

Hermeneutics Class

“Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth”

Scripture Definitions

>**General revelation:** God shows Himself through creation (Ps.19:1).

>**Specific revelation:** God reveals Himself through the Bible...in many different ways.

>**Biblical genres:** The styles that God chose to write the Bible:
historical narrative, poetry, proverb, law, Gospels, letters, apocalyptic. The Bible is not a systematic theology text book.

>**Progressive revelation:** God chose to reveal Himself gradually over a long period of time (Heb.1:1,2; Eph.3:5,9; Col.1:23; Is.52:15) That does not mean that the OT is wrong, it is simply the basics that God chose to reveal at that time to those people. Ex.: when you are in grade school you learn basic math, when you are in high school you learn trigonometry. Does that mean addition and subtraction is wrong? No, it is merely the foundation and the basics for the more mature study. If we fail to recognize God's progressive unfolding of salvation, we will tumble into error.

>**Descriptive revelation:** The author merely describes an event. This does not mean that we are to mimic the description. We can learn principles or about the nature of God and man, but we do not model the described event. Ex. We do not invade other nations because God told the Jews to take the promised land. Note: sometimes the author does not clearly state the event is bad and should not be followed. Ex. Naaman (II Kings 5:18), Judges, David's many wives).

>**Prescriptive revelation:** This is direct language intended to prescribe a lesson, moral or value to every generation that reads it.

>**Selective revelation:** God has not chosen to reveal everything to us. While the Bible is complete in everything we need to know, it does not tell us everything we may want to know (history, science, predestination). Woodal states, “It's purpose is theological and its theme is Christ.”

>**Inspiration:** God's means of communicating everything we need to know for life and salvation. The Holy Spirit breathed out to men what he wanted them to communicate WITHOUT violating their minds, writing styles and personalities (II Tim3:16-17; II Pet. 1:20,21).

>**Verbal inspiration:** This involves both the thoughts of the author and the words of Scripture: both the role of man and the role of the Holy Spirit. In a sense we can describe the theology of Paul or John or Luke because the human element is not passive. However, Paul's theology is not different than or contradict Peter's.

>**Plenary inspiration:** ALL Scripture is inspired. There are not degrees of inspiration and the Bible is consistent and not contradictory. Some parts of Scripture might apply more but they are not more inspired.

>**Autographs:** the original manuscripts. Only the original manuscripts are inspired and perfect.

>**Infallibility:** The Bible is the reliable source of truth for Christians. Infallibility means not capable of errors.

>**Inerrancy:** There are no errors in the original manuscripts of the Bible. There are no contradictions. This is a modern day Shibboleth.

>**Canonization:** the process by which God protected the inspired writings. While the church did not formalize this canon until the fourth century, all of the texts we have today were recognized and used in the first century.

>**Translation:** the transformation of the written text from the source language (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) to the receptor language (English).

>**Textus Receptus:** This was the best manuscript available in 1611. This was the manuscript used for the original King James Version. It is also the text used for the New King James Version.

>**Eclectic Text:** This is the most modern and agreeably accurate text we have today. It consists of multiple sources that have been determined by consensus to be the most accurate. The following texts use the eclectic text: New American Standard Bible, New Revised Standard Version, English Language Bible, New International Version, New Living Translation.

>**Textual Criticism:** The method for examining the manuscripts to determine which rendering is most accurate. Don't panic, remember, only the original manuscripts are perfect and inspired.

>**Variants:** Discrepancies in the early manuscripts.

>**Unintentional:** errors of the eye or ear.

>**Intentional:** Woodal explains, "Intentional changes were made when two or more variant readings were combined into one (conflation), different Gospel accounts were made to agree (harmonization), or attempts were made to correct perceived manuscript error or to move a text more in the direction of orthodoxy."

NOTE: The variants that exist prior to the printing press are extremely minor and do not in any way, even once, alter a major or even minor doctrine.

>**Textual Criticism:** the study of manuscripts to determine which manuscript most accurately reflects the original. Rules:

>Oldest manuscript is preferred.

>widest geographical support

>the more difficult reading is preferred.

>the reading that most easily explains the other readings is preferred.

>the reading most characteristic of the author

>the reading that does not reflect doctrinal bias

>the shorter reading is preferred.

>**Text Divisions:** The early manuscripts were written in all capital letters, without spaces, no punctuation marks and no paragraph divisions. Chapter divisions were added in the thirteenth century by Stephen Langton and verse divisions were added by Stephanus in the sixteenth century.

>**Transliteration:** word for word equivalent.

>**Formal equivalents:** As word for word as possible without being entirely stiff and wooden. A literal translation. NASB, NRSV.

>**Functional (dynamic) equivalents:** the focus is on the function not the form. The attempt is to eliminate as much of the historical distance as possible. The goal is to have the text impact the modern reader the same way it impacted the original audience. Ex. NIV, NLT.

>**Paraphrase:** A rewriting of a paraphrase translation. This form is the furthest away from the original language. The Message. This type of translation should be avoided and only used after careful hermeneutics to ensure it accurately restates the original.

Recommendation: Use each type for it's strengths. Practice extreme caution with paraphrases.

A list in order from formal to liberal:

KJV
NKJV
NASB
RSV
NRSV
ESV
NIV
NET
NLT
GNB
Message

Interpretive History

This is a VERY general history of interpretive practices in the 20th century.

Early church through 1900: Very **allegorical**, hidden meanings and each item represented something. Ex. Lesson 6.8

Early 20th century; Heidiger and Kierkegaard introduced a more **metaphorical approach**, "What does the Bible say to ME?"

1930-1970: **New Criticism**. The meaning is found in the text. The text stands independent of other texts and the author. We cannot possibly understand what he intended.

1970's: **New Hermeneutic**. The reader creates the meaning as there is no absolute truth. Human subjectivity reigns and all interpretations are valid.

We endeavor to apply **Grammatical and Historical principles** to determine exactly what the author intended and how the original audience would have understood it...then we interpret it and apply it.

Reader response: What does the text say to me?

Authorial intent: What did the author intend to convey to the original audience.

Meaning: What the author intended it to say.

Significance: what does this mean to me today?

Interpretation Definitions

>**Grammatical-Historical Method:** Understanding the grammar of the text and the historical setting of the text.

>**Deductive:** Making a conclusion and then finding the evidence to support the conclusion or belief.

>**Inductive method:** Examining the data to make a conclusion and then an application. This is also known as the parts to the whole. This is how a doctor makes a diagnosis. This is the method we will be following.

>**Hermeneutics:** Literally, to explain, interpret, or translate. The art and science of interpreting Scripture. It is an art because you get better with practice. It is a science because there are definite rules to follow. Osborne states that "Hermeneutics encompasses both what it meant and what it means."

>**Exegesis:** Understanding what the author meant to say to the original audience. This is step one in the interpretive process. Exegesis is just one part (the first part) of the hermeneutics process. This process is objective in nature and inductive in methodology.

>**Eisegesis:** Reading INTO Scripture. In exegesis we read out of Scripture what the author intended to say. In eisegesis we read into Scripture what we want it to say.

>**Observation:** The process of examining EVERYTHING about a text. This is crucial and the first step of exegesis.

The **inductive method** must always proceed from observation to interpretation to application.

Presuppositions and Pre-Understandings

Presuppositions: These are non-compromisable beliefs about the Bible that are healthy and right for a Bible student to possess. These include the belief that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant, non-contradictory, perfect Word of God that has the ability to change us and lead us to everlasting life.

Pre-Understandings: These are all of the preconceived beliefs or understandings we have about what the Bible says. While these are not necessarily bad, we must always be aware of them and willing to adjust them. There are two types of pre-understandings:

>I think the Bible teaches this about _____. This belief may be correct, but we must be willing to change our understanding if the Bible clearly teaches us otherwise.

>**Attitudes and experiences** that influence our attitude toward Scripture. While these attitudes are not necessarily wrong, they should be checked at the door. These pre-understandings include: our language, social conditioning, gender, intelligence, cultural values, physical environment, political allegiances, emotional state, religious experience, denominational background, nationality.

Role of the Holy Spirit

How do we understand the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation? The only place to start is to examine the texts that discuss the issue. We then harmonize these texts into a complete theology. Let's look at two.

2 Tim.2:15 "Study to show yourself approved. A worker rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

>From that we learn that there is an intellectual and methodical way to understand Scripture. If we use the brains God has given us and interpret it with diligent application of certain principles, we will accurately handle God's Word.

I would like to suggest to you that anyone who uses his brain and practices certain principles can rightly understand the Bible. There are plenty of pagans who know Scripture better than you and me. Now you are panicking. "I thought you have to have the Holy Spirit to understand the Bible?" Yes and no. Anyone can understand what it teaches, but the role of the Holy Spirit provides a limited but crucial role in interpretation. Here is our next verse.

1 Cor. 2:14 "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

In other words, the unbeliever might understand the Bible, but he does not accept them as truth. He does not receive the Gospel (cf. Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 1:6). The Holy Spirit impresses the truth of the Scriptures on the believer only. We can only embrace them as true is with the Holy Spirit. The use of the word "understand" in the second part of the verse is a knowledge that comes from experience, not mere head knowledge. It is only with the Holy Spirit can a person understand the significance of the Word on his daily life.

An unbeliever can understand and comprehend the message of the Bible, how else can they determine it is foolish? They simply do not embrace it as truth. That is the role of the Holy Spirit, to help us receive and apply the Word, not to receive a special interpretive skill.

Can He, does He help us with the cognitive elements of interpretation? Perhaps, but we are clearly to study diligently ourselves.

The Holy Spirit becomes more involved when it comes to discerning the truth. He convinces them the Word is true. The unbeliever does not have this understanding.

Finally, when it comes to application, the Holy Spirit only can convince the believer it is true.

David Woodall states, "The Holy Spirit does not guide a believer in one correct interpretation of a passage-that only comes through reflection and careful study. The Holy Spirit does convince the believer that the Bible is the Word of God and the the believer should submit to it."

Does he help us understand the text? Certainly. Does He give us new revelation? No. He gives us new understanding.

Should we ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand and apply His truth? Yes. Should we neglect to endeavor to use interpretive skills to rightly understand the Word? No.

The interpretive process looks like this:

Observation (what does the text say)>>>What does the text mean (interpretation)>>>
Which parts of the text apply to us today>>>How does the New Testament
“change” the text>>>How do I apply the text?

INSERT PICTURE HERE

Sorry...we don't have the picture here, but it is crucial to this teaching.

Imagine this.....

On the left side of your mind, imagine an Old Town from Bible days. There are camels and dirt roads and sandals. Next to this Old Town is a river. Next to that river on the right side of your brain is New Town. This is the town you live in today.

Across the river is Principizing Bridge that connects Old Town from Bible days to you, in your New Town.

The river's width varies based on time, situation, culture, language and covenant.

The bridge is the principle that connects you with the original audience in Old Town.

That is the picture you should keep in mind as you continue.

The following steps are going to describe how you go from Old Town, over the river on Principizing Bridge to New Town.

Sorry we didn't scan in the pic.

But please make sure you keep this image in mind as you now read the Five Steps to crossing the river.

Grasping God's Word (Duvall and Hays) presents a four step model (five steps if the text is in the Old Testament).

Step One: What did the text say to the original audience only? We accomplish this by understanding what the text said grammatically. Next we consider the original audience's situation (were they at war, being disobedient or persecuted, starving, enjoying peace, etc.), why did the author write to them, what did he want them to understand. We begin with observation of the text. Before answering the question, "What does the text mean?", we must understand, "What does the text say?" In other words, we cannot jump the gun to interpretation until we understand what the text said and meant to the original audience. This will become clear as we progress. Refrain from interpreting or applying the text now. Just figure out what it says.

Step Two: How wide is the river (or barrier) between the original audience and us? This is accomplished by examining: culture, language, covenant, situation, time.

Step Three: This is the interpretive process answering the question, "What does it mean?" This may or may not be the same meaning to the original audience due to the width of the width of the river.

Step Four: This step is for OT passages only. How does the NT change the interpretation of the passage?

Step Five: How does the text APPLY to the modern reader/audience?

You will do well to memorize the following five points exactly.

Step One: Grasp the text in their town. What did the text mean to the original audience?

Step Two: Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

Step Three: Cross the principalizing bridge. What is the theological principle in this text?

Step Four: Does the New Testament change our understanding of an OT text?

Step Five: Grasp the text in our town. How should the individual Christian apply the theological principles in our lives today?

Step One:

Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the historical setting can radically influence interpretation.

Rev. 3:15-16.

Colossae was ten miles from Laodicea and it was known for its cold water.

Hierapolis to the north had hot springs. By the time the aqua ducts delivered the water from each city, it was lukewarm and unpleasant. Jesus wanted Laodicea to be like Hierapolis or Colossae...not cold and indifferent.

Laodicea was also known for its banking, wool and eye salve. Read the text with that knowledge in mind and your understanding will grow.

The author had an understanding of the historical and cultural setting, so did the audience and so should we. "Intro to Biblical Interpretation" states, "the correct interpretation of a biblical passage will be consistent with the historical-cultural background for the passage." (172)

There are two types of context to consider:

1. Historical and cultural context.
2. The internal, literary context. Immediate context is king.

What should you know before you start observing your text?

- >Author
- >Place of writing
- >Date of writing
- >Recipients
- >Location of recipients
- >Opponents
- >Culture
- >Commerce
- >Transportation
- >Trade
- >Agriculture
- >Industry
- >Occupations
- >Religion
- >Perceptions
- >History

Sources

- >The Bible. Other verses may give you insight.
- >Primary sources. Texts written during the same time.
- >Secondary sources. Commentaries, our Bible notes, encyclopedias.

Consider John 4:1-39 or I Cor.8,10.

How does the historical-cultural setting deepen our understanding of the text?

Observing Your Text (This is still a part of Step One)

Order of Observation

1. Observe your immediate text
2. Observe the immediate literary context of your text (what comes before and after your text, placement in the book as it relates to the paragraphs around it, flow of thought, the theme of the book, etc)
3. Observe other texts that may shed light on your text (ie- passages about sacrifice as they relate to Romans 12:1-2)
4. Consult outside sources (commentaries, dictionaries, lexicons, concordances, etc) only after completing as much observation as possible in steps 1-3

>**Read the text** over and over and over and over and over.

>**Look for:** repetition of words, contrasts, comparisons, lists, cause and effect, figures of speech, conjunctions, verbs, mood, pronouns.

>**When reading paragraphs**, look for general to specific or specific to general, questions and answers, dialogue, purpose statements, means (how something is being accomplished, conditional clauses, roles of people or God, emotional terms, tone,

>**Avoid trivial observations.** Examples: number of words in a passage, the verse begins with a capital letter, making an interpretation rather than an observation, making an application instead of an observation (what it means to ME rather than the original audience).

>**Avoid** reading into your observations. Some people read short portions of Scripture and observe in them what they want to observe and then make an entire theology out of this. While we stated that there is always more to observe, don't force the text to say something it doesn't. Example: the three success secrets of Shamgar.

>**Always watch for** connectives between sentences, paragraphs or chapters.

>**Be on the alert** for major breaks or pivots

>**Figures of speech** are important.

>**Ask questions of the text.** Write out a list of questions that you want answers to but need to look outside of your text to find. For the most part, we will not stop right now to find the answers to these questions. Right now, we want to spend as much time, on our own, in our text, finding out what it says. Later we will try to find the answers to these questions.

Comparisons

>**Simile:** a comparison between two things that are not alike, using like or as. You are like whitewashed tombs.

>**Metaphor:** a comparison between two things that are not alike introduced by a "be verb." You are the salt of the earth.

>**Hypocatastis:** a comparison between two things that are not alike implied by direct meaning: Behold, the Lamb of God.

Overstatement

>**Hyperbole:** deliberate exaggeration. Literal fulfillment is impossible. Ex. take that beam out of your eye, number of deaths is a battle.

>**Overstatement:** deliberate exaggeration that could (wrongly) be imagined. Ex. 70 times 7.

>**Irony:** Contrary to fact in order to stress a point.

>**Others:** Personification, anthropomorphism.

After determining this information, you can complete Step One of the interpretive process of exegesis. **We cannot** understand more than the original audience.

Keep in mind progressive revelation as you complete Step One. While our understanding is greater than the original audience, we cannot impose that understanding onto the text. However, we must keep the entire Bible in mind as we interpret a text.

Practice Time

Diagraming

Organization of the text so the grammatical relationships become visible.

Identify: Main subject, main verb, modifiers, adjectives, adverbs (modifies a verb or other adverb but not a noun), prepositional phrases, subordinate or dependant clauses, connectives (chronological, continuation, contrast, comparison, aim or intent (in order), result (so that, as a result), reason, inference that draws a conclusion, condition, concession.

Step Two: With our historical and cultural setting in mind, we have to measure the width of the river by determining if the text is addressing a cultural issue that only applies to the original audience or if the issue is one we are likely to face today. This is crucial: role of women in church, slavery, homosexuality.

How wide is the river that separates us from the original audience? We must consider the following:

>**Culture:** Ex. Women were uneducated. Each text must be carefully examined on its own and then compared to: the author's other writings on this subject, the rest of the book, other authors' writings on this subject, the rest of that testament, the rest of the Bible. External sources might shed some light also.

>**Setting:** Ex. In Judges every man did what was right in his own eyes as there was no king. War. Jer.29:19. What difference does it make if the setting is different? The original audience would understand the writing with their setting in mind and this might change the ultimate interpretation of the text.

>**Language:** Has the language changed? Is there a meaning to a word that is different? We have moved from one language to another, that is always a challenge. Words change in meaning over time, we must understand what those words meant at that exact time.

>**Time:** At least 2000 years has passed.

>**Covenant:** Are we living in the same covenant (NT), or in a different covenant (OT)? Remember, OT believers were blessed with prosperity and peace, NT believers receive a different peace. This is crucial when especially when we read OT verses, Jesus makes a big difference.

What applies and what doesn't?

>Specific commands should be obeyed.

>Condemned activities should be avoided.

>Adiaphora. This is the tricky third category. Things neither

>commanded nor

forbidden, disputable dispensations, things neither commanded nor forbidden.

I Cor. 8 tells us:

>If it is a sin to a believer, it is a sin even if the Bible does not say so.

>The stronger brother for whom it is not a sin should not "cause the weaker brother to stumble." This does not mean that we cannot partake of the activity (although just because it is lawful does not mean it is beneficial), but we cannot force the weaker brother to partake and stumble.

>The weaker brother cannot demand the stronger brother stop. He cannot impose his preference but learn to understand that some things are not sins for others.

Ex.: movies, TV, working on Sunday, mixed swimming, playing pool or cards, smoking, tattoos, women wearing pants to church, raising tobacco, listening to pop music, instruments in church, makeup for women, earrings/beards for men, length of hair for men.

Step Three

Interpreting the text. What does it MEAN?

Which commands or observances stay in the first century and which ones transcend to us?

Regardless, we must determine what principles are to be learned from the text. These should be stated in a way that does not reference the historical or modern situation.

Step one states what the verse says to that audience, this is simply restating the principle.

Step three is a re-stating of the principle in general terms.

State in a brief sentence what your verse means. Ex. John 3:16. God is amazingly loving because He sent Jesus to save us if we will believe.

Step Four

Does the New Testament change our understanding of the text? The OT believers lived differently than we do: theocracy, judges, old covenant, less progressive revelation.

Step Five

We must apply the text to us, today. It is imperative that the situation resembles the general situation and then apply the theological principles to our situation.

Let's look at five categories of application

>**Specific Command.** John tells us we would love one another. We should follow that command without wavering.

>**Specific Prohibition.** Paul tells us to not practice homosexuality, there is nothing that changes that prohibition.

>**Cultural issues.** Women should not speak out in church. How do we know if this is cultural or not. 1. We study the historical and cultural setting and discover that women were usually not educated and were not allowed to speak in public to men. 2. In other verses Paul tells us that women can indeed teach other women. Therefore we conclude this is a cultural issue. Why isn't homosexuality a cultural issue? God consistently condemns such behavior throughout Scripture.

>**Principles but not practice.** Ex. Blood for the forgiveness of sin.

>**Adiaphoron.** I can drink, but not get drunk and I should be careful that I do not offend and I should be certain that I do not force someone to drink for whom it is a sin. I should also be mindful that even though I am allowed, it might not be a good idea.

Let's practice

Heb12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Step One: Grasp the text in their town. What did the text mean to the original audience?

Observation: Serious tone (13:22), focus on Jesus, many OT references. Historical-cultural setting: the audience probably has a Jewish background, written @60AD nearing tremendous persecution under Nero, our author is writing to encourage them to not return to Judaism for the sake of persecution but to remain steadfast because Christ is superior.

Literary context: The "therefore" ties us to the preceding chapter, the hall of faith chapter. 12:1-2 uses race imagery using Jesus as the example. 3-11 describes hardships as an expression of God's love by using the analogy of a parent's love for a child.

Continued observation: Using the great examples of chapter 11, the original audience is told:

1. throw off whatever hinders you.
2. run the race with perseverance
3. fix your eyes on Jesus

The race imagery should govern the way we understand any key words. This race takes effort, training and is long distance. We should run a marked path, stripping our clothes (anything that hinders us) with our eyes on Jesus. The word “author” can mean “champion, leader, forerunner or initiator”. In other words, because Jesus has been the champion who has perfected the way, our path is clear so we can run it. There are hurdles but the roadblocks have been removed by Jesus.

To summarize the meaning: the author uses the imagery of long distance running to encourage his audience to persevere despite opposition. Endure, don't drift back to Judaism. As an inspiration they should consider the faithful saints who persevered before them, especially Jesus, the champion of faith.

Step Two: Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

We share much with this new covenant audience. We run a marathon and have many great examples of faith that precede us, especially Jesus. However, we don't face the same level of persecution and we are not tempted to revert to Judaism. There may be other more PC religions though.

Step Three: Cross the principalizing bridge. What are the theological principles in this text?

1. The Christian life is like a difficult long-distance race, which requires effort and endurance.
2. We should look to the saints before us for encouragement.
3. In order to successfully complete the race, we should get rid of anything that hinders us and focus on Jesus.

Step four: Grasp the text in our town. How should we apply this text today?

Let's combine the theological principle and the original situation:

>The runners are Christians and the race is life.

>The race is hard and we are tempted to quit.

>Running a successful race requires both effort and endurance.

Now, what is a contemporary situation that contains ALL of the key elements? In other parts of Scripture, the emphasis is on God's grace, but here we are told how to respond to His grace. We must realize that effort and discipline is required in our Christian walk/race over a long period of time.

If you have been mocked, wounded, hurt because of your faith, you must fix your eyes on Jesus, look at the many who preceded you and endure.

What would be some specific scenarios?

Grammar...Literary Context

Literary context is crucial. Kay Arthur chants, “Context, context context.”

Only when we understand what immediately before and after a verse can we correctly determine what the verse means. Context determines meaning.

A word can have a semantic range, but a word has only ONE meaning in a text.

Trunk can mean be related to: a tree, a suitcase, a human, elephant, underwear, a car. The context will determine what is the correct and exact meaning.

How do we understand the context?

1. Determine the paragraphs in a chapter (best if it is the entire book). Most times they will resemble the paragraph breaks in your English translation, but not always.
2. Summarize the big idea of each paragraph in as few words as possible (no more than twelve).
3. Prepare a thought flow outline.
4. How does your paragraph fit into the immediate context?

Study Matthew 11:1-6. Notice the text is surrounded by miracles and Jesus teaching about persecution.

If time does not permit such a careful study, at least read several paragraphs before and after your text. It is also important to read the first chapter as it will frequently tell you the purpose for writing. If a purpose is identified by the author, this purpose should be kept in view at all times as it may influence your understanding of your text.

Concordance use.

A concordance is an index, or alphabetical listing, of words used in the Bible, with references to chapter and verse. An exhaustive concordance is a tool for the Bible student to study all the places in the Bible where a particular word is found.

John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress: "I dare not presume to say I know I have hit right in everything; but this I can say I have endeavored to do. I have not fished in other men's water. My Bible and concordance are my only library in my writing."

Until you've got your Bible memorized in both of the original languages, keep your concordance within reach.

WHY USE THIS TOOL?

9 Reasons:

- a. To find the reference of a verse. If you want to find a verse, simply look up the most unusual word and you will find the verse.
- b. To find which verses contain a certain word. Find every use of the word for a word study.
- c. To gather background information. To learn everything about a person or place, look up the name and let the Bible teach you about your subject.
- d. To compare Scripture with Scripture by using cross-references. In order to develop a systematic theology, all verses on your subject should be studied.
- e. To determine word distribution in a chapter or book. Frequently an author uses the same word frequently. A concordance will help you see how often your word is used.
- f. To determine the semantic range (possible meanings) of a word. This is often necessary in order to determine exact meaning.
- g. To understand how the author uses the word in the book.
- h. To study word association. By discovering associated words, it will help you understand the meaning of your word.

- i. To discover the word in the original language. Don't panic, your concordance can do all the work, and this will help you learn the semantic range of the word.

HOW TO PUT YOUR CONCORDANCE TO WORK

Digging INTO a Designated Word

Goal: Examine the original Hebrew or Greek word. This will introduce you to the different ways the word CAN be used (semantic range).

Concordance Steps

1. Look up your English word. *(obey)*
2. Find the verse that your word is used in. *(Colossians 3:20,22)*
3. Look to the right of your verse and you will see a number. That is the number that is assigned to your Greek or Hebrew word. *(Gk. 5219)*
4. Go to the back of the concordance to the Greek or English Dictionary.
5. Look up your number and you have found information in this order (in Strong's):
 - a. The Greek word
 - b. The "transliteration" of the Greek word, or how it is written in English letters
 - c. How to pronounce the word *(hoop-ak-oo'-o)*
 - d. The etymology of the word, or where the word came from with related numbers *(from 5259 and 191)*
 - e. The definition of the word, in this case *"to hear under (as a subordinate), i.e. to listen attentively; by impl. To heed or conform to a command or authority"*.
 - f. The different ways the word is translated into English in the King James. The translations always appear after the (:). In our example. we learn that this same Greek word appears in the English New Testament as *"hearken, be obedient to, obey"*.

Determine Meaning OUT OF Digging

1. Look up the possible meanings in your concordance.
2. How does the author USUALLY use the word? Remember, this does not mean the word must mean the same thing.
3. How is the word used in other verses?
4. Remember, Scripture interprets Scripture (the analogy of faith). If your selected meaning of a word causes the verse to undermine other verses, you have selected the wrong translation.
5. If the word is repeated in a single book, the author probably had the same meaning in mind.
6. Does the author's argument suggest a meaning? Does the historic situation help us determine the meaning?

Two Decisive Steps:

- A. Determine the semantic range.
- B. Determine the exact meaning. You must pick one and one only.
-Paul's use of the word obey in regards to children and slaves means...

Concordance and Word Study WARNINGS

English-only fallacy: you base your word study on the English word and not the original language. Don't use an English dictionary as a study tool.

Root fallacy: a word means what it means to the users, not what its etymology is. Consider the word "gay".

Time frame fallacy: what the word meant before or after the original audience.

Overload fallacy: a word has one meaning in a given text, not the entire

semantic range of the word. Consider “works”.

Word-count fallacy: don't give the word the same meaning every time it occurs.

Word-concept fallacy: once we have studied the word we have not studied the entire concept. You must study each word each time in each context. Consider “blessing”.

Let's practice another word together. Gen.39:14-15. Potiphar's wife has just attempted to seduce Joseph. Joseph fled, she grabbed his coat and called the other servants saying that, “the Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us. He came here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.”

Let's figure out what “to make sport of” means.

1. Look up the word “sport.”
2. In the NIV you will find your verse and learn your Hebrew number is 7464.
3. Go to the Hebrew dictionary and look up your number and read about shahaq. It's semantic range is: to laugh; to mock, make sport, caress; to laugh with delight or in scorn; caressing, indulge in revelry.
4. You will also be told how many times each definition is used.

Which definition should you choose?

1. Look up the other verses that use your word.
2. Keep your immediate context in mind.
3. Look at your circle of context: start with the verses immediately surrounding your word, then the word as it's used in the same book, then how it is used by the same author in different books (if he has written others), then how it is used in the same testament, then the whole Bible.
4. Look for a contrast in the same verse: Eph.4:29.
5. Does the subject matter dictate a meaning?
6. Does the author use the same word in a similar context elsewhere?
7. Does the theme of the book suggest a meaning?
8. Does the historical situation help determine a meaning?

Now, select only ONE meaning and defend it...recognizing you could be wrong. Finally, use other sources to compare your work. Consider the NIV Theological Dictionary of NT Words.

Application

First things first. Let's make sure we only apply Scriptures that were meant for us. Remember, some verses are merely describing an event or emotion. That does not mean we get to take that verse and automatically apply it.

How do we do that?

Duvall and Hays lead us through Phil.4:13. “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Let's go through the interpretive process together.”

Step One: Grasp the text in their town. Summarize the original situation and the meaning of the text for the original audience.

Paul wrote this letter from prison, he was experiencing hardship. He is awaiting trial. Because he has been faithful in proclaiming Christ (doing ministry) he is in jail. The theme of this friendship letter is for the Philippians

to stand firm in the face of trials and persecution. Paul also acknowledges that Jesus has provided for him through their gift. Let's write a summary.

Step Two: How wide is the river? What are the differences between then and now? Usually in the NT, the river is not very wide. However, this passage has some situations that are specific to the understanding of the original audience. Paul was an apostle who was in jail and he had received a gift from a church. There are similarities though: we are new covenant believers who are members of Christ's body and we experience challenges to living the Christian life.

Step Three: Cross the principlizing bridge. What are the theological principles? We could state, "Jesus will give believers the strength to be content in a variety of trying circumstances that come as a result of following him faithfully."

Step Four: Applications can vary from reader to reader, but we need to make sure that our applications don't exceed what the author originally intended. So let's list the circumstances as that is the one distinguishing characteristic of this verse.
>Paul is a Christian.
>Paul is doing church work.
>Paul is being persecuted for Christ.
We must meet those criteria for this verse to apply. If all three elements do not exist in our situation, then the verse does not apply to us. Remember, Paul is talking about enduring, not conquering or accomplishing.

With that in mind, let's write some applications. The application must be specific.

Genres

The word "massacre" means something different on the front page than it does on the sports page. The genre of literature may make a significant difference in how we understand words and meanings. The same is true with the Bible. As we read a text, we should always be aware of which genre we are in.

Let's read through the paper.
Front page: Larry Johnson got loaded and drove like a madman.
Real estate section: This model home is loaded.
Sports page: He loaded his high power rifle and shot a bulls eye.
Local section: The pavilion was loaded with people.

We automatically interpret a word a certain way when we understand what genre of the paper we are in. The same thing is true with the Bible. When you understand which of the many types of literature God chose to write the Bible, you will better understand what He is trying to communicate.

The New Testament

Gospel: The Gospel is a historical, theological biography of Jesus Christ. Each author had a different audience in mind. The purpose/theme of each biography should be kept in view at all times. Remember, biographies then are different than biographies now. Ancient biographers did not feel the need to include every detail or to put events in order. Remember, their theme was prominent in their minds, so event order

sometimes took second place to theme. If you read a parallel account in another Gospel (horizontal reading) and it appears to be different, it is because the writer wanted to stress something different.

MATTHEW wrote to Jews to proclaim Jesus as KING.

MARK wrote to Romans to present Jesus as a SERVANT.

LUKE wrote to the Greeks (Theopholis) to declare Jesus was an IDEAL MAN.

JOHN wrote to the world to announce Jesus as the SON OF GOD.

As you read the Gospels, you need to understand what Jesus was saying AND what the author meant by his choice of material presented.

Miracles: Remember, these are biographies, not mythologies. The author wrote of the miracles as if they actually happened. That is another presupposition worth holding onto.

We are never given a complete account with every single detail presented. We should be very careful to not speculate on what God chose to not disclose.

The first three Gospels are called the **Synoptics** because they are similar in type and structure and share much of the same material. John's Gospel contains @70% unique material.

Parables: A long simile (fictitious story) that moves from the known (the every day) to the unknown (the moral or spiritual). Prior to the late 19th century, parables were translated allegorically (every detail was given a hidden significance). This led to wild interpretations and predictions.

In the late 19th century, a liberal theologian rejected the allegorical approach and promoted a one point only approach. In other words, there is only one lesson per parable.

Modern theologians now promote a triadic structure. Because parables like the parable of the weeds in Matt. 13:38,39 clearly present multiple meanings (allegories), it is best to understand that MOST parables present three basic points: God, someone (or a group) that responds positively and someone (or a group) that responds negatively to Him. All other details merely support the story but do not have an allegorical meaning or lesson for us.

The purpose of a parable is to call for a response from us.

Acts

40% of the OT is narrative and 60% of the NT is narrative (the Gospels and Acts).

When we begin the observation phase (step one of step one), we should determine:

WHO: Who is the author and who is the audience?

WHEN: When are things happening and why do they happen in that order in the text?

WHERE: What is the geographical setting?

WHAT: What is the plot?

Your biggest challenge is to determine if the narrative is prescriptive (applicable or commanded to us) or merely descriptive (which always serves to teach

us something about God or man, but does not tell us how to behave). All Scripture has a lesson to teach (applicable) but not all Scripture is prescriptive.

How do we determine if the narrative is prescriptive or descriptive?

1. Examine the text itself. If the details of a similar event are not exact, perhaps it is not normative. Consider Acts 2, 8, 10, 19. (pg.268)
2. If events are unique, consider if this is meant to be repeated throughout history.
3. Is God doing something new? If He is, the narrative may simply be describing the event.
4. Interpret narratives in light of the letters (didactic books).
5. Does the narrative contradict any other Scripture? If it does, it is a narrative.

Perhaps the best way to discover what is normative is to look for themes or patterns that remain constant throughout the book of Acts.

Letters

There are three major characteristics to consider when we read a NT letter.

1. They are occasional documents. In other words, the author had an occasion to write. The author was writing to correct, teach, encourage or rebuke. Without understanding this, reading a letter is like listening to a one-sided phone conversation.
2. Legal documents. Because the letters are legal in nature, the author had a structure and order in mind and special attention should be paid to order, connectives, conditions and cause and effect.
3. These are ancient documents. While God certainly had us in mind when the letter was being written, these letters were written to real people. If we fail to overlook that, we will neglect to consider context, culture, situation and time. To forget these are ancient documents will lead us to breeze through Step One of the interpretive process.

Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic literature was a prevalent form of literature from 7BC until the 2nd century AD.

The best way to view apocalyptic literature is to think of it as our modern day political cartoons. Many symbols are used and many modern references are used, and if we fail to know what these symbols and references are, we will not understand what the author intended to say.

Not only are symbols frequently employed but figurative language is employed.

If you had never heard the term, "It is raining cats and dogs", you might think you were in a strange land. The challenge is understanding what is symbolic, figurative or literal.

How should we read it and how do we determine if the language is symbolic or literal?

Howard Hendricks recommends 10 principles.

1. Use the literal sense unless there is some good reason not to. Literal

interpretation must be the starting point.

2. Use the figurative sense when the text tells you to. Rev. 1:20; 4:5; 5:8; 7:13, 14; 12:9; 17:9, 12, 15, 18.
3. Use the figurative sense if the literal meaning is impossible or absurd. Rev. 1:16, Jesus couldn't have an actual sword coming out of His mouth.
4. Use the figurative sense if a literal meaning would involve something immoral. Ex. Eating the flesh of Jesus or drinking His blood.
5. Use the figurative sense if expression is an obvious figure of speech. Rev. 1:14-16.
6. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the scope of the passage. Rev. 5:5 clearly refers to Jesus and not an actual lion.
7. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the general character and style of the book. Is the text a reference or symbol the original audience would have clearly understood. The use of encyclopedias and dictionaries will help with this.
8. Use the figurative sense if a literal interpretation goes contrary to the plan and purpose of the author.
9. Use the figurative sense if the literal interpretation causes a contradiction of Scripture.
10. Use the figurative sense if the literal interpretation causes a contradiction of doctrine.

If the figure is symbolic, the question then becomes, "What is the symbol representing?"

1. If the symbol is defined in the book of Revelation, embrace it.
2. If a symbol is interpreted elsewhere in the Bible, embrace it.
3. If your symbol is present in extra canonical apocalyptic literature, consider any interpretation in that context as a possible interpretation in your passage.
4. Context should be the final arbiter of the meaning of the symbol.

Old Testament Narrative

God uses stories to show us how to live or not live through the lives and stories of others.

Don't look for allegories but principles that teach us about God, man or how we are to live.

Once the OT theological principle is established, it must be considered in light of NT theology.

Old Testament Law

Law in the OT can mean:

1. The entire OT.
2. The Pentateuch, Genesis through Deuteronomy.
3. Exodus 20 through Deut. 33 (the Mosaic law).

There are three ways to determine which laws, if any, apply to the NT believer. There are three basic models. While their approach is different, the result is the almost basically, but not entirely, the same.

1. The law is separated into three categories: moral, civil and ceremonial.

Moral: behavior.

Civil: Casuistic law.

Ceremonial: How to worship God.

The moral law (including the ten commandments) still apply today, but the civil and ceremonial no longer apply, however, principles can be learned from them. The only major snag to this approach is the fourth commandment.

2. Follow all of the Mosaic Laws except for the laws that the NT repeals.

This approach has limitations in farming and clothing, which are not repealed in the NT.

3. None of the OT laws apply. We follow only the laws set forth in the NT.

While the NT does not address some OT laws (sorcery), we could still use the principles learned in the OT to learn about these issues.

Old Testament Poetry

While we could study the various styles of Hebrew poetry, what is important to remember is that poetry is intended to involve us and help us **FEEL** what God is trying to teach us. How kind that God would provide a genre of teaching that allows us to understand God on an emotional level.

While we never want to feel anything that is not biblical, we do want to enjoy the emotions that God allows us to have. Drink it in. Enjoy. Meditate.

Old Testament Proverbs

Proverbs are written to teach us right and wrong living in a striking and memorable way. Again, how kind of God. Let the proverbs paint a picture in your mind to help you learn. Remember, proverbs are not promises. They are principles to live by that if kept will usually lead to better living.

The shorter the proverb, the less likely it is to be precise. Again, proverbs are not promises that everything will work exactly as described, they are general principles that must be balanced with two other considerations:

>**God's sovereignty**

>**Job**

If you use a concordance to gather all of the proverbs on your topic, a more well rounded picture will emerge.

Old Testament Prophecy

OT prophecy differs from NT apocalyptic literature (chart by D. Brent Sandy.)

INSERT CHART

Very little of the OT is predictive. Most prophetic literature is proclaiming or forth telling.

>2% of OT prophecy is messianic.

>5% of OT prophecy describes the New Covenant age.

>1% of OT prophecy concerns events yet to come after the NT period.

While we recognize a small amount of prophetic/foretelling in the OT, **we must avoid** the extreme of forcing a futuristic element to all prophecy.

The reader should also consider near and distant predicting.

There can also be multiple fulfillments to a single prophecy.

Determining the future of Israel and its relationship to the church is perhaps the biggest issue to be addressed. And I'm not gonna do it. Nevertheless, there are basically four main schools of thought.

1. Covenant Ammilenialism

Israel = Church

Israel and the church are the same throughout history and Israel should be understood as the people of God. Israel is a non-ethnic term.

2. Historic Pre-millennialism

The church replaces Israel

The OT Jews were an ethnic entity that was disinherited because of their apostasy. The church began in Acts 2. Israel still exists and has a future, but the church with both Jews and Gentiles fulfills Israel's prophetic hopes and constitutes God's one elect people.

3. Classic or Revised Dispensationalism

The Church interrupts Israel

Israel is always ethnic Israel and the church is distinct. There are two people and two programs that should not be confused. When the church is raptured, the plan for Israel will resume from its interruption from the church.

4. Progressive Dispensationalism

The Church includes and extends Israel

Israel is ethnic and distinct from the church (even though Israel is part of the church). The church is in a sense a continuation of Israel. There is a future for ethnic Israel.

You pick.