



Bible Handling

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who **correctly handles** the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

What could
you use me
for?



Overview

- About the Bible
- The Importance of Meaning
- Tools for study
- Immediate Context
- Larger Context
- Exercise

Why study the Bible?

- Scripture is God's '**special**' **revelation** to us of himself. Scripture is what God especially wants us to know about Himself, the universe, mankind, history so far, his plan of redemption etc.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

"...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you **wise for salvation** through faith in Christ Jesus. 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."

1 Peter 1:10-12

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, **searched intently** and with the **greatest care**, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. **It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you**, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. **Even angels long to look into these things.**"

About the Bible

About the Bible

- Written by ~40 authors over ~1500 years
- OT written in **Hebrew** (and Aramaic), NT written in **Greek**
- Different genres:
 - History/Narrative
 - Law
 - Psalms/Songs
 - Poetry
 - Prophecy
 - Wisdom
 - Letters
 - Apocalyptic

How did we get the Bible?

- Manuscripts copied and collected over multiple years and then formed into a single unit by church leaders
- Old Testament:
 - No clear point in history when canon was formalised
 - AD 170 - Melito, Bishop of Sardis lists all OT Books (except Esther)
 - Writings of the Jewish people (what we now know as the OT) were generally accepted yet other writings were not seen as divinely inspired
- New Testament:
 - AD 367 – Athanasius' Paschal letter listed all NT books as we have them
 - AD 393 – Synod of Hippo – Bishops listed and approved all NT books
 - AD 397 – Council of Carthage – western churches agreed with eastern churches on the same list of NT books

Accuracy of the Bible

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span	Qty of Copies	Accuracy
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	A.D. 1100	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (A.D. 50-100)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. A.D. 130 f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.50%

What is the Bible?

- The words of the Bible have not just magically appeared from God with no human participation
- He chose to use the written communication of mankind to reveal himself to humanity
- The Bible is 'God's Word written, by people and for people, in a given time and context'
- The Bible is both authored by God and man (guided by the Holy Spirit)

Authorial Intent

- We must ask what did the author originally intend to mean? - there is only one true interpretation (& many applications) and our task is to discover that
- Authorial intent applies to individual words, phrases and passages but also applies to whole books
- Purpose of John's gospel - **John 20:30-31**
- Purpose of Luke's gospel - **Luke 1:3-4**



John 20:30-31

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Luke 1:3-4

"...I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

The Importance of Meaning

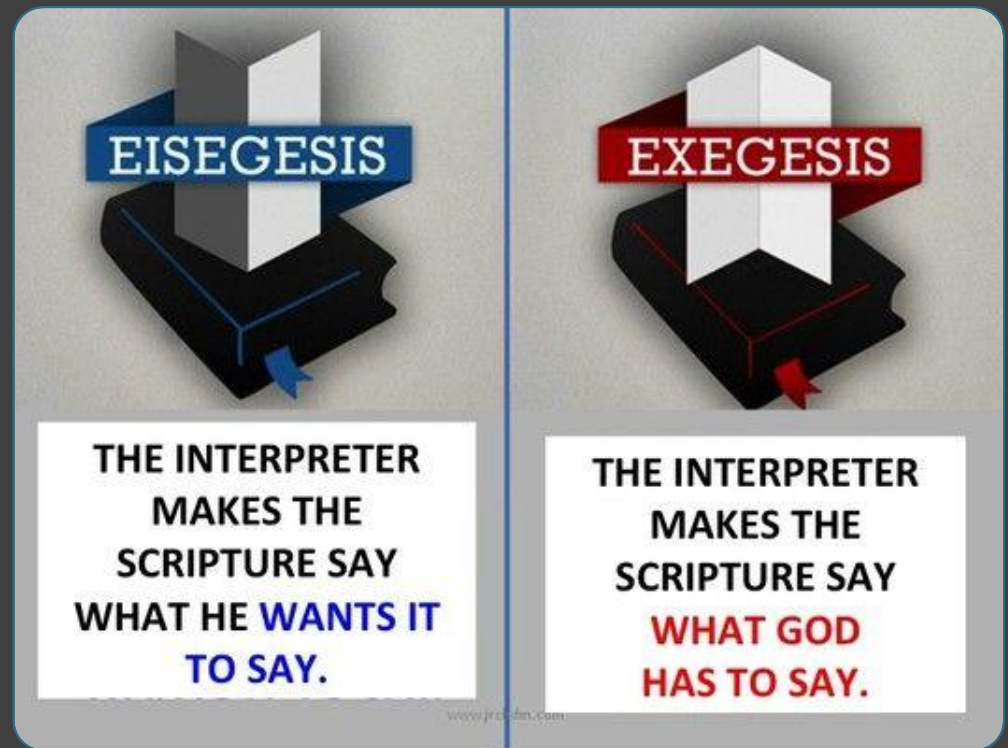
Where does meaning come from?

- Many will approach the Bible like a Rorschach painting – we **apply** the meaning
- The Bible is more like a fine art painting – it **gives** us the meaning
- Meaning is within the text, not within us! – The Holy Spirit within us, will enable us to discover the meaning within the text

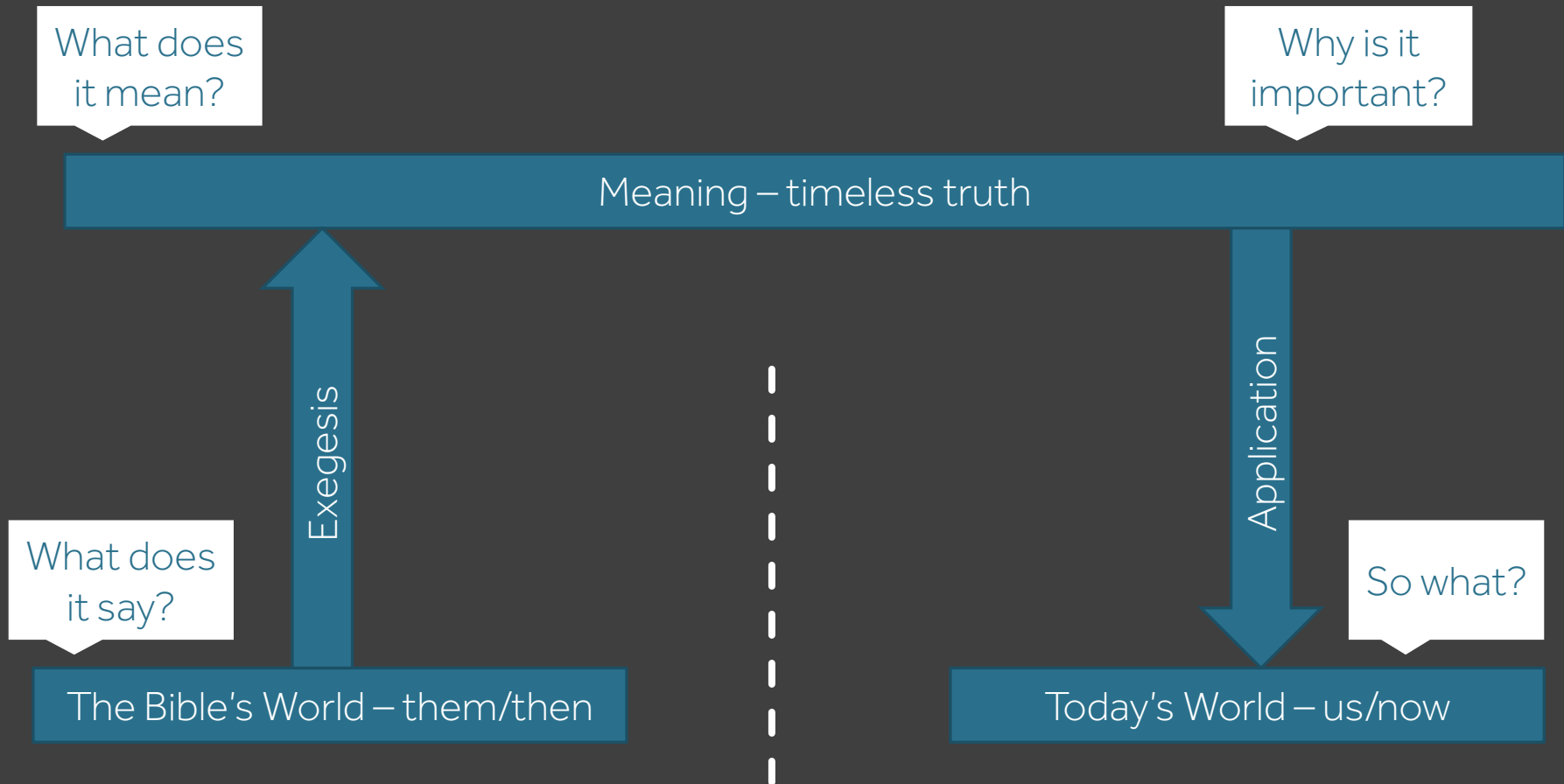


Eisegesis vs Exegesis

- Scripture does not mean what we want it to mean, it has a purpose and meaning from God, but the applications are many
- Allow the scripture to speak for itself and inform your own understanding rather than applying you current understanding first and making the scripture mean what you want it to mean
- Come to the scriptures objectively and unbiasedly



Hermeneutic Bridge

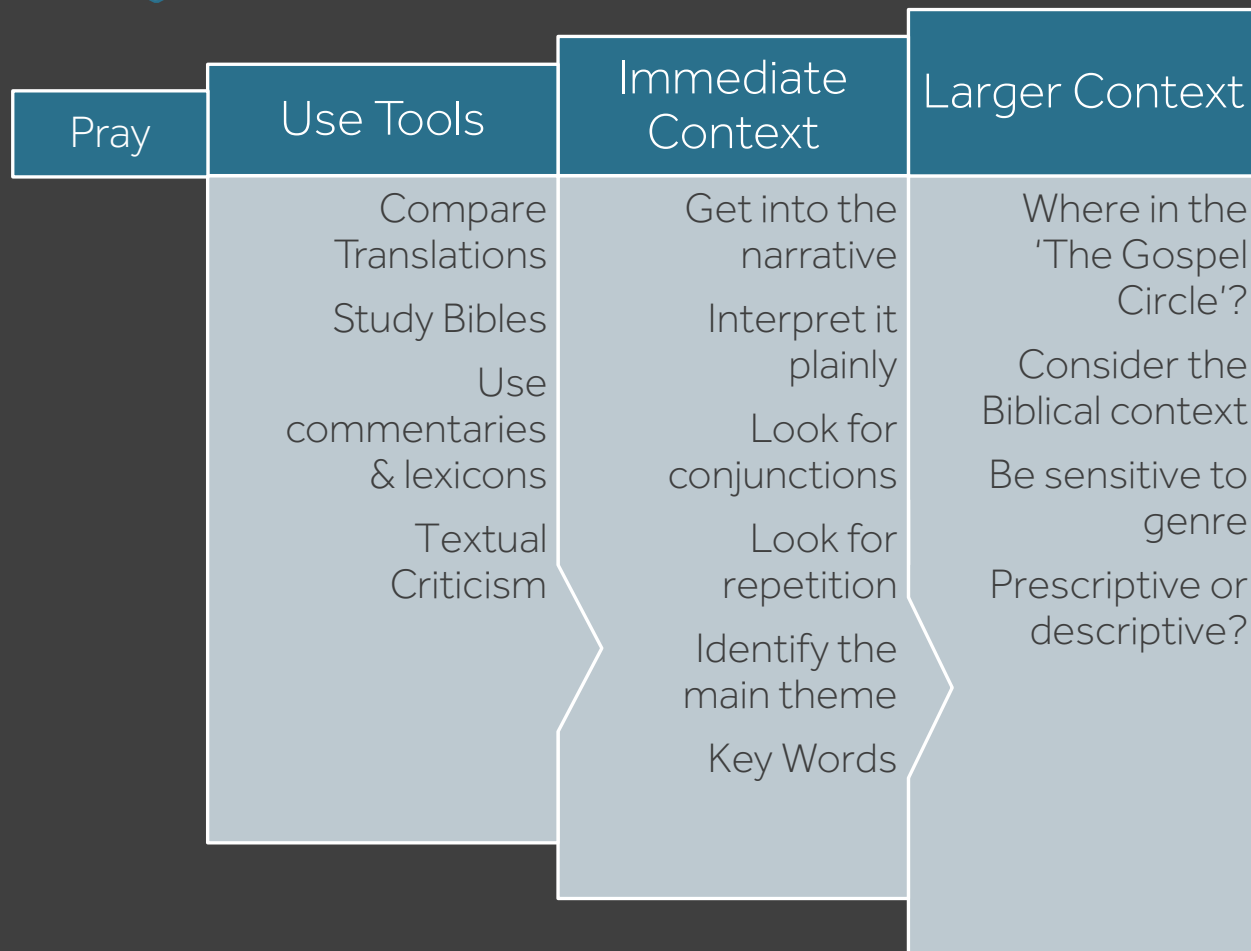


Good Questions to Ask

- What does it say? (put it in your own words and summarise)
- What does it mean? (what is the truth that we can pull from it?)
- Why is it important? (why is this relevant or significant?)
- So what? (how do we apply it? What do I need to do/think differently?)



Study Process



Tools for Study

Compare Translations

Bible Translation Comparison

WORD-FOR-WORD (Formal)

most often used for in-depth study and personal development

NASB

AMP

ESV

KJV

NKJV

HCSB

NRSV

NAB

NIV

NLT

NirV

GNT

TLB

MSG

THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT (Dynamic)

most often used for in-depth study and personal development

PARAPHRASE

most often used for devotional reading and gaining diverse insights

INTERLINEAR

Textual Aids



Info

- Compare translations
- Study Bibles
 - Good principle to own one for personal study/reading
- General/whole Bible Commentaries
- Single Book Commentaries
 - Useful for providing info and insight into passages
- Systematic/Biblical Theology
 - For help in understanding big/singular topics systematically

Hebrew/Greek Lexicons

- Hebrew/Greek Lexicons
 - Useful for getting behind the English translations and seeing which Hebrew & Greek words are used
 - See where the words originate from, what their meanings are and where else they are used
- Electronic Tools
 - Biblehub (online), MySword (Android app), PocketSword (Apple app)
 - e-Sword, Logos (Desktop software)

John 21:15-17

<https://biblehub.com/lexicon/john/21-15.htm>



John 21:15-17

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Textual Criticism

- The Bible as **originally given** is divinely inspired
- Punctuation, capital letters, verse and chapter divisions are not inspired...but useful!
- We only have copies of the original versions
- Whilst the copies are numerous and very accurate, there are places where we are uncertain of the authenticity

John 7:53-8:11 (*pericope adulterae*)

John 5:4

Mark 16:9-20



John 7:53-8:11

d whis-
nen the
temple

only a
ne who
you will
cannot

Where
cannot
ple live
ach the
e said,
ot find
me?"
of the
voice,
to me
e, as^a
living
By this
no be-
Up to
given,
i.

e peo-
et."
Christ
Scrip-
n Da-
town
were
ted to
im.

[The earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11.]

⁵³Then each went to his own home.

8 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

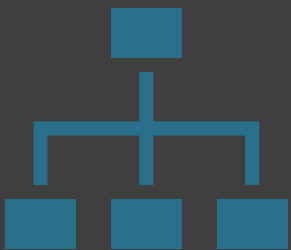
⁹At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Finding Meaning: Immediate Context

Identify the main theme

- Scripture is not a collection of random thoughts and ideas but has principal themes and structures
- Try to 'stand back' from the passage/book and identify the main theme from the author – What big thing do all of the little things add up to?
- Remember that scripture is like a fine art painting – study the detail but also stand back to take everything in!
- Romans 1:18-20



Romans 1:18-20

18The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Colossians

1:1-8 – Gospel Growth

1:9-14 – Knowing God's Will

1:15-23 – The Supremacy of Christ

1:24-2:5 – Striving for Maturity

2:6-15 – Fullness in Christ

2:16:23 – Freedom from Rules

3:1-17 – Put on the Nature of Christ

3:18-4:1 – God over Marriage, Family & Work

4:2-18 – Pray for Opportunities & Each Other



CHRIST IS ALL,

SO MAKE HIM ALL!

Immediate Context

- The Bible explains the Bible
- One of our most common mistakes is to take passages out of their given context and so 'misuse/misapply' the scripture
- Read and think about the context of the passage, usually the context (bits before and after) help explain the bit you are studying
- How is the following phrase from scripture commonly used and applied?

1 Peter 2:24 "...by his stripes we are healed..."



1 Peter 2:23-25

23When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his stripes you have been healed." 25For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Immerse yourself in the narrative

- It is too easy for us to gloss over the scriptures in our different time and context
- We must pause and consider all of the contextual elements going on and feel the emotions of all that is happening/being said
- **Matthew 15:22-28**



Matthew 15:22-28

22A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

23Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

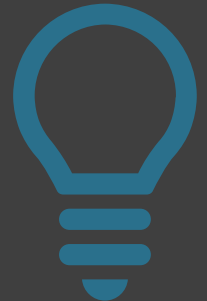
26He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

27"Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

28Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Clarity/Perspicuity of Scripture

- God has intended his scripture to be clearly understood
- There are no codes or hidden meanings for us to find and we don't need to be a Jewish historian either!
- Take the rational and literal meaning of the text (for given genre's)
- **Matthew 19:23-24**



Matthew 19:23-24

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Conjunctions within text

- Making note of conjunctions (linking words like “and, for, therefore, so”)
- These help us tie passages together and prevent us looking at passages in isolation, and understand them in their given context
- 2 Corinthians 5:15-17



2 Corinthians

5:15-17

15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Repetition

- Look for repetition of words, phrases and ideas
- What does the author/God seem to emphasize
- Ephesians 1:11-14



Ephesians 1:11-14

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Put yourself in the story

- Scripture reveals truth about the nature of God and humanity, and speaks into our context
- Once you have grasped the context of what is going on, put yourself in the story
- Who are you/we in the story?
- 1 Samuel 17:48-51



1 Samuel 17:48-51

48As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. 49Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

50So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

51David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran.

Key Words

- Look out for the key words in the text which acts as 'pillars' of the meaning within the text – they carry a lot of the weight and meaning
- The combination of key words helps identify the overall meaning and structure of the passage
- 1 Peter 1:1-2



1 Peter 1:1-2

1Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

1 Peter 1:1-2

1Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To God's **elect**, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2who have been **chosen** according to the **foreknowledge** of God the **Father**, through the **sanctifying** work of the **Spirit**, for **obedience** to Jesus **Christ** and sprinkled with his **blood**:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Finding Meaning: Larger Context

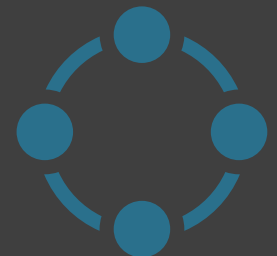
The Gospel Circle

- The Bible is 'one book' with 'one story' and that story is the Gospel!
- The Gospel is the key to unlocking and understanding the scriptures
- Each section of scripture is part of the 'gospel circle' and so it helps to ask where a certain passage fits into this circle/gospel



The Gospel Circle

- Pearl Necklace - each book of the Bible is a pearl and the thread running through them all is the Gospel
- Look for foreshadows and symbology of the Jesus/cross through the OT - God has been whispering the gospel message since time began!
- Question to ask: "Which section of the gospel does this passage/book highlight?"
- Ezekiel 5:5-7



Ezekiel 5:5-7

5" This is what the Sovereign Lord says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. 6 Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees.

7" Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: You have been more unruly than the nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you.

Be sensitive to genre

- Wisdom - Proverbs are proverbs, not promises
- Prophetic and apocalyptic scripture is heavily symbolic
- History/narrative books record what happened, not necessarily all that God approves of (just because it's mentioned doesn't mean it's okay)
- Poetry often have Hebrew structures and patterns behind them



Wider Biblical Context

- Be aware of Biblical Context
- Old Testament Covenant (Law) vs New Testament Covenant (Grace) - the Laws and promises of the old Covenant do not apply to us under the New Covenant
- Israel vs The Church - the laws and promises for one do not apply to the other
- Jeremiah 29:10-14



Jeremiah 29:10-14

10 This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil my good promise to bring you back to this place.

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

14 I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

(Un)balanced Truth

- Has anyone been shocked by something they have read in scripture?
- The entirety of scripture provides a balanced truth, however this truth can appear unbalanced or emphasized in a particular way at times
- These are not contradictions, but compliments to each other and work towards providing a broad and balanced truth
- Luke 14:26-27
- This needs to be balanced with the command to "honour your father and mother"



Luke 14:26-27

26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Prescriptive or Descriptive?

- We need to also discern whether the meaning of a text is
prescriptive (commanding us to do something)
or
descriptive (informing and building our understanding)
- Acts 8:14-17



Acts 8:14-17

14When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Try it for yourself!

- What does it say? (put it in your own words and summarise)
- What does it mean? (what is the truth that we can pull from it?)
- Why is it important? (why is this relevant or significant?)
- So what? (how we do we apply it? What do I need to do/think differently?)