

# DIGGING DEEPER IN SCRIPTURE...

Whether you are planning a club talk, a campaigners lesson, or a personal devotion, you are constantly making important decisions about what scripture teaches. This seminar will expose you to ideas and practical steps about how to carefully interpret scripture.

## OUTLINE

1. Intro – the need
2. General process
  - a. Prayer
  - b. Observation
  - c. Interpretation
  - d. Application
3. An example
4. Your turn...
5. Resources

## INTRO – THE NEED TO FIND OUT WHAT A SCRIPTURE MEANS

1. Club talk
  - a. Ex: Why was it strange for Jesus to talk to the Samaritan woman in John 4?
2. Campaigners
  - a. Ex: Why does scripture say that if two or three are gathered, there am I... Is God there is I am alone?
3. Personal devotion and questions
  - a. You might have questions about speaking in tongues, universalism, or salvation, etc. How do you look into this more in depth?
4. NOTE: A lot of info... a semesters worth of info.
5. This is also the process of exegesis and hermeneutics

## GENERAL PROCESS

1. **Prayer**
  - a. Begin in prayer
  - b. We often run off to the task of “doing” rather than the task of “listening”.
  - c. Here is a prayer of the Psalmist in an entire Psalm devoted to the wonder of scripture
    - i. Psalm 119:18 (ESV) 18Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.
2. **Observation**
  - a. Pick the appropriate translation
    - i. Literal word-for-word: ESV, NASB, NKJV
    - ii. Dynamic equivalence: NIV, NLT
    - iii. Paraphrase: Message
  - b. Read, read, read
    - i. Read through the text over and over.
    - ii. Slow, fast, reverse order
    - iii. Try to read the entire book in one setting
  - c. Ask questions and make observations (this is a very important task)
    - i. Make observations... there are no dumb observations
    - ii. Key and repeated terms
    - iii. Structure and outline
    - iv. Note the genre (some general types...)
      1. Prose = story and narrative, can include history
      2. Poetry = follows a poetic form and figurative language
        - a. Some estimate over 1/3 of the Bible is poetry. Some estimate much more.
      3. Parables = story with an implied specific lesson
      4. Wisdom = Proverbs, Job, Eccl, SS
      5. Prophecy = things to come (or already came)
        - a. Less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic
        - b. 98% concerns issues other than Jesus
        - c. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come
        - d. 99% concerns things that already happened
      6. Apocalyptic = Revelation

- v. Tip... write in your Bible or print out the text and make lots of notes on it

### 3. Interpretation

- a. Four general rules of interpretation
  - i. Scripture interprets scripture.
    - 1. Tool: concordance, but not too much, focus on the text/context as primary.
  - ii. Explicit instruction explains stories and parables.
  - iii. Focus on the plain sense of the text.
  - iv. Interpret experience in light of Scripture; not the other way around.
- b. Words and Grammar
  - i. Identify words
    - 1. key verbs (and tense)
    - 2. Identify key nouns (and pronouns)
    - 3. Do word studies
      - a. Identify the word in the original language
  - ii. Make an outline of the section or chapter
    - 1. Don't pay much attention to chapters, verses, commas, and periods since they are added after the text. (NT early manuscripts were all capital letters with no spaces between words and no punctuation)
- c. Context
  - i. Contextual circles of interpretation (see chart below – Figure 1)
    - 1. Sentence
    - 2. Paragraph
    - 3. Book
    - 4. Author
    - 5. Testament (OT/NT)
    - 6. Bible
    - 7. Geography, history, culture
  - ii. Spiral, keep looking closer and then take a step back to confirm the details, then repeat. (Like an iPhone, pinch and zoom back and forth)

### 4. Application

- a. 3 questions
  - i. What did it mean then?
  - ii. What does it mean for all people of all places of all times?
  - iii. How does it apply to me?
- b. The goal is obedience, not knowledge
- c. Compare to other people's conclusions (commentaries)

## AN EXAMPLE... MARK 10:46-52 BLIND BART

1. Prayer
2. Observation
  - a. Translation = ESV
  - b. Read it lots of different ways
  - c. Ask questions, make observations
    - i. Repeated words (shout, blind)
    - ii. Form = Prose
    - iii. Observations?
    - iv. Questions?
      1. Where is Jericho?
      2. How did the blind man know who Jesus is?
      3. Why did the people tell the blind man to be quiet?
3. Interpretation
  - a. Four general rules
    - i. Scripture interprets scripture... Compare with Lk 18?
    - ii. Focus on the plain teaching... this is a story about healing and following Jesus... not Jesus' reputation, not keeping people away from Jesus
  - b. Key words
    - i. I look at Jesus' verbs first (call, go, faith... then others: shout, rebuked)
    - ii. Key nouns (blind)
  - c. Basic Outline
    - i. Alone by the road (46)
    - ii. Hearing about Jesus (47a)
    - iii. Calling for Jesus (47b-48)
    - iv. Jesus calls and heals (49-52a)
    - v. Following Jesus (52b)
  - d. Context
    - i. Immediate context
      1. Story before = James and John ask for "whatever we want"
        - a. Note verse 36 is the same as 51
      2. Story after = Triumphal entry, the path to crucifixion
    - ii. Book of Mark = short and to the point stories about Jesus' actions
    - iii. NT = The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God
    - iv. Bible = God's kingdom and redeemed people
    - v. Geography, history, culture (Biblemap.org, Blueletterbible.org, books, etc.)
  - e. Application
    - i. 3 questions
      1. What did it mean then?
        - a. A blind man was healed by Jesus.
      2. What does it mean for all people of all places of all times?
        - a. Jesus has power over blindness.
        - b. Jesus responds to people who ask in faith.
      3. How does it apply to me?
        - a. Where do I put my faith when faced with challenges?
    - ii. Compare to other people's conclusions (commentaries)

## YOUR TURN... ACTS 1:8

Acts 1:8 (ESV) 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

1. Prayer
2. Observation
  - a. Translation = Word for word version
  - b. Read it lots of different ways
  - c. Ask questions, make observations
    - i. Repeated words Form = Prose
    - ii. Observations?
    - iii. Questions?
3. Interpretation
  - a. Key words
  - b. Basic Outline
  - c. Context
4. Application
  - a. 3 questions
    - i. What did it mean then?
    - ii. What does it mean for all people of all places of all times?
    - iii. How does it apply to me?
  - b. Compare to other people's conclusions (commentaries)

## RESOURCES

- c. Concordance = Bible gateway, iPhone apps, Blue letter Bible, Logos
- d. Word studies... (websites)
- e. Commentaries

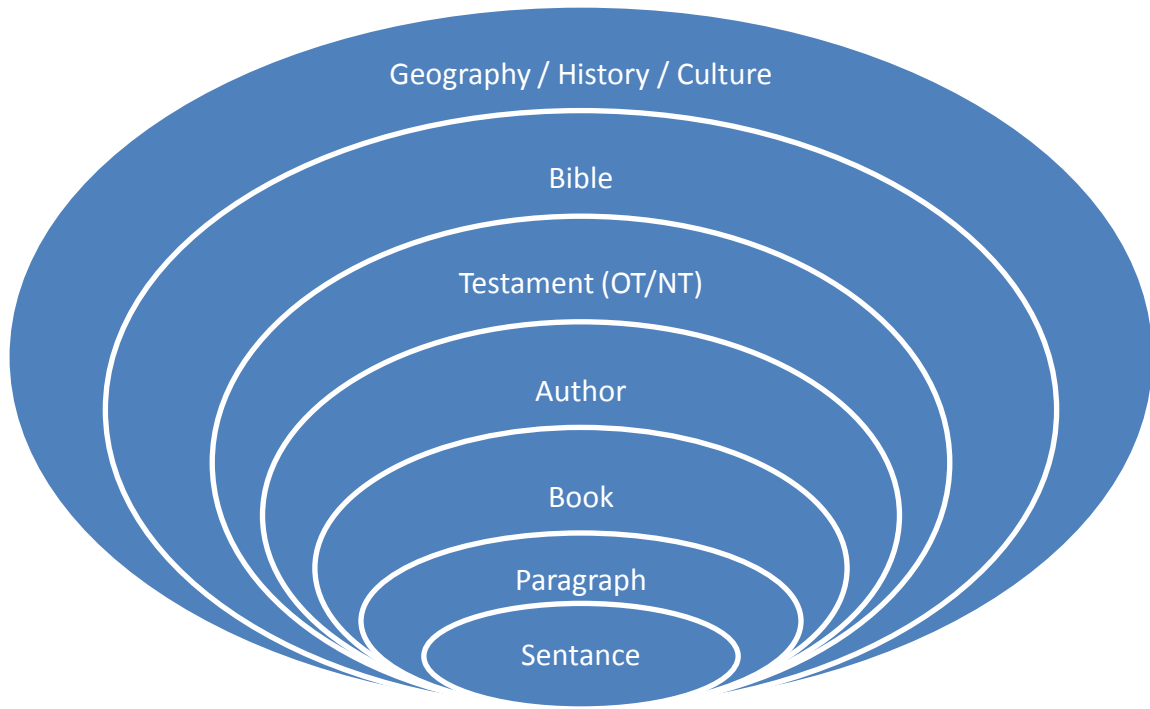


Figure 1 - Contextual Circles of Interpretation