

## **Guideline 4: Identify the Text and Cotext**

**Identify the text to  
be interpreted and its  
literary surroundings**

### **Pitfalls of Ignoring Cotext**

- Ignoring Cotext can lead to misinterpretation

- “Go to Bethel and sin...”

Amos 4:4 (NIV)

- “Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more...”

Philippians 3:4 (NASB)

### **Paying Attention to Cotext Leads to Greater Understanding of a Text**

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)

## **Cotext**

- The literary surroundings -

- What comes before and after the passage

### **Paying Attention to Cotext Leads to Greater Understanding of a Text**

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

### **Ways to Pay Attention to Cotext**

- Study the structure of the book to get an overview of the message
  - Outline the book
  - Use commentary introductions or Bible dictionaries
  - Check boundaries of proposed passage

## Ways to Pay Attention to Cotext

- Trace themes
- Circle or underline repeated words, ideas and concepts

## Example: The book of Habakkuk

- Theme of Waiting  
(Habakkuk 2:1-2, 2:3, 2:20; 3:16)

## Example: The book of Habakkuk

I will stand on my guard post  
And station myself on the rampart;  
And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me,  
And how I may reply when I am reproved.  
Then the LORD answered me and said,  
“Record the vision  
And inscribe it on tablets,  
That the one who reads it may run.  
For the vision is yet for the appointed time;  
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.  
Though it tarries, wait for it;  
For it will certainly come, it will not delay.”  
Habakkuk 2:1-3 (NASB)

## Example: The book of Habakkuk

But the LORD is in His holy temple.  
Let all the earth be silent before Him.  
Habakkuk 2:20 (NASB)

## Example: The book of Habakkuk

I heard and my inward parts trembled,  
At the sound my lips quivered.  
Decay enters my bones,  
And in my place I tremble.  
Because I must wait quietly for the day  
of distress,  
For the people to arise who will invade us.  
Habakkuk 3:16 (NASB)

## Ways to Pay Attention to Cotext

- Trace themes
- Circle or underline repeated words, ideas, concepts
- Look for implicit or explicit purpose statements

## Purpose Statements

“But these [signs] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

John 20:31 (NRSV)

- Purpose statement: Faith in Jesus as Messiah

## Guideline 5:

### Carefully Study the Text Using Appropriate Methods and Tools

## Carefully Study the Passage

- Pay attention *to the relationship of ideas*
- Significance of genre

## General Steps

- Note the structure of the passage
- Identify themes

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## General Steps

- Note the structure of the passage
- Identify themes
- Carefully follow the pattern of ideas through the passage

## General Steps

- Carefully follow the pattern of ideas through the passage
- Poetry:
  - Parallelism—balancing of lines
  - Figurative language

## General Steps

- Carefully follow the pattern of ideas through the passage
- Epistle:
  - Follow the logic of the argument via clauses, ideas and conjunctions

## General Steps

- Carefully follow the pattern of ideas through the passage
- Narrative:
  - Follow the plot (setting, character interaction, conflict, climactic points)
  - Identify themes woven through the plot

## General Steps

- See the Biblical Genre section of this CD Presentation

## General Steps

- Consult commentaries after your own work to avoid *undue reliance* on commentaries

## Guideline 6: Summarize the Key Ideas of the Text

## Identify the Key Ideas of the Passage

- There are many ideas in any one text
- Identify those that are central to the text versus secondary
- Use your careful reading of the passage (guideline 5)

## Example: The Gospel of Matthew

And Jesus came up and said to them,  
“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (NRSV)

## Example: The Gospel of Matthew

- Is the key idea of this text *about the trinity*?
  - Main idea is the *making of disciples*

## Example: The Gospel of Matthew

- Main idea is the *making of disciples*
- A secondary idea relates to *how* disciples are made: By baptizing and teaching
- Another supporting idea: Authority and presence of Jesus with his disciples

## Crafting a Summary Statement

- Summary statement: Expresses the key ideas(s) and how the secondary ideas relate to those that are primary

## Summary Statement:

- Summary  $\neq$  The main point
- Summary  $\neq$  Loose collection of reflections on passage
- Summary  $\neq$  Verbatim repetition of passage
- Summary = *Disciplined paraphrase*

## **Summary Statement:**

- Disciplined Paraphrase:

'Paraphrase' suggests that I will need to use my own words to some extent; 'Disciplined' keeps the ideas very much tied to the passage

## **Still in Exegetical Phase**

- What was the author communicating in the text?