

Basics of Biblical Interpretation

The following areas of study and inquiry should be taken in studying passages in the Bible:

General Questions Before First Reading

- a. What seems to be the most interesting thing about this passage to you?
- b. Are there any words, historical detail or ideas in it on which you have questions?
- c. To whom was this first written?
- d. What is the writer trying to do or what point is the writer trying to make to the people who first read this?
- e. What were the writer's feelings and concerns when this passage was written?
- f. Does any of this passage speak to needs today?

Study Methodology

2. Book as a whole
 - a. time, purpose, author, life situation
3. If the passage is in the gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke or John), where does this passage fit into the whole context of the book (note: a *pericope* is a section in the synoptic gospels)
 - a. structural place, importance of topic, general sequence and structure of section
4. The passage itself (if it is in the gospels, compare this Pericope with other parallels in the other gospels)
 - a. Important **Words** (consult concordances, lexicons, are there grammar issues, dictionaries,)
 - b. Important **Phrases** (are there grammar issues, it is used elsewhere by this or other authors)
 - c. Important **Sentences and Paragraph thrusts**
5. The New Testament **Literary Context**
 - a. Old Testament Context?
 - b. Parallel Gospel (Synoptic) contexts?
 - c. Parallels in John's (more unusual) gospel?
 - d. Is this passage part of the author's overall themes or personal interest? (Redaction Criticism)
 - e. Is there a parallel or similarity to the writings of Paul?
6. **Historical Context**
 - a. Is there relevance to a previous historical significance?
 - b. How has the early church related to this passage?
 - c. Have the Church "fathers" traditionally responded to this passage?
 - d. How has this passage impacted on Church history?
7. **Theological Context**
 - a. How does this relate to the overall emphasis of the writer?
 - b. Are there other perspectives or differing interpretations or thoughts on the event or issue by other Biblical authors or extra-Biblical authors?
8. Are there **comparisons with other** (perhaps more contemporary) **Biblical Scholars**?
9. **Conclusions**
 - a. What do you conclude is the emphasis or purpose of this text in its original setting for its first readers?
 - b. What do you conclude is the major emphasis that emerges for its first readers?
 - c. What do you conclude is a possible relevance to our needs today in light of our very different historical, cultural, theological setting today?