

Exegesis & Hermeneutics

*Some guidelines for
interpreting the Bible*

GENEVA
BIBLE SCHOOL



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE?

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15

The various contexts of any Passage



External context

Internal context

DEFINITION OF EXEGESIS

Exegesis [< Greek exègeisthai (to extract)]

Definition: To understand a text by way of a thorough analysis of its content. In its most basic Bible-relevant meaning, exegesis means finding out what the Spirit originally was saying through its author in that Bible passage.

Exegesis is what comes out of the Bible, as against what gets read into it.

“Ex” = “out of”

“Egesis” = “to lead”

**Ex+Egesis = to lead out
from the Biblical text**

“For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”

Ezra 7:10 (NIV)

METHOD OF EXEGESIS

CO

Context

Who said
it **When**
and **Where**?

FO

Form

How did
he say it?

CO

Content

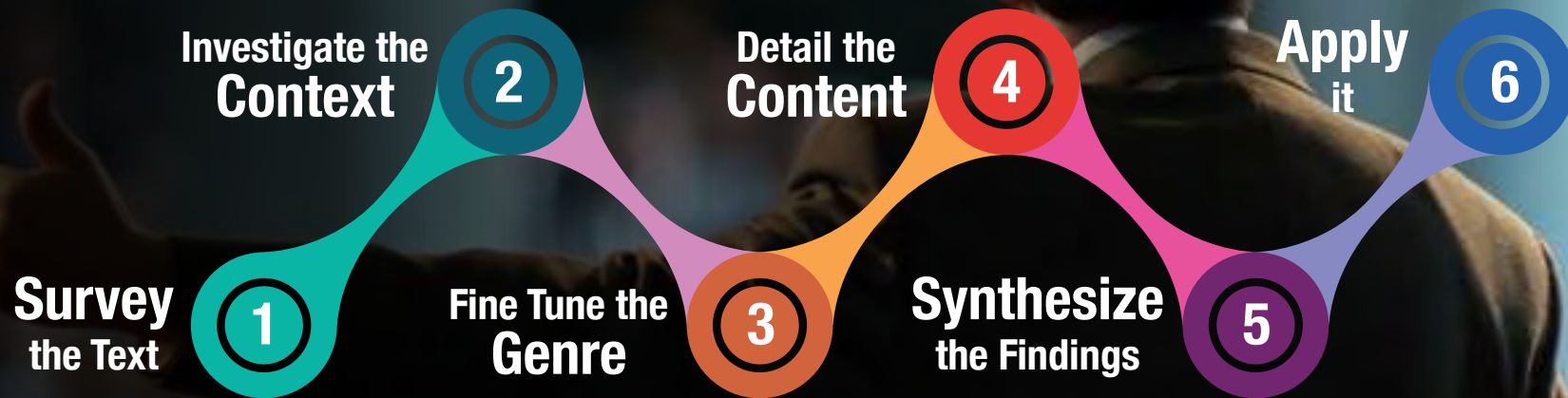
What did
he say?

FU

Function

Why did
he say it?

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS WORKFLOW



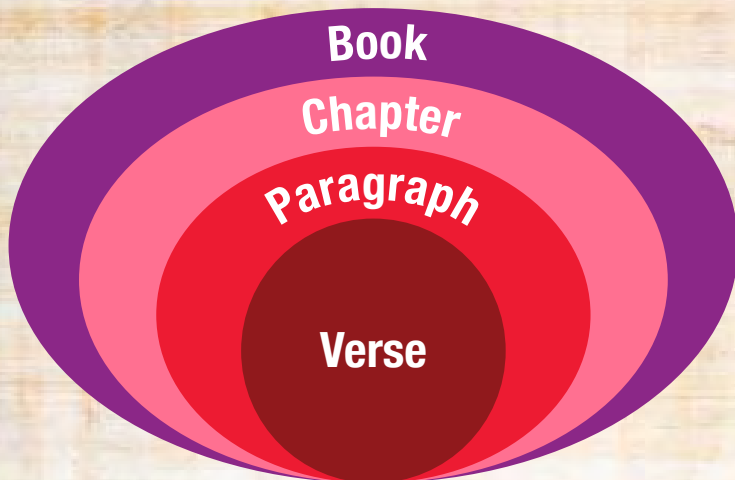
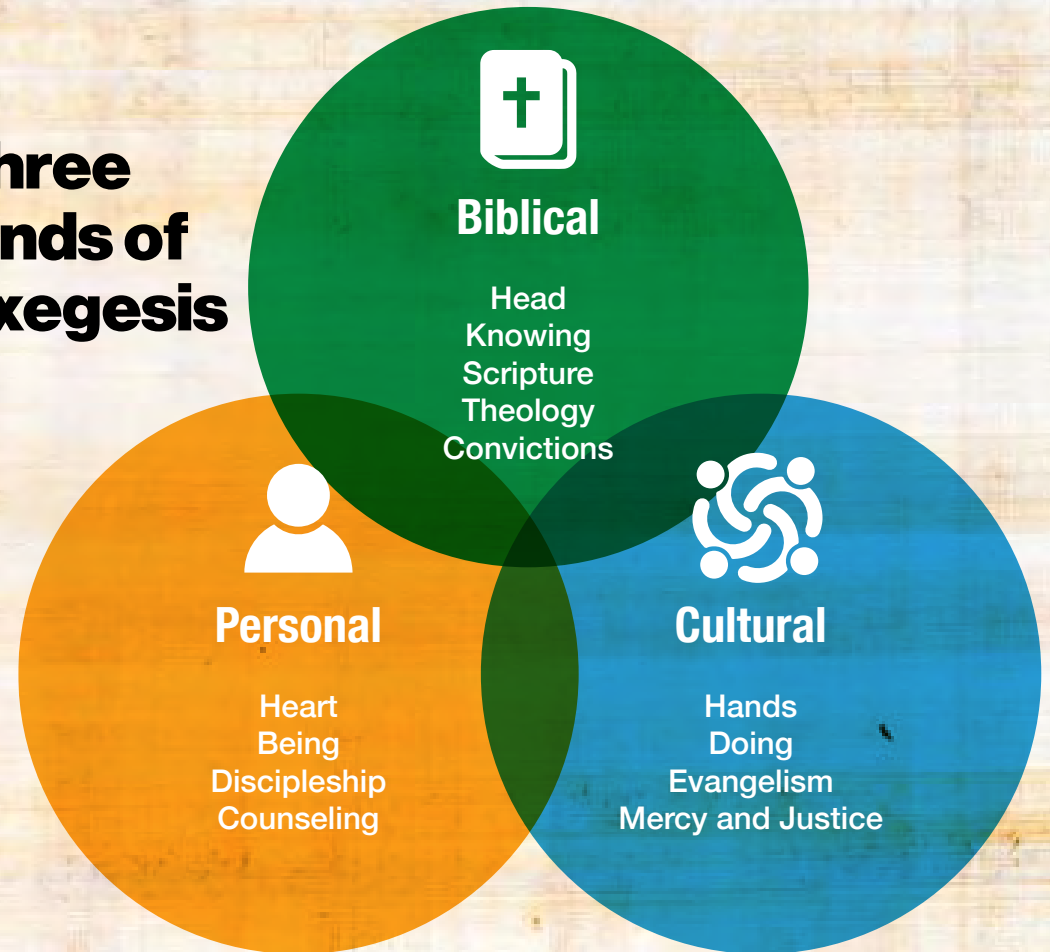
“Exegesis...is an act of love. It means loving the one who speaks the words enough to want to get the words right. It is respecting the words enough to use every means we have to get the words right. Exegesis is loving God enough to stop and listen carefully.”

– Eugene Peterson, in Theology Today, April 1999

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS TO DO LIST

- ✓ Survey Text
- ✓ What does it say?
- ✓ Read the whole Book
- ✓ Read, re-read, read different translation or language
- ✓ Take notes
- ✓ Get the big picture, overall message, big idea, topic
- ✓ Read an introduction to the Book
- ✓ Inductive & Deductive Reading

Three kinds of Exegesis



A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a book with a blue pen. The person is wearing a red shirt. The book is open, and the pages are yellowed with age. The background is dark and out of focus.

EXAMPLE OF EXEGESIS

In Leviticus 11

God instructs Israel not to eat the meat of certain animals, like those who do not chew the cud or have a divided hoof.

By carefully studying the historical and cultural context of the passage and of the book of Leviticus (i.e. by doing an exegetical study) we might ascertain that God was trying to institute a new code of conduct among his people of how they were to govern their lives in the Promised Land.



Unclean food?



“Every animal that does not have a divided hoof or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean.”

Leviticus 11:26

Clean food



EXAMPLE OF EXEGESIS

In Leviticus 11

What to eat?

Among the many goals, three stand out in this text:

1

Fidelity to God, which was demonstrated by avoiding the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations (some of which showed up in the prohibitions we see in Leviticus).

2

Identity of God's people - This was achieved in everything from the clothes that Israel was allowed to wear to the food they were allowed to eat. Thus, even when they sat down for a meal, their eating code would remind them that they were a unique people, special unto God.

3

A high moral standard, which would separate Israel from the practices of the other nations. This was best summed up by the phrase, "Be holy, because I am holy..." (Lev 11:44)

EXAMPLE OF EXEGESIS

In Leviticus 11

The prohibitions against eating certain kinds of food (as did the other prohibitions found in Exodus through Deuteronomy) all functioned to uphold these three values (among many others).

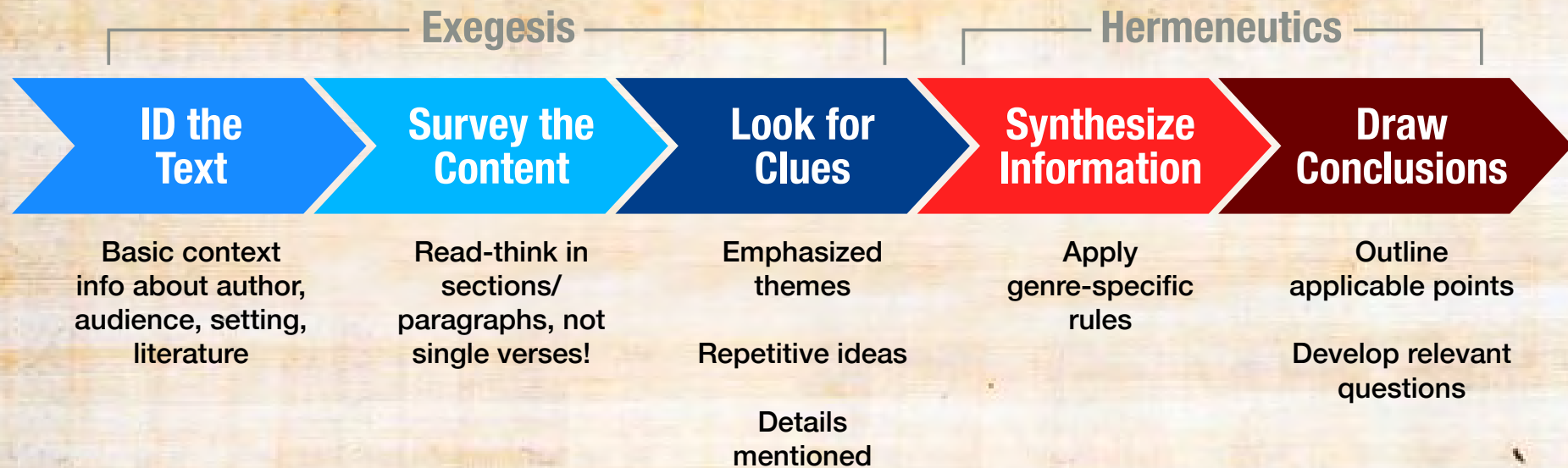
Thus, our exegetical study would help us determine what God's word meant to its original audience in its original context.

From here, the jump to a modern application is much easier to make. We could simply ask: What are the things in our culture that must be avoided in order to remain faithful to God, to maintain our identity as Christians and to maintain a high moral standard?

Jumping directly from the text to a modern application (without exegesis) would require all of us to stop eating pork, which we could consider an incorrect "interpretation" of Leviticus 11.



EXEGESIS-HERMENEUTICS WORK PROCESS





DEFINITION OF HERMENEUTICS

The word hermeneutics comes from the Greek word **hermeneu(te)s** meaning “**to interpret, to explain**”. Thus, hermeneutics is an interpretation.

Hermeneutics, in general, does not necessarily have to refer to biblical study but could be an interpretation of another story, text, etc. Merriam-Webster defines hermeneutics as “the study of the methodological principles of interpretation” and “a method or principle of interpretation.”

This word is most often used in relation to the Bible. It is the **science (principles) and art (task) of Biblical interpretation.**

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS?

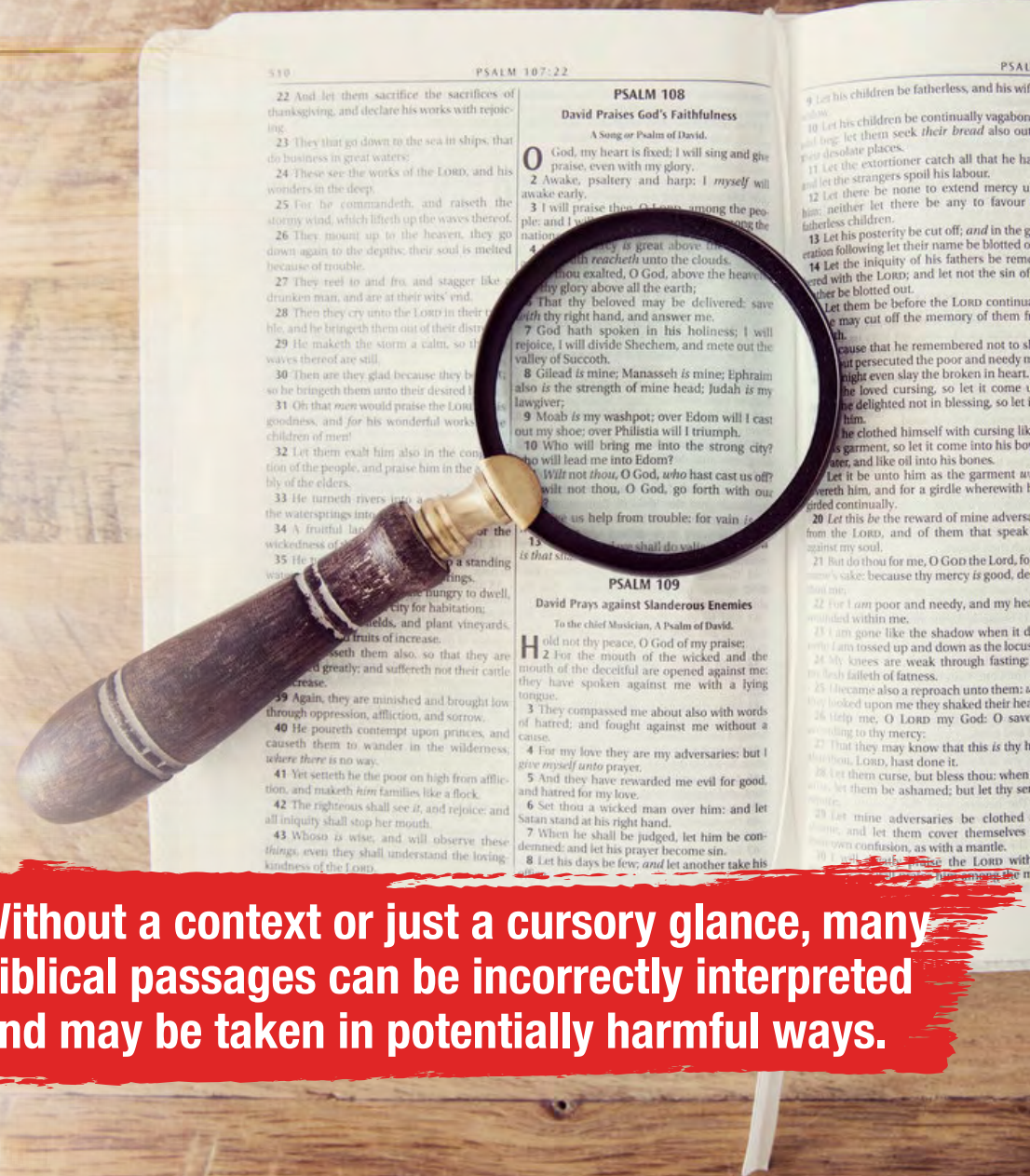
Is the study of the principles of interpreting what means the God's Word.

A Discipline: The study of God's Word must be conducted within the context of our relationship to and dependence upon God. View the hermeneutics process, not as an avenue to conquer God's Word, but to properly understand God's Word that it may conquer our hearts.

A Science: Biblical hermeneutics follows certain processes, resulting in an understanding of the text. Through systematic study, we can find consistency as we seek to understand God's Word.

An Art: We gain a feel for the significance to ascribe to certain parts of the hermeneutic process, and gain skill in recognizing where our attention will prove to be most beneficial.

Without a context or just a cursory glance, many biblical passages can be incorrectly interpreted and may be taken in potentially harmful ways.



PURPOSE OF HERMENEUTICS?

The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to understand:

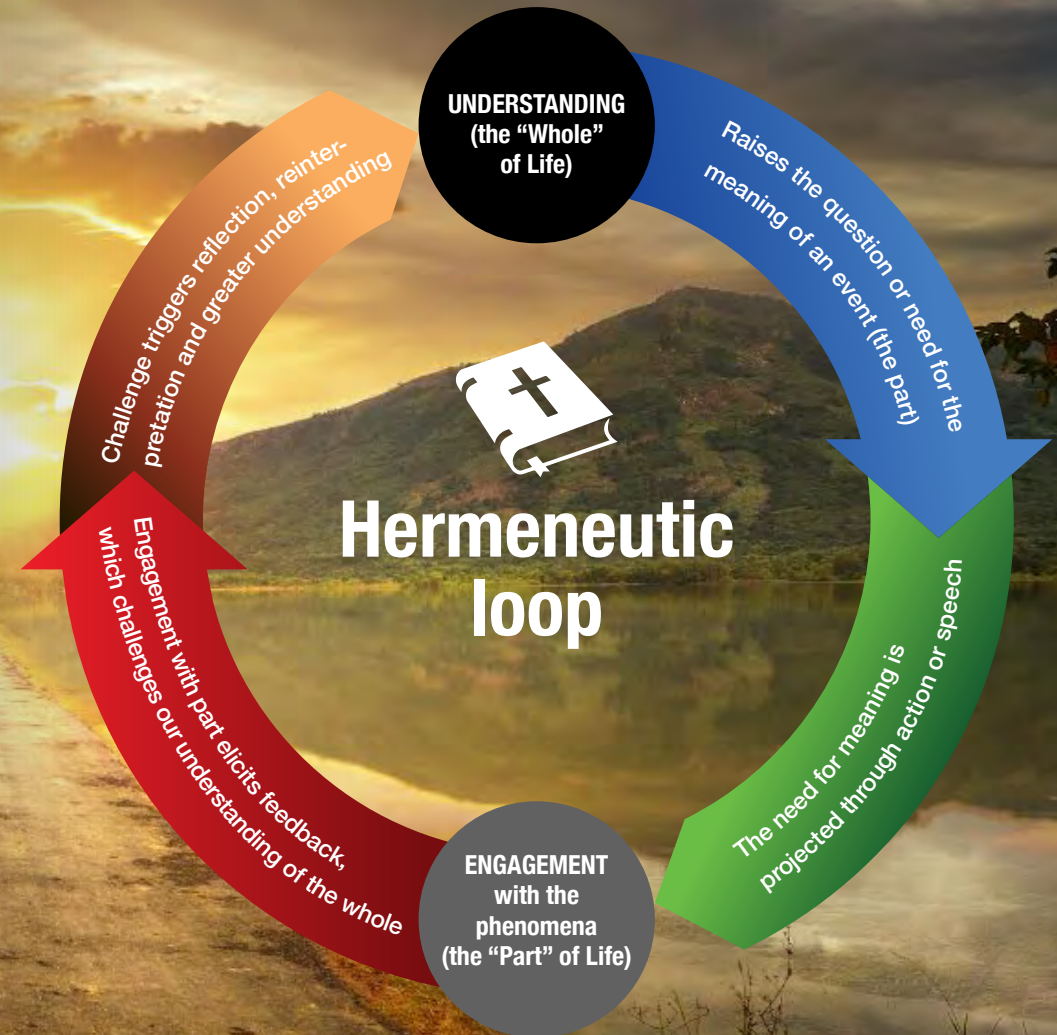
- ✓ What the Scriptures communicated to the original audience
- ✓ What timeless principles and applications there are for us
- ✓ What the text truly means

And, also:

- ✓ To discover what God wants us to take away
- ✓ To avoid to look at the Bible with a subjective or tainted lens

“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.”

Nehemiah 8:8

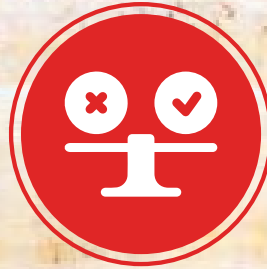


THE FOUR MAJOR TYPES OF INTERPRETATION



Literal

The most prominent in Protestant circles. It was championed by, among others, Jerome (4th century), Thomas Aquinas (13th century), Martin Luther (15/16th century), and John Calvin (16th century). This approach interprets the text according to its plain or literal meaning according to grammatical construction, historical context, and the intention of the author.



Moral

This strove to derive ethical lessons from different parts of the Bible. For example, a document called the Letter of Barnabas dating from around the turn of the second century, employed this approach to interpret the Levitical dietary laws not as forbidding eating the flesh of certain animals, but rather as forbidding certain vices associated with these animals.



Allegorical

This interprets the Bible as having a second level of meaning beyond the actual people, places, and events mentioned. Clement of Alexandria and Origen were two adherents of this approach, although Origen embraced a threefold approach to Scripture as literal, moral, and spiritual (allegorical). As is evident from Origen, multiple types of hermeneutics can be synthesized.



Anagogical or mystical

It was more typical to Jewish study than Christianity. This approach interprets biblical events as prefigures of the afterlife.

THE PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS

1

Context Interprets Scripture

The surrounding verses, chapter, and Book of the Bible provide immediate context to any Bible verse, as does the historical, cultural, linguistic context of a verse.

2

Scripture Interprets Scripture

Often Scripture interprets itself. In some instances, another Biblical writer interprets another Biblical passage.

How to correctly interpret the Bible?

3

Intent Interprets Scripture

All Scripture has an intended meaning. It is therefore true that a Scripture has one correct interpretation while it may have correct applications.

4

The Clear Interprets The Obscure

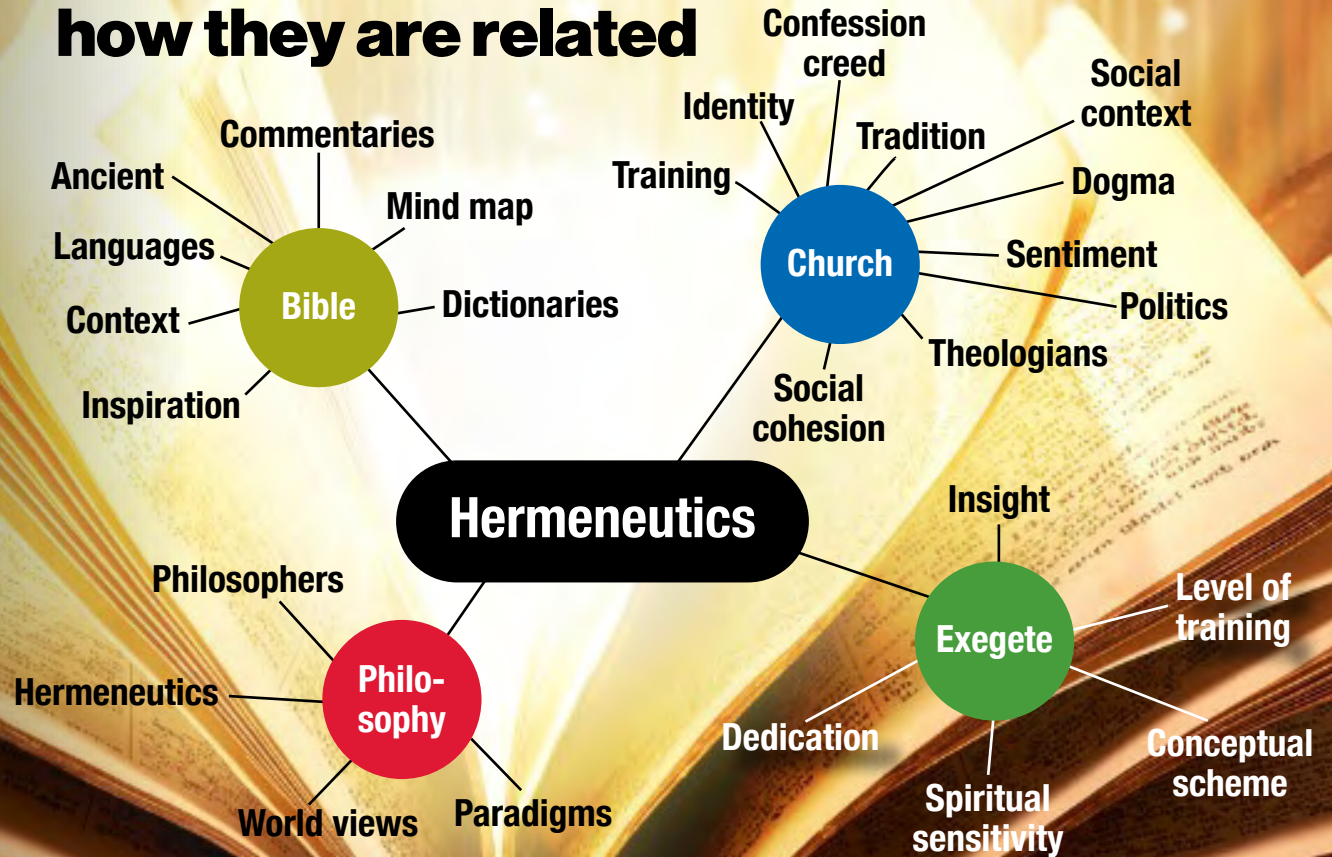
No verse of Scripture should be interpreted to contradict the overall message of Scripture. When we are faced with an obscure verse, we find a clear verse to help interpret it.

HERMENEUTICS AND ITS RELATIONS

For Bible study, hermeneutics is about the ways you discover meaning in the Bible for your life and your era, faithfully taking its intents into today's world.

Most hermeneutical methods are done from inside a Christian's (or a Christian community's) own desire to learn more of what God tells us in the Bible. Hermeneutics are a type of discernment process, ways of mining for God and God's truth. We're exploring what is endless and beyond our ability to comprehend, so there is some practical use of heuristic tools (like trying out ideas or using 'rules of thumb') in order to live it.

Key words and how they are related



Hermeneutics helps us know how to interpret Scripture correctly, so that we can avoid misapplying its truths to our lives.

PROCESS OF HERMENEUTICS

So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him."

Acts 8:30-31



Historical and Cultural Context



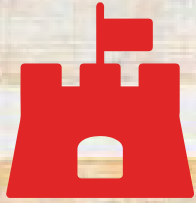
Literary Context



Observation



Application



1 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The setting of the Scripture

The first step of the process asks questions about the Book as a whole.

- Who is the author?**
- Who is the audience?**
- When was the book written?**
- Why was it written?**
- What is the purpose and theme of the book?**

These are great questions to ask regardless of the Book's genre.

2

LITERARY CONTEXT

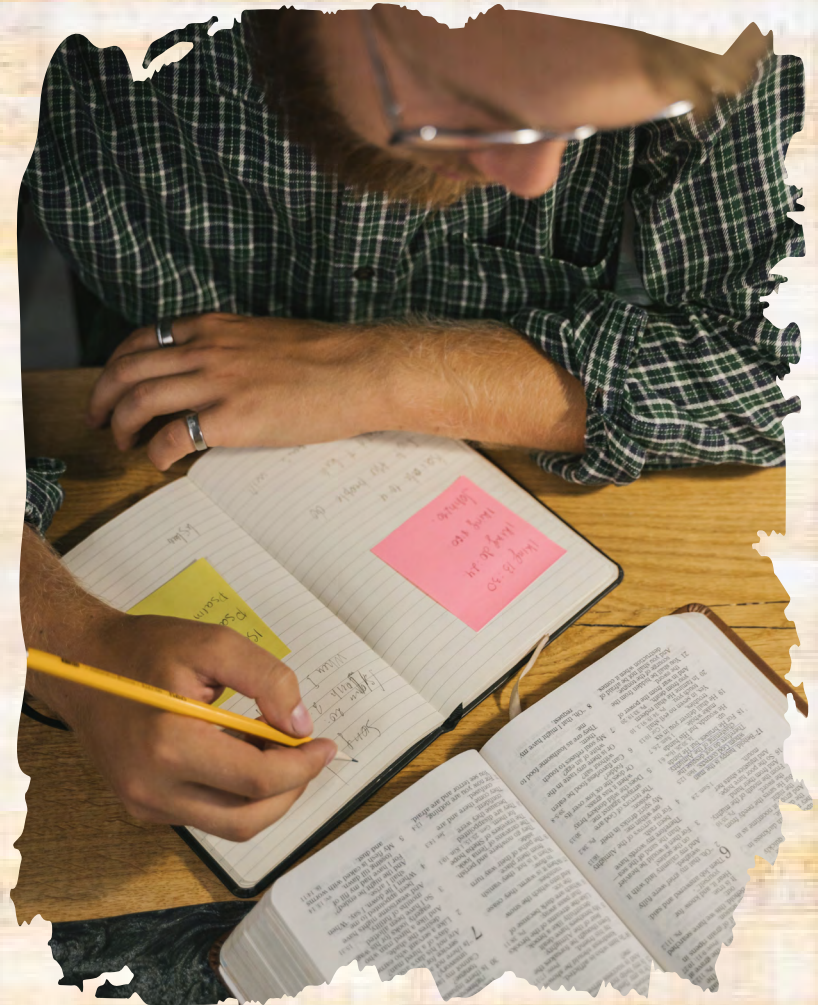
The styles of the Scripture

The second step enables you to see how the passage you're studying fits into the larger flow of thought.

Understanding the literary context depend on the genre of the book. This is important because you would read a poetic psalm differently than the historical account of King Solomon.

There are several genres of biblical literature, and one Book of the Bible can contain different genres and even intermix them. Below is a list of 7 biblical genres and examples of them found in the Bible:

- **Narrative:** I & II Kings, I & II Samuel, I & II Chronicles
- **Law:** Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers
- **Poetry:** Psalms, Song of Solomon
- **Prophecy:** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah
- **Wisdom:** Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs
- **Gospel:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- **Parables:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- **Letter:** Ephesians, Philemon, Titus
- **Apocalyptic:** Daniel, Revelations





3

OBSERVATION

The content of the Scripture

1) Ask a lot of questions

Start with the basics like **‘What? When? How? Where? Why?’** and move on to more detailed questions such as:

- What are the repeated words, phrases, or themes in this passage that may emphasize a concept or point?
- Are there any noteworthy lists?
- What is the tone of this passage?
- Does the author seem to be joyful? Angry? Mournful? Afraid?
- Are there any figures of speech that the author is using to convey a certain image or idea?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting opposing ideas to make a point?
- Does the author use passive verbs, or strong active verbs?
- Does the author express himself by using descriptive adjectives and adverbs?

It is awareness of all the data in the passage that can be used in the interpretive process. Observation is not explanation or interpretation; it is simply seeing the details.

2) Write down your observations

Make notes of everything you see and keep re-reading the passage you are studying. Don't forget to keep in mind the larger context.

4 APPLICATION

The implications of the Scripture



In the final step, **we take the principles we discovered and decide how it should be impacting our lives here and now in real-life situations.**

- Observe how the theological principle in the text addresses the situation of the original audience. How did this principle make a difference in their situation?
- Think about situations in your life or world that may be similar or impacted by the same truth. Ask God how He would want you to apply this.
- Make specific application to these real-life situations that answer how the theological principle should impact you in various instances.
- Once you know how the principle should be applied, test it to make sure it is faithful to the meaning of the text.
- If the application is true to the meaning of the text, obey what you have learned.

Application is meant to be more than broad ideas; it should be specific actions that change the way we live.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO?

Exegesis is Step 1 and Hermeneutics is Step 2

The difference is that of theory versus application. It is best to think of exegesis as the process of uncovering the message that the original author was trying to convey to the original audience. This is crucial because the goal is to understand “what does the Bible say.”

Hermeneutics, on the other hand, is the process of applying the biblical text to a modern situation. In order to do so, it is important to understand what the original message and intent of the passage was; essentially, good hermeneutics first requires good exegesis.

... will make sure we
... of living on the
... that we may learn to
... it is said, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the
... ended every temptation, he departed from him until
... after the wilderness...
... power of the Spirit in Galilee, and a report about him
... surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues,
... where he had been brought up. And as his custom,
... sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll
... to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place
... develop wisdom, unable to
... clearly Jesus
... The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
... because he has anointed me
... to proclaim good news to the poor
... He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
... and recovering of sight to the blind,
... to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
... to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
... 2 Cor. 4:4
... And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And
... the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them,
... "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of
... him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And
... they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" And he said to them, "Doubtless you will
... quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at
... Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." And he said, "Truly, I say to you,
... no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many
... widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years
... and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to
... none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a
... widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha,
... and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. When they heard
... these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and
... drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their
... synagogue was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through
... their midst, he went away.
... Wonder → Wrath
... Jesus Heals a Man with an Unclean Demon
... And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them
... on the sabbath. And they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed
... authority. And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean
... demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, "Ha! What have you to do with us,
... Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy
... Spirit of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!"
... and when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him,
... having done him no harm. And they were all amazed and said to one another,
... "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean
... spirits and they come out!" And reports about him went out into every place in
... the surrounding region.
... Jesus is the HOLY ONE OF GOD

AT GODS WORD
by HIS WILL ev
thing can ch
BY HIS POWER
thing can hap
Do we have fa
... Jesus then
... And
... modest
... he stood
... began to
... No
... us disc
... healed t
... that he g
... was the
... Jesus Pr
... An
... sought him and came to him, and would
... said to them, "I must preach the good news
... as well: for I was sent for this purpose."
... of Judea.
... thirsting
... Jesus Calls the First Disciples
... On one occasion, while the crowd was
... he was standing by the lake of Gennesa
... the fishermen had gone out of them and w
... the boats, which were Simon's, he asked him
... down and enter the people from the boat
... said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and le
... answered, "Master, we've toiled all night and
... down the nets." And when they had done
... and their nets were breaking. They signaled
... and help them. And they came and filled t
... But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down
... for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he was
... at the catch of fish that they had taken.
... Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. A
... from now on you will be catching men."
... to land; they left everything and followed
... power of broo
... Jesus Heals a Leper
... While he was in one of the cities, he
... saw Jesus, he fell on his face and beseech
... clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand
... And immediately the leprosy left him. A
... and he commanded, for a proof to them, "But
... ahead, and great crowds gathered to beca
... But he would withdraw to deserted plac
... Jesus Heals a Paralytic
... On one of those days, as he was
... were sitting there, who had come from e
... Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord wa
... men were bringing on a bed a man who
... ble they had n
... had no moti

**“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,
He expounded to them in all the Scriptures
the things concerning Himself.”**

Luke 24:27



Thank you!

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