

## 2. Book Studies and Principles of Interpretation

### The Project

#### Review Step 1 Assignment

Your preparation will help you make good use of your time as you proceed.

- Prayerfully choose a book of the Bible you want to study.
- Get a copy of the book you can write on. If possible, print out a copy of the book. Consider obtaining a “raw” version of it, with no footnotes, headings, verse numbers, chapter numbers, or section titles, by using biblegateway.com or a comparable source.
- Select a notebook or a journal where you can keep a running tab of your observations and questions as you do this book study.

#### More on the book study: material from David Bauer

In IBS, the essential elements in terms of methodology are:

- Pray
- Ask questions/ note observations

#### How will I have time for this type of study?

1. You get faster as you go—you’ll become structure conscious (of literature and films, etc.)
  - You’ll be able read other literature well
  - You’ll be able to read films because there’s no “pure entertainment.” IBS can help you evaluate films. The messages that we get from entertainment are values laden and usually subliminal.
2. You have to adapt and consider how to adapt the principles you’ve learned here for your own life in terms of preferences, time constraints, etc.
3. You may need to adapt your theology of ministry that puts the interpretation of Scriptures high.
  - Your (and a Seminary’s) beliefs are not determined by belief statements but by
    - The budget
    - The curriculum and content of your time
4. In the end, this kind of study saves time because you’ll have more than you need to teach and preach on.

## Complaint: This is too left-brained

- This is not actually true. Robert Traina said that “there’s an element of genius to it.”
- Exegesis and IBS are actually artsy things
- In regard to exegesis Schlaugter (to whom TDNT) said, “It’s as much an art as it is a science.”

## Three Levels of Observation:

1. Survey the book as whole
2. Survey the parts as wholes, divisions, sections, segments
3. Analysis, detailed observation of paragraphs and sentences

## Step 2. Identify the Main Theme

It’s important to identify the primary theme of the book you’re studying because this helps you understand from a high level what’s happening in the details.[1]

[1] Robert Traina’s classic *Methodical Bible Study*, pp. 55-59, says that you can have more than one main concern but even when it is so, the interaction between the two seems to be the main concern of the book.

- Read through the entire raw version of your chosen book in one sitting.
- As you read, keep a running tab of your questions and observations.
- List potential book themes as you read. While you are reading, ask yourself and the Holy Spirit, *What are some of the main emphases in this piece of literature?*
- You may want to read the book multiple times until you can identify potential themes.
- Identify what you think is the main theme of the book. You may need to read it again to identify from the themes you listed what is the primary theme—the one that stretches the entire document.
- Your written theme study will have five elements:
  1. Name the main theme (one phrase) and the main point of the book (one sentence).
    - Optional (unless student is taking for credit):
  2. Provide a general description of your theme (one paragraph).
  3. Explain one premiere representative passage (one short paragraph)
  4. Share a personal note on how this theme impacted you (one short paragraph)
  5. Describe why you think it’s the main theme and not others on your list (one paragraph)

## Example: John

[On separate paper]

## Principles of Interpretation

- Difference between meaning and significance
  - Meaning is what it meant then; it's objectively known as a baseline. While it is objectively discovered, it can also be subjectively experienced.
  - Significance is what role it plays in our lives means now; it's subjectively ascribed based on meaning.
  - EXAMPLE: 1 Thess. 4:13–18: “1 Thess 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.”
- AIM: Author's Intended Meaning.
  - Should we take God's Word literally? Literally in it's intended genre, which can mean we literally read it as a metaphor.
  - Should we read the Bible like love letters?
    - Yes: AIM
    - No: It's not love letters!
  - Should we read the Bible like an instruction manual?
    - Yes, it gives instructions for life.
    - No, it's not an instruction manual!
  - Song lyrics:
    - Yes, it has poetry!
    - No, it's not all poetry!
  - Alternatives to AIM:
    - Your intended meaning
    - Everyone's meaning.
    - No meaning.
  - EXAMPLE: Who is doing the rejoicing in Luke 15:7, 10? *Don't give answer, just tease the question.*
    - Luke 15:7: “Luke 15:3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 **I tell you that in the same way**

**there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”**

- Luke 15:10: “Luke 15:8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 **In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”**
- Luke 15:32 **“But we had to celebrate and be glad,** because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”
- Context is king: “A text without a context is a pretext for a proof-text that means whatever you want it to say.”
  - EXAMPLE: Matthew 7:1 (read full context, then go to John 7:24).
- Pay attention to details:
  - EXAMPLE: Jesus sweat drops of blood? No, his sweat was *like* drops of blood, a four-letter word in Greek and English (transliterated *hosei*) (Luke 22:44): “Luke 22:44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”
  - Notice small things: “Antichrist” isn’t mentioned in Revelation at all
- Order of decision making for meaning:
  - Immediate context
  - Section context
  - Book context
  - Author’s corpus context
  - New Testament context
  - Bible as a whole context