.g., “*Here is a trustworthy saying*” in 1 Timothy (clause)

“*What then?*” “*What shall we say then?*” etc. in Romans (i.e., rhetorical question → grammatical construction)

#### 1.3 To *connect* different units

e.g., the series of repeated words which ties together the thoughts in James 1: “*trials,*” “*perseverance,*” “*lacking,*” “*giving,*” “*asking,*” etc.

### **2. Series**

A series is a list of equal but logically-related items.

e.g., “*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*” (Rom. 12:12)

### **3. Progression**

In progression, there is a list with each clause building upon the earlier. These may reflect *temporal* progress (movement through *time*) or *logical* progress.

e.g., “*that Christ died for our sins ...*

*that he was buried,*

*that he was raised on the third day ...*

*and that he appeared to Peter*

*and then to the Twelve ...*

*and last of all he appeared to me*” (1 Cor. 15:3-7) [Temporal]

e.g., “*those he predestined, he also called;*

*those he called, he also justified;*

*those he justified, he also glorified*” (Rom. 8:30) [Logical]

### **4. Alternative**

These are different possibilities arising from the same situation. Most often, alternative is signaled by “*either...or*” or “*neither...nor.*”

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<sup>28</sup>For further study on relationships, particularly in epistolary literature, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990): 97-126; Robert H. Stein, *Playing by the Rules: A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994): 178-184.

e.g., *“To one there is given...the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge... to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing...”* (1 Cor. 12:8ff)

## 5. Comparison

In comparison two or more things are placed together to highlight their similarity. Look for the words “like” and “[just] as.”

e.g., *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”* (1 Cor. 11:1)

## 6. Explanation

An idea is clarified by the statement which follows it.

e.g., *“for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.”* (1 Cor. 10:4)

## 7. Contrast

Two or more things are placed near one another to highlight their differences. Contrast is often indicated by words like “but,” “instead,” “rather,” etc.

e.g., *“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens”* (Eph. 2:19)

## 8. Rhetorical Question

The question is stated, and the answer immediately given.

e.g., *“Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (Rom. 7:24-25)

## 9. Reason

The grounds or basis is given for a statement. As a clue, look for words or phrases like “because,” “for [this reason],” “therefore,” “so that,” etc.

## 10. Condition-Result

This describes what happens as a consequence of certain conditions (i.e., cause-and-effect).

e.g., *“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”* (John 14:15)

## 11. Quotation

The use of another text to prove a point.

e.g., *“Just as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”* (Rom. 1:17)

## 12. Interruption

The author begins one thought, then breaks off onto a different thought before returning.

e.g., *“As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message.”* (Gal. 2:6)

## 13. Concession

In a concession, the conditions are described which point toward one result, when in reality a different result takes place. Clues to look for: the words “even though,” “yet,” “although,” “even if,” “nevertheless.”

e.g., *“By faith Abraham, EVEN THOUGH he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father.”* (Heb. 11:11)

*Part Two:*

# UNDERSTANDING



# *Understanding: What Does It Mean?*

## **1. Pillars of Understanding**

There are four pillars to proper biblical understanding. Together they establish the meaning of a Scriptural passage.

### **First Pillar: *LITERARY***

- Seek the normal and natural meaning of the words as they are written.
- “Normal” and “natural” are determined by CONTEXT, especially the literary type, genre, and form.
- Literary understanding allows for figurative language (e.g. symbols, figures of speech), as determined by CONTEXT.
- The largest and most significant literary level of CONTEXT is the entire canon of the Bible.

### **Second Pillar: *GRAMMATICAL***

- The sentence is the basic, irreducible unit of meaning.
- How a given word is used is affected by the rules of grammar and syntax.
- Grammatical-syntactical relationships are established by CONTEXT, including type, genre, and form.

### **Third Pillar: *HISTORICAL***

- The meaning of a passage should be seen in relation to the other events in the Scriptural storyline (more on this issue later in the class notes).
- The significance of an event referred to in the Bible is determined by the literary CONTEXT in which it is described.

### **Fourth Pillar: *NON-CONTRADICTING***

- The meaning of a passage must be consistent and harmonious with all other parts of Scripture.
- It must be in agreement within the overall CONTEXT of the entire Bible.

**NOTICE:** CONTEXT is the all-important factor in interpreting any passage of Scripture.

## **2. Testing Your Understanding**

- 2.1 Distill your idea of the passage into a single, well-worded statement.
- 2.2 Does this understanding arise naturally from the *content* of the passage under study?
- 2.3 Does this understanding smoothly “plug into” the flow of thought in the wider *context*?
- 2.4 Does this understanding fit with the author’s overall literary strategy in communicating his message?
- 2.5 Is this understanding in harmony with the entire Scriptural teaching on this subject?
- 2.6 Does this understanding find support from other secondary sources—commentaries, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, theological reference works, etc.?
- 2.7 If the answers to 2.2-2.6 above are all “yes,” then state your conclusion as clearly and concisely as possible. If any of the above are answered “no,” then a reasonable and *convincing* explanation must be given for the understanding to be plausible.

# *Hermeneutical Foundations for Bible Study*

## **1. Definitions**

-*Hermeneutics*: the theoretical principles which determine our methods of understanding.

-*Exegesis*: the practice of determining the meaning of a particular passage through careful study of the text.

## **2. The Goal of Understanding**

To discover the author's intended meaning and goals as they are presented in the text.

## **3. The Goals of Bible Study**

To change our lives so that they become more Christ-like.

## **4. Presuppositions for Doing Bible Study**

4.1 *The Bible is authoritative.*

-The Bible is our standard for establishing both our doctrine and our behavior as Christians.

4.2 *It is possible for finite humans to understand the meaning of Scripture.*

-Understanding of the Bible doesn't come automatically with simply reading it.

-God has made the meaning of the Bible accessible to anyone.

-It is the "revelation" of God, who wants us to *know* him. Thus the Bible is understandable and sufficiently clear ("perspicuous").

-The message of the Bible can be properly identified in modern translations.

-While the ability to read in the Bible's original languages can yield additional insight, translations of the Bible are still God's Word and convey his message for us.

-It is the privilege and responsibility of *every* believer to read and interpret the Scriptures.

4.3 Our understanding can increase, yet it will never be exhaustive.

4.4 *There is normally only ONE correct meaning to any given passage of Scripture.*

4.5 *The correct meaning is what the author intended to communicate.*

4.6 *Various interpretations are simply hypotheses which attempt to account for what the author has said, and how and why he has said it in that way.*

-Our interpretations should not be viewed in terms of "right" and "wrong," but in terms of probable validity: given all the facts within the text, how well does our understanding square with what the author is saying in that passage?

4.7 *Though every passage has just one meaning (the author's), it has MANY applications.*

-There is a difference between meaning (what we identify as Shared Truths) and significance (how it relates to specific needs and circumstances).

4.8 *Every passage of Scripture needs to be understood in light of its literary type and genre.*

-Each style and genre has its own set of "rules" and calls for a different set of interpretive strategies. Each form has a conventional pattern, and our awareness of these patterns shapes what we are to look for.



## Part 2: Understanding

### 4.9 *Scriptural passages are best understood when read in light of their context.*

- The Bible is a unified whole.
- There is continuity of character and a single, overarching plot. Thus, while there is great diversity within the Bible (of authorship, time periods, languages, literary styles, theological emphases, geographical locations, etc.), it is essentially one story.
- Our focus is the text itself, not books about the Bible, Bible characters, archaeology, historical background, etc.
- Accurate interpretation is based upon a thorough understanding of the entire context of a given passage. Context will determine the meaning of words (in their grammatical and syntactical relationships) and whether something is to be understood literally or figuratively.
- Each passage of Scripture is illuminated by other passages. Thus our interpretation of a particular passage should be compared with other Scriptures.

### 4.10 *Following the Bible means that we emphasize what the text emphasizes, not building main points from the details.*

- The authors of Scripture each wrote with specific purposes in mind, and used literary “strategies” to accomplish this. Looking for these larger structures of thought enables us to understand each part properly.
- We should not approach individual verses as self-contained units.
- Every verse fits within the logical sequence of an entire passage, and must be understood in light of the whole.
- We must allow the passage to establish its own “agenda” of concerns. Biblical authors usually highlight their central idea through repetition, amount of space, chiasm, or some other literary device. We should therefore develop an eye for seeing these clues.

### 4.11 *We need to evaluate our personal experience in light of Scripture, and not the other way around.*

### 4.12 *We should check out our understanding of God’s Word with other believers.*

### 4.13 *Every passage of Scripture has meaning and relevance for the believer.*

- Some passages have more direct relevance while others have more indirect, but ALL Scripture is profitable for Christian growth (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

# *History and His Story: A Reappraisal of Literal-Grammatical-Historical Interpretation*<sup>29</sup>

## **1. Question: What is Literal-Grammatical-Historical interpretation?**

The Literal-Grammatical-Historical (LGH) method says that correct interpretation of the Bible requires that we understand:

- (1) The words of the text in their ordinary, normal usage [*literal*]<sup>30</sup> (though more accurately we should say *literary*)
- (2) By observing the commonly-recognized patterns of grammar (i.e. context) [*grammatical*]<sup>31</sup>
- (3) As they relate to the known facts of history [*historical*]<sup>32</sup>

## **2. Question: Where did the idea of LGH interpretation come from?**

Although the *literal* and *grammatical* aspects of interpretation can be traced back to biblical times, the addition of the *historical* element developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, a major shift took place. Whereas before the historical method *was* the literal-grammatical, now a *historical* interest<sup>33</sup> was *added* to the literal-grammatical.<sup>34</sup>

Before: Literal + Grammatical = Historically correct method

After: Literal + Grammatical + Historical = the correct method

For the first time it was considered important to study the *historical background* of a biblical passage in order to understand it properly. The basis of this thinking was actually borrowed from other fields of study going on during the 1800's.<sup>35</sup> Here are some examples:

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<sup>29</sup> This is a revised edition of a paper delivered at the annual meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society in Lisle, IL on November 17, 1994. This paper has subsequently been reformatted and proofed by Matthew Quintana.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, J. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible: An Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Chicago: Moody, 1983): 63-66.

<sup>31</sup> See Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991): 47-63.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-139.

<sup>33</sup> This may broadly be termed “historical criticism,” and includes a number of sub-set “criticisms”: source, form, tradition, redaction, etc. Most unfortunately, source criticism (the attempt to identify multiple strands of authorship within biblical texts) was given the label “literary criticism,” the result of which has been to “pollute” this term for biblical scholars in a way in which those operating in the field of literature never use it.

<sup>34</sup> These terms were first mentioned together by Andrius Rivetus (*Isogoge* [Lugdunus, 1627]: 4:2), who discusses the “literal and grammatical, *which is* the historic [method of the Church]” (I am indebted to John Sailhamer for this quote). Johann Ernesti (1707-1781) transmuted this phrase into the “literal-grammatical-historical” method, wedding historical criticism to the process of correct interpretation. This shift was then popularized through the work of Karl Keil, Johann Gabler, and Johann Semler. According to Spinoza (1632-77), “Examining the history of Scripture means learning Hebrew and Greek, analyzing each book’s contents with a view to establishing its meaning, and then researching the setting of the author and book—‘the life, the conduct and the studies of the author of each book, who he was, what was the occasion, and the epoch of his writing, whom did he write for, and in what language.’ The history of Scripture includes... ‘how it was first received, into whose hands it fell, how many different version there were of it, by whose advice it was received into the Bible, and lastly, how all the books now universally accepted as sacred, were united into a single whole’” (Benedict Spinoza, *A Theologica-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes [NY: Dover, 1951]: 103, cited in Peter Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009]: 17-18).

<sup>35</sup> “Because it is now deeply entrenched in our thoughts, it is easy to forget that the tendency to view all matters in terms of their histories may itself have had a history” (Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: A Study*

## Part 2: Understanding

- (1) The Emergence of the **Scientific World Views**: tracing phenomena back to their causes
  - 1st: Theism—God as Creator (*origin*); providence (*development*)
  - 2nd: Deism—God as the initial “First Cause” (*origin*); physical laws (*development*)
  - 3rd: Naturalism—No god, only natural processes: Steady state, oscillating, or “Big Bang” (*origin*); uniformitarianism (*development*)
- (2) Charles Darwin (1809-1882): **Biology**
  - “Origin of the Species” / Spontaneous Generation (*origin*)
  - “Natural Selection” / evolution / “Punctuated equilibrium” (*development*)
- (3) Georg Hegel (1770-1831): **Philosophy**
  - “Dialectical Process”

THESIS

vs.

ANTITHESIS (*origin*)

↓

↓

SYNTHESIS (*development*)
- (4) Karl Marx (1818-1883): **Economics**
  - “Dialectical Materialism,” “Economic Determinism”

THE ELITE

vs.

THE OPPRESSED (*origin*)

↓

↓

REVOLUTION (*development*)
- (5) Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): **Psychology**
  - “Psychoanalysis”: analyzing past experiences (*origin*) to understand and treat present behavior (*development*)

**Point:** All use an EVOLUTIONARY model which explains present-day phenomena on the bases of: (1) *origin* and (2) *development*

Critical Scholarship: Led mostly by German “liberal” scholars (e.g., Ernesti, Karl Keil,<sup>36</sup> Gabler, Semler, *et al.*), it also was based upon some very negative assumptions about the Bible. Beginning with the assumption that the Bible communicates through the normal use of words and grammar *just like any other book* (so far so good), very soon it was asserted that the Bible must be approached as if it were *nothing more than* another book. Nearly all “biblical criticism,” then, built on these presuppositions:

- (1) The Bible is *not* revelation, but a book that people *thought* was revelation.
- (2) The miracles of the Bible are not historically true, but merely the superstitious embellishments of ancient people.
- (3) The Judeo-Christian faith can be compared to any other primitive faith, none of which are “true.”
- (4) The study of the Bible is therefore a historical task which tries to explain what certain groups of ancient people believed.

Thus, their goal in biblical interpretation is to learn how the Hebrew and Christian religions evolved (*religionsgeschichte*, i.e., “history-of-religions”).<sup>37</sup>

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in *Nineteenth-Century Thought* [Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1971]: 51).

<sup>36</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. credits Karl Keil (1788) with popularizing the term “grammatico-historical” method of exegesis (*Toward an Exegetical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981]: 87-88, 197-198).

<sup>37</sup> See Gerhard Hasel, *NT Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978): 28ff.

Conservative Scholarship: The LGH method was adopted (with important modifications) by conservative scholars about 50 years later (e.g., Hengstenberg, C.F. Keil, Havernick, Delitzsch, *et al.*), with these contrasts:

- (1) Both the Bible *as well as* the historical *events* it describes are God's revelation to us.
- (2) The miracles of the Bible are factually true as recorded.
- (3) The Christian faith is unique as the only true religion.
- (4) The study of the Bible therefore includes historical description of what the authors *meant*, but also involves what it *means* for today.<sup>38</sup>

For the majority of modern, conservative biblical scholars, this is still what is meant by the literal-grammatical-historical method: What factors in the author's original, historical situation (*sitz im leben*) influenced him to write the text in this particular way?<sup>39</sup>

### **3. Question: How has this method impacted the study of theology?**

- (1) In the desire to trace God's plan through its developmental stages:<sup>40</sup> e.g., Covenant theology, dispensationalism,<sup>41</sup> salvation history ("*Heilsgeschichte*")<sup>42</sup>
- (2) In the use of the concept of "progressive revelation"<sup>43</sup>: i.e., God has revealed himself through stages of development<sup>44</sup> from lesser to greater, so that modern humanity now can know him better than the ancient people could.
- (3) Minimizing the importance of the Old Testament<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This expression for the distinction was coined by Krister Stendahl and is widely-recognized today.

<sup>39</sup> "It is no exaggeration to say that all across the theological spectrum the great reversal had taken place; interpretation was a matter of fitting the biblical story into another world with another story rather than incorporating that world into the biblical story" (Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* [New Haven: Yale, 1974]: 130).

<sup>40</sup> This has been referred to as *diachronic* biblical theology, defined by Gerhard Hasel as "the description of *longitudinal* sections of the OT with special attention to the *chronological* sequence of the various traditions and books in contrast to the cross-section method with the thematic arrangement" (*OT Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975]: 47). Cf. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an OT Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978): 9-12, 25-32. For an evaluation and critique, see Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*.

<sup>41</sup> "Although the word *historical* is used once in *Dispensationalism Today* in conjunction with *grammatical* interpretation, it appears to be a relatively new expression whose implications have not yet been thought through" (Craig A. Blaising, "Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition" p. 13-34 in *idem* & Darrell L. Bock [eds.], *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992]: 29 [italics theirs]).

<sup>42</sup> For example, George Eldon Ladd states that "while [he] regards the Bible as the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule for faith and practice, he is convinced that he is most true to the Bible when he focuses attention not on the Bible as an end in itself but on the redemptive *events in history* which the Bible records" (*Jesus and the Kingdom* [New York: Harper & Row, 1964]: xiv-xv). For further discussion of text vs. event, see John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995): 36-85.

<sup>43</sup> For a critique of the concept of *progressive revelation*, see John Barton, *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity* (Louisville: WJKP, 1988): 56-57; James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (London: SCM, 1973): 144-146; John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the OT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 101-104; James A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987): 139-140. Frei describes progressive revelation as "a rationalist reduction of biblical meaning and biblical unity, in which ideas are self-contained entities undergoing self-explanatory progressive development" (Frei, *The Eclipse*: 172).

<sup>44</sup> The stages or "increments" of development, of course, reflect a theological parallel of the evolutionary model of origin and development so much in vogue in the enlightenment/modernist era (see above).

<sup>45</sup> For a critique, see Ray Lubeck, "Dusting Off the Old Testament for a New Millennium" p. 17-38 in Scott Gibson [ed], *Preaching to a Shifting Culture: 12 Perspectives on Communicating that Connects* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004). The biblical critic Adolph von Harnack said: "To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the Church rightly repudiated; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a fate which the Reformation could not

#### 4. *Evaluation of the LGH approach*

While I do believe that God revealed himself in history (just as he continues to reveal himself in nature today), I do *not* believe that we should use the LGH as it is usually understood today. Instead, I would argue that the Bible is the *only* inspired revelation which we have—and that we should *not* try to seek its meaning by trying to reconstruct its original setting from historical research done outside of the Bible. Rather, we should stick to the church’s “historic” approach(es) to interpretation,<sup>46</sup> which is *not* dependent upon these preliminary background studies in extra-biblical materials, but rather the *literal-grammatical* method. There are several primary reasons I think we should focus on the *Bible itself* and not its historical background.

(1) Historical: A survey of the history of interpretation reveals that reconstructing the “original circumstances” of the text as an interpretive step is a relatively recent development. Requiring specialized background knowledge *beyond* this text-centered approach (e.g., archaeology, anthropology of ancient peoples, critically reconstructed time lines, etc.) has *not* been the norm,<sup>47</sup> having arisen only in the Enlightenment period.<sup>48</sup> The original audiences did not employ historical-critical thinking.<sup>49</sup> An increasing number of scholars are likewise advocating a “post-critical” approach to the text, which in certain important ways means a *return* to the church’s classic, historic, “pre-critical” interpretive methods.<sup>50</sup>

(2) Traditional: Since the Reformation, Protestants have rejected the notion that the teaching of church tradition can set aside the teachings of Scripture. Scripture stands as our norm, not extra-textual doctrines and beliefs. “Sola Scriptura simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture.”<sup>51</sup>

What has been overlooked by historical critics is that they have simply replaced church tradition with their own historical, critical methods.

*Roman Catholicism*: Church tradition > Scriptural interpretation

*Historical Criticism*: Scholarly assertions (tradition) > Scriptural interpretation

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yet avoid; but to continue to keep it as a canonical document after the nineteenth century is the consequence of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis” (*Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott. Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der katholischen Kirche* [Berlin, 1921]: 248-249, trans. and cited by John Barton, *People of the Book?*: 11 n.11). For further examples and analysis of the ways we are guilty of undervaluing the OT, see Timothy L. Thomas, “The OT ‘Folk Canon’ and Christian Education” *Asbury Theological Journal* 42/2 (1987): 45-62.

<sup>46</sup> Of course, I recognize that there has never been a single, standardized method of interpretation within the Church. But our point is that *none* of the Church’s methods (literal, allegorical, tropological, etc.) employed historical reconstruction prior to the Enlightenment.

<sup>47</sup> Leo Strauss writes, “Historicism thrives on the fact that it inconsistently exempts itself from its own verdict about all human thought”—i.e., any statement we make about the historical past is conditioned by the historical present in which we currently live, and thus tells us more about present-day thought than about the ‘objective’ past (*Natural Right and History* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950]: 25).

<sup>48</sup> “In the last three centuries, there has arisen another context of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, the *historical* context...Historical critics place all the emphasis on development and historical change” (Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the OT, and Historical Criticism* [Louisville: WJKP, 1993]: 2).

<sup>49</sup> “Within the historical period in which the body of Jewish and Christian belief was explicitly formed on the basis of biblical faith, critical historical awareness was almost entirely absent” (Sean McEvenue, *Interpretation and Bible: Essays on Truth in Literature* [Collegeville, MN, 1994]: 25, cf. n.17).

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology: Recovering Christian Roots* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979). While it is true that many others who are advocating “post-critical” interpretation do not identify meaning with author’s intent as reflected in the text (opting for either the text itself or the reader), this is not a move I am advocating here.

<sup>51</sup> Quote from John MacArthur.

(3) Theological: The very term *revelation* means that God wants to tell us about himself. God reached down to us, speaking to us in language we can understand, so that we can know him and his purposes. If God gave his revelation in such a way that only the expert (historian, anthropologist, rhetorician, etc.) can understand it,<sup>52</sup> then: (a) God is prejudiced toward the educated, and (b) he really has not “revealed” himself to us very well at all!<sup>53</sup>

(4) Philosophical: The interpretation of history is by nature ambiguous and subjective—two elements we certainly do not need more of in biblical exegesis! We cannot “know” the past by empirically re-experiencing it; it is inaccessible. Furthermore, no two people remember a past event in exactly the same way, and the disagreement is much greater when we try to determine the precise *cause(s)* and *meaning* of an event. Of course, this problem is heightened when the interpreters of this history are debating about events which they didn’t experience personally, and in fact happened two thousand years or more ago!<sup>54</sup> As Adam puts it, “...when a modern interpreter insists that the historical record of the past makes his interpretation of a text the best, he is only talking about *his own interpretation* of that historical record.”<sup>55</sup>

(5) Literary: Any good piece of literature which is intended for a wide spectrum of readers (especially cross-cultural) removes the elements that only certain people would know about (i.e., it is “de-particularized”).<sup>56</sup> In other words, the author tells us everything *in the text*<sup>57</sup> that

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<sup>52</sup> A more extreme example of this emphasis on prerequisite understanding is found in L. D. Hurst: “In the end the interpreter can surmount [interpretive problems] *only* if he or she is simultaneously a historian, a linguist, a literary critic, a psychologist, a sociologist, and even an artist. This may sound daunting, but the task is within the bounds of realistic performance...” (“NT Theological Analysis,” in Scot McKnight [ed.], *Introducing NT Interpretation* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989]: 142 [emphasis mine]).

<sup>53</sup> This contrasts with the Reformer’s emphasis on the “perspicuity” of Scripture (i.e., its clarity). Gerhard Maier shares this objection in *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977): 51. While not carrying the argument as far, Peter Stuhlmacher also significantly truncates the role of history for hermeneutics in his *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

<sup>54</sup> Wood writes: “Reconstruction is *distinct from* literary representation as the latter is a written account which is undertaken to convince other persons of the correctness of a reconstruction...In other words, historical reconstruction is a process in which a historian interprets data according to his or her particular life experiences” (Richard A. Wood, “The Use and Significance of Models for Historical Reconstruction” p. 488-498 in Eugene H. Lovering [ed.], *SBL Seminar Papers, 1991* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1991]: 488). He continues: “Historical reconstruction cannot be made into an empirical science. Since reconstruction incorporates models, and models tend toward distorting the specific circumstances of an event, an event cannot be depicted exactly or with exact laws...*Every reconstruction is in some manner uncertain*...Serious evidence can usually be brought to bear against a reconstruction. This observation is especially true for the study of the Ancient Near East” (496 [emphasis mine]).

<sup>55</sup> A. K. M. Adam, *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997): 21 [emphasis his].

<sup>56</sup> “What makes a work of art powerful is its ability, while arising from a particular place and time, to make the reality of that time and place available to others distant from it. Art becomes art precisely not by being confined but by making available to people what in the particular is generally significant” (Wesley A. Kort, *Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1988]: 76).

<sup>57</sup> This has been labeled a “text-immanent” approach. See John H. Sailhamer’s “Exegesis of the OT as a Text” in Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. [ed.], *A Tribute to Gleason Archer: Essays on the OT* (Chicago: Moody, 1986): 279-296. Robert H. Stein also writes that “the primary goal is not to experience or reduplicate Paul’s [i.e., the author’s] mental and emotional experiences when he wrote. Rather...what Paul sought to convey *by his text* is in the public realm, for he purposely made this available to the reader *in the text itself*” (*Playing by the Rules* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994]: 23 [emphasis mine]). Nathan Scott adds this: “Verbal meaning is constituted of those intentions of the author which are *embodied* in his text and which, under the prevailing conventions that control linguistic usage, are *shareable* by his readers” (“The New *Traison des Clercs*: Reflections on the Present Crisis in Humanistic Studies” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 62 [1986]: 418-419 [emphasis his]).

we need to know to understand it.<sup>58</sup> If not, the author has failed in reaching a wide audience.<sup>59</sup> So the requirement that biblical interpreters must know history external to the Bible assumes that the authors were literarily inept.<sup>60</sup>

(6) Pragmatic: It is much harder to gain an accurate picture of any given *sitz im leben* (life-setting, i.e., historical circumstances) from biblical times than most realize.<sup>61</sup> For example:

(a) No consensus opinion has emerged regarding the existence or characteristics of any clearly-defined form of Gnosticism prior to the second century AD. So to interpret the NT writings in light of this (these) much-debated system(s) is anachronistic and distorting.<sup>62</sup>

(b) Morna D. Hooker has surveyed the range of candidates for the “heretics” that Paul is allegedly refuting in Colossians. She has identified 44 different theories put forth by various interpreters before concluding that actually there were *no* particular “heretics”

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<sup>58</sup> Here I am merely echoing the Reformation claim that Scripture is its own interpreter (*interpretes sui ipsius* or *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*). Vanhoozer’s textbook on hermeneutics has, as one of its goals, “to reclaim a Reformation insight: ‘The infallible rule of interpretation is Scripture itself.’ This statement of what we might call the ‘hermeneutical sufficiency’ of Scripture implies that the text itself contains those contexts necessary for determining the literal sense” (*Is There a Meaning in This Text?*: 305). Paul R. House recasts this Reformation tenet: “One must trust the text to know best how to tie together its message and characters, lest the background of a piece take precedence over the piece itself” (*The Unity of the Twelve* [Sheffield: Almond, 1990]: 165). See also Herbert Chanan Brichito: “The clues to any given pericope in Scripture are often to be found in another section of Scripture rather than (where it is our wont to look) in the disciplines of sociology or history, anthropology or comparative religion, or even in poetics borrowed from an extrabiblical literature” (*Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics* [New York: Oxford University 1992]: 62).

<sup>59</sup> “If the author expects the general reader to understand the text, the author will represent the text as the central focus of the reader—that is, *the author will not always assume that the reader will be looking elsewhere for the information the text is meant to transmit*” (Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*: 14 [emphasis mine]). “We do not make the leap into the past, we do not have to devise some scheme for bridging the gap between the ‘then’ of the text and the ‘now’ of the hearer. Any literature worth the name jumps the time gap of its own accord” (David J. A. Clines, “Story and Poem: the OT as Literature and as Scripture” in Paul R. House [ed.], *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in OT Literary Criticism* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992]: 38). The competence of the author in telling us all we need to know with the “world” of the text is the starting point for a growing number of scholars who approach the Bible literarily. See, for example, Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, “Methodological Considerations” in *idem* & James S. Ackerman [eds.], *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982): 13-17. David Robertson writes, “To sum up this discussion of conventions, then, we can say that a work of literature is a...world, the clues for the understanding of which come *from within the work itself*” (*The OT and the Literary Critic* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977]: 9 [emphasis mine]). For a fuller treatment of the concept importance of *narrator’s* point of view in interpreting texts, see Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition* (Berkeley: University of Cal., 1973).

<sup>60</sup> “The problem is that by making the *historical* context sovereign and regulative, historical criticism destroys the *literary* context that is in the Bible (either Jewish or Christian) as a whole and often even the smaller literary context that is the book, the chapter, or whatever” (Levenson, *Hebrew Bible, OT, & Historical Criticism*: 100).

<sup>61</sup> In fact, bringing to the biblical text extrabiblical notions about how ancient texts communicate can often *cause* us to misread the text. For examples of these misconstruals, see Harold Fisch, *Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1988).

<sup>62</sup> Wilson is illustrative here. He acknowledges that “there can be no thought of ‘Gnostic’ influence on the NT, and the only question concerns the use that was made of the NT documents by the second-century gnostics” (277). He then counters with a belief in some sort of pre-Christian form of Gnosticism, but still expresses reservations: “We must still seek for a clearer definition of its character. Only then can we really go on to formulate the further questions: a) how far has it actually affected the NT writers, and b) how far can we trace a direct continuity and development from this pre-Christian Gnosis to the schools of the second century and later?...Such questions could be multiplied, but those which have been raised may serve to indicate the complexity of the problems, and to warn against superficial and facile solutions” (Robert McLachlan Wilson, “Response to G. Quispel’s ‘Gnosticism and the NT’” p. 272-278 in J. Philip Hyatt [ed.], *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1965]: 277-278).

being addressed!<sup>63</sup>

In light of ambiguities such as these, how can the earnest Bible student ever hope to have any certainty regarding the exact historical/cultural situation of a passage?<sup>64</sup> In fact, it may be reading against the grain of the text to do so.<sup>65</sup>

(7) Linguistic: It has been widely assumed that the goal of word studies is to determine a word's meaning by locating it in the time period in which it was written (*diachronically*).<sup>66</sup> This view has more recently been sharply criticized for several reasons:

(a) It represents a move away from identifying meaning with the *author* in favor of locating its meaning within a *time period*.<sup>67</sup> If the meaning of a word is supposedly derived from the time period rather than the written context, is it even possible to hold to *authorial* meaning?<sup>68</sup>

(b) It presumes that each text has but one historical context. However, in some cases, the situation is much more complex. For instance, what is the historical context of a particular word as used in a Davidic psalm? David's lifetime? The time at which it was collected and used within first temple worship? The way it was understood in the aftermath of the exile and subsequent second temple worship? The way it was appropriated by NT authors

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<sup>63</sup> "Were There False Teachers in Colossae?" in Barnabus Lindars & Stephen S. Smalley, *Christ and the Spirit in the NT: Studies in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973): 315-331.

<sup>64</sup> David M. Gunn writes, "It is no exaggeration to say that the truly assured results of historical critical scholarship concerning authorship, date and provenance would fill but a pamphlet" ("New Directions in the Study of Biblical Hebrew Narrative" in Paul R. House [ed.], *Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in OT Criticism* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992]: 413). Robert Alter is even more skeptical: "Given the paucity of reliable historical data we have, especially when anonymous authors who have been edited and combined with each other are involved, historical scholarship is bound to be more than halfway to historical fiction" (*The World of Biblical Literature* (New York: Basic, 1992): 162. A. K. M. Adam states, "We cannot helpfully reintroduce historical interpretation as a factor in biblical theology until we have utterly dethroned it" ("Biblical Theology and the Problem of Modernity: *Von Wredestrasse zu Sackgasse*" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 12/1 [1990]: 17n.12). In "Fernseed and Elephants," C.S. Lewis attests that *every* time his interpreters speculated on the purpose or occasion of his writing a text (i.e., the *Sitz im Leben*), they were wrong. If we can't guess right with our contemporaries, how can we do so with ancients? "The 'assured results of modern scholarship,' as to the way in which an old book was written, are 'assured,' we may conclude, only because the men who knew the facts are dead and can't blow the gaff" (*Fernseed and Elephants* [Glasgow: Fount, 1975]: 117).

<sup>65</sup> Childs notes, "When critical exegesis made to rest on the recovery of these very sociological distinctions which have been obscured, it runs directly in the face of the canon's intention... However, the one concern which is expressly mentioned is that a tradition from the past be transmitted in such a way that its authoritative claims be laid upon all successive generations..." (Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the OT as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979]: 78, cited in Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Case Study in OT Canon Formation* *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 27 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000/2009]: 101).

<sup>66</sup> "In the course of the eighteenth century... 'verbal sense' was philological or 'grammatical-historical' (a common technical designation in the later eighteenth century, indicating the lexical in addition to the grammatical study of the words of a text) *more than literary*... Commentators all agreed that something *more than* understanding a text's verbal sense was involved in understanding the text" (Frei, *The Eclipse*: 9 [emphasis mine]).

<sup>67</sup> See Leland Ryken, "Intentionality in Biblical Interpretation: A Modest Proposal" *Journal for Christian Studies* 6 (1986): 12-13. Most of those who identify the meaning of the text with the *author* recognize the need to qualify this by adding "as revealed in the text." E.D. Hirsch, Jr. is seen as a benchmark on this point. He states, "Meaning is that which is represented in a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence" (*Validity in Interpretation* [New Haven: Yale, 1967]: 8 [emphasis mine]). While many when reading this focus merely on the emphasis on author's intent here, the crucial role of the *text* must also be noted as fundamental to his definition.

<sup>68</sup> See Alter writes, "What is decisive is that the author in establishing a careful context of his own for the tale, has given it a meaning, *his meaning*" (*World*: 16 [emphasis mine]). See also Ryken, "Intentionality": 17.



quoting the passage (who, of course, were also writing biblical *text*)?<sup>69</sup>

(c) It rests upon inadequate and illegitimate linguistic and semantic principles.<sup>70</sup> Linguists argue that it is the *textual* context (the *syntagmatic* meaning) which determines the way in which a word is being used rather than a dictionary definition (*paradigmatic* meaning).<sup>71</sup> Diachronic word studies, unfortunately, fall primarily into the dictionary-definition category.<sup>72</sup>

(8) Scriptural: 2 Timothy 3:16 states, “All *Scripture* is God-breathed (inspired) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness...” It is not the *author* who is inspired, nor the *events* that the author is describing, but the *words* themselves (i.e., *γραφῆ*, the *text*) that God has inspired for us. Inspiration is a function of scripture, not history.

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<sup>69</sup> On the difficulties and nuances of time and chronology even *within* the text, see Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1980): 33-112. This is the problem addressed by Bruce K. Waltke, “A Canonical Process Approach to the Psalms” in John S. & Paul D. Feinberg [eds.], *Tradition & Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (Chicago: Moody, 1981): 3-18. The use of texts within texts (intertextuality) is also receiving a great deal more attention (see Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* [New York: Longman, 1981]: 10-11; Danna Nolan Fewell [ed.], *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* [Louisville: WJKP, 1992]).

<sup>70</sup> J. P. Louw distinguishes three sets of features which condition a reading: *extra-linguistic features*, which includes matters of background and history of a text; *para-linguistic features* such as punctuation, genre, discourse types, etc.; and *linguistic features* such as word order, style, etc. (“Reading a Text as a Discourse,” p. 17-44 in David Alan Black [ed.], *Linguistics and NT Interpretation* [Nashville: Broadman, 1992]: 18). Louw continues, “Since any analysis, by necessity, is in danger of ‘reading into’ a text, it is important to be alert of *not going beyond the text*... Going *beyond* a text involves a refusal to recognize the discourse constraints of a text” (19 [emphasis mine]).

<sup>71</sup> James Barr scathingly attacked the linguistic fallacies of the then-standard *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, which used the diachronic approach as its standard operating procedure (see *The Semantics of Biblical Languages* [Oxford: Oxford University, 1961] and *Comparative Philology and the Text of the OT* [rep. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1968, 1987]). Wesley A. Kort writes, “The given lexical meaning of words—that is, what they have meant in the past—is always being violated or subverted by their uses in the new situation” (*Story, Text, and Scripture: Literary Interests in Biblical Narrative* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1988]: 79). I. Howard Marshall concurs, “The meaning of a word depends not on what it is in itself, but on its relation to other words and to other sentences which form its context. Dictionary-entries about words are rule-of-thumb generalizations based on assumptions about characteristic contexts... A ‘mechanical’ emphasis on verbal and propositional forms is not only pre-critical in terms of Biblical studies, it is also obsolete in terms of *semantics*, violating virtually every modern insight into the nature of meanings” (“Semantics and NT Interpretation,” in *idem*, *NT Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977]: 78-79, cf. 90-93. Kevin J. Vanhoozer writes, “The new battleground is no longer biblical words, but larger units of discourse: sentences, paragraphs, entire books. The crucial questions of meaning and truth are now located on the textual level—thus the need for a semantics of biblical *literature* rather than biblical *language*” (“The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture’s Diverse Literary Forms” p. 53-104 in D.A. Carson & John D. Woodbridge [eds.], *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986]: 53-54 [emphases his]; so also David Alan Black: “Above all, to know what a word means we must consider its context. Meaning is then extracted from the *passage in which the word is found*” (*Linguistics for Students of NT Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988]: 122 [emphasis mine], cf. 120-142); so also D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984]: 64-66). McEvenue states that “the very first, and only really rigid, rule in literary theory is that texts must be read from beginning to end, as the meaning of each word is not determined by definition but only by the relations of all elements of the whole text to all others” (*Interpretation & Bible*:171). From a more theoretical perspective, see Teun A. van Dijk, *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* (New York: Longman, 1977): 3-5, and Robert E. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983): xv.

<sup>72</sup> In light of these considerations, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida have introduced what may prove to be the “new breed” of lexicography in biblical studies based on “semantic domains” rather than paradigmatic meanings with their *Greek-English Lexicon* (2 vols., New York: United Bible Societies, 1988).

(9) Methodological: Historical study is very different from the study of a text, especially the Bible. Is it meaningful to speak of an inspired event? An inerrant event? We can't parse an action the way we do a verb, nor diagram an incident the way we can the syntax of a sentence. Other than saying that it actually happened, in what ways does an event teach truth? Can we say, "The authorially intended meaning of the church in Ephesus was...?" And if we can't really talk about the authorially-intended meaning of a place or an event, what and whose meaning are we after? In viewing the Bible, we must recognize that we have "pre-interpreted" versions of the events, i.e., authorially shaped perspectives on how we are to evaluate the characters and events that they describe and their significance. When we construct our own historical backgrounds, then, we are actually setting aside this inspired version—this divine historiography—of the meaning and significance of biblical events.

(10) Practical: People—even nonbelievers—turn to the Bible precisely because it is *timeless* in the truth that it tells. "When believers approach scripture, they generally seek guidance or revelation. They want the scripture to speak to their present lives, not just be a document from the past."<sup>73</sup> Granted, historical factors did give the *occasion* for the individual books to be written. However, when we view the Bible as God's Word intended for *all humanity*, it expands its target readership beyond the first audience/first readers.<sup>74</sup>

"The presence of [books] within the canon of the Christian Bible therefore relativizes the importance of the original implied readers...As components of the New Testament,...[they] are now meant to be read by Christians of virtually all ages and cultures, not just by first-century Christians proficient in Greek...Once [they] are part of the New Testament of the Christian Bible, their life setting reaches beyond the original one to include all the contemporary Christian uses of Scripture."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> William S. Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville: WJKP, 1993): 174-175. This aspect also favors a renewed interest in reading the Bible as *Scripture*, opening the door for what has been labeled "canon[ical] criticism. The leading example here is Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the OT as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) and *idem*, *The NT as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

<sup>74</sup> Vanhoozer states: "The absorption of a text...into the Old or New Testament does indeed affect how it is read...by expanding the context of interpretation beyond the original historical and literary contexts" (*Is There a Meaning?*: 380). According to Childs, canonical shaping was done "precisely to loosen the text from any one given historical setting, and to transcend the original addressee" (Brevard S. Childs, *The NT as Canon*: 23). Robert Wall agrees: "The tools of historical criticism misplace Scripture's theological reference point with a historical one, freezing its normative meaning in ancient worlds that do not bear upon today's church" ("Canonical Context and Canonical Conversations," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning NT Studies and Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel Green [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000]: 166). In the same vein, Chapman observes, "The subversive quality of...canon formation also means that a canon's 'ideals' are never reducible to one single historical or ideological context" (Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Case Study in OT Canon Formation*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000/2009): 95. See also George W. Knight III, "The Scriptures Were Written for Our Instruction" *JETS* 39/1 (1996): 3-13.

<sup>75</sup> Kurz, *Reading Luke-Acts*: 160-161. The comments of Francis Watson elucidate this further: "The Bible embraces writings in a variety of literary genres, but these genres are transformed by the fact of canonization. The canon converts poetry and prose, narrative, law, prophecy and epistles alike into 'holy scripture.' Genre is determined not only by a text's intrinsic characteristics but also by its communal usage, and it is arbitrary to claim that a text is 'really' a mere letter or poem and that its role as holy scripture was imposed on it later—as it were, against the grain. That view supposes that texts are wholly limited and confined by their immediate circumstances of origin, and that as soon as they stray from their appointed time and place they will be 'misread.' Yet it is of the nature of writing—unlike speech—to stray from its appointed time and place, and the possibility that writing will transcend the time and place envisaged by its author is therefore part of its structure from the very beginning. 'Holy scripture' as a generic category is not an alien imposition upon texts whose essential being and meaning is to be found elsewhere, for texts do not give their essential being and meaning to be known apart from the process of their reception. The reception of some texts

## Part 2: Understanding

Indeed, recently more scholars are calling us to rethink the issue of the “occasional” nature of the NT epistles, i.e., these epistles were not intended primarily for the special and unique needs of the recipient churches, but address these problems primarily for the edification of the *entire* Body of Christ.

“The assumption that Paul’s thought arises out of, and only in response to, particular situations in his congregations, I would suggest...is essentially incorrect...The contingent situations affect how Paul articulates his thoughts, but those thoughts are basically not *ad hoc* in character...Contingency has to do by and large with the mode of expression, not the matter expressed.”<sup>76</sup>

(11) Postmodern: Postmodern and deconstructionist thinking has effectively pointed out that historians always operate within (sometimes subconscious) paradigms or interpretive models (i.e., biases). Consequently, historians inevitably emphasize certain details, while screening out other details that they deem unimportant.<sup>77</sup>

“Since any description must be partial, the typical natural history often omits from its immensely circumstantial accounts just those details that later scientists will find sources of important illumination...What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see.”<sup>78</sup>

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but not others as holy scripture assigns to them a complex function within the life of the community” (*Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994]: 4). H. Gamble explains it like this: “Canonization entails a recontextualization of the documents incorporated into the canon. They are abstracted from both their generative and traditional settings and redeployed as parts of a new literary whole; henceforth they read in terms of this collection” (*The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985]: 75). Brian E. Daley makes a similar point: “Because the Bible is not just a book of texts but is *Holy Scripture*, the concern of the ancient exegete was not simply, or even primarily, to reconstruct the *Sitz im Leben* of the text being studied but to elucidate its *Sitz in unserem Leben*, its situation in *our* life; the hearers’ faith is the living context in which its scriptural meaning—its meaning for our salvation—is to be found” (“Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Some Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms” p. 69-88 in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis & Richard B. Hays, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003]: 77). Christopher R. Seitz sharply focuses this point: “Why capitalize Scripture and also speak of ‘authoritative texts’ if one is prioritizing functional concerns in the community?” (*The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011]: 119). Along with Childs, the other leading exponent of studies in the theological and exegetical significance of approaching the Bible as canon is James A. Sanders, who echoes the notion of the timelessness of Scripture with his phrase, “adaptable for life” (see *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987]: 9-39).

<sup>76</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville: W/JKP, 1994): 3-4. See also N. R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985): 135.

<sup>77</sup> This point has been recognized by an increasing number of scholars: “Moreover, historical criticism has implicitly veiled the historical character of biblical scholarship’s entanglements with modernity and has therefore left unexamined its own critical and theoretical assumptions as well as the cultural conditions that produced, sustained, and validated them” (The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press]: 2).

<sup>78</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970): 16, 113.

## 5. Is there any value in studying the historical background of the Bible? YES!

- (1) *For apologetics*<sup>79</sup> (i.e., to prove the trustworthiness of the Bible).<sup>80</sup>
- (2) *For illustrations of applications* (i.e., to show how other people responded to the Shared Truths of God's Word).
- (3) *As a means to historical truth* (i.e., using the Bible as a trustworthy document to learn about history).<sup>81</sup>
- (4) *As a hermeneutical check-and-balance* (i.e., using the history of interpretation to evaluate the validity of our own conclusions).<sup>82</sup>
- (5) *As a means of general revelation* (i.e., observing God's providential acts through history reveals aspects of his character).<sup>83</sup>
- (6) *For translation and philology* (i.e., our knowledge of dead languages depends on the

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<sup>79</sup> Meir Sternberg spells out what is at stake here: "Were the narrative written or read as fiction, then God would turn from the lord of history into a creature of imagination, with the most disastrous results. The shape of time, the rationale of monotheism, the foundations of conduct, the national sense of identity, the very right to the land of Israel and the hope of deliverance to come: all hang in the generic balance. Hence the Bible's determination to sanctify and compel literal belief in the past" (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana Univ., 1985]: 32).

<sup>80</sup> On this point, unfortunately, a good deal of confusion exists. The "historical" meaning of a text is used to describe two very different concerns: (1) the interpreter's attempt to ground meaning in the historical author's intent; and (2) the historicity of the event behind the text. In large measure, concern for the second of these (which is an *apologetic* task) has dominated the first, with many critics dismissing the veracity (inerrancy) of the Bible, while conservatives have defended it on the grounds of history and archaeology. On the relationship of text versus event, see Frei (*The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*) who asserts that "real subject matter of biblical narratives is not the *events* they narrate but the quite separable *religious lessons* they convey...the meaning of its narratives *does not lie in their historical truth*" [43, emphasis mine]. Sailhamer further observes, "Evangelical biblical scholars have...a tendency to interpret the formula 'revelation in history' in such a way that the term *history* refers not to the text of Scripture but rather to the past events themselves" ("Exegesis of the OT": 283). See also James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (London: SCM, 1973): 168-181; John Barton, *Reading the OT: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984): 160-167; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983): 3-4; I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970-71): 21.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Maier, in the Multnomah Spring lectures of March 1997, identified four values for the study of history and archaeology: (1) "It gives a way of checking up on the biblical record" (= verification, an *apologetic* task). (2) "We get better dimensional [fuller] views when we bring in nonbiblical sources" (= *illustrations* of how the text is applied in an historical matrix). (3) "It helps clear up biblical difficulties" (???). Here Maier brought up *not one* example. Moreover, he continued, "Do you need [historical background] to understand the message? *Of course not*, but...it is intrinsically fascinating." I personally share his fascination, but neither can I think of clear examples of extra-biblical sources providing a consensus solution to any biblical difficulty. (4) "It gives us a way to fill in some the gaps in the biblical records." If by this he means gaps in the *narrative* of the Bible, necessary to understanding the text, then again he provides no examples. In my opinion, much more convincing explanations of narrative "gapping" as a deliberate literary technique may be found in Sternberg, *Poetics of Bib Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985): 186-263, and Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: An Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1978): 182-191.

<sup>82</sup> I would add to this the history of both hermeneutics and doctrine, which includes an awareness of the role of church traditions upon our thinking (including interpretive *vorverständnis*, i.e., hermeneutical presuppositions we bring to a text). "By its instruction, history can...deliver us from the tyranny of our own times, the conceit that we are necessarily wiser than our fathers and mothers—what C. S. Lewis called chronological snobbery" (Nathan O. Hatch, "Yesterday: The Key That Unlocks Today" *Christianity Today* 27/12 [Aug 5, 1983]: 18). See also Cedric Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983): 69-80.

<sup>83</sup> "History [is] a continuing parable whereby God's purposes are revealed for those with eyes to see" (Malcolm Muggeridge, "Christianity: A Religion of Hope" *Crux* [Sept. 1979]: 2). Of course, this is true for all history, not just the biblical events.

literary contexts in which we find how the language is used).<sup>84</sup> Note: This is *philology*, not history.

An Important Clarification: The historical background of a particular passage *is* important for correct interpretation, but all we really need to know is found *within the bible itself*.

## 6. Conclusion

I believe in the fundamental importance of the historicity of the Bible for Christian faith and practice. Its historical truthfulness is a central and vitally important concern to apologetics and doctrine. But as an interpretive method, extra-biblical historical criticism is of little value in determining the textual meaning of the Bible, by which I mean the Shared Truths, values, authorially-intended functions, truth assertions, and the anticipated effects of the Bible. The copious footnotes I've incorporated into this paper reflect the fact that this view is not merely an idiosyncratic, "Lubeckian" idea, but is gaining increasing acceptance both by conservatives and non-conservatives across a broad range of academic disciplines. I close with two sample quotes which point in this direction:

"Some interpretive approaches, because they offer only thin descriptions of literary acts, will ultimately be seen to be inadequate and perhaps self-defeating. Indeed, this may be happening at present to the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation."<sup>85</sup>

"To say that the text is an accurate portrayal of what actually happened is an important part of the evangelical view of Scripture, but it does not alter the fact that God's revelation has come to us through an *inspired text*, and thus no amount of delving into the history of Israel as an event apart from the text can take the place of the meaning of the text of Scripture."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> We need extrabiblical texts to discover the range of interpretive options for a given word. Biblical words in the original languages found rarely in the text or only once (*hapax logomena*) force us to consider these. But it remains essential to recognize that we are comparing *literary* contexts rather than their underlying *history* for determining the possible meanings. History and philology are not the same thing: "Philological knowledge is fundamentally different from historical knowledge as well. The Thirty Years' War and a sonnet of Andreas Gryphius do not become objects of knowledge in the same way" (Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987]: 5).

<sup>85</sup> Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*: 332.

<sup>86</sup> Sailhamer, "Exegesis of the OT": 286 (emphasis mine).

## ***“Facts About Figures”***

### **Identifying Figures of Speech in the Bible**

One common way that language can “come alive” is through use of figures of speech. A figure of speech is *an expression which uses words in a nonliteral or unusual sense to enhance its effect upon the listener*. The following is a list of some of the more common figures of speech that we encounter in the Bible.

#### **1. Simile**

A simile draws a comparison between two things that are ordinarily very different, using the words “like” or “as.”

“He’s as big *as* a Mac truck.”

“Learning about figures of speech is *like* trying to nail Jell-O to a tree.”

“He is *like* a tree planted by streams of water” (Ps. 1:3)

“*As* a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” (Isa. 53:7b)

“*As* water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man.” (Prov. 27:19)

#### **2. Metaphor**

Metaphor also compares two things that are different, but without using the words “like” or “as.”

“The cold air *stabbed* his lungs.”

“This car is a *lemon*.”

“I’d love to go for a walk with you,” she *gushed*.

“I’m having a brain *cramp*.”

“You are the *salt* of the earth.” (Mat. 5:13)

“For Yahweh God is a *sun* and a *shield*.” (Ps. 84:11)

“Your word is a *lamp* to my feet and a *light* for my path.” (Ps. 119:105)

#### **3. Personification**

Giving living qualities to things that are not alive.

“We sat beside a *laughing* brook”

“The thunder *roared* off in the distance.”

“The branches *waved* in the breeze.”

“There are three things that are never *satisfied*, four that never *say*, ‘*Enough!*’; the grave, the barren womb, land, which is never *satisfied* with water, and fire, which never *says*, ‘*Enough!*’” (Prov. 30:15b-16)

“‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will *cry out*.’” (Luke 19:40)

#### **4. Irony**

There is a contrast between what is actually said and what it meant.<sup>87</sup>

“*Nice* move!” (to somebody who just spilled their orange juice).

“Oh, sure—I just *love* my toast burnt!” (for someone who doesn’t like it at all).

“Never use a preposition to end a sentence *with*.”

“Here is your *King!*” (Pilate, presenting the beaten Jesus, “crowned” with thorns; John 19:14)

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<sup>87</sup> For more detailed information, see the section on “Irony” (p. 12-15).

“Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and *you shall answer me.*” (God, asking Job questions he cannot possibly answer; Job 38:3; 40:7)

“How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? *Forgive me this wrong!*” (Paul does *not* think that refusing to accept money for ministering to them is wrong; 2 Cor. 12:13)

## 5. Hyperbole

A deliberate exaggeration.

“I could *eat a horse* right now!”

“I’ve told you a *thousand times* not to exaggerate.”

“Hear, O Israel! You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls *up to the sky.*” (Deut. 9:1)

“You hypocrite, first take the *plank* out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Luke 6:42)

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even *the whole world would not have room* for the books that would be written.” (John 21:25)

## 6. Anthropomorphism

Describing God as having human body parts.

“He’s got the whole world in his *hands.*”

“And Yahweh God formed man from the dust of the ground and *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath* of life...” (Gen. 2:7)

“Give *ear* to my words, O Yahweh” (Ps. 5:1)

“I will hide my *face* from them.” (Deut. 32:30)

## 7. Synecdoche

Using a part to describe the whole, or vice versa.

“I’ve got five *mouths* to feed at home.” (mouths → people)

“I just bought a new *set of wheels.*” (wheels → whole car)

“Give us today our daily *bread.*” (bread → all our daily needs; Mat. 6:12)

“The Word became *flesh* and lived for a while among us.” (flesh → human being; John 1:14)

“Yahweh will judge the *ends of the earth.*” (ends of the earth → all people; 1 Sam 2:10)

## 8. Metonymy

Using the name of one thing for something else closely related to it.

“*The White House* has issued a statement condemning the action.” (White House → President of the U.S.)

“*The Blazers* have traded their first-round draft pick.” (the team → team owner and/or manager)

“Yahweh will extend your mighty *scepter* from Zion.” (scepter → territory ruled over; Ps. 110:2)

“He who holds his *tongue* is wise.” (tongue → words which are spoken; Prov. 10:19)

## 9. Merism

Using two opposites joined with a conjunction (usually “and”) to indicate totality.

“We’ve searched *high and low* for it.”

“And so I’m offering this simple phrase, to kids *from one to 92*.”

“... *for richer or poorer, for better, for worse, in sickness and in health*...”

“...I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your *sons and daughters* will prophesy, your *young men* will see visions, your *old men* will dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17)

**NOTE:** When we say that the Bible uses figurative language, it does *not* mean that those parts are untrue or less important. It is only when we fail to recognize them properly or misunderstand the point they are making that they become troublesome.

### ***Question: Why Does the Bible Use Figures of Speech?***

1. *To emphasize a point.* “If a person does not hate his father or mother...” is more forceful than “You should love me more than anyone else.”
2. *To help us remember that point.* The parable of the Good Samaritan is much more effective and memorable than merely saying “We should be kind to all people.”
3. *To illustrate an idea.* Describing Christian ministry as farming helps us to recognize the need for doing diligent, hard work without expecting to see any immediate results, and that “success” will ultimately depend on God’s blessing and not *just* our hard work.

### ***Guidelines for Interpreting Figures***

1. The Bible should always be interpreted literally *unless*:
  - 1.1 The phrase would not make sense or would be absurd.  
e.g., God is a Rock (cf. Deut. 32:4)
  - 1.2 The immediate context indicates figurative meaning.  
e.g., Pilate *was* correctly identifying Jesus when he said, “Look at your King!”—but his point was that there was no reason to crucify someone as pathetic and powerless as Jesus in his state.
  - 1.3 It creates an obvious contradiction with a clearer passage of Scripture.  
e.g., Literally “hating” our father and mother (Luke 14:26) would contradict numerous other passages which clearly teach that we are to honor our parents and listen to them.
2. Look for the main point of comparison that you think the author is making—do not try to “see” more parallels than are actually there.



## *Summary of Figures of Speech*

<b>Simile</b>	A comparison between 2 things that are usually very different, using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>
<b>Metaphor</b>	Compares 2 different things, but <i>without</i> “like” or “as”
<b>Personification</b>	Giving living qualities to things that are not alive
<b>Irony</b>	A contrast between what is actually said and what is really meant
<b>Hyperbole</b>	A deliberate exaggeration
<b>Anthropomorphism</b>	Describing God as if he were human, especially having human body parts
<b>Synecdoche</b>	Using a part to describe the whole or a whole to describe the part
<b>Metonymy</b>	Using the name of one thing for something else closely related to it
<b>Merism</b>	Two opposites joined with ‘ <i>and</i> ’ to indicate totality

★ **The default should be to interpret the Bible literally unless:**

- the phrase or word would not make sense or would be absurd
- the immediate context or genre indicates figurative meaning
- it creates an obvious contradiction with a clearer passage

★ **Look for the *main* point of comparison that you think the author is making**

## ***“The Art of the Chart”***

### **1. The Value of Creating Charts**

Making and keeping charts on the passages we study can be a valuable part of Bible study. Some of the advantages of doing this include:

- 1.1 Forcing us to make key interpretive decisions concerning the *overall message* of the passage.
- 1.2 Causing us to determine the *structure* and trace the *flow of thought*.
- 1.3 Clarifying the *relationships* between the units.
- 1.4 Drawing our attention to *repeated* or *emphasized* words and ideas.
- 1.5 Making us *summarize* and *simplify*.
- 1.6 Allowing us to see each part in *context*.
- 1.7 Helping us to see the passage as a *whole*.

### **2. Guidelines for Making a Chart**

- 2.1 Limit it to *one* page (use legal size paper if necessary).
- 2.2 *Avoid overcrowding*.
- 2.3 Give a *title* to the chart (usually the book or Scripture reference).
- 2.4 Provide a *statement* of the *main idea*: **ONE, SINGLE COMPLETE SENTENCE**.
- 2.5 Create boxes which indicate the *main divisions* of the book/section/passage (with chapter and verse references); if possible, also show *subdivisions*.

*There are many ways to divide a book/section/passage. Your job is both to recognize these, and then decide which of these features you believe is MOST important to the AUTHOR in presenting his material.*

- 2.5.1 Chapter divisions
- 2.5.2 Paragraph divisions
- 2.5.3 Changes of scene/setting
- 2.5.4 Changes of time
- 2.5.5 Change of character(s)
- 2.5.6 Change of main idea(s)
- 2.5.7 Change of audience
- 2.5.8 Change of literary forms
- 2.5.9 Poetic clues: e.g., *Selah*, *inclusio*, *chiasm*, *repetition*, etc.
- 2.6 Give *division titles* which indicate the contents of that division.
- 2.7 Create smaller boxes to indicate other *important features* such as:
  - 2.7.1 *Relationships*: comparisons, contrasts, repetitions, parallels, cause-and-effect, etc.
  - 2.7.2 *Literary Forms*: *if* these have a significant bearing on the meaning of the passage.
  - 2.7.3 *Proportion*: the amount of space given to each unit.
  - 2.7.4 *Key words* or *topics*.
- 2.8 Restrict yourself to *major ideas*.

### 3. Two things should instantly be recognized when looking at your chart:

3.1 CONTENT: the key ideas which the author is trying to get across.

3.2 ARRANGEMENT: the way the author develops his ideas through the passage's structure.

### 4. Additional Guidelines for Charts

1. Do NOT use ruled paper.

2. Do NOT use lead pencil (unless for shading).

3. Write a COMPLETE SENTENCE for your main point.

*Note:* NOT "Jonah is about . . ." or "The main idea of the book of \_\_\_\_\_ is..."

4. Your chart should include ALL verses, IN SEQUENCE.

5. Write in NEAT, large letters, with NO CROSSED-OUT WORDS.

6. Do NOT put name, box number, or assignment number on the front side.

### 5. Example Chart Layout

## CHART TITLE

*The main theme of the book is stated as one, complete sentence.*

<i>Section 1 Main Idea</i>	<i>Section 2 Main Idea</i>	<i>Section 3 Main Idea</i>	<i>Section 4 Main Idea</i>
Key words	Key words	Key words	Key words
Ideas	Ideas	Ideas	Ideas
Parallels	Parallels	Parallels	Parallels
Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 1
Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 2
<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Reference</i>

# Ruth

An *excellent character* is rewarded by God's *BLESSING*.

	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
<i>Excellent character</i>	Kindness to late husband and to Naomi (1:8)	Leaving home to return with Naomi (2:11)	"All my people in the gate know you are a <i>woman of excellence</i> " (3:11)	Boaz taking Ruth to raise up the name of the deceased (4:10,15)
<i>BLESSING given</i>	"May the LORD deal kindly with you...May you find rest in the house of [your] husband" (1:8,9)	"May the LORD reward your work and your wages be full from the LORD" (2:12)	"May you be <i>blessed</i> of the LORD" (3:10)	"May you build the house of Israel; may you achieve wealth; may you become famous" (4:11,12) -Additional blessing to Naomi through Ruth's son (4:14,15)
<b>Plot</b>	-Leaving God's land brings destitution and death. -Ruth returns with Naomi.	-Returning to the land brings life: food, blessing, and Boaz' favor.	-A redeemer is provided.	-Life is given through offspring, leading to the <b>King</b> .
<b>Setting</b>	-Famine in Israel -in Moab for 10 years.	-Bethlehem at harvest time.	-Threshing floor at night.	-Bethlehem's city gate.

*"...Boaz the father of Obed, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David" (4:21)*

# Malachi

*The Righteous Remnant is still a Future Reality.*

	<i>1:1-5</i>	<i>1:6-2:9</i>	<i>2:10-16</i>	<i>2:17-3:5</i>	<i>3:6-12</i>	<i>3:13-18</i>	<i>4:1-6</i>
<i>There is still wickedness in the remnant</i>	-The remnant does not believe God's love (1:2)	-Priests dishonor God in sacrifices (1:6-9,12,13) -Violated covenant (2:8)	-Unfaithfulness (2:10-14)	-Dishonoring God by calling his character into question (2:17)	- "Turned away from my decrees" and robbed God (3:7-8)	-Dishonor God by <i>again</i> calling his character into question (3:13-15)	Implicit here is the idea that the wicked are still present...but not for long
<i>God is faithful in his covenant and love</i>	- "I have loved you" (1:2)	-Covenant w/ Levi (2:5)	- "I hate divorce," says Yahweh of Israel (2:16)	-Implicit in sending the messenger and purifying his people is God's love	- "I Yahweh do not change" So the nation is not destroyed (3:6)	-He will take up his remnant and love him as a father to a son	-This is the Day God has promised because of his love
<i>God will purge wickedness from his people. (cf. Deut. 16-18)</i>	-Will destroy Edom (symbol of evil) [1:3-4]	-Cursed for bringing blemished animals (1:14-2:4) -Humiliates priests (2:9)	-God stands as a witness to their unfaithfulness (2:13-14)	-Refiner will purify people (3:2-3) -Judge the wicked (3:5)	-Under a curse (3:9)	-Distinction made between righteous and wicked (3:18)	-In the Day of Yahweh all wicked and proud will be destroyed (4:1)
<i>The future remnant will love God heart and soul</i>	-They will honor God (1:5)	- "My name will be great among the nations" in every place pure offerings are brought (1:11)	-Implicit in the idea of God hating divorce and creating us to be godly offspring	- "Then Yahweh will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness" (3:3b-4)	- "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land" (3:12)	-The righteous fear God and honor his name (3:16-18)	-The Day of Yahweh is the day of Salvation for the righteous (4:2-3)

**"My name will be great among the nations." 1:11**

## *The Author's Point of View*

The author's point of view involves: who tells the story, how it is told, how accurately it is told, and with what amount of understanding it is told.

### 1. Who Tells the Story

1.1 *Anonymous vs. Implied Author vs. Real Author*: An anonymous work gives no clue as to who the author actually is (e.g., Ruth, 1 & 2 Kings, Esther). An implied author is involved where the text either implicitly<sup>88</sup> or explicitly identifies its author.<sup>89</sup> The real author refers to a distinction we sometimes have to make between the words which were written down by a secretary ("amanuensis") as opposed to the person dictating them.<sup>90</sup>

1.2 1<sup>st</sup> person (I/me, we/us)<sup>91</sup> vs. 3<sup>rd</sup> person (he/him, she/her, they/them)<sup>92</sup>

### 2. How It Is Told

The goal of an author is to convince his readers of a way of thinking and responding to God that is different from what they currently practice, but which they become persuaded is correct. Biblical authors use three primary strategies to achieve this: logical reasoning (i.e., discourse), aesthetic and emotional appeal (i.e., poetry), and illustration through story-telling (i.e., narrative). Besides these three basic strategies (which we call literary "types"), the author can use other devices to persuade us:

2.1 Selection of genre(s) and forms.

2.2 Other literary techniques (humor, misdirection, irony, dialogue, figures of speech, symbolism, etc.)

2.3 Amount of authorial "intrusion"—does the author let you draw your own conclusions about the characters or does he assist or influence your opinion by providing his own interpretations and explanations? From the standpoint of literary strategy, there is a trade-off here:

#### Narrative Interference

Less likely to be misunderstood  
More control over the reader  
A clearer message  
Less ambiguity

#### Narrative Non-Interference

Less realistic  
More dramatic and emotional  
A more powerful message  
More reader interest and involvement  
(filling in gaps, maintaining suspense, etc.)

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<sup>88</sup> An example of implicit clues might be Luke-Acts. Luke does not begin by saying, "I, Luke,..." However, since both Luke and Acts are written in the same style to the same person (Theophilus), they reflect the same author. Furthermore, in Acts the author uses the third person (they/them) to describe Paul and his companions except at those times when Luke is with them, at which points in the text it uses the first person (we/us). We conclude, then, that Luke is the implied author.

<sup>89</sup> Most of the NT epistles identify the implied author in the opening of the letter. OT examples where the text identifies its author include Nehemiah, superscriptions to various psalms and proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and most of the prophets.

<sup>90</sup> This is probably the case with the Pentateuch (see note below), along with the letter to the Galatians (see 6:11), and with at least parts of Jeremiah (see 36:4).

<sup>91</sup> Use of the first person is found primarily in Ezekiel; Amos 7-9; Habakkuk; Zechariah 1-8,11; Psalms, the speeches of Job and Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations 3, Daniel 7-12, Nehemiah; Acts 20-28; Romans-Philemon; James; 1 & 2 Peter; Jude; Revelation.

<sup>92</sup> Though most conservatives attribute the Pentateuch's authorship to Moses, Moses refers to himself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (he/him) throughout Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus. Only in Deuteronomy does he use the 1<sup>st</sup> person (I/me).

There is a high degree of narrative interference in John's Gospel. He explains details of geography (1:28) and chronology (3:24), gives translations (1:37, 42; 2:25; 6:1), interprets cryptic sayings from a retrospective position (2:21-22; 6:64, 71), explains customs (4:9), provides insights which have bearing upon the action (4:44).

### 3. How Accurately It Is Told

In biblical narrative we must assume that our author is a reliable source for two reasons: (1) it is *God's Word*, and God does not lie, mislead, or deceive; and (2) the human authors of Scripture possess what is called "narrative omniscience." Narrative omniscience refers to narrators who can know things that no mere observer could: e.g., unspoken thoughts of the characters, events happening simultaneously elsewhere, knowledge of God's perspective/attitude.<sup>93</sup>

### 4. Amount of Understanding

Again, our narrator knows what he is speaking about, though the vehicle of his knowledge varies with the different genres.

4.1 *Apocalyptic*: supernatural revelation given to the author, usually through visions and/or angels.

4.2 *Epistle*: though these letters usually have an implied target audience (an individual, a particular church, or group of churches), there is still an awareness that the author is writing not merely his own words but God's.<sup>94</sup>

4.3-4 *Gospel* and *Story*: the biblical narrator is a reliable communicator, drawing his information from three sources:

- (i) his own personal experience;
- (ii) research in other sources like eyewitnesses<sup>95</sup> and extrabiblical writings<sup>96</sup>
- (iii) the superintending guidance and revelation from the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

4.5 *Prophecy*: God communicates directly his own words to a prophet, who then speaks on behalf of God to others, often to the degree that the first person (I, me) refers not to the prophet but to God.

4.6 *Psalms*: prayers and meditations of the righteous.

4.7 *Proverbial* (Wisdom): wise, godly men make generalizations about the built-in order and patterns of cause-and-effect which God has established for his creation, as well as draw object lessons from nature which teach greater principles.

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<sup>93</sup> "In the case of biblical narrative, the narrator has a potentially omniscient perceptual point of view. He can be anywhere and everywhere, even inside the minds of the characters. The reader's perception is formed by what the narrator reveals of his omniscience and the way it is revealed. Thus, although the narrator potentially knows more than the reader, for practical purposes the perceptual viewpoints of the narrator and the reader coincide—the reader comes to see what the narrator sees." (Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* [Sheffield: Almond, 1983]: 52).

<sup>94</sup> Peter recognizes the authority of Paul's writings and calls them "Scripture" (ἡ γραφή), just the same as the Old Testament (2 Peter 3:15-16).

<sup>95</sup> See Luke's prologue (1:1-4) where he explains his investigation into his sources.

<sup>96</sup> Both Testaments mention and use outside writings. OT: the Book of Jashar, the Book of the Wars of Yahweh, the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah, etc.; NT: Paul quotes from pagan poets (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12).

*Part Three:*

# **SHARING**





## *To Obey or Not to Obey?*

Each of the following statements or commands are quoted directly from the Bible (NIV). Some of these we think we *SHOULD OBEY* in our lives today. But some of them we do *NOT* think are *APPLICABLE* in their literal sense today. For each of these verses, write “OE” (Obey Exactly) if you believe that we should obey the command in its exact, literal sense today, or “NE” (Not Exactly) if you believe that the command is not literally applicable today exactly as it is stated.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”
2. \_\_\_\_\_ “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”
3. \_\_\_\_\_ “If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off: and if it is a disgrace to have her hair...shaved off, she should cover her head.”
4. \_\_\_\_\_ “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues.”
5. \_\_\_\_\_ “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”
6. \_\_\_\_\_ “Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.”
7. \_\_\_\_\_ “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine.”
8. \_\_\_\_\_ “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak.”
9. \_\_\_\_\_ “From now on, those who have wives should live as if they had none.”
10. \_\_\_\_\_ “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”
11. \_\_\_\_\_ “Greet one another with a kiss of love.”
12. \_\_\_\_\_ “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.”

## “Sharing Thoughts”

Sharing is a key (but often overlooked) step in the process of Bible study. This step focuses on the *timeless truth*—the main ideas—that the original author intends to share with his readers.

### 1. Definition

A “**SHARED TRUTH**” is a truth claim that God is communicating to all people of all time everywhere through a given passage of Scripture. Notice the following:

1.1 A Shared Truth is ETERNAL.

-Example: “The Pharisees challenged him, ‘Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.’” (John 8:13)

-Poor statement: “The Pharisees opposed Jesus” is not a principle because it refers a *past* event. It is a description of something which happened long ago, not a timeless statement.

1.2 A Shared Truth is UNIVERSAL, i.e., it must be equally shared between all people of all times.

-Example: “You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly?...When one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:3-4)

-Poor statement: “The Corinthian church had a problem with hero-worship.” This speaks only about one particular church (and also again describes only a *past* event).

-Better statement: “Division in the church indicates worldliness.”

1.3 A Shared Truth reflects the same *main point* that the *text itself* is emphasizing—it’s what the author is sharing with us.

-Example: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mat. 22:39)

-Poor statement: “In order to love other people genuinely, we must first accept and love ourselves.” It is not enough that a statement is true, or that it doesn’t contradict the Bible, or that you can “find” it in a verse. A principle must be something that is either *clearly stated or unquestionably implied as THE point the author is trying to make in that passage*.

-Better statement: “It is our duty to love other people unselfishly.”

1.4 A Shared Truth is best stated as a single, complete sentence.

-Poor statement: “Since Jesus as the Son of God shares in all the attributes of the Trinitarian Godhead, his sovereign power and healing grace are made available to all. That is why people need to trust in him to meet their holistic needs, physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially, mentally, etc.”

-Better statement: “We need to trust Jesus as the one to meet our needs.”

### 2. Types of Shared Truth

2.1 “**Teaching**” Statements (Exposition): Shared Truths that inform us of a truth—something we need to *KNOW*.

-Example: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:38-39)

-Shared Truth: Nothing can thwart God’s love for those who are saved.

2.2 **“Urging” Statements (Exhortation):** Shared Truths that call for us to respond—something we need to *DO*.

-Example: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.” (Rom. 12:8)

-*Shared Truth*: We should love each other.

### 3. Some Practical Suggestions:

3.1 We should *avoid finger-pointing* in the wording of principles.

-Example: “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. 9:7)

-*Poor statement*: *YOU* should give willingly.

-*Better statement*: *WE* should give willingly.

3.2 We should *avoid using figures of speech*, which themselves need interpretation.

-*Poor statement*: “God’s eye is upon us through the storms of life.”

-*Better statement*: “God provides for us during difficult times.”

-*Poor statement*: “Christian life is like a fresh spring shower across a parched and barren wasteland.”

-*Better statement*: “Obeying God’s Word enables us to enjoy life more fully.”

3.3 We should use simple, uncomplicated sentences in stating Shared Truths.

-*Poor statement*: “Because God is in sovereign control over his entire created order, he governs even the most minute details of our lives.”

-*Better statement*: “God oversees every detail of our lives.”

### 4. How Do We Know Whether Our Shared Truth Is Valid?

The following questions are designed to help us decide this:

4.1 Is it an Old Testament teaching which is repeated in the New Testament?

-*Point*: If it was true in ancient Israel before Christ *and* also in the early church after Christ, then it is probably true for all time.

-*Example*: “The righteous will live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4)

-This verse occurs not only in Habakkuk, but also in Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; and Heb. 10:38. It is very likely, then, that this is appropriate for all people of all times.

4.2 Is the *reason* for a specific command given in the passage?

-*Point*: While sometimes a specific command was intended for a limited time and place, the reason behind the command applies to everyone.

-*Example*: “Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.” (1 Cor. 8:13). Here the issue isn’t about what kinds of food to eat, but about not causing others to sin.

4.3 Is it a statement about God?

-*Point*: Since God cannot change, any statement about him made in the past is still true today.

-*Example*: “Yahweh is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.” (Ex. 34:6)

### Part 3: Sharing

#### 4.4 Is it a general statement about the character of man?

-*Point*: All people have two things in common: we were made in the image of God and we are sinful. Therefore, general statements about mankind which reflect these are always true.

-*Example*: “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Prov. 28:13). *Shared Truth*: “We should confess instead of conceal our sins.”

#### 4.5 Is it a statement about the relationship of God and man?

-*Point*: There are truths that describe the relationship between God and human beings generally.

-*Examples*: “God judges evil”; “God forgives those who repent”; etc.

#### 4.6 If you are reading narrative literature, does the writer pass judgment on what is happening in the story?

-*Point*: If the narrator says that what a person did is good, then that person serves as an example to us.

-*Example*: “After Yahweh had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what *is right*, as my servant *Job has*.’” (Job 42:7)

-*Point*: If the narrator says that a particular action was bad, or if it is something that is clearly forbidden elsewhere in Scriptures, then that person is a negative example to us.

-*Example*: “Yahweh looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.” (Gen. 4:4-5)

-*Point*: If the narrator makes no judgment, and the Scriptures do not clearly endorse or forbid that behavior elsewhere, then be careful! That behavior might still be wrong, or perhaps right, or perhaps it makes no difference—look for a clearer passage.

**Note:** *EVERY* biblical passage is teaching Shared (eternal, universal) Truth intended for all mankind. The issue is not whether some passages are relevant while others aren’t. Rather, we are looking at whether **both** the Shared Truth and the specific behavior mentioned in the passage are to be applied today, or **only** the Shared Truth is to be applied today in culturally-equivalent ways.

# ***Biblical Theology***

## **1. Definition**

Biblical theology studies the main ideas of the Bible, tracing the Bible's own words, thought patterns, and shape to see its unity within its diversity.<sup>97</sup>

## **2. Its Relation to Other Biblical Studies**

-*Systematic Theology* asks: "How can I reorganize the Bible's truth to present it in an effective way to my culture?"

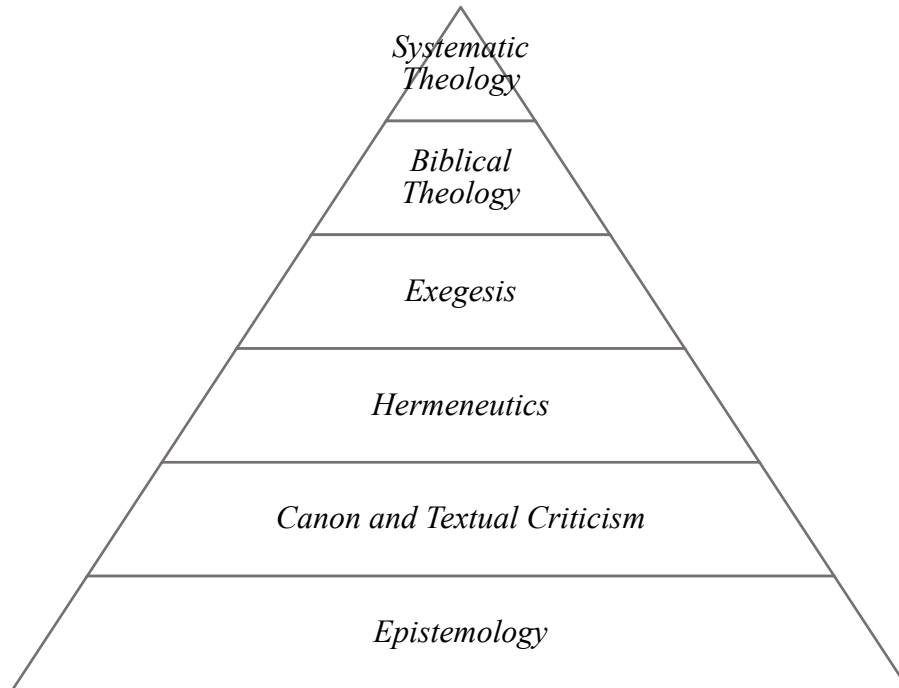
-*Biblical Theology* asks: "What are the main ideas and overall arguments in this passage?"

-*Exegesis* asks: "What is being said in *this* passage?"

-*Hermeneutics* asks: "What rules govern true or correct interpretation?"

-*Canon & Textual Criticism* asks: "Which Bible is true?"

-*Epistemology* asks: "Is the Bible truth?"



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<sup>97</sup> Here is a fuller, more complete definition. *Biblical theology* refers a study and presentation of the leading ideas and arguments contained within the Bible, organized around the categories of thought and terminology present within the text. The term may be used (1) for those studies which focus upon either the entire canon (Hebrew Scriptures, Greek Scriptures, or both), or a smaller subset: the theology of a particular book or passage, the theology of a biblical author, the theology of a biblical genre of writing, or the theology of a particular theme throughout the canon. The term "biblical theology" has also been used (2) to describe diachronic interests in the Bible: the overall progress of salvation history as seen throughout Scripture, or the theology of a particular time period within that salvation history, or the theological interests of people living during (a) biblical time period(s). While this latter use of the term is, in my view, problematic, it does reflect the interests of a substantial number of biblical scholars. Even less appropriately, in my judgment, the term is also sometimes used (3) to describe theological structures, propositions, or positions which are (merely) "in agreement with" what may be derived from the Bible.

### 3. Kinds of Biblical Theology

3.1 **Unit:** Identifying important themes in:

3.1.1 A *passage* (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount)

3.1.2 A *biblical book* (e.g., the theology of Isaiah)

3.1.3 A *canonical section* of biblical books (e.g., the Pentateuch)

3.1.4 A *literary genre* (e.g., Wisdom literature)

3.2 **Author:** Identifying themes emphasized in the writings of a particular author (e.g., the theology of Paul).

3.3 **Theme:** Tracing a theme through the entire Scriptures (or one testament, one canonical section, one book, etc.).

3.3.1 A *biblical term* (e.g., “the kingdom of God” or “the land” or “rest”)

3.3.2 A *biblical idea* (e.g., leadership or women in ministry or life after death)

3.4 **Historical:**

3.4.1 Identifying the dominant theological concerns of a particular *biblical time period* (e.g., the exilic period)

3.4.2 Tracing *God’s overall plan* across all of biblical history (e.g., dispensationalism or salvation/redemptive history)

### 4. How to Do Biblical Theology

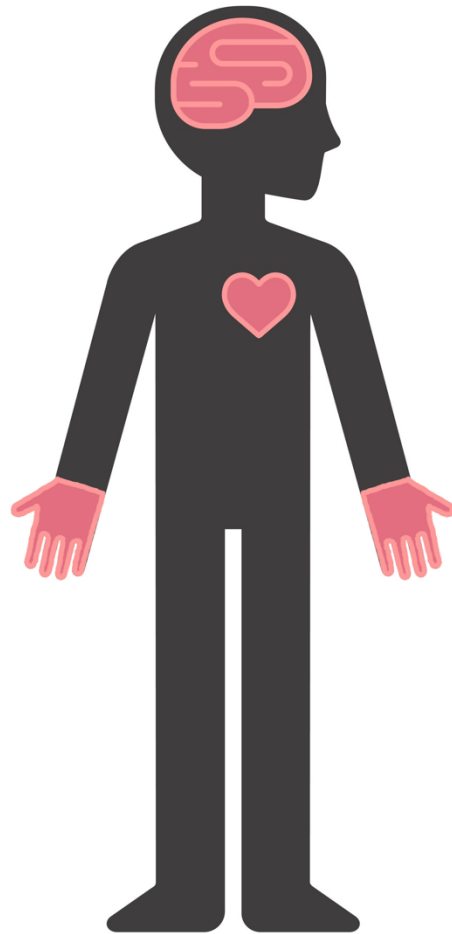
4.1 *Main Ideas:* Identify the main ideas which are being stressed by the author in his own words and terms.

4.2 *Definition:* Define the key terms the author uses to express his message. These will include similar words (near or less apparent synonyms in the “semantic range”), opposite words (antonyms), and figurative and symbolic language.

4.3 *Relations:* Follow the development of the overall argument. How has the author organized his ideas? What is his strategy for making his point?

4.4 *Unity and Diversity:* Compare and contrast how this idea is presented elsewhere in the same book, in books by the same author, in other books using the same genre, in other biblical books and genres.

*Part Four:*  
**RESPONDING**



## ***Responding: “Taking It Personally” (James 1:22-25)***

### **1. Some WRONG Ideas Concerning How We Respond to God’s Word:**

- 1.1 “Application will follow naturally and automatically if the text is just properly interpreted.”
- 1.2 “It’s up to the Holy Spirit to make it personal.”
- 1.3 “The Bible is already relevant.”
- 1.4 “The Bible’s main purpose is to teach how we’re supposed to act.”

### **2. Responding to the Bible Should...**

#### 2.1 Be based on what the AUTHOR INTENDS:

- It should be founded upon proper understanding and should build on the Shared Truths.
- We do NOT start with, “What challenges or blesses me in this passage?” but, “What truth does the author want me to grapple with in my own life is being taught here?”

#### 2.2 Involve us as COMPLETE PERSONS: thinking, imagining, feeling, and doing.

- Begin with, “*If this Shared Truth really is true, how would it affect my life?*”

#### 2.3 AVOID 2<sup>nd</sup> PERSON finger-pointing:

- NOT “*You* should serve others willingly.” This sounds like scolding.
- Instead “*We* should serve others willingly.” This comes across more graciously.

#### 2.4 Be RELEVANT: Responding begins with prayerful self-evaluation and should address my real needs.

#### 2.5 Involve LIFE CHANGE:

- In what ways has my previous THINKING been flawed, and how do I need to change my thoughts?
- How is the author expecting me to use my IMAGINATION—Reflecting on a figure of speech, calling me into a narrative world that is different from my familiar life, envisioning how my life could be different, etc.?
- What EMOTIONS is the author seeking to evoke from me—shock, anger, laughter, sorrow, surprise, anticipation, etc.?
- How should I change my outward BEHAVIORS in order to be consistent with the inward changes?

#### 2.6 Behavioral response suggestions should be SMART:

- Specific: in one week’s time, I should know whether there has been improvement
- Measurable: how can I evaluate my progress?
- Attainable: they should stretch me, but be possible
- Realistic: both what I should and what I can do (by the Holy Spirit’s power)
- Timely: How often? For how long? When?  
*NOT*: “I should be more Christlike.” *AND NOT*: “I ought to be a more giving person.”  
*BUT*: “I plan to give \$X to my church, \$Y to needy people, and \$Z to missions each month for the next six months.” *AND*: “I will spend 20 minutes per day, five days a week in intercessory prayer for the people in my church this next month.”

#### 2.7 Specific applications should be evaluated periodically.

- NOTE: Limit the number of conditional applications—i.e., “If X happens, then I will...”



## Part 4: Responding

or “When(ever) X happens, I will...” *In your applications you should focus on actions which you INITIATE, rather than responses you anticipate.* A few of these are okay, but not a majority.

-For example: “This Tuesday I will sit down and list out ways I’ve been hurt by \_\_\_\_ which may be contributing toward my anger toward them. Then, each morning for a month I will go down that list and pray specifically for one item, asking God to give me a forgiving spirit concerning that matter.”

-But *NOT*: “Whenever I get angry with \_\_\_\_ I will pray to forgive them.” And *NOT*: “If I lose my temper, I’ll try to remember not to say hurtful things.”

**EXAMPLE: SHARED TRUTH—**“*God is patient.*”

Poor Examples of Response Suggestions	Better Examples
Whenever I get angry, I should confess immediately. [a conditional statement] I will try to be less critical of people I don’t like. [not specific or measurable behavior] I will pray for people instead of getting impatient. [not specific or measurable behavior] I will try to be more patient, even when I don’t feel like it. [not specific or measurable behavior] I will stop carrying grudges and being bitter. [not specific or measurable behavior] You should ask God to convict you about people you have a bad attitude against. [2 <sup>nd</sup> person finger-pointing]	-Over the next week I will carry a notebook and pen, and record each time I get impatient with someone else. -At the end of each of those days, I will confess that impatience, and pray for heightened awareness. -For each of the instances I got impatient, I will consider how I could have handled it better. -This next week I will identify at least 8 scriptural examples displaying God’s patience. -This next week I will also write at least 8 specific examples of God’s patience in my own life. -This month I will memorize these verses concerning God’s patience, and recite them out loud morning and night, so that I can start to reprogram my instinctive responses: Ex. 34:6-7; Rom. 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:8-9

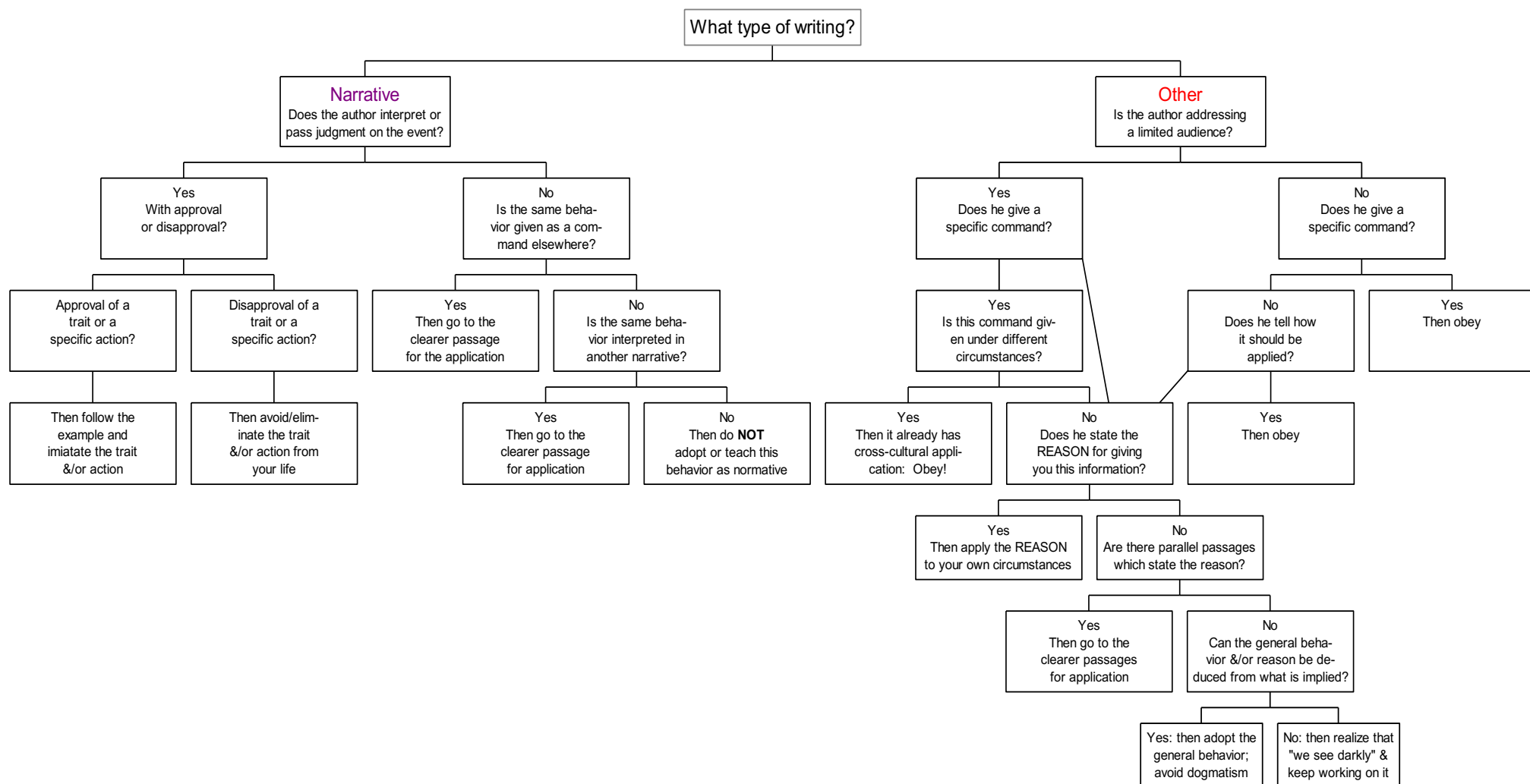
### 3. Questions to Ask When Applying a Passage

- Are there NEW PERSPECTIVES I should adopt?
- Are there EMOTIONS which are hindering me?
- Are there SINS which I need to confess?
- Are there HABITS which I need to revise?
- Are there ATTITUDES which I need to adopt or alter?
- Are there PROMISES which I need to trust in?
- Are there SACRIFICES which I need to consider making?
- Are there POSITIVE EXAMPLES which I need to imitate?
- Are there ERRORS which I need to avoid?
- Are there COMMANDS which I need to obey?
- Are there CHALLENGES which I need to accept?

### 4. Typical Problem Areas to Address in Making Response Suggestions:

conflicts in relationships	financial matters	health matters
uncontrolled emotions	use of time	integrity
difficult circumstances	crippling memories	depression & discouragement
self-perception	boredom	unresolved guilt
priorities	attitudes toward others	self-preoccupation
worry	fruit of the Spirit	self-control
ministry	addictive habits	struggles for power
communication	sexuality	integrity

# Flow Chart for Responding to Scripture



## ***Suggestions for Ways to “Let God’s Word Dwell in You” (Col. 3:16)***

### **1. Establish a Regular Bible Reading Plan.**

- Read through the Bible in a year.
- Speed-read entire biblical books in one sitting.
- Keep a Bible study notebook/reading-log in which you record your insights (i.e., seeing, understanding, sharing, responding).
- Work your way through a biblical book using an independent study guide (e.g., Bible Project videos, N. T. Wright’s *For Everyone Bible Study Guide*, etc.) or commentary (e.g., Daily Study Bible Series, *NIV Compact Commentary*, etc.). See also the bibliography and recommended resources at the end of the class notes (p. 107-108).
- Read through the Bible or a biblical passage using different translations.
- Enroll in an online course covering particular biblical books/passages.

### **2. Be Involved in a Bible Study Group.**

- Through your church, school, parachurch ministry, etc.

### **3. Teach a Person, Group, or Class.**

- One of the most effective and permanent forms of learning is by teaching others.

### **4. Memorize Scripture.**

- Favorite individual verses
- Entire passages, chapters, or books

### **5. Listen to the Bible on Audio Recordings While Driving.**

### **6. Listen to Audio Recordings of Scripture Songs.**

### **7. Become Involved in an Accountability/Discipleship Relationship.**

- Make yourself accountable for your daily Bible reading to (an)other(s).

### **8. Meditate on Scripture.**

- In prayer (e.g., reading Psalms to God)
- In worship (sharing Scripture)
- In discussions with family and others (cf. Deut. 6:6-9; Josh. 1:8)

### **9. If You’re Artistic, Try to Capture the Thought of a Passage:**

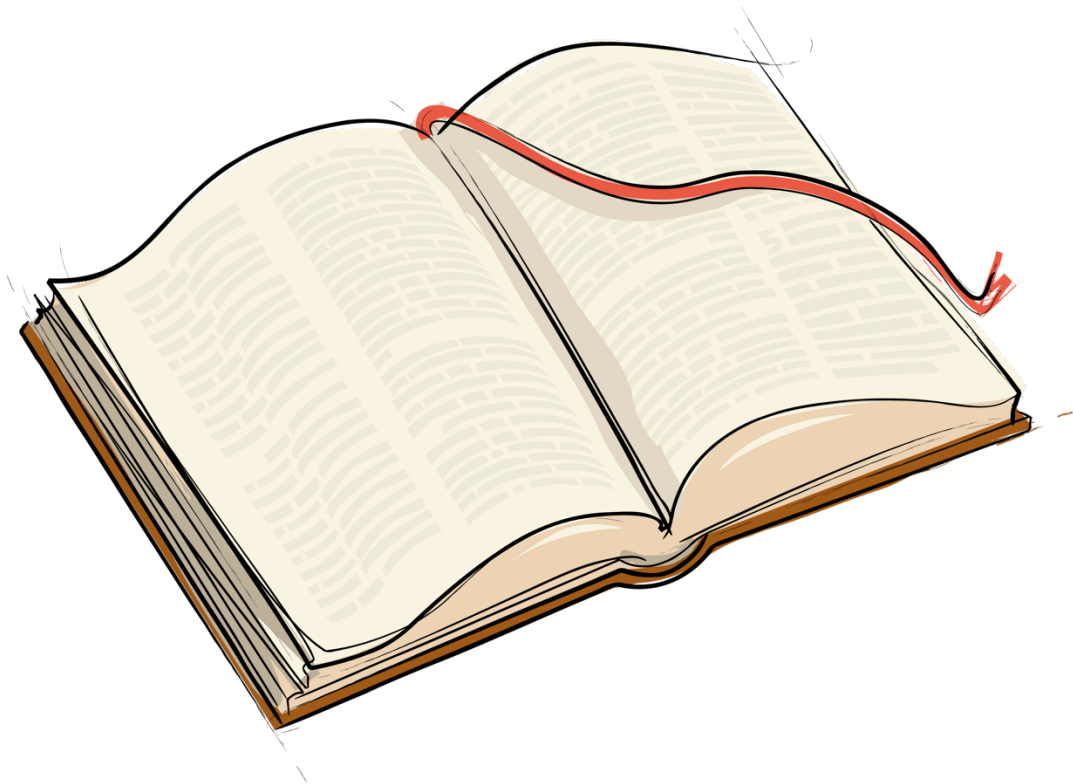
- In a song or musical work
- In a poem or a fictional story
- In a drawing, painting, or sculpture
- By writing it out in calligraphy or sewing it in cross-stitch
- In a “photo essay”

***POINT:*** Use whatever means you can to expose yourself to (and be exposed by) God’s Word.

***WHY?*** (1) to learn about God and his work in Christ; (2) to experience the power of God’s Word in our everyday lives; and (3) to become more like Christ.

*Part Five:*

# **LAB ASSIGNMENTS & OTHER MATERIALS**



## *A Formal Translation of Jonah*

**1:1** And the word of YHWH was to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup>“Arise! Go to Nineveh the great city! And call out against it, because its evil has ascended before me!” <sup>3</sup> And Jonah arose to run away toward Tarshish from before YHWH, and he went down to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarshish, and he gave its fare, and he went down in it in order to go with them toward Tarshish from before YHWH. <sup>4</sup> And YHWH hurled a great wind to the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea and the ship considered breaking apart. <sup>5</sup> And the sailors feared and they cried out each to his god and they hurled the utensils which were in the ship to the sea to lighten from upon them. And Jonah went down to the inmost part of the ship and he laid down and fell into a deep sleep. <sup>6</sup> And the leader of the ship came to him and he said to him, “What, to you, sleeper? Arise! Call out to your God!<sup>98</sup> Maybe the God<sup>99</sup> will notice us, and we will not be destroyed.” <sup>7</sup> And they said each to his friend, “Go! And let us cause lots to fall down, and let us know on whose account this evil is to us.” And they caused lots to fall down, and the lot fell down against Jonah. <sup>8</sup> And they said to him, “Reveal, now, to us on whose account this evil is to us! What is your work? And from where are you going? What is your land? And where, from this, are your people?” <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, “Hebrew am I, and I fear YHWH, God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry ground.” <sup>10</sup> And the men feared a great fear and they said to him, “What is this you have made?” (because the men knew that he was running away from before YHWH because he had told them). <sup>11</sup> And they said to him, “What should we do to you and the sea will be calm from against us?” (because the sea was going and storming). <sup>12</sup> And he said to them, “Lift me up! And hurl me to the sea! And the sea will be calm from against you, because I know that it is on my account that this great storm is upon you.” <sup>13</sup> And the men rowed to return<sup>100</sup> to the dry ground, and they were not able because the sea was going and storming against them. <sup>14</sup> And they cried out to YHWH and they said, “O YHWH, please do not let us be destroyed for the life of this man! And do not hold<sup>101</sup> against us innocent blood, because you, YHWH, have done<sup>102</sup> as you pleased.” <sup>15</sup> And they lifted up Jonah, and they hurled him to the sea, and the sea became calm from its raging. <sup>16</sup> And the men feared

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<sup>98</sup> 1:6 Or “Call out to your *gods*!”

<sup>99</sup> 1:6 Or “Maybe the *gods* will notice us . . .”

<sup>100</sup> 1:13 Or “*repent*.”

<sup>101</sup> 1:14 Or “*give*.”

<sup>102</sup> 1:14 Or “*made*.”

YHWH a great fear, and they sacrificed a sacrifice to YHWH, and they vowed vows. <sup>17</sup> And YHWH appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the insides of the fish three days and three nights. **2:1** And Jonah prayed to YHWH his God from the insides of the fish. <sup>2</sup> And he said: “I called out in my distress to YHWH, and he answered me. From the belly of *Sheol* I requested salvation; you heard my cry. <sup>3</sup> And you hurled me deep into the heart of the sea, and the rivers<sup>103</sup> surrounded me; all your breakers and waves crossed over<sup>104</sup> me. <sup>4</sup> And I, I said, ‘I was banished from your eyes; yet I will look again to the temple of your holiness.’ <sup>5</sup> Waters overwhelmed me, to my life<sup>105</sup> the deep surrounded me; reeds were wrapped around my head. <sup>6</sup> To the roots of the mountains I went down; the foundations of the land were upon me forever. And you made my life ascend from the pit, YHWH my God. <sup>7</sup> When my life was diminishing from me, I remembered YHWH, and my prayer went to you, to the temple of your holiness. <sup>8</sup> Those who guard worthless emptiness, their loyal love they forfeit. <sup>9</sup> And I, with a song of thanksgiving, I will sacrifice to you; what I vowed I will complete. Salvation is from YHWH.” <sup>10</sup> And YHWH said<sup>106</sup> to the fish, and it vomited Jonah to the dry ground. **3:1** And the word of the YHWH was to Jonah a second time, saying: <sup>2</sup> “Arise! Go to Nineveh the great city! And call out to it the message<sup>107</sup> I spoke to you.” <sup>3</sup> And Jonah arose, and he went to Nineveh according to the word of YHWH. And Nineveh was a great city to God—a going of three days. <sup>4</sup> And Jonah began to enter into the city a going of one day. And he said: “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned/destroyed.” <sup>5</sup> And the men of Nineveh believed in God. And they called a fast, and they put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the smallest. <sup>6</sup> And the word arrived to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he took off<sup>108</sup> his royal robes from upon him, and he covered himself with sackcloth, and he sat down upon the dust. <sup>7</sup> And he cried out, and he said, “In Nineveh,<sup>109</sup> from the decree of the king and his great ones: the man, nor the cattle of the herd, nor the flock, they shall not taste from anything; they shall not eat; and waters they shall not drink. <sup>8</sup> And let them be covered with sackcloths, the man and the cattle, and they shall call out to God with might, and they shall each repent from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? The God may

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<sup>103</sup> 2:3 i.e. currents.

<sup>104</sup> 2:3 The verb for “crossed over” here (עָבַר *‘ābārū*) is from the same root as 1:9 “Hebrew” (‘*ibri* עִבְרִי).

<sup>105</sup> 2:5 Wordplay: the word for “life” (*nephesh* נֶפֶשׁ) is the same as for “neck” or “throat.”

<sup>106</sup> 2:10 i.e. “spoke”; related to “word” (דָּבָר) in 1:1; 3:1,3,6; 4:2; “spoke” 3:2.

<sup>107</sup> 3:2 Lit. “and call out to it the *calling* . . .”

<sup>108</sup> 3:6 The verb here is *wayya’bēr* (וַיַּעֲבֹר), from the root ‘*br* עָבַר; see note on 2:3.

<sup>109</sup> 3:7 Or, “and he said in Nineveh: From the decree of the king...”

repent and he may have compassion and he may repent from his burning anger and we will not be destroyed.”<sup>10</sup> And the God saw their deeds—that they repented from their evil way, and the God had compassion about the evil that he said to do to them, and he did not do<sup>110</sup> it. **4:1** And it was evil to Jonah, a great evil, and he burned to himself.<sup>2</sup> And he prayed to YHWH, and he said, “O YHWH, is this not my word when I was still with my people? Because of this I began to flee toward Tarshish, for I knew that you are a gracious God and compassionate; long to angers and abounding in loyal love, taking pity against the evil.”<sup>3</sup> And now, YHWH, take away my life from me! For my death is good, more than my existing.”<sup>4</sup> And YHWH said, “Is it good—the burning within yourself?”<sup>5</sup> And Jonah went out from the city and he sat down at the east<sup>111</sup> of the city, and he made himself a booth there, and he sat under it in the shade until he would see what would happen to the city.<sup>6</sup> And YHWH God appointed a vine, and he caused it to arise over Jonah to be shade for his head to deliver him from his evil, and Jonah was overjoyed about the vine with great joy.<sup>7</sup> And the God appointed a worm when the dawn arose on the next day, and it chewed the vine, and it dried.<sup>112</sup> <sup>8</sup>And it was when the sun emerged, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head, and he grew faint, and he asked his life to die, and he said, “My death is good, more than my existing.”<sup>9</sup> And God said to Jonah, “Is it good—the burning within yourself about the vine?” And he said, “The burning within me is good<sup>113</sup>—to death.”<sup>10</sup> And YHWH said, “You have pitied concerning this vine which you did not tend to nor caused it to become great. It was a son of the night, and a son of the night was destroyed;<sup>11</sup> and I, shouldn’t I have pity concerning Nineveh, the great city in which there are many, more than two plus ten ten-thousands people who do not know between their right hand from their left hand, and cattle: many?”

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<sup>110</sup> 3:10 *‘asah* עָשָׂה, from the root *‘sh* עָשָׂה, is related to 1:9 “who *made* the sea and the land”; 1:10 “What is this you *have made*?”; 1:14 “you, YHWH, *have done* as you pleased”; 3:10 “when the God saw their *deeds* [*ma’asêhem* מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם]; 3:10 “the evil which he said *to do* to them.”

<sup>111</sup> 4:5 *miqqedem* מִקְדָּמָה, from *qdm* קִדְמָה (“east”) is related to 4:2 *qiddamti* קִדְמָתִי (“I began to flee”).

<sup>112</sup> 4:7 *wayyiybaš* וַיִּיבָשׁ, from *ybs* יָבֵשׁ, is related to 1:10 “who made the sea and the *dry ground*”; 1:13 “and the men rowed to return to the *dry ground*”; and 2:10 “and he vomited Jonah on the *dry ground*.”

<sup>113</sup> 4:9 The word for “good” (*tôb* טוֹב) can also be understood as “right”—see here and also vs. 3,4,8,9a.

## *Settings in Jonah*

<b>Place</b>	
<b>Change of Time</b>	
<b>Change of Character</b>	



## *Settings in Jonah*

Place	
Change of Time	
Change of Character	

## ***Literary Analysis Lab Assignment***

*For each of the following passages, identify (1) its literary type (narrative, poetry, or discourse); (2) its genre (apocalyptic, epistle, gospel, prophecy, psalm, story, or wisdom); and (3) its literary form (see **RBC**, “Bible as Literature Summary”). Note: it is possible on some to have more than one correct answer—choose the one which **most accurately** describes the passage.*

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Literary Type</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Form(s)</b>
Jude 24-25			
Deut. 5:6-21			
Neh. 7:6-63			
Nah. 1:1-8			
Rom. 15:23-29			
Psalm 6			
Neh. 1:1b-4			
Luke 2:8-12			
2 Chron. 36:5-8			
Rom. 12:1-8			
Rev. 7:5-8			
Mat. 13:31-33			
Deut. 27:15-26			
Prov. 30:24-28			
Psalm 51:3-6			

## ***Literary Analysis of Jonah (T.G.F.)***

Go through the entire book of Jonah and identify the literary features verse-by-verse.

**Note:** Literary style will be the largest category, then genre, then form. There will be few changes (if any) in style and genre within the book, but there will be many different forms. The forms found in Jonah include: *command, commission, dialogue, formula, history, hymn, miracle, oracle, petition, prayer, quotation, rhetorical question, royal edict, satire, and thanksgiving*.

*\*Use the following as a template for your work.*

Ref.	Literary Type	Literary Genre	Literary Forms

## *How to Analyze Hebrew Poetry*

When analyzing poetry, a formal translation such as the ESV or NASB works best, as they tend to preserve more of the formal components of the Hebrew text. Write out (or better, copy and paste) the entire psalm, and then double-space between each of the two-couplet units. Just assume that the majority of the poetic lines (the fancy term for a single, poetic line is a *colon*) go paired together in couplets, called *bicola*. Occasionally, you might see either a single line (a colon), or a three-cola unit (*tricola*). Here's an example with **Psalm 100 (ESV)**:

1     Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!  
2     Serve the LORD with gladness!  
      Come into his presence with singing!

3     Know that the LORD, he is God!  
  
      It is he who made us, and we are his;  
      we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4     Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
      and his courts with praise!  
  
      Give thanks to him; bless his name!

5     For the LORD is good;  
      his steadfast love endures forever,  
      and his faithfulness to all generations.

Now, each colon can usually be subdivided (e.g., subject-verb-prepositional phrase). Don't worry about being able to identify the grammatical terms—you can do this intuitively. Use vertical lines to align these different parts so you can compare the *bicola* or *tricola*:

1	Make a joyful noise	to the LORD,	all the earth!
2	Serve	the LORD	with gladness!
	Come into	his presence	with singing!
3	Know that	the LORD,	he is God!
	It is he who made us,	and we are his;	
	we are his people,	and the sheep of his pasture.	
4	Enter	his gates	with thanksgiving,
and	---	his courts	with praise!
	Give thanks	to him;	
	bless	his name!	
5	For the LORD	is	good;
	his steadfast love	endures	forever,
	and his faithfulness	continues	through all generations.

## Part 5: Lab Assignments & Other Materials

Next, as best you can, identify whether these parallel lines are saying essentially the same thing (*echoing parallelism*, or “*synonymous*” or “*repeating*”), or the succeeding line(s) build(s) on the thought of the first colon (*developing parallelism*, or “*synthetic*” or “*progressing*”), or the second line is giving the opposite perspective of the same truth (*antithetic*, or “*contrasting*”). Note that antithetic parallelism is almost always tipped off with the word “but” or “yet” at the beginning of the second line. If the order of the sub-parts within a line of an echoing bicola pair is switched around, it is *inverted parallelism* (“*mirror*”). Identify this relationship for each of the poetic units. Also make note of other features mentioned in the notes that you find in the psalm.

1	Make a joyful noise	to the LORD,	all the earth!	<b>ECHOING</b>
2	Serve	the LORD	with gladness!	
	Come into	his presence	with singing!	
3	Know that	the LORD,	he is God!	<b>DEVELOPING</b> (with above lines)
	It is he who made us, we are his people,	and we are his; and the sheep of his pasture.		<b>ECHOING</b>
4	Enter	his gates	with thanksgiving,	<b>ECHOING; ellipsis</b>
and ---	his courts		with praise!	
	Give thanks	to him;		<b>ECHOING</b>
	bless	his name!		
5	For the LORD	is	good;	<b>ECHOING</b>
	his steadfast love	endures	forever,	
	and his faithfulness	continues	through all generations.	

Then, determine the *overall form* of the psalm. The main categories are (1) Praise; (2) Thanksgiving; and (3) Lament. There are several other categories (e.g., Torah psalm, Royal psalm, Wisdom psalm). Note that these other categories these don’t follow a standard structural form or outline; instead these describe the content of what is in them.

*Important note about forms:* Avoid forcing the text into preestablished molds. It is very easy to read the textbook/class notes on Laments, Praises, and Thanksgivings and then look at a psalm in the Bible and expect it follow every jot and tittle of what is stated in the notes. Sometimes the psalm follows the regular form quite nicely, and other times it does not. The “normal” elements will not always follow a linear order and the structure of one lament may look a bit different than that of another. When a psalm does not follow the form there may be a good reason. Any attempt to make an “abnormal” psalm become “normal” may strip it of its literary artistry. So, when a psalm breaks form, seek to understand why it does so rather than seeking to make it fit “the norm.”

With this in mind, Psalm 100 is best classified as fitting the form of a **praise** psalm, exalting God for his character and awesomeness, expressing confidence in his eternal love, and calling on and teaching others to respond.

## Part 5: Lab Assignments & Other Materials

**Call to Praise:** v. 1-3a, 4a

**List of those who should praise:** *all the earth* (v. 1b)

**Reason(s) for praise**

-*Yahweh is God, he made us, we are his people/sheep* (v. 3)

-*Yahweh is good, enduring steadfast love and faithfulness* (v. 5)

**Concluding praise:** *"Give thanks to him and praise his name."* (v. 4)

This psalm does not use the following forms: antithetic parallelism, inverted parallelism, stair-step, acrostic, inclusio, chiasm, refrain, stair-step, imprecation, confession. It does contain the following stock word-pairs: joy | gladness; gates | courts; thanks(giving) | praise; love | faithfulness.

## Word Study Assignment

In some English versions, Jonah’s oracle to the Ninevites is translated, “Forty more days, and Nineveh will *be overturned*.” Others have, “...will *be destroyed*” or “...will *be overthrown*” or “...will *be demolished*,” and even “...will *be annihilated*,” and “...will *be smashed*.” In this assignment, your mission is to:

1. Determine which of these translations more clearly conveys the author’s intended thought.
2. Identify what significant issue(s) may be at stake behind this choice of terms.
3. Explain how your translation choice might influence understanding of the book of Jonah.

There are a number of different tools available for doing word studies. In the past, students have been required to use the *NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, which is a phenomenal resource that you may like to invest in, especially if you prefer working with a physical book. Here, I am going to walk you through an app that is online, free, and very useful, called *Parallel Plus*. To begin, either go to Google and type in “parallel plus,” and follow the link to *Parallel Plus* by TheBible.org, or simply click the link [here](#). (Note: it is also a handy app to have on your phone, but I would not recommend attempting to do this assignment on your phone).

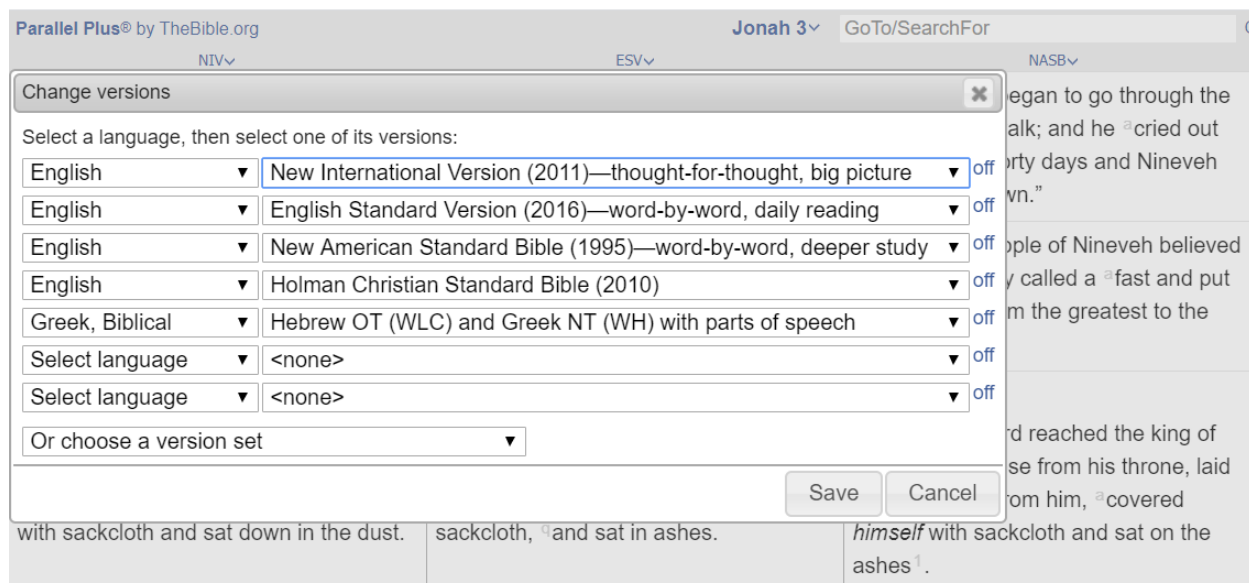
For initial setup, you will see that it takes you immediately to some parallel columns with several Bible versions. Go to the version in the upper right hand and click on the little arrow pointing down, then click on “change versions.”

Parallel Plus® by TheBible.org		Jonah 3	GoTo/SearchFor
NIV	ESV	NASB	
<p>4v Jonah began by</p> <p>into the city, procla</p> <p>days and Nineveh</p>	<p>4v Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"</p>	<p>4v Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."</p>	
<p>5v The Ninevites be</p> <p>was proclaimed, a</p> <p>the greatest to the</p> <p>sackcloth.</p>	<p>5v <sup>m</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. <sup>n</sup> They called for a fast and <sup>o</sup> put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.</p>	<p>5v <sup>n</sup> Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a <sup>a</sup> fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.</p>	

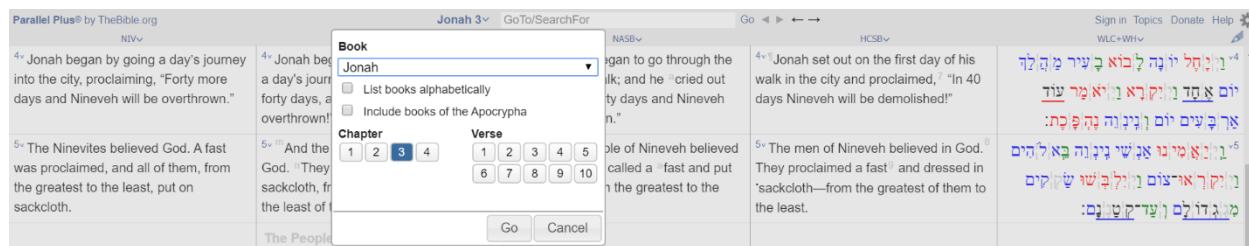
When you click on “change versions,” you will be to select which versions you’d like to display. I’d recommend the following: NIV, ESV, NASB, and HCSB, along with the Hebrew text.

(Note: There are other ways to customize the display by clicking on the gear symbol in the upper right-hand corner, but you don’t need to do anything with that for this assignment.)

## Part 5: Lab Assignments & Other Materials



Then, go to the passage selection tool in the middle of the top section of the page to find the passage we're studying: Jonah 3:4.



You are now set to begin your word study. Additional instructions will be provided along the way, but using this resource, begin answering the following questions:

1. How do the NIV (2011), the ESV, and the NASB translate this word?

How does the HCSB translate it?

We're actually more interested in the **Hebrew** word in our study here, even though I'm assuming you don't know the language. The Hebrew text is printed in the last column on the right here. Note that Hebrew reads from right-to-left. You could click on any one of these words to begin a word study. But to save you time, I'll just tell you which one it is: the target word we're looking for is the last one in this verse. Click on it.



Once you’ve clicked on this word, next click on “Word Study.” This will open up several boxes on the lower half of the screen. At the top-middle of these boxes, you will see this word spelled with English letters, followed by the total number of times it occurs in all its forms in the entire Old Testament.

2. What is this word, and how many times does it occur?

The column on the left displays for you every time this Hebrew word occurs in the entire Old Testament. A thorough word study would involve looking up every one of these uses and reading the verse in its context. But this is *a lot* of occurrences, so let’s narrow our target to just when it appears in the prophets. Look at all the references for each of the books of Isaiah through Malachi (you can skip the books of Lamentations and Daniel).<sup>114</sup> A short part of the verse is displayed in English (the only option here is for this column to use the King James Version—sorry!). If using the KJV is too difficult or clunky for you, or if you would simply like to use a different version, you may use another translation (preferably the NIV, the ESV, or CSB) and answer the following questions based off of this translation. As long as you reference the column *Parallel Plus* has displayed with the KJV, you should be able to clearly tell which English word is translating our specific Hebrew one in any of these verses.

3. In *Parallel Plus*, which is displaying the KJV, the English words used to translate this Hebrew word are in **bold** font. List every reference of these occurrences and write out the bold letter words used in the KJV to translate this word.

**NOTE:** don’t include “and” or “for” or “therefore.”

**NOTE:** if you use the KJV, feel free to change words like “ye,” “thou,” “art,” and “...eth” words into modern English: “you,” “are,” “...s.”

**NOTE:** don’t include Jonah 3:4, since this is the word we’re trying to study.

<sup>114</sup> In the Hebrew Bible, these two books are not considered as “Prophets,” but as part of the “Writings.”

4. Look up each of these occurrences and read them in context. There appear to be two main senses for this Hebrew word *hapak*. What are these two different, basic senses?

5. From just counting from your list, which of the two senses is more common in the prophets?

6. From your study of these passages, is either option for translating *hapak* *POSSIBLE* based on its use in the prophets? Why or why not?

7. As it occurs in Jonah 3:4, do you think it (a) should **DEFINITELY** be translated “overthrown” (= “destroyed”), or that it (b) should **DEFINITELY** be translated “(over)turned” (= “changed”), or that it (c) is ambiguous and difficult to tell from the way Jonah stated it? Why?

**NOTE:** Be sure to support your answer from other clues in the context of Jonah.

8. Which meaning do you think Jonah had in mind for Ninevites? Why?

**9.** Which meaning do you think God had in mind for the Ninevites? Why?

**10.** What significant issue(s) do you see here at stake for understanding Jonah and/or theology? Give this serious thought—there are some important things hanging in the balance!

**11.** What translation option do you think is the closest to capturing the meaning of this word in its context? Why?

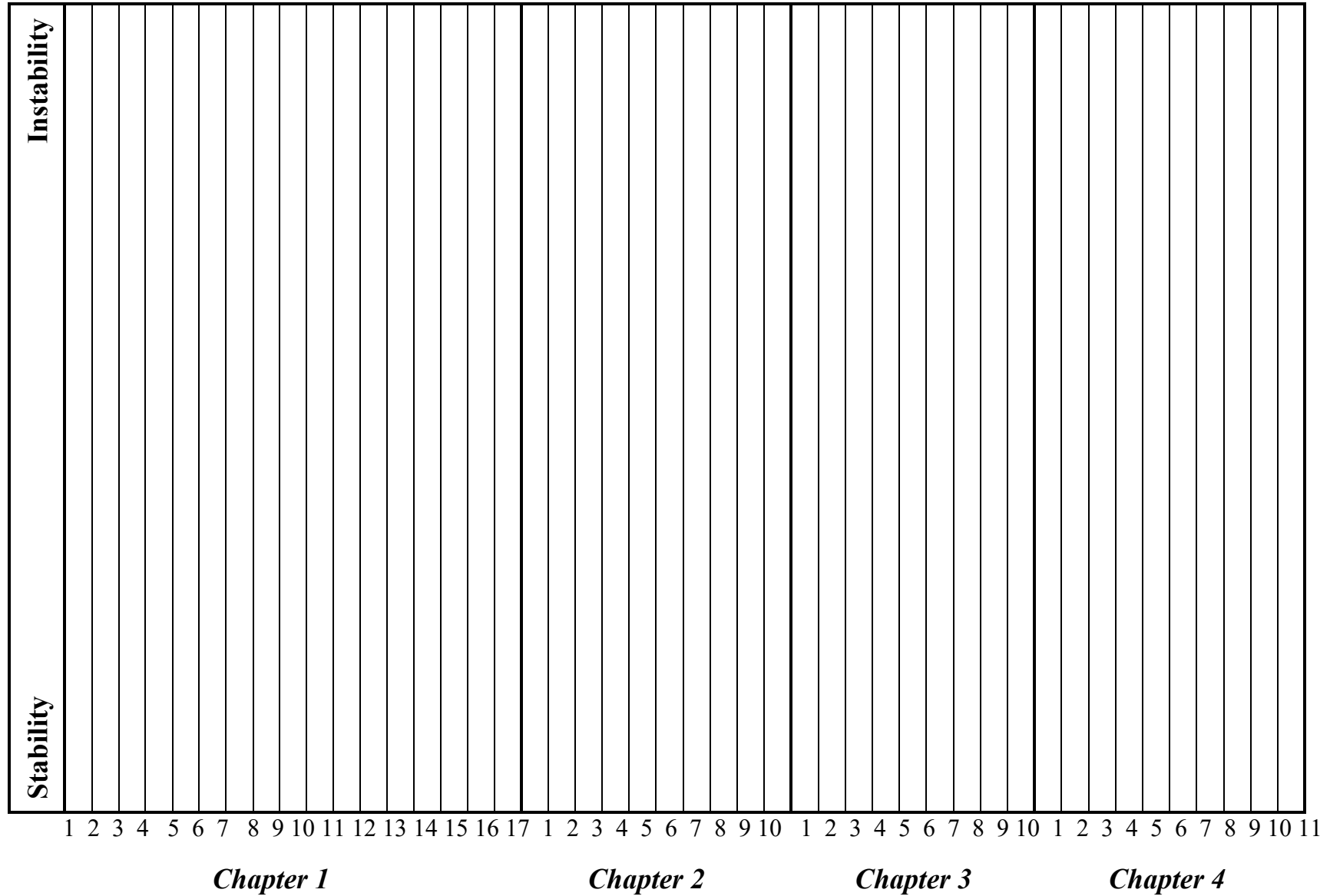
**12.** How might your choice effect our understanding of the book of Jonah?

## ***Figures of Speech***

*\*Use the following as a template for your work.*

<b>Vs.</b>	<b>Write Out Text</b>	<b>Kind of Figure</b>	<b>Explanation</b>

## *Plot Intensity in Jonah: Level of Conflict*



## *Identifying Shared Truths*

After reviewing *Read the Bible for a Change* on “Sharing” (ch. 6) and the class notes (p. 57-59), read the following proposed Shared Truths. Circle the number of the ones you believe are stated well. If the statement is not valid or is poorly stated, indicate what is wrong with it.

1. We should not hold grudges.
2. David should not have remained at home while his men fought in battle.
3. God will provide for our needs.
4. Should Christians go to war?
5. You should avoid situations where you know you might be tempted.
6. God desires to forgive all who repent.
7. In light of the finished work of Christ upon the cross on our behalf, we should strive to live out our lives in a way that will please him by all that we think, say, and do.
8. God’s love is as vast as the stars of the universe.
9. No one ever will ultimately get away with unconfessed sin.
10. God wants you to love him wholeheartedly.
11. Timothy was not to allow his youth to hold him back in ministry.
12. We should pray for the needs of others.

## *Lab Assignment on Biblical Commands*

This assignment is to be done in conjunction with your responses in class lecture (see your class notes on “Sharing,” p. 56). This assignment is to be typed out by the student on separate paper.

1. Identify the Scripture REFERENCE for each verse with the use of a concordance.
  2. Look up in your Bible each passage and read it in its CONTEXT.
  3. Give a short explanation of your REASON why you think it should or should not be obeyed in its exact, literal sense today.<sup>115</sup>
  4. For those you do not believe should be obeyed exactly today (“NE”), propose an ALTERNATIVE biblical principle which you think is both faithful to the text *and* valid for today.
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1. \_\_\_\_\_ “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”
2. \_\_\_\_\_ “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”
3. \_\_\_\_\_ “If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off: and if it is a disgrace to have her hair...shaved off, she should cover her head.”
4. \_\_\_\_\_ “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues.”
5. \_\_\_\_\_ “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”
6. \_\_\_\_\_ “Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.”
7. \_\_\_\_\_ “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine.”
8. \_\_\_\_\_ “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak.”
9. \_\_\_\_\_ “From now on, those who have wives should live as if they had none.”
10. \_\_\_\_\_ “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”
11. \_\_\_\_\_ “Greet one another with a kiss of love.”
12. \_\_\_\_\_ “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.”

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<sup>115</sup> *ALL* of these passages are teaching something that we must listen to and obey (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). In some cases, what we need to obey is the shared truth, but not the exact behavioral expression; in other cases, we should obey *BOTH* the shared truth and the exact behavioral expression.

## *A Formal Translation of Ephesians*

**1:1** Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. To the saints who are in Ephesus and to those who have faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—he who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ—<sup>4</sup> in that he chose us in him before<sup>116</sup> the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him, in love <sup>5</sup> having pre-destined us unto sonship-adoption through Jesus Christ unto himself in accordance with the good pleasure of his will <sup>6</sup> unto the praise of the glory of his grace with which he graced us in the loved-one, <sup>7</sup> in whom we have the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accordance with the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> which he abounded to us, in all wisdom and understanding <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will in accordance with his good pleasure which he pre-purposed in him <sup>10</sup> as a household-plan<sup>117</sup> for the fullness of the times: to head-up all things under Christ—the things upon the heavens and the things upon the earth—in him, <sup>11</sup> in whom also we have been apportioned-an-allotment,<sup>118</sup> being pre-destined in accordance with the pre-purpose of he who works everything in accordance with the desire of his will, <sup>12</sup> that we might be, unto the praise of his glory, those who pre-hoped in Christ <sup>13</sup> in whom also you, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom<sup>119</sup> also having had faith you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is a down-payment of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the possession, unto the praise of his glory. <sup>15</sup> On account of this, also I, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, <sup>16</sup> do not stop giving thanks for you making remembrance in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having had-light-shined<sup>120</sup> on the eyes of your heart in order for you to see what the hope of his calling (is), what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints (are), <sup>19</sup> and what the surpassing greatness of his power unto us—those who have faith—(is), in accordance with the working of the might of his strength <sup>20</sup> which he

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<sup>116</sup> 1:4 πρὸ (*pro*); same word translated “pre-” throughout.

<sup>117</sup> 1:10 οἰκονομίαν (*oikonomian*) “house-law” refers to the work of an οἰκονόμος (*oikonomos*) “house-steward” or “administrator” and is related to the “house-” word group in 2:19ff.

<sup>118</sup> 1:11 Verb κληρώω (*kleroō*) “apportioned-an-allotment” is related to the word κληρονομίας (*kleronomia*) “inheritance” in v. 14.

<sup>119</sup> 1:13 or “in which also” (ἐν ᾧ καὶ *en ho kai*): this translation seeks to preserve structural parallel of 11a,13a,13b.

<sup>120</sup> 1:18 πεφωτισμένους (*pephōtismenous*): verbal form of the “light” as in 5:8ff.



worked in Christ, having raised him from the dead and having seated him at his right in the heavenlies <sup>21</sup> over-above all rulers and authorities and powers and lords and every name being named, not only in this age, but also in those coming, <sup>22</sup> and he subjected all under his feet and gave him (as) head over all the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of he who fills all in all.

**2:1** And you, being dead in your transgressions and sins <sup>2</sup> in which at one time you walked, in accordance with the age of this world, in accordance with the ruler of the authority of the air—the spirit which is working in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> in which at one time also we (ourselves) conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh doing the will of the flesh and the mind—and we were children of wrath by nature, as also the rest (are). <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, on account of the great love with which he loved us—<sup>5</sup> and we, being dead in (our) transgressions—made-us-alive-together with Christ—by grace you are having been saved—<sup>6</sup> and he raised-us-up-together with and sat-us-together with Christ, <sup>7</sup> so that he might demonstrate in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness unto us in Christ. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you are having been saved, through faith, and this not from you—(it is) the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not from works in order that no one might boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are made-things<sup>121</sup> of him, having been created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God pre-prepared, in order that you might walk in them. <sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you—the gentiles in the flesh, those who are called ‘uncircumcision’ by those who are called ‘circumcision’—in the flesh, done-by-hand—<sup>12</sup> that you were at that time apart from Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers of the covenants of promise, hope not having and God-less in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus, you, those at one time being afar, have been made near in the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace, the one having made the both one and the middle-wall of the dividing-fence having destroyed, the enmity in his flesh, <sup>15</sup> the law of the commandments in decrees having nullified, in order that the two he might create in him unto one new man, making peace, <sup>16</sup> and (that) he might reconcile the both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity, in him, <sup>17</sup> and coming, he gospelled peace to you—those afar—and to those near, <sup>18</sup> because through him we have access—the both of us in one Spirit—to the Father. <sup>19</sup> Now then, no longer are you strangers and sojourners<sup>122</sup> but you are citizens-together

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<sup>121</sup> 2:10 ποίημα (*poiema*): noun form of verb ποιέω (*poieō*) “to make/do” as in “doing” (v. 3), “made [alive]” (v. 5), “having made” (v. 14), “making” (v. 15); cf. 3:11, 20, etc.

<sup>122</sup> 2:19 “strangers” (ξένοι *xenoi*) is lit. a “foreigner” or “non-citizen” (opposite of συμπολίται *sumpolitai* “citizens-together”); “sojourners” (πάροικοι *paroikoi*) is lit. “one who is away from/outside of the house” (opposite of οἰκεῖοι *oikeioi* “house-members”).

of the saints and house-members of God, <sup>20</sup> being housed-up upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, its cornerstone being Christ Jesus, <sup>21</sup> in whom all the house being jointed-together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom also you are housed-together into a housing-place of God in Spirit. **3:1** For this reason, I, Paul, the bond-captive of Christ on behalf of you, the gentiles <sup>2</sup>—if indeed you have heard of the household-plan of the grace of God which was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> that according to revelation was made known to me the mystery, just as I wrote in brief/above, <sup>4</sup> which you are able, reading, to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which to other generations was not made known to the sons of men as now it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in Spirit, <sup>6</sup> (that) the gentiles are inheritors-together and body-members-together and partakers-together of promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, <sup>7</sup> of which I have become a minister in accordance with the gift of the grace of God which was given to me in accordance with the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, the very-least-er of all saints, this grace was given: to gospel to the gentiles the unimaginable riches of Christ <sup>9</sup> and to shine-light to all regarding what the household-plan of the mystery (is) which has been hidden-away from the ages in God the creator of all, <sup>10</sup> in order that might be made known now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies through the church the multi-faceted wisdom of God, <sup>11</sup> in accordance with the pre-purpose of the ages which he made in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through the faith of him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I implore you not to lose heart in my afflictions on your behalf, which are your glory. <sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knee to the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom all fatherhood in the heavens and upon the land is named, <sup>16</sup> that he might give to you, in accordance with the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in the inner man—<sup>17</sup> for Christ to in-house through faith in your heart, in love being rooted and being foundationed,<sup>123</sup> <sup>18</sup> that you might be empowered to grasp, together-with all the saints, what the breadth and length and height and depth (is) <sup>19</sup> to know the surpassing-knowledge-love of Christ, that you might be filled unto all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> And to him who is powerful to do superabundantly above all which we ask or think in accordance with the power that is working in us—<sup>21</sup> to him (is) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages, Amen. **4:1** Therefore, I exhort you—I, the bond-captive in the Lord—to walk worthily of the calling which you have been called for, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with

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<sup>123</sup> 3:17 τεθεμελιωμένοι (*tethemeliômenoi*) “being foundationed”; verbal form of θεμέλιος (*themelios*) “foundation” as in 2:20.

patience upholding one another in love, <sup>3</sup> being diligent to keep the one-ness of the Spirit in the bond-together of peace. <sup>4</sup> (There is) one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, the over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> Each one,<sup>124</sup> however, was given the grace in accordance with the measure of the gift of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, “having ascended on high he took captivity captive, he gave gifts to men.” <sup>9</sup> But the ‘he ascended’—what (is it) if not also that he *descended* to the lower part of the earth? <sup>10</sup> The one having descended is also the one “having ascended” over-above all the heavens, in order that he might fill all. <sup>11</sup> And he—“he gave” some as apostles, others as prophets, others as gospel-proclaimers, others as shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the bringing-to-completion of the saints, unto work of ministry, unto housing-up of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain unto the one-ness of faith and knowledge of the son of God, unto (the) mature/completed man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> in order that we might no longer be infants, being wave-tossed and blown-about by every wind of teaching, by the trickery of men, by concocting for the purpose of the scheming of deceit <sup>15</sup> but rather (in order that), by truth-speaking in love, we might grow all things unto him, who is the head, Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom all the body—being jointed-together and being knit-together through all the ligaments of the supply, in accordance with the working, in the measure of each one part—makes the growth of the body unto the housing-up of itself in love. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk, just as the nations do walk—<sup>18</sup> being darkened in mind, being alienated from the life of God on account of the ignorance in them, on account of the hardness of their heart—<sup>19</sup> who, being callused, gave themselves over in licentiousness unto the working of all impurity in greed. <sup>20</sup> But you—you did not thusly learn Christ, <sup>21</sup> if you have heard him and were taught in him, as is truth in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off the old man, (which is) in accordance with your former manner-of-conducting-yourself, which was being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, <sup>23</sup> but to be re-newed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new man, the (one which is) in accordance with God, which is having been created in the righteousness and the holiness of truth. <sup>25</sup> Therefore, putting off the false, “speak truth, each with his neighbor,” because we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> “Be angry and do not sin.” The sun—let it not set upon your anger, <sup>27</sup> nor give place to the devil. <sup>28</sup> The one who steals—let him steal no longer. Rather, let him

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<sup>124</sup> 4:7 The Greek word order is identical to the preceding (i.e., *one lord, one faith, one baptism, one God...*, *one—* but to each was given...).)

labor working the good with his own hands, in order that he might have (something) to give to the one having need. <sup>29</sup> Any rotten word—let it not come forth from your mouth, but only whatever is good for the housing-up<sup>125</sup> of need, in order that it might give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you have been sealed unto the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> All bitterness and rage and anger and clamor and blasphemy—let it be removed from you, together with all evil, <sup>32</sup> but rather, be kind unto one another, compassionate, showing grace toward one another, just as Christ graced you. **5:1** Be therefore mimickers of God, as loved children, <sup>2</sup> and walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself over on our behalf as an offering and sacrifice to God, as a fragrant aroma. <sup>3</sup> But fornication and any impurity or greed – let it not be named in you, just as is proper for saints, <sup>4</sup> nor shamefulfulness and foolish words or smutty talk, which are not fitting, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For know! knowing this, that no immoral or impure or greedy person—such (a man) is an idolater—has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words—on account of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers-together with them, <sup>8</sup> for you (were) at one time darkness, but now (are) light in the Lord. Walk as the children of the light—<sup>9</sup> for the fruit of the light (is) in all goodness and righteousness and truth—<sup>10</sup> testing what is pleasing to the Lord, <sup>11</sup> and do not share in the fruit/less works of darkness, but rather expose (them). <sup>12</sup> For the things that are done by them in secret—it is shameful even to speak. <sup>13</sup> But all that is being exposed by the light is visible, <sup>14</sup> for everything that is visible is light. Therefore it says, “Rise up, O sleeping one, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.” <sup>15</sup> Therefore, watch carefully how you walk—not as *unwise*, but as *wise*—<sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, for the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Because of this, do not be un-understanding, but understand what the will of the Lord (is). <sup>18</sup> And do not be drunk with wine, in which is indulgence, but keep on letting yourself be filled by means of (the) Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking with one another, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and psalming in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always on behalf of all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to the God and Father, <sup>21</sup> submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ—<sup>22</sup> the wives to their own husbands, as to the Lord, <sup>23</sup> because the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church; he (is) savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> But as the church submits to Christ, thusly the wives to the husbands in all. <sup>25</sup> The husbands—love the wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself over on her behalf, <sup>26</sup> in order that he might sanctify her, purifying her by

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<sup>125</sup> 4:29 οἰκοδομῆν (*oikodomên*) “housing-up” as in v. 12, 16. Meaning: “building up where there is need.”

the washing of water in the word,<sup>27</sup> in order that he himself might present to himself the glorified church, not having stain or wrinkle or any things such as these, but in order that she might be holy and blameless.<sup>28</sup> Thusly also the husbands ought to love the wives of themselves—as the bodies of themselves. For the one who loves the wife of himself, himself he loves.<sup>29</sup> For no one at any time hated the flesh of himself, but he nourishes it and nurses it—just as also Christ (nourishes and nurses) the church,<sup>30</sup> because we are members of his (own) body.<sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined with his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.”<sup>32</sup> This mystery is great, but I am speaking about Christ and about the church.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, you also—each individual one—let each love the wife of himself in this way—as himself—and the wife, that she might fear the husband. **6:1** The children—obey your parents in the Lord, for this is righteous.<sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother,”—which is the first commandment with a promise—<sup>3</sup> “in order that it might be well with you and you might be a long time in the land/earth.”<sup>4</sup> And the fathers—do not enrage your children but nourish them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.<sup>5</sup> The slaves—obey the according-to-the-flesh lords with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to Christ,<sup>6</sup> not according to eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the soul,<sup>7</sup> with cheerfulness serving as to the Lord<sup>126</sup> and not to men,<sup>8</sup> knowing that each, if he might do anything good, this he will be recompensed for—whether slave or free.<sup>9</sup> And lords—do the same thing to them, giving up the threat, knowing that the Lord—both of them and of you—is in heaven and receiving-the-face is not to him.<sup>10</sup> Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of his strength—<sup>11</sup> Put on the full-armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil,<sup>12</sup> because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-masters of this darkness, against the spiritual (powers) of evil in the heavenlies.<sup>13</sup> On account of this, take up the full-armor of God in order that you might be able to with-stand in the day of evil, and, all things being worked-out, to stand.<sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, your loins being girded-round-about with truth and having-put-on the breastplate of righteousness<sup>15</sup> and the feet being sandaled with the preparedness of the gospel of peace,<sup>16</sup> in all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the flaming projectiles of the evil (one),<sup>17</sup> and receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God—<sup>18</sup> through all prayer and intercession praying at every opportunity in

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<sup>126</sup> 6:7 Wordplay between the slave master/lord (κύριος *kurios*) and The Lord (κύριος *kurios*) to the effect of ‘not merely serving your lords—but rather serving *the* Lord.’ The same in v. 9.

the Spirit, and in this keeping awake with all perseverance and intercession concerning all of the saints <sup>19</sup> and on behalf of me, in order that the word might be given to me in opening my mouth, with boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> on behalf of which I serve-as-an-ambassador in chains, in order that in it I might be emboldened as it is necessary for me to speak. <sup>21</sup> And so that you may know also yourselves the things in accordance with me—how I am doing—Tychichus, beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you, <sup>22</sup> whom I sent for this very purpose, in order that you might know the things concerning us and your hearts might be exhorted. <sup>23</sup> Peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptibility.

## *A Formal Translation of Philemon*

<sup>1</sup> Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother. To Philemon our beloved-one and co-worker <sup>2</sup> and to Aphia the sister and to Archippus our co-soldier, and to your in-house church. <sup>3</sup> Grace to **you**<sup>127</sup> and peace from God our father and [from the] Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I offer-thanks to my God, always making remembrance of you upon my prayers—<sup>5</sup> hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and unto all the saints—<sup>6</sup> in order that the fellowship of your faith might become effective<sup>128</sup> in the recognition of all good that is among us<sup>129</sup> unto Christ.<sup>130</sup> <sup>7</sup> For I have had much joy and encouragement at your love, because the inward parts<sup>131</sup> of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, having much boldness in Christ to command you [to do] the proper [thing], <sup>9</sup> rather because of love, I make appeal—being such a one as Paul, an old-one,<sup>132</sup> and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus—<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you concerning my child, whom I birthed in prison-chains, Onesimus, <sup>11</sup> the one once useless to you, but now useful<sup>133</sup> both to you and to me, <sup>12</sup> whom I sent to you—him, this one is my inward parts—<sup>13</sup> whom I was desiring to retain toward myself, in order that on your behalf, he might serve me in the prison-chains of the gospel. <sup>14</sup> But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, in order that your good[ness] might not be according to coercion but according to willingness. <sup>15</sup> For perhaps because of this he was separated for an hour, in order that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but above a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup> If, therefore, you have me as a fellowship-partner,<sup>134</sup> receive him as me. <sup>18</sup> But if in anything he has wronged you or he owes you (anything), charge this to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, wrote [this] with my hand: I will make compensation (in order that I not say to

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<sup>127</sup> v. 1 the plural 2<sup>nd</sup> person is indicated “**you**” (i.e. “y’all”) in bold and underline font, while singular 2<sup>nd</sup> person is in normal font: “you.”

<sup>128</sup> v. 6 or, “your faith might become *energized*” (ἐνεργῆς *energēs*).

<sup>129</sup> v. 6 the Greek manuscripts are divided between two variants “among us” or “among **you**.”

<sup>130</sup> v. 6 the Greek is very difficult. O’Brien seems to capture the thought well: “I pray that your generosity, which arises from your faith, may lead you effectively into a deeper understanding and experience of every blessing which belongs to us as fellow-members in the body of Christ” (Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* [WBC 44] Waco: Word, 1982: 275). For the translational and interpretive issues see: N.T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: IVP, 1986), 175-178.

<sup>131</sup> v. 7 “inward parts” (σπλάγχνα *splangchna*, from which we get “spleen”), i.e. idiom for the center of emotions and feelings (also vs.12, 20). An equivalent in English idiom would be “heart.”

<sup>132</sup> v. 9 “elder” (πρεσβύτες *presbutēs*).

<sup>133</sup> v. 11 wordplay between “useless” (ἄχρηστον *achrēston*) and “useful” (εὐχρηστον *euchrēston*).

<sup>134</sup> v. 17 “fellowship-partner” (κοινωνόν *koinōnon*) is connected to “fellowship” (κοινωνία *koinōnia*) in vs.6.

## Part 5: Lab Assignments & Other Materials

you that you owe your very self to me.) <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, may I benefit<sup>135</sup> from you in the Lord. Refresh my inward parts in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Having confidence in your obedience I wrote to you, knowing that you will do even more than what I say. <sup>22</sup> And also at the same time, prepare for me lodging, for I hope that through **your** prayers, I will be restored to **you**. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras greets you, my co-captive in Christ Jesus—<sup>24</sup> Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my co-workers. <sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with **your** spirit.

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<sup>135</sup> v. 20 wordplay between “benefit” (ὠνάϊμην *oninaimēn*) and “Onesimus” (Ὀνήσιμον *Onēsimon*).



## ***Audiences: To Whom Were the New Testament Books Addressed?***

Skim through the introductory and concluding sections of each NT book to determine whether they identify a particular person, group of people, or church to whom or for whom they were written. Under the appropriate column(s), list (1) the name(s) of the person or group being addressed; and (2) the chapter and verse reference where this is indicated (if not given, put an 'X' under "General"). Grading will give emphasis to interaction to the explanatory notes you provide.

These are your options for the initial audience: (1) Individual(s); (2) a single, local church; (3) several local churches; (4) specifically *Jewish* Christians regardless of location; (5) Christians in general; (6) unspecified.

<i><b>Book</b></i>	<i><b>Audience</b></i>	<i><b>Explanation</b></i>
Matthew		
Mark		
Luke		
John		
Acts		
Romans		
1 Cor.		
2 Cor.		
Galatians		
Ephesians		
Philippians		

## Part 5: Lab Assignments & Other Materials

<i><b>Book</b></i>	<i><b>Audience</b></i>	<i><b>Explanation</b></i>
Colossians		
1 Thes.		
2 Thes.		
1 Timothy		
2 Timothy		
Titus		
Philemon		
Hebrews		
James		
1 Peter		
2 Peter		
1 John		
2 John		
3 John		
Jude		
Revelation		

## *Elements of the Epistle Genre*

The New Testament epistles all follow a fairly standard pattern. There are two advantages to knowing this pattern: (a) you can approach each individual book with a “complimentary” outline already provided for you; (b) you can also recognize any deliberate deviations from the pattern where the author is doing something unusual for emphasis or effect. These standard parts of an epistle are:

**1. OPENING:**

1.1 *Name of the Sender*

1.2 *Name of the Recipient(s)*

1.3 *Greetings*

**2. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING / BLESSING**

**3. BODY:**

3.1 *Exposition*

3.2 *Exhortation*

**4. TRAVEL LOG / SENDING OF SOMEONE ELSE TO VISIT**

**5. CLOSING:** (the order of these two may be reversed)

5.1 *Greetings*

5.2 *Blessing*

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For this assignment, go through the books of Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians and fill out the following chart by listing the references for each of these parts.

### **Romans**

1. OPENING \_\_\_\_\_

1.1 Name of the Sender \_\_\_\_\_

1.2 Name of the Recipient(s) \_\_\_\_\_

1.3 Greetings \_\_\_\_\_

2. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING / BLESSING \_\_\_\_\_

3. BODY \_\_\_\_\_

3.1 Exposition \_\_\_\_\_

3.2 Exhortation \_\_\_\_\_

4. TRAVEL LOG / SENDING OF SOMEONE ELSE \_\_\_\_\_

5. CLOSING \_\_\_\_\_

5.1 Greetings \_\_\_\_\_

5.2 Blessing \_\_\_\_\_

## **Ephesians**

1. OPENING \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1.1 Name of the Sender \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1.2 Name of the Recipient(s) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1.3 Greetings \_\_\_\_\_
2. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING / BLESSING \_\_\_\_\_
3. BODY \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3.1 Exposition \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3.2 Exhortation \_\_\_\_\_
4. TRAVEL LOG / SENDING OF SOMEONE ELSE \_\_\_\_\_
5. CLOSING \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5.1 Greetings \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5.2 Blessing \_\_\_\_\_

## **Colossians**

1. OPENING \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1.1 Name of the Sender \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1.2 Name of the Recipient(s) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 1.3 Greetings \_\_\_\_\_
2. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING / BLESSING \_\_\_\_\_
3. BODY \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3.1 Exposition<sup>136</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3.2 Exhortation \_\_\_\_\_
4. TRAVEL LOG / SENDING OF SOMEONE ELSE \_\_\_\_\_
5. CLOSING \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5.1 Greetings \_\_\_\_\_
  - 5.2 Blessing \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>136</sup> The transition from exposition to exhortation is not straightforward in this book (i.e. there are several possibilities here). Just do your best.

## ***Literary Analysis of Ephesians (T.G.F.)***

Go through the entire book of Ephesians and identify each of the changes in literary features.

**Note:** Literary type will be the largest category, then genre, then form. There will be few changes (if any) in style and genre within the book, but there will be many different forms. The forms found in Ephesians include: *blessing, closing, doxology, exhortation, exposition, formula, household code, inclusio, irony (?)*, *list, opening, petition, prayer, quotation, rhetorical question, thanksgiving*, and *travel log*.

\*Use the following as a template for your work.

Ref.	Literary Type	Literary Genre	Literary Forms

## *Identifying Parts of a Sentence*

Review the material, if necessary, relating to sentences and parts of speech (p. 16-17). Then, for each of the following sentences:

- (1) Underline the subject (If the subject “*You*” is implied, please write it above the verb).
  - (2) Circle the main verb.
  - (3) Draw a box around logical connecting words (e.g., *and*, *but*, *therefore*, *then*, *if*, *since*, *however*, *finally*, etc.).
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1. Rather, we uphold the law. (Rom. 3:31)
2. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. (3:22)
3. We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. (3:9)
4. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. (3:28)
5. If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. (4:2)
6. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,... (5:1)
7. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (5:18)
8. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (14:12)
9. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (15:7)
10. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. (15:16)
11. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not,... (14:3a)
12. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. (12:17)

## Part 5: Lab Assignments & Other Materials

Using the same procedure that is explained in your class notes on “Basic Guidelines for Diagramming Sentences” and “Grammatical Analysis,” (p. 19-21) do a grammatical layout of the following passage from Ephesians 6:10-13:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

## ***Figures & Illustrations in Ephesians 2***

### **1. Part One: Figures of Speech**

(1) Ephesians 2:11-22 contains a number of figures of speech and illustrations. Read through your class notes on figures of speech (p. 45-48).

(2) Identify as many figures of speech as possible, stating what kind of figure it is.

(3) State what you believe is the meaning (i.e. interpretation) for each of these.

(4) Explain what you think is Paul's reason for using each of these expressions.

*\*For the first part of the assignment, use this kind of format:*

<i><b>Vs.</b></i>	<i><b>Write Out Text</b></i>	<i><b>Kind of Figure</b></i>	<i><b>Explain Paul's Meaning &amp; Purpose</b></i>



## 2. Part Two: Intertextuality

(5) Choose three of these figures or images to investigate in depth. Identify any OT passages or concepts which Paul may be drawing on for these images. Explain what Paul is deriving from earlier passages, and how he is developing this further. In some instances, there may also be relevant background insights from the book of Acts.

*\*For the second part of the assignment, use the following format:*

<i><b>Vs.</b></i>	<i><b>Figure</b></i>	<i><b>Background Passages</b></i>	<i><b>Explanation</b></i>

## *Identifying Well-Stated Shared Truths*

After reviewing *Read the Bible for a Change* on “Sharing” (ch. 6) and the class notes (p. 57-59), read the following proposed Shared Truths. Circle the number of the ones you believe are well stated. If the statement is not valid or is poorly worded, indicate what is wrong with it.

1. We should be kind and gentle.
2. Elijah’s sin involved thinking he was all alone in trusting God
3. God wants to bless us.
4. Can Christians ever remarry?
5. You be exercising your spiritual gift(s) within your church.
6. God desires to forgive all who repent.
7. On the basis of God’s plan to reconcile all things to himself, and having given that ministry of reconciliation to all believers, we should seek out opportunities where we can bring people back together from broken relationships.
8. God’s promises are like blank checks—we can decide by faith how much he will grant us.
9. Even forgiven sins can continue to have negative consequences.
10. God wants you to pray regularly.
11. Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh” in order to keep him humble.
12. We should meditate on God’s Word.

## *Course Evaluation*

1. Do you think that as a result of this course you can understand the Bible better when you read it for yourself?

2. Do you intend to use the methods you've been taught in this course in your future Bible study?

*Circle one:*    None       Some       Many       Most       All

3. Which assignment(s) do you rate as being the most valuable? (List by name) Why?

4. Which assignment(s) do you think were the least profitable? (List by name) Why?

5. My lab instructor was (name) \_\_\_\_\_. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your lab instructor? Please give several reasons for your rating.

6. List any suggestions you might have for how the course could be improved.

7. Any other comments you'd like to make? (*Use back of page if necessary*)

# ***Bibliography & Recommended Resources***

There are a number of good Bible study tools that can help you in your own independent study of the Bible. Some of these tools include:

## **1. Electronic Resources and Software**

-Online (Free):

1. Bible Gateway (<http://www.biblegateway.com/>)
2. Step Bible (<http://www.stepbible.org/>)
3. Parallel Plus (<http://www.thebible.org/gt/index/>)

-Paid Bible Software:

4. *Accordance* (<https://www.accordancebible.com/>)
5. *Logos* (<https://www.logos.com/>)

## **2. Print Concordances**

John R. Kohlenberger III & Edward Goodrick. *Greek-English Concordance to the NT*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

John R. Kohlenberger III. *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

John R. Kohlenberger III & James A. Swanson. *The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

## **3. Bible Handbooks and Introductions**

William J. Dumbrell. *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the OT*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988, 2002. [Note: focuses more on each book's theology than background]

Gordon D. Fee & Robert L. Hubbard [eds.]. *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

Mark Allan Powell. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

Leland Ryken, Philip Ryken, & James Wilhoit. *Ryken's Bible Handbook*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 2005.

## **4. Dictionaries and Encyclopedias**

Chad Brand & Eric Mitchell [eds.]. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. Nashville: Holman, 2015.

David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, & Astrid B. Beck [eds.]. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Merrill C. Tenney, Moises Silva [eds.]. *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible: Revised Full-Color Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Moisés Silva. *The New International Dictionary of NT Theology*, 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. [Note: keyed to the numbers in NIV Concordance]

Daniel J. Treier & Walter A. Elwell [eds.]. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

Willem Van Gemeren [ed.]. *New International Dictionary of OT Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. [note: keyed to the numbers in NIV Concordance]

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier & N. T. Wright [eds.]. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

## **5. Hermeneutics and Other Helpful Tools for Bible Study**

Shimon Bar-Efrat. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. Sheffield: Almond, 1989. [An excellent, medium-level introduction to the main components of biblical narrative, written by a Jewish scholar.]

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- Craig G. Bartholomew. *et al*, [eds.]. *“Behind the Text”: History and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
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- Craig G. Bartholomew & Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.
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- J. Daniel Hays & J. Scott Duvall. *Grasping God’s Word*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Craig S. Keener. *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
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- Gary T. Meadors, *et al*. *Four Views on Moving beyond the Bible to Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
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- Robert H. Stein. *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing By the Rules*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- Meir Sternberg. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). [Tough, technical reading, but the BEST text in English on how to approach biblical narrative—comprehensive, ground-breaking, state-of-the-art thinking by a Jewish scholar.]
- Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Biblical Knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998. [This is simply the best book on hermeneutics that has been written by an evangelical. Tough, slow reading, but well worth it!]