

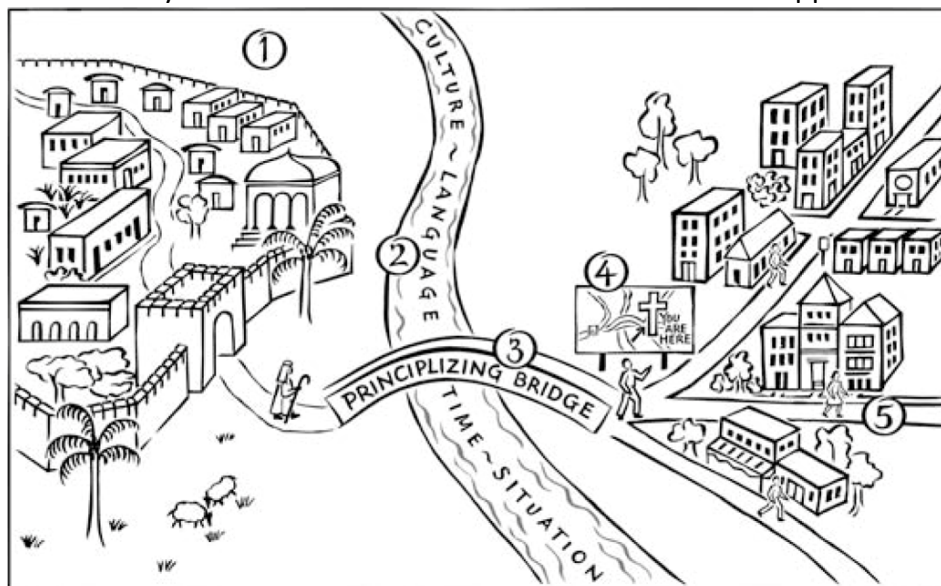
Hermeneutics

Week 2 – Observing the Text in Passages and Discourses

I. The Hermeneutical Journey¹

1. Step 1: Grasp the text in their town. What did the text mean to the original audience?
 - A. This is highly observational and requires observing what the text says.
 - B. It requires you to have some understanding of the speaker, the people, and the time.
 - C. It also helps to understand what type of Literary Genre you are dealing with.
2. Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

A. Historical Context	C. Language difference
B. Cultural context	D. Time
3. Step 3: Cross the principlizing bridge. What is the theological principle in this text?
 - A. What principles being addressed transcend time and culture?
 - B. How different in the current culture from the one we are studying?
4. Step 4: Consult the biblical map. How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?
 - A. Where does the text land in the Bible?
 - B. How can it be squared with what the Bible says elsewhere?
 - C. Context starts at the passage and moves outward (Forward and Back)
5. Step 5: Grasp the text in our town. How should individual Christians today live out the theological principles?
 - A. Using the principles you have extrapolated, determine how those can be applied to people. These can be general or specific.
 - B. The more specific one gets, the more exclusive that truth seems to other people.
 - C. This is why the current audience matters in the choice of application.



¹ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, [*Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*](#), Fourth Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 31-32.

II. Observations in Paragraphs

1. Repetition of Words
 - A. Note anything that comes up more than once
 - B. This could be single words or phrases
 - C. Words that are repeated frequently can help identify Themes
 - i. For example, comfort in the opening of 2 Corinthians.
 - ii. It is used 6 times between 3 nearby verses in 2 Corinthians. 1:3,4,6
2. Contrasts
 - A. Looking for differences
 - B. People, Ideas, Items
 - i. People -Luke 18:10-14 the Pharisee and the Tax Collector
 - ii. Ideas – Galatians 5:16-17 – The Flesh vs. The Spirit
 - iii. Items – Matthew 7:24-27 – Rock vs. Sand foundations
3. Comparisons
 - A. Looking for similarities
 - B. People
 - i. Philippians 2:19-22 – Timothy is like unto Paul
 - C. Ideas
 - † **Proverbs 25:19** – *Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.*
 - D. things
 - i. James 3:5 – a Tongue to a fire
 - ii. Isaiah 55:10-11 – God’s word to rain/snow
4. Lists
 - A. Mention 2 or more items in a sequence
 - † **Galatians 5:22-23** – *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*
 - B. At times, the order in a sequence can be helpful in addressing importance.
 - † **2 Peter 1:5-7** – *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*
5. Cause and Effect
 - A. This is very common in scripture
 - i. Paul says his bonds lead to the furtherance of the Gospel
 - ii. Jesus healed on the Sabbath, and the religious leaders tried to kill him.
 - B. One cause may have multiple effects
6. Figures of Speech
 - A. Note expression that convey an image
 - i. Jesus said he was the Light of the World
 - ii. He claimed to be the door.
 - B. Expressions that do not use the words literally

- i. John 6:54 – Jesus said that eating his flesh and drinking his blood was required for eternal life
 - ii. Matthew 5:13 – You are the salt of the earth
- 7. Conjunctions
 - A. Different conjunctions give you a focused idea of how to connect the text.
 - B. For example, but would inform you of a contrast being made
 - C. And may be used at times to help with a list
 - D. Therefore, it tells the reader to connect the text before it.
- 8. Verbs
 - A. Note the tense of tense of verbs
 - B. Is the verb Active, Passive, or middle
 - i. John 13:34 – Love one another
 - ii. Ephesians 2:8 – you are saved
 - iii. Middle is used especially in Greek.
 - iv. It is something that is done actively, but also effects the person doing the action.
 - C. Look for imperatives or commands
 - i. Eph 6:11 – Put on the whole armor of God.
- 9. Pronouns
 - A. It is important to identify who the pronoun is addressing.
 - B. Sometimes this bolsters a truth not clearly seen.
 - † **1 John 1:9** – *If **we** confess **our** sins, he is faithful and just to forgive **us our** sins, and to cleanse **us** from all unrighteousness.*
 - 1) We, our, and us would include the author expressing that the author, who was clearly already a Christian, thought it important to note that we still sin and ought to seek repentance.

III. Observations in Discourses

- 1. General to specific and specific to general—Find the general statements that are followed by specific examples or applications of the general. Also find specific statements that are summarized by a general one.
 - A. When telling Christians at Phillipi the importance of Humility, Paul then gives 4 examples of what this looks like: Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.
- 2. Questions and answers—Note if the text is built on a question-and-answer format.
 - A. Look at Romans 6 regarding this concept commonly
 - i. Show we sin that Grace may abound? God forbid!
 - ii. Is the law against the promises of God? God forbid!
- 3. Dialogue—Note if the text includes dialogue. Identify who is speaking and to whom.
 - A. How would know who the characters are effect the reading of John chapter 3
 - B. How about in Jesus trial with Pilate
- 4. Purpose/result statements—These are a more specific type of “means,” often telling why. Purpose and result are similar and sometimes indistinguishable. In a purpose

statement, you usually can insert the phrase “in order that.” In a result clause, you usually can insert the phrase “so that.”

- A. John 20:31 is a pretty clear purpose statement
 - B. As is 1 John 5:13
5. Means—Note if a sentence indicates that something was done *by means of* someone/something (answers “How?”). Usually you can insert the phrase “by means of” into the sentence.
 6. Conditional clauses—A clause can present the condition by which some action or consequence will result. Often such statements use an “if ... then” framework (although in English the “then” is often left out).
 7. Actions/roles of people—Identify actions or roles that the text ascribes to people or encourages people to do/be.
 8. Actions/roles of God—Identify actions or roles that the text ascribes to God.
 9. Emotional terms—Does the passage use terms that have emotional energy, like kinship words (“father,” “son”) or words like “pleading”?
 10. Tone—What is the overall tone of the passage: happy, sad, encouraging, and so on?
 11. Connections between paragraphs and episodes—How does the passage connect to the one that precedes it and the one that follows it?
 - A. Therefore
 - B. Wherefore
 - C. since
 12. Story shifts and pivots—Is the passage being used as a key to understanding a dramatic shift in the story?
 - A. 2 Samuel 11
 - B. 1 Kings 11
 13. Interchange—Does the passage shift back and forth between two scenes or characters?
 - A. Samuel and the sons of Eli?
 14. Chiasm—Does the passage have any chiasmic arrangements, such as a-b-c-d-c’-b’-a’?
 - A. Genesis 6-9
 - B. Psalm 8
 15. Inclusio—Does the passage open and close with similar statements or events?²
 - A. An example of an inclusio could be seen in the book of Mark.
 - i. Mark 1:1 and Mark 15:39 cover the idea of Jesus being the Son of God, but it is rarely something noted by the apostles in Mark.
 - ii. Instead, it seems to be everyone who wasn’t too close to the situation.

IV. General Biblical Observations

1. The Bible is set up in its current state with a particular order and with two overarching covenants, the Old and the New.
 - A. Pentateuch (Law) – 5 Books – Downward Look

² Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 96–97.

- i. In these books God moves down into human history by choosing a nation (Genesis),
 - ii. redeeming them (Exodus),
 - iii. sanctifying them (Leviticus),
 - iv. guiding them (Numbers),
 - v. and instructing them (Deuteronomy).³
 - B. History – 12 Books – Outward look**
 - i. This is described somewhat below in the overarching storyline of the Bible.
 - ii. This articulates the history of Israel from coming into the land to the 400 years of silence up to the coming of the Messiah.
 - C. Poetry – 5 Books – Upward Look**
 - i. This addresses mankind’s worship of God through different points of life.
 - ii. These books are some of the most powerful and picturesque due to the genuine outlooks of the authors and kinds of writing.
 - D. Prophetic – 17 books – Forward Look**
 - i. Major Prophets – 5 Books
 - 1) Dealing with the fall of the nation (North and South)
 - 2) Giving future hope of Redemption
 - ii. Minor Prophets – 12 Books
 - 1) Calling the People back
 - 2) Warning them of the danger of their current trajectory
 - 3) Explaining how to rebuild and obey
 - E. Gospels – 4 Books – Downward look**
 - i. These address the life and ministry of Jesus
 - ii. Their Focus is different in each book thus they include different details
 - iii. They all give the same overarching message of Jesus and what he accomplished.
 - F. History – 1 Book – Outward look**
 - i. Here, the beginnings of the church are established
 - ii. It shows the power of the Spirit and the gospel
 - iii. It addresses the church with two prominent leaders, primarily Peter and Paul.
 - G. Epistles – 21 Books – Upward look**
 - i. Teaches Doctrine
 - ii. Gives interpretations
 - iii. Used for edification
 - iv. Policies/ practices of the church
 - H. Prophetic – 1 Book – Forward look**
 - i. Express realities helpful to the people who originally read them
 - ii. Express truths that can help us today
 - iii. Notes the end of times.
2. The Bible in unity tells one overarching story

³ Norman L. Geisler, [*A Popular Survey of the New Testament*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 10.

- A. God created a world people whom God intended to interact with man
- B. Man chose sin in opposition to God, but God promised to redeem them through
- C. Sin and its devastating consequences (Separation from God, others, and life) afflict the whole world.
- D. God delves into history through Abraham and gives a covenant promise for land, progeny, and blessing.
- E. Israel, after eventually going into Slavery in Egypt, was brought out and reintroduced to their God via the Mosaic covenant.
- F. Israel continually broke the Mosaic covenant and desired a physical leader to direct the people. This eventually brought about the Davidic covenant.
- G. Human sinfulness exemplified the need for something more, as the Israelites not only continued to fail but waxed worse and worse generally.
- H. God, after exiling his people and bringing them back, reiterates to them that God would be the one to fulfill his promise to the people.
- I. Thus, Jesus comes as the prophesied Messiah (The God man) who brings about an upside-down kingdom.
- J. He lives perfectly, dies for sins, and is raised again, sending his servants to proclaim Christ's Gospel until Jesus one day comes back to give the final judgments as the Lord of all.

Bibliography

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Fourth Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Geisler, Norman L. *[A Popular Survey of the New Testament](#)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014.