

Welcome to Kingdom Life for Tammuz 5786!

WEEK 1 6/22 - 6/27

=> For Monday and Tuesday, please review the first half and the second half of the video replay of FIRST Tammuz (you could change the rate to higher speed), with ministry notes. You may want to take additional notes - this is precious revelation from Holy Spirit and does not all fit on the one-page highlights pdf, "Ministry Notes." <https://www.embassyofzion.org/first-fruits>

Listen to the Lord in reflection questions. Pray in faith agreement through your notes and the ministry notes doc, as Holy Spirit leads. Wednesday night, in addition to sharing revelation from the Word, let's worship and let's pray for each other, joining faith to see visible change manifest this month, according to his breakthrough revelation.

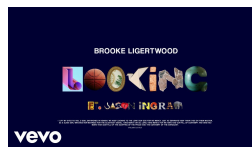
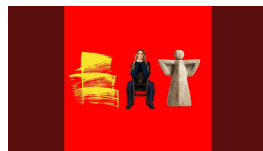
1. (about Holy Spirit working **IN** you/ us): Ask Holy Spirit to shine light and give you spiritual insight as you watch, listen, worship, and process FIRST! Tammuz. Is Holy Spirit speaking anything to you personally or for the group? Record aha's and questions.

2. (about Holy Spirit working **THROUGH** you/us): How may you see yourself moving spiritually in this goodness from FIRST, impacting others - in situations where you are in a ministry relationship, through intercessory prayer, or in conversations at work, home, school? Is Holy Spirit speaking anything to you personally or for the group? Record.

=> For Wednesday - we will begin our quest for **giving Him "worship in Spirit and truth"** as in John 4:23-24. (*We love to give God what He wants!*)

First, lean in on those two verses, then **scope out to the entire passage**, John 4:1-42 for even more depth of meaning. He sets a new order for worship. See the water references. Then look back to the testimony of John the Baptist **immediately before** this encounter, John 3:22-36. See any similarities with Jesus' words with the Samaritan woman at the well.

(*Herrnhut inspiration...*) Below are 3 beautiful worship songs (click) that help us meditate on Jesus in awe, and draw ourselves to the Lord for deep fellowship with Him. "Even Death on a Cross" "Participation" and "Looking" by Brooke Ligertwood and friends.



Hope to see you in team zoom session Weds evening. So happy we are taking this journey together - will be amazing to see what God does in and

through us! Please stay in touch with questions comments in between team sessions. **Note:** on email we sent photo attachments from the IVP Study Bible.

=> **Here is the link to Wednesday evening's team session replay (click=>)**



==> **For Thursday and Friday** - There may be two somewhat different interpretations of what Jesus meant when He said **worship in Spirit and truth**. Did Jesus mean something like

- 1) Holy Spirit and truth (Jesus or his word/truth revealed), or
- 2) our human spirit and our mind engaging?

In studying and interpreting any passage in the Bible there are some useful skills to develop. Here is a simple one: ask **"What did the author intend to communicate, and what would the original audience have understood him to mean?"**

- **Consider the audience.** When Paul is writing to Gentiles, such as the letter to the Galatians, we need to consider what was being sent and received in **communication to whom**. Example: Gal 4:8-10
"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!" He is calling them down for observing special days and months and seasons and years. Is he referring to the Feasts begun in OT, observed by Jews? Pause and think about that. We will answer that quickly on Saturday.
- **Another recommendation is to read a translation using Modern English**, or else learn the vocabulary of (KJV) Early Modern English. Here's an example from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. What did Juliet mean by asking "Wherefore art thou Romeo?" Did she mean what is your location? Susie can tell us on Saturday 😊

One great practice in Bible interpretation is to use Scripture to help interpret Scripture. Let's get some practice with that concerning John 4:23-24.

- Consider additional scriptures which may help interpret "worship in Spirit and truth"
John 3:1-8; 7:37-40; 14:6-17; 15:3, 26; 16:13-15; 17:13-19; 2 Cor 3:17. Do these give light? Let's take our time and enjoy this approach to whatever the Lord unfolds/ reveals!
- **Normative or Descriptive?** Example: look at these Scriptures to consider what was **prescribed (not only described)** for the (worship) gatherings in house churches of the NT (unlike worship in the Temple). 1 Cor 14:26, Col 3:15-17, Eph 5:18-20.

==> **On Saturday's session 9-10 am (eastern)** we will continue the investigation of John 4:23-24 in context, looking to come into agreement with Holy Spirit on the nature of the worship that Jesus meant in John 4. He sought out a Samaritan woman as one the Father was looking for. We often rightly call her as the first evangelist - telling all in her village about Jesus. And, consider that she was the first one, after this revelation, who worshipped the Father not on the Samaritans' mountain (in their temple) nor the Jews' mountain (in their temple), but in Spirit and truth. Yes? If so, how did she demonstrate that? The **gospel narrative (genre)** may give us **descriptive (vs. normative)** clues within the larger context of John 4.



Please hear Rich Mullins' introduce his song, Creed.
<== THIS!



==> Here is the link to Saturday's team session replay (click==>)

WEEK 2 7/6 - 7/11

==> For Monday- Review your notes from week 1.



Review of Bible Study skills from week 1

- When studying/ meditating on a few verses, make sure to also scope out to read the entire passage for the context. Context is extremely important to the meaning.
- Look to the passages before and after this passage to see if they may be important to get the fuller meaning of this passage.
- Ask: "What did the author intend to communicate, and what would the original audience have understood him to mean?" That is the message of the passage.
- Is the passage normative/ prescriptive or descriptive? (*"I went fishing on Monday" describes what I did - not prescribes that everyone must go fishing on Mondays.*)
- Use Scripture to help interpret Scripture.
- Ask the Lord questions about the passage, and listen for revelation and/or additional questions he may ask you; this may lead to more Bible study adventures.

Review of resources/tools from week 1

- Consider if a modern English translation may serve you better than one using archaic prose.
- You may want the benefit of a really good study Bible - one to hold in your hand or access online. (Anne is happy with her new one: NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.)

Familiarize yourself again with John 4:1-42.

Below is a portion of John 3. Read and make notes about what you see in this, which manifests in John 4 with the Samaritan woman and those in the village who come to see, hear, and believe Jesus.

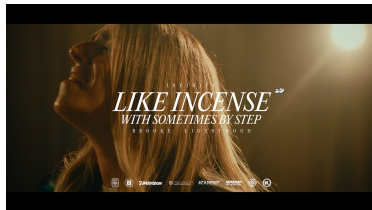
A. The testimony of John the Disciple of Jesus. 3:14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

B. In John 3:22 "After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized." In verse 26 John the Baptist's disciples pointed out that "everyone is going to him." Think about what the Samaritans would do, (ch 4) - get living water fro

Now read and linger over these 3 verses which are immediately prior to Jesus going through Samaria - the testimony of John the Baptist in reply to his disciples regarding Jesus. **John 3:34-36** (NIV)

“For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them.”

Consider what manifested then with the Samaritan woman and those who came out from the village to see Jesus at the well - *and they believed. Ponder - put yourself there in AWE and WONDER.*



<== You probably know this song originally recorded by Rich Mullins, remade with added lyrics by Brooke. Imagine Photine singing this with us! Let's all enter in in our multiple locations, worshipping the Lord, gladly telling him our love, gratitude, and dedication - and speaking His excellencies!

***Lord, we together are your people!
You alone are our God!***

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

BIG CONNECTION HERE - Lord, please open our understanding...!

Why did Jesus talk about harvest to the disciples? Jesus was doing the will of the Father? What did Jesus harvest for the Father? How does the Great Commission (Matt 28) - to make disciples... connect with Jesus revealing what the Father is looking for? As a Troop - it’s not just 4 months until harvest - look at the fields now. Let’s give God what he wants!

Pray as the Lord leads, and record your reflections.

=> For Tuesday - Jesus set a new and profound order of worship, not in a mountain or in a building (made by human hands) - the Father is looking for those who will worship Him in Spirit and truth.

How do these 6 passages bring light on the new order: “Worship in Spirit and truth” (rather than in a mountain or building)? Record your reflections.

1. **ISA 66:1-2** (NIV), “This is what the Lord says: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?’ declares the Lord. ‘These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.’”

2. **John 2:19-22** “Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ They replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”

3. Now read this passage and see those who are in Christ looking to Jesus as Solomon was saying to look at the temple... **1 Kings 8:27-30** (when Solomon is praying at the Temple dedication) “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! 28 Yet give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. 29 May your eyes be

open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, 'My Name shall be there,' so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. 30 Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive."

4. Consider Stephen's testimony/ answer to the Sanhedrin right before they killed him, in **Acts 7:44-51**, "Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. 45 After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, 46 who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48 "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: 49 "'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me?' says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? 50 Has not my hand made all these things?' 51 "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

5. (Perhaps Paul remembered Stephen quite regularly - he was there as Saul.) **Acts 17:22-31** Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' 29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

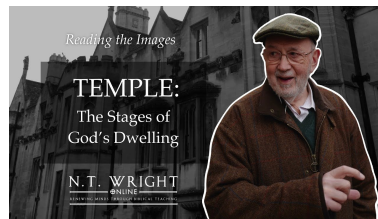
6. **1 Cor 3:16-17** Don't you know that you [plural] yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

==> For Wednesday - Welcome to Team Session on Weds night 7 pm (eastern)

Through yesterday's Bible portion it becomes clear that "worship" and "temple" are not limited to what is done in a building made by humans for the honoring of God and for him to fill with his presence. Yes, the Temple in Jerusalem was holy. Think about what is "made with human hands" (part of creation) contrasted with what is made by God's hands (Creator.)

Consider that God made a garden (Eden)... to be filled - and compare that with Habakkuk 2:14: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Do you see a mission in that for us?

God wants a family who knows Him and makes Him known. On Monday we considered the BIG CONNECTION of linking the Great Commission to go make disciples, with giving God what he is looking for: those who worship him in Spirit and truth. Recall, worship includes, but is much more than praising and proclaiming God's excellencies - it's also lifestyle of enjoying His Presence, carrying his glory... alive in relationship through Jesus by the power of Holy Spirit...



Here are two videos related to the light on the new order of worship which Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman at the well. The first video (4:40) is from BibleProject showing the "Temple" theme from Eden to Jesus to those in Christ to filling the earth with the

Glory of God. The second video (12:45) is a beautiful development through Scripture of this Biblical theme of God's desire to dwell with his people, by NT Wright. Both are so worthy!

"We together are your people! You alone are our God!" This month in Tammuz it is especially important for our worship of God in Spirit and truth to shine brilliantly: live for Jesus, together hosting and enjoying His presence, and as image-bearers and His kingdom of priests we have the privilege and call to proclaim Him into the earth, and reflect his glory out into the earth.

Rev 21:1-3 (NIV) Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

We have a beautiful present and future in the Lord! Pray and worship as the Lord leads, and record your reflections.

Special! The next 3 days - Chapter 1 excerpt from: Fee, Gordon D.; Stuart, Douglas. How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition (pp. 22-23, 25-29).

THE READER AS AN INTERPRETER

The first reason one needs to learn how to interpret is that, whether one likes it or not, every reader is at the same time an interpreter. That is, most of us assume as we read that we also understand what we read. We also tend to think that our understanding is the same as the Holy Spirit's or human author's intent. However, we invariably bring to the text all that we are, with all of our experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas. Sometimes what we bring to the text, unintentionally to be sure, leads us astray, or else causes us to read all kinds of foreign ideas into the text.

Thus, when a person in our culture hears the word "cross," centuries of Christian art and symbolism cause most people automatically to think of a Roman cross, although there is little likelihood that that was the shape of Jesus' cross, which was probably shaped like a T. Most Protestants, and Catholics as well, when they read passages about the church at worship, automatically envision people sitting in a building with "pews" much like their own. When Paul says, "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Rom 13:14 NKJV), people in most English-speaking cultures are apt to think that "flesh" means the "body" and therefore that Paul is speaking of "bodily appetites."

But the word "flesh," as Paul uses it, seldom refers to the body — and in this text it almost certainly did not — but to a spiritual malady sometimes called "the sinful nature," denoting totally self-centered existence. Therefore, without intending to do so, the reader is interpreting as he or she reads, and unfortunately all too often interprets incorrectly. ...

THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE

A more significant reason for the need to interpret lies in the nature of Scripture itself. Historically the church has understood the nature of Scripture much the same as it has understood the person of Christ — the Bible is at the same time both human and divine. “The Bible,” it has been correctly said, “is the Word of God given in human words in history.” It is this dual nature of the Bible that demands of us the task of interpretation.

Because the Bible is God’s message, it has eternal relevance; it speaks to all humankind, in every age and in every culture. Because it is the word of God, we must listen — and obey. But because God chose to speak his word through human words in history, every book in the Bible also has historical particularity; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written (and in some cases also by the oral history it had before it was written down). Interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the “tension” that exists between its eternal relevance and its historical particularity.

There are some, of course, who believe that the Bible is merely a human book, and that it contains only human words in history. For these people the task of interpreting is limited to historical inquiry. Their interest, as with reading Cicero or Milton, is with the religious ideas of the Jews, Jesus, or the early church. The task for them, therefore, is purely a historical one. What did these words mean to the people who wrote them? What did they think about God? How did they understand themselves?

On the other hand, there are those who think of the Bible only in terms of its eternal relevance. Because it is the word of God, they tend to think of it only as a collection of propositions to be believed and imperatives to be obeyed — although invariably there is a great deal of picking and choosing among the propositions and imperatives. There are, for example, Christians who, on the basis of Deuteronomy 22:5 (“A woman must not wear men’s clothing”), argue that a woman should not wear slacks or shorts, because these are deemed to be “men’s clothing.” But the same people seldom take literally the other imperatives in this list, which include building a parapet around the roof of one’s house (v.8), not planting two kinds of seeds in a vineyard (v.9), and making tassels on the four corners of one’s cloak (v.12).

The Bible, however, is not a series of propositions and imperatives; it is not simply a collection of “Sayings from Chairman God,” as though he looked down on us from heaven and said: “Hey you down there, learn these truths. Number 1, There is no God but One, and I am that One. Number 2, I am the Creator of all things, including humankind” — and so on, all the way through proposition number 7,777 and imperative number 777.

These propositions of course are true, and they are found in the Bible (though not quite in that form). Indeed such a book might have made some things easier for us. But, fortunately, that is not how God chose to speak to us. Rather, he chose to speak his eternal truths within the particular circumstances and events of human history. This also is what gives us hope. Precisely because God chose to speak in the context of real human history, we may take courage that these same words will speak again and again in our own “real” history, as they have throughout the history of the church.

The fact that the Bible has a human side is our encouragement; it is also our challenge, and the reason that we need to interpret. Two items should be noted in this regard:

1. One of the most important aspects of the human side of the Bible is that, in order to communicate his word to all human conditions, God chose to use almost every available kind of communication: narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry of all kinds, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalypses.

To interpret properly the “then and there” of the biblical texts, one must not only know some general rules that apply to all the words of the Bible, but one also needs to learn the special rules that apply to each of these **literary forms (genres)**. The way God communicates the divine word to us in the “here and now” will often differ from one form to another. For example, we need to know how a psalm, a form often addressed to God, functions as God’s word to us, and how certain psalms differ from others, and how all of them differ from “the laws,” which were often addressed to people in cultural situations no longer in existence. How do such “laws” speak to us, and how do they differ from the moral “laws,”

which are always valid in all circumstances? Such are the questions the dual nature of the Bible forces on us.

2. In speaking through real persons, in a variety of circumstances, over a 1,500-year period, God's Word was expressed in the vocabulary and thought patterns of those persons and conditioned by the culture of those times and circumstances. That is to say, God's word to us was first of all God's word to them. If they were going to hear it, it could only have come through events and in language they could have understood. Our problem is that we are so far removed from them in time, and sometimes in thought. This is the major reason one needs to learn to interpret the Bible. If God's word about women wearing men's clothing or people having parapets around houses is to speak to us, we first need to know what it said to its original hearers — and why.

Thus the task of interpreting involves the student/reader at two levels. **First, one has to hear the word they heard; we must try to understand what was said to them back then and there (exegesis). Second, we must learn to hear that same word in the here and now (hermeneutics).** A few preliminary words are needed about these two tasks.

THE FIRST TASK: EXEGESIS

The first task of the interpreter is called exegesis. This involves the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning. This is primarily a historical task. It is the attempt to hear the Word as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible. This is the task that often calls for the help of the "expert," a person trained to know well the language and circumstances of a text in its original setting. But one does not have to be an expert to do good exegesis.

In fact, everyone is an exegete of sorts. The only real question is whether you will be a good one. How many times, for example, have you heard or said, "What Jesus meant by that was . . ." or, "Back in those days, they used to . . ."? These are exegetical expressions. Most often they are employed to explain the differences between "them" and "us" — why we do not build parapets around our houses, for example — or to give a reason for our using a text in a new or different way — why handshaking has often taken the place of the "holy kiss." Even when such ideas are not articulated, they are in fact practiced all the time in a kind of commonsense way.

The problem with much of this, however, is (1) that such exegesis is often too selective and (2) that often the sources consulted are not written by true "experts," that is, they are secondary sources that also often use other secondary sources rather than the primary sources. A few words about each of these must be given.

1. Although everyone employs exegesis at times, and although quite often such exegesis is well done, it nonetheless tends to be employed only when there is an obvious problem between the biblical texts and modern culture. Whereas it must indeed be employed for such texts, we insist that it is the first step in reading EVERY text. At first, this will not be easy to do, but learning to think exegetically will pay rich dividends in understanding and will make even the reading, not to mention the studying, of the Bible a much more exciting experience. But note well: Learning to think exegetically is not the only task; it is simply the first task.

The real problem with "selective" exegesis is that one will often read one's own, completely foreign, ideas into a text and thereby make God's word something other than what God really said. For example, one of the authors of this book once received a letter from a well-known evangelical, who argued that the author should not appear in a conference with another well-known person, whose orthodoxy on a point was thought to be suspect. The biblical reason given for avoiding the conference was the command to: "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thes 5:22 KJV). But had our brother learned to read the Bible exegetically, he would not have used the text in that way. For this is Paul's final word in a paragraph to the Thessalonians regarding Spirit manifestations in the community. What Paul really says, in current English, is: "Do not treat prophecies with contempt, but test them all; hold on to

what is good, reject every kind of evil” (NIV). The “avoidance of evil” had to do with “prophecies,” which, when tested, were found not to be of the Spirit. To make this text mean something God did not intend is to abuse the text, not use it. To avoid making such mistakes one needs to learn to think exegetically, that is, to begin back then and there, and to do so with every text.

2. As we will soon note, one does not begin by consulting the “experts.” But when it is necessary to do so, one should try to use the better sources. For example, at the conclusion of the story of the rich young man in Mark 10:24 (Matt 19:23; Luke 18:24), Jesus says, “How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!” He then adds: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” You will sometimes hear it said that there was a gate in Jerusalem known as the “Needle’s Eye,” which camels could go through only by kneeling, and with great difficulty. The point of this “interpretation” is that a camel could in fact go through the “Needle’s Eye.” The trouble with this “exegesis,” however, is that it is simply not true. There never was such a gate in Jerusalem at any time in its history. The earliest known “evidence” for this idea is found in the eleventh century(!) in a commentary by a Greek churchman named Theophylact, who had the same difficulty with the text that many later readers do. After all, it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that was precisely Jesus’ point. It is impossible for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom. It takes a miracle for a rich person to get saved, **which is quite the point of what follows: “All things are possible with God.”**

==> The link to Wednesday’s team session replay is coming soon on email.

==> [For Thursday](#) - Bible Study/ Interpretation Skills Sharpening

Special! Continuing excerpt from: Fee, Gordon D.; Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition* (pp. 29-32).

LEARNING TO DO EXEGESIS

How, then, do we learn to do good exegesis and at the same time avoid the pitfalls along the way? The first part of most of the chapters in this book will explain **how one goes about this task for each of the genres in particular**. Here we simply want to overview what is involved in the exegesis of any text.

At its highest level, of course, exegesis requires knowledge of many things we do not necessarily expect the readers of this book to know: the biblical languages; the Jewish, Semitic, and Greco-Roman backgrounds to much of what is written; how to determine the original text when early copies (produced by hand) have differing readings; the use of all kinds of primary sources and tools. But you can learn to do good exegesis even if you do not have access to all of these skills and tools. To do so, however, you must learn first what you can do with your own skills, and second how to use the work of others.

The key to good exegesis, and therefore to a more intelligent reading of the Bible, is to learn to read the text carefully and to ask the right questions of the text. One of the best steps one could do in this regard would be to read Mortimer J. Adler’s still popular classic *How to Read a Book* (1940, revised edition, with Charles Van Doren [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972]). Our experience over many years in college and seminary teaching is that many people simply do not know how to read well. To read or study the Bible intelligently demands careful reading, and this includes learning to ask the right questions of the text.

There are two basic kinds of questions one should ask of every biblical passage: those that relate to context and those that relate to content. The questions of context are also of two kinds: historical and literary. Let us briefly note each of these.

The Historical Context

The historical context, which will differ from book to book, has to do with several matters: the time and culture of the author and audience, that is, the geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author's setting; and the historical occasion of the book, letter, psalm, prophetic oracle, or other genre. All such matters are especially important for understanding.

1. It makes a considerable difference in understanding to know the eighth-century BC background of Amos, Hosea, or Isaiah, or that Haggai prophesied after the exile, or to know the messianic expectations of Israel when John the Baptist and Jesus appeared on the scene, or to understand the differences between the cities of Corinth and Philippi and how these differences affected the churches in each, and thus Paul's letters in each case. One's reading of Jesus' parables is greatly enhanced by knowing something about the customs of Jesus' day. Surely it makes a difference in understanding to know that the "denarius" ("penny" KJV!) offered to the workers in Matthew 20:1 – 16 was the equivalent of a full day's wage. Even matters of topography are important. Those raised in the American West — or East for that matter — must be careful not to think of "the mountains [that] surround Jerusalem" (Ps 125:2) in terms of their own experience of mountains, since they are actually low hills and plateaus.

To answer most of these kinds of questions, you will need some outside help. A good Bible dictionary, such as the four-volume International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ed. G. W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995]) or the one-volume Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary (J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney; ed. Moises Silva [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011]) or Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (ed. David Noel Freedman [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000]), will generally supply the need here. [Anne's note - a *trustworthy, reliable* study bible is a valuable resource]

2. **The more important question of historical context, however, has to do with the occasion and purpose of each biblical book and/or its various parts.** Here one wants to have an idea of what was going on in Israel or the church that called forth such a document, or what the situation of the author was that caused him to speak or write. Again, this will vary from book to book; it is after all somewhat less crucial for Proverbs, for example, than for 1 Corinthians.

The answer to this question is usually to be found — when it can be found — within the book itself. But one needs to learn to read with their eyes open for such matters. If you want to corroborate your own findings on these questions, you might consult your Bible dictionary again or the introduction to a good commentary on the book. But make your own observations first!

The Literary Context

The literary context is what most people mean when they talk about reading something in its context. Indeed this is the crucial task in exegesis, and fortunately it is something one can learn to do well without necessarily having to consult the "experts." **Essentially, literary context means first that words only have meaning in sentences, and second that biblical sentences for the most part have full and clear meaning only in relation to preceding and succeeding sentences.**

The most important contextual question you will ever ask — and it must be asked over and over of every sentence and every paragraph — is: What's the point? We must try to trace the author's train of thought. What is the author saying, and why does he say it right here? Having made that point, what is he saying next, and why?

This question will vary from genre to genre, but it is always the crucial question. **The goal of exegesis, you remember, is to find out what the original author intended.** To do this task well, it is imperative that one use a translation that recognizes poetry and paragraphs. One of the major causes of inadequate exegesis by readers of the King James Version and, to a lesser degree, of the New American Standard Bible, is that every verse has been printed as a paragraph. Such an arrangement tends to obscure the author's own logic. Above all else, therefore, one must learn to recognize units of thought, whether paragraphs (for prose) or lines and sections (for poetry). And, with the aid of an adequate translation, this is something any good reader can do with practice.

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Bible Study Skills/ Sharpening

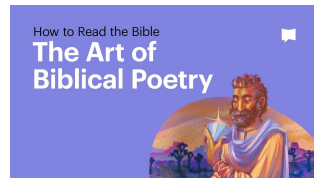
- **Realize what genre you are reading:** "What kind of writing is this - how does it communicate truth?"

Narrative (Genesis, Judges, Acts) - Tells what happened, not necessarily what should happen.
Ex. David did not take action on behalf of Tamar.

Law (much of Exodus–
Deuteronomy) -

Poetry/Psalms -

**Wisdom (Proverbs,
Ecclesiastes)** - General truths, not
ironclad promises.



Prophecy - Combines forth-telling (confronting the present) and foretelling (future events), heavily poetic, and often uses covenant lawsuit language. Requires attention to the prophet's original audience before jumping to end-times application.

Gospel - Theological biography with selective, arranged material meant to present Christ's identity and call for response .

Epistle - Written to address specific situations to groups of Christians (some Jewish, some Gentile, some mixed) often in a specific region.

Apocalyptic (Daniel, Revelation) - Highly symbolic, drawing on an established vocabulary of images that the original audience would have recognized.

- **Related questions you may want to ask when studying the Bible:**

Who was the original audience, and what did they need to hear?

Is the author describing what happened or prescribing what should happen?

Would they have recognized a literary technique (such as hyperbole, parallelism, or symbolism) that I might miss reading in English 2,000 years later?

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Contemplate the Living Water John 4:10-26, John 7:37-39, Revelation 22:17

Jesus offers living water to the woman at the well (who is drawing still water). Jesus reveals that he is the Messiah. Living water describes fresh, moving water (a spring or stream) as opposed to stagnant cistern water.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem - do you see Word and Spirit in this? Jesus reveals that Holy Spirit is the flow of Living Water within believers.

John 7:37-39 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 **Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.**" 39 **By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.** Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The Bride Together with Holy Spirit as described in the Final Chapter of the Bible (Apocalyptic genre)

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"

And let the one who hears say, "Come!"

Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

==> For Friday - Worship in Spirit and Truth - Doing the Word We Have Heard, Drinking Deeply of the Living Water, and Calling the Thirsty

John 4: 1) Contemplate the meaning of what Jesus said about harvest and sowing and reaping - why say this here?

2) Use your godly imagination with Holy Spirit to ponder what Jesus revealed while he stayed with the Samaritans for two more days. What would you talk with new believers about, who had come out of a false belief system - *Spirit and truth*?!

Review of some takeaways from looking at John 4/ worship in Spirit and truth

"In Spirit" — the worshippers must be enlivened, anointed, filled with and by the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit's presence, worship is merely human performance. This connects directly to John 3 — you must be born of the Spirit — and to John 7:37–39 where the living water which Jesus promises is the flow of Holy Spirit.

"In Truth" — aligned with, abiding in, formed by the actual words and revelation of Jesus. *John 15:3 "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."* Truth here is - JESUS - and his words. The word Jesus speaks does what the temple rituals could only symbolize — it actually cleanses.

John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Jesus doesn't say he is a truth among truths. He is the truth. **So worshipping in truth means worshipping in alignment with who Jesus actually is and what he has actually said — his revealing himself, his commands, his word abiding in us.** *John 8:31-32 To the Jews those who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

The Paraclete passages:

John 14:17 — "the Spirit of truth"

John 16:13 — "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth"

Holy Spirit takes the truth of Jesus and makes it reality/ dynamic in his born again people: we are made new, free to worship with our lives, joining God in his mission.

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Bible Study Skills/ Sharpening - getting more out of the passage

- Read the OT passage that is being quoted in the New Testament passage. Sometimes this is very enlightening!
- Distinguish singular and plural "you" - you can find and use a free online tool (ex. stepbible.org) for this or just google it. You may be amazed at how much y'all is used vs. you individually.
- Beware of anachronistic (out of time) errors of interpretation.

Anachronistic: reading a later concept, word-meaning, or cultural assumption back into an earlier text where it did not exist or mean that at the time of writing — interpreting the past through the lens of the present instead of the past's own context.

Luke 17 example of a semantic anachronism - where a word's modern meaning is read into an old translation. Example: Sometimes the KJV "offense" (skandalon/skandalizō = stumbling block, cause of apostasy) gets reread through the modern sense of "offense" (hurt feelings). This is not only confusing the message of the passage, but it has produced a teaching/ manmade doctrine that has potential to keep offenders from being corrected, and their victims under condemnation for feeling hurt, "offended". It changes "Woe to the one through whom the offense comes," from meaning the stumbling block setter, to instead put the "woe" onto the person who has a wound from encountering that stumbling block set in their path.

Luke 17:1 KJV Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! What does this mean?

Unfortunately a popular book urges people: don't take the bait/snare/trap of becoming offended. It is using the modern word meaning of offense instead of the KJV word meaning for "offense". That is anachronistic - misplaced definition.

Now look at it in KJV in context of the subsequent sentences Jesus spoke. *Luke 17:2-4 KJV 2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

Now see the NIV modern translation. *Luke 17:1-4 Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. 2 It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 So watch yourselves. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. 4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."*

In this example of Luke 17:1-2 consider: is the "woe" becoming injured when someone puts a stumbling block on your path? *No!* The warning is to those who would cause one of these little ones to stumble (an offender of them). For the good of all the offender should be rebuked, not ignored. Their sin should not be covered up/ concealed, rather, they should be forgiven when they repent.

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Special! Concluding chapter 1 excerpt from: **Fee, Gordon D.; Stuart, Douglas. How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: Fourth Edition (pp. 32-35).**

The Questions of Content

The second major category of questions one needs to ask of any text relates to the author's actual content. "Content" has to do with the meanings of words, their grammatical relationships in sentences, and the choice of the original text where the manuscripts (handwritten copies) differ from one another (see next

chapter). It also includes a number of the items mentioned above under “historical context,” for example, the meaning of a denarius, or a Sabbath day’s journey, or high places, etc.

For the most part, these are the questions of meaning that people ordinarily ask of the biblical text. When Paul writes to the believers in Corinth, “Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer” (2 Cor 5:16, NASB), you should want to know who is “according to the flesh” — Christ or the one knowing him? It makes a considerable difference in meaning to learn that “we” know Christ no longer “from a worldly point of view” (NIV) is what Paul intends, not that we know Christ no longer “in his earthly life.”

To answer these kinds of questions a reader will ordinarily need to seek outside help. Again, the quality of one’s answers to such questions will usually depend on the quality of the sources being used. This is the place where you will finally want to consult a good exegetical commentary. But note that from our view, consulting a commentary, as essential as this will be at times, is the last task you perform.

The Tools

For the most part, then, you can do good exegesis with a minimum amount of outside help, provided that the help is of the highest quality. We have mentioned three such tools: a good translation, a good Bible dictionary, and good commentaries. There are other kinds of tools, of course, especially for topical or thematic kinds of study. But for reading or studying the Bible book by book, these are the essential ones.

THE SECOND TASK: HERMENEUTICS

Although the word “hermeneutics” ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis, it is also used in the narrower sense of seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. In this book we will use it exclusively in this way — to ask questions about the Bible’s meaning in the “here and now” — even though we know this is not the most common meaning of the term.

This matter of the here and now, after all, is what brings us to the Bible in the first place. So why not start here? Why worry about exegesis? Surely the same Spirit who inspired the writing of the Bible can equally inspire one’s reading of it. In a sense this is true, and we do not by this book intend to take from anyone the joy of devotional reading of the Bible and the sense of direct communication involved in such reading. **But devotional reading is not the only kind one should do. One must also read for learning and understanding. In short, you must also learn to study the Bible, which in turn must inform your devotional reading.** And this brings us back to our insistence that proper “hermeneutics” begins with solid “exegesis.”

The reason you must not begin with the here and now is that the only proper control for hermeneutics is to be found in the original intent of the biblical text. As noted earlier in this chapter, this is the “plain meaning” one is after. Otherwise biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they might mean to any given reader. But such hermeneutics becomes total subjectivity, and who then is to say that one person’s interpretation is right and another’s is wrong? Anything goes.

In contrast to such subjectivity, we insist that the original meaning of the text — as much as it is in our power to discern it — is the objective point of control. We are convinced that the Mormons’ baptizing for the dead on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:29, or the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ rejection of the deity of Christ, or the snake handlers’ use of Mark 16:18, or the prosperity evangelists’ advocating of the American dream as a Christian right on the basis of 3 John 2 are all improper interpretations. In each case the error is in their hermeneutics, precisely because their hermeneutics is not controlled by good exegesis. **They have started with the here and now and have read into the texts “meanings” that were not originally intended.** And what is to keep one from killing one’s daughter because of a foolish vow, as did Jephthah (Judg 11:29 – 40), or to argue, as one preacher is reported to have done, that women should never wear their hair up in a topknot (“bun”) because the Bible says “topknot go down” (“Let him that is on the housetop not go down” [Mark 13:15 KJV])?

It will be argued, of course, that common sense will keep one from such foolishness. Unfortunately common sense is not always so common. We want to know what the Bible means for us — legitimately so. But **we cannot make it mean anything that pleases us and then give the Holy Spirit “credit” for it. The Holy Spirit cannot be brought into the process to contradict what is said, since the Spirit is the one who inspired the original intent.** Therefore, the Spirit’s help for us will come in our discovering that original intent and in guiding us as we try faithfully to apply that meaning to our own situations.

The questions of hermeneutics are not at all easy, which is probably why so few books are written on this aspect of our subject. Nor will all agree on how one goes about this task. But this is the crucial area, and believers need to learn to talk to one another about these questions — and to listen. On this one statement, however, there must surely be agreement: **A text cannot mean what it could never have meant for its original readers/hearers.** Or to put it in a positive way, the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first spoken or written. This is the starting point. How we work it out from that point is what this book is basically all about.

Someone will surely ask, “But is it not possible for a text to have an additional [or fuller or deeper] meaning beyond its original intent? After all, this happens in the New Testament itself in the way it sometimes uses the Old Testament.” In the case of prophecy, we would not close the door to such a possibility, and we would argue that, with careful controls, a second, or ultimate, intended meaning is possible. But how does one justify it at other points? Our problem is a simple one: Who speaks for God? Roman Catholicism has less of a problem here; the magisterium, the authority vested in the official teaching of the church, determines for all the fuller sense of the text. Protestants, however, have no magisterium and we should be properly concerned whenever anyone says they have God’s deeper meaning to a text — especially if the text never meant what it is now made to mean. Of such interpretations are all the cults born, and innumerable lesser heresies.

It is difficult to give rules for hermeneutics. What we offer throughout the following chapters, therefore, are guidelines. You may not agree with our guidelines. We do hope that your disagreements will be bathed in Christian charity, and perhaps our guidelines will serve to stimulate your own thinking on these matters.

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Enter in to worship the Lord! Use any of the worship songs we have shared together - or additional. Now please record your reflections.

We hope to see you Saturday morning at 9 am (eastern) for the grande finale - discussing and bringing insights and revelation; worshipping in Spirit and truth; responding to questions (bring them if you have them), and building spiritual strength in the community of the Troop!

Congratulations for completing KL this month!