

So That's What That Means!

Learning to Interpret the Bible on Your Own



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Goal of Valid Interpretation



To discern God's message.



To avoid or dispel misconceptions or erroneous conclusions about what the Bible teaches.

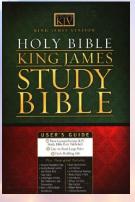


To be able to apply the Bible's message to our lives.

Overview Challenges to Biblical Interpretation

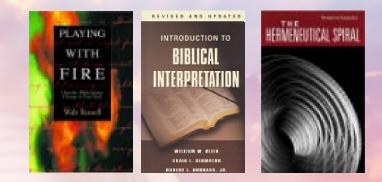


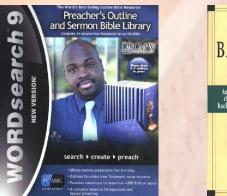
Overview Bible Interpretation Tools

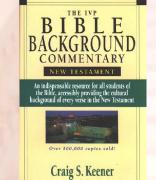


Study Bible: Preferably a literal translation

Support Texts: Playing with Fire, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, The Hermeneutical Spiral

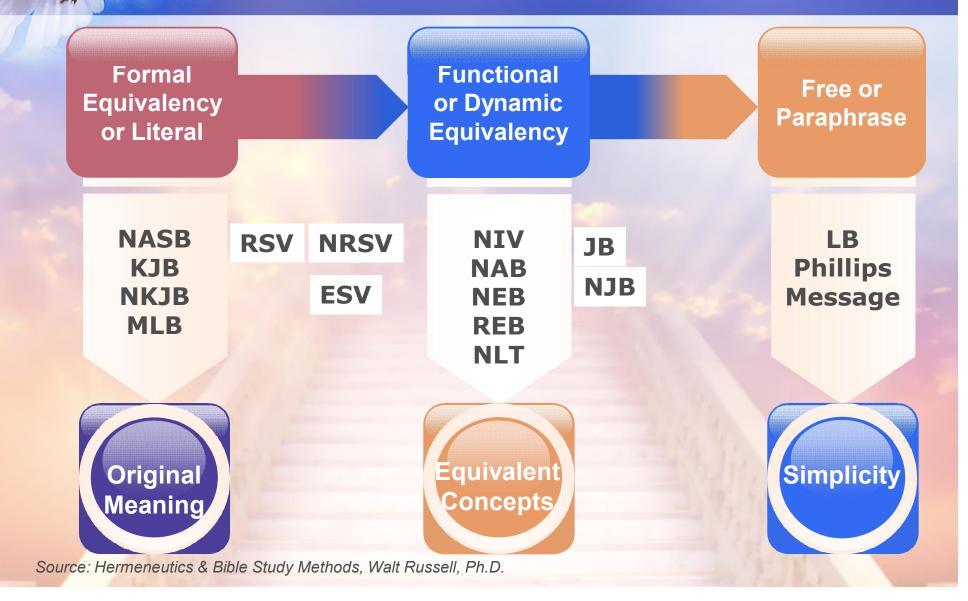






Study Tools: Commentaries, Bible Study Software (ex: WordSearch). Many are available free online!

Overview The Translation Spectrum



Overview The Translation Spectrum

Example: "sarx" (flesh) in Galatians 5:24

²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the **flesh** with its passions and desires.

	Bible Version	Translation
Literal	New American Standard	"the flesh"
	King James, New King James	"the flesh"
	Revised Standard, New Revised Standard	"the flesh"
Dynamic	New International Version	"the sinful nature"
	New Living Translation	"of their sinful nature"
	New English Bible	"the lower nature"
	Revised English Bible	"the old nature"
	New Jerusalem Bible	"self"
Para- phrase	Today's English Version	"their human nature"
	Living Bible	"their natural evil desires"
	Phillips	"their old nature"

Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Overview Interpretation Steps

Genre	The writers of scripture used public genres of literature of their day. When a genre is chosen, then the public rules for interpreting that genre apply.
Generic Conception	State the big idea of the passage in one concise sentence.
Observations	Note historic and cultural, literary, and grammatical, observations of the passage.
Interpretations	Interpret the meaning of the passage as you meditate on it and your observations.
Applications	Apply the passage to your life; what is the meaning and significance in your life?

Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Interpretation Why Study Genres?



Because Meaning is Genre Dependent!

Interpretation Why Study Genres?

Indians Slay Tigers!

Evert Kills Navratilova!

Interpretation Types of Genres

- Reports (anecdotes, battle, dream, epiphany, historic)
- Heroic (epic, cosmic epic, ancestral epic)
- Prophet Story
- Comedy
- Farewell Speech
- Embedded (proverb, parable, riddle, fable, songs, lists)
- Casuistic, apodictic, legal series, legal instruction
- Prayers (complaint, imprecatory, dirge)
- Songs (thanksgiving, hymn, personal hymn, coronation hymn, love, wedding)
- Liturgies
- Wisdom

- Disaster
- Salvation
- Woe Speech
- Dirge
- Hymn
- Liturgy
- Disputation
- Lawsuit
- Against Foreign Nations
- Vision Report
- Narratives
- Proverbs
- Instruction
- Example Story and Reflection
- Disputation Speeches

Source: Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

Interpretation Types of Genres

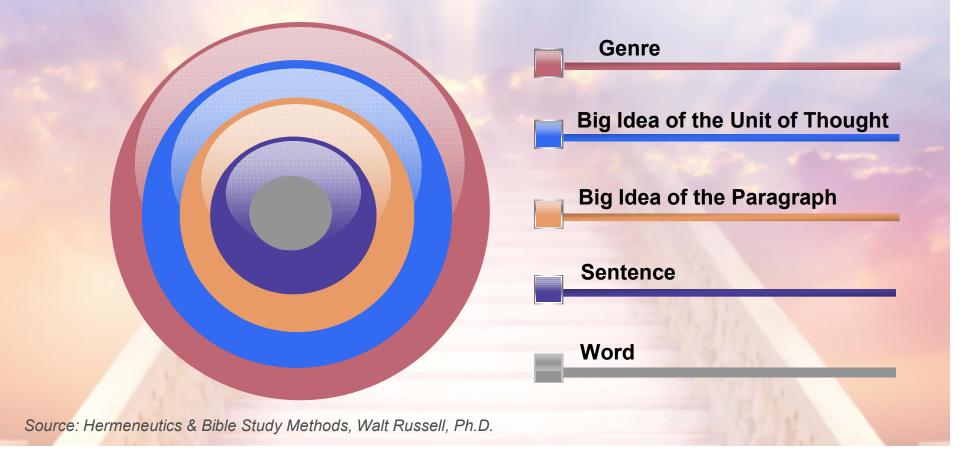
- Parables
- Miracle Stories
- Pronouncement Stories
- Exhortation Letter
- Diatribe
- Letter of introduction or recommendation
- Apologetic letter of self-commendation
- Family
- Judicial
- Deliberative
- Epideictic (using praise or blame)
- Ambassadorial
- Creeds or Hymns
- Domestic Code
- Slogans
- Vice & Virtue Lists

Source: Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

- Epistle
- Prophecy
- Apocalyptic

Understanding Meaning Meaning is Top Down

Meaning comes from the top down, that is, from the text's larger units to its smaller units.



Practicum N.T. Genre: Parables

Note the setting within which the parable is placed.

Study the structure of the parable.

kingdom teaching and to the basic message of the individual gospel.

parables without checking corroborative details elsewhere.

Uncover the background of the earthly details.

Apply the central truth(s) to similar situations in modern life.

Determine the main points of the parable.

View the parable holistically.

Source: Hermeneutical Spiral, Grant Osborne, Ph.D.

The Good Samaritan

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷ And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸ And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Genre

Generic Conception

Observations

Interpretations

Applications

Book: One of the three synoptic gospels. Specifically Luke is often referred to as a historical biographic narrative.

Passage: Luke 10:25-37 is a parable; specifically an "example parable", located in the "journey" or "travel" section 9:51-18:14.

Genre

Generic Conception

Observations

Interpretations

Applications

The generic conception of Luke 10 (the whole chapter) is: "Jesus' desire for the gospel to be preached to the world." Herein Jesus commissions 72 others to the mission field with specific instructions to evangelize; teach about salvation, Satan, the trinity, and prayer (Luke 10:1-24) and answers the question "What must I do to inherit eternal life" (Luke 10:25-37).

The generic conception of *only* Luke 10:25-37 is a teaching: "We show our love of God through our actions as demonstrated by our love for all mankind." Herein Jesus is questioned by a lawyer about eternal life and Luke relates the parable of the Good Samaritan in which Jesus teaches using the story about the wounded man who is ignored by a priest and a Levite but aided by a Samaritan.

Genre

Generic Conception

Observations

Interpretations

Applications

- 1) Literary. The passage is divided roughly into three sections; an introduction as the question of eternal life is asked (5 verses), Jesus' telling of the parable (6 verses), and Jesus' concluding teaching (2 verses).
- Literary. The first section (the introduction) follows a similar 4-part pattern; the lawyer's question, Jesus' response, lawyer's reply, Jesus' response.
- Cultural. Jesus, as is often the case, selects the least likely person to be the hero of the story; a Samaritan, someone despised by the Jews as being racially impure. Jesus contrasts the actions of the Samaritan with those of the "enlightened" members of the Jewish faith; a priest and a Levite.

Genre

Generic Conception

Observations

Interpretations

Applications

- Grammatical. This is a specific event, "On one occasion"; asked by a specific person, "an expert in the law," specifically to test Jesus (v25).
- 5) Grammatical. The lawyer addresses Jesus respectfully as "master" or "teacher" but not as Lord (v26).
- 6) Grammatical. The lawyer asks, "What must I do...?" The tense here is aorist participle (simple action).
- 7) Literary. Jesus turns the question back on the lawyer since he was an expert in the law (v26).
- 8) Literary. The lawyer answers quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Lev 19:18 (v27).

Genre

Generic Conception

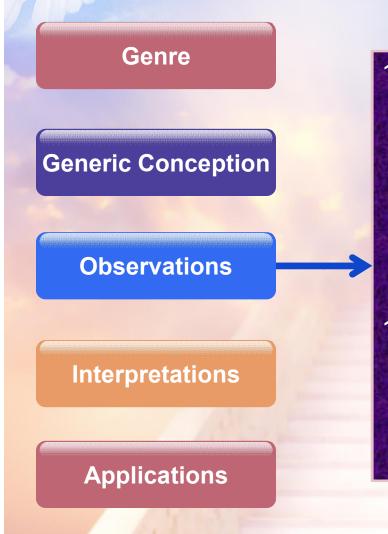
Observations

Interpretations

Applications

9) Cultural. The lawyer does not question "Love the Lord your God..." but hones in on "who then is my neighbor" (v29). The lawyer's knowledge of the law indicates that he would have known that he was to be a neighbor to those of the Jewish faith. Jesus answers teaching through the parable of the Good Samaritan showing that our neighbor is all mankind.

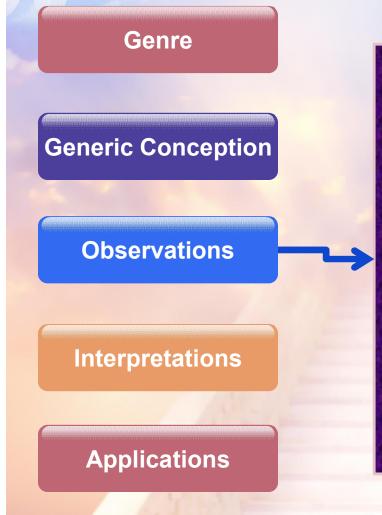
10)In the parable a man is travelling alone (v30) from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is a long, hard day's walk of some 20+ miles in an area known as "the Way of Blood" because of the thieves. They strip him and beat him nearly to death (implies he was dying).



11) Cultural. A priest going down (implies away from Jerusalem) passed by on the other side of the road (implies he crossed to the other side to avoid the man) (v31). Perhaps not to defile himself, perhaps not to be caught by the same robbers but regardless, he does not offer aid to the dying man. 12) Cultural. Then a Levite does the same thing after looking at the man. He passes by on the other side of the road (v32). Both should know the law but neither shows mercy to the injured man.

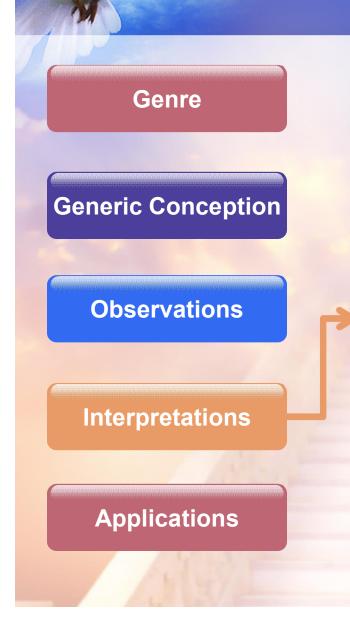


13) Cultural. The Samaritan comes along the same road and without knowing who the man is (Jew or Samaritan) and is immediately filled with compassion for the injured man (v33).
14) Literary. The Samaritan does six things; he stops, gives the man first aid, puts him on his donkey, gets him to an inn, pays for his care out of his own pocket and promises the innkeeper to pay any additional expense (v34-35).



15) Literary. Jesus asks the lawyer which of the three in the parable was the man's neighbor and the lawyer answers "the one who showed mercy" (v37).
16) Literary. Even after hearing the story the lawyer can't bring himself to admit that the Samaritan was the better person – he refers to the Samaritan as "the one who showed mercy."
17) Grammatical. Jesus commands him to "go and do likewise." Both words are in perfect imperative tense indicating that this is

ongoing, a habitual action.



Jews understood they had a responsibility to be a neighbor to their Jewish brethren as it was documented in Jewish law. At the heart of this and similar teachings (Mt 22:34 and Mk 12:28) Jesus is expanding the traditional Jewish view of "who is our neighbor?" beyond the scope of the Jewish faith to all mankind. Jesus emphasizes that to love God is to love not just other Jews but all mankind - even our enemies. Importantly, Jesus tells us in this teaching that our love for God and mankind is demonstrated in real terms by; 1) who we treat as a neighbor, and 2) how we are a neighbor. It is not sufficient to have the feeling of loving God without the *action* that God commands. We must we demonstrate our love through our actions to all mankind.



Jesus gives us a specific roadmap for how to treat someone as a neighbor; to show them love. The Samaritan stopped what he was doing which involved personal risk; he took immediate action to keep the man alive by treating his wounds; he put caring for the man first by putting him on his donkey; he ignored the personal inconvenience by taking the man to an inn; he sacrificed his own property to pay for the man's care; and he followed-up to insure the man would receive any additional care that he needed.

Genre

Generic Conception

Observations

Interpretations

Applications

 Jesus is very clear; if we say we love God, our love for Him is demonstrated through how we show love to all of mankind – even our enemies. This is not a one-time act that we do and then are done but rather a way of life. It is the way of the Christ-centered life.



We are commanded to do what we can "to love our neighbors" even if it is inconvenient, even if it involves personal sacrifice. Do I "cross the road" to avoid the beggar in the street? Do I always show God's love in my life by loving the "unlovable?" Do I send in a check to support the professionals in ministry and consider that "good enough?" Do I "do what I can, when I can?" or "do I turn a blind eye to the suffering of the poor and downtrodden?" Christ died for them and He loves them – how can I ignore those very people who need my love the most?

Conclusion

The goal of Hermeneutics is the valid interpretation of the Bible:



To discern God's message.



conclusions about what the Bible teaches.



To be able to apply the Bible's message to our lives.

Appendix

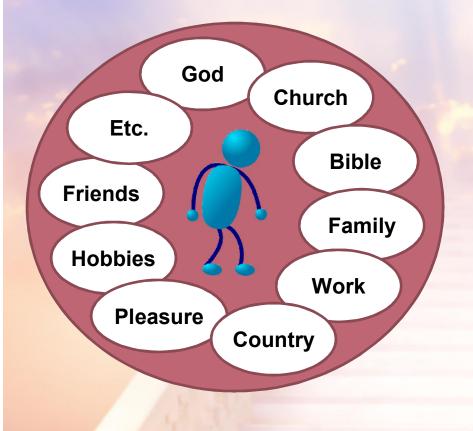
The following slides are provided to help you continue your foray into the interpretive study of the Bible

Overview History Of Hermeneutics

Rabbinic	457 B.C A.D. 500	Hillel – 7 rules of interpretation, short phrases without regard to context
Alexandrian	180 B.C. – A.D. 400	Philo – every passage has both a literal and an allegorical meaning
Patristic	A.D. 95 - 1100	dominates, church establishes itself as guardian of interpretation
Scholastic	A.D. 1100 - 1500	Aquinas, Wyclif – a systematic, rational, more literal approach to interpretation
Reformation	A.D. 1500 - 1600	Luther - "sola scriptura," Calvin –primacy of Scriptures' literal interpretation
Post-Reformation	A.D. 1600 - 1750	Analogy of Faith
Modern Era	A.D. 1750 - present	Historical critical, source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, Biblical Theology

Overview Secular "Existential" World View

"Life's a giant smorgasbord"



- Radically Individualistic
- Pervasively Relativistic
- Incessantly Narcissistic
- Excruciatingly *Empty*
- Alarmingly A-historical
- Arrogantly Self-Authorizing
- Increasingly Secularized

Source: Playing with Fire, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

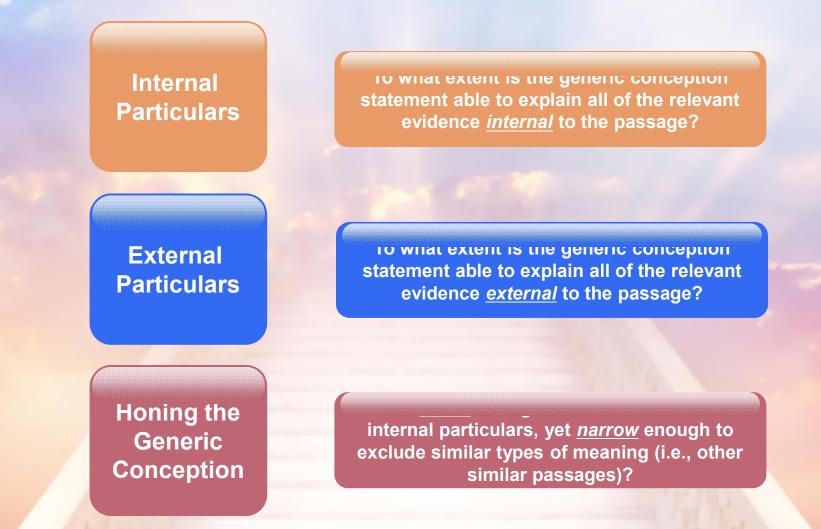
Interpretation The Big Picture

The exegetical process can be compared to the shape of an hourglass: you start with the big picture (whole), move to the little picture (part), and then move back to the big picture (whole) again.



Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Interpretation Generic Conception

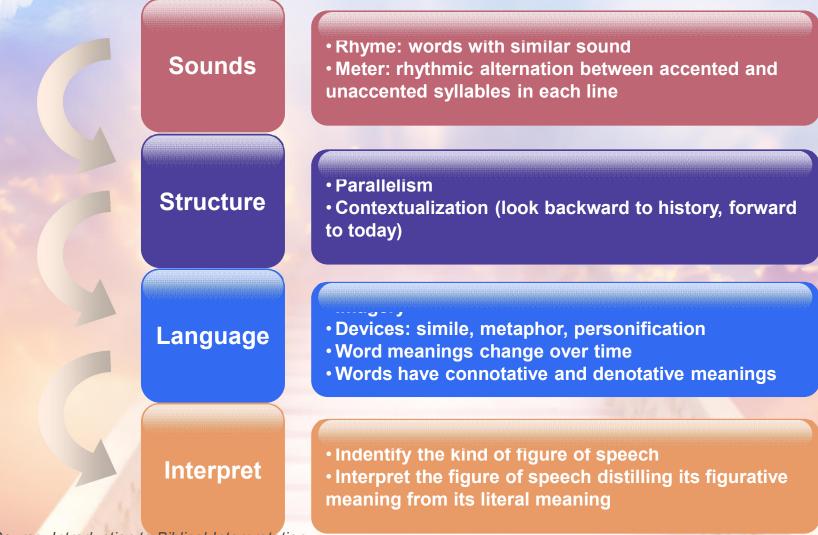


Source: Adapted from E.D. Hirsch, Yale University Press

Interpretation General Rules - Prose

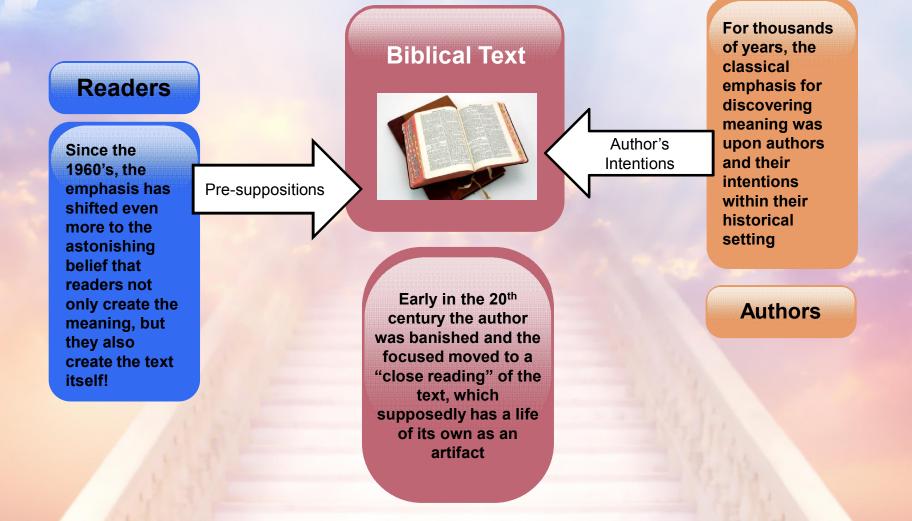


Interpretation General Rules - Poetry



Source: Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

Understanding Meaning The Battle for Meaning



Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Understanding Meaning The Text's Role

First

All meaning is "in-formed" or expressed through the literary structure and forms of the text. More focus should be placed here than we have historically given!

Second

The "meaning" comes from the top down not from the bottom up. That is, more emphasis should be placed on the larger linguistic units (sentences, paragraphs, episodes, discourses, etc.) than on the smaller units (words, phrases, clauses). We tend to reverse this emphasis in conservative circles!

Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Understanding Meaning The Author's Role

First

Second

Look for the author's "intention" as expressed in the text's content.

Supplement with insights from the author's historical setting to aid in understanding the text and the expressed intentions. The context of the author's life-setting that is invoked should be the most probable context. Remember: The text is primary and authoritative over any extra-biblical insights into "intention" gleaned from your background study!

Third

Summarize the author's intention or the text's content by means of an "intrinsic genre statement" or a statement of the text's "generic conception" which equals the author's "overall argument". This statement simply forces you to verbalize your controlling idea of the whole of the text that you have already formed! It should be improved the more you interact with the parts of the text.

Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Understanding Meaning The Reader's Role

First

We should be in the process of exegeting our culture in addition to the text!

- As a healthily self-conscious interpreter, we should be aware of many of our cultural biases, personal needs and concerns, present emotional state, etc.
- We need to expand our cultural horizons, especially regarding Ancient Near East and Mediterranean cultures.
- We will need to learn to think in terms of how various sub-cultures and age groups within our church or class will ask very different questions of the text. (This is the value of cross-cultural vs. mono-cultural education!)

Second

Humility must characterize our perspective (2 Tim 2:14-26) because of the complexity of the interpretation process and the cultural/temporal gap between the Bible and us.

Third

We have an absolute need for reliance upon the Holy Spirit in the whole interpretation process, of which one manifestation is an openness to growth in our understanding of the Scriptures.

Source: Hermeneutics & Bible Study Methods, Walt Russell, Ph.D.

Practicum O.T. Genre: Narratives

Attend to the three dimensions of O.T. Narratives

- i) The eleman universal plan of Gou (most important for understanding me)
- 2) The story of God's people (most important for identity and heritage)
- 3) The stories of individuals (important in offering models)

Emphasize that generally <u>God is the hero!</u>

It is best to take "big bites" (start at the top)

O.I. Narratives are not a venicle for "my story" (via allegorizing) or a psychological study.

O.I. Narratives are not a treasure cnest of "moral" or "success principles."

Practicum O.T. Genre: Law

How do O.T. Laws relate to Christians in light of the N.T.?

Some laws retain literal validity.

In some cases the NT actually makes the OT more strict. longer have validity because of NT teachings.

longer apply literally still teach important timeless truths.

Source: Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

Practicum O.T. Genre: Law

which an individual law appears serves as its literary context.

Endeavor to understand the original meaning of the laws in light of their cultural background.

Apply laws primarily to the N.T. counterpart of the original audience.

both depends on how it compares to laws in the categories above.

Practicum O.T. Genre: Prophecy

Determine the individual saying (oracle).

Determine the type of oracle involved.

Determine the presence of literal meaning or symbol.

Carefully delineate Christological emphases.

Study the individual oracle in light of the whole prophecy.

Do not impose your theological system on the text.

Study the balance between the historical and the predictive.

Seek analogous situations in the modern church.

Source: Hermeneutical Spiral, Grant Osborne, Ph.D.

Practicum O.T. Genre: Poetry

Note the stanza patterns of the poem or hymn.

Group parallel lines.

If possible, note the historical background to the psalm.

Study the psalm in terms of its type and basic stance.

Study the metaphorical language.

Study the psalm as a whole before drawing conclusions.

Study the messianic psalms in terms of their historical support before noting their eschatological import.

Source: Hermeneutical Spiral, Grant Osborne, Ph.D.

Practicum O.T. Genre: Wisdom

Note the form of the wisdom saying.

Ask whether the context is important.

Determine whether hyperbole is present.

Obscure passages must be cross-culturally applied to analogous situations today.

Source: Hermeneutical Spiral, Grant Osborne, Ph.D.

Practicum N.T. Genre: Gospels

Since the gospels are narratives we should emphasize the broader context when reading.

i ne gospeis demand some background information regarding history and culture.

The focus of the gospels is on Jesus, not on us!

One of the primary goals of the gospel writers is to prove that Jesus *is the messiah*, not to prove that he is God.

various gospel accounts, when appropriate.

Understand the centrality of the Kingdom of God in the gospels.

Practicum N.T. Genre: Acts

Read the whole narrative in one sitting to grasp Luke's purpose.

Emphasize what Luke emphasized for maximum spiritual impact:

- 1) The overt spread of the gospel.
- 2) The intentional crossing of racial and cultural barriers as the gospel is boldly proclaimed.
- 3) The church in loving community as it proclaims the gospel and plants local churches where there was no previous testimony to the name of Jesus Christ.
- 4) The living out of the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the repeated filling of the Holy Spirit, who empowers believers to proclaim the gospel and cross racial-cultural barriers.

Be impacted by the Godly models and imitate their faith.

Practicum N.T. Genre: Epistles

Read the whole epistie in one sitting to get the big idea of the letter and its main contours.

I NINK IN TERMS OF THE PARAGRAPHS DEING THE MAIN UNITS OF thought.

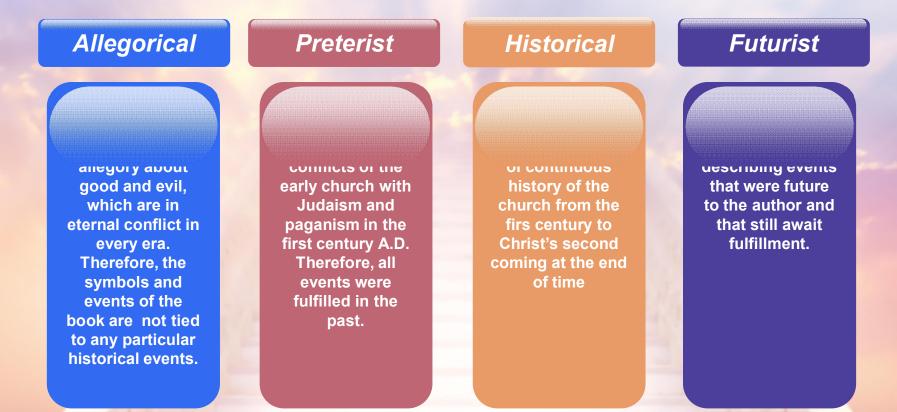
Knowing the structure of the epistie heips you to know where you are in the letter.

Do some background reading in order to understand better the epistle's main concerns and its historical and cultural setting.

Background		Background	Background
Information is		Information is of	Information is
Less Significant		<i>Average Significance</i>	<i>Highly Significant</i>
Narratives	Law	Psalms	Epistles
Proverbs		Gospels	Prophecies
Wisdom		Acts	Parables

Practicum N.T. Genre: Revelation

Four Approaches to Interpreting Revelation



Practicum N.T. Genre: Revelation

distinctive genre.

Remember that this book is ultimately about Jesus Christ, not Satan, or the antichrist!

church, expect to be exhorted to living holy today in light of this vivid picture of God's future triumph through Christ.

Testament; therefore, it is really intended to function as the capstone of all scripture and to complete the picture of what God has been doing in human history.