



## How to Study the Bible Small Group – Table of Contents

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**How to Study  
the Bible**

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**Week #1 - Why Study the Bible?**

- Introduction
  - *How to Study the Bible* is for people who want to understand the Bible at a deeper level.
  
  - The process of interpreting and applying the Bible may be compared to taking a *journey*.
  
  - There is a *river of differences* separating us from the biblical audience—culture, language, time, situation, and covenant.

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- **Basics of the Journey**
  - Assumptions:
    - There is a personal God who wants to communicate with His creation.
  
    - He created us with a mind that is capable of understanding His revelation.
  
    - Because of this every human is able to understand God's revelation in some capacity.

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• **Basics of the Journey**

- **There are 2 types of revelation:**
  - **General Revelation in the created universe**
  - **Special Revelation in His Scriptures**
- **The Bible is God’s communication of Himself and His will to us.**

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• **Why should we study His Word?**

• **Jesus said we should:**  
“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”  
– Mt. 7:24-27

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• **Why should we study His Word?**

**The Scriptures say we should:**

**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**  
– 1 Tim. 3:16-17

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- **Why should we study His Word?**  
It is the key to wisdom and insight:

**My son, if you accept my words  
and store up my commands within you,  
turning your ear to wisdom and applying  
your heart to understanding— indeed, if  
you call out for insight and cry aloud for  
understanding, and if you look for it as  
for silver and search for it as for hidden  
treasure . . .**

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- **Why should we study His Word?**  
It is the key to wisdom and insight:

**then you will understand the fear of  
the LORD and find the knowledge of God.  
For the LORD gives wisdom; from his  
mouth come knowledge & understanding.  
He holds success in store for the upright,  
he is a shield to those whose walk is  
blameless, for he guards the course of the  
just and protects the way of his faithful  
ones. - Proverbs 2:1-8**

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- **Why should we study His Word?**

- **It is God's promise to us:**

**This is the Book of the Law and it shall  
not depart from your mouth, but you  
shall meditate on it day and night and  
be careful to do everything written in  
it. Then you will find your way  
prosperous and have good success.  
- Joshua 1:8**

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**• Why should we study His Word?**  
**It will strengthen us in our struggle with the evil one:**

- **Jesus was tempted in the desert in Luke 4:**
  - Each time he resisted the evil one with the statement "It is written, It is written, It is written"
  - He explicitly states - "Mankind shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from God.:"

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**• Why should we study His Word?**

**It will give us length of life and peace:**

**My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.**

- Proverbs 3: 1-2

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**• Why should we study His Word?**

**It will help keep us from sinning:**

**I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.  
I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.  
Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees.**

- Ps. 119: 10-12

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**• Why should we study His Word?**

**It is our “ever present rule of faith & practice” – God’s owner’s manual for our lives:**

**“The Scriptures ...all which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.”**

**- Westminster Catechism**

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- Were there any concepts shared today that need further clarification for you?**
- In what ways have the ideas shared in this lesson been shown to be true in your own life?**
- What is the Holy Spirit showing you about living out these truths in your everyday practices?**
- What was the most important take-away for you from our discussion today?**

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**Week #2 - What constitutes the Word of God?**

- **Types of Revelation**
- **Three-fold view of God's Word**
- **Role of the Holy Spirit in the process of special revelation**

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- **Basics of the Journey**
  - **There are 2 types of revelation:**
    - **General Revelation in the created universe**
    - **Special Revelation in His Scriptures**

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- **Word of God?**
  - **Only Subjective – “word of God becoming...” – Rudolf Bultmann**
  - **Gospels and much of NT – myth created by the early church**
  - **Based on “existentialism” focus only on “the moment”**
  - **“Historical” Jesus not needed – only relationship in the now**

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• **Karl Barth's Corrective - 3 aspects to God's Word:**

- **Revealed Word**
- **Breaking in of God into human history**
- **Revealed through God's acts and speech**

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• **Karl Barth's Corrective - 3 aspects to God's Word:**

- **Written Word**
- **Stories of God's acts become "inscripturated"**
- **Become accepted as "canon" – "reed" or measurement of authenticity**

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• **Karl Barth's Corrective - 3 aspects to God's Word:**

- **Living Word**
- **Heb. 4:12**

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**Heb. 4:12**

**For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. - NIV**

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**• Karl Barth's Corrective - 3 aspects to God's Word:**

**• Living Word**

**• Heb. 4:12**

**• Divine mystery of Jesus as Incarnate Word of Life**

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**John 1: 14**

**The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**- NIV**

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**• Role of Holy Spirit in revelation process:**

- Presence from beginning as part of Triune Godhead**
- Inspires human authors to form the accounts of oral tradition or stories**
- Role of memorization in oral tradition – Hebrew youth – every jot and tittle.**

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**• Role of Holy Spirit in revelation process:**

- Superintends writing of those stories**
- Preservation of the text down through the eons of time**
- Translation of the text from the original languages**

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**• Role of Holy Spirit in revelation process:**

- Illuminates our understanding in interpretation of the text**
- Empowers our application of the principles in our everyday lives**
- Will never contradict the written word.**

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**• Role of Holy Spirit in revelation process:**

- But will bring into remembrance all things of Jesus (John 14:26)**
- As the Spirit of Christ is always in continuity with the Father and the Son**
- Key is abiding in Christ.**

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**1 John 2: 26-27**

**I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him. - NIV**

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**• Role of Holy Spirit in revelation process:**

- Requires certain expectations regarding the Spirit's role:**

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- **Expectations regarding the Spirit's guidance:**
- **The Holy Spirit does not give new revelation.**
- **Does not mean that one's interpretations are always without error.**
- **Does not give some interpreters a mental ability for seeing truths under the surface that are not evident to any other dedicated Bible student.**
- **Means that the unregenerate do not welcome and apply God's truth, though they are able to comprehend many of its statement intellectually.**

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- **Expectations regarding the Spirit's guidance:**
- **Does not mean that only Bible scholars can understand the Bible.**
- **Requires spiritual devotion on the part of the interpreter.**
- **Means that lack of spiritual preparedness hinders accurate interpretations.**
- **No substitute for diligent study.**
- **Does not rule out the use of study helps such as commentaries and Bible dictionaries.**

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- **Expectations regarding the Spirit's guidance:**
- **Does not mean interpreters can ignore common sense and logic.**
- **Does not normally give sudden intuitive flashes of insight into the meaning of Scripture.**
- **Does not mean that all parts of the Bible are equally clear in meaning.**
- **Does not result in believers having a comprehensive and completely accurate understanding of the entire Scriptures.**

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Food for thought:

- It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand. - Mark Twain

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• **Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- **Were there any concepts shared today that need further clarification for you?**
- **In what ways have the ideas shared in this lesson been shown to be true in your own life?**
- **What is the Holy Spirit showing you about living out these truths in your everyday practices?**
- **What was the most important take-away for you from our discussion today?**

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**The Old Testament**

Significant Dates in the OT:

- 2000 BC—Abraham
- 1400 BC—Moses
- 1000 BC—David
- 722 BC—Fall of Israel to the Assyrians
- 587 BC—Fall of Judea to Babylon
- 538 BC—Return from Babylonian Exile
- 420 BC—End of OT (1 and 2 Chronicles, Neh., Malachi)

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**The Old Testament**

Completion of OT and acceptance of it as canonical impacted (3 things):

1. Made Hebrew the Holy Language
2. Created the Foundational Body of Authoritative Lit (RL, NT, Sectarian Lit.)
3. Effected morals, ethics, domestic life, commerce, land, agriculture, economics, temple, priesthood, sacrifice, calendar, feasts, etc.
4. Pretty much every area of life - cite as authority because of development of the "text-bound society".

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**The Old Testament**

**Major Themes to be Remembered**

Covenant – “agreement enacted between 2 parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.” (ABD)

**Unconditional Covenants of Grace:**

- \* Adamic – Gen. 1: 27-28 -
- \* Noahic – Gen. 9: 8-17 -
- \* Abrahamic – Gen. 17: 1-14
- \* Mosaic – Sinaitic – Ex. 24
- \* Davidic – 2 Sam. 7: 11-16

Treaty - Between Yahweh as Lord and Israel as Vasal

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**The Old Testament**

**Major Themes to be Remembered**

*Hesed* - “everlasting loving kindness” – unconditional love of God

Covenant and Promise – (prophets)

Salvation in OT did not include idea of Christ’s atonement as part of it

Out of pit, dungeon, darkness – walking in freedom, plains, light

Wisdom Lit – “walking” “way of the Lord” protection – ongoing journey – mostly nomadic

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**Relationship Between the Old & the New Testament**

- The OT is cited or alluded to 100’s of times in NT
- Quoted authoritatively by Jesus, Paul other Apostles
- The NT culture, religious expressions, messianic expectations, all Jews as people of God, informed by the OT, are all part of what led up to NT
- OT is part of our canon, equally inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

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**Relationship Between the  
Old & the New Testament**

All Scripture is *God-breathed* and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

-2 Tim. 3:16-17

- *Theoneustos* – inspired by God
- *Hapax legomenon* – used only “once”
- *graphē* – “writing”
- Divine Spirit as a flow of air?

What “writing” did they have in Paul’s time?

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**Relationship Between the  
Old & the New Testament**

Matt. 5:17-19—“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

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**Relationship Between the  
Old & the New Testament**

Rom 2:13—“for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.”

Rom 3:31—“Do we then nullify the Law thru faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold/ establish the Law!”

“In the OT, people were “saved” by keeping the Law; in the NT, we are saved by grace”. Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3,22; Gal 3:6; Gal 3:11; Hab. 2:4 (Rom 1:17); Heb. 10:38

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**“Why then the Law?”**

- So God’s chosen people might reflect His character (Lev 19:2—“Be holy for I am holy”)
- Give a unique identity to the Chosen People (Exod. 19:5-6 = 1 Peter 2:9)
- Provide training in obedience (school master—Gal.3:24)
- Reveal the sinful nature of humans and show them their need for God—Gal. 3:19; Rom. 5:20; 7:7
- Protect from harmful things that can hurt the individual, family, and society

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**Relationship - OT & NT**

- In the OT, there is Covenant & Promise; in the NT, Fulfillment
- So why the NT? Why Jesus? Why the Cross? Hebs. 1:1-3; Rom. 5:6 “at the right time”; Gal. 4:4; Mt. 1:1-17 *kairos* – point of time – period of time
- “Progressive Revelation” —“steadily increasing, ever-unfolding and unveiling of God, His will, and His plan for mankind.”
- Christ is not a plan “B”, to fix a failed system. He was from the beginning, a culmination.

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**Relationship - OT & NT**

- Emphasis on Continuity not Discontinuity—“Covenant” Heb. 9:22 (no forgiveness without blood)
- So why OT and NT? To progressively reveal the same God, same plan for me, same way of salvation in an ever-increasing clarity.

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- **What do you think are the major differences between the OT and the NT?**
- **What are the similarities?**
- **Is one more important, "greater than," the other?**
- **What questions does this raise for you regarding the relationship between the OT and the NT?**

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Week 4 –  
Basic Steps of Exegesis –  
Interpretation of the Text

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- Assumptions:**
- The Bible is God’s communication of himself and his will to us.
  - We do not create meaning; rather, we seek to discover the meaning that is already in the Bible.
  - Biblical principles revealed in specific passages of the Bible are applicable to both the biblical audience and to Christians today.
  - We can use the *principlizing bridge* to cross the river of differences.

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- The Interpretive Journey**
- Introduction
    - *How to Study God’s Word* is for people who want to understand the Bible at a deeper level.
    - The process of interpreting and applying the Bible may be compared to taking a *journey*.
    - There is a *river of differences* separating us from the biblical audience—culture, language, time, situation, and covenant.

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### Culture Bubbles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ancient Near East</li><li>• Jewish</li><li>• Egyptian</li><li>• Canaanite</li><li>• Assyrian</li><li>• Babylonian</li><li>• Persian</li><li>• Greek</li><li>• Roman</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modern – Post-Modern Western</li><li>• U.S.A./Regional</li><li>• Economic</li><li>• Educational</li><li>• Social</li><li>• Political</li><li>• Religious/Non</li><li>• Liberal/Conservative</li><li>• Pentecostal/Non</li></ul>
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There/Then	Here/Now
	

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We must take into consideration two key factors that can hinder us:

- The first factor is the reader.
- We bring with us our preconceived ideas, pet theologies, proof-texts systems.



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Exegesis is the attempt to discover the original, intended meaning of the scripture, to reach an understanding "from" the text.

Eisegesis is an attempt to read "into" the scripture one's biases or preconceived ideas.

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The second factor that should be considered is the nature of Scripture.

- Scripture was also given in a particular culture.
- The interpreter must bridge gap between the "there and then" and the "here and now."
- A passage cannot mean something today which it did not mean originally.



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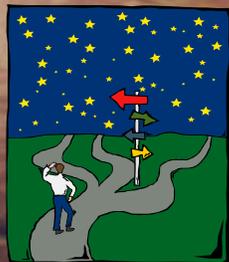
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How can we cross the river?

Intuitive or "feels-right" approach



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How can we cross the river?

Spiritualizing approach



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How can we cross the river?

Get discouraged and give up



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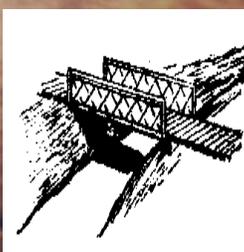
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How can we cross the river?

*How to Study God's Word*—an accurate, consistent approach



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– **Four Steps:**

- 1 – **Grasping the Text in Their Town**  
*What did the text mean to the biblical audience?*
- 2 – **Measuring the Width of the River**  
*What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?*
- 3 – **Crossing the Principlizing Bridge**  
*What is the theological principle in this text?*
- 4 – **Grasping the Text in Our Town**  
*How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?*

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• **Example–Luke 11: 2-13**

He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

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• **Example–Luke 11:2-13**

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" - NIV

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• Example–Luke 11: 2-13

– Step 1 What did the text mean?

The Disciples asked the Lord how to pray  
He provides an outline we know as the Lord's prayer  
He tells the story of the faithful or persistent neighbor  
to impress upon his audience the importance of such

– Step 2 What are the differences?

Rabbi's taught in outline to help with memorization  
Jewish hospitality was ingrained in the people  
Communal responsibility for travelers  
Communal kitchens for cooking of daily bread

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Sense of Communal Responsibility – Especially for Men  
Luke 11 – Persistent or Faithful Neighbor?

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– Step 3 What is the theological principle?

Jesus provided an outline for approaching  
the Father.  
Faithfulness and/or persistence is a must to see  
answers to prayer!

– Step 4 How should we apply this principle?

Use the Lord's prayer as an outline in our  
consistent prayer  
Remember the importance of our persistence  
in prayer to see God's provision in our life.

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• Review

- Interpreting and applying the Bible is like a *journey*.
- A *river of differences* separates us from the biblical audience—culture, language, time, situation, and covenant.
- We begin to build a bridge across the river by discovering what the text meant to the biblical audience.
- This calls for careful *reading and observation* of the text and going on the interpretive journey.

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• Recap of the Journey

- *Step 1* What did the text mean?
- *Step 2* What are the differences?
- *Step 3* What is the theological principle?
- *Step 4* How should we apply this principle?

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- What if we bypass observation and move straight to application?



- To hear from God in new and exciting ways, we must look carefully at what God said to the biblical audience.

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• **Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

– Were there any concepts shared today that need further clarification for you?

– Was there anything that caused you to say – “hey I never thought of that?”

– What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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Week 5 –  
Genre  
or  
Categories  
of the  
Biblical Literature

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• What is literary genre?  
– Genre means “form” or “kind.”  
– We encounter different literary genres in everyday life:

Newspaper	Poem
Telephone book	Love letter
Menu	Math textbook
Devotional book	Map

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– The Bible contains different types, forms or categories of written literature:

<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
Narrative	Gospel
Law	Historical Theological
Poetry	Story
Prophecy	Letter
Wisdom	Prophetic-Apocalyptic

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- Literary genre is like a game complete with its own set of rules



- To understand what the biblical authors are saying (and what God is saying through them), we must "play by the rules" of the literary genre they selected.

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**Rules for Interpretation**

(1) The identification of the general literary form

- Prose - predominately based on the literal common usage of words
- Poetry is basically built on figurative language
- Apocalyptic literature is recognized by its symbolic use of words.

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**Rules for Interpretation**

(1) The identification of the general literary form

- Narrative – historical narratives or chronicles with theological meaning
- Law – codes for holy living
- Wisdom – used in schooling young Hebrews
- Major & Minor Prophets - oracles

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### Rules for Interpretation

(1) The identification of the general literary form

- Gospels – unique stories about life of Christ
- Epistles – letters of the early church
- Apocalyptic – figurative language & prophesy of the end times.

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### OTHER ISSUES

Some genre are part of oral tradition

- Legends
- Myths
- Ancient codes

Liturgical use – during worship services

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### OTHER ISSUES

Often embedded in other genres –

- Poetry within prophecy
- Wisdom literature contains:
  - proverbs, riddles, fables, & rhetorical questions
- Prophetic contains:
  - Judgement
  - “woes”
  - Taunts

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**OTHER ISSUES**

Embedded in the Psalms:

- Hymn
- Lament
- Thanksgiving
- All of which may be further subdivided (individual laments, thanksgiving for victory in battle, creation and royal focus, etc.)
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**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

Even a difference between OT and NT as categories of literature as previously discussed.

Each category or genre must be identified for its unique form and the “situation in life” in which it arises to properly interpret the context of the passage we are exegeting.

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**EXAMPLE – GENRE WITHIN A GENRE**

The Revelation of John:

- First 3 chapters “letters” or prophecy to the 7 churches?
- Much of it is figurative or symbolic language
- Some of it we take “literally” or it means what it says plainly

How do we know which is which?

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- Why do you think it is important to identify the “genre” or category of literature in correct interpretation of the text?
- Are there any concepts shared today that need further clarification for you?
- What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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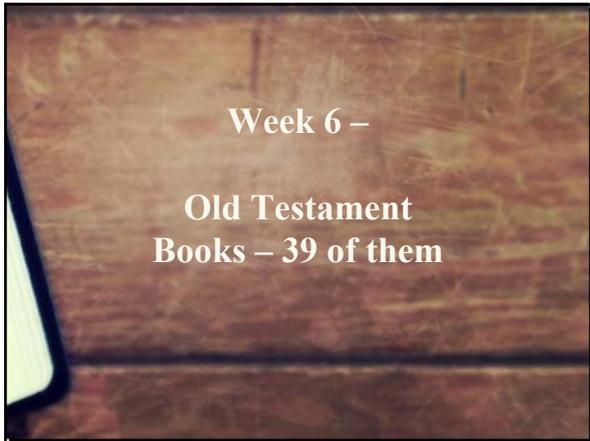
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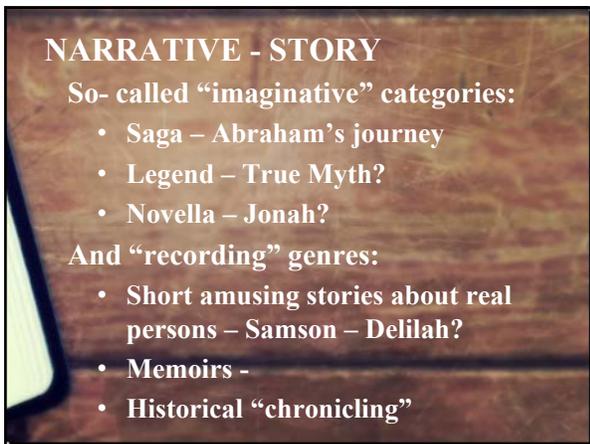
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**LAW**  
Shared Social Norms  
Laws Protecting the Family  
1. Sexual Taboos  
2. Adultery  
3. Rape  
Personal Injuries  
1. The Goring Ox  
2. Miscarriage  
4. Battery  
5. "Eye for an Eye" & Compensation

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**LAW**  
Homicide  
Theft  
Cultic Law  
Law and Social Welfare  
1. Debts and Slavery  
2. Redemption and Release

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**POETRY**  
Hymns -  
Communal laments  
Royal psalms  
Individual laments  
Individual songs of thanksgiving

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### EXAMPLE - COMMUNAL LAMENTS

- a) the address (13:1, "O Lord"; 22:1; "My God, my God");
- (b) the complaint in three forms, with the subject "I" (13:2a; 22:2, 6, 14-15, 17a), "thou" (13:1; 22:1), or "they" (13:2c; 22:7-8, 12-13, 16, 17b-18);
- (c) the request for help (13:3-4; 22:11, 19-21);
- (d) the affirmation of trust (13:5; 22:3-5, 9-10);
- (e) the vow to praise God when the crisis is past (13:6; 22:22-31).

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### PROPHECY

Prophecy in Israel before the Exile

Postexilic prophecy

Prophecy in the NT and early Christianity.

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### PROPHECY

Prophecy in Israel before the Exile:

- Narrative books – Torah
- Narrative books – Former Prophets
- Prophetic writings – Latter Prophets
- Themes:
  - God
  - Israel
  - Relation between God & Israel
  - The Future

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**PROPHECY**

Postexilic Prophecy:

- From Doom to Hope
- Calls to Repentance
- The Prophets and the Sacrificial System
- Oracles about Foreign Nations
- Predictions regarding the End Times

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**PROPHECY**

NT & Early Christianity:

- John the Baptist
- Jesus as Prophet
- John the Revelator
- Prophecy throughout the NT

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**WISDOM**

Argumentative Speech – Job

Wisdom Poems – Psalms & Proverbs

Wisdom Sayings:

- “not good” sayings (Prov 19:2)
- “abomination” sayings (Prov 11:1)
- “better” sayings (Prov 22:1)
- “numerical” sayings (x-number, plus 1; cf. Prov 30:18–19)
- “impossible questions” (Job 8:11)

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**MASORETIC TEXT**

The text or “canon” of the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures

Has been pretty much fixed without controversy since 93 A.D.

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- Why is it important to know the specific genre of a passage of Scripture?
- Why do you suppose God inspired His word to be declared in so many different ways?
- What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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**Week 7 –  
New Testament**

**Books – 27 of them  
66 books in total in the Bible**

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– The NT contains different types or forms of literature:

*New Testament*

Gospel

Historical Theological Story

Letter

Prophetic - Apocalyptic

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– Literary genre is like a game complete with its own set of rules



– To understand what the biblical authors are saying (and what God is saying through them), we must “play by the rules” of the literary genre they selected.

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### ETHNICITIES

Jewish and Gentile populations were mixed

- More Jews lived in Syria than in Palestine; more lived in Alexandria, Egypt than in Jerusalem
- There was a sizable Gentile population in Palestine (ex. Galilee), and they outnumbered Jews in the Decapolis

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### LANGUAGE

Many languages

- Latin was the legal language used mostly in the West
- Greek predominated both East and West thanks to Alexander the Great conqueror
- Aramaic was a sister language to Hebrew which the Jews picked up during exile
- Literacy estimates vary though evidence suggests reading and writing were common

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### TRANSPORTATION, COMMERCE, AND COMMUNICATION

Roads were the most common form of transportation

- Palestine roads were relatively underdeveloped, when compared with the western part of the Roman Empire
- A few notable roads branched out from Jerusalem on which Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:1-42) or where Paul had his transforming vision en route to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9)
- Hospitality was the rule of the roads and aided the apostles and disciples in bringing the gospel to others in the empire

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**ORAL TRADITION**

Hebrew Youth – Every jot and tittle  
Sayings of Jesus passed around  
through oral sharing

Written down nearly a generation  
after His death

Matthew & Luke used Mark and  
another source known as *Q* – German  
“quelle”

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**COMMUNICATION  
MATERIALS**

Papyrus, ostraca (broken pottery),  
and wax tablets for common  
messages and documents

Leather or parchment for  
important ones

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**GOSPEL**

Four Gospels accepted as Canon:

Matthew – 64 A.D.- Jesus as fulfilment of the Law – written to Jews

Mark – 59 A.D.- Earliest Gospel - Evangelism tractate to convince others Jesus is the Son of God

Luke – 62 - 64 A.D. Historical Narrative to put down written account declaring Jesus as healer, baptizer, etc.

John – 95 A.D. Latest - Later corrective to fill in the gaps.

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**HISTORICAL THEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE**

Luke – Acts

- One book – 2 sections
- Jesus
- Early Church
- Acts 1:8 as the prologue
- Acts of the Holy Spirit?
- Unique historical account with theological intent

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### LETTER

Paul's Letters – earliest of the NT?

- Corinthian Letters
- Romans & Galatians
- Pastoral Epistles
- Prison Epistles

General Epistles

- Petrine
- Hebrews
- James
- Johannine Epistles

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### PROPHETIC-APOCALYPTIC

- Matthew 24 - 25 – Sheep & Goats – end time judgement
- 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18 – the Parousia – 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ
- 1 Corinthians 15 – Resurrection body
- Revelation of John

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### NT CANON

- “Canon” – rule or “measuring stick”
- Considered authoritative and standard for defining and determining “orthodox” religious beliefs and practices
- Debated until the 4th century at the Council of Nicaea – 325. A.D.

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- Why is it important to know the specific genre of a passage of Scripture?
- What role do you think the Holy Spirit played in the “canonization” of Scripture?
- What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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Week 8 –  
Historical – Cultural  
Background

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**Historical-Cultural Context**

- **Introduction**
  - To grasp God’s Word, we must understand the meaning of the text in its context.
  - Two major forms of context:
    - Literary context
    - Historical-cultural context (or “background”)

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- **Why bother with historical-cultural context?**
  - God did not choose to speak directly to everybody at all times and all cultures.
  - God chose to speak through the human writers of Scripture to address the real-life needs of people at particular times in a particular culture.
  - We must listen to God’s message (or interpret) in a way that honors how God chose to communicate.

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– We study the historical-cultural context to see what God was saying to the biblical audience.

– This time-bound message contains eternally relevant theological principles that we can discover and apply to our lives.

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– Historical-cultural context gives us a **window** into God’s original meaning as reflected in the text.



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– Once we understand the meaning of the text in its original context, we can apply that meaning to our lives in ways that will be just as relevant.

– Guiding principle:  
*For our interpretation of any biblical text to be valid, it must be consistent with the historical-cultural context of that text.*

– We must determine what a text meant in “their town” before we can determine what it means and how we should apply it in “our town.”

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• **What is historical-cultural context?**

– Biblical writer

- Who was the author?
- What was his background?
- When did he write?
- What was the nature of his ministry?
- What kind of relationship did he have with his audience?
- Why was he writing?

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– Biblical audience

- Who was the biblical audience?
- What were their circumstances?
- How was their relationship to God?
- What kind of relationship did they have with each other?
- What was happening at the time the book was written?

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Historical-Cultural Analysis

- The recounting of the events which relate the redemptive process is known as "saving history" or *heilsgeschichte*.
- The Bible is a combination of event plus interpretation.

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*Sitz im Leben* refers to the life situation of the people of Scripture.

- Three basic questions to ask: to whom, when, and why was the passage written.
- These should be followed by specific questions, e.g., geography, government, local nuances.

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The spiritual environment of the passage must be considered.

- *Cultural analysis* is related to determining if a passage is "culture bound" to a particular period or if it is binding on all cultures.

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Cultural areas:

- (1) Material culture
- (2) Social culture
- (3) Political culture
- (4) Economic culture

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**We must find the meaning that the original audience understood.**

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**Historical study insures that proper control is exerted in the area of religious authority.**

- Does the interpreter control the Bible or the Bible control the interpreter?
- Historical study furnishes guidance in application to contemporary Church problems.
- Historical study can reveal human weakness.

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**Cultural Relativity**

- Is the passage relative to the first century only or does it transcend the original setting and become normative (applicable) for all cultures and times.

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**Basic Guidelines**

- 1. A text cannot mean what it never meant to its author or readers.
- 2. Whenever we share similar specific life situations with the first-century setting, God's word to us is the same as to them.

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**There are times when the particulars are not comparable**

- A. Hear what God's Word to them really was. Usually a clear **PRINCIPLE** that transcends culture has been given.
- B. The principle must be applied to genuinely comparable situations.

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**Guidelines for determining matters of indifference:**

- a. What the Epistles indicate as matters of indifference may still be regarded as such.
- b. Matters of indifference are not inherently moral, but are cultural.

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**To Summarize:**

- Distinguish between the central core of the biblical message and what is peripheral to it.
- Distinguish between what the NT states as inherently moral and what is not.

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Notice items where the N.T. has a consistent witness and where it reflects differences:

Keep alert to possible cultural differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century church.

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- **Dangers associated with studying background**
  - Not studying historical-cultural context at all
  - Getting bad information
  - Focusing on background matters to the neglect of meaning and application



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- **Conclusion**
  - Studying historical-cultural context is only a tool to help us grasp God’s Word.
  - Some people are convinced that background studies are tedious ways of making the Bible less relevant.
  - Often the opposite proves to be true. Knowing the historical-cultural context makes the passage explode with relevance—sometimes more than we can take.

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- **Questions for Small Group Discussion:**
  - Why is it important to know about the historical-cultural background of a passage of Scripture?
  - What are the biggest challenges you face in completing the historical-cultural step of exegesis?
  - What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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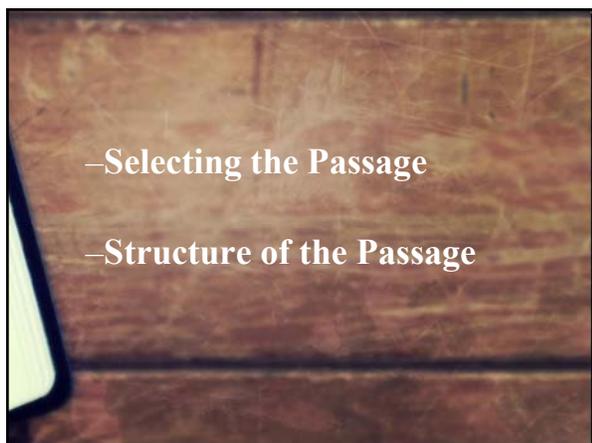
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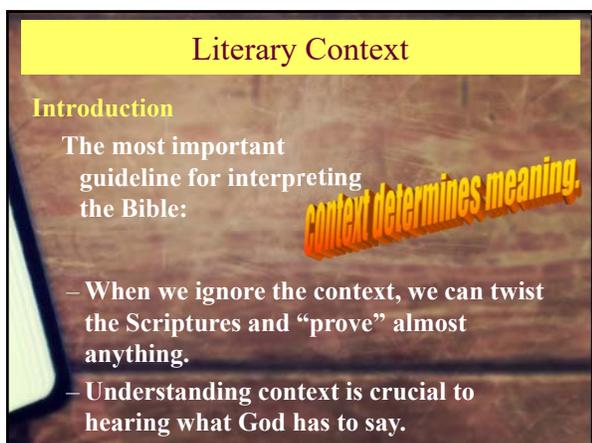
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– Two major kinds of context:

- Historical-cultural context (or “background”)
- Literary context

– Literary genre – form of a passage

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– The Bible contains different types or forms of literature:

<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
Narrative	Gospel
Law	Theological History
Poetry	Letter
Prophecy	Prophetic-Apocalyptic
Wisdom	

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- What is the surrounding context?
  - Any passage that *surrounds* your passage
  - Give the highest priority to immediate context

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**• Dangers of disregarding literary context**

- We can make the Bible say anything we want only if we disregard the literary context.
- Two common ways:
  - By ripping single verses out of their surrounding context
  - By stringing together unrelated thoughts from different books of the Bible

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**• How to identify literary context**

- The Bible is more than a collection of unrelated parts.
- The parts (words, sentences, paragraphs) connect to form whole discourses and books.
- *Goal* → see how an author's thought flows through each part to form the whole.

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- Four steps to identifying literary context:

- 1 - Read the whole book and divide it into paragraphs or sections.
- 2 - Summarize the main point of each section.
- 3 - See how the sections connect to form the whole (an outline of the author's flow of thought)

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• **Conclusion**  
– Don't forget ...  
**Context determines meaning**  
– Ignoring context allows us to make the Bible say what we want to hear.  
– But that approach ultimately hurts people by robbing them of God's liberating truth.

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Context forces the interpreter to examine the entire line of thought of the writer.

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**Guidelines for contextual study:**  
1) What is the general outline of the book?  
2) How does the passage fit with the author's argument?  
3) How does it relate to the passages preceding and following it?

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3) What was the author's perspective?

- Is it written from God's perspective?
- Or is something seen from the author's or humanities' perspective?

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4) Does the passage state descriptive or prescriptive truth?

- A descriptive passage relates (describes) what was said or happened at a particular time.
- Prescriptive passages claim to be articulating normative principles (for all people at all times) e.g., particularly the epistles.

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5) What constitutes the teaching focus of the passage and what represents incidental details only?

6) Who is being addressed in the passage?

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**From the specific to the general:**

- 1) Consider the pericopes before and after the passage?
- 2) Consider the entire book.
- 3) Consider other books by the same author.
- 4) Consider the Testament.
- 5) Consider the overall biblical perspective.

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**As Calvin admonished us,  
"Scripture interprets Scripture."**

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**Parallel material means identical or similar language or ideas found in a different context from the one being studied.**

- 1) verbal cross-referencing - Wording in two passages is similar.

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2) Conceptual cross-reference - A verse/passage in one book has the identical substance of another even though the same words are not used.

3) Parallel cross-references exist when two or more books of the Bible describe essentially the same events.

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When we ignore context, we leave ourselves open to proof-texting, which can lead us into error.

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An example

ROMANS 10: 9 & 10

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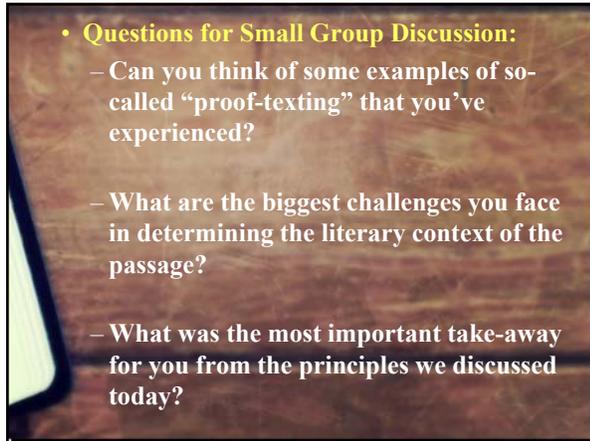
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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- Can you think of some examples of so-called “proof-texting” that you’ve experienced?
- What are the biggest challenges you face in determining the literary context of the passage?
- What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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Week 10 –  
Bible Translations  
&  
Exegetical Helps

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**Bible Translations**

- Introduction
  - The Bible version (or translation) is different from the marketing format used by the publishers (over 1,200 different kinds of Bibles in English).
  - *Translation* → transferring a message in one language into another language.
  - Translation is unavoidable unless everyone wants to learn Hebrew and Greek. It allows us to hear what God has said.

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- **Out of whose mouth did Scripture come, then? God's or man's?**
  - The only biblical answer is “both.” Scripture is equally the Word of God and words of human beings. Better, it is the Word of God through the words of human beings. - John Stott- *The Contemporary Christian*.

Revealed  
Written  
Living

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- How did we get our English Bible?
- God worked through the various human authors, including their background, personality, cultural context, writing style, faith commitments, research, and so on, so that what they wrote was the inspired Word of God.

Original Text  
Copies  
Critical Text  
Translation  
Readers

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- English translations

**Prior to 1611**  
Wycliffe, Tyndale

**Authorized Version of 1611 (KJV)**  
Final revision 1769

**Since 1611**  
18 translations listed in text alone

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- Approaches to translating God's Word
  - Not as simple as defining each word and stringing together the definitions. Don't assume that *literal* automatically equals *accurate*.
  - Languages differ:
    - No two words have exactly the same meaning.
    - The vocabulary of any two languages varies in size.
    - Languages put words together differently.

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– Translation involves reproducing the meaning of a text in a source language as fully as possible in the receptor language.

– Two main approaches to translation:

- *Formal* – tries to follow the wording and structure (“forms”) of the original language; sometimes labeled “literal” or “word-for-word”
- *Functional* – tries to express meaning of original text in today’s language; often called “idiomatic” or “thought-for-thought”

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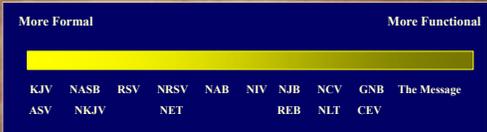
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– No translation is entirely formal or functional; and form should not have priority over meaning.



– A paraphrase is not a translation from the original languages, but a restatement or explanation of an English translation.

– Use paraphrases like you would use commentaries.

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- **Choosing a translation**

– Uses modern English (whole point of translation)

– Based on the standard Hebrew and Greek critical texts.

– Made by a committee rather than an individual.

– Appropriate for your specific purpose at the time

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## Exegetical Helps

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- Commentaries:**
- A commentary may separate one from the text itself
  - One may become intimidated by the scholarship of the author.
  - Commentaries may become the easy way to get a quick answer.
  - Commentaries are not designed to be used in isolation from other tools of biblical study.

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- What Commentaries Can & Cannot Do:**
- Serve as a model for our interpretation.
  - Help in understanding difficult words.
  - Help us see a passage and how that passage fits in the book as a whole.
  - Help us discover the theological and practical relevance of the passage.
  - Reinforce the communal aspect of Christian life.

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**Commentary technical factors**

- Is the commentary exegetical, homiletical, or a combination of both?
- Is it based on the Greek or Hebrew text or an English translation?
- Does the author discuss all the possible meanings, evaluate them, and give reasons for his/her own choice?

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**• Does the author discuss text-critical problems?**

- Does the author discuss the historical background at important places?
- Does the author give bibliographical information for further study?
- Does the introduction section in the commentary give you enough information about the historical context to enable you to understand the occasion of the book?

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**•Lexicons, Grammars, and Concordances  
Vary in technical difficulty depending on the ability of the reader to handle the biblical languages.**

- Histories, Atlases, and Archaeologies
- Bible and Theological Dictionaries
- Old and New Testament Theologies
- Bible Translations

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**SUGGESTED BEST HELPS:**  
Free Versions:  
<https://www.logos.com/>  
<https://www.biblegateway.com/>  
Other helps (not so free):  
<https://biblesoft.com/>

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**Dictionaries:**  
*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*  
*Anchor Bible Dictionary*  
**Language:**  
*Vine's Expository Dictionary of the NT*  
*Theological Wordbook of the OT*  
*Strong's Concordance*

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**  
– What is the difference between a translation of the Bible and a paraphrase?  
– What role do you think the Holy Spirit plays in our interpretation of the Scripture?  
– What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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**Week 11 –  
Sentence Structure Issues**

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**Syntactical Analysis**

- Syntax is the way thoughts are expressed through grammatical form.

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**Guideline for syntax**

- (1) Consider definitions or explanatory phrases that the authors themselves give.
- (2) The subject and predicate of a sentence may mutually explain each other.
- (3) Examine parallelism if it occurs within the passage.

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**Parallelism - a thought in one line is balanced by a thought in another line.**

- (a) synonymous-the second line repeats the first line using different words.**
- (b) antithetic -the second line contrasts the first line**
- (c) synthetic -the second line completes the idea of the first line**

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**(4) Determine if the word is being used as part of a figure of speech.**

- (a) A metaphor uses direct comparison.**
- (b) A simile uses “like” or “as”**
- (c) Hyperbole -an intended exaggeration**
- (d) Paradox – seems to be contradictory**
- (e) Irony denotes the opposite of what is said.**
- (f) Personification-personal nature attributed to inanimate objects or abstract notions.**

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**Figures of speech convey a single intended meaning just as other speech does**

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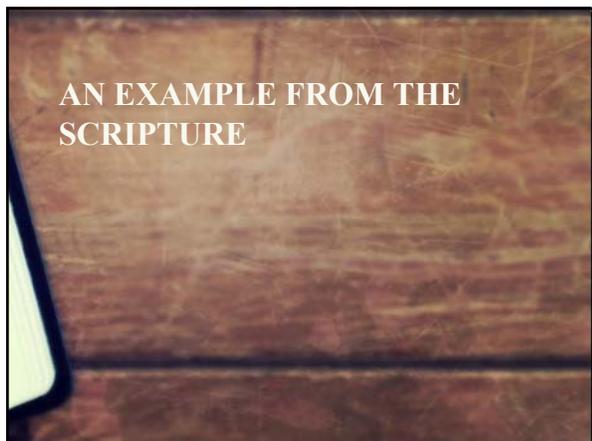
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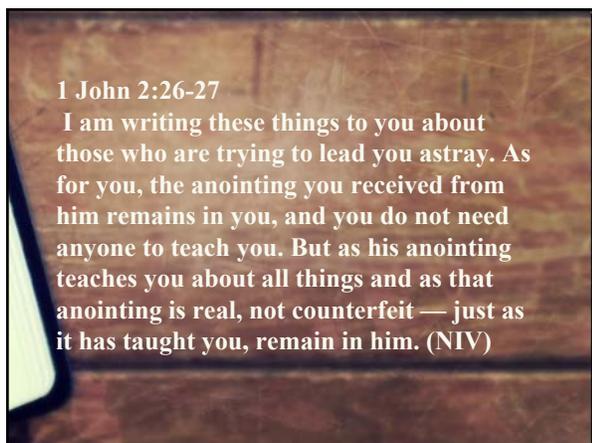
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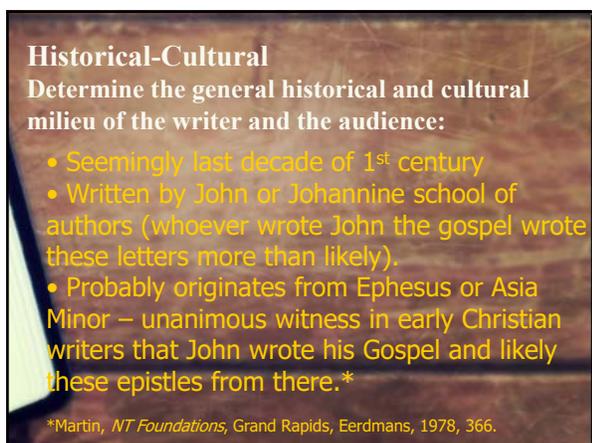
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### Historical-Cultural

Determine the purpose(s) the author had in writing a book.

- Message of assurance to believers in danger of being persuaded by false teachers. Perhaps new Christians "little children" as they are called in numerous places in 2:1, 12, 3:18, 4:4, and 5:21.
- Purpose is pastoral, though the letter is encyclical and general.
- May be a baptismal-catechetical document.\*

\*Martin, *NT Foundations*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 368.

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### Contextual Analysis

Understand how the passage fits into its immediate context.

- Preface (1:1-4)
- Apostolic message & its moral implications (1:5-2:2)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Application of the tests (2:3-27)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Application of the tests (2:28-4:6)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Application of the texts (4:7-5:5)
- 3 Witnesses and our consequent assurance (5:6-17)
- 3 Affirmations and concluding exhortation (5:18-21)\*

\*Stott, *The Letters of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, 61.

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### Contextual Analysis

Understand how the passage fits into its immediate context.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Application of the tests (2:3-27)
  - Obedience, or the moral test (2:3-6)
  - Love, or the social test (2:7-11)
  - A digression about the church (2:12-14)
  - A digression about the world (2:15-17)
  - Belief, or the doctrinal test (2:18-27)\*

\*Stott, *The Letters of John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, 61.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**

- Identify the general literary form.
- Trace the development of the author's theme and show how the passage fits into the context.
- Identify the natural divisions of the text.
- Identify the connecting words within the paragraphs and sentences and show how they aid in the author's progression of thought.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**

- Determine what individual words mean.
- Analyze the syntax to show how it aids in understanding the passage.
- Put the results of your analysis into non-technical easily understood words.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**

Identify the general literary form.

Trace the development of the author's theme and show how the passage fits into the context.

Identify the natural divisions of the text.

- Cf – previous slides by Stott

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
Identify the connecting words within the paragraphs and sentences and show how they aid in the author's progression of thought.

- Dear children, v.1
- Dear friends v.7
- Anyone, v.9; Whoever, v.10; But, v.11
- I write to you, 6 verses
- Do not, v.15
- Dear children, v.18
- See, v.20
- And now, v.28.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
Identify the connecting words within the paragraphs and sentences and show how they aid in the author's progression of thought.

- The author is writing about a new way of living, a new command to love one another, and warns them about their attitudes towards one another, and the world. In the middle of this he exhorts them.
- But then goes on to warn them against those who would lead them astray.
- In our text he is providing an anecdote to their misleading teaching.

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- **Questions for Small Group Discussion:**
  - Why is it so important to understand the nature of syntax?
  - Can you think of examples of spiritualizing or allegorizing the text?
  - What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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Week 12 –  
Vocabulary/Lexical issues

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**Word Studies**

- Introduction
  - Words are like pieces of a puzzle, fitting together to bring the larger picture to life.
  - The goal of word study is “to try to understand as precisely as possible what the author was trying to convey by his use of *this* word in this context.”



–Gordon Fee

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- Common word study fallacies
  - English-only fallacy
  - Root fallacy
  - Time-frame fallacy
  - Overload fallacy
  - Word-count fallacy
  - Word-concept fallacy
  - Selective-evidence fallacy

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- Choose your words carefully
  - Word studies take time and you cannot possibly study every word.
  - Look for words that are crucial to the passage.
  - Look for repeated words.
  - Look for figures of speech.
  - Look for words that are unclear, puzzling, or difficult.

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- Determine what the word *could* mean
  - Most words will have several different meanings, but will normally carry only one of those meanings in a particular context.
  - Semantic range – all the possible meanings of a word
    - “spring” ?
      - season that follows winter
      - jumping ability
      - metal support
      - source of water

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- To find the semantic range for the original-language word that underlies our English translation, do two things:
  - Use a *concordance* to locate the original Hebrew or Greek word and see how it has been translated into English.
  - Check the immediate *context* to see how the word is used.

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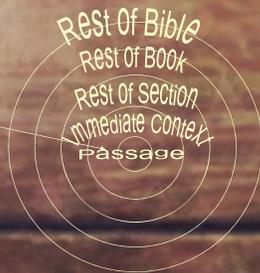
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- **Decide what the word *does* mean in context**
  - Select from the possible meanings the one meaning that best fits your word in this particular context.
  - Use the *circles of context* approach to help you decide. Start with the immediate context and work your way out until you find your answer.



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- For more help, ask the following questions:

- Is there a contrast or a comparison that seems to define the word?
- Does the subject matter or topic dictate a word meaning?
- Does the author's usage of the same word elsewhere in a similar context help you decide?
- Does the author's argument in the book suggest a meaning?

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Lexicology- the study of words in order to define them as the author intended in his historical context.

- Syntax-the way words are combined
- Lexical-syntactical analysis holds that words have only one intended meaning in any given context.

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**Steps in the lexical-syntactical process**

**(1) The identification of the general literary form**

- Prose - predominately based on the literal usage of words
- Poetry is basically built on figurative language
- Apocalyptic literature is recognized by its symbolic use of words.

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**(2) Find the development of the author's theme.**

**(3) Identify the natural divisions of the text.**

**(4) Identify the connecting words within the sentences and paragraphs.**

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**(5) Individual words need to be defined.**

- A denotation gives a specific meaning and a connotation gives an additional implication.
- The most valid method of determining word meanings is to discover the various denotations a word possessed at the time it was used by the writer.

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**Methods to determine word meanings**

(1) Etymological study - word study based upon the formation of the different parts of a word. [Ex. "apostle" *apo stello* ]

(2) Comparative study - the various contexts in which the word is used helps the interpreter see the entire circle of use

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(3) Cultural context study - Often behind a word in the NT or OT there is a practice of the culture

(4) Cognate languages and ancient translations - studying languages that are of the same family may give insight on how a troublesome word is being used

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**AN EXAMPLE FROM THE SCRIPTURE**

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1 John 2:26-27  
I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him. (NIV)

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**

- Identify the general literary form.
- Trace the development of the author's theme and show how the passage fits into the context.
- Identify the natural divisions of the text.
- Identify the connecting words within the paragraphs and sentences and show how they aid in the author's progression of thought.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**

- Determine what individual words mean.
- Analyze the syntax to show how it aids in understanding the passage.
- Put the results of your analysis into non-technical easily understood words.
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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
 Determine what individual words mean.

- **anointing**- only place in noun form in NT; *chrisma* "is probably the gift of Christ's Spirit to the Church"
- false teachers "probably emphasized their own special reception of the Spirit, as did the Gnostics later. The author responds by emphasizing that only those have received true anointing who hold fast to what has been given them, namely, the correct confession of Jesus as the Christ (and who hold fast to life in the Church according to his commandment).

From *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* © 1990 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
 Determine what individual words mean.

- **teaching** – *didáskein* suggests the presence of direct inspiration or revelation. No Hellenistic models have been found for this; it is best to understand it in the light of the teaching of Jesus.
- In 1 John 2:27 this teaching by anointing (the Spirit) offers a safeguard against false teachers who also raise total claims. If the meaning in these verses verges on "to reveal," it is because the subject of teaching is Jesus himself.

\* *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged edition, Copyright © 1985 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
 Determine what individual words mean.

**remaining** - By the use of *menein* Jn. seeks to express the immutability and inviolability of the relation of Immanence. In so doing he elevates the Christian religion above what is attained in Hellenistic rapture or even in the prophecy of Israel. Thus God abides in Christ, 14:10. Believers abide in Christ (6:56; 15:4-7; 1 John 2:6 1 John 2:27 f.; 3:6,24) and Christ in them (John 15:4-7; 1 John 3:24). God abides in believers (1 John 4:16), and believers in God (1 John 2:24; 4:16). The eschatological promise of salvation becomes immediate possession in virtue of this statement in the present tense. Nevertheless, Jn. keeps to an expression ("remain in") which maintains biblical theism and avoids the assertions of identity found in Hellenistic mysticism.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
**Determine what individual words mean.**  
**remaining** - After the analogy of the personal statement Jn. uses *menew* for the abiding of the expressions of divine life in believers, e.g., God's Word, life, love, truth, and anointing, 1 John 2:27. Believers, too, abide in divine things, e.g., in God's house,; love, light, doctrine. Here again the relationship of salvation is both enduring and present. The same is true of perdition. Unbelievers abide in darkness and death.\*

\*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Copyright © 1972-1989 By Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
**Analyze the syntax to show how it aids in understanding the passage.**

- Two words are in the imperative mood in the passage.
  - Do not need anyone to **teach** you
  - **Remain** in him in v. 24 and repeated in 27 (and again in 28 but now present active indicative – ongoing continual sense)
- Imperative is the mood of command or exhortation, often denoting a strong admonition of some sort.

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**Lexical- Syntactical Analysis**  
**Put the results of your analysis into non-technical easily understood words.**

The writer of the epistle is trying to both warn and encourage the hearers. He exhorts them that the anointing, touch of the Holy Spirit, presence of Christ in their lives, is all they need to teach them, give them revelation, or insight, not false teachings by those who claim a special anointing they don't have. The key to discerning the difference is trusting in the truth that Jesus Christ has revealed to them and they will get this revelation by remaining, abiding, living in Christ and allowing him to live in them.

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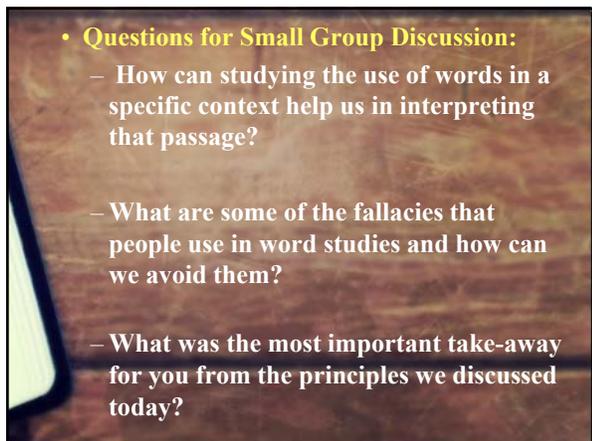
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- **Questions for Small Group Discussion:**
  - How can studying the use of words in a specific context help us in interpreting that passage?
  - What are some of the fallacies that people use in word studies and how can we avoid them?
  - What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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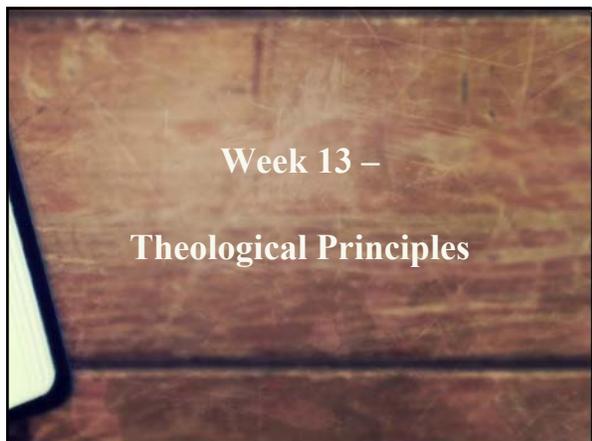
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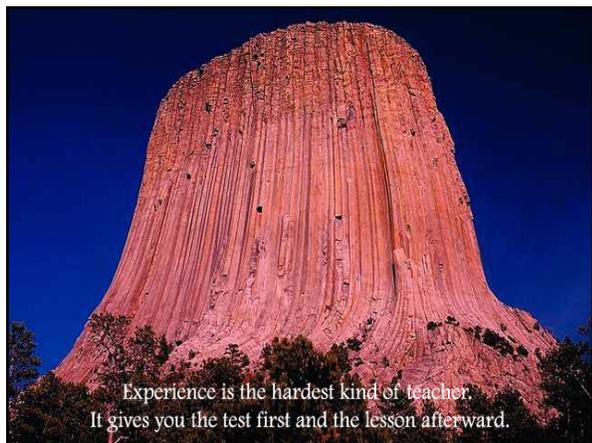
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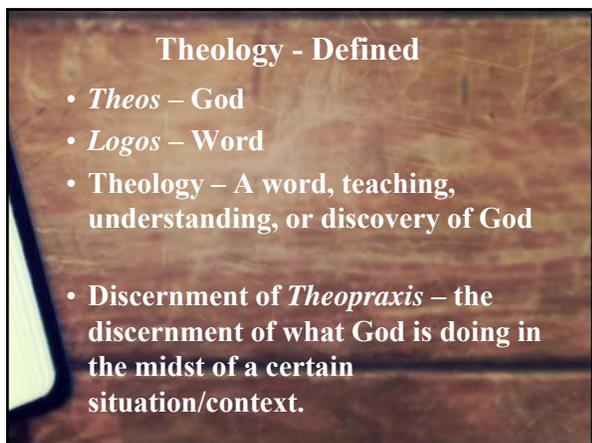
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#### 4 Main Disciplines in Theology

- Biblical theology seeks to discover how the author and original readers were influenced by their historical situation.
- Systematic theology takes the theological materials from the comprehensive whole and arranges these in a logical framework.

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#### 4 Main Disciplines in Theology

- Historical theology seeks to interact with the historical situation including extrabiblical lit. and church tradition
- Practical theology uses the other disciplines to discern what God is doing in the midst of concrete situations in the home, marketplace, church and academy.

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#### Responsibilities of the theologian:

- (1) The theologian is a redeemed person standing in the circle of divine revelation.
- (2) Doctrinal teaching must stem from correct interpretation of the Bible.
- (3) The main burden of our theology should rest on NT teaching.
- (4) Exegesis is prior to any system of theology.

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- (5) One must not extend doctrine beyond the scriptural evidence.
- (6) The theological interpreter strives for a system.
- (7) The theologian must use his proof texts with proper understanding of correct procedure.
- (8) What is not a matter of revelation cannot be made a matter of creed or faith.

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- (9) The theological interpreter must keep the practical nature of the Bible in mind.
- (10) The theological interpreter must recognize his responsibility to the Church.

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- Two important questions:
- (1) What is the pattern of God's revelation.
  - (2) How does this passage fit into the total pattern of that revelation?

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**The task of the theologian:**

- (1) Provide a way of thinking about faith.
- (2) Guard against heresy.
- (3) Provide direction for the church's ongoing life.

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**Who Controls the Meaning?**

- Does the reader or the author control meaning?
  - *The Wizard of Oz*
    - Simple story of good vs. evil (reader) or
    - Political satire (author)
  - Reader response – reader as the one who determines the meaning
  - Authorial intention – stresses the author in the determination of meaning

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- Central issue — communication
  - If we view the text as communication between the author and the reader, we should follow the authorial intention approach.
  - If we don't care what the author is trying to communicate, we are free to follow the reader response approach.

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– Should we view these texts as communication?



– To ignore the author’s intention in texts that should be viewed as communication can have serious negative consequences for the reader.

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– Central question—is the Bible merely inspiring literature or is it inspired communication from God?

– Since we believe strongly that the Bible is God’s communication of himself and his will to us, we follow the authorial intention approach.

– In biblical interpretation, readers do not create or control the meaning. Rather, we seek to discover the meaning that has been placed there by the author.

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• Definitions

**Author** With reference to the Bible, the term “author” refers to both the human and divine author. God works through human authors.

**Meaning** This term refers to what the author intended to communicate when he wrote the text. Meaning will be same for all Christians.

**Application** This is the response of the reader to the author’s meaning communicated in the text. Application will vary from Christian to Christian.

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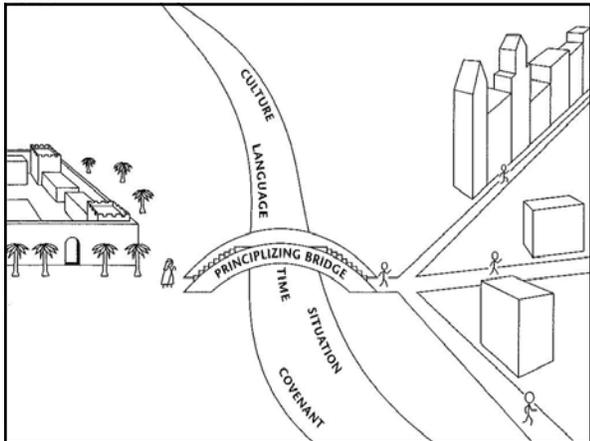
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• Definitions and the Interpretive Journey

**Meaning** { 1 – Grasping the Text in Their Town  
*What did the text mean to the biblical audience?*

2 – Measuring the Width of the River  
*What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?*

**Meaning** { 3 – Crossing the Principlizing Bridge  
*What is the theological principle in this text?*

**Application** { 4 – Grasping the Text in Our Town  
*How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle(s) in their lives?*

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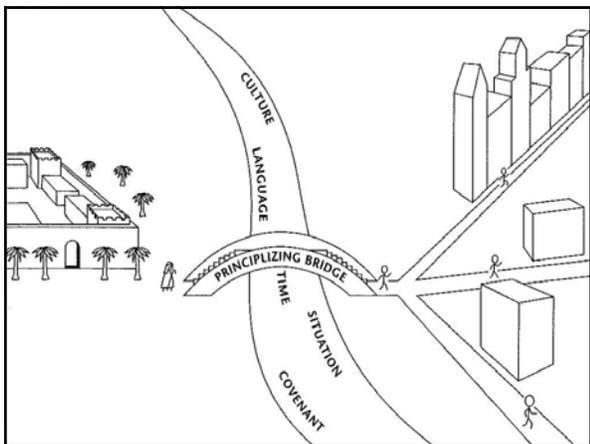
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- Determining what the author meant
  - For proper interpretation (communication) to take place, we must determine what the author meant.
  - How?
    - Context**
    - Word Studies**
    - Careful observation**
    - Translation**
    - Literary genre**

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- Determining what the author meant
  - The question is not “What does this passage mean to you?”
  - Rather the correct sequence would be:
    1. What does this passage *mean*?
    2. How should you *apply* this meaning to your life?

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### Levels of Meaning

- Introduction
  - Does the Bible have multiple levels of meaning?
  - Are there deep “spiritual” meanings hidden in the text of the Bible that are unrelated to the historical-cultural and literary contexts?

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• **Spiritualizing**

- Looking for deep, secret, “spiritual” meanings apart from what the author communicated in the text. Poses a dichotomy between spiritual and literary.
- Since God used literary conventions to communicate to us, the real spiritual meaning of the Bible will be the same as the literary meaning!
- Question – will we seek the literary (and truly *spiritual*) meaning intended by the author or the “meaning” created by our own speculation?

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• **Allegorizing**

- Allegory – a story that uses an extensive amount of symbolism (e.g., Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*)
- Allegorizing (or allegorical interpretation)
  - Looks for deeper, “spiritual” meaning below the surface of the text
  - The details of the biblical text stand for many different things (e.g., tent pegs representing Jesus)
  - Goes far beyond comparison or symbolism
  - Limited only by the fanciful imagination of the reader

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• **Typology**

- Event or person in the OT that serves as a prophetic pattern or example of a NT event or person.
- OT sometimes *foreshadows* or points to what is fulfilled in the NT.
  - Example – entire sacrificial system foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice of Christ
  - Part of one salvation story where we see a promise (OT) and later see its fulfillment (NT)
  - General connections made explicit by the NT (and therefore intended by the divine author)

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**• Conclusion**

- Does the Bible have different levels of meaning?
  - Decidedly Not!
- One level of meaning—the *literary* meaning (intended by the divine/human author).

Includes:

- Meaning for the biblical audience (Step 1 of *The Journey*) and
- Theological principle (Step 3 of *The Journey*)

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- Avoid the temptation to spiritualize or allegorize.
- Affirm OT typology when it is identified in the NT.
- Use the Interpretive Journey to help you discover the meaning communicated by the divine/ human author through the text.
- By God’s design this meaning is very *spiritual*.

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- Why is it so important to determine the original authorial intent of a passage?
- Why do you think ordinary people are so turned off by the term “theology”?
- What role do you think the Holy Spirit plays in application of the Scripture?
- What was the most important take-away for you from the principles we discussed today?

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Week 14 –  
Bridging the Text to Today

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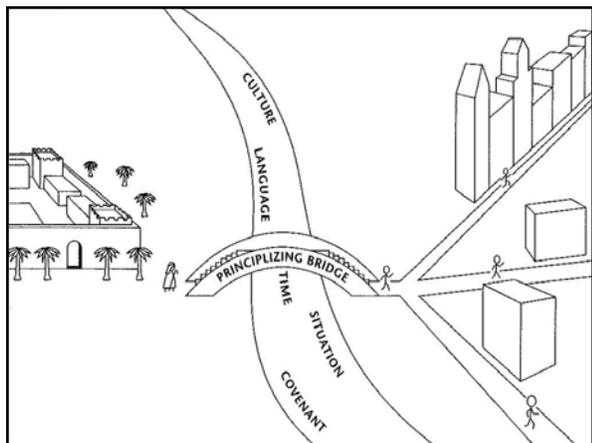
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• Definitions and the Interpretive Journey

**Meaning** { 1 – Grasping the Text in Their Town  
*What did the text mean to the biblical audience?*

2 – Measuring the Width of the River  
*What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?*

**Meaning** { 3 – Crossing the Principlizing Bridge  
*What is the theological principle in this text?*

**Application** { 4 – Grasping the Text in Our Town  
*How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle(s) in their lives?*

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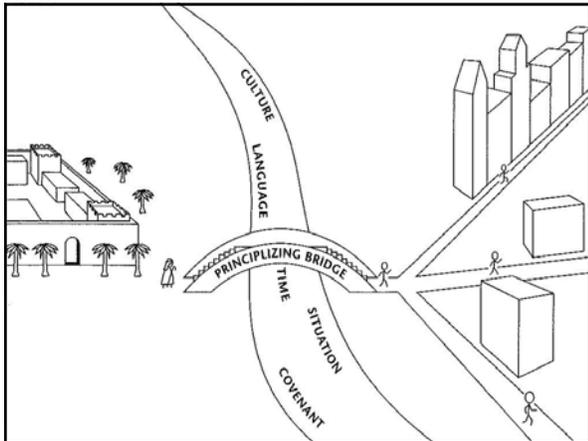
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**General guidelines for contemporary application:**

A. The Bible is more a book of principles than a catalogue of specific directions.

Principlizing is an attempt to discover in a narrative the spiritual, moral, or theological principles that have relevance for the contemporary believer.

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**Guidelines for principlizing:**

- (a) The details may change, but the principles remain the same.
- (b) The meaning of a story must be the author's intended one as determined by sound hermeneutical analysis.
- (c) The meaning and principles derived from a story must be consistent with all other teachings of Scripture.

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**(d) Texts have only one meaning,  
but may have many applications.**

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**(B) The Bible emphasizes the inner  
spirit rather than the outward  
religious cloak.**

**(C) In some statements it is the spirit  
of the statement that is to be our  
guide.**

**(D) Commands in terms of one  
culture must be translated into  
our culture.**

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**Guidelines for translating commands  
transculturally**

**(a) Discern as accurately as possible  
the principle behind the given  
behavioral command.**

**(b) Discern whether the principle is  
timeless or time-bound or  
perhaps culture-bound.**

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(c) If a principle is transcultural, study the nature of its behavioral application within our culture.

(d) If the behavioral expression of a principle should be changed, suggest a cultural equivalent to adequately express the principle behind the original command.

(e) Apply the principle of humility if a question remains.

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Case Study: 1 Cor 11:11-16

<sup>11</sup> In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. <sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, <sup>15</sup> but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice — nor do the churches of God.

NIV

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**Guidance from examples:**

(1) Make a distinction between what the Bible records and what it approves.

(2) Take direct application from all of those incidents that the Bible directly censures or approves.

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(3) Express commands to individuals are not the will of God for us.

(4) In the lives of the people of Scripture determine the outstanding spiritual principle.

(5) In applying examples to our lives we do not need a literal reproduction of the biblical situation.

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**Guidelines for interpreting promises.**

(1) Note whether the promise is universal in scope.

(2) Note whether the promise is personal.

(3) Note whether the promise is conditional.

(4) Note whether the promise is for our time.

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**The Promise in Acts 2:38-39:**

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call." (NIV)

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**Procedures for Contemporary Application**

1. List the life issues: Are they central or secondary?
2. Clarify the nature of the application: Does it inform or direct?

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3. Clarify the possible areas of application: Faith or action?
4. Identify the audience of the application: Personal or corporate?
5. Establish the categories of application: Interpersonal, piety, social, economic, religious, spiritual, familial?

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6. Determine the time focus of the application: Past, present, future?
7. Fix the limits of the application.

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**1 John 2:26-27**  
I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him. (NIV)

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**Theological Analysis**  
Assess the extent of theological knowledge available to the people at that time

1 Jn.'s audience would not have been familiar with all that's been written about the Gnostics since or even John's other letters concerning them.

If it was catechetical in focus – they were probably new converts and not very theologically astute at this point.

The basics of leaning on the Spirit for understanding and alerting them to heresy was probably the main focus.

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**Theological Analysis**

Determine the meaning the passage possessed for its original recipients in light of their knowledge.

Watch out for heretics- trust the Spirit to teach you all truth and remain in Christ no matter what.

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### Theological Analysis

Identify the additional knowledge about this topic which is available to us now.

We know a lot more about Gnosticism than they probably did.  
We have the rest of the NT- the Gospels, Acts, the letters of Paul.  
We have probably a broader understanding of the work of the Spirit throughout the early church, throughout history and in the world today.

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### Theological Analysis

Determine your own view of the nature of God's relationship to humans.  
Identify the implications of this view for the passage you are studying.

Pentecostals attribute the "anointing" as the presence of the Holy Spirit and will likely see the *chrisma* as a more dynamic "coming upon" due to their interpretation of Paul's use of this term (1Cor. 12) than other traditions.

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### Comparison with Others

Gordon Fee sees "anointing" as about the work of the Spirit (*God's Empowering Presence*, 171, 291).

Colin Brown writes of how "anointing" speaks of new life in the Spirit and of the work of the Paraclete "to witness and interpret both in recalling the teaching originally given and leading into new truth" (*DNVT*, Vol. 3, p 703-704).

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**Application**  
Principlizing: Based on the first 4 steps ascertain by deductive study; the principle(s) that passage was intended to teach, or the principles (descriptive truths) illustrated within the passage that remain relevant for the contemporary believer.  
**Determine transcultural transmission of biblical commands.**

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**Application of 1 Jn. 2:26-27**

**What is the text talking about?**

**How to know the truth from heresy**

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**Application**

What is the text saying about the subject?

- ✓ Some will try to lead astray
- ✓ The anointing is the anecdote to heresy
- ✓ Remaining in Christ is the key to keeping the anointing.

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**Hermeneutics to Application**

Movement from - what is the text saying - to what is God leading me to do about it?

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the key to learning for the Christian.

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**Hermeneutics to Application**

There are many who will try to lead us astray

We can trust the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth

Remaining in Christ is the key

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- What do you think is the biggest challenge we face today in actually applying biblical principles to our day to day lives?
- Why do you think this is so?
- And what do you think God wants you to do about it?

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Week 15 –  
So what? – Application &  
Response

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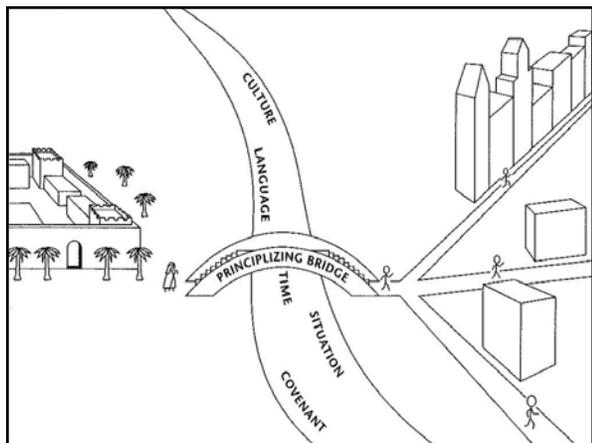
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- Definitions and the Interpretive Journey
- Meaning** { 1 – Grasping the Text in Their Town  
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*What is the theological principle in this text?*
- Application** { 4 – Grasping the Text in Our Town  
*How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle(s) in their lives?*

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**Five Core Values for Effective Application of God's Word**

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**1. Establish the Primacy of the Word of God as the foundation for your ministry:**

- a) *Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away (Lk. 21:33).*
- b) *The grass withers and the flowers fade but the word God stands firm forever (Isa. 40:8).*
- c) *Humankind does not live by bread alone but by every word that issues from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4).*

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- d) *Lk. 7:24-27: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

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**2. Maintain the Priority of Prayer:**

- a) Jesus' ministry is not based on need but on what he hears from the father (Jn. 14:23-24, 31).
- b) In the most stressful of times – Jesus retreats to pray – Garden of Gethsemane in the Passion Week.
- c) Prayer is two-way communication – we listen carefully and act in obedience to be the answer to prayer.

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- d) God has ordained prayer as the means by which he is glorified in our lives:
  1. Shows our dependence upon him.
  2. Gives us the guidance we need when we need it.
  3. Gives God the glory as he answers prayers.
  4. Causes faith to rise in our hearts as he answers our prayers.

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**3. Listen to the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit**

- a) He will send us a comforter, counselor who will guide us into all truth (Jn. 14:15f; Jn. 16:13).
- b) 1 Jn. 2:26: *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

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c) The Spirit of Christ performs four different functions within the human spirit:

1. The Spirit operates as a divine instructor who illuminates the truth of God's Word, guides in the interpretation, and empowers in the application of these divine principles.
2. The Holy Spirit is a compassionate companion in prayer. Because only divine illumination can probe the deepest recesses of the psyche (Acts 15:8, Rom. 8:27)...

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– ...the Spirit, through prayerful contemplation searches out the core issues and exposes the desires of God to the human conscience – Prayer is more than non-verbal communication; it involves human obedience by the empowerment of the Spirit.

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3. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent of the Trinity that forms the genuine messianic community. The Spirit's attendance is the mark of the divine presence within the hearts of humans (Acts 10:45-47).
4. The Holy Spirit provides the impetus and power necessary for the messianic community to be a witness to the world.

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**4. Practice the Presence of Christ:**

- a) Where the Spirit is there is all the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
- b) The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing – Jn. 15:5 *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*
- c) Presence of Jesus is key to healing, conversion, spiritual growth, and change.

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**5. Anticipate the Power of God to be displayed:**

- a) As we focus on the fruit of the Spirit in our lives we can anticipate the gifts of the Spirit to be manifested – esp. the mind of God, the voice of God and the power of God (1 Cor. 12:7-11).
- b) God desires to manifest himself in this world to bring his *shalom* or peace to all persons, situations, and nations.

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- c) *“Repent for the Kingdom of God is near you”* (Mt. 4:17).
- d) God’s power is displayed in human weakness ( 1 Cor. 1:25).

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**• Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice\***

**I. Reading Scripture is not enough**

- Do not be just hearers of the Word but doers of the Word also (James 1:22)
- We prepare for obedience to the Word by:
  - Seeking the Holy Spirit
  - Confessing our sins and forgiving one another
  - Praying for the sick
  - Offering good news to others

- Taken from Joel B. Green's "Cultivating the Practice of Reading Scripture" Fuller Magazine, #8, Spring 2017, 61-63.

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**• Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice**

**II. Read and Read Again**

- Not a "how-to" manual
- Rather about obtaining the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16)
- The formation of Scripture-shaped minds that understand God and His creation through Scripture-shaped lens
- Reading for no good reason other than to have our reflexes and attitudes shaped by it.

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**• Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice**

**III. Read Slowly**

- Blogs, email, Facebook, texts, social networks, news outlets – hurried pace
- Different rules of engagement for reading Scripture
- Not how fast we can get through today's reading
- How slowly – combining prayer, reading & contemplation,
- "Let these words sink into your ears" (Lk. 9:44)

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- **Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice**

IV. Read Together

- Read in community – study groups
- Origins and purpose of Scripture was grounded in community of God’s people
- Resist temptation that Scripture is simply for me and about me . . .
- Or that we should determine its significance apart from the church historically or globally.

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- **Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice**

V. Refuse to separate reading for a class, sermon/teaching prep and spiritual formation

- Basically same qualitative methods or approaches
- Embrace all domains (work, home, church, academy) in our exegesis
- Should not the crisis we encounter through God’s voice in Scripture not shape our reading of these texts for and with others?

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- **Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice**

*“As with Christian practices in general, so with developing scriptural patterns of faith and life, the destination is the journey itself. This is a journey in which we discover that the work of scriptural reading is not about transforming an ancient message into a modern application but about the transformation of our lives through Scripture. The Bible does not present us with texts to be mastered, then, but with a Word intent on shape our lives, on mastering us.”*

- Dr. Joel Green – Fuller

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- One rabbi said, “we don’t interpret the Word of God as much as it interpret us”
- Do you agree with that statement, why or why not?
- If this is true – then how does this occur in our lives?
- What do you think is the biggest hindrance to allowing the Scripture to interpret us in our daily lives?

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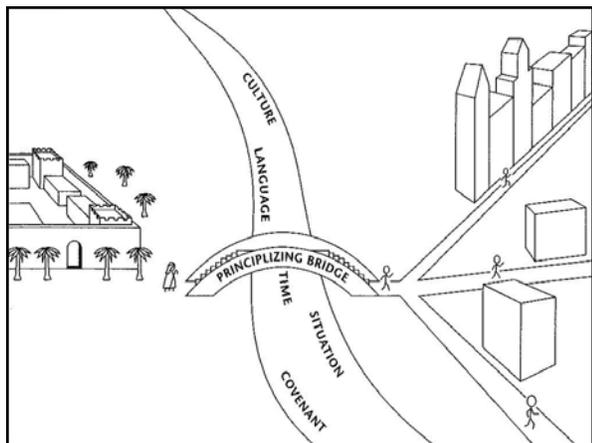
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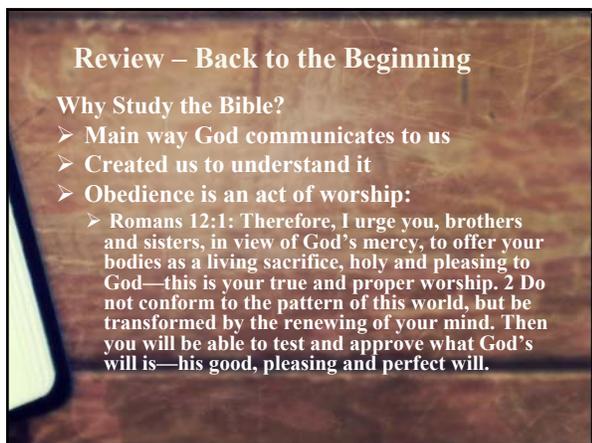
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**Review – Back to the Beginning**

What constitutes the Word of God?

- Revealed Word
- Written Word
- Living Word

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**Review – Back to the Beginning**

– Four Steps:

- 1 – Grasping the Text in Their Town  
*What did the text mean to the biblical audience?*
- 2 – Measuring the Width of the River  
*What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?*
- 3 – Crossing the Principlizing Bridge  
*What is the theological principle in this text?*
- 4 – Grasping the Text in Our Town  
*How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?*

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis – Interpreting the Text**

1. Genre of the Literature
2. Historical Background
3. Literary Context
4. Grammatical - Sentence Structure Issues
5. Lexical - Vocabulary/Lexical issues
6. Discerning Theological Principles
7. Bridging the Text to Today
8. So what? – Application & Response

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### Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis: Genre of the Literature

– The Bible contains different types, forms or categories of written literature:

<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
Narrative	Gospel
Law	Historical Theological
Poetry	Story
Prophecy	Letter
Wisdom	Prophetic-Apocalyptic

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### Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis: Historical Background

• **What is historical-cultural context?**

- Biblical writer
  - Who was the author?
  - What was his background?
  - When did he write?
  - What was the nature of his ministry?
  - What kind of relationship did he have with his audience?
  - Why was he writing?

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### Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis: Historical Background

- Biblical audience
  - Who was the biblical audience?
  - What were their circumstances?
  - How was their relationship to God?
  - What kind of relationship did they have with each other?
  - What was happening at the time the book was written?

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis:  
Literary Context**

**Guidelines for contextual study:**

- 1) What is the general outline of the book?
- 2) How does the passage fit with the author's argument?
- 3) How does it relate to the passages preceding and following it?

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**– Three steps to identifying literary context:**

- 1 – Read the whole book and divide it into paragraphs or sections.
- 2 – Summarize the main point of each section.
- 3 – See how the sections connect to form the whole (an outline of the author's flow of thought)

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis –  
Grammatical - Sentence**

- Identify the general literary form.
- Trace the development of the author's theme and show how the passage fits into the context.
- Identify the natural divisions of the text.
- Identify the connecting words within the paragraphs and sentences and show how they aid in the author's progression of thought.

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis:  
Vocabulary/Lexical issues**

- Determine what individual words mean.
- Analyze the syntax to show how it aids in understanding the passage.
- Put the results of your analysis into non-technical easily understood words.

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis:  
Discerning Theological Principles**

- Determining what the author meant
  - For proper interpretation (communication) to take place, we must determine what the author meant.
  - How?



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- Determining what the author meant
  - The question is not “What does this passage mean to you?”
  - Rather the correct sequence would be:
    1. What does this passage *mean*?
    2. How should you *apply* this meaning to your life?

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis:  
Bridging the Text to Today**

**Guidelines for principlizing:**

- (a) The details may change, but principles remain the same.
- (b) The meaning of a story must be the author's intended one as determined
- (c) The meaning and principles derived from a story must be consistent with all other teachings of Scripture.
- d) Texts have only one meaning, but may have many applications.

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis:  
So what? – Application & Response**

**Five Core Values for Effective Application of God's Word:**

- 1. Establish the Primacy of the Word of God as the foundation for your ministry
- 2. Maintain the Priority of Prayer
- 3. Listen to the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit
- 4. Practice the Presence of Christ
- 5. Anticipate the Power of God to be displayed

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**Review – Basic Steps of Exegesis:  
So what? – Application & Response**

- **Reading Scripture as a Central Christian Practice\***
- I. Reading Scripture is not enough
- II. Read and Read Again
- III. Read Slowly
- IV. Read Together
- V. Refuse to separate reading for a class, sermon/teaching prep and spiritual formation

\* Taken from Joel B. Green's "Cultivating the Practice of Reading Scripture" Fuller Magazine, #8, Spring 2017, 61-63.

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**• Questions for Small Group Discussion:**

- What has been the most important single “take away” for you from this study?
- What do you think is the biggest hindrance to your putting the principles you’ve learned into practice?
- What do you think is the next step God wants you to take in this regard?

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