

How to Study Your Bible

Grace Community Church
Bible Study

What Will We Learn?

- What is Biblical Exegesis?
- Key elements for studying the Bible
- What are some good Bible translations for studying?
- What model of study do we adhere to?
- Is there a strategy that I can follow to get the best out of my bible study?

What Exactly is Biblical Exegesis?

- Exegesis is a careful historical, literary and theological analysis
- It means to “lead out”
- Different from eisegesis which means to “lead into”
- It is asking the questions: Who, what, where, when...of every text.
- Goal- achieve a good understanding of a text on its own and in context of what is around it.

Key Elements for Studying the Bible: The Holy Spirit

- **NO scripture is interpreted apart from the Holy Spirit**
- **The Holy Spirit is our teacher**
- **The Holy Spirit is our guide**
- **The Holy Spirit is our helper**
- **The Holy Spirit speaks to our conscience**
- **Isaiah 11:2; John 12:16; John 14:26; John 16:13; Luke 24:30,31; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 1:17,18; 1 John 2:27**

Key Elements for Studying the Bible: Study with an Open Mind...

- **Do not bring prejudices into scripture**
- **Do not bring preferences into scripture**
- **There are sometimes where presupposition is OK**
 - **See Ephesians 4:17-19**
- **2 Timothy 3:16,17; Romans 11:34**

Key Elements for Studying the Bible: Let Scripture Interpret Scripture

- **The Bible will interpret itself if we let it...**
- **Does your study Bible include footnotes of references?**
- **Do you own a concordance?**
- **Good websites: Biblehub.com, Blueletterbible.com, Biblegateway.com, Faithlife.com**
- **Always cross reference Scripture**
- **Matthew 1:23 {what are the references here?};
Matthew 27:35 {What are the other references here?} – why is this important?**

How Did We arrive at Our Current Bible?

- **The Canon is a list of authoritative books and not an authoritative list of books (Geisler)**
- **The Old Testament is based on Hebrew and Aramaic texts; survived through Jewish culture; accepted as canonical based on this.**
- **The New Testament, while organized by the Council of Nicaea who met in 325 AD, existed as a loose collection of accepted epistles before these men ever met (200 AD); formally accepted by the Council of Hippo in 393 AD.**

How Did We arrive at Our Current Bible?

Why wasn't everything accepted?

- Forgeries
- Pseudographs [for added authority]
- Extravagances
- Outright lies

Don't Be Afraid of NOT Using the King James Version

- **King James did not write the Bible**
- **King James did not know Jesus**
- **King James Bible was not written by William Shakespeare**
- **The language in the King James is antiquated**
- **The King James Version is NOT the holiest version of the Bible**
- **It is not a sin to use a Bible other than King James**

What is a Translation?

- We do not have the original texts (autographs) from which the Bible was composed.
- We do have very reliable copies (manuscripts) of both Old and New Testament scriptures
- There are no known autographs of the Old Testament¹
- A translation is a scholarly work of converting copies of texts from a *source* language into a *target* language

<http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/bibleorigin.html>, last accessed, 1/31/2018

What is a Translation?

- **Translation is any rendering of the Bible that is based on the original Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic languages.**
- **Translations are all different but have the same purpose**
- **Obvious drawbacks?**
 - **Do we have words that allow accurate translation from the source language?**
 - **How are the words combined in the original language**
 - **Context- meanings of words change over time**

Two Types of Translations

Formal Equivalence: Places emphasis on linguistic similarities i.e. vocabulary and grammatical structure between source language and target language. Word for Word translation

Functional Equivalence: Places emphasis on linguistic function (meaning) between the source language and the target language. Idea for Idea translation.

Formal vs Functional Equivalence

- **Why is formal equivalence better for exegesis of English texts?**
 - **Allows for more nuance which allows for deeper study**
 - **Renders recurring words in the Biblical text with the same English word in translation.**
 - **CONS-** can create odd sounding sentences due to syntax

Formal vs Functional Equivalence

- **Drawbacks of functional equivalence**
 - **Oversimplification**
 - **Substitute contemporary sayings for ancient biblical sayings**

Formal vs Functional Equivalence Translations

- **Revised Standard Version- 1946-1977 (Formal Equivalence); Top scholars translated**
- **New Revised Standard Version- 1989; as literal as possible; as free as necessary; Translation committee chaired by Bruce Metzger; used pronouns without reference to gender where applicable (Formal Equivalence)**

Formal vs Functional Equivalence Translations

- **New American Standard Bible- 1971, updated in 1995; Formal Equivalence; published by Lockman foundation; billed as the most literal translation available**
- **New Living Translation- 1996, Tyndale House; Excellent scholarship; Functional Equivalence; especially sensitive to cultural context**
- **The Message- Eugene Peterson; 1993; Seeks to render the biblical text into contemporary language; uses paraphrases; functional equivalence**

Formal vs Functional Equivalence Translations

- **New International Version- 1978; Combination of formal and functional equivalence; uses some modifications of syntax for clarity**
- **Good News Bible- 1971, functional equivalence; produced by the American Bible Society; written for limited vocabulary**
- **King James Version- 1611, translated with less reliable biblical manuscripts; formal equivalence; some words are outdated; not based on current scholarship**

Models for Study: Synchronic

- **Synchronic Model- “same time”**
- **Looks only at the final form of the Bible as we have it**
- **Not interested in the pre-history of the text**

Models for Study: Synchronic

- **Literary criticism**
- **Narrative criticism**
- **Rhetorical criticism**
- **Lexical/grammatical/syntactical analysis**
- **Discourse analysis**
- **Social-scientific analysis**

Models for Study: Synchronic

- **Potential questions (Sermon on the Mount):**
 - **What are the sections of the Sermon on the Mount? How do they fit together?**
 - **What does the narrator seek to convey by telling us the location, the crowd composition before and after the sermon, the reaction to the sermon?**

Models for Study: Synchronic

- **Potential questions (Sermon on the Mount):**
 - **What is the function of the sermon in the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus and discipleship?**
 - **How would a first-century reader understand and be affected by this sermon?**

Methods of Study: Diachronic

Diachronic Method- Historical-Critical method

- Studies a text “across time”**
- focuses on the origin and development of a text**

Methods of Study: Diachronic

- **Textual criticism**
- **Historical linguistics**
- **Form criticism**
- **Tradition criticism**
- **Source criticism**
- **Redaction criticism**
- **Historical criticism**

Methods of Study: Diachronic

Potential questions (Sermon on the Mount):

- What writer or oral sources did the gospel writer adopt, adapt and combine to compose this sermon?**
- What are the various components of the Sermon (prayers, sayings, beatitudes, parables...etc.)**

Methods of Study: Diachronic

Potential questions (Sermon on the Mount):

- What does the writer's use of these components reveal about his own theology?**
- How well do these teachings match up with the ideas and words of the historical Jesus?**

Methods of Study: Existential

- **“Engaging the text”**
- **Focuses on the text as a means to an end**
- **Approach the text to encounter God via meditation on the text**
- **Transformative; self-involving**
- **Views the text as something that could be life changing.**

Methods of Study: Existential

- **Canonical criticism**
- **theological exegesis and spiritual reading**
- **Actualization**
- **Advocacy criticism**

Methods of Study: Existential

- **Potential questions (Sermon on the Mount):**
 - **What does the Sermon on the Mount call us to in the present time?**
 - **How might “*turning the other cheek*” be problematic or even oppressive for the socially downtrodden?**

Methods of Study: Existential

- **Potential questions (Sermon on the Mount):**
 - **Does love of enemies rule out resistance or violence in every situation?**
 - **What spiritual practices are necessary for individuals and churches to live out the message of the Sermon on the Mount?**

Seven Basic Study Principles

- **Survey**
- **Observation**
- **Structural Analysis**
- **Detailed Analysis**
- **Synthesis**
- **Reflection**
- **Refinement**

Study Principles: Survey

- **Read over the text initially**
- **Read the chapter before and the chapter after**
- **Read an introduction to the particular Book of the Bible that you are studying**
- **Ask: What's going on here?**

Study Principles: Observation (Contextual Analysis)

- **What historical and literary contexts do we have to consider?**
- **What are the key facts and issues related to this passage?**
- **Let's Consider a text: 1 Corinthians 7:21-22**

Contextual Analysis: 1 Corinthians 7:21-24

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. **22** For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. **24** Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called.

Study Principles: Structural Analysis

- **What is the genre?**
 - **Let's Consider a text: Song of Solomon 2:1-3**
- **How is the passage organized?**
 - **Let's Consider a text: 2 Corinthians 12: 1-10**

Study Principles: Structural Analysis

- **How does the text move?**
 - **Is it describing some details (see Lev 25:1-7)?**
 - **Is it an exposition (see Isaiah 1:2-20)?**
 - **Is there repetition (see Deuteronomy 27:11-26)?**

Study Principles: Structural Analysis

- **How does the text move?**
 - **Is it a statement of logic (see Romans 6:1-7)?**
 - **Is it a list (see Galatians 5:19-23)?**
 - **Is it a compare/contrast (see Hebrews 9:1-14)?**

Structural Analysis: Habakkuk 2:1-5

1 I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved. **2** Then the LORD answered me and said, “Record the vision And inscribe *it* on tablets, That the one who reads it may run.

3 “For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. **4** “Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith. **5** “Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, So that he does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetite like Sheol, And he is like death, never satisfied. He also gathers to himself all nations, And collects to himself all peoples.

Example Outline for Hab 2:1-5

- A. Habbakuk waits for God's answer
(Verse 1)**
- B. God answers with specific instructions
(Verses 2)**
- C. God describes the trustworthiness of
the vision (Verse 3)**
- D. God describes the fate of evildoers
(Verses 4,5)**

Detailed Analysis

- **What are the major points made in each part of the text?**
- **How does the author make these points?**
- **Are there literal/figurative elements to the text?**
- **What specific words or phrases are used?**
- **How do the phrases or sentences interrelate to one another?**

Detailed Analysis

- **What are the major points made in each part of the text?**
 - **Can the text be divided into sections?**
 - **How do the sections relate to the whole?**
 - **Does the whole shed light on the parts?**
 - **What are the key terms and images?**
 - **What do they mean?**
 - **Can we look elsewhere to help us interpret the passage?**

Detailed Analysis

- **How does the author make these points?**
 - **What types of words or phrases does the author use?**
 - **Does the author use literary devices (metaphors, similes, rhetoric)?**
 - **Is it narrative? If so, can you chart the action (beginning, middle and end?)**
 - **What sources does the author rely on?**

Detailed Analysis

**The meaning of any
word or phrase depends
on context AND
relationship to other
parts of the text...**

Detailed Analysis: Key Words and Phrases

- **Key words and phrases depend on:**
 - **The context in which the words were written**
 - “God, help us!” [meaning will depend on setting]
 - **Words have semantic range [spectrum]**
 - “Green” [meaning will depend on specialized sense]
- **Analysis tools for words: Dictionary, Concordance or Wordbooks...**

Detailed Analysis: Key Words and Phrases

- **Key words and phrases can anchor a text:**
- **Figurative language- metaphors and similes used to convey meaning**
- **Can be cultural or universal**
 - **God is a rock (metaphor)**
 - **God is like a rock (simile)**
- **An entire text can be built around a figure of speech (governing image)**

Detailed Analysis: Key Words and Phrases

- **Phrases combinations of words**
- **Linked phrases become sentences**
- **Look at the text and look for phrases**
 - **Ask what the phrases mean**
 - **Look at how the phrases are ordered and ask why**
 - **Ask if the phrases are related**

Detailed Analysis: Key Words and Phrases

- **Chronological relationships (Narrative)**
 - Use words like: while, when, before, then, in that place, therefore...
- **Logical Relationships**
 - Use words like: if, because, so that, by, through, although...
- **Intertextual Relationships**
 - Can other texts enlighten us? Does it “echo” other texts? [see Luke 4:16-19 and Isaiah 61:1,2; See Hebrews 2:10; Isaiah 53:3]

Detailed Analysis: Assignment

- See Handout for Assignment

Study Principles: Synthesis

- **What is the punchline?**
- **Not just a summary but your conclusions about what you have just studied**
- **Can you give your impressions of all of the contents of the text in a short statement?**

Homework from Detailed Analysis/Synthesis

- Read Psalm 19 and list ten key words, phrases or images that you would explore if you wanted to preach from this text.

Glory, knowledge, speech, law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, judgment, errors, sins, words...

Homework from Detailed Analysis/Synthesis

Carefully read Luke 2:1-21: Divide the text into scenes and describe the action in each scene.

Homework from Detailed Analysis/Synthesis

Divide Luke 2:1-21 into scenes

- **Scene 1: Census**
- **Census taken**
- **People coming to register**
- **Joseph and Mary introduced**
- **Scene 2: Birth of Jesus**
- **During Census**
- **Mary gives birth**
- **Wraps Jesus in cloths**
- **No room for them anywhere else**

Homework from Detailed Analysis/Synthesis

Divide Luke 2:1-21 into scenes

- **Scene 3: Shepherds**
- **Shepherds in the field**
- **Night**
- **“An” angel of the Lord appears with glory**
- **Calmed them down**
- **Announces birth of Jesus**
- **Gives location**
- **Described what to look for**
- **Heavenly host cosign**

Homework from Detailed Analysis/Synthesis

Divide Luke 2:1-21 into scenes

- **Scene 4: Entrance of the Shepherds**
- **Shepherds go to see Jesus**
- **Believed the angels report (went straight)**
- **Saw the baby**
- **Recounted the angel's words**
- **Scene 4a: Mary ponders**
- **Mary's epiphany**
- **Mary's confirmation**

Homework from Detailed Analysis/Synthesis

Divide Luke 2:1-21 into scenes

- **Scene 5: Finale**
- **Shepherds glorify God**
- **(note symbolism-
shepherds went to
see the Good
Shepherd)**

- **Identify the following aspects of the text: date, location(s), human and non-human characters, the reactions of the characters to the birth of Christ, reactions to the message of the angels.**
- **Date: During the reign of Caesar Augustus/Quirinius governor**
- **Location: Syria/Galilee/Nazareth/Judea/Bethlehem/**

Identify the following aspects of the text: date, location(s), human and non-human characters, the reactions of the characters to the birth of Christ, reactions to the message of the angels.

- Characters: Mary, Joseph, Caesar Augustus, Quirinius, Shepherds, Angels**
- Reactions to the message of the angels/birth of Christ: Fear, apprehension, faith, excitement, quiet confidence (Mary)**

What is the theme of the story? Is there any irony in the story? Do the scenes that you identified work together to produce a complete narrative?

- **Theme: Birth of the Savior of the World**
- **Irony: The king is born in a stable and is audience is a group of lowly, poor and dirty shepherds, and there was no room for Him and no one would make room for Him...**
- **Complete Narrative: Yes**

Are there any hints of conflicts that you might encounter later in the book of Luke?

- **Hints of Conflicts: Yes, we would see that the lowliness of Christ would be a problem for the religious establishment.**

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Read the collection of short stories in Luke 8:22-56. How are these stories related to one another? What seems to be the main point of each and the point of the collection as a whole?

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Verses 22-25 (Calming the Sea)

- **V24b: And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm...**
- **V25: Who is this that He commands even the winds and the water and they obey Him?**

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Verses 26-39

V27: Met a man possessed by many demons

**V28: Demon declares the divinity of Jesus
“Son of the Most High God”**

V29: Commanded the demons to come out

V30: Jesus asked their name (authority)

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Verses 26-39

V31: Demons recognized the authority of Christ and His ability to send them into the abyss (eternal torment); authorized them to go into the swine

V35: Report of herdsmen brought witnesses out; they saw this man in a normal state for the first time, a 180 from his previous condition; Shows the power of God at work

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Verses 40-56

V38,39: Man desires to follow Jesus/ Jesus calls Himself God (Self-aware)

V40: Rejected in the Gerasenes, accepted when He reached the other side

V41: Jairus, fell at the feet of Jesus (12 y/o daughter);

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Verses 40-56

V43: Woman w/ issue of blood (12 years); healed by touching the garment of Jesus

V46: Power went out from Him after being touched

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

Verses 40-56

**V49,50: Daughter died; Jesus consoles,
“she will be made well”**

V52: She is asleep

**V54: Arise; Jesus raises her from the
dead**

Synthesis: What is the Punchline?

How are these stories related to one another? What seems to be the main point of each and the point of the collection as a whole?

- Stories are related in that Jesus is in close, personal encounters with people who need Him.
- Point of each story is to highlight His power: Lord over the elements; Lord over disease; Lord over the demons; Lord over death.
- **Overall point: He is LORD!**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

- **What does this text mean for readers other than the original ones?**
- **What does it mean to you? What does it mean to your faith community?**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Five Interpretative Postures

- **Antipathy**
- **Noncommitment**
- **Discernment/Inquiry**
- **Suspicion**
- **Consent/Trust**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Five Interpretative Postures

- **Antipathy**
 - **Opposition**
 - **The Bible is dangerous**
 - **The text is deleterious to society as a whole**
 - **Interpret with these things in mind**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Five Interpretative Postures

- **Noncommitment**
 - **The Bible is literature**
 - **I appreciate it**
 - **What does the Bible tell me about the human quest for life's meaning?**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Five Interpretative Postures

- **Discernment/Inquiry**
 - **Not necessarily a sacred text**
 - **Not necessarily discounted**
 - **Looking for answers**
 - **Bible is one of many sources of knowledge**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Five Interpretative Postures

•Suspicion

- Used by religious community**
- Abuse of religious authority**
- Text has been used to marginalize and oppress**
- Can we make the text liberating rather than oppressive?**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Five Interpretative Postures

- **Consent/Trust**
 - **Used by most practicing Christians and Jews**
 - **Word of God is authoritative**
 - **What is the Word of God in this text for me?**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Two Horizons

- **Consent/Trust or Suspicion Lens**
 - **Original context (what the text meant?)**
 - **Contemporary context (what the text means?)**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Two Horizons

- **Are there universal concepts in the text?**
- **What does the text affirm about: God, those affiliated with God, other supernatural beings, ethics, daily life?**

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Two Horizons

- What claims does the text make about God and His claim on us?
- What do you do if the text is antithetical to your beliefs?
 - Ignore, challenge, reconcile, *change...*

Study Principles: Reflection/Application

Two Horizons

- **Do we take the text seriously?**
- **How does the text change my life right now?**
- **How do I become a “living exegesis”**
- **What does the text call on us to embody or actualize?**

Study Principles: Refinement

- What tools are available to expand and refine our work on the text?**
- What have other biblical scholars said about the passage?**
- How should their work affect ours?**

Why Consult Other Scholarly Work?

- **Published scholarly work on the text can confirm or correct our discoveries**
- **Grammatical issues can be cleared up**
- **A little knowledge is a dangerous thing...**
- **Depth of consultation will depend on the depth of your study**

Why Consult Other Scholarly Work?

- There will be general agreement among scholarly work when it comes to essential Christian doctrinal issues
- IF your stuff falls out of orthodoxy, pray about it!
- There is still no substitute for the Holy Spirit

What are Some Scholarly Available Scholarly Tools ?

- Commentaries**
- Books and Articles**
- Software Packages**
- Be careful of the internet!**

Summary Section

What is
Exegesis?

What Exactly is Biblical Exegesis?

- Exegesis is a careful historical, literary and theological analysis
- It means to “lead out”
- Different from eisegesis which means to “lead into”
- It is asking the questions: Who, what, where, when...of every text.
- Goal- achieve a good understanding of a text on its own and in context of what is around it.

Seven Basic Study Principles

Seven Basic Study Principles

- **Survey- Scan the text**
- **Observation- Context?**
- **Structural Analysis-Genre, organization, flow, sections etc.**

Seven Basic Study Principles

- **Detailed Analysis**-Analysis of sections, key words or phrases, major points in each section
- **Synthesis**- The text in a nutshell

Seven Basic Study Principles

- **Reflection-** How do I embody the text?
- **Refinement-** What have others said about the text?

Three Basic Study Methods

- **Diachronic:** Across time;
Historical evolution of text
- **Synchronic:** In time; final form of text
- **Existential:** Spiritual Exegesis;
Transformative power of the text

Final Tips

- **Study with prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit!**
- **There is NOTHING new under the sun!**
- **Be flexible and avoid dogmatic positions based on limited knowledge**
- **Use a good translation**

References

- **Used to compose this study:**
 - **Walter Henrichsen, Gayle Jackson, Studying, Interpreting and Applying the Bible, 1990, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.**
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References

- **New Testament References:**
 - **Gary Burge, The New Testament in Antiquity, 2009, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI**