

Biblical Exegesis

A. Get Started

1. Any given text is an essential part of a larger writing. You must first understand the significant themes and arguments set out by the author. Only then can you know how the text contributed to it.
2. Use an English translation of the text for reading and reflection. This reading serves as a starting point for surveying and evaluating the basic form and literary style of the text, initiating the formation of initial reflections on the contemporary application and relevance of the passage.
3. Determine the logical boundaries of the passage. The passage must be placed within its immediate context, including the larger framework of the section, book, and ongoing discussion. Remember that the biblical languages may also indicate the specific beginning or end of the text. You should, therefore, remain flexible and willing to accept different boundaries.

B. Examine the Text

4. Translate the text. Note any significant textual issues. Additionally, examine the grammatical features and the text's structure. Compare your findings to the preliminary assessment of the boundaries of the text. Begin listing observations and ideas that may be used in your sermon or lesson.
5. Using the translation and grammatical analysis, prepare an outline of the text and identify its literary form. Consult parallel or other related passages.
6. List key terms or concepts identify key terms or concepts that are necessary for understanding the text. Examine these terms and concepts through word studies. Comparisons can also be made regarding the history of translating these words into the English language.

C. Understand the text

7. The focus shifts from the content of the text to issues of its authorship and social and historical context. These issues may require consultation with historical literature (contemporary to the text) or modern publications (including commentaries).
8. Review your work. Be certain that you have not overlooked anything of importance.
9. Prepare a brief thematic outline and identify theological discoveries and the central thought. These conclusions will also form the focus of a sermon or lesson.

D. Prepare Your Lesson (or Sermon)

10. Review the information gathered and the notes from the preliminary list of observations and ideas that may be used in the sermon or lesson. Determine the relevance of the text -- for you and others. Prepare a list of ideas, divided into the following categories:

For a Lesson:

1. Ice Breakers/Introductions

A strong start is essential for any good lesson. But remember that your participants may arrive with a variety of troubles and concerns. Help them ease into the material with icebreakers – opening questions or activities that will bring them more fully into the room. When you're ready to transition into the heart of the lesson, this is a good time to introduce the subject of the study.

2. Dig into the Text

In an inductive Bible Study, you don't need to have all of the answers. Prepare a list of questions that will require the participants to read the Bible and find their answers. Look for details in the narrative that tell the story. Begin with a list of six critical questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How?*

3. The Point and the Application

Every lesson, like each story in the Bible, will have a central point. Encourage the person to express the central point of the lesson in one sentence. With this in mind, turn the discussion to applying the point of the lesson into everyday life.

For a Sermon:

1. The Problem

Where does the text address issues and concerns (religious or secular) that continue to confront us? Does the text inform (or challenge) the way that we view God? Others? Ourselves? What does it say of God's intention for the way that human life is to be shaped?

2. The Power

How are these relevant issues or concerns addressed in the text?

3. The Point

One Sermon, One Point! Being faithful to the text and the results of the exegetical work, identify one thought that the audience must know to understand the text. Apply the text to the life of the person sitting in the pew.

Note: This exegetical method is designed for non-seminary-trained teachers and preachers. Emphasis is placed on the need to balance the limitations of time and the responsibility to proclaim the Word of God faithfully. This method began as a consolidation of the procedures recommended by J. D. Kingsbury and Paul Achtemeier in their New Testament courses. Their methods are exhaustive and produce significant insight into any text. However, they are designed for use in an academic setting and are intended, among other things, to familiarize students with the available resources. Additional insight into the process of Biblical exegesis came from Gordon Fee's *New Testament Exegesis* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) and conversations with a variety of Pastors, Preachers, Professors, and Bible Translators.

David H. Green (2025)