How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth

- By Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart
- Page numbers taken from the third edition
Two Factors (p. 18-21)

• The nature of the reader
  – Culture
  – Expectations
  – Vocabulary
  – Personal preferences

• The nature of the text (Scripture)
  – Genres (varied styles of literature)
  – Historical particularity
  – Eternal relevance
Two Tasks

- Pages 23-31
- Exegesis
- Hermeneutics
Exegesis

- Exe whasis?
Exegesis

• Pages 23-31
• What did it mean to the writer and readers?
• Find out what the text originally meant; this task is called exegesis.
Hermeneutics

- Herman Who?
• *Pages 23-31*

• *What does it mean to us?*

• *Apply what the text means to ourselves and our situations. We call this second task hermeneutics.*
The aim of good interpretation

• Pages 17-18
• The aim is to get at the plain meaning of the text.
• The test is that it makes good sense of the text.
eternal relevance

• Page 21

• Eternal relevance means that it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture.
historical particularity

• *Historical particularity refers to the fact that each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written.*
Exegesis is the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning.
good exegesis

• Page 24-25
• To learn to read the text carefully and to ask the right questions of the text.
historical context

• Page 26
• The time and culture of the author and his readers and the occasion of the writing.
• Understanding background of the person and culture
• Understanding the occasion and purpose of the writing (p. 27)
most important contextual question

• Page 27
• “What’s the point?”
four (five) tools

- Pages 27-29
- a) A good Bible dictionary
- b) A good Bible handbook
- c) A good translation
- d) Good commentaries
- WEBSITES: www.blueletterbible.org; www.crosswalk.com; www.ccel.org
three original languages

- Page 34
- a) Hebrew (most of the Old Testament, one version of Matthew)
- b) Aramaic/Chaldean (portions of Daniel, Ezra, some words and phrases in the New Testament)
- c) Greek (The New Testament)
three basic theories

- Page 41
- a) Literal
- b) Free
- c) Dynamic Equivalent
Is Textual Criticism a Science?

- P. 36 “Textual criticism is a science that works with careful controls.”
  - External evidence (character and quality of manuscripts)
  - Internal evidence (mistakes made by copyists)
- P. 38 “…it is not an exact science, because it deals with too many variables.”
A Brief Look at Different English Versions

• Handout
# Translations (p. 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Equivalence (literal)</th>
<th>Functional Equivalence (dynamic)</th>
<th>Free</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. KJV</td>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>RSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. NKJV</td>
<td>NASU</td>
<td>NRSV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criticisms of KJV and NKJV

- Dated language (especially KJV)
- Choice of Manuscripts (*textus receptus*, majority text)
The Choice of Manuscripts

• Your Bible is only as good as the manuscripts from which it was translated.
• Eclectic (gathered from many sources) vs. Byzantine or Majority text
• For more information visit terryewell.com and selection “Trinity Course Materials”
BREAK
New Testament
Epistles (Letters)
Epistles: one thing

- Page 58
- They are occasional documents (i.e., arising out of and intended for a specific occasion) and they are from the first century.
Historical Context: two things

• Page 59
• a) Consult a Bible dictionary or the introduction to a commentary to find out as much as possible about the place and its people.
• b) Develop the habit of reading the whole letter through in one sitting.
necessary key

- Pages 64-65
- Learning to think paragraphs.
Basic Rule

• Generally a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers. (p. 74, 78)

• EXEGESIS!
Second Basic Rule

- Pages 75, 78
- Apply the text to our lives whenever we share comparable particulars (i.e., similar specific life situations)
- HERMENEUTICS!
Phil.1:27-30

- Exegesis: what did this text say to 1st century Christians in Philippi?
- Hermeneutics: what can be applied to our lives today? What cannot be applied?
2 Pet. 2:1; 2:12-17

- **Exegesis**: what did this text say to 1st century Christians receiving this letter from Peter?
- **Hermeneutics**: what can be applied to our lives today? What cannot be applied?
Problems of Particulars

• P. 72 (what can be applied to us?) 2 Tim. 2:3, 2 Ti. 4:13; 1 Tim. 2:3;
• P. 77 (what can be applied to us?) 1 Cor. 8:4-13.
seven guidelines

• Pages 81-84
• a) Distinguish between the central core of the message of the Bible and what is dependent upon or peripheral to it.
seven guidelines

• Pages 81-84
• b) Distinguish between what the New Testament itself sees as inherently moral and what is not.
seven guidelines

• c) Make special note of items where the New Testament itself has a uniform and consistent witness and where it reflects differences.
seven guidelines

• d) Be able to distinguish within the New Testament itself between principle and specific application.
seven guidelines

• e) Determine the cultural options open to any New Testament writer.
seven guidelines

• *f*) *Keep alert to possible cultural differences between the first and twentieth centuries that are sometimes not immediately obvious.*
seven guidelines

• *g*) *Exercise Christian charity at this point.*
Break!
Old Testament Narratives

- What is a narrative? How does it differ from prophecy, poetry, or wisdom literature?
ten principles

• Page 106
• a) An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.
• b) An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught elsewhere.
• c) Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or ought to happen every time.
ten principles

• d) What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.

• e) Most of the characters in the Old Testament narratives are far from perfect and their actions are too.

• f) We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad.
ten principles

• **g)** All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the relevant details are always given.

• **h)** Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions.

• **i)** Narratives may teach either explicitly or implicitly.

• **j)** In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.
eight most common errors

• Pages 103-105
• a) Allegorizing - Instead of concentrating on the clear meaning, people relegate the text to merely reflecting another meaning beyond the text.
• b) Decontextualizing - Ignoring the full historical and literary contexts, and often the individual narrative, people concentrate on small units only and thus miss interpretational clues.
eight most common errors

• c) Selectivity - Involves picking and choosing specific words and phrases to concentrate on, ignoring the others, and ignoring the overall sweep of the passage being studied.

• d) False combination - Combines elements from here and there in a passage and makes a point out of their combination, even though the elements themselves are not directly connected in the passage itself.
eight most common errors

• e) Redefinition - Redefining the meaning of a text to mean something else.
• f) Extracanonical authority - Using a set of doctrines or a book that claims to reveal scriptural truths not otherwise knowable.
eight most common errors

• g) Moralizing - The assumption that principles for living can be derived from all passages.

• h) Personalizing - Also known as individualizing, this is reading Scripture in a way that supposes that any or all parts apply to you or your group in a way that they do not apply to everyone else.