

An Exegetical Method

(Adapted from Gordon Fee- New Testament Exegesis)

Prayer and Spiritual preparation

I. Survey the general historical context

- A. Read the document through in one sitting
- B. Read it again noting relevant data
- C. Make a general outline of the document

II. Confirm the limits of the passage

- A. Compare where a number of English translations break the paragraph or section.
- B. Make a final determination based on key words, conjunctions or shift of topic.
- C. If the section is too large, further divide the section, If it is too small, combine two sections

III. TOQ (Translation/Translation survey, Observation, Questions)

- A. Make a provisional translation OR read the passage in several different translations
- B. Make a list of places where translations have significant differences
- C. List your observations of significant items from the passage
- D. List any questions that you have about the passage, noting especially any ambiguities and difficulties.

IV. Analyze Sentence Structure/Flow of Thought- i.e. what are the logical relationships between the sentences, and what is the point of each sentence?

- A. For Discourse- Make a sentence flow and arc of the passage
- B. For Narrative- Make a storyboard of the passage
- C. For Poetry- analyze the parallelism and make an arc of the passage
- D. Restate the argument and major points of your passage in your own words.

V. Analyze the Grammar and significant words

- A. For those translation differences which you suspect are based on grammatical decisions, consult the discussion in the commentaries.
- B. Determine which words bear the need for further study
- C. Look up these words in Lexicons, Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, and Theological Dictionaries to find the range of meanings
- D. Determine the precise meaning by the word's use in context

VI. Research the specific historical/cultural background

- A. Determine if your passage is primarily Jewish and/or Greco-Roman
- B. Look up key words, places, persons, events, institutions and/or concepts in Background studies and Background commentaries

VII. [Specific steps for different genres]

VIII. Go back and check/revise your sentence structure/flow of thought based on grammar/word/background studies

IX. Consider the broader Biblical/Theological contexts

- A. Determine how the meaning of your passage compares to and contrasts with other biblical material that deals with the same or similar issues
- B. Check cross references in Study Bibles or Topical lists
- C. Check Indexes in Biblical and Systematic Theologies

X. Research the secondary literature

- A. Compare your finding with commentaries
- B. Check for journal articles using the Periodical Index, New Testament Abstracts or Old Testament Abstracts
- C. Assess, compare and weigh different arguments and new evidence
- D. Adjust your findings to take your new knowledge into account.

Application