

Capstone Proposal¹

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Expected Graduation Date: May 28, 2022

Working Title of Project: Equipping Church Members of Gospel-Centered Community Church On How To Study The Bible

Faculty you have consulted for this project: Dr. Gerardo Lisbe Jr, Dr. Ricky Recodo

List the courses you've taken at CGST that you will be integrating into this capstone project: Hermeneutics, Evangelical Theology, New Testament 1-2, Old Testament 1-2.

Capstone Description:

I believe that anyone who reads the Bible is a theologian because the reader will automatically in his or her mind interpret what he or she is reading. The natural consequence is that either one becomes a bad theologian or a good theologian. Since the Bible is ancient literature, written according to the context and culture of the author, it comes to us today with a big gap not just historically but culturally as well. The truth is that a bible-believing Christian does not automatically possess the skills how to properly interpret the Scriptures and many passages are just difficult to understand, even for those who have been a student of the Word for a long time. Without proper training, even to a faithful Christian, studying the Bible and making sense of it today is a challenging and difficult pursuit. Thus, every believer must be disciplined or trained on the proper study and interpretation of the Bible so he or she can know the will of the Lord and obey it, and benefit from it. After all, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This is what this capstone project is trying to achieve. To equip the believers of Gospel-Centered Community Church on how to properly study the Bible so they can reap the benefits of the Holy Word and become mature in the service of the Lord. This is my heart's desire for GCCC. Our Church just celebrated its 5th Anniversary. It is very young and most of the members are either untrained or barely trained in the art and science of Bible interpretation. I've heard honest feedback from active members that sometimes Bible reading is not profitable because they cannot understand what it says. It leaves them confused at times. Unfortunately, some just stopped reading completely and be content hearing Sunday preaching. This is the sad reality that is present in our church and probably in other churches as well. Reading and studying the Bible is not supposed to be boring but a joyful endeavor. As a Pastor, I see the need for the members to grow in this very basic and important aspect of their Christian walk. I want to see them grow in their study habit and enjoy Bible studies. Later on, when they have learned the basics, they will also teach others.

¹ This format has been adapted from San Francisco State University's MA TESOL Capstone Proposal sample. https://english.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Capstone_Proposal-Sun.pdf (accessed 13 Aug. 2021).

Approach and/or Methods:

Completing the capstone project will require three (3) key components to be in place. These are a) Teaching Methods, b). Teaching Materials, c). Application and Assessment.

First, the teaching methodology will be like a classroom setting where they listen to lectures and participate in the discussion. Available technological means such as laptops and a projector will be utilized. Depending on the signal and internet availability (as of this writing, 90% of Lapulapu City is still without wired internet), a blended learning set-up is also a possibility.

Second, the teaching materials will be mainly from my Hermeneutics class (with the permission of professor Dr. Lisbe) and from the required readings from that class that are vital in achieving the goal of this capstone project. Other resource materials from my Evangelical Theology, OT, and NT class will be utilized too.

Third, the application and assessment. The participants will be required to submit a written devotional every week to apply what they have learned from the lectures and discussions. At the end of the training, they will fill up a survey and feedback form to assess the effectiveness of the class.

Timeline

Stage	Description	Timeline
Planning	The activities will include the planning of the Goals and Objectives of the class, the selection and creation of teaching materials, the finalization of the class schedule, and the establishment of the registration procedure.	1 month
Promotion and Registration	The church will be informed about the class via Group Chat and it will be announced after the Worship service. A poster about the class will be posted on the church's Bulletin Board, and registration forms will be distributed after the Worship Service to those who would like to participate in the class.	1 month

Implementation	This is the actual implementation, starting with the promotion and registration of the class, and then the actual teaching and discussion according to schedule.	4 months
Evaluation	In this stage, an evaluation will be given to check the effectiveness of the class. The areas that will be evaluated are the instructor, the content and teaching materials, and the student’s learning. The participants will be required to submit a written devotional every week to apply what they have learned from the lectures and discussions. At the end of the training, they will fill up a survey and feedback form to assess the effectiveness of the class.	Written Devotional – Weekly, for 7 weeks. Survey and Feedback form - 1 week
Culmination and Presentation	Compilation of class records and presentation to the panel for defense and approval.	1 week

Outline

1. **Introduction** – The capstone project is about teaching the members of Gospel-Centered Community Church on “How To Study the Bible”. Our church is a relatively young church with members coming from different economic and educational backgrounds. Upon surveying the members to gain an understanding of their spiritual walk and their study of the Bible, I found out that majority of the members were not trained nor taught how to properly study their Bibles. I also learned that they were interested to attend a training on the proper way to study the Bible if given the opportunity. As a pastor, I see the need to conduct this training to equip them so they can grow spiritually and for them to be effective in their service to the Lord. The goal of this project is to equip the members with the fundamental tools to properly study, interpret, and apply the Holy Scripture in their lives.

2. **Background** – Typhoon Odette has downed the internet connection of most areas of Lapulapu City. With the limited internet access, the training will be done face-to-face in a venue suitable for learning. The training will be an informal type where the participants will participate in lectures and discussions. They will be exposed to different tools (Commentaries, Lexicons, Bible Dictionaries, etc...) needed to study the Bible and they will be taught the Hermeneutical principles as well. They will not undergo examination but they will be required to submit a devotional paper every week before the start of the class. The participants will not be graded for their performance but they will be expected to fully commit to this training by attending every session and submitting the required devotional paper. If and when the participants will have internet access, they can submit their devotional paper via messenger for checking and comment.

3. **Body** – This capstone project will be realized following the four (4) stages – the planning stage, the promotion and registration stage, the implementation stage, and the evaluation stage.

Planning Stage. This stage is crucial to the success of this project. This is when the Goals and Objectives are set and other necessary elements such as scheduling, selection of teaching materials, and teaching methods will be considered and included.

Scope and Limitation. This project is tailored for the members of Gospel-Centered Community Church. This project is primarily limited to teaching the basics of hermeneutics and exegesis. This project will be implemented from March 27 to May 7, 2022, with 7 sessions only and will be conducted at Living Word Gun-ob, Lapulapu outreach.

Target Audience. The target audience is new and existing members of Gospel-Centered Community Church. It may include new converts, church workers, deacons, and core leaders of the church. This project is designed to cater to the needs of every member of the church.

Textbook and References. The main textbook is the Holy Bible. The textbooks from my CGST classes will be utilized, this includes Robert Stein's *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* and Fee and Stuarts's *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* 2nd Edition. In addition, I will also make use of the lecture notes that I have gathered at CGST, especially from my Hermeneutics class.

Syllabus and Schedule. The syllabus contains the subject description, the learning objectives, the class requirements, the textbooks that will be utilized, the topics that will be covered, and the class schedule. The Syllabus is found under Annex 1.

The class schedule was established to make sure that the participants will be able to block their calendars in advance. Table 1 shows the class schedule.

Table 1: Class Schedule

Date	Sessions	Readings (required before the sessions)	Topic
March 12, 2022	1		Orientation and Introduction (The Need to Interpret)
March 26, 2022	2	Fee & Stuart, pages 21-35	Knowing the Bible, The Basic Tools for Interpretation
April 2, 2022	3	Sproul, pages 128-145	Interpreting OT: Narratives, Laws, Covenants,
April 9, 2022	4	Stein, pages 99-108	Interpreting OT: Poetry, Psalms, Prophets, Wisdom
April 23, 2022	5	Stein, pages 124-130	Interpreting NT: Gospel, Parables,
April 30, 2022	6	Stein, pages 158-173	Interpreting NT: Epistles and Letters
May 7, 2022	7	Stein, pages 189 - 207	Review and Deadline of Submission of Summary Paper

Creation of Teaching Materials. To be able to come up with the teaching material, I pulled up my notes from my Hermeneutics class as well as the lecture materials, and I studied the main textbook and other references. I selected relevant topics and synthesize them to come up with concise yet insightful topics. I then created visual presentations using keynote and or PowerPoint to aid in effective teaching.

Promotion and Registration Stage. In this stage, the plan will be put into motion. It starts with the training promotion. The training details will be announced to the congregation so they can sign up for it.

Promotion and Announcement. To promote the training, the announcement was made via Facebook Messenger, text messaging, and during the announcement portion after the Sunday Worship Service. The promotion started on February 20, 2022 (Sunday) and it runs until March 11, 2022. The admin in charge started accepting registrants after the Worship Service.

Registration Process. The registration process is very simple. This can be done by following 3 steps. In Step 1, the student will fill up the registration form provided by the Admin. In Step 2, The Admin will review the registration form and if all the info is provided, the admin will collate the list and forward it to the Training Instructor/Project Head. In step 3, the student will show commitment by attending all the sessions. A total of 19 students registered but only 10 completed the training. Reasons for not completing the training include conflict of schedule, health reasons, and work.

Table 2: Registration Process

Step No.	Activity	Responsible Person
1	Fill up the registration form	Student
2.	Review and collate the list of registrants.	Admin
3.	Attend the class	Student

Implementation Stage.

Subject Description. This subject is the introduction of the basic principles of interpretation to provide the participants with the tools needed to properly interpret the various literary genre found throughout the Scriptures.

Learning Objectives. This training's objectives are as follows:

- The student will be able to know and understand the different literary genres of the Scripture.
- The student will be able to use the fundamental tools in interpreting the Scripture.
- The students will be able to properly interpret the Scriptures at the end of this training.

Class Requirements. The students must be able to comply with the following:

- a. Accomplished Registration Form.
- b. Attendance and participation in all sessions.
- c. Required readings must be accomplished.
- d. Submission of Devotional and Summary Paper

Program of the class. The class meets in person every Saturday from 4-6 PM. Every meeting will be done by following this program.

- Opening Prayer (2 minutes)
- Recap (15 minutes) – a short review of the previous lesson.
- Lecture Proper (1 hour and 30 minutes) – lecture and discussion of the topic for the day based on the schedule.
- Question and Answer (15 minutes)
- Closing Prayer (2 minutes)

Contents and Outline. The contents of the lecture materials are from the textbooks from my CGST classes, especially from my Hermeneutics class and I also made use of the notes that I got from that class which I think are very useful for the participants. Aside from the lectures, the participants will also be given a reading assignment which they will accomplish before the start of the class. A checklist was provided and the participant will mark the readings that they have completed. As a way of measuring their learning, the participants were required to submit a “devotional paper” every week which shall be collected before the start of the class.

There are 7 sessions throughout the training. These sessions are outlined and described below.

- Session 1 - Orientation and Introduction (The Need to Interpret)
- Session 2 - Knowing the Bible, The Basic Tools for Interpretation
- Session 3 - Interpreting OT: Narratives, Laws, Covenants
- Session 4 - Interpreting OT: Poetry, Psalms, Wisdom
- Session 5 - Interpreting NT: Gospels, Parables
- Session 6 - Interpreting NT: Epistles, Letters
- Session 7 - Review and Deadline of Submission of Summary Paper

Lectures



Figure 1. Session 1 – Orientation and Introduction



Figure 2. Session 2 Lecture



Figure 3. Session 3 Lecture



Figure 4. Session 4 Lecture



Figure 5. Session 5 Lecture



Figure 6. Session 5 Lecture



Figure 7. Session 6 Lecture



Figure 8. Session 7 Lecture

Evaluation Stage.

The training is evaluated in 3 areas: evaluation of the content, the instructor, and the students.

An evaluation/survey form was created and distributed to the participants for them to fill up and to anonymously and honestly provide feedback.

Evaluation of the Content. The content evaluation includes the lecture and reading materials.

Based on the evaluation result, 63% of the participants said that the lecture material was extremely helpful. 37% said that the lecture material was very helpful. There were feedbacks that the presentation slides and videos were very helpful as well.

Based on the evaluation result, 88% of the participants said that the reading material was extremely helpful. 12% said that the reading material was very helpful. There were feedbacks that the reading materials were easy to read and understand and very relevant to the topics being discussed.

Based on the evaluation result, 63% of the participants said that the training was extremely helpful in their Christian walk. 37% said that the training was very helpful in their Christian walk. 100% said that the training helped increase their understanding of God's Word.

Based on the evaluation result, 100% of the participants said that they would recommend this training to their friends at church.

Evaluation of the Instructor.

Based on the evaluation result, 57% of the participants said that the instructor explains the course material extremely clearly. 43% said that the instructor explains the course material very clearly.

Based on the evaluation result, 88% of the participants said that the instructor answers the questions extremely well. 12% said that the instructor answers the questions very well.

Based on the evaluation result, 100% of the participants said that participation and interaction were encouraged by the instructor.

Evaluation of the Students. The evaluation of the students is not measured by exams or quizzes because the training is not formal education. They will be measured by the completion of reading assignments and submission of devotional papers.

Based on the evaluation result, 100% of the participants submitted their weekly devotional papers. However, only 67% were submitted on time. 88% said that they gave their best in the creation and submission of weekly devotional papers.

Based on the evaluation result, 88% of the participants completed their reading assignments. 12% have missed a maximum of 2 readings.

Based on the evaluation result, 100% of the participants said that they have given their best in the participation in class discussion.

4. Conclusion and Final Reflections

Based on the feedback of the participants, the Capstone project has successfully achieved its goals and objectives. 100% of the participants said that the training helped increased their understanding of God's Word and has been helpful in their Christian walk. They said that the training equipped them to properly interpret the Scripture and that their learning even progressed by applying the principles in the creation of devotional papers which they are required to submit every week. They also said that the comments and corrections that I made on their devotional paper help as they see where they need to improve the next time. Because of the requirement to submit a devotional paper for 7 weeks, the majority of the participants developed the discipline to journal and write their observations, interpretation, and application as they do their daily

devotional. Reading their weekly devotional paper brought me great joy. I have seen their progress in observing the historical and literary context of the passage they are studying. I noticed that their interpretation is getting more and more accurate as the weeks progressed. I have seen practical, specific, and biblical applications as well.

I noticed that many of them are not frequent readers and are not used to reading. They have not yet developed the habit of reading. Hopefully, this training ignited a desire in their hearts to pursue reading books in addition to the Bible.

I received two (2) suggestions for improvement. The first is to increase the time for Q&A. I acknowledge this to be true. I have seen their inquisitiveness and eagerness to ask questions and the 15 minutes allotted for Q&A is not enough. In some sessions, we went over the 2 hours limit just to accommodate questions and provide answers. We will consider increasing the time to 20-30 minutes. The second suggestion for improvement is to add more sessions so that more topics can be included like the book of Revelation and the major and minor Prophets. I agree that the 7 sessions are not enough to cover all the important topics and different genres of Scripture. I believe that adding 2 or 3 sessions would be enough.

Reflecting on the whole training, I am just truly grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to equip the members of GCCC on how to study the Bible. They were eager and participative and it encourages me to continue and do more training in the future. I realized that this Capstone Project has enabled me to become a better follower of Christ. As I teach the topics, I learn and grow with them. As I interact with them during discussions and answer their questions, my mind is sharpened as well.

5. References

The Bible Project. 2022. "What is the Bible?" Accessed March 12, 2022.
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<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-epistles-historical-context/>

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<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/reading-biblical-law/>

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<https://bibleproject.com/bible-studies/covenants/>

The Bible Project. 2022. "Holy Spirit" Accessed April 2, 2022.
<https://bibleproject.com/bible-studies/holy-spirit/>

6. Appendices.

Annex 1 Syllabus

Training Description:

Training and introduction on the basic principles of interpretation to provide the participants with the tools needed to properly interpret the various literary genre found throughout the Scriptures

Learning Objective:

This training is about teaching the members of Gospel-Centered Community Church How To Study the Bible. The goal is to equip the members with the fundamental tools to properly study, interpret, and apply the Holy Scripture in their lives.

Textbooks:

Stein Robert H. 1994. *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group.

Sproul, Richard C. 2009. *Knowing Scripture*. Second Edition. Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. 1993. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments

Class Requirements:

- a. Accomplished Registration Form.
- b. Attendance and participation in all sessions.
- b. Required readings must be accomplished.

d. Submission of Devotional and Summary Paper

Class Procedure:

- The class meets in person every Saturday from 4-6 PM. Class attendance is required. (From March 12 – May 7, 2022, A total of 7 meetings, No classes on March 19 and April 16)
- There will be required readings that the participants will comply with.
- The participants will be required to submit a devotional paper before the start of the class. It can be sent via e-mail or Messenger.

Class Schedule:

Date	Sessions	Readings (required before the sessions)	Topic
March 12, 2022	1		Orientation and Introduction (The Need to Interpret)
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Registration Process and Procedure:

Step No.	Activity	Responsible Person
1	Fill up the registration form	Student
2.	Review and collate the list of registrants.	Admin
3.	Attend the class	Student

Annex 2 Lecture Notes

These are lecture notes I gathered and compiled from lecture materials from CGST Classes, especially the Hermeneutics Class and other relevant references.

Lesson 1: The Importance of Hermeneutics

I. Why are there so many interpretations?

1. We all understand DIFFERENTLY from others.
2. We have a tendency to JUMP quickly to conclusions.
3. We tend to be NOT open to new things that are being said.
4. We have a tendency to understand the PART and not the WHOLE.
 - It's the whole that gives the PART the meaning
 - You need to understand the WHOLE first before you can understand the part
5. We tend to read our IDEAS back into the Bible.

PREUNDERSTANDING – our prior knowledge, biases and presuppositions.

- Preunderstanding is a reality one needs to accept. No one reads the Bible without bias.
 - Our preunderstanding becomes the starting point as we approach the Scriptures but we need to allow the Bible to challenge/correct/change these biases.
6. We tend to indiscriminately apply passages to JUSTIFY our beliefs.

“We are not to interpret Scripture in the light of our experience; but we are to interpret our experience in the light of Scripture”

Lesson 2: The Need to Interpret

I. DEFINITION OF HERMENEUTICS

- A. Greek word: *hermeneuein* = which means to explain or interpret

Luke 24:27 (ESV)

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself”

Luke 24:27 (NIV)

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself”

B. Hermeneutics simply describes the practice or discipline of interpretation and the rules involved.

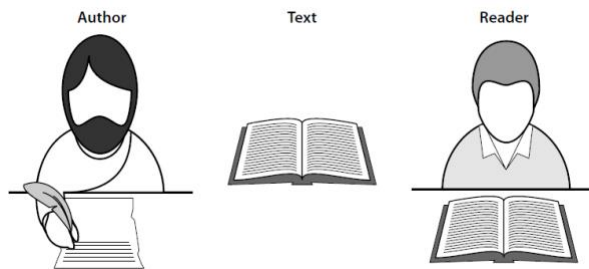
C. In the narrower sense Hermeneutics seeks the present-day relevance of ancient text.

II. COMPONENTS INVOLVED IN HERMENEUTICS

A. In all communication three distinct components are necessary.

B. Communication through books: Author, Text, and Reader.

Linguist: Author = Encoder; Text = Code; and Reader = Decoder.



C. The main goal of interpreting the Bible is to discover the meaning of the text being studied.

Where does the meaning originate? Where does it come from?

A. The Author as the determiner of meaning.

- The more traditional approach
- Trying to see the world of the human author.
- The meaning of the text is what the author consciously intended to say by his text.
 - ❖ Fee & Stuart; “A text cannot mean what it never meant” (p.26)

B. The Role of the Author.

- The author consciously willed to write a text for the purpose of communicating something meaningful to a reader.
 - The text’s meaning is anchored in history and can never change.
 - Yet what an author such as Paul consciously willed to say in the past also has implications of which he was not necessarily aware, and those implications are part of the meaning of the text.
 - ❖ Example: Implications of Ephesians 5:18 “Do not get drunk with wine which leads to debauchery...”
 - ❖ The principle behind the command: Do not take into your body substances like wine that cause you to lose control of your senses and natural inhibitions.
 - Implications are still part of the meaning of the text.
 - The benefit of an author-centered hermeneutics is that it provides the best, if not the only, objective basis for judging the validity of an interpretation.
- C. The Role of the Text
- In writing, an author creates a text that possesses shareability.

- ❖ Shareability refers to the common understanding of a text's words and grammar possessed by both author and reader. Apart from this a reader cannot understand what an author wills to say.
- A text can open up to the reader vast areas of information like:
 1. Historical
 2. Spiritual
 3. Sociological
 4. Cultural
 5. Geographical
 - What is the author's intended meaning for mentioning such detail?
- The reader seeks to understand what the author meant by his text.
 - ❖ This is called "exegesis" = getting the meaning out of the text.
 - ❖ Contra "eisegesis" = putting meaning into the text.

D. The Role of the Reader

- The reader exegete the text in order to understand the author's communicative intent.
- How? Through "Hermeneutical Circle"
 - ❖ Hermeneutical circle - is a process of seeing how the words are used in phrases and sentences, how the sentences are used within paragraphs, how paragraphs are used in chapters, and how chapters are used in the work. This expression refers to the fact that the whole text helps the reader understand each individual word or part of the text; in turn, the individual words and parts help us understand the meaning of the text as a whole.
- The reader checks the author's other writings as well to find out the clues to specific meaning of the words and phrases in the text. (Ex. Romans – Paul's other letters like Galatians, 1 & 2 Cor, Philippians...)
- It is also important for the reader to understand the particular literary form being used by the author, for different forms of literature are governed by different rules.
- Once the meaning is known, the reader needs to seek the implications of that meaning that are especially relevant.
- A text only has one meaning but has different implications for different readers.

Lesson 3: The Nature of the Bible

Intro: Video – What is the Bible? (from The Bible Project)

3 Things What the Bible Is Not

1. The Bible is not a magic-answer book.

- a. Crystal-ball approach.
2. The Bible is not a list of promises to claim.
 - a. Every promise in the Bible has a context.
 - What is the context of Genesis 12:1-3?
 - b. Two (2) key points to consider with reference to biblical promises:
 - Each biblical promise was given to a specific individual or group and relates first of all to their situation.
 - Promises are often conditional and contingent, dependent on circumstances and the response of the recipient.
3. The Bible is not a list of commands to obey.
 - a. There are many commands in the Bible that Christians do not obey.
 - b. Culture-Specific vs. Universal Commands
 - c. Should we obey all OT commands?
 - Deut. 6:5
 - Exod. 29:38
 - d. Should we obey all NT commands?
 - 1 Cor. 10:31
 - 1 Cor. 14:34
 - e. Few, if any, Christians obey every command in Scripture.
 - f. Why do we intuitively know that some commands relate to us while others do not?
 - g. Comment on these statements:
 - None of the individual commands of Scripture were written to you and me.
 - h. Comment on this also:
 - Though it wasn't written to us, it was written for us.
 - i. We must read the Bible in context.

What the Bible Is (The Bible's Nature and Central Theme)

1. Unity in diversity: God's word through human words
 - a. Unity
 - Divine side of revelation
 - Unifying message = one Great Story = redemptive plan of God.
 - b. Diversity
 - Human side of revelation
 - Diverse authors.
 - Varied cultures, contexts.
 - Diverse literary forms (genres).
2. The diversity of Scripture and the task of exegesis.
 - a. Exegesis is the careful study of the historical and literary context to determine the author's intended meaning.

- b. Eisegesis is imposing your own ideas into the text.
 - c. Diversity of Scriptures and the Task of Exegesis.
 - I. Authors
 - a. Historical human authors
 - b. Inspired by God's Spirit to write
 - c. Different style of writing.
 - d. Different personalities emerge through their writings.
 - II. Languages
 - a. OT = Hebrew and a few sections in Aramaic.
 - b. NT = Koine Greek (*common trade language spoken throughout the eastern Mediterranean region in the 1st Century AD*).
 - III. Literary forms/genres
 - a. Narrative, Poetry, Prophetic, Parable, etc...
 - b. There are rules of interpreting each genre.
 - IV. Social & Cultural Contexts
 - a. The social context in which the author writes impacts the text's meaning and application.
 - b. These remind us of the need for careful exegesis.
 - V. Purposes in writing
 - a. Identifying the purpose of an author or speaker is essential for proper understanding.
 - b. Purpose is closely related to genre.
 - c. Our present application must arise from the author's original purpose.
3. The Bible as Story
- a. Unity of the Bible – unified consistent message
 - How do more than 40 authors writing 66 books over a period of 1,500 years produce a unified message?
 - b. The Bible's story / drama:
 - a. PLOT: actions of God in human history, the record of the human race from creation to catastrophe to new creation
 - b. PROTAGONIST & HERO: God, along with those who align with him
 - c. ANTAGONISTS: Satan, and those who reject God's sovereignty
 - d. SETTING: *Cosmos* that God has created – a world that is fallen, yet in the process of being restored
 - c. God's Story: The Metanarrative of Scripture
 - d. A metanarrative refers to a great unifying story that makes all individual stories part of that Story.
 - e. The plot of the story: from creation to new creation.

- f. The 7 Acts in God's Grand Drama of Redemption.
1. Act 1: CREATION
 - Gen. 1:1 = creation of heavens and earth
 - Gen. 1:27 = creation of God's image bearer, man
 2. Act 2: THE FALL
 - Gen. 3
 - All that is wrong today – all evil, conflict, disease, suffering, natural disasters, and death – has resulted from the fall of humanity.
 3. Act 3: ISRAEL = redemption initiated through covenant
 - Gen. 12 = Abraham's call
 4. Act 4: JESUS = redemption accomplished and the kingdom inaugurated.
 5. Act 5: THE CHURCH = redemption announced through mission and discipleship.
 6. Act 6: FINAL JUDGEMENT =
 - Rev. 20 = the great white throne judgement.
 7. Act 7: NEW CREATION = redemption complete
 - Rev 21 = New heaven and new earth.

Lesson 4: Inductive Bible Study

1. Three Steps in Inductive Bible Study

- Observation
 - Ask: What does the text say?
 - Goal: Thorough Observation
 - Interpretation
 - Ask: What does the text mean?
 - Goal: Correct Interpretation
 - Application
 - Ask: How does it apply to me today?
 - Goal: Relevant Application
2. How to Proceed?
- A. Plan your study
 - Ideal: one book at a time.
 - Start with shorter sections
 - B. Pray
 - Marinate your study with prayer.
 - C. Read
 - Be thoroughly familiar with the passage.
 - D. Observe

- Bombard the text with questions using 5 Ws (What, Who, Why, When, and Where) and 1 H (How)
- Observe the following:
Genre, repeated words and phrases, linking words, time words, location, contrast and comparison, unknown words, figurative expression, grammatical elements...etc...

3. Clarification about doing Observation

- Don't go to the commentaries & Bible dictionaries right away.
- Bombard the text with questions and look for the answer of those questions in the text.
- When the explanation is not in the text, find it using a Bible dictionary or commentary.
- When a certain word or phrase is repeated, find out the significance of that word or phrase.

Example: Ephesians 2:4-10

Lesson 5: Rules of Interpretation

I. Context = refers to the willed meaning that an author gives to the literary materials surrounding a passage in a text.

2 Kinds of Contexts:

1. Literary context (co-text or the text around the text)

- a. Immediate (micro)
- b. Far or remote (macro)

Example: Literary context of Matt. 6:33

Macro:

- Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7)
- Gospel according to Matthew

Micro:

- *It's part of a teaching pericope of Matt. 6:25-34 about anxiety/worry.*

2. Historical context = the total life situation in which the book arose.

- Includes geography, history, politics, religions, culture, social structures, etc.
- Also includes issues like authorship, date, provenance, recipients, purpose & occasion for which it is written.

2. Historical Grammatical-Method

- a. Emphasis on the historical and literary contexts.

3. Since the Bible is a human book given as a written communication in human language to be understood by people - several rules stems from it:

- A. Rule # 1: Grammatical = Each biblical writing - that is, each word, sentence, and book – was recorded in a WRITTEN LANGUAGE and followed normal, grammatical meanings, including figurative language.
- B. Rule # 2: Historical = Each biblical writing was written by someone to SPECIFIC hearers or readers in a SPECIFIC historical geographical situation for a SPECIFIC purpose.
- C. Rule # 3: Cultural = The Bible is affected and influenced by the CULTURAL environment from which each human writer wrote.

Examples: Exodus 23:19

“Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

Ruth 4:8

“So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, ‘Buy it yourself.’ And he removed his sandal.”

- D. Rule # 4: Contextual = Each biblical writing was accepted or understood in the light of its CONTEXT.
- E. Rule # 5: Literary = Each biblical writing took on the nature of a specific LITERARY form.
- F. Rule # 6: Logical = Each biblical writing was understood by its initial readers in accord with the basic principles of LOGIC & COMMUNICATION

Lesson 6: The Holy Spirit and Biblical Interpretation

Intro: Video – The Holy Spirit (from The Bible Project)

- I. **The Role of the Spirit:**
 - a. Throughout the entire process of interpreting the Bible, the Holy Spirit is intimately involved.
 - b. He was involved at the very beginning in the inscripturation (writing) of the biblical materials, for it was under his divine inspiration that the biblical authors wrote the Scriptures.
 - c. He was involved in the preservation of these inspired writings and in the recognition by the church of which books were inspired and part of the sacred Scriptures (the development of the canon).

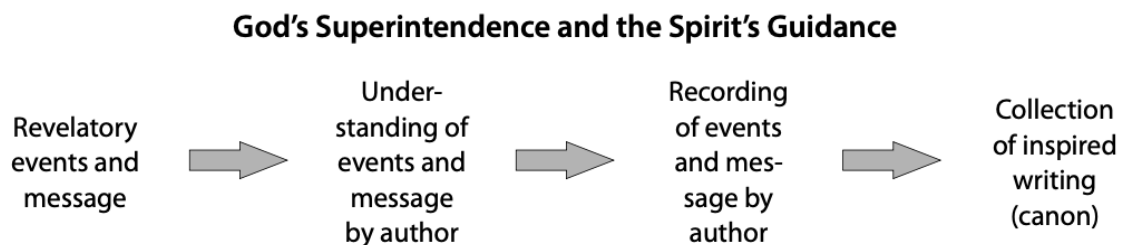
- d. The Spirit is also involved at the end of the interpretative process, as the believer seeks to understand and apply the biblical teaching to his or her life.

II. The Role of the Spirit in Inspiration

- A. The Bible is the product of divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). As a result, the Bible is the Word of God and reveals what Christians are to believe (matters of faith) and how they are to live (matters of practice).
- B. Inspiration involves the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding the authors of Scripture as they sought to convey their pattern of meaning in writing. As they wrote, they were “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21), so that their writings are the only infallible rule of faith and practice for the Christian.

III. The Role of the Spirit in the Formation of the Bible

- A. The process by which the sixty-six books that make up the Bible came to be collected and recognized as the Word of God involves the question of “canon.” The term itself is a Greek word that referred to a staff or straight rod used as a means of measurement. The term soon came to mean a rule or standard.
- B. In the process of recognizing which of the various books were part of the canon, several factors played a role. It should be pointed out, however, that in this process the church did not make these books into the Word of God but rather recognized which books were in fact the Word of God.
- C. Through the divine superintendence of the Holy Spirit the church recognized which books belonged to the canon of Scripture.



a. The Role of the Spirit in the Interpretation of the Bible

- A. The Spirit illumines and convicts the readers.
- Illumination = the Spirit helps readers understand the meaning of the text (cognition).
 - Conviction = the Spirit attributes a positive significance to the text (persuasion).
- B. The role of the Spirit in interpretation is not an excuse for laziness.
- Doing exegesis is hard work.
 - We need to use the tools that have been made available to us (commentaries, lexicons, concordances, dictionaries).

Lesson 7: Biblical Narratives

Intro: Video – Design Patterns in Biblical Narratives (from The Bible Project)

- I. Biblical Narratives
- Narratives are stories
 - Over 40% of the OT
 - Nearly 60% of the NT
- II. Purpose of Biblical Narratives

Bible narratives tell us about things that happened—but not just any things. Their purpose is to show God at work in his creation and among his people. The narratives glorify Him, help us to understand and appreciate him, and give us a picture of his providence and protection. At the same time, they also provide illustrations of many other lessons important to our lives.

- III. The Nature of OT Narrative
- Historical Narrative (non-fiction)
 - 3 Main Features
 - A. Settings
 - B. Characters – can be good (protagonists), bad (antagonists), neutral or ambiguous.
 - Most important character of all is GOD.
 - C. Plot – progresses from introduction to conflict to crisis to resolution
- IV. 3 Levels of OT Narrative
- A. Top Level
 - Metanarrative
 - key aspects: creation, the fall, the need for redemption, and Christ’s incarnation & sacrifice.
 - The “story of redemption” or “redemptive history.”
 - B. Middle Level
 - Center on Israel
 - From the call of Abraham to the restoration after the Exile
 - C. Bottom Level

- Individual narratives that make up the other two levels:
- Joseph's story from Canaan to Egypt
- Gideon's doubting God and testing him via the fleece;
- David's adultery with Bathsheba;

Relationship of the 3 Levels of OT Narratives

- Every individual OT narrative (bottom level) is at least a part of the greater narrative of Israel's history in the world (the middle level), which in turn is a part of the ultimate narrative of God's creation and his redemption of it (the top level).

Application of the 3 Level OT Narratives: 1 Samuel 16 – David anointed as King

Summary:

Top level: the carrying forward of God's universal plan to raise up a Savior who would restore all of creation.

Middle level: the establishment of the Davidic dynasty and the messianic idea in Israel's history

Bottom level: God's choice of David, a man after God's own heart

V. Principles for Interpreting Biblical Narrative

The following ten principles should help you to avoid obvious errors in interpretation whenever you seek to exegete these and other stories.

1. An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
2. An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.
3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.
4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.
5. Most of the characters in Old Testament narratives are far from perfect and their actions are, too.
6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically elsewhere in Scripture.
7. All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given (cf. John 21:25). What does appear in the narrative is everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know.
8. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific, limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving others to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.

9. Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it).
10. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.

Lesson 8: Covenants & Laws

Intro: Video – The Covenants (from The Bible Project)

Video – The Law (from The Bible Project)

A covenant is binding contract between two parties, both of whom have obligations specified in the covenant.

1. Covenant and law are closely related, for the laws of the Bible are based on a covenantal relationship between God and the believer.

- A. Abrahamic Covenant: Gen. 12, 15, 17
 - o The most important covenant in OT.
 - o Renewed with Isaac (Gen. 26.1-5)
 - o Renewed with Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17; 35:9-15).
 - o Remembered during the exodus from Egypt (Exod. 2:23-25).
 - o Renewed with Joshua (Josh. 24.14-27).
 - o Referred to time and time again in the OT
 - o Jeremiah 31:31-34 refers to a coming new covenant, which finds its fulfillment in Jesus (Luke 22.20; 1 Cor. 11.25).
 - o This new covenant is the hope of the believers (Acts 3.25; Gal. 3.6-9, 15-18, 29)
- B. The OT law is a covenant.

• 2 Kinds of Covenant in OT Times

1. Parity Covenant
 - Relationship involves equals
 - Both parties mutually agree as equals to obey similar stipulations.
2. Suzerainty Covenant
 - Not a treaty among equals.
 - Between a powerful suzerain (overlord) and a weaker, dependent vassal (servant).
 - The suzerain unilaterally establishes the terms & conditions, and guarantees benefits & protection.
 - A vassal is obligated to remain loyal by keeping the stipulations (rules of behavior) specified by the suzerain.
 - When the stipulations were violated, the suzerain was required by the covenant to take action to punish the vassal.

- C. OT Covenant / Law
- a. God is the Suzerain.
 - Guarantees blessing & protection.
 - Establishes terms & conditions
 - Blesses or curses Israelites depending on their response to the covenant stipulations.
 - b. Israel is the vassal.
 - Expected to keep 600+ stipulations in Exod. 20 to Deut. 33 to show their loyalty to God.
- D. OT Covenant Format
- i. Preamble – identifies the parties involved
 - ii. Prologue – gives a brief history of how the parties became connected to one another
 - iii. Stipulations – the individual laws themselves
 - iv. Witnesses – those who will enforce the covenant
 - v. Sanctions – the blessings & curses that function as incentives for keeping the covenant
 - vi. Document clause – provision for regular review of the covenant so that it will not be forgotten

Example:

Exodus 19-24

- i. Preamble – “I am the Lord your God...” (20:2)
- ii. Prologue – “I...brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (20:2)
- iii. Stipulations – “You shall have no other gods before me...” (20:3-17)
- iv. Witnesses – “All the people answered together...” (19:8; cf. 24:3)
- v. Document clause – “Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people” (24:7)

E. Clarification about the OT Covenant

- 1) Always keep in mind the unilateral and gracious nature of the biblical covenants.
 - God is infinitely greater than the Israelites.
 - God is not under any obligation to protect & bless the vassals.
 - But God is also a gracious and benevolent suzerain.
 - o The covenant originated in grace and is based on grace alone.
- 2) The stipulations found in a covenant are not to be understood as requirements in order to initiate a positive relationship with God.
 - The stipulations presume an already-existing covenantal relationship. See Exod. 20:1-2.

- The attempt to keep the commandments cannot save, because to be saved one must be a beneficiary of this gracious covenant.

3). Guidelines for understanding the relationship of Christian to the OT law:

1. The OT Law is a covenant.
 - o God constructed the Old Testament law on the analogy of these ancient covenants and thereby constituted a binding contract between Yahweh, the Lord, and his vassal, Israel. In return for benefits and protection, Israel was expected to keep the more than six hundred stipulations (i.e., commandments) contained in the covenantal law as we find it in Exodus 20– Deuteronomy 33.
2. The OT is not our covenant / testament.
 - OT represent old covenant for OT Israelites.
 - Unless an OT law is somehow restated or reinforced in the NT, it is no longer binding on God’s people today (cf. Rom. 6:14-15).
 - God still expects obedience and loyalty from believers today. But it is how one shows that loyalty that has been changed in certain ways.
3. Some stipulations of the Old Covenant have clearly not been renewed in the NT.
 - 3 additional categories of the OT Law
 - Civil laws – those that specify penalties for various crimes (major or minor) for which one might be arrested and tried in Israel.
 - Ritual laws – related to worship, the entire priesthood and sacrificial system
 - Ethical laws – such as the 10 Commandments
 - Both the Civil and Ritual laws are not renewed in the new covenant.
 - Civil laws – No one living today is a citizen of ancient Israel.
 - Ritual laws – accomplished by Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice (Heb. 9:22).
 - A new form of worship is introduced in the new covenant.
4. Part of the Old Covenant is renewed in the New Covenant.
 - This refers to the Ethical laws, intended by God to continue to apply to all of His people on through the New Covenant he would establish with them.
 - Two basic laws of the New Covenant (Matt. 22:40)
 - “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind” (Deut. 6:5; cf. Matt. 22:38).
 - “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18; cf. Matt. 22:39)
5. All of the OT law is still the Word of God for us even though it is not still the command of God to us.
 - The original audience of the OT law is ancient Israel.
 - We read about that Law; it is not a law to us.

6. Only that which is explicitly renewed from the OT law can be considered part of the NT “law of Christ” (cf. Gal. 6:2).

Lesson 9: Poetry and Wisdom

Intro: Video – The Book of Psalms (from The Bible Project)

I. Psalms

A. The name Psalms comes from the Greek word *psalmos* that translates the Hebrew *mizmor*, refers to a song accompanied by music.

B. 150 Psalms in the Psalter

C. Arranged in 5 books

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

D. The Psalms served the crucial function of making connection between the worshiper and God.

E. Studying Psalms is profitable when used for the purposes intended by God who inspired them: for helping us (1) to express ourselves to God and (2) to consider His ways. The Psalms, therefore, are of great benefit to the believer who wishes to have help from the Bible in expressing joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and regrets.

Guidelines for Interpreting Psalms

1. Identify the particular type of psalm and its original purpose.

Types of Psalms:

a). Lament Psalms (more than 60 laments in the psalter).

- Are cries to God for help in times of danger, pain or sorrow.
- Sung when life was difficult and disappointing.
- Individual laments (e.g., 3, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 71, 120, 139, 142) help a person to express struggles, suffering, or disappointment to the Lord.
- Corporate laments (e.g., 12, 44, 80, 94, 137) help a group of people to express struggles, suffering, or disappointment to the Lord.

- Value of Lament Psalms - they offer not only encouragement but models for prayer.

b). Hymns or Praise & Thanksgiving Songs.

- They celebrate the joy of worshiping Yahweh (Ps 139.1; 111.1-2, 10).
- Thank God for his answers to specific prayers (Ps 18; 30; 65; 67)

c). Psalms of Zion

- Content centers on Jerusalem and the temple
 - 46, 48, 76, 84
- d). Royal Psalms
- Frequently associated with the messianic hope.
 - 2, 18, 20-21, 45
- e). Wisdom and Didactic Psalms.
- Psalm 1; 36; 37; 133
 - As in Proverbs, the way of the righteous is contrasted with that of the wicked (Ps 1; 49; 73).
- f). Imprecatory Psalms.
- Are angry cries to God to punish the wicked for the evil they have caused.
 - Psalm 137.8-9
 - Psalm 12; 35; 52; 57-59
 - Give us significant problem of interpretation
 - Reason: the attitude they express seems to be contrary to God's merciful, loving attitude towards sinners.
 - We have to consider the passages carefully in light of their backgrounds.
2. Recognize the function of figurative language.
- Ask: How does the figurative language contribute to the message of the psalm?

3 Basic Benefits of Psalms

1. The Psalms are a guide to worship.
2. The Psalms demonstrate to us how we can relate honestly to God.
3. The Psalms demonstrate the importance of reflection and meditation upon things that God has done for us.

A Caution!

“The Psalms do not guarantee a pleasant life”

- It is a misunderstanding—an overliteralization—of the language of the Psalms to infer from some of them that God promises to make his believers happy and their lives trouble-free.

II. 3 OT Wisdom Books / Literature

1. Proverbs
2. Job
3. Ecclesiastes

The Nature of Wisdom

A. Definition:

- Wisdom is the ability to make godly choices in life.

Fee & Stuart: “*The only good choices are godly choices*”

B. Wisdom literature tends to focus on people and their behavior, how successful they are at making godly choices and whether or not they are learning how to apply God's truth to the experiences they have.

C. Teachers of Wisdom

- People devoted to gaining wisdom
- Called "wise men" in Israel (Prov. 22:17)
- Functioned as teacher-counselors

D. Wisdom in the Home

- Wisdom has always been taught at home than in any other setting.
- The highest good a parent can achieve is to teach children to do God's will.

E. The limits of wisdom.

- Wisdom does not cover all of life.
 - Intensely practical, it tends not to touch upon the theological or historical issues so important elsewhere in the Bible.
- Skill at wisdom does not guarantee that it will be properly used.
 - Solomon's great wisdom (1 Kings 3:12; 4:29-34) helped him gain wealth and power but could not keep him from turning away from faithfulness to the Lord in his later years (1 Kings 11:4).

Wisdom in Proverbs

Video – The Book of Proverbs (from The Bible Project)

- The primary locus of prudential wisdom rules and regulations people can use to help themselves make responsible, successful choices in life.
- Concentrates mostly on practical attitudes not theoretical accuracy
- Sometimes called "old fashioned basic values"

D. 3 Main Types of Proverbs

1. True Proverbs

- These state a truth with an implied application.
- Prov. 29:23 reads, "*Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor.*"

2. Instructional Proverbs

- These teach more directly, using an imperative or command form.
- Prov. 3:7 reads, "*Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.*"

3. Example Story

- Illustrates a truth with an example or mini-story.

- Prov. 29:20: “Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them.”

Hermeneutical Guidelines for Understanding Proverbial Wisdom

1. Proverbs are not legal guarantees from God.
 - Not a divine warranty of success
 - Not teaching automatic success
 - Example: Proverbs 10: 27
2. Proverbs are general rather than universal truth.
 - Are truths about how things generally happen.
 - Example: Proverbs 10:4 ; Proverbs 22:6 ; Proverbs 1:33 ; Proverbs 3:9-10
 - Exceptions do not refute the truth of the proverb.
3. Proverbs do not necessary represent the whole truth on a subject.
 - No proverb is a complete statement of truth.
 - Proverbs often address particular situations rather than universal ones.
4. Proverbs must be interpreted and applied in light of the whole teaching of Scripture.
 - Proverbs about righteous people gaining wealth and security have often been distorted to teach a “wealth and prosperity” gospel, which claims that God will bless materially those who have enough faith.

Lesson 10: The Gospels

Intro: Video – The Gospels (from the Bible Project)

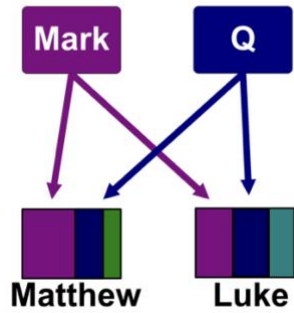
I. The Nature and Functions of the Gospels

- Gospel = *euangelion* = “good news”
 - the **salvation** provided through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - The Gospels are not books *by* Jesus but books *about* Jesus, which contains a large collection of his teaching.
 - Gospel writers as **Evangelists**

II. Synoptic Gospels

- **Synoptic** = “viewed together”
- Matthew, Mark, and **Luke**
 - Follow a **similar** outline of Jesus’ life
 - Tell many of the same stories, sometimes with **nearly** exact verbal agreement.
 - Writer drew from the large body of **oral** and written material being passed down by the followers of Jesus
- Two-source Hypothesis

Two-source Hypothesis



- The Gospel of **John**
 - Offers a **unique** perspective in terms of its content, themes, and structure

Synoptic Gospels	Gospel of John
90% of the content of Mark’s Gospel appears in similar form in Matthew and Luke	Less than 10% of this material appear in John
Tend to contain short , semi-independent vignettes, or mini-stories & Jesus teaches mostly in parables and short sayings.	Tends to contain longer conversations, dialogues, and debates, esp. between Jesus and the religious leaders.
Stress Jesus’s preaching about the kingdom of God and the need to repent and believe the good news.	Jesus speaks more about knowing God and attaining eternal life, identifying himself as the unique Son of God who reveals the Father.
Stress that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah .	Stresses that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine (John 1:1, 14, 18), the one true way to the Father (14:6).

III. Why Four Gospels?

- **Diverse communities, diverse purposes.**
 - Each of the 4 was written to a different **community** within the early church and was meant to address the unique **needs**, concerns, and challenges facing that community.
- **Mark** – to persecuted churches (perhaps in Rome)
 - Believed to be written first.
 - Interested in explaining the nature of Jesus’s messiahship (1:1)
 - Intended to encourage them to persevere and stay faithful to Jesus in the face of severe suffering and even death.
- **Matthew** – to predominantly Jewish-Christian communities
 - Meant to assure these believers that Jesus was indeed the Messiah who had **fulfilled** the promises made to Israel in the OT.

- **Luke** – to a **mixed** or predominantly Gentile community
 - Intended to **confirm** that the message of salvation was for **all** people everywhere, whatever their race, gender, economic status, or social and cultural background.
- **John** – to believers who were experiencing increasing alienation from their Jewish roots and increasing **hostility** from society at large.
 - Intended to assure believers that they have found the **truth** in the One who is the way, the truth, and the life.

IV. The Gospel Genre

- **History, narrative, and theology**
 - characterized as *historical narrative motivated by theological concerns*
 - **Historical terms** in Luke 1:1-4: “eyewitnesses,” “carefully investigated,” “orderly account,” “know the certainty.”
 - **Narrative:** history told as story
 - **Theology:** to proclaim the message of the salvation accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.

V. Understanding the Parables of Jesus

- Approximately **35%** of Jesus’s teachings are found in the form of parables.
 - The parable is a fictional literary form, consists of two parts:
 - a) a *picture part* or the story proper
 - b) a *reality part* or the comparison to which it is likened.
 - Because of the **fictional** nature of parables, it is not surprising that at times we find unreal elements in them.
 - Matt. 18:24 - unusual **exaggeration** as in the parable of the unforgiving servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents (Herod’s annual income was only 900 talents)
 - Matt. 25:5 – unusual **circumstances**: all ten maidens fall asleep
 - Luke 14:18 – unusual circumstances: all the invited guests after accepting the first invitation, decline the final invitation to come to the banquet.

Rules in Interpreting Parables:

1. A parable generally teaches one basic point.

- What is the point of the parable of Matt. 25:1-13?
- The main point of the parable is clear enough: be **prepared**, as the wise maidens were – the message “be prepared” started in Chapter 24 and culminates in Chapter 25.
- the fact that the wise maidens were selfish and did not share their oil with those in need (v. 9) should not be pressed because it is not the point of the story.
- In the study of parables therefore we should seek the main point of the parable and not press its details.
- the greater danger for most interpreters is to see too **much** meaning in specific details rather than too little.

2. Discover the point Jesus sought to make.

- The Parables of Jesus possesses two possible authors
 - a) Jesus, who created the parables.
 - b) Gospel writer, who interpreted Jesus's parables for his readers.
- The willed meaning possesses similar principle but tend to address to different audiences, thus have different implications.

3. Discover the Point the Evangelist Sought to Make

- The Gospel writers were not simply recorders of the Jesus traditions but interpreters of them as well.
- On several occasions the Gospel writers took parables of Jesus aimed at one audience and interpreted their various implications for a different one.

VI. Interpreting the Gospels as Wholes

3 principles at work in the composition of the Gospel;

1. Selectivity
2. Arrangement
3. Adaptation

- The evangelists as divinely inspired authors selected those narratives and teachings that suited their purposes.

Example: John 20:30-31; John 21:25

- the evangelists and their churches had special interests that also caused them to arrange and adapt what was selected.
- The principle of adaptation is also what explains most of the so-called discrepancies among the Gospels.

Example: Cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12–14, 20–25; Matt. 21:18–22).

For Mark, the story is told for its symbolic theological significance.

In Matthew's gospel the lesson on faith is the sole interest of the story, so he relates the cursing and the withering together in order to emphasize this point.

Note that between the cursing and the withering Jesus pronounces a similar judgment on Judaism by his cleansing of the temple. However, the story of the fig tree had great meaning for the early church also because of the lesson on faith that concludes it.

Remember, in each case this telling of the story is the work of the Holy Spirit, who Inspired both evangelists.

VII. Reading the Gospels today

1. Read the Gospels "vertically" (*downward through each story*), rather than **harmonistically** (*merging them into a single story*).

- The Gospel writers often structure their material topically rather than chronologically.
- The 4 Gospels are literary masterpieces.
- The Holy Spirit gave the church 4 distinct Gospels.

2. Read the Gospels “horizontally” to determine their unique perspective.
- Compare the 4 Gospels with one another by reading them horizontally (across the page).
 - The goal of a synopsis is not to produce a single story (a harmony), but rather to compare their accounts to determine each Gospel’s unique perspectives and theological themes.

3. Recognize the Gospel’s **two** levels of historical context.

- The context of the events of the story
 - Events in the Gospels took place around AD 30 in Palestine under Roman rule.
 - Learn about the world of 1st century Judaism, geography (Galilee, Judea, etc.), religious groups (Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.), institutions (Sanhedrin, etc.), etc.

Historical Settings:

- Setting in the Life of Jesus, AD 27-30. The actual continuous events of Jesus’ life.
- Setting in the Life of the Church, AD 30 – 65. The oral telling of the stories.
- Setting in the Life of the Evangelist, AD 65-90. The written accounts of the stories.

- The context of the **authors** and original readers
 - The Gospels were written 25-60 years later to Christian churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

Lesson 11: Epistles and Letters

I. General Epistles

- ◆ An epistle is an artistic literary form and intended as a self-explanatory treatise to a wider public.
- **Standard form of 21st century letters:**
 - Date: April 29, 2022
 - Salutation: *Dear Sweetie,*
 - Body: *How are you? Do you know that I have been sad because I miss you?*
 - Closing: *Your faithful lover,*
 - Signature: *Talpolano*
- **Standard form of 1st century / ancient letters:**
 - Salutation
- Name of the writer (e.g., Paul)
- Name of the recipient (e.g., to the church of God in Ephesus)
 - Thanksgiving and Prayer (e.g., Grace & peace to you from God our Father...)
 (e.g., I always thank God for you...)
 - Body – the largest part of a Pauline letter (Gal. 1:6-4:31)

- Exhortation and Instructions: Romans 12:1-15
- Conclusion – this include a wish for peace (Romans 15:33), a benediction (Romans 16:20), a greeting to various individuals (Romans 16:3-16), a farewell (e.g., The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you...)

- **Things in common in all Epistles**

1. They are all occasional documents (i.e., arising out of and intended for a specific occasion).

2. They are from the first century (AD1 - 100).

- And we're in the 21st century (AD2000-2099).

- Almost all of the New Testament letters were occasioned from the reader's side.

- ASK: What were the special circumstances surrounding the author or the original readers?

Usual occasions include:

- Some kind of behavior that needed correcting (1 Corinthians).

- Some doctrinal error that needed setting right (Galatians, etc.)

- Some misunderstanding that needed further light (2 Corinthians).

- "Task Theology" – theology being written for or brought to bear on the task at hand or particular need.

- Implication: Study the context of the author and the context of the original recipients.

II. Hermeneutical Guidelines for Epistles

1) Get to know the general historical context of the 1st century church.

- Consult Bible Dictionaries & Encyclopedias

- Learn about the *Jewish* and Greco-Roman worlds of the 1st century.
- Learn about the historical *circumstances* of the 1st century churches.

Video – The NT Historical Context (from the Bible Project)

2) Identify the specific *occasion* of the letter.

Example: 1 Thessalonians

- You need to consult your Bible dictionary or the introduction to your commentary to find out as much as possible about Thessalonica and its people.

- Paul started church at Thessalonica during 2nd missionary journey
- Persecution forced Paul to flee to Berea, Athens & Corinth
- Paul sent Timothy to check on the church at Thessalonica
- Timothy brought back a good report that the church was thriving despite persecution
- Paul wrote a letter full of praise & encouragement for this young group of believers.

3) Learn to trace the progress of the argument as an answer to the problem or circumstance (the literary context).

Video – The NT Literary Context (from the Bible Project)

A. Read through the letter in its entirety from beginning to end:

- To follow the author's argument & pick up keys to the letter's occasion and purpose to avoid taking passages out of context.

- To pick up key themes and *motifs* developed by the author.

Example: 1 Corinthians

Literary "*clues*" as to the letter's structure

1:11 "*For it has been reported to me by Chloe's household that...*"

- The problem of *division* in the church (1:10-4:21)
- The problem of the *incestuous* man (5:1-13)
- The problem of *lawsuits* (6:1-11)
- The problem of *fornication* (6:12-20)

7:1 "*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote:*"

- About *behavior* within marriage (7:1-24)
- About virgins (7:25-40)
- About *food* sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1)
- The covering of women's heads in church (11:2-16)
- The problem of *abuse* at the Lord's Table (11:17-34)
- About *spiritual* gifts (12-14)
- The bodily *resurrection* of believers (15:1-58)
- About the *collection* (16:1-11)

- Think paragraphs.

→ Ask: "What's the point?"

→ What does Paul say in this paragraph?

→ How does this content *contribute* to the argument?

B. Avoid "*semantic anachronism*," i.e., a late meaning of a word is read back into an earlier term.

→ Rom. 1:16: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the **power** of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.*"

"power" explained as "*dynamite*" by some

→ 2 Cor. 9:7: "...for God loves a *cheerful* giver."

"cheerful" explained as "*hilarious*" by some

III. Where are the letters in the Metanarrative?

1. They were written to churches and believers who lived in the same place in salvation history as we do.

- For *new covenant* believers living after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but before his second coming.

2. We have to acknowledge that even new covenant commands are embedded in culture and were given to address specific *cultural* and social situations.
 - Don't assume that all NT commands are necessary commands for *all* time.
 - The Epistles, like the rest of the Bible, must be *contextualized* to determine how they apply to us.

IV. Hermeneutics' Basic Rule

I. A text cannot *mean* what it never *meant* to its author or his or her readers.

II. Whenever we share comparable particulars (*i.e., similar specific life situations*) with the first-century setting, God's word to us is the *same* as his Word to them.

Strauss: Apply the letters in truly analogous historical, social, and cultural situations.

- Determining the applicability of a command depends to a great *extent* on whether our social and cultural situation is analogous to the situation the original author is addressing.

Annex 3 Survey Form

**How To Study The Bible
Survey Form**

1. How helpful was the class material provided to you?

Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not so	Not at all
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2. How helpful was the class reading assignment to you?

Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not so	Not at all
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3. How beneficial was the training for you?

Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not so	Not at all
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4. Do you think this training will be helpful for the growth in your Christian walk? Please state why.

5. Did the training help increase your understanding of God's Word?

Yes	Somewhat	No
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6. Please state 3 things that you liked most about the class and why?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

7. What was the most important thing you learned from this class?

8. Did you give your best in the creation and submission of your Devotional Paper?

Yes	Somewhat	No
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9. Did you give your best in the participation in class discussion?

Yes	Somewhat	No
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10. How clearly did the instructor explain the course material?

Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not so	Not at all
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11. How well the instructor answers the participant's questions?

Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not so	Not at all
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13. Were participation and interaction encouraged by the instructor?

Yes	Somewhat	No
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14. Would you recommend this training to your friends at church?

Yes	Somewhat	No
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15. What can you suggest to improve this training?

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Student Signature

May 10, 2022
Date

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Date Received: ____/____/____

Approved by: _____