

Exploring God's Word



How to study, understand,
and apply the Bible

Introduction

Psalms 149

1 Praise the LORD.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

3 Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music to him with tambourine and harp.

4 For the LORD takes delight in his people;
he crowns the humble with salvation.

5 Let the saints rejoice in this honor
and sing for joy on their beds.

6 May the praise of God be in their mouths
and a double-edged sword in their hands,

7 to inflict vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

8 to bind their kings with fetters,
their nobles with shackles of iron,

9 to carry out the sentence written against them.
This is the glory of all his saints.

Praise the LORD.

How do we interpret Psalm 149?

- The first 5 verses are very straightforward.
- The final verses are very difficult!
- How do we handle the sword of God to slay the pagans?
- This verse has been used to justify slaughter by everyone from the Maccabees to the Anabaptists to modern day Christians.
- How do we apply this today? What is our justification for our interpretation?

Psalm 137

1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.
2 There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
3 for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget [its skill].
6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem
my highest joy.

7 Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did
on the day Jerusalem fell.
“Tear it down,” they cried,
“tear it down to its foundations!”

8 O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is he who repays you
for what you have done to us—
9 he who seizes your infants
and dashes them against the rocks.

How do we interpret Psalm 137?

- How do we handle this idea of dashing the infants on the rocks?
- Does this mean that the New Testament and Old Testament are really different?
- Do we interpret the first verses of the Psalm in a “straightforward, literal fashion” (God wants us to pray for and remember Jerusalem, the city in the Middle East), and then change interpretive methods when we come to the final verses? If so, why?
- What is our interpretive method?
- How is it controlled so we don’t make the Scripture say what we want it to say?
- If we just say “The Bible could not mean that literally” why can’t others say that about Jesus being the only way of salvation, or in passages about hell?
- If we say “That was the Old Testament; we live in the New Testament” are we consistent in how we relate the two testaments?

General Principles for Interpreting the Scripture

The Nature of the Scripture & the Need for Interpretation

1. The nature of the Scripture demands that we give great attention to how to interpret.
 - 1.1. The Bible is God's Word.
 - 1.1.1. Scripture claims that it is God's Word.
 - 1.1.1.1. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 **All Scripture is God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
 - 1.1.1.2. 2 Peter 1:20–21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men **spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**
 - 1.1.2. Because the Scripture is God's Word, it is of paramount importance that we interpret it correctly!
 - 1.1.3. Because the Scripture is God's Word, interpretation must be done through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1.1.3.1. 1 Corinthians 2:12–16 We have not received the spirit of the world but the **Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.** ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. ¹⁴ **The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.** ¹⁵ The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: ¹⁶ "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
 - 1.1.3.2. Everything we will talk about today assumes that we are crying out for God to give us understanding through His Spirit.
 - 1.1.4. All Christians have the Spirit and He will enable all Christians to understand God's Word. No group has an "inside track" on this, and the thought that one group is "more open to the Spirit and therefore understand the Scripture better" is utter foolishness and undermines accurately understanding the Word of God. The Spirit does not help one Christian or group more than the other. He is given to ALL that ALL may understand God's Word.

- 1.1.4.1. Romans 8:6–9 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷ **the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.** ⁸ Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹ **You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.**
- 1.1.4.2. 1 Corinthians 2:16 “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” **But we have the mind of Christ.**
- 1.2. The Bible is God’s Word through man
 - 1.2.1. Scripture teaches that God gave Scripture through human beings, in real human language.
 - 1.2.1.1. 2 Peter 1:20–21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**
 - 1.2.1.2. 2 Samuel 23:2 “The Spirit of the Lord spoke **through me**; his word was on **my tongue.**”
 - 1.2.2. This means that the Scripture is given in real human language, using ordinary words, grammar, figures of speech, metaphors, etc. - and that it must be interpreted like other written human communication.
 - 1.2.3. This means that to understand the Scripture is NOT just a matter of “letting the Spirit interpret it for me.” We must be consciously dependent on the Spirit as we study, but WE do the interpreting, using the same procedures as we would for other written human communication.

For further information on the topic of the nature of the Scripture, see session one “Inspiration” of “How I Got My Bible.” This, and all other BRCC seminars are available at:

<http://www.bayridgechristianchurch.org>

- 1.2.4. This also means that each writer of Scripture writes differently, and that some individual sections will be more difficult to interpret than other sections.

- 1.2.4.1. 2 Peter 3:15–16 Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.
 - 1.2.5. Therefore it is imperative that we learn how to properly read, study, interpret and apply the Scriptures.
2. Our own situation requires care in interpretation
- 2.1. The problem of objectivity and subjectivity (see Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 37-43).
 - 2.1.1. Because we are inherently limited as creatures, but especially because of our fallen natures, we are inherently subjective. We have a natural tendency to read into the Scripture (or other writings) what we want to find there, rather than seeing what is actually being communicated to us by the author.
 - 2.1.2. This is especially a temptation in our own hyper-subjective age.
 - 2.1.3. “That’s your interpretation.”
 - 2.1.3.1. This is built on the idea that there is more than one meaning - it can mean one thing for you and another for me.
 - 2.1.3.2. This is radical subjectivism and postmodernity, and utterly worldly.
 - 2.1.3.3. This negates any chance for real communication - we can not know what something really means.
 - 2.1.3.4. Walter Kaiser’s example of responding to a students argument for total subjectivity in class - “That’s what it means to me.”
 - 2.1.4. The goal - getting to the objective meaning that can be subjectively applied to our varying circumstances.
 - 2.1.4.1. This requires hard work - but it is worth it
 - 2.1.4.2. “Not all false prophets speak falsely out of malice; many do so out of ignorance. From the malicious and the ignorant we should flee.” (Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 42).
 - 2.1.4.3. How do we keep from being ignorant? How do we interpret the text so that we do not engage in subjectivism, and simply make it say what we want it to say?
 - 2.2. The problem of laziness and pride - “I do not need to interpret; I just read and do what it says.”
 - 2.2.1. This idea is especially prevalent today.
 - 2.2.2. This idea can sound pious, and wants to stress that God wrote the Bible in a clear manner - which is true!

- 2.2.3. However, this is an utterly false statement - all reading is inherently interpreting. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS NON-INTERPRETIVE READING. To read is to interpret.
- 2.2.4. The only question then is whether our interpretation is good or bad, consistent or inconsistent.
- 2.2.5. This is why there are so many interpretations of Scripture - clearly evident to each person, who often will say they are not interpreting, they are just “giving the plain meaning.”
- 2.2.6. The antidote to bad interpretation is good interpretation - not no interpretation at all (which is not even possible).
- 2.3. The problem of distance
 - 2.3.1. This need for the hard work of good, consistent interpretation is even more evident when we consider that the the Bible contains 66 books, written in three languages over a period covering at least 1,500 years by dozens of authors who were writing in numerous genres for diverse audiences.
 - 2.3.2. We live in a situation very different than the ones in which the various parts of Scripture were written. Given the vast variety of languages, authors, literary genres, and historical situations found in the Scripture - many of which are quite distant and removed from our own language, situation and outlook - we need to learn how to read, interpret and apply the Scripture.

3. The clarity of Scripture

- 3.1. Definition - The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and willing to follow it. - Wayne Grudem
- 3.2. This does not mean that we do not need to exercise care in interpreting the Scripture, that all Scripture is equally easy to interpret, or we can just “trust the Holy Spirit” to give us the proper interpretation.
 - 3.2.1. As seen in section 1.2 above, the Bible is God’s Word through man, and thus WE must interpret. The Spirit will not interpret for us, anymore than He will eat for us, rest for us, hug our children for us, etc. Interpretation is a human task - the Spirit will aid us, but we must labor to interpret correctly. Any other approach is not being “led by the Spirit” - it is the sin of presumption.
 - 3.2.2. As we saw in section 1.2.4 above, not all sections of Scripture are equally easy to interpret. The clarity of Scripture as a whole does not mean that all of the individual parts are equally clear.
- 3.3. However, this does mean that we should not fear studying God’s Word, or just leave it for the experts. God Word is given to all of His people, and if we are willing to work, its message is clear for us to understand and apply.

4. The progressive revelation of Scripture
 - 4.1. Definition - Progressive revelation refers to the fact that God’s unified revelation in His word was given over a long period of time, and that later revelation does not contradict earlier revelation, but it does serve to illuminate, clarify, and interpret the content of earlier revelation, and in some cases even declares that the earlier revelation has been fulfilled and is no longer binding.
 - 4.2. This means that the teachings of the New Testament must determine our understanding of the Old Testament. We interpret the Old in light of the New.
 - 4.2.1. Hebrews 1:1–3 **In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,** whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
 - 4.2.2. Hebrews 9:8–12 **The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.** ⁹ This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. ¹¹ When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹² He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.
 - 4.2.3. Mark 7:18–19 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? ¹⁹For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” **(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)**
 - 4.2.4. Matthew 5:17–18, 21–22 **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.... ²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.**

- 4.3. This does not mean we force the full revelation of the New Testament onto the Old Testament, or act as if the people of the Old Testament enjoyed the full revelation that we do. However, it does mean that the New and Old Testament - from Genesis to Revelation - are one unified revelation, telling one unified story, and that to properly understand the Old Testament we must read it in light of the final revelation given in the New Testament. Further, we should expect that the New Testament will throw light on the Old Testament, helping us to understand and interpret it properly.
 - 4.4. As can be seen in some of the examples listed in 4.2 above, progressive revelation is closely tied to the history of redemption. As God's redemptive plan unfolded, so did His revelation of that plan. Thus, as that plan reaches its fulfillment in Christ and His church, so also we expect revelation to reach its fulfillment in Christ and His church.
5. Scripture interprets Scripture - letting the clear determine the meaning of the obscure
 - 5.1. If we apply the previous principles, we see that we must let Scripture interpret Scripture. At its simplest, this simply means that if one Scripture quotes and interprets another Scripture, that interpretation is authoritative.
 - 5.2. Another import of this idea, however, is that we must interpret more difficult or obscure texts in light of clearer texts. Since we know that Scripture has One Ultimate author, that Scripture will not contradict itself, and that Scripture was progressively revealed, we must let the clearer parts help us interpret the more difficult portions.
 - 5.2.1. This is especially important when we approach the most difficult of all the parts of Scripture - prophecy and apocalypse. These are very important, but they are quite often the most obscure and difficult portions of Scripture, and must be interpreted in light of God's clear, direct revelation found in other parts of Scripture.
 - 5.2.1.1. Numbers 12:6-8 He said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. ⁷ But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. ⁸ With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"
 - 5.3. Finally, this means that we must let the message of all Scripture determine the meaning of an individual passage.
 - 5.3.1. "The entire Holy Scripture is the context and guide for understanding the particular passages of Scripture." (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 105).
 - 5.3.2. This particular point will be discussed in depth later in the session.

Hermeneutics - Learning How To Interpret the Bible

1. Hermeneutics - Learning to interpret and apply the Scripture.
 - 1.1. Definition - Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation.
 - 1.2. Hermeneutics refers to the principles we follow to read, study, and interpret the Bible, and then apply it to our lives in our current situation.
 - 1.3. Broadly speaking, hermeneutics has two main parts: exegesis and application.
2. Exegesis
 - 2.1. Exegesis - from the Greek word ἐξήγησις (exegesis) which means “setting forth something in great detail; explanation; interpretation.” (From Bauer, Danker-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon).
 - 2.2. Broadly speaking, exegesis refers to determining what the text originally meant.
 - 2.3. This is the critical first step in Bible study. Before I can know what the Bible means for me today, I must determine what it meant for the original audience. **IF THIS STEP IS SKIPPED IT WILL ALMOST ALWAYS USHER IN FALSE UNDERSTANDINGS OF WHAT THE TEXT MEANS TO ME AND HOW IT APPLIES TO ME TODAY.**
 - 2.4. If we do not do this, we will read the ideas of our own time and place (which are almost always completely foreign to the Scripture we are reading) back into the text, and thereby make the Scripture say something other than what God intended.
 - 2.4.1. Mark 10:25 “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”
 - 2.4.2. We often hear that this is a reference to a small gate in the wall at Jerusalem known as the eye of the needle, which forced the camels to their knees, where the treasure was taken off their backs, put through first, and then the camel would be taken through the eye of the needle. This is then related to how we must do the same.
 - 2.4.3. The problem is that this is entirely fictitious. There was never an ‘eye of the needle gate’ in Jerusalem. The first time any such thing is mentioned is not until the 11th century when it was mentioned by a Greek Churchman named Theophylact! (See Fee & Stuart, 22).
 - 2.4.4. Since neither Jesus nor those hearing him knew of any such “eye of the needle” in the wall, it is not possible for that to be the meaning or the application for us.
 - 2.5. One of the most important part of exegesis is learning to ask the right questions of the text. Our question needs to be the same one that the author has in mind, or else we will likely misinterpret the text.
 - 2.6. These questions also deal with the purpose of the letter or book, the background circumstances, etc. If we do not consider these we will often misinterpret the text.

- 2.7. To determine what the text meant then will require the use of materials that will help us understand time, place and purpose of writing, biblical languages and idioms, history, culture, etc. WE SHOULD DO OUR OWN READING FIRST, BUT THESE SHOULD ALWAYS BE CONSULTED IN THE END.
- 2.7.1. Some may object that the original audience did not use commentaries, original language tools, word studies, historical resources, etc., so we do not need to either. This is false for one simple reason - they did not need them since they were alive at the time of the writing and so already knew the language, culture, history, etc. Since we live at a different time and place, we must work to learn what they already knew.
- 2.7.2. Thankfully, such tools are readily accessible today and so we have no excuse for not using them.
- 2.7.3. This is also why God has given teachers to the body of Christ. Their task is to work with all of these tools to accurately understand the text and then to teach it to others. IF ANYONE WANTS TO TEACH THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE TO OTHERS - ESPECIALLY OTHER ADULTS - THEY MUST LEARN TO USE THESE TOOLS SO THEY DO NOT MISREPRESENT THE MEANING OF SCRIPTURE TO THEIR STUDENTS OR CONGREGATION.
- 2.7.3.1. James 3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.
- 2.7.3.2. 1 Timothy 1:3–8 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may **command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.** These promote controversies rather than God’s work—which is by faith.⁵ **The goal of this command is love,** which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.⁶ **Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.⁷ They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.⁸ We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.**
- 2.8. We will look more at the principles of exegesis and how to use tools in a later session today.
3. The second task is application - determining what the text means today
- 3.1. Note that Fee and Stuart use ‘hermeneutics’ to discuss this topic (which they admit is unusual) but this is not the usual meaning of that word and so I would avoid it.
- 3.2. Once we know what it meant, we can now extrapolate to ask what it means in our stage of redemptive history, and how I can apply its teachings today.

- 3.3. If we do not move to this step, our study is only academic and thus incomplete.
- 3.4. Much of the study and teaching we hear today attempts to go straight to this stage, and so we are much more comfortable with application than with exegesis.
- 3.5. However, it must be stressed again that we can not move on to application without first doing proper exegesis to learn what the text meant to the original author and audience.
- 3.6. We will also look at some principles of application in later sessions today.

Exegesis - Discovering What the Text Meant

The Controlling Factor - Context

1. Understanding the importance of context
 - 1.1. The old saying - In choosing a house or place of business, the three most important things are location, location, and location!
 - 1.2. In determining the meaning of a text, the three most important things are CONTEXT, CONTEXT, AND CONTEXT!
 - 1.3. A great many of the problems in biblical interpretation come from ignoring the context of a particular verse within the paragraph, the biblical book of which it is a part, and of the entirety of Scripture.
2. Understanding the multi-layered context of a verse in the Scripture
 - 2.1. Each verse in the Scripture has a multi-layer context.
 - 2.2. When attempting to understand a word, phrase, or verse, we must consider the immediate context of the sentence and paragraph of which it is a part. The word, phrase, or verse can not mean something foreign to the sentence and paragraph of which it is a part. If we do not do this, we can actually make something say the opposite of what is intended.
 - 2.3. We must also consider the intermediate context of the word, phrase, or verse in view. The intermediate context includes the section or entire book of which the word, phrase or verse is a part, as well as any other writings by the same author or any parallel passages.
 - 2.4. We will look at the immediate and intermediate context in more detail in a later session.
3. The ultimate context - the whole Bible
 - 3.1. Because the Bible has one ultimate author, and is telling one ultimate story, every individual verse, passage, section, and book must be considered within the whole Bible. No individual book will have a meaning that is contrary to the meaning of the Bible as a whole. The Bible does not contradict itself.
 - 3.2. Thus, before we begin looking at how to interpret the small units of Scripture (words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs), we must begin by getting an accurate overview of the message of Scripture.
4. The big picture - what the whole Bible is about
 - 4.1. Some would argue that you can not begin this way, since one must add up the individual passages to arrive at the final meaning of the whole.
 - 4.2. There is certainly some truth in this in that our understanding of individual passages will necessarily correct how we understand the whole of Scripture. In fact, the two must always be interacting to allow us to arrive at the proper meaning of an individual text or topic.

- 4.3. However, when interpreting the Bible, there is one key difference - Jesus has already told us the central subject of the Bible. The central subject of the Scriptures is nothing other than Jesus Christ Himself - His Person and work.
- 4.3.1. John 5:39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. **These are the Scriptures that testify about me...**
- 4.3.1.1. Note that the Old Testament Scriptures are said to testify about Jesus.
- 4.3.1.2. Jesus fully expected that the Pharisees should have known Who He was from the Old Testament - because it is about Him.
- 4.3.2. Luke 24:25–27 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe **all that the prophets have spoken!** ²⁶ **Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”** ²⁷ **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**
- 4.3.2.1. Note that once again Jesus says that the Old Testament - specifically the Law and the Prophets - are about Him.
- 4.3.2.2. Also note that once again He rebukes people for not seeing Him in the Old Testament.
- 4.3.2.3. Note that the content is said to refer to Christ’s suffering (which would have special reference to His death) and then to His glory (which would have special reference to His resurrection and then ascension).
- 4.3.3. Luke 24:44–48 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
- 4.3.3.1. Note that the Hebrew Scriptures were commonly broken down into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the writings (the first and greatest of which is the book of Psalms).
- 4.3.3.2. This means that Jesus is referring to the whole of the Old Testament - it is all about Him.
- 4.3.3.3. Further, notice that it is not just about Him in some vague or general way, but rather it is about His life, death, resurrection, and the gospel going forth to all peoples as Christ builds His church from all nations. All of this is the **CENTRAL** message of the Old Testament.

- 4.3.4. 2 Timothy 3:14–16 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,¹⁵ and how **from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**
- 4.3.4.1. Note that the Scriptures - which at the time of Timothy's infancy was the Old Testament - is able to make one wise for salvation through Jesus Christ.
- 4.3.4.2. This means that the Gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ alone is clearly taught in the Old Testament.
- 4.3.5. Galatians 3:6–9 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.⁸ The **Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham:** "All nations will be blessed through you."⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
- 4.3.5.1. Note that Paul says the Scripture - the Old Testament - foresaw justification by faith for everyone - Jew and Gentile.
- 4.3.5.2. Note that Paul says the promise to Abraham is nothing other than the Gospel. The promise "All nations will be blessed through you" is the promise of the Gospel - justification by faith alone through Christ alone.
- 4.3.5.3. One might also note that here and in Romans 4 Paul uses Abraham (and other Old Testament figures) as examples of those who were justified by faith alone - exactly as we are.
- 4.3.6. 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,¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.¹² 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.**
- 4.3.6.1. Note that the prophets spoke of salvation and the grace that has come to us.
- 4.3.6.2. Note that the prophets spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow - the same topics as Luke 24.
- 4.3.6.3. Note that the prophets were not serving themselves (or their generation ultimately) but we who have now received the Gospel. This means that Christ, the Gospel and the Church are the focus of the Old Testament as well.

- 4.4. Based on this clear teaching in the New Testament, I would summarize the central message of the Bible as follows: “The central message of the Bible is that God is bringing glory to Himself through the Person and work of Jesus Christ as He creates and redeems a people in whom God dwells by His Spirit so that they will glorify and enjoy Him forever.”
- 4.5. This means that as we study individual passages, sections, books, and topics they must be read in light of Christ, His redemptive work, and His people.
- 4.6. A key question in all Bible study must be “How does this text fit into the story of God bringing glory to Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ as He is creating and redeeming a people who will glorify and enjoy Him forever?” **EVERY** text fits into this overall story, and if we are not reading the individual texts as part of this larger story, we are reading the Scripture incorrectly - and differently than Jesus and the apostles read the Scripture.

The Grammatical-Historical Method of Interpreting Scripture

1. Grammatical - interpretation based on words, sentences, paragraphs, books and genre
 - 1.1. The foundation of the grammatical method of interpretation is that we are after the literal meaning of the text. However, it is imperative that we understand what is meant by the “literal” meaning of the text.
 - 1.1.1. The literal meaning of the text refers to reading the text in a straightforward rather than allegorical manner.
 - 1.1.1.1. In the allegorical method, the text is said to have layers of mystical meanings, least important of which is the surface ‘literal’ meaning of the text, and the most important of which is the deep ‘spiritual’ meaning of the text.
 - 1.1.1.2. In its most developed form in the Middle Ages, the allegorical method saw a four fold meaning of Scripture:
 - 1.1.1.2.1. Literal meaning
 - 1.1.1.2.2. Allegorical (find faith and sacraments)
 - 1.1.1.2.3. Tropological – moral guidance
 - 1.1.1.2.4. Anagogical – hope and 2nd coming
 - 1.1.1.3. It was this convoluted system that was being objected to by the Reformers when they argued for the literal, grammatical-historical method of interpreting the Scripture.
 - 1.1.2. The literal meaning does NOT mean that we should ignore the use of literary devices, symbolism, typology, etc.
 - 1.1.3. The literal meaning does NOT mean that we read poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic literature, etc. as if they were straight prose. We read each genre using rules appropriate to that genre.
 - 1.1.4. The literal meaning of a text is what that text conveys when we follow the normal manner of reading that type of genre, paying attention to context, literary devices, word meanings, etc.
 - 1.2. Exegesis requires grammatical study
 - 1.2.1. The text can not mean something foreign to the grammatical meaning of the words
 - 1.2.2. Meaning is conveyed by words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.
 - 1.2.3. We have to learn to read - many Christians struggle understanding the Bible because they do not know how to read properly.

- 1.3. Semantics - the meaning of words and sentences
 - 1.3.1. We must begin by paying attention to the actual words used and determine their meaning
 - 1.3.1.1. We need to understand the possible range of meaning of the word in question - hot does not mean cold, and bitter does not mean sweet!
 - 1.3.1.2. The first step is to simply pay careful attention to the actual words used in the text under consideration. Do I understand what the words themselves actually mean?
 - 1.3.1.3. It is very helpful to compare a number of English translations to see how different scholars understand the words under consideration. This may shed light on what the individual words do or do not mean in this case.
 - 1.3.1.4. Lexicons, theological dictionaries, and similar tools are very helpful in this regard. We will look at bit more in depth at these tools later in the seminar.
 - 1.3.1.5. Good commentaries will provide a lot of help here. I will discuss commentaries more later in the seminar.
 - 1.3.1.6. CAUTION - do not go beyond your own abilities. If you do not read Greek or Hebrew, do not give in to the temptation to act like you do.
 - 1.3.1.6.1. בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ
 - 1.3.1.6.2. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
 - 1.3.1.6.3. If you can not read the sentences above, you DO NOT know Hebrew or Greek. If you can not read them, then don't talk confidently about what the Greek and Hebrew says - admit your limitations!
 - 1.3.1.6.4. CAUTION - recognize the extreme limitations of Strong's concordance. It is not a real lexicon, but just some very brief glosses. People use this tool improperly all the time and follow many of the mistakes listed below. Don't do this!

- 1.3.1.7. Problems to avoid
 - 1.3.1.7.1. English meaning fallacy - take a different meaning for the English word, which is not acceptable for the Greek or Hebrew word.
 - 1.3.1.7.1.1. I heard a man on a video podcast excitedly exclaiming - '**Now** faith is - Faith is present tense. It grasps God promises in the present. It is not about the future - faith is about NOW!' However, I immediately knew that this had nothing to do with what the verse was teaching. The Greek word δὲ (de) which is translated 'now' means 'consequently' or 'therefore' - it has no time reference at all. Obviously, in English the word 'now' could mean consequently/therefore, or it could mean the present time - but the Greek word δὲ (de) does not have both of these meanings - it simply connects the thought with what preceded - 'therefore, faith is being sure of what we hope for...'
 - 1.3.1.7.1.2. Do not use an English dictionary or thesaurus to get an English word you like better - it probably does not have overlap with the Greek/Hebrew word.
 - 1.3.1.7.1.3. You have to use a Greek or Hebrew lexicon to find out the range of the Greek or Hebrew word - not fish for an English word you like.

- 1.3.1.7.2. English anachronism fallacy - reading a later English word back into a Greek word from which it was at one time derived
 - 1.3.1.7.2.1. Dunamis and dynamite (Acts 1:8) - The problem is that dynamite can be destructive rather than just powerful - not to mention that they did not have dynamite in New Testament times, so such an analogy could not have been in the mind of the authors or readers of the New Testament!
 - 1.3.1.7.2.2. Hilaron and hilarious (2 Corinthians 9:7) - The idea can be given that our giving must be with hilarity. But this can convey that we are somehow overcome with laughter - when the real point is that our giving is not reluctant.
- 1.3.1.7.3. Lexical root fallacy - Determining the meaning of a word by combining the meaning of the words out of which it is formed. While this method will produce accurate results sometimes, it will yield very dubious results far more often. Butterfly does not mean butter is flying or the winged creature is a mix of butter and a fly!
- 1.3.1.7.4. Chronological meaning fallacy - assuming that the original root from which a word is formed controls its meaning throughout the various ages in which a word is used.
 - 1.3.1.7.4.1. Synchrony (meaning at that time) vs. diachrony (meaning through time).
 - 1.3.1.7.4.2. For example, the English word “nice” comes from a Latin word meaning “ignorant” - but that is hardly the meaning we attach to the word today.

- 1.3.1.7.4.3. The English word ‘scan’ has changed meaning multiple times - from a precise careful reading, to skimming over a text, to a precise electronic reproduction of the text.
- 1.3.1.7.4.4. Remember that synchrony is far more important. The readers were not thinking about what a word meant 500 years before their own time, but rather what it meant to them at that time. This is the meaning we must try to understand.
- 1.3.1.7.4.5. However, due to the great influence of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, there are times that the way a word was used in the Septuagint seems to have more weight than the normal meaning of the word in Greek culture.
- 1.3.1.7.4.6. For example the word usually translated ‘covenant’ is **διαθήκη** (diatheke) - which normally meant ‘last will and testament’ but was used in the Septuagint to refer to a covenant - especially between God and man.
- 1.3.1.7.5. Meaning overload fallacy (totality transfer fallacy) - can not read every possible meaning of a word into an individual occurrence.
 - 1.3.1.7.5.1. This is a major potential problem with Amplified Bible.
 - 1.3.1.7.5.2. A word almost always has a single meaning in a particular occurrence (only exception is if there is double entendre or a play on words).

1.3.1.7.5.3. “The sky is blue” does not mean that the sky is sad, and “I am feeling a bit blue today” does not mean that I feel like my skin color has changed - even though the English word ‘blue’ can refer to a color and also an emotional state.

1.3.1.8. Pay attention to how the author generally uses a word - sometimes each author has a particular shade of meaning.

1.3.1.8.1. For example, Paul and James seem to use the word ‘faith’ in different ways. For Paul it is a full orbed belief that includes knowledge, assent, and real trust. For James, it is primarily knowledge, so that the demons and the devil can have faith - knowledge of the truth - but they do not accept it or trust it obediently.

1.3.1.8.2. Another example to consider concerns the Greek words υἱός (huios) and τέκνον (teknon), both of which mean ‘son’ or ‘child.’ For John, when speaking of one as the “Son of God” the word υἱός (huios) is always and only used of Jesus. To speak of us as God’s sons John always uses τέκνον (teknon). John never uses υἱός (huios) to refer to us as children of God, and never uses τέκνον (teknon) to refer to Jesus as God’s Son. (The only exception is Revelation 21:7, where John is quoting 2 Samuel 7:14 and so keeps the word υἱός (huios) when referring to us). However, in Matthew 5:9 Matthew says we are “sons of God” and uses υἱός (huios) - something John would never do. Paul does the same thing in Romans 8:14, 8:19, 9:26, Galatians 4:7, and the writer to Hebrews uses it this way in Hebrews 12:7. Furthermore, Paul also uses τέκνον (teknon) to refer to us as God’s sons in Romans 8:16, 17, and 21 - in the midst of a passage where he uses υἱός (huios) to refer to us as God’s sons - thus showing he takes τέκνον (teknon) and υἱός (huios) as synonyms. These authors use these synonyms differently, and we should pay attention to this in our study.

- 1.3.2. Pay attention to parts of speech & grammar - follow grammatical rules
 - 1.3.2.1. Words do not exist in isolation, nor is their meaning simply determined in isolation.
 - 1.3.2.2. We must pay attention to how the words are put together in a sentence and what part of speech a particular word is in a particular sentence - grammar.
 - 1.3.2.3. Wrong understanding of the grammar can lead to error, and in some cases to serious theological error.
 - 1.3.2.3.1. 1 Corinthians 3:16 is often taught as if it is speaking of the individual Christian as the Temple of God. However, it is quite clear that this is NOT the point of this text (though it IS the point of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
 - 1.3.2.3.1.1. The verbs (Don't you know; you are) and the pronouns (you) are plural - not singular. To use Southern colloquialisms, we could translate this "Don't y'all know that y'all are the temple of God, and that God's Spirit lives in/among y'all - as a group?"
 - 1.3.2.3.1.2. The context is about the church - not the individual believer. There is NOTHING in the context that would point to an individual believer.
 - 1.3.2.3.2. Ephesians 6:10-18 is often taught with the same mistakes. Once again, all of the verbs and pronouns are plural, and the metaphor being used demands a plural application, since armor and tactics were always designed to be used as part of a unit - not for individual combat.
 - 1.3.2.3.3. Ephesians 5:18-21 - The only finite verbs are "do not get drunk" and "be filled" - all other verbals (speaking, singing, giving thanks, submitting) are dependent on these verbs, either showing the purpose of being filled (that we might speak to one another, sing praise to God, submit to one another), or the result of being filled with the Spirit. They are not separate commands we are being commanded to do, but rather a description of what being filled with the Spirit looks like.

- 1.4. Context - sentences, paragraphs, pericopes, books, authors, and the Scripture as a whole
 - 1.4.1. When attempting to understand a word, phrase, or verse, we must consider the immediate context of the sentence and paragraph of which it is a part. The word, phrase, or verse can not mean something foreign to the sentence and paragraph of which it is a part. If we do not do this, we can actually make something say the opposite of what is intended.
 - 1.4.1.1. “There is no God!” - did you know the Bible teaches this?
 - 1.4.1.1.1. Psalms 14:1 The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.
 - 1.4.1.1.2. The context of the whole verse actually shows that anyone who believes this is a fool and corrupt before God!
 - 1.4.2. We are not interpreting sentences in isolation either. They are part of paragraphs, which in turn are parts of pericopes (self-contained sections or units within a book), which are parts of biblical books, which are often part of an author’s entire corpus, which are part of the context of Scripture as a whole.
 - 1.4.2.1. We must apply a contextual spiral - constantly interpreting the parts in light of the whole, but also revisiting our understanding of the whole in light of the parts as we study.
 - 1.4.2.2. There is definitely a tension here. When studying a particular section, do not let the teaching of that section be artificially determined by another unrelated section. However, no individual passage can be interpreted in a manner so that it violates or contradicts what the Scripture teaches elsewhere.
 - 1.4.3. The broader context of the paragraph and pericope can help determine meaning - and also exclude meaning.
 - 1.4.3.1. Does Ephesians 5:21 teach that husbands are to submit to their wives - so called ‘mutual submission’? It is clear that it does not for a number of reasons:
 - 1.4.3.1.1. In all likelihood, verse 21 is not even part of the paragraph or section that runs from Ephesians 5:22-33. The verbal in v21 (‘submitting’) is a participle which is part of the section running from verse 18. It supports the verb “be filled” and is simply another purpose/result of being filled - speaking, singing, making melody, giving thanks, submitting. Admittedly there is a textual issue here, so it is possible that a new

section begins with verse 21, but I think it is most likely that verse 21 is part of the previous section. However, even if it does belong with the next section, it still does not teach ‘mutual submission’ for the reasons given below.

- 1.4.3.1.2. Look at the context of the verse. Does Christ submit to the church? Do parents submit to children? Do masters submit to slaves? Then how can we take v21 as teaching that husbands are to submit to wives?
 - 1.4.3.1.3. Consider the wider context of Paul’s writings. Does the parallel passage in Colossians 3:18ff even mention mutual submission? Does Paul ever command husbands to submit to wives? Is this consonant with teaching anywhere else in Scripture?
 - 1.4.3.1.4. Context shows that the idea of ‘mutual submission’ between husbands and wives is not even possible.
 - 1.4.3.1.5. Of course, context also defines what submission and leadership look like - which is very different than what many assume! It is NOT a harsh ruling and forced following, but loving sacrifice and willing honoring of that leadership.
- 1.4.4. The context can include structural devices that can show us the meaning of the text
- 1.4.4.1. The Epistles often have a structure of doctrine then practice, the indicative followed by the imperative. If you do not pay attention to this, you can misinterpret the meaning of a text.
 - 1.4.4.1.1. Ephesians 1-3 is doctrinal - indicative. It tells us what God has done for us in Christ.
 - 1.4.4.1.2. Ephesians 4-6 is practical - imperative. It tells us how to live in light of the salvation we have already been given. Thus, the commands we read in Ephesians 4-6 must be built on the doctrine of what God has already done for us in Christ, which we see in Ephesians 1-3. If we do not do this, we will read the commands in Ephesians 4-6 like legalists, and will become good disciples of the Pharisees rather than Jesus!

- 1.4.4.2. Even books that seem to be more random in their order, such as Psalms and Proverbs, often have a structure that will give clues to the meaning of individual sections within the book. Good commentaries and other tools will help you see these structures.
- 1.4.5. The context of a book can help understand an individual passage within the book.
 - 1.4.5.1. Remember that the majority of Scripture was originally written simply as books. They did not even have chapters and verses! Thus, we can not isolate individual passages from the overall book, or we will miss their meaning.
 - 1.4.5.2. This why it is critical that we understand the provenance (date, time and circumstances) of the book. Why was it written? To whom was it written? What are its major points? What function does it serve within the canon of Scripture?
 - 1.4.5.2.1. How do we understand Gideon, Jephthah and Samson? Do we follow their examples, using fleeces, sacrificing our children, sleeping with prostitutes?
 - 1.4.5.2.2. Judges is meant to show the need for a king:

Judges 17:6 - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.
 Judges 18:1 - In those days Israel had no king.
 Judges 19:1 - In those days Israel had no king.
 Judges 21:25 - In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.

Note that this is dominant as the book closes - and Judges 21:25 is the final verse of the book!
 - 1.4.5.2.3. The structure of Judges is not chronological but shows Israel descending into chaos - the judges get worse and worse, the deliverance less and less effective and more and more problematic.
 - 1.4.5.2.4. Thus, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson are pictures of what not to be - not examples for how we serve God.
 - 1.4.5.2.5. But do note that they are included in Hebrews 11 - because it is by faith - not our heroic obedience or service. This is the wider bible context!

- 1.5. The importance of the context of all Scripture.
 - 1.5.1. In the case of Scripture, the context is not only the passage and book under consideration but all Scripture, since there is One Ultimate Author behind all Scripture.
 - 1.5.2. This has several important implications:
 - 1.5.2.1. Consider the other writings of the author you are studying first, especially any parallel passages. These will illumine any difficult meanings in the passage under consideration. The author may also use slightly different wording which can provide a clue as to their meaning in the text under consideration.
 - 1.5.2.1.1. For example, Colossians 3:16 is parallel to Ephesians 5:18.

Colossians 3:16–17

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Ephesians 5:18–20

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1.5.2.1.2. Note that both of these sets of verses cover the same topics - speaking/teaching one another; singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, giving thanks to God the Father through Christ.
- 1.5.2.1.3. Note the larger context of Colossians 3:16-4:1 and Ephesians 5:18-6:9. Both deal with the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. The topics covered in these passages are identical. Therefore, Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18 are driving at the same point.

- 1.5.2.1.4. This means that being filled with the Spirit and letting the Word of Christ dwell richly are very closely related concepts. Any doctrines or ideas that would not fit with the parallel passage should be scrutinized extra carefully, since they are probably not true. This would also show that any Word-Spirit dichotomy is false, since to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word, and to be filled with the Word of God is to be filled with the Spirit. The two can not be separated.
- 1.5.2.2. Consider parallel passages from other writers to find complementary information that might shed a light on the current passage.
 - 1.5.2.2.1. This is especially helpful with historical books like Kings and Chronicles, and the Gospels.
 - 1.5.2.2.2. It is important to both note how the two passages can illuminate one another, but also what each author stresses and omits to make their own purpose clear. Let each author speak for himself.
 - 1.5.2.2.2.1. Note the differences in the story of Sennacherib and Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chronicles 32. In 2 Kings 18:13-16 we read that Hezekiah wavered in his faith and gave tribute money to Sennacherib, while the passage in 2 Chronicles makes no mention of this at all.
 - 1.5.2.2.2.2. The reason for this difference is that 2 Kings purpose is to show the failures of the kings to explain why the exile came, whereas 2 Chronicles was written to highlight the successes of the kings to give hope to a people in exile as they were returning to the promised land.
 - 1.5.2.2.2.3. When studying or teaching these texts, you can note information from both, but if you are focusing on Chronicles, the stress

must be on Hezekiah's faith and success, since this is where the text lays stress. On the other hand, if you are just going through Kings, then the stress is on his wavering faith, for that is where the Spirit placed the stress in that book.

- 1.5.2.3. Let newer Scripture interpret older Scripture. This follows the idea of progressive revelation. This means that the New Testament will teach us how to read the Old Testament, and will help us to see its full meaning.
- 1.5.2.3.1. This is clearly true in cases where the NT quotes and interprets OT texts. The NT is the authoritative interpretation of what these OT texts mean.
- 1.5.2.3.2. It is also true when the NT is making a clear allusion to an OT text without making a direct quote. For example, 1 Peter 2:9-10 is not a direct quote, but is a clear allusion to both Exodus 19:4-6, and Hosea 1-2. This has major implications for a proper understanding of those texts.

1 Peter 2:9–10

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Exodus 19:5–6

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

Hosea 1:6–2:1

Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD said to Hosea, "Call her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer show love to the house of Israel, that I should at all forgive them. ⁷ Yet I will show love to the house of Judah; and I will save them—not by bow, sword or battle, or by horses and horsemen, but by the LORD their God."

⁸ After she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, Gomer had another son. ⁹ Then the LORD said, “Call him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God.

¹⁰ “Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’ ¹¹ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited, and they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. ^{2:1} “Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’”

1.5.3. This means that when we interpret (and especially when we teach!) the Old Testament, we must always ask how it points forward to and is fulfilled in the New Testament. This will have major implications on our study and teaching of the Old Testament.

1.5.3.1. What does Matthew 2:14-15 tell us about Hosea 11:1?

Matthew 2:14–15

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Hosea 11:1–2

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ² But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images.

1.5.3.1.1. When we interpret Hosea 11:1, we must include both the original context as it relates to Old Testament Israel, but also the typology as it points to Christ, and bring out Christ as the true Israel. Israel, God’s son, was called by God, but failed. They turned from God and bowed to false God’s. Now, in the fulness of time, God calls Jesus, His Son, the True Israel, and Jesus does not fail. He refuses to bow and worship idols. If we do not see this in Hosea 11:1, we have misunderstood the text - according to the interpretation given by the Holy Spirit!

1.5.3.2. What does Galatians 3:6-9, 16 tell us about the meaning of Genesis 12:1-3, 7?

Genesis 12:1-3, 7

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. ² “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” ... ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Galatians 3:6-9, 16, 28-29

Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.... ¹⁶ The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.... ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- 1.5.3.2.1. Note that when Paul reads the promises to Abram in Genesis 12, he sees the Gospel, Christ, and the Church - both Jew and Gentile.
- 1.5.3.2.2. Furthermore, note that Paul does not merely see Christ as part of the meaning of the text, or one seed among many - He is THE seed to whom the promises referred (see Galatians 3:19 as well).
- 1.5.3.2.3. This means that any reading or teaching of Genesis 12 that does not center on how it is fulfilled in the Gospel, Christ, and the Church is different than the reading that Paul uses.
- 1.5.3.2.4. Our hermeneutic, Bible study methods, and preaching methods should be the ones the apostles used - reading the Old Testament in light of the New Testament - Christ and His Church.

- 1.5.4. Genre - the type of literature being considered.
- 1.5.4.1. A genre is a type of literature that is characterized by a certain style, form, purpose or intent. Examples of different genres would be poetry, narrative, law, apocalyptic, parable, epistle/letter, and proverb.
- 1.5.4.2. The Bible contains many different genres of literature. In fact, a single book can contain many or almost all of the genres listed above. However, each passage is predominantly one genre.
- 1.5.4.3. All genres may be used to communicate truth, but they will do it differently. Poetry expresses truth, but it does it in a very different manner than law.
- 1.5.4.3.1. Exodus 20:14 - You shall not commit adultery.
- 1.5.4.3.2. Proverbs 5:15–20 - Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.
¹⁶Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares?
¹⁷Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. ¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.
¹⁹ A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. ²⁰ Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife?
- 1.5.4.3.3. These two passages express the same truth - do not commit adultery - but do it in VERY different manners. Thus, to read the command in Proverbs to drink water from your own well and not let your springs overflow in the public square as if it is literal water that is in view is to misinterpret the text.
- 1.5.4.4. Different genres of literature require different approaches to reading and interpreting. For example, one does not read a parable the same way one reads a historical narrative, nor does one read poetry the way one reads law or epistle.
- 1.5.4.4.1. Matthew 13:3 - Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed...”
- 1.5.4.4.2. Genesis 9:20 - Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard.
- 1.5.4.4.3. Both of these verses speak of planting, but the first one is not something that actually happened

- it is a parable. The second one is in a historical narrative and describes something that actually happened.

- 1.5.4.5. Some genres such as poetry, proverb, and prophetic/apocalyptic literature are full of literary devices. This must be borne in mind as one attempts to interpret these texts.
- 1.5.5. The use of literary devices.
 - 1.5.5.1. There are many different literary devices and genres of literature within Scripture. We must learn to recognize these and interpret them accordingly.
 - 1.5.5.2. If we do not recognize literary devices and genre, it is VERY likely that we will misread the text, and it is in fact possible that the meaning we derive will be the opposite of what God actually intends.
 - 1.5.5.3. Some common literary devices
 - 1.5.5.3.1. Parallelism - Parallelism is a literary device where an idea is stated, and then the idea is restated, often advancing the idea in some important way. It is VERY common in Hebrew poetry such as Psalms and Proverbs, but can also be found in the New Testament.
 - 1.5.5.3.1.1. Synonymous parallelism - the same basic idea is presented again

Psalm 2:1

“Why do **the nations** conspire,
and **the peoples** plot in vain?”

Proverbs 16:13

Kings take pleasure in **honest lips**;
they value a man who speaks the truth.

- 1.5.5.3.2. Antithetic - an idea is presented, and then the idea is clarified by presenting its opposite.

Proverbs 10:1

“**A wise son** brings joy to his father,
but **a foolish son** grief to his mother.”

Proverbs 14:3

A fool's talk brings a rod to his back,
but **the lips of the wise** protect them.

1.5.5.4. Chiasm - Chiasm is a literary device that was very popular in Biblical times. This is VERY common in both OT and NT - they just thought this way. In chiasm there is a symmetry of ideas. Typical chiastic structures are

A
 B
 B
A

OR

A
 B
 C
 B'
A'

1.5.5.4.1. Entire Psalms, narrative stories (the Tower of Babel narrative) and even whole books (Judges) can be structured this way. Chiasm is found everywhere, but is especially prevalent in poetry like the Psalms.

Proverbs 16:13 (ESV - also note parallelism)
Righteous lips are the delight of a king,
and he loves him who speaks what is right.

Psalm 137:5-6
“If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
 may my right hand forget its skill.
 May my tongue cling to the roof of my
 mouth
if I do not remember you, if I do not consider
Jerusalem my highest joy.”

John 1:1-2
In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God
He was with God in the beginning

- 1.5.5.5. Simile - A comparison of two items using a connective such as like, as, etc.; i.e., X is like Y.
- 1.5.5.5.1. James 1.23-24: "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."
- 1.5.5.5.2. Proverbs 10.26: "Like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so are the lazy to their employers."
- 1.5.5.6. Metaphor - A direct comparison of two items, or X=Y. A metaphor does not mean that the two items are actually the same, but that in some important respect there is a key identity between the two, so that they can be spoken of as being the same.
- 1.5.5.6.1. James 3.6: "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body."
- 1.5.5.6.2. John 10:6–7 Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.
- 1.5.5.6.3. Psalm 17.8: "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings..."
- 1.5.5.6.4. Proverbs 15.19: "The way of the lazy is overgrown with thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway."
- 1.5.5.6.5. Note that none of these are actually the same thing - the tongue is not fire, Jesus is not a gate, God is not a bird with wings, we are not literally apples, etc. To interpret a metaphor in a woodenly literal fashion is to make it nonsense.

- 1.5.5.7. Metonymy - In this type of metaphor, one item or concept is used to signify another that is closely related or associated with it; a, metaphorical or spiritual association between two items, such that one is used interchangeably to mean the other. For example, in communion, wine and blood are used interchangeably for one another. Hence, sometimes a literal item serves as a metaphor for an abstract item.
- 1.5.5.7.1. John 6:53-54: "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life."
- 1.5.5.7.2. Hosea 1:2: "the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord." (Note that land = people in the land.)
- 1.5.5.7.3. Revelation 1:18: "I have the keys of death and Hell." (Note that keys symbolize authority.)
- 1.5.5.8. Synecdoche - Similar to metonymy; a part is used to symbolize the whole to which it belongs. For example, in English we say "three heads of cattle" - and this does not refer merely to their heads but rather three whole cattle. Similarly, the news might report "Today, Washington stated that it will respond to the recent threats from the radical group." The report does not mean that Washington D.C. spoke or will respond. Rather, Washington is shorthand for the USA.
- 1.5.5.8.1. Acts 27:37 - Altogether there were 276 of us on board. (Note: The original Greek uses "276 souls" to stand for for 276 men. It was not just their souls - so the NIV translates accordingly).
- 1.5.5.8.2. Micah 1:1 - The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah--the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. (Micah's vision and words concern all of Judah and Israel - not just the two capital cities.)

- 1.5.5.8.3. Often Jerusalem will stand for the whole nation of Israel, as will Mount Zion.
- 1.5.5.8.3.1. Micah 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.
- 1.5.5.8.3.2. Isaiah 40:1–2 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.
- 1.5.5.9. Merism - A listing of opposite parts stand for a whole. For example., "day...night" can mean 'all the time', or 'beginning and the end' can mean 'everything'.
- 1.5.5.9.1. Psalm 91.5-6 You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- 1.5.5.9.2. Genesis 14:19 and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.”
- 1.5.5.10. Idiom - A set expression of two or more words that means something other than the literal meanings of its individual words. “It was raining cats and dogs” does not mean that felines and canines were falling from the heavens, but that it was raining really hard.
- 1.5.5.10.1. Matthew 23.24: "You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel."
- 1.5.5.10.2. Revelation 7.1: "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth..." (This is an idiom based on the language of appearance.)
- 1.5.5.10.3. NOTE: These types of idioms are very common in prophetic literature, and to try to interpret them “literally” is as foolish as interpreting “raining cats and dogs” literally. To do so it to miss the real meaning of the idiom.

- 1.5.5.11. Personification - Something inanimate (or divine) is given human form.
- 1.5.5.11.1. Proverbs 9:1–6 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. ² She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. ³ She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. ⁴“Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. ⁵ “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. ⁶ Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.”
- 1.5.5.11.2. Isaiah 55:12 - You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
- 1.5.5.12. Anthropomorphism - This type of personification involves ascribing human characteristics (physical form, human-like emotion, etc.) to God, in order to make Him more understandable to us.
- 1.5.5.12.1. Genesis 6:6: "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain."
- 1.5.5.12.2. Exodus 9:3 - “the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field-- on your horses and donkeys and camels and on your cattle and sheep and goats.”
- 1.5.5.12.3. 2 Chronicles 16:9 - “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war."
- 1.5.5.13. Word play - Biblical writers and speakers, especially prophetic and poetic writers, make plays on word meanings in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. This happens with many names in the OT where the name tells us something of the character of the person (Jacob, Israel, etc.)
- 1.5.5.13.1. Matthew 16:18: "And I tell you that you are Peter [Greek: Petros], and upon this rock [Greek: petra] I will build my church..." ('Petros' means a small rock, stone, or pebble; petra means a large, unmoveable, impenetrable rock.)

- 1.5.5.13.2. Micah 1:11: "Those who live in Zaanan will not come out..." (The town name Zaanan in Hebrew means 'come out'; this is pronounced as a judgment against the town.)
- 1.5.5.13.3. Hosea 1:9 Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God. (The Hebrew 'Lo-Ammi' means "Not my people.")
- 1.5.5.14. Hyperbole - Literary exaggeration for emphasis or rhetorical effect.
- 1.5.5.14.1. Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple." (Our love for God must be so strong, that our love to others would seem like hate in comparison.)
- 1.5.5.14.2. Mark 9:43: "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and go to hell..." (Jesus is not calling for actually physically maiming ourselves which would actually be a sin, but is rather showing how strong our commitment against sin must be.)
- 1.5.5.15. Paradox - A statement that seems illogical or contradictory on the surface, but actually conveys truth.
- 1.5.5.15.1. Matthew 16:25 - "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."
- 1.5.5.15.2. Matthew 19:30 - "But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."
- 1.5.5.16. Acrostics - A poem or series of lines in which certain letters, usually the first in each line (or sometimes every other line), form a name, motto, or message when read in sequence. In the Scripture this is most often seen when the first letter in each line moves sequentially through the alphabet. This may be seen in Psalm 119 for example. Each of the section headings is a successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and each of the eight verses in that section begin with that Hebrew letter. Other Psalms which use acrostics are Psalm 25, 34, 37, and 112, as well as Proverbs 31:10-31.

- 1.5.5.17. Numerology - Occasionally numbers are used in symbolic ways in Scripture, especially in prophecy and apocalypse. This can easily be carried too far, so great caution is needed, but it is valid in many places. The most common numbers used in this way are 1, 3, 7, 10, 12, and multiples of these numbers ($144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 10^3$).
- 1.5.6. Commentaries will help note the use of these devices, and over time they will become easy to spot.
- 1.6. All of this means that we must consider the whole grammar - the meanings of words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs, the genre of literature we are reading, the use of literary devices, the place of our verse within its larger context in the paragraph, section, book, and the Scripture as a whole - when trying to understand what God is saying in a text. If we do not do this, we are almost certain to misunderstand what God is actually saying to us.
 - 1.6.1. If this seems overwhelming - it is not. We do this everyday when we read the newspaper, books, letters, emails, etc. We subconsciously do this in virtually all of our communication. We do not read a cookbook the way we read poetry, nor do we read a history book the way we read a fictional novel. However, because the Bible is written in languages, times and cultures different than our own, it will take a bit more conscious effort at first. Nonetheless, the basic principle is the same thing we do in all communication, and with time it will become second nature here as well.

2. Historical - interpretation that takes into account the original historical setting and our own chronological and cultural distance from the writing and its setting.
 - 2.1. We do not interpret Scripture allegorically. We read it in its real redemptive-historical context and look for the meaning in the events themselves - not in some fanciful allegorical meaning.
 - 2.1.1. Joshua 9:1–6 - Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)—² they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel. ³However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, ⁴ they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. ⁵ The men put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. ⁶ Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, “We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us.”
 - 2.1.2. I actually heard a pastor at a gathering of pastors preach on this text and interpret it allegorically: “The dry moldy bread means old lifeless prayers...” NO!!!! Dry, moldy bread means - DRY MOLDY BREAD. It is a narrative of what happened. If we begin to interpret allegorically, there are no controls - we will make the Scripture mean whatever we wish for it to mean.
 - 2.2. This means that history must be taken seriously. We can not simply write off the history as if it does not affect the theological meaning of the text. The history of the Scripture is real history. God did not merely act via propositional statements - He acted in real space-time history. Thus, it really does matter if Jesus was raised from the dead bodily (1 Corinthians 15:14).
 - 2.3. Interpretation begins with understanding what the writing meant then. Until we understand what it meant in its original setting, we can not understand what it means and how it applies to us.
 - 2.3.1. We must seek to understand the time setting, culture, practices, etc. that influence what the text meant in its original setting. We must then ask how the text would apply given our different cultural circumstances.
 - 2.3.1.1. 1 Peter 5:14 - Greet one another with a kiss of love.
 - 2.3.1.1.1. How do we apply the command to greet one another with a kiss? Do we follow this slavishly? Or is there a cultural equivalent today? Is a handshake or hug the same thing in our culture as a kiss of greeting was in their culture?

- 2.3.1.2. 1 John 5:21 - Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.
 - 2.3.1.2.1. What are the equivalents of idols today? Is idolatry confined to literal gods of wood or stone? Or does our culture have its own idols? Are we merely being commanded to avoid little wooden gods, or does this command apply to a different type of idols in our own culture?
- 2.3.1.3. Titus 2:3–5 - Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.
 - 2.3.1.3.1. Does this text forbid women from working outside the home? What about the fact that both men and women worked in the home at this time? How would this fit with Proverbs 31 which has the woman working outside the home, or at least running a business from the home. What would be the cultural equivalent today?
- 2.3.2. Note that this does not apply to moral laws, which reflect God’s unchanging nature.
 - 2.3.2.1. Fornication, lying, homosexuality, greed, murder are not representative of a particular cultural position or time but rather reflect God’s unchanging nature. The prohibitions against these things are not appealed to on the basis of culture, but rather are given in universal terms that would apply to all people, in all times, and all cultures.
 - 2.3.2.1.1. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 - **Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

- 2.3.2.1.2. Galatians 5:19–24 - **The acts of the sinful nature** are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.** ²² But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
- 2.3.2.1.3. 1 Timothy 1:8–11 - We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. ⁹ We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else **is contrary to the sound doctrine** ¹¹ **that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God**, which he entrusted to me.
- 2.3.2.1.4. Note that in all these texts the behavior under consideration is not condemned for cultural reasons but because it is opposed to God’s Kingdom, His Spirit, the law of God, the Gospel, and the work of Christ. This shows that these standards do not change with culture.
- 2.3.2.2. However, it may be true that there are new applications which are added on top of the act itself. For example, how would the command to not steal be applied when considering digital music files? This clearly did not exist then, but how would this unchanging law apply in our modern circumstance?

- 2.3.3. Note whether the practice or command is rooted in culture or in nature/ God's character/redemptive necessity.
 - 2.3.3.1. 1 Timothy 2:12–13 - I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
 - 2.3.3.2. Why are women forbidden to teach or practice authority in this passage? Many state it is only a cultural issue, but why does Paul say it must not be done? Note that the divinely given reason is not cultural, but is rooted in creation itself - Adam was formed first, then Eve.
 - 2.3.3.3. When we are given a reason like this in a text, we may not apply “cultural equivalents” or “the direction of biblical history” to get around the teaching. The reason for the prohibition is given directly - Adam was formed first. Consequently, the rule applies at all times, in all cultures.
- 2.4. Sometimes the historical narrative will tell us that a particular action is good or bad, and if it is meant to be a pattern for other believers, or if it is simply a one time thing that will not be repeated.
 - 2.4.1. 2 Samuel 11:27 - After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. **But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.**
 - 2.4.2. God did this with circumcision (see Genesis 17) and Passover (see Exodus 12), which he commanded to be reenacted in every succeeding generation.
 - 2.4.3. Remember, though, that many historical narratives do not give us this kind of clear cut affirmation or rebuke.
- 2.5. However, it is imperative that we remember that since it is real history, not every action is meant to be emulated or reproduced in the church today.
 - 2.5.1. Acts 1:23–26 - So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.
 - 2.5.1.1. Do we emulate the early church casting lots to choose leaders?
 - 2.5.1.2. Is Luke commending this as a pattern for the church in all times and places, or is he merely reporting what the early church did in this instance?

- 2.5.2. Acts 8:14–18 - When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
- 2.5.2.1. Is Luke laying out a pattern for how all believers receive the Holy Spirit sometime after their conversion? Is the laying on of hands required? Must it be an apostle? Or is this a unique experience that is not to be attempted to be made a pattern for others?
- 2.5.3. Judges 16:1 - One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her.
- 2.5.3.1. Nothing in this text or its context actually condemns Samson's actions, and God uses this as part of the process of delivering Israel from the Philistines. Does this mean that it is ok? Are we meant to believe this is a good thing, or something we should emulate?
- 2.5.4. Judges 6:36–37 - Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised— ³⁷ look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said."
- 2.5.4.1. This text is often taught to give a tool in discovering God's will. We are to be like Gideon and place a "fleece" out to see how God is guiding us. But in the book of Judges Gideon is not serving as a positive example, but rather one of doubt, indecisiveness, and wavering faith. Thus, is this really meant to be an example for us - or is it really an example of what NOT to do?
- 2.6. Consequently, it is imperative that we interpret the historical narratives in light of clear didactic (teaching) passages. The historical is illustrative, but in the absence of didactic teaching, or if it contradicts clear teaching elsewhere, we do not establish doctrine on the basis of historical accounts alone.
- 2.6.1. Some object that that ALL Scripture is useful to doctrine - alluding to 2 Timothy 3:16. This is correct - but only IF that Scripture is properly interpreted. Historical narrative is wonderful and teaches us much about God and ourselves - but only if we interpret it correctly. As the examples above show, historical narrative is often used improperly, and many interpretations tell us more about the interpreter than the text, and such interpretations are sometimes used to support ideas that are directly contrary to the actual meaning of the text.

- 2.6.2. Historical narrative should never be used for doctrine without first asking what the point of the story is - to give us an example to follow, to show how God worked in one specific instance, to show us how not to act or live, to illustrate doctrines clearly laid out elsewhere, etc. If we are not very careful here, we will be poor interpreters of Scripture and will reap poor fruit for our bad exegesis.
- 2.7. We must seek to understand the text in light of its redemptive-historical purpose. The entire Scripture is redemptive-historical in nature. It is telling the story of God's word and acts in history to redeem His people. How does this text fit within that grand narrative?
 - 2.7.1. See the notes above on the importance of context. Each text must be viewed in its redemptive historical context. The Scripture is giving one overarching grand narrative, and each individual part must be fit within that overall narrative to be properly understood.
 - 2.7.2. This means that when I approach each text I must ask questions such as:
 - 2.7.2.1. How does this text move the redemptive story of Scripture towards the coming of Christ or toward the consummation of all things?
 - 2.7.2.2. How does this text point to Jesus, the focal point of all Scripture?
 - 2.7.2.3. Do the characters give us examples of being like Christ and thus point toward Him, or do they give examples of being unlike Christ and thus point to why we need Christ?
 - 2.7.2.3.1. The same person may well fulfill both of these roles at different times. When David fought Goliath He is a pointer to our True Champion Jesus, who vanquishes God's enemies and protects God's people. When He commits his heinous sins with Bathsheba he is unlike Christ, and points to why we need a True King, the True Messiah - Jesus.
 - 2.7.2.4. How does this text fit with other texts of Scripture so that they speak with a united voice? Is it quoted or alluded to in a later Scripture that would give me light on how to interpret it?
 - 2.7.2.5. If this Scripture is difficult to interpret, what other texts help me to understand it better?

Putting It All Together

1. The tools we need to study
 - 1.1. Several good translations of the Bible
 - 1.1.1. I would recommend at least having a copy of the NIV, the ESV, and the KJV or NKJV.
 - 1.1.2. You need a mix of different translation theories and different manuscript preferences to give a good overview of the possible translations of the Greek or Hebrew.
 - 1.1.2.1. NIV - dynamic equivalence; eclectic Greek text
 - 1.1.2.2. ESV - word for word; eclectic Greek text
 - 1.1.2.3. KJV or NKJV - word for word; Majority Greek text
 - 1.1.3. You can access many of these translations for free online at sites such as Bible Gateway, or you can get them as part of a Bible study program on a computer.
 - 1.1.4. A special translation that I like is the NET Bible. You can view it at <http://www.bible.org/netbible>. It is a unique translation of the Bible into English. The translation is worth seeing, but where the NET Bible really shines is in the notes. The translators and editors have given extensive notes on why they have translated a Hebrew or Greek word a particular way, along with some study notes for various verses. All of these notes are very helpful in understanding why various translations have rendered the Greek or Hebrew a particular way, and to aid in understanding the text.

For further information on the topic of the translations and how to pick good ones to use, see session four "Translation" of "How I Got My Bible." This, and all other BRCC seminars are available at

<http://www.bayridgechristianchurch.org>

- 1.2. A good study Bible
 - 1.2.1. A good study Bible will contain a number of the tools discussed here - a good translation, cross references, study notes/commentary, maps, outlines, charts, etc.
 - 1.2.2. My two favorite study Bible at present are the ESV Study Bible and the NIV Study Bible. I like them for a number of reasons:
 - 1.2.2.1. NIV Study Bible
 - 1.2.2.1.1. The NIV is the most popular English translation today, so it is nice to have a study Bible for that translation.

- 1.2.2.1.2. It's cross references are much more numerous than those in the ESV Study Bible. I find these very helpful in finding other verses that are related in some way to the verse under study.
- 1.2.2.1.3. It has good introductions to each Biblical book, comments for various verses, charts, maps, and other helps to aid in the study of the Biblical text under consideration.
- 1.2.2.2. ESV Study Bible
 - 1.2.2.2.1. The ESV is a good translation, and I prefer it to the KJV, the NKJV, and the NASB upon which many popular study Bibles are based.
 - 1.2.2.2.2. It is more comprehensive than many study Bibles, containing more notes, maps, articles, etc. than others.
 - 1.2.2.2.3. It gives a fair presentation of the differing view of how to handle difficult passages. Some study Bibles only really present one view, and the point of a study Bible is to let the reader see the different options available to an evangelical believer.
 - 1.2.2.2.4. Many of the resources are available online to those who have bought the Bible, so that the information can be accessed on your computer as well.
- 1.3. Cross reference helps
 - 1.3.1. Cross reference lists or tools will give other bible verses which contain material that seems to be relevant to the present verse.
 - 1.3.2. Many bibles, and virtually all study Bibles, will have cross reference lists. These are a good place to begin looking for the larger Biblical context, and will often point out Old Testament quotes or allusions in the New Testament, or places where a Bible verse is referenced in later biblical writings.
 - 1.3.3. A particularly helpful list of cross references is found in the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. It is keyed to the King James version, and sometimes it is not easy to see why a particular set of verses were thought to be linked, but at over 500,000 cross references, no other single source has the sheer volume of cross referencing. It is included in many Bible software packages, or can be bought as a separate book.

1.4. Lexical helps

1.4.1. Lexical tools help you to understand the actual words that God gave to convey His message to us. A lexicon is a dictionary, and in the case of lexicons for our use, they give information on the Greek and Hebrew words written down by the authors of Scripture.

1.4.1.1. Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon of the New Testament (BDAG), Liddel-Scott Geek Lexicon - These are very helpful (and are found in many good bible software programs) standard lexicons. However, words are listed in Greek alphabetical order and these tools are of limited usefulness if a person can not read Greek.

1.4.1.2. New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT) - a good word study resource that delves into the actual use and meaning of various Greek words. However, the words are grouped together under the English words to which they are most closely related so that a person can use this tool beneficially even if they can not read Greek.

1.4.1.3. New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE) - the companion volumes to the NIDNTT, except it is aimed at the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The format is very similar to the NIDNTT, so it is useful for a person who does not read Hebrew.

1.4.1.4. Computer software - This will be discussed more below, but some computer software can help you identify the Greek or Hebrew word behind the English translation, and will allow you to then access the resources listed above.

1.4.2. A word about Strong's Concordance and Vines expository dictionary.

1.4.2.1. Both of these tools were created to allow non-Greek (or Hebrew) readers to have access to the Greek (or Hebrew) words behind the English translations.

1.4.2.2. They are helpful for helping English readers to see the Greek or Hebrew words behind the English translation, but great caution must be used. Greek and Hebrew words, like English words, can have broad ranges of meanings depending on their form and context, and many who use these tools do not understand this and thus draw erroneous conclusions. **BE VERY CAREFUL IF YOU USE THESE TOOLS. VERIFY YOUR CONCLUSIONS WITH A GOOD COMMENTARY, OR WITH SOMEONE WHO READS GREEK OR HEBREW.**

- 1.5. Good commentaries
 - 1.5.1. Commentaries will give historical background information, help you to understand the context, give literary links with other books of Scripture, help with word studies of the Greek or Hebrew word being discussed, and can help to understand the flow of the authors thought.
 - 1.5.2. A couple of good commentary series:
 - 1.5.2.1. **New International Commentary on the New Testament (NICNT)** - This is an excellent, conservative, detailed set of commentaries on the New Testament. Generally, each volume will cover a single New Testament book, so they will often give a couple of paragraphs to a couple of pages of comments on a single verse. These commentaries do not require knowledge of Greek, but the authors understand Greek well and will explain the underlying Greek text in an understandable manner.
 - 1.5.2.2. **Pillar New Testament Commentaries** - Similar in theology and scope to the NICNT. The format is slightly different, and you will get different authors than the NICNT for the same NT book, so you can get a different perspective on the meaning of an individual verse or passage. Like the NICNT, the coverage is detailed, and no knowledge of Greek is required, though the authors will give good explanations of the underlying Greek text.
 - 1.5.2.3. **New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)** - This is the OT companion set to the NICNT. The format and scope are almost identical to the NICNT, and once again do not require knowledge of Hebrew, but they will give helpful comments about how the Hebrew is being used.
 - 1.5.3. Good commentaries are expensive (often \$25-\$40 for a single volume) so it is best to see if you can borrow them from your pastor, or if your church starts a library that includes good books like these.
 - 1.5.4. Study Bibles are helpful and are a good introduction, but they are not detailed enough to replace a good commentary. They are good for a quick overview, but for serious study they are far too brief.
 - 1.5.5. The same may be said of most one-volume commentaries such as Matthew Henry. They are fine for devotional study, but are far too brief for serious study.
 - 1.5.6. CAUTION - As mentioned before, do not let commentaries become a crutch. You need to wrestle with the text yourself first. Then go to the commentaries to see if you missed anything, to learn more about the words being used, etc.

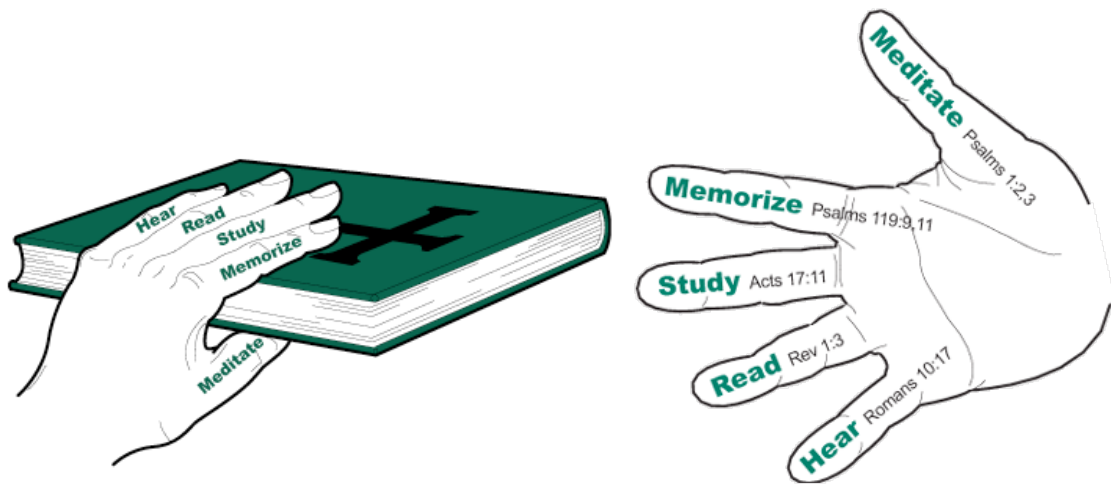
- 1.6. Systematic Theologies
 - 1.6.1. These are books that give introductory discussions on the major doctrines of the Christian faith. They try to gather the biblical data to give an answer to questions such as “What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?” or “What does the Bible teach about church leadership?” or “What does the Bible teach about justification?” Thus, they can be very helpful for topical studies of major Bible doctrines.
 - 1.6.2. However, these books will not cover many topics such as wisdom, how to determine God’s will for my life, what does the Bible teach about divorce, etc. Their focus is on major doctrines rather than practical questions.
 - 1.6.3. Also, because they are covering many of these topics in a systematic fashion to give an overview of the great doctrines of the faith, none of the topics will be covered exhaustively. For example, the will discuss the inspiration of Scripture as a single chapter, but other books will devote the entire book to this single topic.
 - 1.6.4. The Systematic Theology book I would most highly recommend for beginners is the one by Wayne Grudem. This is a book that is worth the investment for any serious student of the Scripture.
- 1.7. Other study resources
 - 1.7.1. There are many other resources which can help you understand the text. These include bible dictionaries, Old and New Testament introductions, bible atlases (maps), etc. All of these will be helpful at times, but can be expensive, so it is best to ask a pastor or check with a church library to borrow one.
- 1.8. Teaching resources on the internet
 - 1.8.1. There are many excellent teaching resources on the internet. These will allow you to download teachings and other resources to aid in your study. Often, these are free.
 - 1.8.2. The BRCC website
 - 1.8.2.1. BRCC is trying to make our website a useful aid to study.
 - 1.8.2.2. Each teaching is loaded on to the web site, and may be referenced by date, by Scripture, by topic, and by series. Many of the teaching series cover entire books of the Bible verse by verse, or, for larger books such as Psalms or Isaiah, by giving an extensive overview of the book.
 - 1.8.2.3. The resources include the audio of the sermon, the teaching outline, and sometimes other resources or handouts.
 - 1.8.2.4. This means that if you are studying a particular book, passage, or topic, you can see if it has been taught on by BRCC, and then look at the notes and listen to the audio to see how the teacher understood that text, book, or topic.

1.9. Bible software

- 1.9.1. There are many fine Bible software packages available today that greatly assist in studying the Scripture.
- 1.9.2. These programs will allow the user to view several translations of the Bible, search for all occurrences of a word, phrase, or group of words, look up cross-references, find the corresponding Greek or Hebrew word, look up the Greek or Hebrew word in a lexicon, etc.
- 1.9.3. A brief demo of Accordance Bible Software
- 1.9.4. You choose a Bible software package that matches your own skills, needs, and desires. The Bible software that a pastor or Bible scholar who has good knowledge of Greek is probably more complex than what many people will want. With power, there is ALWAYS a corresponding complexity.
- 1.9.5. Bible software recommendations
 - 1.9.5.1. Simple and inexpensive
 - 1.9.5.1.1. Bible Gateway - this is on the internet and is free. It will allow you to do simple searches, will display multiple versions, and has a few other tools. It is simple, fast, and free for those who do not need the power of a standalone program - but it does require an internet connection.
 - 1.9.5.1.2. Quick Verse - this program is great for users who do not require Greek or Hebrew - which is most Christians. It is fairly inexpensive (less than \$70 for most packages), comes with a lot of versions and basic tools, and has good searching capabilities, and has versions for both PC and Mac. This is a great program for most Bible students.
 - 1.9.5.1.3. Free bible software. There are a number of free Bible programs on the market. I have not really tried any of these, but they may be worth looking at if your needs are fairly simple. I am sure they will not replace the full tools listed in the next section, but they will probably do a great job for those with more modest requirements.

- 1.9.5.2. Powerful - and more complex and expensive
 - 1.9.5.2.1. BibleWorks - this is the premier Windows program for those who want to do serious Bible study built around the original languages. It is expensive - \$350 or so - but it gives you almost everything you need (you will still want some commentaries and other books) right out of the box. It is fast and powerful. If you want to do original language study on a PC, this is the best program by far.
 - 1.9.5.2.2. Accordance - this is the premier Mac program for those who want to do serious Bible study built around the original languages. It's power and speed are very similar to BibleWorks. It is more expensive than BibleWorks, but if you own a Mac and want to do serious original language study, it is the best program by far.

2. How to let Christ's Word dwell in you richly
 - 2.1. Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.
 - 2.2. To let the Word dwell richly, we need a comprehensive plan for reading, studying, and applying the Scripture.
 - 2.3. I recommend following the method outlines by the Navigators in their famous hand illustration.



- 2.4. Five parts of getting a grip on the Word
 - 2.4.1. Hear - the pinky
 - 2.4.1.1. Romans 10:17 Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.
 - 2.4.1.2. Luke 11:28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."
 - 2.4.1.3. 1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.
 - 2.4.1.4. Often hearing something being read to us allows us to notice things we might not otherwise perceive.
 - 2.4.1.5. You can do this every Sunday in a meeting, or use the Bible on CD.

- 2.4.2. Read - ring finger
 - 2.4.2.1. Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.
 - 2.4.2.2. Deuteronomy 17:19 It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees
 - 2.4.2.3. Reading penetrates a little more than just hearing. It requires more concentration and more effort.
 - 2.4.2.4. This is especially important as a younger believer. Try to read through the Bible many times to get the big picture.
 - 2.4.2.5. Reading (and hearing) is the important first step in studying a verse or passage. To study it, you should read it a number of times, in different versions.
 - 2.4.2.6. When studying a book, I normally read it through five or more times, using different translations (or reading it in the Greek or Hebrew for smaller books). **THIS IS CRITICAL TO GET THE CONTEXT OF THE BOOK IN YOUR MIND BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO STUDY INDIVIDUAL PASSAGES.**
- 2.4.3. Study - middle finger
 - 2.4.3.1. Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.
 - 2.4.3.2. Proverbs 2:1–6 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
 - 2.4.3.3. This requires a LOT more effort than hearing or reading.
 - 2.4.3.4. This is mainly what we are talking about today.
 - 2.4.3.5. Take a particular passage (or whole book), or topic and use the tools discussed today to drill down into it, really trying to draw out all the treasures contained in it.
 - 2.4.3.6. This will also include thinking through the context, and especially determining how the passage points forward to Christ and is applied to us - His Church.

- 2.4.4. Memorize - index finger
 - 2.4.4.1. Psalms 119:9–11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. ¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
 - 2.4.4.2. Psalms 119:13 With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth.
 - 2.4.4.3. Memorization requires effort - but it is worth it!!! This has been one of the biggest tools that has allowed God’s Word to dwell richly within me.
 - 2.4.4.4. Pick a key verse or section from your study, write it down on cards and being to memorize it. I recommend memorizing shortly before you go to sleep at night, and then review it first thing in the morning. Then carry the cards around and review throughout the day.
 - 2.4.4.5. I recommend the Navigators Topical Memory system as a great place to start, and they will give practical tips for memorization.
- 2.4.5. Meditate - the thumb - brings it all together for application
 - 2.4.5.1. Psalms 1:2–3 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.
 - 2.4.5.2. Joshua 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
 - 2.4.5.3. Psalms 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.
 - 2.4.5.4. This is used in conjunction with all of the other methods.
 - 2.4.5.5. This is not the same as meditation in eastern religions. You do not repeat a mantra. The Hebrew word means to mutter to yourself. To meditate is to think deeply.
 - 2.4.5.6. In meditation we are thinking deeply about what the text is saying, what it means, and how it applies to me.
 - 2.4.5.7. WITHOUT MEDITATION OUR STUDY OF THE WORD IS MERELY ACADEMIC - NEVER BEING APPLIED TO OUR OWN LIFE.

For further information on this method of letting the Word dwell in you richly, see the teaching “Letting the Word Dwell in You Richly” taught on January 17, 2010 at BRCC. This, and all other BRCC teaching resources are available at

<http://www.bayridgechristianchurch.org>

3. Applying the method to a single passage

3.1. Genesis 12:1-7

3.1.1. Listen to the passage being read

3.1.2. Read the passage on your own. Read it through a couple of times.

3.1.3. Study

3.1.3.1. Note the immediate context

3.1.3.1.1. After the creation and fall, sin corrupted everything. God then saved Noah, but once again all turned to sin. The nations gather to glorify themselves, so God has to spread them out, confusing their languages. The families/nations of the earth are now disbursed and filling the earth, but how will God reach them with redemption?

3.1.3.1.2. At this point God calls Abram - one man and his family in the midst of a world turned from God.

3.1.3.1.3. Note that this is the very beginning of the Abram cycle in Genesis. Everything else in the story - and really the rest of Scripture - will flow out from this point.

3.1.3.2. Note the great covenantal promises to Abram

3.1.3.2.1. Posterity - I will make you a great nation(v2)

3.1.3.2.2. Provision - I will bless you (v2)

3.1.3.2.3. Prominence - I will make your name great (v2)

3.1.3.2.3.1. Note contrast with Genesis 11:4

3.1.3.2.4. Protection - bless and curse others (v3)

3.1.3.2.5. Purpose - you will be a blessing (v3)

3.1.3.3. Note the central concept of blessing others through Abram

3.1.3.3.1. Bless occurs 5 times in Genesis 12:2-3

3.1.3.3.2. It only occurs 6 times in all of Genesis 1-11!

3.1.3.3.3. There are 7 phrases - blessing through Abram is the middle and ending phrase. This gives emphasis to the place that God blessing everyone through Abram and His seed occupies.

I will make you into a great nation

I will bless you

I will make your name great

You will be a blessing

I will bless those blessing you

Those despising you I will curse

All peoples on earth blessed through you

- 3.1.3.3.4. God blessing through Abram is central to the meaning of this whole passage!
- 3.1.3.4. Note that promises are given to Abram and to his seed/offspring
 - 3.1.3.4.1. God promises to make Abram a nation (v2)
 - 3.1.3.4.2. Note the reference to all families of the earth, giving a corporate rather than individual focus to the passage.
 - 3.1.3.4.3. God promises the land to Abram and his seed/offspring (v7)
 - 3.1.3.4.4. A good study Bible or cross reference tool will note that the same promise is given to the seed/offspring in Genesis 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 22:16-18; 24:7; 26:3-4; 28:13; 35:12; 48:4; Exodus 33:1.
- 3.1.3.5. The development of this passage in the rest of the Old Testament
 - 3.1.3.5.1. The promises to Abram and his seed form the basis of Israel's self-understanding and claim to God's covenant blessings - including the land.
 - 3.1.3.5.1.1. Exodus 33:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.'

- 3.1.3.5.1.2. Numbers 10:29 Now Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place about which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will treat you well, for the LORD has promised good things to Israel."
- 3.1.3.5.1.3. Deuteronomy 1:8 See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them."
- 3.1.3.5.1.4. Psalms 105:9–11 the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. ¹⁰ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: ¹¹ "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."
- 3.1.3.5.2. These promises received their initial fulfillment in the days of Joshua and afterwards.
 - 3.1.3.5.2.1. Joshua 11:23 So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.

- 3.1.3.5.2.2. Joshua 21:43–45 So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. ⁴⁴ The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. ⁴⁵ Not one of all the LORD’S good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.
- 3.1.3.5.2.3. Joshua 23:14 “Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.”
- 3.1.3.5.2.4. 1 Kings 8:56 “Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.”
- 3.1.3.5.3. Under the covenant of law, these promises could only be retained if the people fully obeyed. If they did not, they would be cursed rather than blessed, and would be exiled from the land.
- 3.1.3.5.3.1. Joshua 23:15 But just as every good promise of the LORD your God has come true, so the LORD will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you.

- 3.1.3.5.3.2. Joshua 24:20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”
- 3.1.3.5.3.3. For the specific curses see Leviticus 26:14-39; Deuteronomy 28:15-68.
- 3.1.3.5.3.4. 2 Kings 17:22–23 The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them ²³ until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.
- 3.1.3.5.3.5. Daniel 9:11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.

- 3.1.3.6. The development of this passage in the New Testament
 - 3.1.3.6.1. The coming of Jesus is seen as a fulfillment of all of God's promises to Abraham. Jesus is THE Seed of Abraham. All before Him are merely foreshadows of the True Seed.
 - 3.1.3.6.1.1. Luke 1:69–75 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— ⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³the oath he swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
 - 3.1.3.6.1.2. Acts 3:25–26 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”
 - 3.1.3.6.1.3. Galatians 3:16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

- 3.1.3.6.2. Through Christ, the Church inherits all of God's good promises to Abraham. In Christ, the Church is the recipient of the covenant with Abraham.
- 3.1.3.6.2.1. Galatians 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
- 3.1.3.6.2.2. Galatians 4:28–31 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.²⁹ At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."³¹ Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.
- 3.1.3.6.2.3. Ephesians 3:6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.
- 3.1.3.6.2.4. Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

3.1.3.6.2.5. Romans 9:6–8 It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. ⁷ Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” ⁸ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.

3.1.4. This means that a full biblical understanding of Genesis 12:1-7 will see all of the great promises to Abraham and his seed. It will note how they were fulfilled in a typological manner in the life of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the nation of Israel. Further, it will see that the inheritance can not be received or kept through law, but only by faith. It will note that THE True Seed of Abraham is Jesus, Who inherits all of the good promises given to Abraham, and them gives them to His church, both Jews and Gentiles.

3.2. If you would like to see how I handle Psalm 137 - one of the difficult texts mentioned at the beginning - you may listen to an audio of a teaching I gave on Psalm 137, or download the outline. You can access these at our website www.bayridgechristianchurch.org.

4. If you take this methodology and use the tools God has made available, you will be blessed with a lifelong fruitful study and application of God Word in your life. May God bless your study of His Word to draw you closer to Himself, so that you may experience the rich life He gives to us in Christ!

Resources for further study on exploring God's Word (Annotated Bibliography)

Good books on how to study and apply God's Word

How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

This is a great introduction on how to read and study God's Word. It covers general topics such as those found in this seminar (but in a much briefer fashion), but then delves into all of the various genres of Scripture, giving tips on how to apply hermeneutical principles to each distinct genre, and selecting various thorny texts and working on them in practice. I certainly do not agree with all of the authors' conclusions on various difficult texts, but they provide a lot of introductory help to get the reader into the habit of reading the Scripture according to genre. This is perhaps the best single introductory volume available.

Knowing Scripture, R.C. Sproul.

This is another excellent introduction. Sproul goes more into the need for interpretation, the various methods people employ, and gives a lot of practical advice and principles for interpreting the text. However, because of the different format and size of the book, he does not work through the various genres or give as many examples as Fee and Stuart. Nonetheless, it is a very good book, and certainly worth owning. I recommend using it alongside the Fee and Stuart book to get a fuller picture of how to study and apply Scripture.

Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible, Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton.

This book is largest of the three books - and also the most complex. It deals with a lot of topics, including truth, language and sin in a postmodern context, the history of interpretation, principles for interpretation, a brief look at various genres, and the place of Scripture in our witness and in guidance for our lives. It is an excellent book, but a beginner may find it daunting. For this reason, I would recommend starting with the other books first and then moving to this one. However, it is an excellent resource for those serious about properly studying and applying the Scripture.

Good resources on understanding the central message of Scripture

Christ the Focus and Fulfillment of the Old Testament - Bret Hicks

This is a 23 week series of teachings showing how Christ is the focus and fulfillment of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. It shows that the major people, places, and events in the Old Testament are types and shadows of the reality that is found in Christ, and how through Him all believers inherit the Old Testament promises. The audio of the teachings or the outlines of the teachings may be downloaded at www.bayridgechristianchurch.org.

The Christ of the Covenants, O. Palmer Robertson.

This book is an excellent look at how Christ is the fulfillment of all of the Biblical covenants. It goes through each of the covenants, showing both the continuity and discontinuity in the covenants, and how ultimately Christ fulfills all of the covenants in our place, and gives the blessings of the covenants to His people. The book can be technical at times, but it is an excellent work on this important topic.

Jesus & Israel: One Covenant or Two?, Daniel Holwerda.

This excellent book show how Jesus is the True Israel - the people, the land, the temple, and the law all find their fulfillment in Him. If you combines this book with Robertson's book, you will have an excellent overview of how Jesus is the focus and fulfillment of all Scripture.