

Community of Christ Seminary

דבר – Λόγος

Did You Hear the Word?

Basic Exegetical Method

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Scripture in the Community of Christ
(Sharing in Community of Christ, 2nd ed., pp. 25-26;
<http://www.cofchrist.org/ourfaith/scripture.asp>)

Scripture provides divine guidance and inspired insight for life when responsibly interpreted and faithfully applied. Scripture helps us believe in Jesus Christ. Its witness guides us to eternal life and enables us to grow spiritually, to transform our lives, and to participate actively in the life and ministry of the church.

1. *We declare that Jesus Christ—who lived, was crucified, was raised from the dead, and comes again—is the Living Word of God. It is to Christ that scripture points. It is through Christ that we have life (John 5:39–40). It is Christ whom we must hear (Mark 9:7).*
2. *We find the Living Word in and through scripture. Scripture is the indispensable witness of the saving, transforming message that God has entrusted to the church. The church formed the canon of scripture so that it might always have a way to hear the good news, nurture its faith, measure its life, test its experience, and remember its identity.*
3. *Scripture is a library of books that speaks in many voices. These books were written in diverse times and places, and reflect the languages, cultures, and conditions under which they were written. God’s revelation through scripture does not come to us apart from the humanity of the writers, but in and through that humanity. In the earthen vessels of scripture we have been given the treasure of divine love and grace (2 Corinthians 4:7).*
4. *Scripture’s authority is derived from the model of Christ, who came to be a servant (Mark 10:45). Therefore, the authority of scripture is not the authority to oppress, control, or dominate. If Jesus came to serve, how much more should the books that point to him be treated as a servant of the saving purposes of God.*
5. *Scripture is vital and essential to the church, but not because it is inerrant (in the sense that every detail is historically or scientifically correct). Scripture makes no such claim for itself. Rather, generations of Christians have found scripture simply to be trustworthy in keeping them anchored in revelation, in promoting faith in Christ, and in nurturing the life of discipleship. For these purposes, scripture is unfailingly reliable (2 Timothy 3:16–17).*
6. *Faith, experience, tradition, and scholarship each have something to contribute to our understanding of scripture. In wrestling to hear and respond to the witness of scripture, the church must value the light that each of these sources may offer.*
7. *As the church tries to interpret scripture responsibly, it seeks the help of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide his disciples into new truth (John*

- 16:12–15). By the Spirit, the ancient words of scripture can become revelatory, allowing us to grasp what may not have been seen or heard before.*
- 8. Disciples are called to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the scriptures so that they may ever increase in love for God, neighbor, and self (Matthew 22:37–40; Mosiah 1:49), uphold the dignity and worth of all persons (Doctrine and Covenants 16:3c–d), and faithfully follow the Way of Jesus Christ.*
 - 9. With other Christians, we affirm the Bible as the foundational scripture for the church. In addition, the Community of Christ uses the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants as scripture. We do not use these sacred writings to replace the witness of the Bible or improve upon it, but because they confirm its message that Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God (Preface of the Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants 76:3g). We have heard Christ speak in all three books of scripture, and bear witness that he is “alive forever and ever” (Revelation 1:18).*

For our time we shall seek to live and interpret the witness of scripture by the Spirit, with the community, for the sake of mission, in the name of the Prince of Peace.

Theology Task Force, May 3, 2003, with the concurrence of the World Church Leadership Council, May 12, 2003; reissued August 2006

Step 1: Disassembling Your Passage

A simple way to begin studying your passage is to disassemble or “dissect” it (remember high school biology?). This can be done by outlining the text. The purpose is both to become *familiar with the text* and to become *unfamiliar* with it. You will see and hear things you’ve never noticed before.

Below is a dissection of John 1:1-5. The outline reveals the various “parts” of this passage in relation to each other. Use all the words of your passage in their proper order and arrange them so that “like” words, characters, or thoughts form columns. Each passage will take its own unique shape. As you dissect your text, various questions will emerge about words, phrases, and concepts, or about the meaning of the passage as a whole. As you rewrite your passage, **keep a written list of the questions that come to mind.**

After completing your dissection of the text, here are some other questions you may want to ask yourself: **What does the outline help me see? What does it make me wish I knew more about? What terms or ideas are unclear to me?**

This close, careful reading of your passage equips you to go deeper into the text and will guide you through the subsequent steps of the exegetical process.

John 1:1-5

1:1	In the beginning with God, God.	was the Word, and the Word was and the Word was	
1:2	in the beginning with God.	He was	
1:3		came into being through him, and without him	All things not one thing
1:4		came into being. has come into being in him	What
1:5		was life, and the life was the light The light shines	of all people.
			in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Step 2: Compare Translations

The next exegetical step requires you to examine your passage in several versions of the Bible. Use the NRSV as your baseline, and then pick two or three other versions of the Bible (from the list below). Compare how each one translates your text.

A helpful way to compare different versions is to write your passage out in one column and then write just the variations found in the other versions in parallel columns.

Since the original biblical languages were Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, this exercise will help us appreciate the nuances of meaning that can come when translating one language to another. By carefully comparing different translations, you will be able to grasp where there may be various nuances of meaning that the original language communicated. This exercise will also prepare you to ask more informed questions when you study the commentaries.

After you have made your comparison, describe what you've discovered. List any questions about translation issues or word meanings that you will need to pursue as your exegesis progresses.

List of Some Translations

King James Version
 New King James Version
 Jerusalem Bible
 New Jerusalem Bible
 New International Version
 New English Bible
 New American Bible
 Revised Standard Version
 Revised English Bible
 Contemporary English Version
 New Revised Standard Version
 New American Standard Version
 Common English Bible

For a helpful, short book on the basic issues of Bible translation, see Steven M. Sheeley and Robert N. Nash, Jr., *Choosing a Bible: a Guide to Modern English Translations and Editions* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999). ISBN: 0-687-05200-9

Translation Comparison Worksheet

Text: _____

NRSV:

|

_____:

|

_____:

|

_____:

The Bible & the Issue of Translation

Questions: *Why are there so many different translations of the Bible? How reliable are they? How can I make the best use of translations for study, teaching, and preaching?*

1. Why are there so many different translations of the Bible?
 - A. Because the Bible is such a significant text
 - B. Because as our historical and linguistic knowledge of the world of the Bible is constantly improving
 - C. Because as new translations become popular, they gain 'classic' status, meaning that people keep on using them when even newer translations come out
 - D. Because translation is an art, not a science, and there are different theories about what makes for an accurate translation
 - i. Translation theories
 - a. *Formal Correspondence* or *Verbal* translations
KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV (sort of in between), NAB, NKJV, NJB, NRSV
 - b. *Dynamic Equivalence* translations
JB, NEB, REB, NCV, NLT, TEV, CEV,
 - c. *Paraphrases*
LB, *The Way*, *The Message*

2. How reliable are they?
 - A. The reconstructed texts of the OT and NT are today considered *extraordinarily* reliable.
 - i. The Dead Sea Scrolls
 - ii. Over 5000 manuscripts and fragments of the NT
 - B. There are no perfect translations, but generally the translations (not the paraphrases) available today can be trusted to give us the sense of the original, though they differ in exact wording.

3. How can I make the best use of translations for study, teaching, and preaching?
 - A. By using a variety
 - B. By becoming familiar with some of the issues related to translating the Bible
 - C. By becoming a student of contemporary biblical scholarship
 - D. By learning and practicing good exegetical method
 - E. By learning the biblical languages

4. What about the 'Inspired Version'?
 - A. Is it really a translation?
 - B. Based on the KJV, so shares its weaknesses
 - C. It was never a finished text, and the term 'IV' was an editorial choice
 - D. There is no basis in any extant manuscripts for the changes Joseph makes
 - E. Perhaps more helpful to see it as Joseph's commentary or theological workshop
 - F. It helps us glimpse what Joseph thought/believed, but not what the original authors wrote or intended.

Scripture Interpretation: *The Importance of Context*

- Key Points:**
1. *The authors of scripture did not write lists of 'proof texts' but works of literature. A passage in any text is related to the whole work of which it is a part; the part has its meaning in relation to the whole. Sound interpretation requires that we learn to read scripture as literature.*
 2. *The authors of scripture were shaped by the cultural-religious milieu of which they were part, thus their writings reflect those settings. Sound interpretation requires that we learn to navigate in their worlds.*

Literary Context = the relationship of a selected passage to the content, purpose, and flow of the whole work it is part of. Literary Context refers to the world *within* the text.

- *What type of literature am I reading? (Poem? Prayer? Parable? Narrative? Letter? etc.)*
- *Where does my passage appear in the narrative or argument and why?*
- *What is its relation to things said before and after it?*
- *How does it connect to themes that appear elsewhere in this book?*
- *How does the use of terms in my passage reflect the author's usage in other places in this book?*

Literary Context keeps us focused on what and how the author was trying to communicate. It gives interpreters a way to check themselves so that they don't import meanings into the text that are inappropriate. It reminds us that scripture is literature, and its writers are authors.

Historical Context = the cultural-historical setting that shaped the book. Historical Context refers to the world *around* the text

- *What were the cultural, religious, linguistic, social, historical, political forces that influenced the author and thus the text?*
- *What was the author's background?*
- *When was this book written?*
- *What can we know about how this type of literature was understood and used in its culture?*

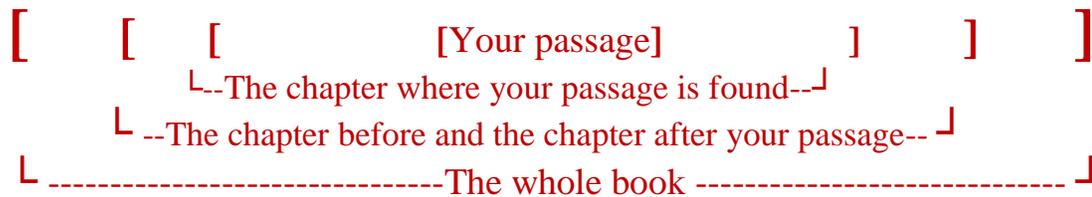
Historical context reminds us that the experience and concepts of the author are different from ours. It helps us see how the text is connected to its own thought-world, and thus helps us resist imposing our own ideas or experience on the text. Using historical context to help us interpret scripture keeps us from turning the text into a mirror, and requires us to differentiate the text's message from its worldview.

Step 3: **Reading the Text in Its Literary Context**

A punch-line has little meaning apart from a joke; it's also hard to know what's going on when you come in on the middle of a conversation. In the same way, the meaning of a passage is determined by its "literary context," or the material found before and after it. For example, the phrase "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37) means little, or may even be misunderstood, apart from where it is found and how it functions in Luke's Gospel. Jesus' statement finds its meaning (1) in relation to the passage it is in –the Parable of the Good Samaritan, (2) in relation to the larger section of Luke it is part of –Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, and (3) in relation to the whole gospel of Luke, where it expresses themes unique to Luke's story: Jesus' concern for outcasts. Put simply, the part is always related to a larger whole.

Reading the passage in its literary context begins quite simply: we read it in light of what comes before and after. The language, themes, and theology of a passage will be connected to other things the author has to say. Your task is to discover these connections.

Literary context, then, works like this: (1) read your passage; (2) read the whole chapter in which your passage is found; (3) read the chapter immediately before and after your passage; (4) read the whole book.



Reading a biblical text in this way lets the author (not our own agendas) guide the reader in understanding the meaning of a specific passage. It also allows the reader to rely on the author for help in understanding his distinctive way of telling the story, making the argument, or using special vocabulary.

Literary Context Worksheet

Text: _____

The Task: figuring out how *the part* (my passage) is related to *the whole* (the letter, or

gospel, etc).

Immediate Literary Context:

What light does the immediate literary context shed on my passage? (The chapter in which my passage is found, as well as the chapter before and after my passage)

Wider Literary Context

What light does the wider literary context shed on my passage? (The whole book)
As I read through the whole book, what themes and key words keep appearing that relate to my text? How does my text relate to the issues or goals of the author's whole work?

What important terms are used in my passage and where else do they appear in the book?
(Use a concordance to find these.)

—
—
—

**Step 4:
Exploring Key Terms (Word-Studies)**

A concordance and Bible dictionaries will be the necessary tools for this exercise.

Word Studies: Beginning to Read the Text in Its Historical/Social/Religious Context

As you explore your passage, you'll find vocabulary you'll need to learn more about. Often, the literary context can help you grasp how an author is using a certain term. But more often, some kinds of terminology will not be clear to you, because we are far removed from the ancient world in which the biblical authors lived and thought. We can't assume that because we know the meaning of a term in contemporary English that this term when used to translate the original text of the NT means exactly the same. For example, the word "justify" in contemporary American English often means "to make excuses for oneself." However, in the NT, especially in Paul's writings, "justify" is a theological term that refers to God's act of restoring the fractured relationship between humankind and God.

You need special techniques and appropriate tools to do word studies. Good Bible dictionaries (by good, we mean those based on modern critical research and methodology) are indispensable for helping students grasp the original linguistic context of a term.

The process you will follow is this:

1. Identify key terms in your text that you want to be sure to understand accurately.
2. In a concordance, find the other places in your book where this term is used.
3. Read each of those passages, and try to discern from the way the author uses the term what its meaning is.
4. Once you have done this (and only after you have done this!), then look up at least two of your terms in a Bible dictionary. Bible dictionaries will help you understand the linguistic background of the Bible; from them, you will understand the meanings of important terminology. The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, the *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, the *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, and the *Harper's Dictionary of the Bible* are all reliable resources. Report what you have learned about the meaning of these terms on the following worksheet. Reflect on how this knowledge helps you deepen your grasp of the passage.

Word Studies Worksheet

Text: _____

Terms to be studied:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

**Step 5:
Commentaries and Other Scholarly Literature**

At this point in your exegesis, you have already discovered much about your text independently. You are now ready to consult the commentaries and scholarly literature. Commentaries are verse-by-verse, or section-by-section, analyses of a text. They are always written from a perspective, whether theological or scholarly, which the reader should become aware of. Some commentaries are “mainline Protestant,” some “evangelical,” some “liberation,” some Catholic, while some strive to be purely historical, others devotional, etc. All commentators write from a perspective. This does not necessarily invalidate their interpretations, since exegesis cannot be done without a perspective. But it’s helpful for readers to recognize this fact. We generally find the following commentaries to have solid scholarship and a perspective that is compatible with Community of Christ theology:

Some One-Volume Commentaries

Harper’s Bible Commentary

HarperCollins Bible Commentary

Oxford Bible Commentary

Eerdmans’ Bible Commentary

Some Multi-volume Commentary Series

Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Abingdon)

Interpreter’s Bible (Old and New Series)

Interpreter’s Concise Commentary

Interpretation Series (Westminster/John Knox)

Sacra Pagina (Liturgical/Michael Glazier Press)

Westminster Bible Companion (Westminster/John Knox)

Interpreting Biblical Texts (Abingdon)

For Everyone Series (Westminster/John Knox)

Your assignment is to look at a few commentaries and read what each author has to say about your passage. Pay close attention to how commentators resolve puzzling issues in your text, and to questions they raise that you didn’t think about. An important question to take to each commentary is: what can I learn about how my passage spoke to the concerns, issues, and context of its first readers?

What do the commentaries have to say about your text?

_____ (title of commentary):

_____:

_____:

*Scripture Interpretation: Examples of the Importance of
Historical-Social-Religious Context*

Genesis 6-8. *Why does God's response to human evil seem so evil and violent itself?*

→ Reading Gen 6-8 in light of other ancient Near Eastern flood stories, like the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, reveals an answer.

Genesis 15: 7-12, 17-21. *What is the significance of the bizarre visionary experience Abram has in which God makes a covenant with him?*

→ Knowing something about ancient treaty ceremonies reveals a profound theological truth about the covenant God makes with Abraham.

Exodus 5-14. *How can we make any theological sense of God's 'hardening of Pharaoh's heart'?*

→ To see Pharaoh as the ancient Egyptians did, as the embodiment of the sun god, helps us see that one of the points the story is trying to make is that the God of Israel can make one of the Egyptian gods into a plaything.

Mark 9:33-37, 10:13-16. *What do children have to do with the Kingdom of God? What point is Jesus trying to make?*

→ Understanding how children were viewed in the ancient world sheds light on the radical point Jesus is trying to make

Philemon 12. *What moral sense can we make of Paul sending the runaway slave Onesimus back to his owner Philemon?*

→ Gaining some understanding of slavery in the Roman Empire and of Paul's theology, as well as reading the whole letter closely, can help us see that Paul is actually subverting the slavery system in light of the gospel.

Revelation (the whole thing!). *Does this book predict the times in which we live? Is there any way to make sense of the strange symbolism?*

→ Actually, no. It's addressed to the time of its original audience. Learning about apocalypses (the literary form of Revelation) can help make sense of this puzzling book: its main point is *God's in charge, not Rome! So stay true to Jesus!*

**Step 6:
Assembling the Results of Your Study**

At this point in your work, you'll have some new insights into what your text is about. The steps of exegesis will have helped you grasp some of the finer point so of the passage, and you will have gained a new awareness of what the author was trying to convey to his readers/audience. Step 6 involves sifting back through the work you have done and organizing the results. The simplest way to do this task is to go back to the questions your first close reading of the passage raised and explain how you would now answer them, and on what basis. At this point you should also list the questions for which you do not yet have answers. Be advised, though, that some of your questions may *not* have answers, even now, and that some of them will surely require additional research or new skills; you are not required now, or ever, to issue the "definitive" understanding of the text. What is needed now is a statement of your best, current understanding of the original sense of your passage.

Issues and Questions:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Exegetical Insights:

Unanswered Questions:

➤

➤

➤

➤

➤

Further Research Needed:

**Exegesis Step 7:
Restating Your Text: A Paraphrase**

It will now be helpful to restate the text, as you presently understand it, in your own words. This is called *paraphrasing*. A paraphrase affords the interpreter an opportunity to state the text in the light of: your grasp of its literary, historical, social, and religious context, and the aims of the original author. Paraphrasing is an art, but it cannot legitimately be done until you have worked through all the preceding exegetical steps. Some texts will be easier to paraphrase (narratives, for example); others will be more difficult (sayings, dense theological arguments with technical terminology, prophetic oracles, etc.).

The “control mechanism” here is the biblical author’s original intent (as tricky as that can be to know). Remember, the point is not yet to offer a current theological or pastoral application, and certainly not to “screen” out whatever you dislike in the text. If we use the analogy of reflective listening from interpersonal communication, you are restating what you have heard, not slavishly but with the understanding borne of your deep reflection on the text.

Paraphrase Worksheet

Text: _____

In the space below, write out a paraphrase of your text:

Step 8: Building Bridges between the Text and Your Context

Ministers of the gospel are commissioned to serve the church in the name of its Lord for the sake of God's redemptive purposes in the world. We are thus called to use, read, and study the sacred text in order to hear God's Word (= God's loving self-communication) in and through it for today. An approach to scripture that is striving to be in some sense "Christian" must seriously take the setting of the church –the community which witnesses of Jesus Christ – as the primary context in which it tries to hear the living voice of God in the written word of the scripture.

At its most basic, this stage of exegesis asks the simple question, ***How can my text be used today in a way that creatively, generously, and non-coercively gives voice to the central proclamation of the Christian faith?***

At this point in your work you will be offering an interpretation of your passage for today. *You are now making a leap from past meaning to present significance.* Offering an interpretation involves drawing theological conclusions or discipleship principles from the passage. These are not definitive or final, but represent both your best reading of the text at present and an act of the disciplined, Spirit-guided imagination. "Disciplined, Spirit-guided imagination" means (1) that your leap from past to present will offer an interpretation that coheres in some way with the sense of the text, and (2) that your interpretation will attempt to hear and proclaim the gospel for today in and through the text. Example: Knowing something of who the Samaritans were in Jesus' social and religious world and something of the good news he proclaimed (and was: he is what he taught!) equips you to hear what this text might be calling us to today.

Some fairly basic questions may help you to make the leap from past to present: *What might this text be calling followers of Jesus to be or to do? How might this text inform the journey of faith today? How might the message of this text lead us to a renewed and deeper encounter with God? In what ways does it challenge our own views of the "way things are"? How does one's own context help one hear the text in new ways? What is the good news in this text? How can this text help the church proclaim and teach the gospel? What in our experience connects us to the images and message of this passage?* These questions are only suggestions.

Obviously, one's own spiritual discipline, discernment, awareness of the needs of the community, understanding of the gospel and principles of Christian theology, and willingness to wrestle with the text will affect the outcome. But take heart; there is ample grace! There is also some help in the form of the church's Statement on Scripture (2003), which is intended to give guidance about the place and value of scripture in the life of the church today.

Remember: your task now is to let the ancient, human words of the text become the means of a real, life-transforming, liberating encounter with the Living God. Here we must seek and ask the Holy Spirit to use our efforts, to use the text, and to use us –flawed and broken instruments that we are –to speak God's loving Word for the sake of the Kingdom.

Building Bridges Worksheet

Text: _____

What does my text, as interpreted, have to say to the lives of disciples today? To what does it call us? How shall we apply it in our lives? What in the text may not apply to us today?

A Test Run for Your Sermon or Class

- *Where is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in your sermon?*
- *To what am I inviting people?*
- *Faith/experience/tradition/scholarship: what tools have I used to interpret the scripture?*
- *Same old drum? Are you saying what you always say (using a different text for your only issue)? How is the scripture stretching you in new ways? Changing and expanding your understanding of God? (The sermon is not about converting people to your way of thinking, but inviting them to walk with Jesus)*
- *The “Ego-Test”: How much is this sermon about you?*
- *The purpose of scripture, preaching, and even our experience is to point to One much bigger than us*
- *The ‘Love of God’ test: What kind of God does your message illuminate?*
- *The Community test: When I preach I represent the Community of Christ. So how well does my sermon reflect the communal, public beliefs and principles of the church (as in *Sharing in Community of Christ*)?*

Some Reliable Tools for Serious Bible Study

For an updated version, see: <http://www.cofchrist.org/onlineresources/biblestudy.asp>

Bibles

Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, NRSV – the ‘gold standard,’ used in colleges and seminaries
HarperCollins Study Bible, NRSV – brilliantly done: clear, affordable, up-to-date
The Discipleship Study Bible, NRSV – superb scholarship made very accessible: top choice for congregations
New Interpreter’s Study Bible, NRSV – clear, solid, sound, easy to use, good for preaching
Oxford Access Bible, NRSV – a somewhat simplified version of the Oxford Annotated
Spiritual Formation Bible (NRSV or NIV) – good source of spiritual formation exercises and questions

Bible Dictionaries

Anchor Bible Dictionary – scholarly, but accessible (multi-volume)
Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (2000) – a superb one volume work
Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible – the old standard scholarly reference dictionary (5 volumes)
New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible – in five volumes, the new standard reference tool, available in CD
Oxford Bible Companion – an excellent reference tool: clear, solid, and easy to use

Scholarly Introductions

R. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* – a solid, balanced textbook, very accessible
 J.J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* – clear, scholarly, and readable
 C. Fant, et al., *An Introduction to the Bible*, revised – best 1-vol. intro to whole Bible available
 S.L. Harris, *The New Testament: a Student’s Introduction* – a standard & informative undergrad text
 R. Kugler & P. Hartin, *An Introduction to the Bible* – superb undergrad intro, worth owning

One Volume Commentaries

Harper’s Bible Commentary – basic and affordable
HarperCollins Bible Commentary – very useful
International Bible Commentary – reflects many cultural perspectives
Global Bible Commentary – an excellent way to get commentary from many cultural perspectives
Oxford Bible Commentary – superbly done, though a bit more technical
Eerdmans’ Commentary on the Bible – the 2000 edition is one of the best 1-volume commentaries
New Interpreter’s Bible One Volume Commentary – outstanding, readable, and up-to-date (2010)

Multi-volume Commentary Series

Abingdon New Testament Commentaries – solid volumes by good scholars
Interpreter’s Bible (Old and New Series) – both series are mainstays for preachers & teachers
Interpreter’s Concise Commentary – out of print jewel, small paperback volumes in a case (used bookstores)
 Interpretation Series (Westminster/John Knox) – for pastors and teachers
 Sacra Pagina (Liturgical/Michael Glazier Press) – excellent commentaries by world-class scholars

Useful Study Series (or Volumes)

Barclay’s Daily Study Bible – still a gem after many decades of use
 The *For Everyone* series (Westminster/John Knox) – simple, relevant guides by scholar Tom

Wright; a kind of 21st century Barclay's Study Bible; mildly evangelical
 John Hayes and Keith Schoville, *Books of the Bible* (Abingdon) – an easy, clear, sound survey of the whole Bible with study questions and a very user friendly format.
 Interpretation Bible Studies (Westminster/John Knox) – companions to the Interpretation Commentaries, very usable, sound scholarship, good theology
 The Pastor's Bible Study (Abingdon) – excellent companion volumes to the New Interpreter's Study Bible
 The *Push It!* Series (United Church Press) – thought-provoking, young adult oriented Bible studies
 20/30 Series Bible Studies (Abingdon) – nicely designed, Young Adult oriented, good theology
 3V Series (Abingdon) – excellent series for Senior High

Scholarly Journals

Interpretation – many helpful articles, short sermons, and book reviews in each volume

Method

D. J. Harrington, *Interpreting the New Testament* – excellent, straightforward guide to exegetical method
 J. Hayes & C. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (3rd ed.) – single best guide to the craft of biblical interpretation
 L. Johnson, *Living Jesus* – blends the scholarly with Christian spiritual formation
 M. R. Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* – a potent antidote to over-intellectualized Bible study

Miscellaneous

Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*, 4th edition (Augsburg Fortress, 2006).
 A clear and beautiful overview of the theological meaning of the whole Bible by one of the premier 20th century American Old Testament scholars.
 Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code* (Abingdon) – finest small study of the Book of Revelation available, simple, inexpensive, comes with leader's guide, and represents excellent scholarship
 Mark Allan Powell, *The Fortress Introduction to the Gospels* (Fortress) – a valuable, solid volume on the background and message of the four Gospels.
 Marion Soards, *The Apostle Paul* (Paulist) – an excellent intro to the Pauline letters