



Key Steps to Biblical Interpretation – Expanded Outline

Step One: Understanding the Original Situation.

A. Ask God to open your eyes to truth through the ministry of the Holy Spirit as you read His Word.

1. Tell God that you want to be changed as well as informed by your reading of Scripture
2. Ask Him to reveal specific actions and attitudes in your own life which need to be changed or disciplined
3. Write out your prayer in the space provided below:

B. Establish the background of the book.

1. Who is the author?

2. When was this book written?

3. What do we know about the author?

4. Who was the audience and what were their concerns?

5. What was the author's purpose in writing the book?

C. Read the context around the passage.

1. Where does this passage begin and end? (Where are the natural breaks?)

2. What happens immediately before and after this section? (read at least one chapter before/after)

3. How does this affect how we should read the passage we are studying?

4. Can you see any reasons why this passage is placed at this point in the book rather than somewhere else?

E. Read the passage in another translation of Scripture.

1. Are there any observable differences?

2. Are there any new questions this new translation raises in your mind?

F. Read any parallel accounts or passages from other parts of Scripture.

1. What is the same? What is different?

2. Why did the author choose to omit some details and emphasize others?

3. What significance does this have for understanding the author's intent?

I. Look for literary structures that might influence the way the text is understood.

1. Are there any figures of speech, similes, metaphors, typologies, symbols, poetic structures, etc. found in the text?
2. How do these influence the way the text is understood?

J. Identify the historical events and the cultural issues which might affect the people or influence the ideas described in the passage?

1. Is there anything happening in history and/or society during that time which would be of importance when reading this passage?
2. How does this affect the way the audience heard the message in this text?

K. Summarize your findings.

1. What was the author trying to say?
2. Why is this message important for the original audience?

Step Two: Finding General Principles.

A. List in sentence form what you believe are the general principles in the passage which apply to *all people, at all time, in all cultures.*

B. Check these statements against other parts of Scripture for clarity and accuracy.

1. Ask yourself the following questions:

a. Are the principles I listed supported by other passages in the Bible?

b. Which of these principles might be difficult or impossible to explain when compared with other passages of Scripture?

c. Should any of these principles be ruled out in light of these other passages?

d. What new information about God and His will does this passage add to my overall knowledge of Scripture and doctrine?

C. Adjust or modify your statements of God's principles in light of the new discoveries made above.

D. Read commentaries to find out some of the key principles and doctrines that others in the church have drawn from this passage.

E. Again adjust or modify your statements of God's principles in light of the discoveries you made above.

C. How should knowing the truth from this passage:

1. Affect my relationship with God?

2. Affect my relationship with others (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.)

3. Challenge beliefs, attitudes, and actions that my culture views as normal?

D. Attempt to answer the questions “What am I to believe?” and “What am I to do?” now that I have studied this passage?

1. Do I need to repent from old ways of thinking and acting?

2. How can I act on this truth so that I become a wiser person?

E. How can I share what I have learned with others in a way that draws attention to Christ and builds them up?

Outline for Bible Passage

(Use the space below to create a detailed outline for the passage you have chosen)