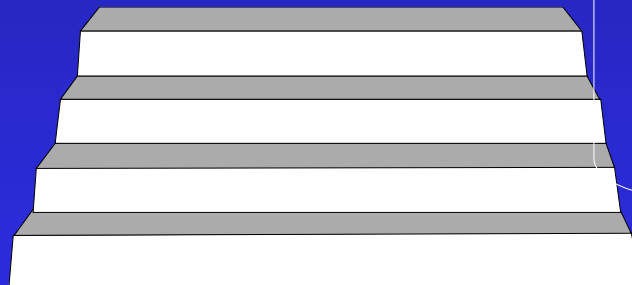
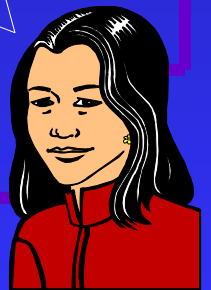



# III. Basic Steps in Biblical Interpretation



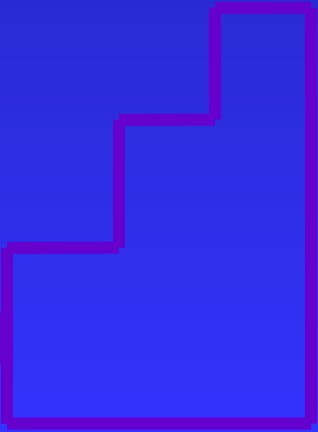

Summarize and make it simple.





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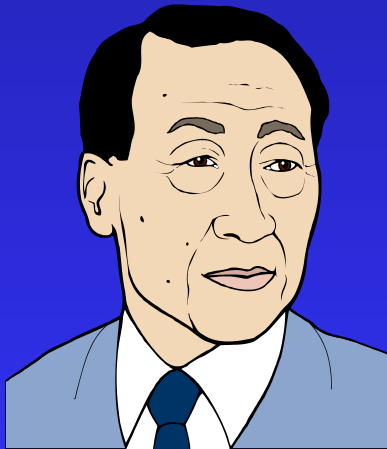
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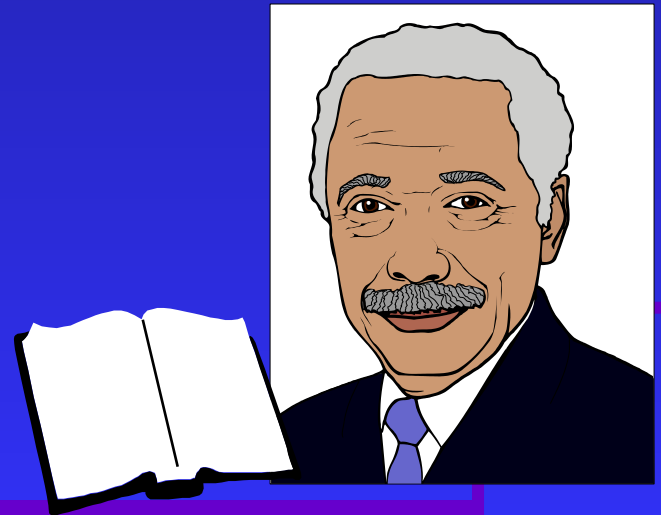
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# The Challenge

How can I go  
about studying the  
Bible correctly?



I'll help you  
get started.



# Reading Assignments

## ■ Required:

- ❖ Kuhatschek and Bunch, *How to Lead a LifeGuide Bible Study*, Chaps. 6-7, pp. 31-39

## ■ Optional:

- ❖ Kuhatschek and Bunch, *How to Lead*, Chaps. 3-5.
- ❖ Clowney, *CM: Christian Meditation*.

# Where Are We?

I. Course arrangements

II. Foundations of biblical interpretation

**III. Basic steps in biblical interpretation**

Elaborating on the steps:

IV. Application

...

■ Look at the first practical steps.

# Implications of *Lex Christi*

7C intimacy implies the elementary  
accessibility of the Bible



# **A. An Example of Interpretation**

Revelation 13:1-10





# **B. Our Goal in Interpreting**

To Serve God



# Function of the Bible

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).

- The Bible illumines all of life.
- Purpose of serving God: “your servant.”



All of life.





# Function of the Bible

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119:105).

- The Bible illumines all of life, knowledge, behavior, attitudes, public and private, the heart.
- With the purpose of serving God: “your servant.”

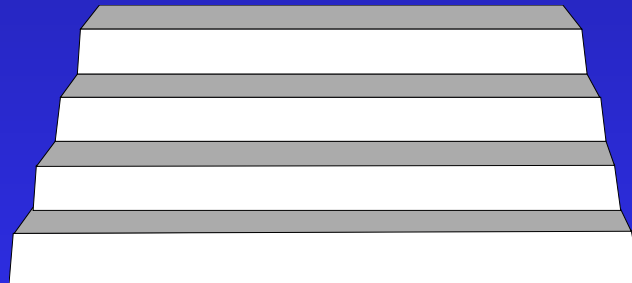
All of life.



# Obstacles to Interpretation

- Ignorance      2 Kings 22:13      Christian veneer
- Misunderstanding      2 Pet. 3:16      liberals, cults
- Inaction      James 1:22      dead orthodoxy

# C. Basic Steps in Interpretation



Elementary  
but important.





# 1. Defining Interpretation in Three Steps

# Remedy for the Obstacles

- Ignorance
- Misunderstanding
- Inaction
- Observation
- Elucidation (earlier called "interpretation")
- Application

Solution.



# Defining the Three Steps

- Observation
- Elucidation
- Application
- What does it say?
- What does it mean?
- How does it change me?

We need  
all three.



# Illustration: Bezalel in Exodus 31

- Observation
- Listen:  
description of the ark.
- Elucidation
- Think about it:  
how does it fit together,  
and how can I make it?
- Application
- Do it!  
Bezalel produces the ark.

# Illustration:

## Bezalel in Exod. 31

- Observation
- Listen: what does God say to describe the ark?
- Elucidation
- Think about it: how does the description all fit together, and how can I bring the design about in production?
- Application
- Do it! Bezalel produces the ark.





## 2. Importance of Observation





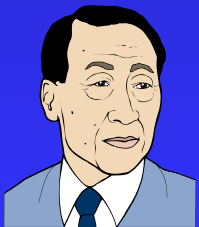
PARIS  
IN THE  
THE SPRING



# Defamiliarizing the Text

- Passages become “overfamiliar.”
- We think that we know, and do not observe.
- Make yourself “look again.”
- Do not shortcut the observation step.

It's not saying  
what I expected!



Open your eyes!

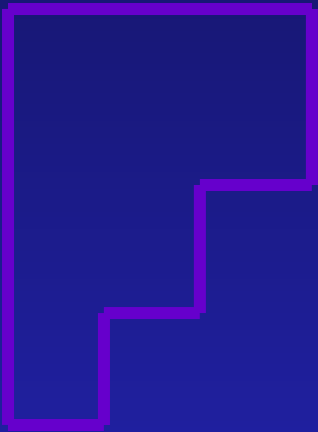


# Defamiliarizing the Text

- When we have read the Bible, many passages may become “overfamiliar.” We think that we know what they say and cease to observe what they really say.
- How do we make ourselves “look again”?
- Do not shortcut the observation step.



Open your eyes!



### **3. An Example from Ephesians 2:1-10**

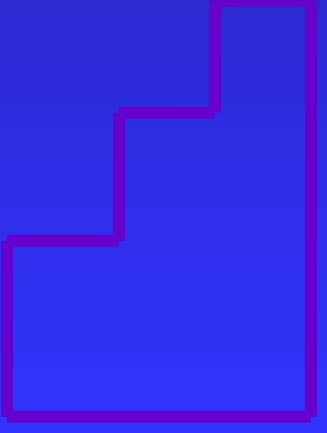
See the attached pages  
3.3a and 3.3b.





## 4. Distinguishing the Three Steps

What distinguishes observation,  
elucidation, and application?



# Observation

- Note each word, each phrase.
- Note arrangement of words.
- Ask who, what, when, where, how:
  - ❖ When and where did this happen?
  - ❖ Who is mentioned?
  - ❖ What are they doing?
- “What does this word contribute?”
- Ask all kinds of questions.
- Answer questions whose answer is obvious.



Look!

# Observation

- Note each word, each phrase, and each arrangement of words into sentences.
- Ask who, what, when, where, how:
  - ❖ When and where did this happen?
  - ❖ Who is mentioned?
  - ❖ What are they doing?
- Ask all kinds of questions, particularly, “What does this word mean, and what does it contribute to the passage?”
- Answer questions whose answer is obvious.



# Elucidation

- Answer questions from “Observation.”
- Unpack any obscurities.
- Note how parts fit together.
- Find general principles.
- Look for main points.
- Overall structure.



Wrestle!

# Elucidation

- Answer questions raised under “Observation.”
- Unpack any obscurities.
- Note how the parts reinforce and qualify one another.
- Make inferences about general principles embodied in the passage.
- Draw conclusions about the main points and overall structure of the passage.

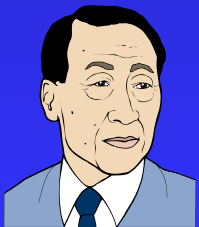


Wrestle!

# Application

- What should you now believe or do?
- Do it!

I'm going to have  
to change my life!



Don't stay in bed!



# Application

- Ask and answer questions about what you should believe or do on the basis of the passage.
- Do what you have seen you should do.



Don't stay in bed!

# 5. Teaching the Three Steps

- Have a block to teach hermeneutics.
- The three steps are simple.
- Books by Sterrett and Wald have further resources.



I'll have to  
organize it to  
make it clear.



Pass it on!

## 5. Teaching the Three Steps

- If you become a teacher of the Bible, have blocks in your schedule for teaching hermeneutical principles.
- The three steps above are simple enough to be taught and practiced by laymen.
- See books by Sterrett and Oletta Wald for further resources.



Pass it on!

## D. Correlation: a Fourth Step

- “Correlation” means comparing passages.
- Correlation belongs between Elucidation and Application.
- Correlation can distract from focus.
- But use it for broader view.

Don't forget  
the rest of the Bible!



## D. Correlation: a Fourth Step

- “Correlation” means examining how one passage fits in with other passages on the same topic or theme.
- Correlation is a fourth step inserted between Elucidation and Application.
- If you wish to concentrate only on one passage, Correlation can distract.
- But if your purposes are broader it may be useful.





# **E. Practicing the Three Steps**





# **1. An Example: Ephesians 2:1-10**

See attached sheets.



# Ephesians 2:1-10 TEXT

## OBSERVATION

## ELUCIDATION

## APPLICATION

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,  
2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.  
3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.  
4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

*Who is you?  
How dead?  
Difference of terms?  
Past time--when?  
World? Ruler?  
What kingdom?*

*Gentiles.  
Spiritually.  
Nuance.  
Before Christ.  
Pattern of life.  
Evil order.  
Satan as powerful,*

*Remember before Christ.  
Only God gives new life.  
Pray for those captive to Satan*

# The Transition in Ephesians 2:1-10

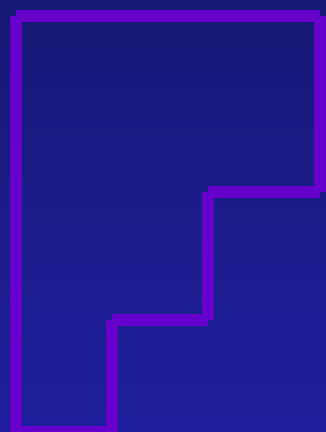
Before

- Dead
- Dominated
- Damned  
(opposite to God)

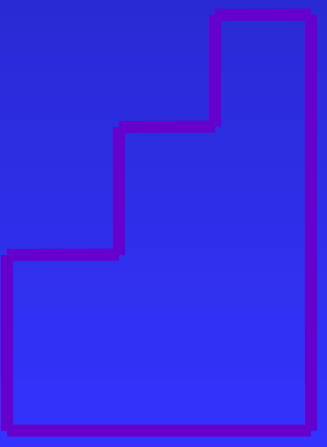
After

- Alive
- Enthroned
- Blessed and a  
display (reflecting  
God)

out of love, by grace



## **2. Homework Exercise: Ephesians 1:15-23**



# Apply Three Steps to Ephesians 1:15-23

- Do your work on page 3.5a.
- Focus on the passage, not on the rest of the Bible.
- Observe, observe again.
- Do not use commentaries or Greek.
- Study the text first-hand.

# Apply Three Steps to Ephesians 1:15-23

- Do your work on the attached page, p. 3.5a.
- Concentrate on what the passage says, not on the rest of the Bible. Beware of bringing in a lot of other ideas (except that in the application step, judging legitimate applications will involve some knowledge of the general teaching of Scripture).
- Do not skip over or minimize observation. Don't leap too quickly into elucidation and application.
- Do not use commentaries or the Greek text. See how closely you can study the passage in English.
- The main point is to discipline yourself to study the text first-hand.



# **F. A More Elaborate Series of Steps for Interpretation**

Preparing Sermons and Talks





# The Character of the Steps


- Attached pages give the full listing.
- The list is idealized.
  - ❖ No time to do every detail.
  - ❖ Not every step relevant.
  - ❖ The steps interact.

# The Character of the Steps

- See attached pages for the full listing.
- The list is idealized and a bit artificial.
  - ❖ You may not have time to do every step in detail.
  - ❖ Not every step may prove equally relevant to every passage and every purpose.
  - ❖ The steps interact with one another; they are not neatly separable in practice.



# Advice on Using the Steps

- Not rigid, but flexible guidelines.
  - Integrate what I have separated.
  - Judge when you can skim a step.
- 

# Advice on Using the Steps

- Not a rigid framework, but flexible guidelines and rules of thumb.
- As you gain experience, you will begin automatically to integrate what I have separated here for the sake of clarity.
- Bearing in mind the passage and its purpose, and the goal of your sermon or talk, judge when you can reasonably skim or devote only a little time to a particular step.

# 1. Preliminary Acquaintance

0. Memorize the passage (and some context)

- ❖ Value of memorization
- ❖ Hints on memorization

# 1. Preliminary Acquaintance (cont.)

- a. Define the limits of the passage
- b. Pray for insight and submission.
- c. Read the whole book.
- d. Try to make connections.

Explore!



# 1. Preliminary Acquaintance (cont.)

- a. Define the limits of the passage
- b. Pray for insight and for courage and humility to understand and present the passage faithfully. Determine to apply it to yourself and obey.
- c. Read the book in which the passage occurs. Try to understand the main purposes, setting, and themes of the book as a whole.
- d. Try to make connections.

Explore!



## 2. Exegesis in the Original Setting

- a. Learn about speaker, audience, and circumstances. (Historical background.)
- b. Translate Greek or Hebrew.
- c. Make a decision on textual variants.
  - ❖ In NT, Nestle-Aland.
  - ❖ In OT, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.



## 2. Exegesis in the Original Setting

- a. Learn as much as you can about the speaker, the audience, and the circumstances of the utterance. (Historical background.)
- b. Translate Greek or Hebrew of the passage, identifying the form and meaning of every word.
- c. Make a decision on any textual variants.
  - ❖ In NT, Nestle-Aland.
  - ❖ In OT, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

d. Solve difficulties with reference tools:

❖ Grammars

- ◆ Greek grammar: Blass-Debrunner-Funk or Burton (Wallace secondary)
- ◆ Hebrew: Gesenius-Kautsch-Cowley
- ◆ Aramaic grammar: Rosenthal

❖ Lexicons

- ◆ Greek: Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich
- ◆ Hebrew-Aramaic: Brown-Driver-Briggs

❖ Bible encyclopedia

- ◆ *New Bible Dictionary* (best one volume)
- ◆ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

❖ Atlases: Beitzel, *Moody Atlas*.

d. Check out difficulties with reference tools:

❖ Grammars

- ◆ Greek grammar: Blass-Debrunner-Funk or Burton (Wallace secondary)
- ◆ Hebrew: Gesenius-Kautsch-Cowley
- ◆ Aramaic grammar: Rosenthal

❖ Lexicons

- ◆ Greek: Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich
- ◆ Hebrew-Aramaic: Brown-Driver-Briggs

❖ Bible encyclopedia

- ◆ *New Bible Dictionary* (best one volume)
- ◆ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (5 vols.)

❖ Atlases: Beitzel, *Moody Atlas*.

## 2. Exegesis (cont.)

- e. Identify the genre.
  - ❖ Of your passage.
  - ❖ Of larger sections.
- f. Outline the passage.

How it fits  
together.



## 2. Exegesis (cont.)

- e. Try to identify the genre (“form”) of the text and of larger sections in which it is embedded.
- f. Outline the passage using whatever forms of outlining are most promising.

How it fits together.



### 3. Interrelations with Other Passages (“Correlation”)

- a. Use cross references to passages.
  - ❖ ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV, or ESV reference Bibles.
  - ❖ Nestle-Aland Greek NT.
- b. Trace 2-5 key words through OT and NT.
  - Same for semantically similar words.
  - ❖ NT: Moulton-Geden or Englishman’s
  - ❖ OT: Even-Shoshan or Englishman’s
  - ❖ LXX: Bagster.
  - ❖ Or Bible software with Greek and Hebrew.

### 3. Interrelations with Other Passages (“Correlation”)

- a. Use cross references to find other passages.
  - ❖ ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV, or ESV reference Bibles.
  - ❖ Nestle-Aland Greek NT has good references.
- b. Pick two to five key words and note their use through OT and NT. Do the same for semantically similar Greek and Hebrew words.
  - ❖ NT: Moulton-Geden or Englishman’s
  - ❖ OT: Even-Shoshan or Englishman’s
  - ❖ LXX: Bagster. Hatch-Redpath is definitive but expensive.
  - ❖ Or buy Bible software to search Greek and Hebrew words

### 3. Interrelations (cont.)

- c. Follow theological issues.
- d. Reevaluate exegesis using previous canon.
- e. Summarize in a single sentence.
- f. Check exegetical commentaries.



### 3. Interrelations (cont.)

- c. Identify theological issues raised or solved. Compare the passage with other passages dealing with similar issues.
- d. Reevaluate exegesis in the light of biblical canon already available to the original readers of the given passage.
- e. Summarize the message of the passage in a single declarative sentence.
- f. Check exegetical commentaries.

## 4. Role in History of Redemption

- a. Locate in an epoch.
- b. Analyze sources and later uses.
- c. Brainstorm for further connections.
  - ❖ How does the passage proclaim Christ?
- d. Assess how situation affects application.

## 4. Role in History of Redemption

- a. Locate the passage in its epoch in the history of redemption.
- b. Do a diachronic analysis of the earlier biblical sources and later biblical uses of this passage, and its application to various audiences.
- c. Brainstorm for further connections. How does the passage proclaim Christ?
- d. Assess how differences in situation will affect current application.

## 5. Presentation (“Application”)

- a. Formulate three or four applications.
- b. Consult others about relevance.
- c. Make a one-sentence summary with “you.”
- d. Adapt application to your audience.
- e. Focus on one principal application.

## 5. Presentation (“Application”)

- a. Formulate three or four applications.
- b. Consult others about situational relevance.
- c. Crystalize the applications in a one-sentence summary, along the lines of 3.e., but now containing the word “you.”
- d. Think about your audience, and adapt the application to them.
- e. Choose a principal application. Then work back from the application to an outline of your speech, with the audience constantly in view.

## 5. Presentation (cont.)

f. Fill in the outline.

- ❖ Whole sentences, not phrases.
- ❖ Apply *every* major point.
- ❖ Include illustrations.
- ❖ Prune ruthlessly.

g. Let it sit for six months.

- Don't go to commentaries before 3.f.



## 5. Presentation (cont.)

- f. Fill in the outline in detail.
- ❖ Write whole sentences, not phrases.
  - ❖ Make applications of *every* major point and as many minor points as you can.
  - ❖ Include illustrations.
  - ❖ Prune ruthlessly.
- g. Let the outline sit for six months.
- Note: resist the temptation to go to commentaries before stage 3.f.

Possible?



# G. Elaboration of Exegesis

See attached sheet.

There's always  
more to do.

