

WOMEN'S EQUIPPING

Session 1: Hermeneutics, Interpretation and Application
West Hills Evergreen; summer, 2017

Notes prepared by pastor Josh

THE GOAL OF THIS GROUP

1. To equip you to love, learn and teach God's word in the church for the glory of God.
2. *Requirement:* you must commit to teach what you are learning in this class to someone else in the context of a shepherding relationship.
3. *Why?* Because the goal of equipping is to arm the saints for "the work of the ministry, for the building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to full maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

PRESUPPOSITIONS

1. The goal of interpretation: to know God (i.e. worship and obedience)
2. Expecting to find:
 - a. Glory (the nature of what is communicated):
 - b. Perfection (the nature of how God communicates):
3. Attitude: humility and hunger (recognition that you need to learn and a desire to do so)
 - a. The word of God judges and hardens (Isaiah 6:9-10) or softens and imparts life (Ezk 37:4-10), but it always has an effect (Isaiah 55:10-11).
 - b. The hermeneutical circle:

- i. The Word of God as a Royal Voice
- ii. The Word of God becomes a subject of inquiry
- iii. The Word of God is reestablished as a Royal Voice¹

HERMEUTICS

1. **Definition:** the art and science of interpretation.
 - a. **A strategy:** that enables one to understand what an author or speaker intended to communicate. Hermeneutics does not provide tools of analysis that enable absolute accuracy. It provides standards, tactics, and rules which govern the interpretation of all forms of communication.
 - b. **The problem:** no one comes to the task of understanding as an objective observer. Our presuppositions and agendas affect the way we understand what is being said as well as the conclusions we draw. Striving for objectivity is like striving for holiness.
2. **Senders Intended Meaning (SIM):** how all communication works.
 - a. Why is this hard to do well?
 - i. Chronological distance
 - ii. Cultural distance
 - iii. Geographical distance

¹ Adapted from Gordon Fee's "Exegesis and Spirituality: Completing the Circle" in *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids; Wm Erdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 3-15.

- iv. Distance of language
 - b. What is the implication of all this?
 - i. Humility
 - ii. Hunger
 - iii. Willingness to work
3. **Text not Event:** where is inspiration located?
- a. What is inspiration? "...the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon divinely chosen agents in consequence of which their writings become trustworthy and authoritative"²...communication from God.
 - b. What does this mean for interpretation?
 - i. I am trying to interpret: what the author meant by what he wrote.
 - ii. I am not trying to: figure out what is going on behind the scenes of what the author wrote,
 - iii. Malcolm Gladwell and 1 Sam 17?³ (v. 45-47!)
4. **Macro Before Micro:** context determines meaning
- a. You can't accurately understand anything without understanding everything (kind of)
 - i. Look at Paul Robert's Mural in the Neuchatel

² C.F.H. Henry, "Bible, The Inspiration of" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology 2nd Edition*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2001), 160.

³ Accessed at https://www.ted.com/talks/malcolm_gladwell_the_unheard_story_of_david_and_goliath on June 1st, 2017.

- ii. What does this teach us? You won't fully understand any one part of the picture without seeing the picture in its entirety.
 - b. This means you understand a word in light of its sentence, a sentence in light of its paragraph, a paragraph in light of its chapter, a chapter in light of the whole book, and a book in light of all the scripture. In other words, we understand the micro in light of the macro. You can't see anything unless you can see everything.
 - i. Example: the long nose of God.
 - ii. Exodus 34:6-7 "The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, [*long of nose*], and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness"
 - iii. Prov14:29; 15:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2
 - c. The unique way this applies to the bible: dual authorship 2 Tim 3:16, and the ultimate macro.
 - i. There is a big "A" and little "a" author speaking in every text.
 - ii. Thus, the Scripture may say more than what the original author intended but never less. The Canon and testament can be the macro and the book can be the micro.
 - iii. All this means is that where appropriate, we allow the bible to interpret itself. The whole interprets the parts.
 - d. If you don't leave this course feeling overwhelmed by the task of 2 Tim 2:15, you or I have failed. The point is not to make you want to stop, but to make you resolve to raise the bar for yourself and others!
- 5. **Message and Medium:** all messages are communicated through a medium (form). Understanding the medium is not the same thing as understanding the message, but the message can't be understood without understanding the medium. God authored a message in a medium
 - a. Three valid questions:
 - i. What does this teach me about history?
 - ii. What does this teach me about theology?

- iii. What is the author intending to communicate to his audience through the form he has chosen to work in?
- b. If we are serious about the author's meaning, we need to be sensitive to what medium of communication he or she has chosen to convey their message.
- c. Genre and prose.
 - i. What is genre? A form or category of artistic composition and communication. Think of a constellation.
 - 1. Wisdom: expressing something that is generally true (Prov 22:6)
 - 2. Narrative (kinds): reports, hero stories and farewell speeches.
 - 3. Parables: The king who stole a sheep. Hear the point, see the point.
 - ii. What is prose? The language people use in various forms of communication.
 - 1. Poetic "I compare you my love to a mare among Pharaoh's chariots." (Sos 1:8)
 - 2. Apocalyptic "All the hosts of heaven shall rot away and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their hosts shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from a fig tree" (Isaiah 34:4)
 - 3. Tone and Overstatement (Heb 5:12-6:2)

INTERPRETATION: Questions we ask that lead to understanding.

- 1. Historical Context of the Text:
 - a. Who is the author? Who is the audience?
 - b. What is the social and historical setting of the author and the audience?
 - i. When was this written?
 - ii. Where do the author and audience live?

- iii. Who is in charge there?
- iv. What is life like in that place?
- v. How do these people think about the world?
- c. What seems to have prompted the writing of this text?
- d. What important historical issues would have influenced the thinking of the author and the audience? Ex: Isaiah and Ezekiel.

2. Literary Context

- a. Examine the placement of the text.
- b. How does this text fit into the author's argument in the book?
- c. Does this advance a previous point, introduce a new point, bring something to conclusion? Does this unit of text seem to be self-contained? Why or why not.
- d. How is my text similar and dissimilar to other related textual units in Scripture?
- e. Analyze the details the author chose to include. Why did he include "this" and not "that"? What is he trying to communicate by including "this".

3. Genre and Form

- a. What is the literary genre of my text? Is it the same or different than the greater genre of the book? The example of Ruth and poetry (Ruth 1:16-17).
- b. Identify the specific form of your text within its genre.
- c. Do your best to link your passage with the real situation of its use. Sometimes the text does this for you (Deut 1:1-5). Otherwise you must work inferentially and with caution.

4. Exegesis

- a. Break your text down into its propositions (basic unit of thought). Example:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

That which was from the beginning,
 which we have heard,
 which we have seen with our eyes,
 which we looked upon
 and have touched with our hands,
 concerning the word of *life*
 —the *life* was made **manifest**,
 and we have seen it,
 and testify to it
 and proclaim to you
 the eternal *life*,
 which was with the Father
 and was made **manifest** to us—
 that which we have seen
 and heard
 we proclaim also to you,
 so that you too may have fellowship with us;
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- b. Be alert to how the conjunctions are functioning.
 - i. Conjunctions can subordinate, coordinate, correlate, or work “adverbially” (qualifying or changing the meaning of) connecting clauses together in sequence, contrast, cause and effect etc.
- c. Look for patterns and emphasis. Look at all the references to the human senses.
- d. Analyze sentence structures and syntactical relationships. This text builds to a “so that”
- e. Analyze any grammatical issues. Who is “that” and “it”?
- f. Concentrate on key words and wording, especially when words seem to possess special theological import. “Life”

5. Exegesis to meaning

- a. Observe, observe, observe. You don’t see everything, you are dependent on God. You have to keep looking and looking and looking.
- b. Prayer, prayer prayer.
- c. What is the author emphasizing?
- d. What kind of comparison or contrast is the author making?
- e. What seems to be good and what seems to be bad and why?
- f. What seems to be the point of including this passage in the letter?

APPLICATION

1. Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)

- a. FCF is: “*the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to, or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the*

passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy Him.”⁴

- b. Simply put, understanding how to apply a text requires understanding how it applies to it's original audience and then doing the hard work of thinking through how the message speaks to our shared experiences. An FCF doesn't necessarily need to be sin, simply an aspect of human life that requires the instruction, admonition, and comfort of God's Word.
 - c. So in working toward an application, do we identify ourselves with characters in stories? Not typically. We are trying to understand how the Word was intended to minister to the readers of the story. This is why epistles are the most easy to apply.
 - d. The example of Genesis: living in the gap between promise and reality. Meat sacrificed to idols in Corinth (we don't sacrifice to idols, but we feel the temptation to capitulate to cultural norms that can serve as stumbling blocks).
2. A God centered view of change. (Exodus 20:3; Psalm 25:12; Prov 1:7; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:1-4, 13; Rev 1-3). People don't change because of your exegesis.
 3. The invasion of the ordinary and the need for specific application.
 - a. “Most people, most of the time, are not in crisis. If pastoral work is to represent the gospel and develop a life of faith in the actual circumstances of life, it must learn to be at home in what novelist William Golding has termed the “ordinary universe”—the every day things in peoples lives”⁵
 - b. The Kingdom of God has come to invade everything, through His Word, in His Church. The martyr and the man with the mortgage matter to God.

⁴ Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2005), 50.

⁵ Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* (Carol Stream IL, Word Inc Publishing, 1989), 120.