

# **How to Study the Bible**

**A Guide to Systematic, Exegetical Bible Study**



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**A Guide to Systematic, Exegetical Bible Study**

**[Abridged Edition]**

**Sam A. Smith**

Biblical Reader Communications  
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## **How to Study the Bible: A Guide to Systematic, Exegetical Bible Study**

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## Preface

The study of the Bible has been my vocation, my recreation, and my joy for the past fifty-one years since I became a Christian. There is nothing I would rather talk about or think about than God's word. Its teachings are fresh every day, and seldom do I read my Bible that I do not discover something new. The truths of the Bible are as relevant today as when they were penned. It is my hope that you too will find the same comfort, hope, and yes, excitement, in the study of God's word that I have found over the years. If this small work in any way contributes to your understanding and communication of God's word it will have been well worth the effort. There is nothing really new in these pages. I have simply digested, organized, and made available in what I hope is an easy to follow format, what my teachers communicated to me, and which I have practiced through the years. I make no claim of originality for any of the underlying concepts, only for the format in which it is presented. I would like to give special recognition to the late Dr. Kenneth McKinley and the late Dr. Raymond Gingrich, both of LeTourneau College (now LeTourneau University) for their labors in communicating to me the basics of biblical study. I would also like to thank my many teachers at Dallas Theological Seminary, most now retired or in the presence of the Lord, for helping me take that basic knowledge to a higher level.

Thank you God for giving us your word!

Sam A. Smith



## **Introduction to Systematic and Exegetical Bible Study**

### **Why systematic and exegetical Bible study?**

The chapter heading sounds rather intimidating, but it shouldn't be. Systematic Bible study makes use of a well-thought-out procedure rather than a haphazard approach, and exegetical Bible study simply means letting the Bible speak for itself rather than using it to "rubber stamp" our own ideas, in other words, discovering what the Bible actually says. If thoroughly and prayerfully implemented, the procedure outlined here should lead to a more complete understanding of the Bible's message and even help in communicating its truths to others. The most important thing to remember is to enjoy your time spent with God in his word!

### **How to use this guide**

The procedure outlined here should be followed stepwise. Don't skip around — you might miss an important step that could help to unlock the meaning of some portion of God's word. You should also record (write or type) all of the data you gather. Hopefully it won't be the last time you study that particular passage or book, and you'll want to look back at your previous data so you don't have to "reinvent the wheel," so to speak. Many students will likely choose to record only certain information of interest; in such cases the outline can serve as a reminder of critical steps in the process. While each student will eventually develop his or her own method of Bible study, the procedure given here is offered as a starting point on which you can build your own study model.

### **Formal versus informal Bible study**

One of the major differences between formal and informal Bible study is in the recording of information. Formal research requires careful documentation. So, you need to determine from the outset what type of study you are going to attempt. For informal study you could simply look through the procedure given here and make general use of the steps, recording only minimal data. However, for formal study, such as required for writing, research, or teaching/sermon preparation, thorough documentation is a must. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that high quality Bible study requires time and careful recording of information. The alternative would be lost information and wasted time and effort. Besides, with modern technology making it so easy there is really no reason not to carefully document and preserve your valuable research.

## **A special word about preserving your research**

Serious consideration should be given to the preservation of your research data. Over time you could invest many hundreds, perhaps thousands of hours into your study; in most, if not all cases you will want to have access to that information in the future. Every serious student of the Bible should develop a system for organizing and preserving their research information. Who knows, that Bible study might someday become a series of sermons, and that series of sermons could serve as the basis for a book. (It has happened many times!) While you might not be able to envision all the ways your data might be useful in the future, careful preservation of your work is certainly a good idea. You should also give thought to how you will back up your work for long-term storage in case your working copy is lost. Hard drives die; disks and thumb drives get lost or damaged. There are many options for offsite, online (cloud) storage. Another good reason to consider cloud storage is that you can access your work from almost anywhere. However, you should not rely on cloud storage alone. You should always keep a current local copy of all your work. Another good idea is to utilize software that will automatically make generational copies of files every time you save a file. A generational backup system makes a separate copy of the file under a different name every time you perform a save (up to a certain number limit). Normally generational files are automatically numbered in chronological order. Making generational backups gives you the option of rolling back changes in the event you accidentally overwrite a file with bad data, or accidentally delete something and subsequently save your file, thus permanently deleting some material. Accidentally deleting a paragraph in a three-page paper might only be an inconvenience, but accidentally deleting a fifty-page section of research could qualify as a major disaster unless you have a generational backup. There are a number of options available for making generational backups, and it's well worth the very small investment to purchase the software. Some backup drives even include this type of software free.

## **Brief outline of the procedure**

The outline below will briefly acquaint you with the study procedure that is more fully developed in the next chapter. After looking at the outline, along with the explanation that follows, you might want to use this brief version of the procedure to remind yourself of the main steps to be followed. It would be a good idea to download the digital version and print out this outline and keep it in a place where you can consult it as you study. (The digital version is free, and the instructions for downloading it are on the copyright page and on the last page of this guide.)

## Procedure:

A special note about the outline format: I have chosen to use a simplified outline format called “decimal outline format,” which might be unfamiliar to some readers. Only numbers are used as identifiers. The first major point in the outline is “1.” The first subpoint of “1” is “1.1.” The first subpoint under “1.1.” would be “1.1.1.” and so on. The advantage of this type of outline should be readily apparent since the entire hierarchy is contained in each identifier; such a system is to outlining what the metric system is to measurement—purely logical. In referring to an identifier (*e.g.*, 1.4.1.3.3.), one knows immediately where this point is located in the overall outline, since no two identifiers are the same (*i.e.*, there is only one 1.4.1.3.3. in the outline). This allows one to refer to any point in the outline using only its identifier rather than having to trace backwards, perhaps many pages, to find that it is subpoint “(3),” under subpoint “c,” under subpoint “1,” under subpoint “D,” under Roman numeral “I.”

### 1. Determine what the text says.

#### 1.1. Determine the proper wording of the text.

*Alternatives:*

1.1.1. Translate the text from the Hebrew (OT) or Greek (NT).

1.1.2. Determine the best reading of the text by comparing a good translation (*e.g.*, the NASB) with the Hebrew or Greek text (or Hebrew/Greek interlinear text).

1.1.3. Determine the best reading of the text by means of comparing translations.

#### 1.2. Identify who is speaking to whom in the passage.

#### 1.3. Make a sentence flow diagram of your passage indicating all clauses and phrases.

#### 1.4. Identify the parts of speech in your passage

##### 1.4.1. Verbs

1.4.1.1. Transitive verbs (verbs with an object)

1.4.1.2. Intransitive verbs (verbs without an object.)

1.4.1.3. If possible, determine the mood of all verbs (this must be done from the original language)

1.4.1.3.1. Indicative mood (facts)

- 1.4.1.3.2. Imperative mood (commands)
    - 1.4.1.3.3. Subjunctive mood (hypotheticals)
  - 1.4.2. Nouns
    - 1.4.2.1. Subjects
    - 1.4.2.2. Predicate nominatives
    - 1.4.2.3. Objects
  - 1.4.3. Modifiers (identify what each modifier modifies)
    - 1.4.3.1. Adjectives, adjectival clauses and phrases (which modify nouns)
    - 1.4.3.2. Adverbs, and adverbial clauses and phrases (which modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, *etc.*)
    - 1.4.3.3. Participles and participial phrases (a form of the verb used to modify a noun or noun phrase)
  - 1.4.4. Prepositions and prepositional phrases (show temporal, spatial, or logic relationships of things modified)
  - 1.4.5. Conjunctions (connect words, phrases, clauses, and sometimes sentences)
  - 1.4.6. Conditional particles (“if,” “since”)
 

(Note that classes of conditionals must be determined from the original language.)

    - 1.4.6.1. First class conditional (“If,” and it’s true; can be translated “since.”)
    - 1.4.6.2. Second class conditional (“If,” and it isn’t true)
    - 1.4.6.3. Third class conditional (“If,” and it might or might not be true—hypothetically)
  - 1.4.7. Determiners (articles)
    - 1.4.7.1. Definite (“the”)
    - 1.4.7.2. Infinite (“a”)
  - 1.4.8. Identify phrases
- 1.5. If need be, look up any words marked in the previous step.
  - 1.5.1. For interpreters with a background in the original language, the syntax of each word should be thoroughly understood and noted. It would be

a good idea to use a grid form to record this information. (See the Parsing Sheet on page 85.)

- 1.5.2. Interpreters without a background in the original language may consult an analytical lexicon or database to determine the syntax (part of speech) of key words.
- 1.5.3. Flag any words that are unique to this author, and pay special attention to those words.
- 1.6. Check the grammar.
2. Determine the historical/dispensational context.
  - 2.1. Who is the author? (This is not necessarily the speaker.)
  - 2.2. When was the passage composed?
  - 2.3. What is the date of the events or dialogue of the passage?
  - 2.4. Who is speaking to whom?
  - 2.5. What is the topic under consideration?
  - 2.6. Under what dispensation was the passage composed?
  - 2.7. To which dispensation does the passage pertain?
  - 2.8. Identify and mark all key terms and ideas that need to be researched historically.
3. List all practical points.
  - 3.1. Commands issued by the writer or speaker
  - 3.2. Observations made by the author or speaker
  - 3.3. Principles given by the author or speaker
  - 3.4. Important implications
4. List all doctrines upon which the passage bears.
  - 4.1. Explicit points of doctrine
  - 4.2. Implicit points of doctrine (by implication)

5. Outline the natural flow of ideas in the passage.
  - 5.1. Determine the general outline of the book in which the passage is found.
  - 5.2. Determine the outline of the passage under consideration.
  
6. Identify the main idea of the passage. (Be sure to keep the key idea of the larger context in view as you do this, *i.e.*, the **main idea** of the book.)
  
7. Contextual analysis: Compare the teaching of the passage with relevant teaching elsewhere in Scripture.
  - 7.1. Compare with relevant content in the same book.  
(Does the same book deal with the topic elsewhere?)
  - 7.2. Compare with relevant content elsewhere by the same author.  
(Does the same author deal with the topic elsewhere?)
  - 7.3. Compare with relevant content elsewhere within the same dispensation.  
(Do other authors within the same dispensation deal with this topic?)
  - 7.4. Compare with relevant content from other dispensations.  
(Do other authors in other dispensational contexts deal with the same topic?)
  - 7.5. Determine how the context relates to the interpretation of the passage.
  - 7.6. Determine how the context sheds additional light on the topic under examination.
  
8. Hermeneutical analysis (See the chapter on “Hermeneutics.”)
  
9. Comparative analysis (Compare your conclusions with those of others.)
  
10. Considering how to present your material
  - 10.1. Decide which presentation mode you plan to use (exegetical, topical, theological, or historical).
    - 10.1.1. The exegetical (expository) mode
    - 10.1.2. The topical mode
    - 10.1.3. The theological mode
    - 10.1.4. The historical mode
  - 10.2. Define the scope of the presentation.
  - 10.3. Select an appropriate title.



- 10.4. Reduce the relevant historical background to a concise paragraph or two.
  - 10.5. Compose a summary explaining what the lesson is about.
  - 10.6. Outline your presentation. (Stick to the main points, based on your research.)
  - 10.7. Plan your closure.
11. Producing the presentation notes
    - 11.1. Compose a general introduction to the text including the author, purpose, and the historical situation of the book and passage.
    - 11.2. If you are preparing a sermon or standalone presentation, you will need to state the main idea of the passage, if there is one, or delineate whatever the main ideas are. This can be included in the general introduction above.
    - 11.3. Compose your presentation notes in accordance with the presentation modality you have chosen.

If you are preparing an exegetical presentation do the following:

      - 11.3.1. Determine the natural breaking points (transitions) in the broader passage. The information in sections 5.2 - 5.3 will help you. This will define the scope of your sermon/lesson (*i.e.*, where your presentation will begin and end).
      - 11.3.2. For each scope, recombine the commands, observations, principles, implications, and doctrines from sections 3.1 – 4.2 in sequence (*i.e.*, in the order they appear in the passage).
    - 11.4. Plan your closing.
12. Evaluation: It's always a good idea to have two or three trusted individuals evaluate your presentation. This is particularly true for new speakers. (A sample evaluation form is included on page 83.)



## A Closer Look at the Procedure

Okay, now that you've have time to familiarize yourself with the basic procedure, let's take a closer look at some of the steps.

### 1. Determine what the text says.

It isn't possible to determine what the biblical text means until one first determines what it says. Even those who "spiritualize" the text cannot do so until they first determine what it says.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the first step in interpreting any biblical text is to determine, as accurately as possible, what it says. Keep in mind that this is not the interpretive stage of your study. Students of the Bible sometimes fall into the trap of determining the reading of the text by reading into it their own biblical or theological preclusions; such a process is "eisegetical" (reading one's own ideas into the text), rather than "exegetical" (reading the author's ideas out of the text). How one goes about determining what the text says will vary according to his or her skill set, but as you can see, this is the foundation upon which the rest of your study will be built. A mistake here can, and likely will, profoundly affect your subsequent study and conclusions, so take the time necessary to do the best you can do, and don't move on until you are satisfied you have done so. As mentioned already, this procedure can be adapted to a wide variety of skill sets. There are different ways of approaching this task depending on one's level of skill. The following methods are given in order of preference. No matter what the skill level, following a systematic approach will help in determining the meaning of the text.

#### 1.1. Determine the proper wording of the text.

*Alternatives:*

##### 1.1.1 Translate the text from the Hebrew or Aramaic (OT), or Greek (NT).

[This is the BEST PRACTICE, but it requires advanced original language skills.]

Doing this will require a level of competency in either Hebrew (and possibly Aramaic) for OT texts, and/or Greek for NT texts. While there are many helpful language tools available for those that do not read the biblical languages, translation is generally the domain of those with considerable training and practice. Translation involves far more than

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<sup>1</sup> Spiritualization (which should be avoided like the plague) is an attempt to determine a deeper "spiritual" meaning in the statements of scripture. Spiritualization is a subjective process that is not actually interpretive. Proper biblical interpretation is exegetical (deriving the meaning from the text), rather than eisegetical (pouring the interpreter's thoughts into the text).

simply determining the meaning of individual words (lexicography). Competent translators must also be familiar with accidentence (word construction), syntax (words usage), grammar (the rules of the specific language), lower textual criticism (the resolution of conflicting manuscript evidence), and to some degree, the writing styles of individual writers. Even archaeology, Bible history, and biblical and systematic theology can come into play in translation. Such skills are most often acquired in higher-level education. Becoming a competent translator can require years of patient study and practice. Having said that, for the student who would like to expand into this area, the good news is that there are now some exceptionally good self-study tools available. So, if you're inclined, pick a language and get started. While mastery of a language will take considerable time and effort, anything you learn can be put to good use. (One small bit of advice: For most people, the best order in which to tackle the biblical languages is: Greek, then Hebrew, then Aramaic. Greek is the easiest to learn, and you will need to know Hebrew before attempting Aramaic since most Aramaic grammars presume some knowledge of Hebrew.)

For those who will be working from the original languages, there is a Parsing Sheet template on page 85. You can copy this sheet to record your data.

- 1.1.2. Determine the best reading of the text by comparing a good translation (*e.g.*, the NASB) with the Hebrew or Greek text (or Hebrew/Greek interlinear text).

[Requires a moderate level of original language skill.]

This is an intermediate level of study; it allows those with minimal language skills access to the original language text. In order to make this method work, one must first begin with a very reliable translation. My recommendation, at the present time, would be the latest edition of the New American Standard Bible (NASB). While there are other good Bible translations, and certainly more will follow, in the author's opinion, the NASB is the most accurate English translation at the present time, and it is periodically updated to reflect the most recent biblical and linguistic research.

Starting from a highly accurate translation like the NASB, one can then delve into the richness of the text using the host of Bible study tools keyed to the Hebrew and Greek texts. Such research can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be. In fact, many of these tools are now available online and can be accessed free (see the chapter "Basic Skills," beginning on page 75).

- 1.1.3. Determine the best reading of the text by means of comparing translations.

[Requires little or no knowledge of the original language.]

For the Bible student who is not ready to tackle the original languages, the best option is to begin with an excellent translation (we'll call this your "primary text"), and to compare it with several other good translations. This procedure, however, comes with a warning: 1) You will need a very good primary text (like the NASB); 2) You will need a couple of good secondary texts for comparison; there are many standard English translations that could be used. At this stage of study paraphrases (like The Living Bible and The Message) should be avoided since they are highly interpretive; the goal at this stage is not interpretation, but determination of what the text says.

- 1.2. Identify who is speaking to whom in the passage.

This might seem rather obvious, but serious problems can result from a failure to understand the flow of dialogue in a text. The best procedure would be to trace the flow of dialogue through the entire book, or section of a book. This is usually not difficult. Generally people or things referred to by pronouns should be identified using the nearest antecedent (there are exceptions, of course). For those with original language skills, case, gender and number suffixes can also be very helpful in identifying, or confirming, to whom or what a pronoun refers.<sup>2</sup>

- 1.3. Make a sentence flow diagram of your passage indicating all clauses and phrases and their relationships.

A sentence flow diagram arranges the text of the passage according to dependency. Dependent clauses and phrases are indented under the clause to which they are dependent. There are many ways to make a sentence flow diagram. Your diagram can be very simple, showing only the relation of independent and dependant clauses, or it can be more detailed, showing the relationship of various types of phrases to clauses. In the simplest type of diagram the text is arranged in indented fashion by main clause, coordinate (independent) clauses, and subordinate (dependent) clauses. This is best done using a word processor. While the procedure might sound difficult, it is actually very easy and fun; and with a little practice, the use of sentence flow

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mt. 1:16 where in the English "whom" is sometimes mistakenly thought to refer to Joseph since it is his genealogy; however, "whom" is feminine and clearly refers to Mary. Thus it is not simply stated of Mary that she was (incidentally) the wife of Joseph, but rather that Joseph was the husband of Jesus' mother (Joseph being the legal, but not the biological father).

diagrams will prove to be one of the most useful tools in your Bible study toolbox. Of all of the grammatical tools available, making a sentence flow diagram requires the least expertise in grammar. (See the sample diagram beginning on page 37.) In addition to helping you understand individual sentences, your sentence flow diagram will also greatly help you in outlining the passage. The following is the basic structure for a simple sentence flow diagram. Remember, although not shown below, you can also indent various phrases (see the section on phrases beginning on page 26).

Topic sentence (independent clause)  
    Topic sentence (dependent clause, if present)  
        Supporting sentence (independent clause)  
        Supporting sentence (dependent clause, if present)  
{ ... Repeat the preceding steps for all supporting sentences in the passage}  
Concluding sentence (independent clause)  
    Concluding sentence (dependent clause, if present)

What's the difference between an independent clause and a dependent clause? An independent clause can stand by itself and make sense, but a dependent clause only makes sense in relation to an independent clause.

*Example:*

Jon is a good basketball player, (independent clause)  
    because he is highly coordinated. (dependent clause)

In studying the Bible a passage may encompass many sentences, and some sentences may extend over several verses. If you are confused about how to get started, the example in the next chapter should help (pages 37-44).

#### 1.4. Identify the parts of speech in your passage.

This is not a structural diagram, though it could be preliminary to making a structural diagram of the Reed-Kellogg type, or the more modern "syntax tree" diagram if the student wants to take his or her study to that level. (Those processes are not discussed here.)

After making a sentence (or passage) flow diagram, you can use a marking system to identify the various parts of speech. An example of a marking scheme could be to underline nouns once, verbs twice, circle modifiers, place a carrot symbol (^) over prepositions, and place a question mark over conditional

particles (“if”); you can then draw lines to connect modifiers to words they modify and prepositions to their objects. You can also use different colors to highlight different parts of speech, or you can use a system of abbreviations such as the one illustrated on pages 25-26 of this guide.

The following information will help you to systematically mark your text. Don’t get frustrated if it’s been a long time since you studied grammar (or, if you hated grammar in school). Do what you feel comfortable with, and then push yourself just a little further with each passage you study. You’ll be surprised how much more productive your Bible study will become with just a little practice. Those more proficient in grammar can expand their marking system to include other parts of speech and grammatical features. The degree to which you mark your passage is up to you. You can mark the entire passage, or focus on more difficult or interesting areas. The more you do, the better. Don’t forget that the text you should mark is **your sentence (or passage) flow diagram** (see above). That will give you the benefit of the grammatical and structural information in one place.

### *Parts of speech*

Again, don’t get frustrated if it’s been a while since you studied parts of speech. Find a good grammar book and expand your knowledge base gradually; don’t try to master the whole of grammar in one day. Read up on nouns one week and verbs the next. Remember the old saying that every journey begins with a single step; it’s like jumping out of an airplane; making the decision to do it is the hardest part!

Don’t be overwhelmed by the following list; it’s only here for reference.

#### 1.4.1 Verbs

1.4.1.1. Transitive verbs (verbs with an object)

1.4.1.2. Intransitive verbs (verbs without an object)

1.4.1.3. If possible, determine the mood of all verbs. (This will need to be done from the original language.)

1.4.1.3.1. Indicative mood (facts)

1.4.1.3.2. Imperative mood (commands)

1.4.1.3.3. Subjunctive mood (hypothetical statements)

#### 1.4.2. Nouns

1.4.2.1. Subjects

1.4.2.2. Predicate nominatives (renames the subject)

1.4.2.2. Objects

1.4.3. Modifiers (identify what each modifier modifies)

1.4.3.1. Adjectives, adjectival clauses and phrases (which modify nouns)

1.4.3.2. Adverbs, and adverbial clauses and phrases (which modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, *etc.*)

1.4.3.3. Participles and participial phrases (a form of the verb used to modify a noun or noun phrase)

1.4.4. Prepositions and prepositional phrases (show temporal, spatial, or logic relationships of things modified)

Note that the meaning of Greek prepositions can vary depending on the case of the word with which they are used, and sometimes there can be different usages even within the same case. For example: *dia* with the genitive case means “through,” but with the accusative case means “on account of;” *en* (with the dative) when used locatively means “in,” but when used instrumentally means “by;” in this case the use must be determined by context. Careful attention should be paid to the proper sense of prepositions, since they can significantly affect the meaning of a sentence. The good news is that the better English translations are almost always correct in the way that they translate prepositions, so if you don’t have the means to research the preposition from the original language, go with the translation given in your primary text; if you do that, you will almost never go wrong.

1.4.5. Conjunctions (connect words, phrases, clauses, and sometimes sentences)

The use of the Hebrew conjunction is complex and unless you’ve studied Hebrew syntax and grammar you should go with what your primary English text indicates. Greek has numerous conjunctions, the meanings of which must be learned from the lexicons. There are also special rules of grammar relating to the use of certain conjunctions, like “the rule of the copulative *kai*.” Again, non-original language students should carefully compare translations and in most cases simply go with the sentence structure and translation given in your primary text. The better English translations (like the NASB) are almost always correct in the way that they handle conjunctions.



1.4.6. Conditional particles (“if,” “since”)  
Note that classes of conditionals must be determined from the original language.

1.4.6.1 First class conditional (“if,” and it’s true; can be translated “since”)

1.4.6.2. Second class conditional (“if,” and it isn’t true)

1.4.6.3. Third class conditional (“if,” and it might or might not be true—hypothetically)

1.4.7. Determiners (articles)

1.4.7.1. The definite article (“the”)

1.4.7.2. The infinite article (“a”)

Neither Hebrew nor Greek has a discrete indefinite article (“a,” or “an”). In some circumstances the lack of a definite article (“the”) might imply an indefinite state. However, that is frequently not the case; there are numerous ways to imply definiteness in the biblical languages, especially Greek. For example, in Greek the Rule of the Definite Predicate states that anytime a predicate nominative precedes the verb, it is to be considered definite. Also anything that is one of a kind does not require a definite article to be definite. There are many other caveats to the use, or non-use of the definite article that must be learned from the Hebrew and/or Greek grammars.

You can come up with your own abbreviations and/or symbols. (Be sure to write down the meanings, and be consistent.) The following is a sample abbreviation scheme:

*Nouns*

**Obj** Object

**Pn** predicate nominative

**Pro** pronoun

**Sub** subject

*Verbs*

**VI** verb intransitive

**VT** verb transitive

**Ptp** participle

**A** adjective

**Adv** adverb

**D** determiner (article)

**Par** particle

**Prep** Preposition (or prepositional phrase, if placed over entire phrase)

**Conj** conjunction

**P** particle

**S** singular

**P** plural

If you are working from the original language you will need additional abbreviations for case, gender, and number (for nouns); and mood, tense, voice, gender, person, number (verbs). For these, you can simply use the first letter of the case, gender, *etc.*; for instance, a noun might be labeled: **NP-NF2S** for pronoun, nominative, feminine, second person, singular; a verb might be labeled: **V-IFAM3S** for imperative, future, active, masculine, third person, singular. You can add your own abbreviations and symbols as needed. (There is a Parsing Sheet temple on page 85 you can copy to record your data.)

#### 1.4.8. Identify phrases

*Types of phrases: (shown in italics in example)*

***Noun phrases*** (There are two types: contiguous and discontinuous)

Description: A noun phrase includes a noun and its modifiers.

Example of a contiguous noun phrase: *The deep valley* was difficult to cross.

Example of a discontinuous noun phrase: *Two instances* have been seen *that involve computer failure*. (Note here that the verb separates the two parts of the noun phrase, thus making it discontinuous.)

***Prepositional phrases***

Description: A prepositional phrase includes a preposition and a noun or pronoun along with its modifiers. Note that prepositions can take the following forms: a single word ("at," "in," "on," "over," "for," "from," *etc.*); two words ("according to," "instead of," *etc.*); three words ("as soon as"), and more than three words as in a preposition + an article + a noun + another preposition ("for the sake of").

Example of a simple prepositional phrase: There is a book *on the table*

### ***Appositive phrases***

Description: Appositive phrases rename or amplify a word that precedes the phrase.

Example of an appositive phrase: John's greatest desire, *to become a scientist*, was eventually realized.

### ***Infinitive phrases***

Description: A verb preceded by an infinitive [to] along with any modifiers and compliments.

Example of an infinitive phrase: John wanted *to build a boat*.

### ***Gerund phrases***

Description: Gerunds are derived from verbs and end in "ing" and they function as nouns; that is, they can do anything a noun can do. A gerund phrase is a gerund and its modifiers.

Example of a gerund phrase: *Practicing for competition* is a very good idea! (In this example the gerund phrase serves as the subject for the sentence.)

### ***Participial phrases***

Description: A participial phrase begins with a present participial (usually ending with "ing") or past participial (usually ending with "ed" unless irregular, in which case it may end in "en," "d," "t," "n," or "ne"), including modifiers and objects. Participial phrases function as adjectives, modifying nouns or pronouns.

Example of a *present* participial phrase: The prophet, *wishing to be heard*, raised his voice.

Example of a *past* participial phrase: *Educated at a university*, the young man was well acquainted with history.

Hint: Don't confuse gerund phrases with participial phrases. A gerund phrase functions as a noun, whereas a participial phrase functions as an adjective modifying a noun or pronoun.

- 1.5. If need be, look up any words upon which the meaning of a passage might hinge. Take your time; even words with which you are familiar can have alternate uses. Explore the possibilities.

A word of caution: One of the pitfalls in biblical interpretation is selecting a meaning from among multiple possible meanings that fits what the interpreter thinks the passages is saying, or that fits with what the interpreter would like for the passage to say (*i.e.*, the interpreter's predisposing ideas or theology). The proper procedure for determining which meaning to select from among multiple meanings is to determine, if possible, how the author used the same, or a closely related word or expression in other places, and what the immediate context indicates, including what the author, and other biblical authors and speakers have taught on the same subject elsewhere. This is the biblical and theological context. Determining this information is not always easy, but it is critically important. Just remember: the fact that a word might have multiple meanings does not give the interpreter license to select any meaning he or she likes. The interpreter must, if possible, determine what the biblical author or speaker intended; determining that always involves a serious study of the context, both immediate and remote.

- 1.5.1. For interpreters with a background in the original language, the syntax of each word should be understood. It would be good idea to parse all verbs (person, number, gender, tense, mood) and decline all nouns (case, gender, number), and include any other syntactical and grammatical information that might be pertinent. Be sure to make a record of your data to be filed with your other research data on the passage. (There is a Parsing Sheet template you can copy to record your data on page 85.)
- 1.5.2. Interpreters without a background in the original language may consult an analytical lexicon or database to determine the syntax (part of speech) of key words. (Also, see the chapter on "Basic Skills" beginning on page 75.)
- 1.5.3. Flag any words that are unique to this author, and pay special attention to those words. Research how the author used those words in other places.

1.6. Check the grammar.

Are there special rules of grammar that come into play in the interpretation of the passage under consideration? For students not thoroughly familiar with the grammar of the original language this type of information must be obtained from a good exegetical commentary.

2. Determine the historical/dispensational context
  - 2.1. Who is the author? (This is not necessarily the speaker.)
  - 2.2. When was the passage composed?

- 2.3. What is the date of the events or dialogue of the passage?
  - 2.4. Who is speaking to whom in the passage?
  - 2.5. What is the topic under consideration in the passage?
  - 2.6. Under what dispensation was the passage composed? (See: “the Importance of a Dispensational Perspective,” beginning on page 71.)
  - 2.7. To which dispensation does the passage pertain?
  - 2.8. Identify and mark all key terms and ideas that need to be researched historically.
3. List all practical points
    - 3.1. Commands issued by the writer or speaker
    - 3.2. Observations made by the author or speaker
    - 3.3. Principles given by the author or speaker
    - 3.4. Important implications
4. List all doctrines upon which the passage bears
 

Your ability to do this will be greatly aided by a good general knowledge of Bible doctrine.

    - 4.1. Explicit points of doctrine
    - 4.2. Implicit points of doctrine
5. Outline the natural flow of ideas in the passage.
 

This is NOT the place to be creative. Creativity comes in presentation. In interpretation, follow the natural flow of the author’s ideas. Remember, the author determines the flow of the information; your job is to discover what the author did in composing the book and passage.

    - 5.1. Determine the general outline of the book in which the passage is found.
    - 5.2. Determine the outline of the passage under consideration.
 

This is where your sentence/passage flow diagram will come in handy. If you’ve done a good job on your flow diagram you should be able to discern the natural flow of the passage with ease. Even the subpoints should be easily discernable.

6. Identify the main idea of the passage. (Be sure to keep the key idea of the larger context in view as you do this, *i.e.*, the main idea of the book.)
7. Contextual analysis (Compare the teaching of the passage with relevant teaching elsewhere in Scripture.)
  - 7.1. Compare with relevant content in the same book. (Does the same book deal with the topic elsewhere?)
  - 7.2. Compare with relevant content elsewhere by the same author. (Does the same author deal with the topic elsewhere?)
  - 7.3. Compare with relevant content elsewhere within the same dispensation. (Do other authors within the same dispensation deal with this topic?)
  - 7.4. Compare with relevant content from other dispensations. (Do other authors in other dispensational contexts deal with the same topic?)
  - 7.5. Determine how the context relates to the interpretation of the passage.
  - 7.6. Determine how the context sheds additional light on the topic under examination.

8. Hermeneutical analysis (See the chapter on “Hermeneutics.” p. 55.)

Hermeneutics is the philosophy of interpretation; that is to say, hermeneutics defines the principles by which interpretation should be done. A complete hermeneutical analysis of any extended passage would be time consuming. However, any known or obvious issues should be identified and solutions proposed. We will just take one example from the passage at hand—Philippians 2:5-7. In what sense did Jesus “empty” himself? Did he cease to be God? Did he surrender some of his divine attributes at the incarnation? Both of these solutions present serious theological difficulties. One solution would be to understand the passage to mean that Jesus, at the incarnation, emptied himself of the manifestation of his infinite perfection. He did not cease to be everything he was before, but the manifestation of such was suspended temporarily that he might accomplish the work of redemption, which would otherwise have been impossible. This solution fits perfectly with the context, the point of which is humility. Hermeneutics and theology go hand-in-hand; hermeneutical problems will almost always show up as theological problems.

9. Comparative analysis (Compare your conclusions with those of others.)

Check the views of various Bible commentators. Commentaries should not be consulted too early in your research, since they could prejudice your interpretive judgment. However, they should be checked before making your conclusions final.

In some cases you might find information in a commentary that will significantly affect your final interpretation, or send you back to rethink your interpretation.

## 10. Considering how to present your material

If you plan to present your material as a sermon or lesson, there are some things you will want to think about before starting on your presentation notes. You probably will not want to present all of the information you have gathered, so you will need to select which material you want to use. The following steps will help you transition from the research phase of Bible study to the lesson (or sermon) production phase.

You will need to make some decisions before starting on your presentation notes.

### 10.1. Decide which presentation mode you plan to use (exegetical, topical, theological, or historical).

Although our method of study has focused on exegesis, that fact does not mean you have to use an exegetical mode of presentation; topical, theological, and historical models can also be very effective in presenting the fruit of your research, though they do present some special challenges.

#### 10.1.1 The exegetical (expository) mode

The exegetical mode essentially provides a running interpretation of the passage along with its implications, challenges, *etc.* The exegetical mode closely follows the contours of the biblical text. One of the key challenges in using this mode for an extended passage or book is to determine the natural transitions in the passage, and how many presentations will be required. Covering too small a portion of the biblical text can make a presentation seem tedious; whereas, covering too large a segment of the biblical text could mean an overly long presentation, leaving out critical information, and/or leaving the audience dazed with too many ideas to process at one time. So as you can see, defining the scope of the lesson is critically important and should be given careful thought.

#### 10.1.2 The topical mode

Exegetical research can serve as the foundation for a topical presentation, such as: how believers are to treat one another, or discipline within the local church. A topical presentation based on exegetical research will usually focus on one main idea. Depending upon how much the passage under consideration has to say about that topic, it might be necessary to bring in other supporting biblical material. The important thing to keep in mind is that if you choose to use additional biblical content (*i.e.*, content not contained in your

principal passage), you will also need to do the exegetical research on those passages as well, though passages briefly mentioned might merit a somewhat abbreviated version of the research procedure. While the most common criticism of topical presentations is that they are often poorly researched and sometimes hastily put together, if done properly a well-researched topical presentation, though time consuming to prepare, can be very effective. Unfortunately, it is also possible to short-circuit this model by simply choosing a topic and then going to a topical Bible, concordance, or other resource simply to gather support for the points to be made. (This practice is called “proof-texting.”) Such presentations, while easy to construct, lack depth, tend toward eisegesis, and sometimes result in unbiblical teaching.

#### 10.1.3 The theological mode

The theological mode focuses on the theological content of the passage, and will usually attempt to demonstrate how that content connects with other theological content elsewhere in Scripture. All good theology ought to be based in sound biblical exegesis, and this type of presentation can bring the exegetical foundation of various doctrines to the forefront. Of course this model requires that the interpreter have a good grasp of biblically sound theology.

#### 10.1.4. The historical mode

This mode is similar to the theological mode, except that the context is historical rather than theological. The historical mode focuses on uncovering the historical dimension of the passage and its relationship to the general context of biblical history.

### 10.2. Define the scope of the presentation.

You will need to decide how much of the passage you researched that you are actually going to use. In some cases this might be the entire section you studied, in other cases it might just be a portion.

If the scope of your research results in more information than can reasonably be presented in one session, you can narrow the scope to a smaller section, or you can construct a series of presentations. If you choose to construct a series, and if you are preparing sermons, remember that each message needs to be able to stand on its own, so you’re going to need to go through this process in preparation for each sermon. If you are preparing for class lectures or for publication you can usually skip from one installment to the next (*i.e.*, simply splitting one long outline), but it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that such is a bad procedure for a sermon. Sermons should always be self-



contained from introduction to conclusion. Trying to use a teaching outline for a sermon most often results in a poor sermon.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. The depth of your material should suit the intended audience. It is possible to overshoot or undershoot your audience. Overshooting with too much material, or overly technical or detailed material can leave your audience bewildered. On the other hand, undershooting with material that is too general might leave your audience bored.
  2. Remember that while you might have been immersed in the research of your subject for some time, your audience likely has not. They will probably be coming into your presentation cold. It's important to ease them into the material. A brief story, object lesson, or a question or two at the beginning of a presentation can give your audience time to connect with the material.
  3. Facts are good, but they should almost always be summarized and stated in plain language. Nothing puts people in a mental fog faster than a list of facts, especially if they contain unfamiliar terms. Present a limited amount of factual information and then focus on the implications, application, *etc.* Avoid unfamiliar technical language unless it is explained.
  4. If you are a student of the original languages resist the temptation to go into the details of syntax and grammar. A few simple observations are okay, but spending too much time on grammatical minutiae will likely result in a disconnect with your audience. Remember that unfamiliar technical language might as well be an unfamiliar foreign language to your audience.
  5. Break your material into manageable units. Try not to exceed the attention span of your audience. Being overly long can ruin an otherwise great presentation. This applies to summaries, conclusions, and invitations as well; keep them to the point. Two or three minutes should be enough time to conclude most presentations. If you plan an hour-long Bible study be sure to include some engaging activities other than just a lecture. For a general audience thirty minutes is about all the focused attention you're going to get for a lecture or sermon format. You can go longer, but unless you're an enormously engaging speaker (in their eyes) some of your material might not be retained, and retention is, after all, one of the chief goals of effective teaching.
- 10.3. For sermons or self-contained lectures, select an appropriate title that reflects the main thrust of the passage. Put some thought into your title. A well-

thought-out title can serve as the “glue” to hold your presentation together; it can also generate interest and anticipation in your audience; after all, you do want to be heard after doing this work, don’t you?

A title should tell your audience the major topic of your presentation. Resist the temptation to use a title that’s “catchy” but doesn’t tell your listeners anything about the actual topic. If you will be giving an exegetical presentation you should include the passage reference in the title. If listeners are cataloging your presentations, having the passage reference in the title will make it easier for them to organize their notes or the audio/video files of your presentations. If you still want to include something catchy in your title consider using a subtitle to identify what you propose to do. An example might be something like this: “The Heart of a Great Leader—An Exposition of Philippians 1:12-30.”

- 10.4. Reduce the relevant historical background to a concise paragraph or two. Don’t clutter your presentation with excessive details.
- 10.5. Compose a summary explaining what the lesson is about. This will keep you on track and will be of benefit in cataloging your presentation.
- 10.6. Outline your presentation. (Stick to the main points, based on your research.)
- 10.7. Plan your closure. If preparing for a sermon or self-contained lecture, plan an appropriate close to the lesson (simple, short, and direct). This should normally include personal application. DO NOT review all the details of your presentation, doing so might cause your presentation to lose traction. Trust that your listeners did their job of listening, and provide them with a thoughtful, reflective, challenging conclusion. (Presenting your conclusion for a typical presentation should only require two or three minutes.) If you plan to make some sort of challenge to the audience, or a call for decisions, this is the place to put your thoughts.

## 11. Producing your presentation notes

Having already acquired the research data, it now remains to produce your presentation notes. You will not want to present your entire cache of information, rather you will need to select and organize only the information that is relevant to the point of your presentation. That will likely include the following:

- 11.1. A general introduction to the text including the author, purpose, and the historical situation of the book and passage

- 11.2. If you are preparing a sermon or stand alone presentation, you will need to state the main idea of the passage, if there is one, or delineate whatever the ideas there are. This can be included in the general introduction above.
- 11.3. Compose your presentation notes in accordance with the presentation modality you have chosen.

Your notes can be as detailed as you would like. Homiletics (preaching) professors debate the merits of detailed versus summary notes. This is a decision you'll have to make for yourself. If you are preparing to present a sermon and you are new to the task I would suggest that you prepare a reasonably detailed set of notes. (Remember to number the pages in case you drop them.), you might even want to write out your message. Whatever one might think about reading a sermon, the fact is that some of the most effective sermons ever delivered were simply read. It is likely that as you become a more accomplished speaker you will find less need to write things out. Personally, I would rather hear a well-thought-out sermon read than a poorly pieced together sermon done on the fly.

*If you are preparing an exegetical presentation you should do the following:*

- 11.3.1 Determine the natural breaking points (transitions) in the broader passage.

For example: If you were studying the book of Philippians, you would need to know where the natural breaking points are in the book. Your research from sections 5.2 - 5.3 (the general outline and the passage outlines) would help you. This will define the "scope" of your sermon/lesson (*i.e.*, the specific scripture that your sermon will cover). The scope of a sermon or lesson could be anywhere from a verse or two to an entire chapter, or more.

How far you decide to break your material down will be determined by several factors: 1) the informational content of the passage, 2) how much material you think is appropriate for one presentation, and 3) how much focus you want to put on each point you will be covering. Obviously, the more you know about your passage, and the subject of your passage, the more you will have to say and the shorter your sermon passages will need to be, so as not to run overtime in your presentation.

- 11.3.2. For each scope, recombine the commands, observations, principles, implications, and doctrines from sections 3.1 – 4.2 in sequence (*i.e.*, in the order they appear in the passage). That body of material is collectively referred to as your "observations."

**You can then use your observations to develop the main points of your sermon/lecture outline.**

Remember: A good sermon or Bible lesson isn't just a regurgitation of research data; a good sermon/lecture brings out the truths contained in a passage in an engaging way.

The sermon/lecture preparation process could be summarized like this: Research informs observations, and observations form the backbone of the presentation. It's your observations that you want to share, not your research, though you can occasionally bring in a brief piece of your research if it is necessary to support an observation, but in a sermon keep it brief.

11.4 Compose your closing.

You've taken your listener on a journey. Now you're getting ready to pull into the station. Avoid an abrupt stop. Your listener needs a moment for what you've said to "gel" in his or her thinking, and they may also need a moment to consider the implications and the practical steps they can take to implement change in their life. Remember, the best conclusions are simple, short, direct, and personal. Think of an elevator; when it's nearing the stop it slows so that the rider doesn't get whiplash. In fact, in a well-tuned elevator the rider hardly senses the stop at all. Try ending your presentations that way, especially sermons. Allow your listeners to leave still pondering the implications of what you've said.

12. Evaluation: It's always a good idea to have two or three trusted individuals evaluate your presentation. (A sample evaluation form is included at the back of this guide.)

## A Sample Study—Philippians 1-2

In this chapter an abbreviated study of the first two chapters of the book of Philippians will be presented to give you a better idea of how the study procedure works. Bold print headings indicate sections in the interpretive outline. The study below is based on the English text, using the New American Standard Bible (NASB). This represents the simplest type of study. In a few places alternate readings of the text (made by comparing the NASB with the Greek, and with different translations), appear in brackets [ ].

### 1.1. Determine what the text says.

For this study we will follow the wording of the NASB fairly close, with a few modifications in brackets. In order to simplify our study I have chosen to keep modifications to a minimum. The extent to which you modify the text will depend upon your experience and skill, and the type of tools you have available.

### 1.2 Determine the author.

Paul is the principal author of this epistle; Timothy is probably mentioned as co-author out of courtesy.

### 1.3 Make a sentence flow diagram of the passage.

In the sentence flow diagram below major section headings have been included in braces {..}. Doing this early in the study will help you enormously in developing a detailed exegetical outline later, since the outline will consist mainly of these headings. In this diagram I have chosen to set off not only clauses, but most phrases as well.

{Introduction}

<sup>1:1</sup>Paul and Timothy,

bond-servants of Christ Jesus,

to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,

including the overseers and deacons:

<sup>2</sup>Grace to you

and peace from God our Father

and the Lord Jesus Christ.

{Paul's expression of deep affection for the Philippian believers}

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God

in all my remembrance of you,

<sup>4</sup>always offering prayer

with joy in my every prayer for you all,

<sup>5</sup>in view of your participation

in the gospel

from the first day until now.

<sup>6</sup>For I am confident of this very thing,

that He who began a good work

in you

will perfect it

until the day of Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all,

because I have you in my heart,

since both in my imprisonment

and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel,

you all are partakers of grace with me.

<sup>8</sup>For God is my witness,

how I long for you all

with the affection of Christ Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>And this I pray,

that your love may abound still more and more

in real knowledge

and all discernment,

<sup>10</sup>so that you may approve the things that are excellent,

in order to be sincere

and blameless

until the day of Christ;

<sup>11</sup>having been filled with the fruit of righteousness

which *comes* through Jesus Christ,

to the glory and praise of God.

{Paul reassures the Philippians that the gospel ministry has not suffered on account of his difficult circumstances.}

<sup>12</sup>Now I want you to know, brethren,

that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

<sup>13</sup>so that my imprisonment

in *the cause of Christ*

has become well known

throughout the whole Praetorian Guard

and to everyone else,

<sup>14</sup>and that most of the brethren,

trusting in the Lord

because of my imprisonment,

have far more courage

to speak the word of God

without fear.

<sup>15</sup>Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife,

but some also from good will;

<sup>16</sup>The latter *do it* out of love,

knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;

<sup>17</sup>the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives,

thinking to cause me distress

in my imprisonment.

<sup>18</sup>What then?

Only that in every way,

whether in pretense or in truth,

Christ is proclaimed;

and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice,

<sup>19</sup>for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance

through your prayers

and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

<sup>20</sup>according to my earnest expectation and hope,  
that I will not be put to shame in anything,  
but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now,  
as always, be exalted in my body,  
whether by life or by death.

<sup>21</sup>For to me, to live is Christ  
and to die is gain.

<sup>22</sup>But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful  
labor for me;

and I do not know which to choose.

<sup>23</sup>But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*,

having the desire to depart

and be with Christ,

for *that* is very much better;

<sup>24</sup>yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary

for your sake.

<sup>25</sup>And convinced of this, I know that I will remain

and continue with you all

for your progress

and joy in the faith,

<sup>26</sup>so that your proud confidence in me may  
abound in Christ Jesus

through my coming to you again.

{Paul's charge to the Philippian believers}

<sup>27</sup>Only conduct yourselves

in a manner worthy

of the gospel of Christ,

so that whether I come and see you

or remain absent,

I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit,

with one mind

striving together

for the faith of the gospel;



<sup>28</sup>in no way alarmed by *your* opponents  
— which is a sign of destruction for them,  
but of salvation for you,  
and that *too*, from God.

<sup>29</sup>For to you it has been granted  
for Christ's sake,  
not only to believe in Him,  
but also to suffer  
for His sake,  
<sup>30</sup>experiencing the same conflict  
which you saw in me,  
and now hear *to be* in me.

<sup>21</sup>[Therefore since there is] encouragement in Christ,  
[since there is] consolation of love,  
[since there is] fellowship of the Spirit,  
[since there is] affection and compassion,

<sup>2</sup> make my joy complete  
by being of the same mind,  
maintaining the same love,  
united in spirit,  
intent on one purpose.

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit,  
but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than  
yourselves;

<sup>4</sup> do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests,  
but also for the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves  
which was also in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality  
with God a thing to be grasped,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself,  
taking the form of a bond-servant,  
*and* being made in the likeness of men.

<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man,  
He humbled Himself  
by becoming obedient  
to the point of death,  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup>For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,  
and bestowed on Him the name

which is above every name,

<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW,

of those who are in heaven

and on earth

and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup>and that every tongue will confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>12</sup>So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed,

not as in my presence only,

but now much more in my absence,

work out your salvation

with fear

and trembling;

<sup>13</sup>for it is God who is at work in you,

both to will

and to work

for *His* good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

<sup>15</sup>so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent,

children of God

above reproach

in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,

among whom you appear as lights in the world,

<sup>16</sup>holding fast the word of life,

so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory  
because I did not run in vain  
nor toil in vain.

<sup>17</sup>But even if I am being poured out  
as a drink offering  
upon the sacrifice and service of your faith,

I rejoice  
and share my joy with you all.

<sup>18</sup>You too, *I urge you*, rejoice  
in the same way  
and share your joy with me.

{Paul's plan to send Timothy and Epaphroditus}

<sup>19</sup>But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly,  
so that I also may be encouraged  
when I learn of your condition.

<sup>20</sup>For I have no one *else* of kindred spirit  
who will genuinely be concerned  
for your welfare.

<sup>21</sup>For they all seek after their own interests,  
not those of Christ Jesus.

<sup>22</sup>But you know of his proven worth,  
that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel  
like a child *serv*ing his father.

<sup>23</sup>Therefore I hope to send him immediately,  
as soon as I see how things *go* with me;

<sup>24</sup>and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

<sup>25</sup>But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus,  
my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier,  
who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

<sup>26</sup>because he was longing for you all  
and was distressed

because you had heard that he was sick.

<sup>27</sup>For indeed he was sick

to the point of death,

but God had mercy on him,

and not on him only but also on me,

so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

<sup>28</sup>Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly

so that when you see him again you may rejoice

and I may be less concerned *about you*.

<sup>29</sup>Receive him then in the Lord with all joy,

and hold men like him in high regard;

<sup>30</sup>because he came close to death

for the work of Christ,

risking his life

to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

#### 1.4. Identify the parts of speech in the passage.

This step is not shown, but you could use the simple format illustrated below.

*Prep Sub A VT Prep Pro Pro Obj Par Pro Prep Obj*

<sup>2:21</sup>For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

#### 1.5. Look up any words upon which the meaning of a statement or question might hinge.

The following is a list of key words one might want to look up in studying this passage from the NASB [verse references in brackets]. This is a partial list (1:1-19); lists will vary depending on what the interpreter already knows about Paul's vocabulary. Students of the original language might look up and parse (for verbs) or decline (for nouns) all of these words. (This is a sample list and covers only a portion of the first chapter of the Philippian letter.)

Word list (1:1-19):

[1:1]	[1:8]	[1:12]
Bond-servant	Witness	Know
Saints	Long	Circumstances
Overseers	Affection	[1:13]
Deacons	[1:9]	“Praetorian guard”
[1:2]	Love	[1:15]
Grace	Abound	Envy
Peace	Knowledge	Strife
[1:4]	Discernment	[1:16]
Always	[1:10]	Appointed
Prayer	Approve	Defense
[1:5]	Excellent	[1:17]
Participation	Sincere	Distress
Gospel	Blameless	[1:18]
[1:6]	“Day of Christ” (see above)	Pretense
Confident	[1:11]	Truth
Perfect	Filled	Rejoice
“the day of Christ”	Fruit	[1:19]
[1:7]	Righteousness	Deliverance
Defense	Glory	Provision
Confirmation	Praise	

**1.6. Check the grammar.**

(Not shown.)

**2.1. Who is the author?**

The Apostle Paul

**2.2. What is the date of the statements made in the passage?**

Approximately A.D. 61.

**2.3. Who is speaking to whom in the passage?**

Paul is speaking to the Philippian believers and their leaders (*i.e.*, the bishops and deacons).

**2.4. What is the topic under discussion?**

Paul is writing to confirm the believers and to encourage them in the continuance of their faith.

**2.5. Under what dispensation was the passage composed?**

This epistle was written under the dispensation of Grace.

**2.6. To which dispensation does the passage pertain?**

The passage pertains directly to the Philippian Church, and by extension to the church under the dispensation of Grace.

**2.7 Identify and mark all key subjects that need to be researched historically.**

- ✓ Apostleship
- ✓ The relationship between Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and the Philippian Church
- ✓ Life of Paul, especially his imprisonment (cf. vv.7, 13,14)
- ✓ Early church government and ministry by elders (bishops) and deacons
- ✓ The problem of disunity in the early church

**3.1 Commands issued by the writer or speaker**

The Philippians were to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of (*i.e.*, consistent with) the gospel (1:27).

They were to “stand firm,” united, unafraid, realizing that suffering (with the conflict that it brings) is part of their calling (1:1:27-30).

They were to be of the same mind, same love, united in spirit, and intent on one purpose (2:1-2).

They were to do nothing out of selfishness or empty conceit (2:3).

They were to humbly regard one another as more important than themselves (2:3).

They were not only to look out for their own interests, but for the interests of others (2:4).

They were to have the same attitude of humility that Christ had, who though existing in the form of God, humbled himself becoming a man and dying on a cross (2:5-6).

The Philippians were to “work out” their salvation with fear and trembling, *i.e.*, they were to humbly persist in their faith to the end, realizing that God was the one working within them according to His good pleasure (2:12-13).

They were not to grumble, and not to be contentious; their testimony was at stake (2:14).

### **3.2. Observations made by the writer or speaker**

The Philippian Church had participated in Paul’s ministry since its founding (1:5).

Christ’s condescension and death on the cross is the greatest example of humility (2:5-8).

God highly exalted Christ, bestowing on him a name above every name (2:9).

Every creature in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will someday bow and confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God (2:9-11).

One’s outward actions evidence the reality of inward faith (2:14-15).

Those who believe the truth appear as lights in the world as they hold fast to the word of life—the gospel (2:14-15).

It is possible, as a Christian, to live one’s life in vain (2:14-16).

Paul compared his life to a drink offering (2:17).

Many within the church seek after their own selfish interests (2:21).

### **3.3. Principles given by the author or speaker**

Love of the brethren is critical to the attainment of real knowledge, discernment, sincerity, personal holiness, and the fruit of righteousness (good deeds) leading to God’s glory and praise (1:9-11).

Outward adversity need not lead to defeat (1:12-14).

God even bends evil to his purpose (1:15-18).

By example: We are to have a singleness of purpose—the exaltation of Christ (1:21a).

By example: Death is not to be feared by the believer (1:21b).

It is better to be with Christ (in Heaven), but more useful to God’s purpose to remain here in productive ministry (1:22-24). Implication: Don’t give up, no matter how difficult things get! Stay focused!

Suffering is to be expected for those who stand firm in the faith (1:27-30).  
God is the source of our desire and ability to serve him (2:13).

### **3.4. Important implications**

Prayer is an important component of spiritual leadership (1:3-5).

God will finish the work he has begun in believers (1:6).

Love of the brethren is a key component in effective ministry (1:8).

Christ is both man and God since he existed in the (outward) form of God prior to the incarnation (2:5-7).

Love is the basis for spiritual growth (1:9-10).

The world is watching believers; testimony matters (1:12-13).

Our physical welfare should not be as important to us as the fact that Christ is exalted (1:20).

Unity is critically important to the success of the local church (1:27-28).

Encouragement, love, fellowship, affection, compassion, unity, and humility are key factors in spiritual growth, and in the life of the church (2:1-4).

Christ is the believer's example of humility (2:5-8).

Christ's death was not an accident; it was God's plan, to which Christ was obedient (2:8).

Our lives are not to be focused on our pleasure, but on God's pleasure (2:13).

The success of those who minister is, at least in part, determined by the success of those to whom they minister (2:14-16).

The thought that we are being "used up" for Christ should be a source of joy (2:17-18).

There may be times when we have to stand alone and work with what we have, instead of what we think we need (2:20-21).

It is possible to be in ministry, but be improperly motivated by self-interests (2:20-21).

Sometimes we have to minister in the midst of personal difficulties and uncertainty about the future (2:23b).

Service to Christ is likened to serving in the military (2:25).

At times, those who minister need to be the recipients of ministry (2:25).



Those who endure hardship for the sake of ministry are to be highly regarded in the church (2:29-30).

**4. List all doctrines upon which the passage bears**

**4.1. Explicit points of doctrine**

I will only mention doctrinal topics here, however, the teaching in each of these areas should be thoroughly documented.

Prayer (1:3-5,19)

Eternal security (1:6)

Sanctification (1:10-11,27; 2:12-13)

Suffering (1:29-30)

Unity of the Body of Christ (2:1-2)

Humility (2:3-11)

Deity of Christ (2:6)

Condescension of Christ (2:5-11)

Supremacy of Christ (2:9-11)

**4.2. Implicit points of doctrine**

The sovereignty of God (1:12-14)

**5. Outline the natural flow of ideas in the passage.**

**5.1. Determine the general outline of the book in which the passage is found.**

*General outline:*

1. Greetings and opening statement (1:1-11)
2. Paul's personal circumstances, and his charge to the Philippian church *i.e.*, to stand firm in one spirit striving together for the faith of the gospel (1:12-30)
3. Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to unity and humility (2:1-18)
4. The examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30)
5. Beware of false confidence (3:1-14)

6. Beware of false brethren (3:15-21)
7. Final charges and encouragement (4:1-23)

**5.2. Determine the outline of the passage under consideration.**

*Passage outline:*

- 1A. Greetings and opening statement (1:1-11)
    - 1B. Authorship and salutation (1:1-2)
    - 2B. Paul's relationship to the Philippian believers recounted and reaffirmed (1:3-8)
    - 3B. Paul's ultimate desire for the Philippian believers (1:9-11)
  - 2A. Paul's personal circumstances, and his charge to the Philippian Church (*i.e.*, to stand firm in one spirit striving together for the faith of the gospel) (1:12-30)
    - 1B. Paul recognizes that his imprisonment has worked for the furtherance of the gospel (1:12-26)
    - 2B. Paul's charge to the Philippian Church: Stand firm! (1:27-30)
  - 3A. Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to unity and humility (2:1-18)
    - 1B. Exhortation to unity (2:1-2)
    - 2B. Exhortation to humility (2:3-11)
    - 3B. Keeping the goal of salvation in mind (2:12-18)
  - 4A. The examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30)
    - 1B. Paul's intent to send Timothy, along with the reason (2:19-23)
    - 2B. Paul's intent to come himself (2:24)
    - 3B. Paul's sending of Epaphroditus, and account of Epaphroditus' faithful service (2:25-30)
- 6. Identify the main idea of the passage. (Be sure to keep the key idea of the larger context in view as you do this, *i.e.*, the main idea of the book.)**

Believers are to be united in love and humility.

**7. Contextual analysis (Compare the teaching of the passage with relevant teaching elsewhere in Scripture.)**

**7.1. Compare with relevant content in the same book.** (Does the same book deal with the topic elsewhere?)

Not shown.

**7.2. Compare with relevant content elsewhere by the same author.** (Does the same author deal with the topic elsewhere?)

Although it is not shown here, it would be a good idea to write a brief summary of the author's relevant teaching elsewhere, if available.

See the following passages:

Romans 12, 15

1 Corinthians 12-14

Galatians 3

Ephesians 1-4

Philippians 2

Colossians 3

**7.3. Compare with relevant content elsewhere within the same dispensation.** (Do other authors within the same dispensation deal with this topic?)

Note the description of the very early church in Acts 4.

**7.4. Compare with relevant content from other dispensations.** (Do other authors in other dispensational contexts deal with the same topic?)

Not applicable (the Church did not exist prior to the present dispensation.)

**7.5. State how the context bears on the understanding of the passage.**

**7.5.1. Determine how the context relates to the interpretation of the passage.**

Unity is presented as an admonition in Philippians (2:1-5); however, when seen in the broader context of the New Testament teaching (mostly Paul) unity in the experience of the church ought to be natural due to the underlying spiritual unity of believers (1 Cor. 12-14). That is to say that the experience of unity in the life of the visible church should proceed from the underlying unity of the Body of Christ. That Paul saw the need to admonish believers in regard to this matter illustrates how sinful selfishness can disrupt what God intends for his people.

**7.5.2. Determine how the context sheds additional light on the topic under examination.**

Much of the Pauline context, especially in first Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians is theological. This underscores the fact that unity in the Church isn't just a nicety; it's a function of the believers' union with Christ, through the Body of Christ.

[Except for steps 11.3.1. and 11.3.2., steps 8-12 are not shown for the sample study.]

**11.3.1 Determine the natural breaking points (transitions) in the broader passage.**

The following are references to the major sections in the passage outline (section 5.2.). You could use these to define the scope of a sermon/lesson, or you could further subdivide any of these scopes if you think it has too much content to present in one sermon or lesson. Given the number of observations previously made on this material we could easily expand this out from four to about six messages; however, For this example we will stay with the four major outline headings. I have shown a possible sermon/lesson title for each scope.

1:1-11      *Title: The "Secrets" of Paul's Success*

1:12-30     *Title: Conquering Circumstances*

2:1-18      *Title: The Forgotten Virtues: Unity and Humility – Why They Matter in the Church*

2:19-30     *Title: Cultivating the Next Generation of Spiritual Leadership*

In addition to the above scopes, we could also "springboard" to two important doctrines: prayer (1:3-5) and eternal security (1:6). Doing that would involve a "textual" presentation type. A textual message is a special type of topical presentation that involves using a text for a "springboard" to a topic largely developed elsewhere. The textual presentation type can be very useful as long as the material to which you springboard is the product of careful exegetical research. Unfortunately, textual presentations are often poorly researched and the method is sometimes overused; nevertheless, an occasional textual message, done correctly as the product of careful exegesis, might give you the opportunity to connect an extended text (such as the book of Philippians) to the broader biblical teaching on an important truth, and

it can serve to occasionally vary your presentation style, which can be refreshing to your audience. Just remember to use this mode sparingly.

**11.3.2. For each scope, recombine the commands, observations, principles, implications, and doctrines from sections 3.1 – 4.2 in sequence (i.e., in the order they appear in the passage).**

For this exercise we will only develop the sermon/lesson outline for the first scope (1:1-11). Below is the combined list of observations for 1:1-11.

1. The Philippian Church had participated in Paul's ministry since its founding (1:5).
2. Love of the brethren is critical to the attainment of real knowledge, discernment, sincerity, personal holiness, and the fruit of righteousness (good deeds) leading to God's glory and praise (1:9-11).
3. Prayer is an important component of spiritual leadership (1:3-5).
4. God will finish the work he has begun in believers (1:6).
5. Love of the brethren is a key component in effective ministry (1:8).

Since this is the first sermon/lesson in a series covering this epistle, we will need to include a general introduction to the book with some brief background information.

From the background information and observations that we have already researched, we can now formulate a sermon/lesson outline. We could stick with a simple sequential list of our observations to construct an expository outline, but with a little creative thought we can arrange those observations into an even more effective sermon/lesson outline.

*Sermon/Lesson Outline:*

Title: The "Secrets" of Paul's Success —Philippians 1:1-11

1A. Introduction

1B. The scope of the series: the book of Philippians

2B. Authorship, date, place of the book in the NT (Prison epistles)

3B. Why was Philippians written? (Historical situation)

4B. Paul's place in history (this is the "lead in" to 2A.)

- 2A. The “Secrets” of Paul’s Success
  - 1B. Radical servanthood (1:1-2)
  - 2B. Unceasing prayer (1:3-5)
  - 3B. Unqualified confidence in the work of God (1:6)
  - 4B. A passion for people (1:7-8)
  - 5B. A clear and worthy goal (1:9b-11)
- 3A. Closing
  - 1B. We are all leaders (moms, dads, Sunday school teachers, *etc.*)
  - 2B. The real question is: Are we intentional leaders?
    - Are we radical servants?
    - Do we have a clear understanding of whom God has called us to serve? Do we earnestly pray for those we serve?
    - Are we confident that God will accomplish his work?
    - Do we have a passion for the people we serve?
    - Do we have a clear vision of the ultimate goal of our ministry? (To produce men and women governed by love, who abound in knowledge and discernment, unto personal integrity)

As mentioned previously, the research phase of your study is not the place to be creative. Your research should simply reveal the message that is embedded in the biblical text. The sermon/lesson preparation phase, however, is an excellent place to be creative in how that material is presented. In some ways it is also the most challenging. One thing is virtually certain: you will get better at constructing sermon/lesson outlines with practice.

**Pages 55 through 74 that appear in the print edition are not included in this abridged edition. See the Table of Contents.**

## Basic Skills

Certain skills are fundamental for in-depth Bible study. The student who is familiar with the languages of the Bible will likely already possess these skills, and no doubt utilize them at a higher level than we will cover here. This section could be titled: *Language Skills 101, For Non-Hebrew and Non-Greek Reading Students*. There is a wealth of language information at your fingertips—much in print, and some in digital format.

### 1. How to determine the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word

Of course, it goes without saying that before you can determine the meaning of a particular word, you must first know what word you are looking for. Perhaps this is a good place to mention that if you intend to be a serious student of the Bible, it would serve you well to learn the Greek and Hebrew alphabets. Learning an original language alphabet will open a door to using many tools. However, even if you do not know these alphabets you can still determine the dictionary form of an original word. I say “dictionary form” because most words as they appear in the Greek and Hebrew texts do not appear in the same form as in the dictionaries. In fact, in many cases the word as it appears in the biblical text will bear only a rudimentary similarity to its dictionary form. This is because both Hebrew and Greek are highly inflected languages; that is, their spellings change with usage (*e.g.*, part of speech, number, gender, tense, mood, *etc.*). Determining the dictionary form of a Hebrew or Greek word is an essential first step in lexical (dictionary) research. If you decide to learn one or both of these alphabets I would suggest that you start with Greek, as most people find it the easiest to learn.

Before proceeding, a word of caution: You should bear in mind that this is not the “high road.” The high road, and the best path, is to learn the biblical language, and practice exegesis for a number of years until you get the hang of it. However, that path might not be practical for everyone. If you happen to be one of those people (most of us are), you can still make use of original language information, but be cautious in disagreeing with scholars who have spent many years in original language study. This is particularly true if your conclusions have serious doctrinal implications. You might be right and they might be wrong, but you should make your conclusions tentative until you have done all your homework, compared your research with others, run it past a few people with more skill and experience, and are confident (not falsely) of your conclusions.

There are several ways to find the dictionary form of an original language word. Whether the word is Hebrew (or Aramaic), as in the Old Testament, or Greek, as in the New Testament, the procedure is the same. The following discussion presumes that the reader has little or no exposure to the original languages.

### *Using online resources*

There are some amazingly powerful online tools, some of which are free. The advantages to the online tools are that they are, for the most part, easy to use, inexpensive or free, and very powerful. Some of these tools will give you the original word, the dictionary form, syntactical information (*i.e.*, part of speech), and display all uses of the word in the Bible. Two current tools are [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com) (use the interlinear feature) and [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net) (which must be downloaded to your local system). I highly recommend that any serious student of the Bible become familiar with these tools, but again, a word of warning: I don't want to sound like a pessimist, but the situation could arise in which you no longer have access to these tools, so you need to possess at least some backup tools in print.

### *Using a key-number system (manually)*

The most popular key-number system is Strong's numbers. Strong's numbering system consists of numbers assigned to 8674 Hebrew words and 5624 Greek words. Many Bible study tools are keyed to these numbers. Prior to the publication of Bibles keyed to Strong's numbers, it was necessary to find the word in a concordance keyed to Strong's numbers. (I will give you detailed instructions on how to do this below.) More recently, Bibles, both print and online, have become available that have Strong's numbers above, or below, each word in the text. This makes it easy to locate both the dictionary form of the original word and information about the word, such as its definition and other occurrences of the word in the Bible. Obviously this is very useful information. But because the information it yields is often incomplete, it must be used cautiously.

Which is best, using a concordance to locate a word, or using a Bible that contains key-numbers? Actually both have advantages, and there will be times when you will want to use each method. Finding words using a keyed concordance can be slow, but it gives you the opportunity to see how the word is used in other contexts and by various authors. On the other hand, using a keyed Bible is much less time consuming, since you don't have to look up each English word individually. If you choose to use the concordance method be sure to read the section on "How to use a concordance." Even if you have been using a concordance for a long time, there are caveats to using concordances that you might not know.



*Finding an original word: Concordance method* (requires a keyed concordance)

1. For the word of interest, look up the English word in the main section of a keyed concordance. [Remember that you must use a concordance specific to your translation (NASB, KJV, NKJV, NIV, *etc.*.)]
2. Find the entry in the concordance that corresponds to the verse in which the word of interest occurs, and take note of the key-number for that word.
3. In the dictionary section of your concordance (or in any other dictionary keyed to the same key-number system) find the dictionary information for the word using Strong's number.

*Finding an original word: Bible method* (requires a keyed Bible)

1. Note the key-number above or below the word of interest.
2. Find the word in any keyed dictionary (or concordance if you want to do comparative research).

*Finding an original word: Online method*

Every online tool is different. Some are very easy to use, others are not; also some are more feature-rich than others. These tools tend to come and go and be folded into other tools, so the word of caution is: use them, but don't become dependent on any one tool unless it's downloadable to your local device.

## **2. How to determine the syntax of a Greek or Hebrew word.**

Syntax refers to how a particular word is used within a grammatical construction. Syntactical information includes such things as number, case, and gender for nouns; and mood, voice, tense, person, and number for verbs. This information is crucial for correct translation, and often enters into the interpretive process. It is, however, a difficult area to navigate for those with no formal training in the original languages. (Syntax is a very big part of what one learns in formal Hebrew and Greek studies.) There are several ways that those not trained in the original languages can access this information. I would not encourage those with no formal training in Hebrew to try to make use of Hebrew syntax—it is much too complex; for that information consult a good exegetical commentary, such as the [Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes](#), by C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. For Greek syntax the simplest, and preferred way is to get this information through one of the online tools referenced above, otherwise you would have to derive it manually, requiring the use of a Greek grammar, or you would have to look up the word in an analytical Greek lexicon or analytical Greek New Testament.

Even with an online tool there are several potential problems that should be kept in mind.

1. In some cases it is possible that the underlying syntactical database (most of which are computer generated) could have a misparsed word. While somewhat rare, this does happen. So it's good to have access to a manual grammar or up-to-date analytical lexicon (like The New Analytical Greek Lexicon, edited by Wesley J. Perschbacher) to check the syntax before making any important interpretive conclusions. However, to use these manual tools you will need to be familiar with the Greek alphabet and some rudimentary features of Greek accidence (spelling) and lexicography (use of the dictionary).
2. Assuming you correctly decipher the syntax, that information will only be helpful to the extent that you understand how it affects both translation and interpretation.
3. If you really want to work at the syntactical and grammatical levels, consider taking a Hebrew or Greek class, or make use of some of the many good Hebrew or Greek self-study materials that are available. Check your local college, university, or seminary; they might offer classes in these languages. Also, there are numerous online resources to help you develop your knowledge of Hebrew and/or Greek.

### **3. How to research the context of a passage.**

There are four areas of literary context that you must understand to correctly interpret any passage: 1) the immediate context of the passage *i.e.*, the surrounding discussion, often within the same chapter; 2) the context of the biblical book; 3) the context of either the Old Testament or New Testament, as the case may be; and 4) the broader biblical context, which includes the entire Bible. To these four aspects of literary context we must add historical context, theological context, and dispensational context. While this might seem a rather daunting task to the new student of the Bible, the quest for context will develop quite naturally as you become a more practiced interpreter. Here are some of the questions you will want to ask yourself about any passage:

#### *Literary context*

1. How does the passage connect to the flow of thought in the immediate context?
2. How does the content in the immediate context connect with the larger context of the biblical book in which it is found?

3. How does the information in the biblical book, including the passage of interest, connect to the broader teaching of the testament (OT or NT) in which it is found?
4. How does the teaching of the testament in which the passage of interest is found connect to the broader context of the Bible?

*Historical context*

1. When, and under what historical circumstances was the passage recorded?
2. What are the historical details of the people, objects, actions, and the social, political, and religious institutions that bear on the passage?

*Dispensational context*

1. Under what dispensation was the passage recorded?
2. To what dispensation does the truth taught in the passage apply?

*Theological context*

1. How does the doctrinal truth taught or implied in the passage connect to doctrine in the same dispensation? in the same testament? and in the larger context of the Bible?
2. Is any new truth revealed in the passage that is not clearly taught elsewhere in scripture?

**4. How to use a concordance**

Most English speaking students of the Bible are familiar with some type of English concordance. Many Bibles include a concise (highly abridged) concordance. There are several important things you should know about concordances: 1) Concise concordances only contain some occurrences of some words. For serious study an exhaustive concordance is needed. 2) An exhaustive English concordance will contain every occurrence of every word in the English text (example: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible). Some English concordances are nearly exhaustive, leaving out only very common particles, articles, *etc.* (for example see: Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible). Since the advent of digitalized translations, it is now possible to do an exhaustive search using any translation in digital form (there are dozens, including the KJV, NKJV, NAS, NASB, NIV, RSV, and many others), essentially compiling your own concordance for a particular word or

phrase. A great online resource for concordance work is [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Using an English concordance is easy, you simply find the English word you're interested in and all of the occurrences in both the Old Testament and New Testament will be listed, if the resource is exhaustive. However, there are some things you should know when using a concordance:

1. English concordances are translation specific. If you're working from the NASB you will need to use an NASB concordance. (That's easy if you're doing a digital search; simply select the version you want to use.)
2. Many Hebrew and Greek words are translated into more than one English word. This means that if you look up a particular English word in the concordance you will only see entries where the original was translated into the English word you looked up. To find where that original word was translated differently will require a special concordance (such as The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance, or The New Englishman's Greek Concordance). These specialized concordances will give every occurrence of every translation of every (or nearly every) original word, and they are keyed to Strong's key-number system to make them simple for non-Hebrew or Greek reading students to use.
3. There are also concordances that are entirely in the original language. These require a fairly extensive knowledge of either Hebrew or Greek at the reading level.

## Sermon/Lecture Evaluation

Title of sermon or presentation \_\_\_\_\_

Name of speaker \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*You have been asked by a speaker to provide feedback. Please respond to the following questions as best you can. You may also include explanations, observations, or other comments along with your answers. Your help will be greatly appreciated!*

1. Did the presentation engage your attention within the first couple of minutes?
2. Did the speaker make the overall topic clear at the beginning?
3. Were the main points clear?
4. Do you remember the main points?
5. Were there too many, or too few main points?
6. Were the main points well supported biblically and logically?
7. Did the speaker present too much or too little information?
8. Was there too much minutia (*i.e.*, too many details)?

9. Did the speaker use specific terms with which you were unfamiliar without explaining them?
  
10. Did the speaker refer to doctrines or concepts with which you were unfamiliar without explaining them?
  
11. Did the speaker bring the presentation to a logical conclusion?
  
12. Did the speaker make an effective appeal to action?
  
13. Were you motivated to make some decision at the conclusion of the presentation?
  
14. Is there any positive criticism you would like to make? (Use the space below.)

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