

How to Know What the Bible Means by What It Says: The Interpretive Journey (Lesson 2)

I. Step 1: Grasp the text in their town.

Question: What did the text mean to the original biblical audience?

- A. Read the passage through several times: Saturation Reading
- B. Study the literary context
 1. How does the passage relate to what precedes it and what follows it?
 2. Grammar
 3. Significant words
 4. Genre
- C. Study the historical context. (the book itself, Introductions, Bible handbooks, etc.)
- D. Write out what the passage meant for the original biblical audience.
 1. One or two sentences
 2. Be specific
 3. Use past tense verbs:
 - “Paul exhorted the Ephesians to...”
 - “Jesus encouraged His disciples by...”

II. Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross.

Question: What are the differences between the original biblical audience and us?

- A. Types of Differences:
 1. Culture
 2. Language
 3. Situation
 4. Time Period
 5. Covenant
 - If an OT passage, significant differences as a result of the life and work of Christ.
- B. Write out the differences between us and the original biblical audience
 1. One sentence for each difference.
 2. Make “We” the subject of each sentence.
 3. Use present tense verbs, stated negatively.
 - “We are NOT...”
 - “We do NOT...”
 - “We have no...”
 - “We no longer...”

III. Step 3: Cross the principlizing bridge

Question: What is the outstanding and abiding theological principle in this text?

- A. “Theological Principle” = the theological message of the passage
- B. Recall differences noted in Step 2

C. Identify similarities between the situation of the original biblical audience and us.

D. Write out the theological principle(s) evident in the passage

1. One or two sentences for each principle
 2. Use present tense verbs.
 3. The principle should...
 - a. be reflected in the text
 - b. be timeless and not tied to a specific situation
 - c. not be culturally-bound
 - d. agree with the rest of Scripture
 - e. be relevant to both the original and a contemporary audience
- Example: “God is holy and He wants His people to be holy.”

IV. Step 4: Consult the Biblical map.

Question: How does our statement of the theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?

A. Scripture Interprets Scripture:

- The principle must agree with the rest of Scripture

B. Theological principles taken from the Old Testament must be run through the grid of the New Testament

V. Step 5: Grasp the text in our town.

Question: How should individual Christians today live out the theological principles revealed in the text?

- One interpretation, many applications

PRACTICE WITH Joshua 1:1-9

Step 1: Grasp the text in their town

- a. “after the death of Moses...” (1:1)
 - A Time of Transition
- b. Moses & Joshua (1:1-3)
 - Divinely sanctioned leaders
- c. “...the Lord said to Joshua...” (1:1)
 - Divine Speech
- d. Jordan River, Promised Land (1:2-5)
 - Geographic Locations
- e. A Series of Exhortations (vs. 6-9)
 - The Lord commanded Joshua, the new leader of Israel...
 - (1) To draw strength and courage from God’s empowering presence,
 - (2) To be obedient to the Law of Moses,
 - (3) To meditate on the Law so that he would be successful in the conquest of the Promised Land.

f. Significant Words:

- Presence –vss. 5, 9
- Strength & Courage vss. 6, 7, 9
- Law & Obey (Do) – vss. 7, 8
- Success –vss. 7, 8
- Meditate—vs. 8

Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross

- We are NOT leaders of the nation of Israel.
- We are NOT setting out on the conquest of the Promised Land.
- We are NOT under the old covenant of the Law.

Step 3: Cross the principlizing bridge

- a. God has a calling on the life of each person.
- b. God is present with us.
- c. God's Word requires obedience.
- d. To be effective in serving God and successful in the task to which He has called us, we must draw strength and courage from His presence and wisdom from His Word.

Step 4: Consult the biblical map

- The whole of Scripture affirms that God's people can draw strength and courage from His presence.
- In the New Testament the Holy Spirit mediates God's presence to His People.
- In both the Old and New Testament God's people are exhorted to meditate on Scripture.

Step 5: Grasp the text in our town

- Purpose to meet with the Lord regularly at a particular time and place, to listen to His voice through the Word, and speak to HIM in prayer.
- Pray that the Lord would reveal to me the specific calling that He has on my life. Ask, "What is my mission?"
- Watch/listen to Pastor Rex's 4/19/2020 sermon on Ephesians 1 re: the calling for which He has designed me.
- Read books to help me understand my unique design: *Please Understand Me* (Kiersey, Bates), *Significant Woman* or *Man of Impact* (published by CRU)
- Do the will of God more closely, choosing to walk in the Spirit more consistently.
- Commit my life's mission to Him, trusting that He will reveal it in His time, and will help me to fulfill it.