

How to Read the Bible

For All It's Worth

October 13, 2020

Class 2: How to Study Well – Basic Tools



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Learning Outcomes:

1. A foundation for Bible Study
2. Understanding the “Text” and “Immerse” portion of the T.I.M.E. acronym
3. An acknowledgement of the need for proper study

Review from last week

What kind of a book is the Bible?

- From the C&MA Statement of Faith:

The Old and New Testaments, inerrant as originally given, were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will for the salvation of people.

They constitute the divine and only rule for Christian faith and practice.

- i. “Inerrant”
 - ii. “Originally given”
 - iii. “Verbally inspired”
 - iv. “Complete”
 - v. “Faith and practice”
- T.I.M.E.
 - i. **T**ext
 - ii. **I**mmerse
 - iii. Ministry
 - iv. Encounter
 1. This class will focus on the “T” and “I” component
 2. Class 3 & 4 will further give you tools to understand the library of Scripture
 3. Class 5 will help you bring the text from *then* to *now*, focusing in on the “M” and “E” part of the acronym

The Process

The process is a journey into the world of the Biblical text and then bringing it back to our day and time.

Step 1:

Grasping the Text in their own town – what did the text mean to the biblical audience?

- a. Exegesis - What is it?
 - i. Exegesis is the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning of the text.
 - ii. We do not create meaning out of a text; rather we seek to find the meaning that is already there (one meaning, multiple applications)
 - 1. The question we should ask is:
“How does this apply to you?”
And not, *“What does it mean to you?”*
 - iii. Everyone is an exegete of sorts as everyone is an interpreter
 - iv. Let’s commit: to doing all we can to honour the text, knowing that we won’t get it perfect every time

Step 2:

Measuring the Width of the River to Cross – what are the differences between the Biblical audience and us?

- i. Significant differences in culture, language, situation, time and covenant (meaning Old and New Testament)
 - 1. This “river” hinders us from understanding and applying the Scripture
 - 2. The river’s width is different depending on text (Leviticus versus Philippians)
- ii. Measuring the River:
 - 1. How do you do it?
 - a. The key of good exegesis is to learn to read the text carefully and to ask the right questions of the text.
 - b. There are two kinds of questions one should ask of every biblical passage:
 - i. those that relate to context
 - ii. those that relate to content
 - c. The questions of the context are also of two kinds: historical and literary.

The Historical Context

- a. Knowing the story of the Scripture (see handout)
- b. Historical context has to do with:
 - i. the time and culture of the author and his readers.
 - ii. The more important questions of historical context has to do with the occasion and purpose of each biblical book.
- c. Look for:
 - i. General historical background of the book: who was the author? When was it written? Why was it written? What concerns are addressed? When and where did this take place? What is the situation? What is the author's purpose for writing this book?
 - ii. Immediate historical context of the passage: understand the historical dynamics of the passage you are studying
 - iii. What cultural elements we need to study: understand the cultural elements affecting the author and original audience of the passage
- d. Tools?
 - i. Study Bible
 - ii. Bible dictionary
 - iii. Bible commentary
 - iv. Maps and atlases
 - v. The internet (be careful!)
- e. How?
 - i. First, you need to consult different tools to find out as much as possible about backgrounds of the text.
 - ii. Second, you need to develop the habit of reading the whole passage and/or book through in one sitting (think snowshoes and not stilts!)
 - iii. As you read the whole passage or book, it will be helpful to jot down a few very brief, notes and references.
- f. Take three kinds of notes:
 - i. What you notice about the recipients themselves; how are they, their attitudes, problems
 - ii. Any specific things mentioned as to the specific occasion of the letter
 - iii. The book or passage's natural, logical divisions.
 - i. Example: how does the context of the verse bring more impact and shed light to our application?
 - Jeremiah 29:11
 - Philippians 4:13

The Literary Context

a. What is it?

The literary context means that words only have meaning in sentences, and in relation to preceding and succeeding sentences.

“The literary context includes the words, sentence and paragraphs preceding and following a passage. The literary context locates a passage within the larger purposes of a book.”

– Daniel Doriani

- Example: Acts 1:8 as a table of contents for Acts

b. Why is this important? Meaning is found in context

- Example:

- i. The word “table”: is it a piece of furniture, a chart in a document, level of ground water or a verb?
- ii. The word “stop”: if you’re in an antique shop and you see a sign that says “Stop”, you react differently than when you are driving on the road.

c. At the end, you want to be able to do two things:

- i. In a compact way, state the content of each paragraph. What does the Biblical writer say in this paragraph?
- ii. Explain very shortly why you think the writer says this right at this point. How does this content contribute to the argument?

Step 3:

Crossing the Bridge – what is the theological principle in this text?

- i. You are trying to create similarities between their situation and ours.
 1. What is the felt need or occurrence? Is there a command to obey? A promise to hold on to. An example to emulate or avoid? What is the link from that context to today’s realities?
 2. A few guidelines:
 - a. The principle should be reflected in the text
 - b. The principle should be timeless and not tied to specific situation
 - c. The principle should not be culturally bound
 - d. The principle should correspond to the teaching of the rest of Scripture
 - e. The principle should be relevant to both the biblical and contemporary audience

Putting It All Together – Group Exercise: Joshua 1:1-9

- a. **T**ext – Read the Bible and pay attention to anything that stands out (words, phrases, clues).
- b. **I**mmerse
 - i. Study the highlighted verse or phrase, by using various Bible tools/software, so you can understand it more deeply.
 1. Interrogate it:
 - a. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?
Please consider:
 - a) the *literary context* (passages before and after the passage),
 - b) the *historical context* (circumstances of the audience)
 - b. How has the author *organized* this passage?
Please a) show the structure in *sections with verse references* and
b) explain what *strategies* you used to see this structure.
 - c. Drawing on your work to this point, state the author's aim for *his audience* (in one short sentence).

Joshua Installed as Leader

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. **4** Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. **5** No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

7 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **8** Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. **9** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the Bible and pay attention to anything that stands out • Words and phrases – ask questions and pay attention 	Immerse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the highlighted verse or phrase, by using various Bible tools/software, so you can understand it more deeply. • Interrogate it: What makes sense? What is confusing? • Genre: what kind of writing is this? • Context: what was the setting? • Sum it up: in one sentence describe what you believe the text is saying?

