

How to Study the Bible

Unit 3: Lexical / Grammatical Analysis – Lesson 2: Words and Grammar

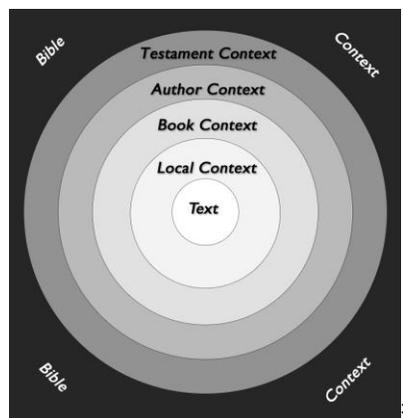
Words and Grammar¹

1. Identify the general literary form.

- How does the author intend his words to be understood?
 - Involves genre:
 - Old Testament Narratives, New Testament Narratives and Gospels, Laws, Prophets, Psalms, Wisdom, Apocalyptic² (Focus of this class in March.)
 - Involves literary forms:
 - Similes, Metaphors, Proverbs, Parables, Allegories, Prophecy, etc.
 - **Example:**
 - You must be able to determine what is literal and what is figurative language.
 - Apocalyptic: Pictures in words.
 - Poetry: Figurative language.
 - Prose: Literal Language.
 - Narrative: Literal Language.
 - You should not read Genesis and Leviticus the same way.
 - You should not read Psalm and Acts the same way.

2. Trace development of author's theme within context.

- Setting and context



3. Identify natural divisions of text.

- Chapter and verse numbers help, but rely more on author's train of thought and rhetorical patterns and subdivisions lined out by various translations.
- Putting it plainly: paragraph, sentences, flow of logic.
 - **Example: Mark 8**

¹ Henry A. Vikler, *Hermeneutics, Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, Pages 99-120.

² Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 30.

³ William Klein, Craig Blomberg, Robert Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004) 214-229.

4. Identify word types and syntactical function.

- **Words:** Place holders for ideas.
- **Syntax:** The way words are arranged to express a thoughts in phrases and patterns.

- Know your English grammar.
 - Nouns, verbs, direct objects, indirect objects, prepositions, clauses, etc.
 - Pronouns, antecedents, modifiers.

 - **Example: John 1:1-14**

- Pay attention to connecting words.
 - **Therefore / Then:** provides the connecting link between a theoretical argument and practical application.
 - **If:** Usually indicates conditionality.
 - **Because:** Suggests the grounds on which an argument stands.

 - **Example: Philippians 1**

5. Determine individual word meanings.

- **Connotative Definition:** The applied meaning of a word based on its usage and context.
- **Denotative Definition:** The formal meaning of a word.

- **Important: Don't use English dictionary to find definitions when studying the bible.**

- Tools to determine word meanings:
 - **Concordance:** Helps you determine word used in original language.
 - Strong's Concordance (Based on KJV)

 - **Dictionaries:** Helps determine definition of original words.
 - Vines Expository Dictionary (For teaching and studying, but not academic studies).
 - Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary

 - **Lexicons:** More technical / advanced look at original words and nuances.
 - Hebrew:
 - Brown, Driver and Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT* (BDB).
 - Gesenius. *Hebrew and Caldee Lexicon to the OT.*
 - Greek:
 - Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT.* (BDAG)
 - Louw and Nida. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT Based on Semantic Domans*

 - **Theological Workbooks:** Helps determine the way the role language plays in the theology position of the author / audience.

- Example: σὰρξ (sarx: flesh).
 - The solid part of the body except bones (1 Cor. 15:39)
 - The whole substance of the body (Acts 2:26)
 - The sensuous nature of man (Col. 2:18)
 - Human nature as dominated by sinful desires (Rom. 7:18)

6. Put results into a paraphrase.

- Put all of your study results into nontechnical, easily understood words that clearly convey the author's intended meaning.