

Guideline I: Reflect on Presuppositions that Impact Interpretation of a Passage

Reflect on Presuppositions

- Part of an ongoing process
- What do you bring to the text?
 - Contact lenses
 - Interpretation involves identification of “lenses”
 - Must become aware of “lenses”

Types of Presuppositions

- Preunderstandings
- Theological Commitments
- Social/Cultural (worldview)
- Personal Experiences

Identifying Presuppositions

- Ask the following questions:
 - Who are you as an interpreter?
 - What theological, social, and cultural commitments do bring to the text?

An Example from Deuteronomy 15:4

However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you...

Deuteronomy 15:4 (NIV)

An Example from Deuteronomy 15:4

- Presuppositions affect interpretation
- Hearing other “voices” is important

Guideline 2: Identify Context

**The socio-historical, political
and religious context**

Identifying the Context

- An ongoing process

Identifying the Context

- Important questions to ask in this step:
 - Audience?
 - Key issues?
 - Worldview and presuppositions of original author and audience?

Context and Interpretation:

- Culture affects interpretation of language

Discovering the Context

- Read widely about culture
- Books, articles on Israelite Society and life in Roman Empire
- History of Israel and early church

Historical and Cultural Context

- Historical and cultural context is not determinative in a text
- Textual evidence is key

Example: Lamentations

- Written in response to 586 BC
- Conclusion from text, not historical proximity

Jewish Basis of Security

- Davidic Kingship
- Covenant with Israel
- Yahweh's ownership of the land
- Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem

Determining the Specific Context of the Text

- Sources:
 - Bible Dictionary
 - Commentaries

Understanding the Context of the Text

- Understand context before attempting interpretation
- Context helps in asking interpretive questions

Context and Interpretation

- Look carefully at text
- Evidence of reference to event or parallel?
- Meaning embedded in text

Interpreting Textual Meaning

- Meaning is embedded in the text

Guideline 3: Identify Genre

The literary category
of the writing being studied

Identifying the Genre

- There are 7 main genres or types of literature in the Bible:
 - 1) Narrative
 - 2) Poetry
 - 3) Prophecy
 - 4) Epistles (or Letters)
 - 5) Wisdom literature
 - 6) Law
 - 7) Apocalyptic Literature

An Example: Proverbs

- “The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway.”

Proverbs 15:19 (NIV)

- “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”

Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

Identifying Genre

- Usually readily apparent
- If in doubt, consult commentary

Types of Genre

- Genre of content
- Genre of form