

# MODULE 7: SESSION 2

## APPLIED THEOLOGY HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

### Observation Part 1: Getting to Know the Passage

[NOTE: for Context assignment, just go through the checklist of things to look for from the last lecture. Remember: this is as much art as science. This is everything AROUND the text not the text itself. Context paper is a beefed up BBR. Can be in bullet points.]

#### 1. Literal Interpretation is a Must

- a. Other names: historical, grammatical, historico-grammatical, or literal methods
- b. What literal interpretation DOESN'T mean:
  - i. Inflexible exaggeration that is not sensitive to figures of speech or literary style. In John 10, Jesus is not literally a door made of wood.
  - ii. Consistent demand to dismiss the possibility of culturally understandable speech. OT prophecy describing the weaponry of the future may or may not mean literally spears and arrows. The author may be using cultural vocabulary with which he is familiar.
  - iii. Insistence of precision when context does not demand it. The 185,000 troops struck down in 2 Kings 19 does not demand that it could not be 184,999 or 185,001. When context demands it, however, precision is clear. Revelation speaks of an exact time period of 1,260 days (Rev 11, 12).
- c. What is DOES mean:
  - i. You don't get to just make up metaphorical meanings without sufficient cause to do so. Using the phrase "this means..." doesn't make your analysis true.
  - ii. Ascertain the usual, customary sense of terms. For example, "crown" in the NT very often refers in context to blessedness in the spiritual realm, such as the "crown" of eternal life in James 1:12. This is a usual sense of the term in the NT, along with the normal use of a physical crown.
  - iii. No dependence on secondary sources to test the validity of Scripture (the historical-critical method). Scripture is self-validating.
  - iv. Doctrine is formed from the Scripture; Scripture is not interpreted according to a pre-conceived doctrinal position
- d. Why literal interpretation?
  - i. It is the norm in interpreting literature.

- ii. All secondary meanings must logically be based on a literal foundation.
  - iii. Literal interpretation is the only method which controls and handcuffs the abuse of Scripture by eisegesis, the imagination of men forced upon Scripture.
- 2. Big Picture of Bible Study – what you are aiming for (I am indebted to Duvall and Hays, *Journey into God's Word*, pp. 14ff).
  - a. Step 1: Grasping the Text in Their Town
    - i. Observation of what the text meant to the original readers
    - ii. This is context, culture, history, grammar, original language (as much as you are able), literary context.
  - b. Step 2: Measuring the Width of the River to Cross
    - i. What are the differences between the situation of the biblical audience and our situation today? What barriers of culture, language, time, situation, and covenant need to be understood and accounted for?
    - ii. What is the actual situation of the original reader? How should I be cautious about overly-quickly making a rapid application to the modern Christian?
  - c. Step 3: Crossing the Principlizing Bridge
    - i. What is the timeless theology of this passage based on my observations?
    - ii. How do these theological principles mesh with the whole of Scripture?
    - iii. E.g. David and Goliath:
      - 1. Too-quick application: Whenever faced with Goliath's in your life, God will help you defeat them.
      - 2. Timeless theological principle #1: David was God's chosen king and God blessed and preserved him in the name of the coming Davidic Covenant from which would come Jesus Christ.
      - 3. Timeless theological principle #2: Spiritual weapons of the believer are used to fight the ungodly weapons of spiritual enemies
        - a. 1 Samuel 17:45 (ESV) – 45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.
        - b. Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) – 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- d. Step 4: Grasping the Text in Our Town
  - i. How should individual believers apply these theological principles in life today?
  - ii. David and Goliath example:
    - 1. God preservation of David and the Davidic Covenant reminds us of the faithfulness of God to bring us a Savior and assures us of the faithfulness of God to complete our salvation.
    - 2. Our greatest enemies are spiritual in nature and are to be fought and defeated spiritually with the gospel of Christ, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God.
  - e. DUVALL and HAYS illustration slide--SUMMARIZE
- 3. Getting to Know Your Text
  - a. Observation example – get into the mind of the author:
    - i. “Dearest Cute-ums, It’s been four days and three hours since our fifth date. Can’t wait for the sixth. Our conversations make me think and looking into your eyes makes my heart sing. See you Tuesday at 5:30 for a glorious dinner and walk, just 24 hours from now. Love, Snuggly-Wuggy
    - ii. 12 Example Observations:
      - 1. The author either (a) doesn’t have a job, (b) has Thursdays off, (c) has a flexible schedule on Thursdays or (d) had an abnormal Thursday recently...(I’ll show you how we arrive at those options)
      - 2. Six references to specific numbers – the author is precise.
      - 3. Author is thinking continually about the other based on the precision.
      - 4. Begins and ends with nicknames – author is either very affectionate and comfortable or socially unaware.
      - 5. Two references to “our”
      - 6. Two references to “my” or “me” but two implied references to “I” ([I] cant’ wait...[I will] see you Tuesday...)
      - 7. Two references to “your” or “you”
      - 8. Author mentions only what the other does for the author, not what the author does for the other.
      - 9. Author views the other as an intellectual equal or greater (“our conversations make me think”).
      - 10. There may be an implied request for reassurance that the other is still committed (“see you Tuesday at 5:30”).
      - 11. The author is writing on Monday at 5:30 so their fifth date was the previous Thursday at 2:30 in the afternoon. “5:30” is not specified as AM or PM, but it is for dinner, so most likely PM.

12. THUS: a mid-afternoon date means that our original observations about the author's Thursdays now hold water

iii. Example Questions:

1. Was this written by a man or a woman? Text doesn't say, but two sentence fragments hint at a man.
2. How did they acquire nicknames so quickly?
3. Why does this not scare the recipient to death?

b. Reading Well

- i. You have already established the context – now read the passage multiple times. Read the passage in other good Bible versions. Read it aloud. The point is to get it clearly as part of your mind and heart. Your study of a passage should nearly lead to memorizing the passage.
- ii. Pray through the passage, asking the Lord for help, integrity, accuracy, and clarity.

c. Asking Basic Questions

- i. Who?
  1. Who is speaking?
  2. Who is being spoken of?
  3. Who is being spoken to?
- ii. What?
  1. What is happening?
  2. What is the flow of the passage?
  3. What is the argument being made?
  4. What are the usual meanings of the major words?
- iii. Where?
  1. Physical geography (part of your establishing context work)
  2. Where are the listeners spiritually?
- iv. When?
  1. When is this taking place and in how does it related to other events in the Bible?
    - a. NOTE: in NT, all events take place within 100 years, culturally a drop in the bucket of time with little change.
    - b. In the OT, centuries make a difference as to the situation.
  2. Are the verbs past, present, or future?
  3. Is there a sense of urgency or patience?
- v. Why?
  1. Why is this passage in this portion of the book?
  2. Why is this after such and such but before such and such?
- vi. Wherefore? (What's the point?) (the beginning of interpretation)
  1. How should this go beyond the acquisition of knowledge about this passage?

2. How does this passage contribute to the overall purpose of the book? (ascertained from your context pre-study)
- d. Patterns to Observe
- i. Importance
    1. How much space is devoted to the topic?
    2. What comes first and what comes last?
    3. Does the order or list of nouns or verbs make a difference?
    4. Is there noticeable repetition of words or concepts?
    5. Is an OT passage repeated in the NT for emphasis? If so, what is the context of the OT passage itself?
  - ii. Relationships
    1. How do the details relate to the overall point of the passage?
    2. Do the details help you modify the overall point of the passage?
    3. What relationships can be observed (connecting words are a key)
    4. Look for relationship words: If, then, but, and
    5. Look for phrases that modify/ define each other
    6. Look for questions and answers (Paul uses this extensively in Romans)
    7. Look for cause and effect
    8. Comparisons and contrasts
- e. Parts of Speech
- i. Verbs (action words) – the most critical words in the text!!
    1. Who is doing what?
    2. Are there commands (imperatives)?
    3. Is the verb active or passive?
      - a. Active: something the reader does
      - b. Passive: something that is done to the reader
      - c. IE: “Be filled with the Spirit” (passive, the correct translation) vs. “Get yourself filled with the Spirit” (active, an incorrect translation). (Eph 5:18)
    4. NOTE: Verb forms in Greek are extremely precise and a good English translation will almost always reflect this precision, but pay attention when a commentary takes time to explain a verb form.
  - ii. Nouns
    1. Subject – who is doing the acting?
    2. Object – who is being acted upon?
  - iii. Adjectives – words that help describe nouns – “red car”
  - iv. Adverbs – words that help describe verbs “quickly walking.”

- v. Prepositions – words that tell you where or how action is happening: in, on, upon, through, to, by, etc.
- vi. Connecting words
  1. And – similarity in thought
  2. But – contrasting thought
  3. Yet – “B” is happening despite “A”
  4. Therefore – a response is required
    - a. E.g. --“Therefore” (*dio* or *oun*) happens 17 times in Romans
  5. As --comparison
- f. Asking Random Questions – the juiciest part of Bible study
  - i. DO NOT wait to note these in writing! As questions come, get them down.
  - ii. You have already been asking structured questions with the “W” questions, but others may pop up which can often be the most interesting and fruitful part of your study.
  - iii. Be curious and put yourself in the place of the original reader.
  - iv. No question is too silly – evaluate the question later.
  - v. If further study doesn’t answer your question, later you go to sources to try to find answers. Try to find the same answer from multiple authors; don’t just believe the first one you see.
  - vi. Once you get an answer you like, plug it back into the purpose of the book and the overall point of the specific passage which you have already established. If it doesn’t fit, you are likely wrong.
- 4. OUR EXAMPLE: Ephesians 4:31-32 (ESV) – 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. – Going to use the observation checklist, but eventually you will blend many of these categories
  - a. Asking Basic Questions
    - i. Who?
      1. Who is speaking? – Paul is speaking
      2. Who is being spoken of? – those with whom they would have something against
      3. Who is being spoken to? The believers reading the letter
    - ii. What?
      1. What is happening? Paul is telling them how to behave
      2. What is the flow of the passage? He tells them what not to do then what to do.
      3. What is the argument being made? You must put off the sinful and put on the righteous

4. What are the usual meanings of the major words? (definitions)
  - a. Bitterness = holding a grudge, internal resentment
  - b. Wrath – belief that someone deserves judgment
  - c. Anger – murderous attitude (Matt 5:21)
  - d. Clamor – making trouble
  - e. Slander – harming reputation
  - f. Tenderhearted – empathetic internal attitude
  - g. Kindness - external actions motivated by internal attitude of tenderheartedness
- iii. Where?
  1. Physical geography (part of your establishing context work)-- Ephesus
  2. Where are the listeners spiritually? The directness and repetitiveness of these commands could indicate these sins are an issue.
- iv. When?
  1. When is this taking place and in how does it related to other events in the Bible?
    - a. This letter is written about 30 years before Revelation, when Jesus addresses the church in Ephesus again.
  2. Are the verbs past, present, or future?
    - a. All the verbs are present tense except the last one, “God in Christ *forgave* you,” past tense.
  3. Is there a sense of urgency or patience? A sense of urgency to obey the command to be patient with one another.
- v. Why?
  1. Why is this passage in this portion of the book?
    - a. This helps explain 4:1, “walk in a manner worthy”
  2. Why is this after such and such but before such and such?
    - a. This comes after the general exhortations about church functioning
    - b. It comes before the specific exhortations about family life.
    - c. Therefore, these general principles help explain how to function in the church and in the family.
- vi. Wherefore? (What’s the point?) (the beginning of interpretation)
  1. How should this go beyond the acquisition of knowledge about this passage?
    - a. These are general commands to the Christian
  2. How does this passage contribute to the overall purpose of the book? (ascertained from your context pre-study)

- a. This explains the Conduct of the Christian based in His call to salvation.
- b. Checklist of Patterns to Observe
  - i. Importance
    - 1. How much space is devoted to the topic?
      - a. There are six sins to avoid
      - b. There are three positive actions to do
    - 2. What comes first and what comes last?
      - a. Things to stop doing come first and things to start doing come last
    - 3. Does the order or list of nouns or verbs make a difference?
      - a. The first three sins (bitterness, wrath, anger) are internal
      - b. The second three sins (clamor, slander, malice) are external actions
      - c. From “bitterness” to “malice” is a progression from an internal grudge to a pre-meditated harm of a fellow believer.
      - d. The outward actions reveal and expose the inner sinful attitudes
      - e. The outward action of kindness reveals the inner attitude of tenderheartedness, but experience tells us this can be faked, so the internal is the most important issue
      - f. Reflects that God looks at the heart (e.g. 1 Sam 16:7)
    - 4. Is there noticeable repetition of words or concepts?
      - a. “one another” 2x
      - b. Forgiveness 2x
      - c. “all” 2x – complete obedience
    - 5. Is an OT passage repeated in the NT for emphasis?--No
  - ii. Relationships
    - 1. How do the details relate to the overall point of the passage?
      - a. The point seems to be “stop doing this and start doing that.” The details enumerate the specifics of this.
    - 2. Do the details help you modify the overall point of the passage?
      - a. No. They are confirming that this is a “stop/start” exhortation.
    - 3. What relationships can be observed (connecting words are a key)
      - a. Instead of commas, “and” is used many times. Could be for emphasis
    - 4. Look for relationship words: If, then, but, and – already covered



5. Look for phrases that modify/define each other
    - a. “kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” seem to be similar or identical
  6. Look for questions and answers (Paul uses this extensively in Romans) – n/a
  7. Look for cause and effect
    - a. Internal sinful thoughts lead to external sinful actions
  8. Comparisons and contrasts
    - a. The opposite of bitterness is tenderheartedness
    - b. The opposite of wrath is forgiveness
    - c. The example we have is “as God in Christ forgave you.”
- c. Parts of Speech
- i. Verbs – the most critical words in the text!!
    1. Who is doing what? The Christian is to obey the imperatives
    2. Are there commands (imperatives)? – five commands
      - a. “Let” = a polite command
      - b. “Be put away” – command to discard something
      - c. “Be kind”
      - d. “[Be] tenderhearted”
      - e. Forgiving one another
    3. Is the verb active or passive?
      - a. “Let” = passive – something you are allowing
      - b. “Be put away” passive
      - c. “Be kind” = active
      - d. “[Be] tenderhearted” = active
      - e. “forgiving” = active
    4. NOTE: Verb forms in Greek are extremely precise and a good English translation will almost always reflect this precision, but pay attention when a commentary takes time to explain a verb form.
      - a. NOTE: English translation limits you somewhat at this point. A good commentary might explain some nitty gritty details about “be kind” and “forgiving,” that they are possibly passive verbs also, although in English they appear active.
      - b. Don’t worry too much about getting to this level of detail yet.
    5. IMPLICATION: Some if not all of the verbs are commands yet they are passive – something that is HAPPENING to you: implication is that the Christian is empowered to “Let” and “be tenderhearted”

- a. CONTEXT: Ephesians 5:18 (ESV) – 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, **but be filled with the Spirit,**
    - b. SO: These commands assume that by the Holy Spirit’s power the Ephesian believers are able to put these things away
  - ii. Nouns
    - 1. Subject – who is doing the acting? The reader
    - 2. Object – who is being acted upon? Fellow believers (“one another”)
  - iii. Adjectives – n/a
  - iv. Adverbs – words that help describe verbs
    - 1. “be kind” – described by tenderhearted and forgiving
  - v. Prepositions – “put away **from you;**” “**to one another**”
  - vi. Connecting words
    - 1. “**as**” God is Christ forgave you – a permanent action with continuing results
      - a. This is the standard of forgiveness
- d. Asking Random Questions – the juiciest part of Bible study
  - i. Do my English definitions hold up in Greek? Does Greek definition help flesh it out any (We will do the cautions of word studies later)
  - ii. What might have been happening in Ephesus or in the churches around Ephesus to necessitate this exhortation?
  - iii. How does this relate to Jesus commands to the Ephesian church in Revelation 2?
  - iv. Who were the leaders in Ephesus that we know of? NOTE: Tradition tells us that sometime after Timothy, John may have ended his ministry in Ephesus. Ironically, the Apostle of Love was in the church that eventually forgot its first love.
    - 1. One initial LESSON: A local church cannot coast on what it used to know or do; it must be shepherded continually.
- e. SUMMARY: 72 observations and 4 major questions
- f. ASSIGNMENT: Use all these questions and answer them to the best of your ability. For the most part, all you need is your Bible and something to write or type on.
- g. ON the HANDOUT: I have included all the observations at the end on one list for your reference.

1. Who is speaking? – Paul is speaking
2. Who is being spoken of? – those with whom they would have something against

3. Who is being spoken to? The believers reading the letter
4. What is happening? Paul is telling them how to behave
5. What is the flow of the passage? He tells them what not to do then what to do.
6. What is the argument being made? You must put off the sinful and put on the righteous
7. Bitterness = holding a grudge, internal resentment
8. Wrath – belief that someone deserves judgment
9. Anger – murderous attitude (Matt 5:21)
10. Clamor – making trouble
11. Slander – harming reputation
12. Tenderhearted – empathetic internal attitude
13. Kindness = external actions motivated by internal attitude of tenderheartedness
14. Physical geography--Ephesus
15. Where are the listeners spiritually? The directness and repetitiveness of these commands could indicate this is an issue.
16. This letter is written about 30 years before Revelation, when Jesus addresses the church in Ephesus again.
17. All the verbs are present tense
18. except the last verb, "God in Christ forgave you," past tense.
19. Is there a sense of urgency or patience? A sense of urgency to obey the command to be patient with one another.
20. Why is this passage in this portion of the book? This helps explain 4:1, "walk in a manner worthy"
21. This comes after the general exhortations about church functioning
22. It comes before the specific exhortations about family life.
23. Therefore, these general principles help explain how to function in the church and in the family.
24. These are general commands to the Christian
25. How does this passage contribute to the overall purpose of the book? This explains the Conduct of the Christian based in His call to salvation.
26. There are six sins to avoid
27. There are three positive actions to do
28. Things to stop doing come first and things to start doing come last
29. The first three sins (bitterness, wrath, anger) are internal
30. The second three sins (clamor, slander, malice) are external actions
31. From "bitterness" to "malice" is a progression from an internal grudge to a pre-meditated harm of a fellow believer.
32. The outward actions reveal and expose the inner sinful attitudes
33. The outward action of kindness reveal the inner attitude of tenderheartedness
34. but experience tells us this can be faked, so the internal is the most important issue
35. Reflects that God looks at the heart (e.g. 1 Sam 16:7)

36. "one another" 2x
37. Forgiveness 2x
38. "all" 2x – complete obedience
39. Is an OT passage repeated in the NT for emphasis?--No
40. How do the details relate to the overall point of the passage? The point seems to be "stop doing this and start doing that." The details enumerate the specifics of this.
41. Do the details help you modify the overall point of the passage? No. They are confirming that this is a "stop/start" exhortation.
42. Instead of commas, "and" is used many times. Could be for emphasis
43. "kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another" seem to be similar or identical
44. Look for questions and answers (Paul uses this extensively in Romans) – n/a
45. Internal sinful thoughts lead to external sinful actions
46. The opposite of bitterness is tenderheartedness
47. The opposite of wrath is forgiveness
48. The example we have is "as God in Christ forgave you."
49. Who is doing what? The Christian is to obey the imperatives
50. Five commands:
51. "Let" = a polite command
52. "Be put away" – command to discard something
53. "Be kind"
54. "[Be] tenderhearted"
55. Forgiving one another
56. "Let" = passive – something you are allowing
57. "Be put away" passive
58. "Be kind" = active
59. "[Be] tenderhearted" = active
60. "forgiving" = active
61. NOTE: English translation limits you somewhat at this point. A good commentary might explain some nitty gritty details about "be kind" and "forgiving," that they are possibly passive verbs also, although in English they appear active.
62. Some if not all of the verbs are commands yet they are passive – something that is HAPPENING to you: implication is that the Christian is empowered to "Let" and "be tenderhearted"
63. CONTEXT: Ephesians 5:18 (ESV) – 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,
64. These commands assume that by the Holy Spirit's power the Ephesian believers are able to put these things away
65. Subject – who is doing the acting? The reader
66. Object – who is being acted upon? Fellow believers ("one another")
67. Adjectives – n/a

68. "be kind" – described by tenderhearted and forgiving
69. Prepositions – "put away from you;" "to one another"
70. "as" God is Christ forgave you – a permanent action with continuing results
71. This is the standard of forgiveness
72. Do my English definitions hold up in Greek? Does Greek definition help flesh it out any (We will do the cautions of word studies later)
73. What might have been happening in Ephesus or in the churches around Ephesus to necessitate this exhortation?
74. How does this relate to Jesus commands to the Ephesian church in Revelation 2?
75. Who were the leaders in Ephesus that we know of? NOTE: Tradition tells us that sometime after Timothy, John may have ended his ministry in Ephesus.  
Ironically, the Apostle of Love was in the church that eventually forgot its first love.
76. Implication: A local church cannot coast on what it used to know or do; it must be shepherded continually.