

APPENDIX 1

THE PROCEDURES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Exegetical labor

These steps are helpful in the actual exegesis and interpretation of the text. They include careful, detailed work. They are not appropriate for devotional reading of the Bible, although they often will lead the student into new and wonderful devotional insights. The Bible should never become a dry textbook.

The student should keep records of his exegetical work. These records should not be too detailed and a burden, but they should enable him at a later time to retrace his steps without having to hunt up all his books again.

Steps in exegetical study

1. Prayer
 - a. A continual attitude during study
 - b. A good idea to formalize at the outset
 - c. Recognizes the need for illumination
2. Translation
 - a. First a formal-equivalence translation
 - b. As study progresses, develop a dynamic-equivalence translation
 - c. Use a format that allows space for word definitions of unknown words and explanation of difficult forms
 - d. For those without language training, consult a variety of good translations
3. Textual criticism

- a. Note any textual variants (in NT, check Nestle-Aland)
- b. Make initial decision in difficult cases
4. Determine the context
 - a. Note the general context
 - i) Historical context, relation to narrative portions
 - ii) The book and its purpose
 - b. Note the particular context (note paragraphs; chapter divisions not always helpful)
5. Ascertain the historical background or parallels
 - a. Use harmonies to find parallels in OT narrative, in the Gospels, in Paul's epistles
 - b. Use dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc., to identify historical or cultural terms, dates, individuals, etc.
 - c. Employ maps and atlases for events in the OT or in life of Jesus or Paul or other characters
6. Carefully study the wording of the text
 - a. Study the vocabulary
 - b. Study the syntax of the passage (try diagramming sentences)
 - c. Identify figures of speech
 - d. This study can be as detailed as you wish, but note two extremes:
 - i) Too much detail—never get finished
 - ii) Too skimpy—end up relying on commentaries
7. Compare with other Scriptures

“The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.” (WCF 1:9)

- a. OT quotes in the NT
 - b. Doctrines and conclusions must fit with overall teaching of the Bible
 - c. Find other passages on the same subject (commentaries and theologies and theological dictionaries will help)
 - d. Remember that each portion should be interpreted with integrity; keep a balance between the passages.
8. Check with commentaries
- a. The “checking principle”
 - b. Beware of totally new ideas
 - c. Especially look for overlooked arguments or passages
 - d. Develop a taste for commentaries
9. Outline the exposition of the passage
- a. Outline the passage
 - b. Paraphrase the passage; expanded translation
 - c. Finalize your dynamic translation (not a loose translation)
 - d. List arguments under debated points
 - e. Note especially helpful references and quotations
 - f. Chart out the significant parallel or related passages

This material now is ready to form the basis of a biblical lesson or message, or a series of messages or lessons!