Biblical Interpretation

**Course Facilitator: Jeff Lark, Th.M.**

## *Institute of Biblical Studies*

**December 16–20, 2019**

**Course Purpose**

## The Institute of Biblical Studies exists to help develop Christ-centered missionaries who possess the biblical and theological competencies they need (head, heart, and hands) to live out the Great Commandment and help fulfill the Great Commission through the ministry of Cru. As an organization, we are passionate about connecting people to Christ. To fulfill our global missionary mandate, we need to be growing in our understanding and experience of the good news about Christ revealed in the Scriptures and increasing in our understanding of people (as created, fallen and redeemed). Biblical Interpretation exists to help you grow in your capacity to read and apply the Scriptures in a Christ-centered contextualized way.

## Course Description

The biblical genre of narrative makes up roughly 40% or our Bibles. Faithfully interpreting God’s Word requires understanding this literary form, applying sound hermeneutical principles, and connecting every passage to God’s redemptive message throughout the Scriptures that centers on Jesus Christ. Building on the foundation of Bible Study Methods, this course will further develop an interpretive process that will enable you to understand narratives and encounter the living God more profoundly. You will have the opportunity to learn this process working in small groups with the aid of a coach who will guide you to handle the treasure of God’s Word faithfully and meaningfully.

Prerequisite: *Bible Study Methods*

**Learning Outcomes**

Cognitive (Knowledge and Thinking Skills)

1. Discover tools that can help you better understand and apply Old and New Testament narrative in Scripture.
2. Better understand the grand story of Scripture and why it is important that we relate every passage to this larger story that culminates in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
3. Grow in your awareness of how culture shapes our reading and application of Scripture as well as the importance of listening to believers in other cultural contexts to understand what God is saying to us in his Word.

Affective (Attitudes, Motivation and Character)

1. Grow as a disciple of Jesus who joyfully submits to the authority of God’s Word and who builds movements of disciples who “truly follow Jesus” by embracing his Word in their lives.
2. Develop greater confidence and humility in your ability to understand and apply God’s Word.
3. Be motivated to apply sound interpretive principles to your future reading, study, application and teaching of Scripture.

Behavioral (Personal and Ministry Skills)

1. Grow in your ability to ask good questions as you read, study, and apply the Scriptures.
2. Grow in your aptitude to read and apply the Scriptures in a Christ-centered way by discerning how Scripture exposes your brokenness/rebellion and points your heart to find true life in Christ.

**Required Texts**

## (There are Kindle versions of these books available. The ISBN is for the print versions)

Duvall, Scott J. and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God’s Word.* 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-310-49066-1 [Duvall and Hays introduce you to a process of interpretation that closely resembles the process we teach in our class. While some of their language is different, the concepts are essentially the same. And, they walk you through the process using each of the major literary genres of the Bible. This book will get you well down the road in understanding our method in Biblical Interpretation. But, a word of caution: do not get “married” to their language. We will introduce you to language that we will use throughout Biblical Interpretation and Biblical Communication. NOTE: *Make sure you buy the third edition.*]

Georges, Jayson and Mark D. Baker. *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016. ISBN-978-0-8308-5146-1 [We will only be reading three chapters from this book. But the entire book is extremely helpful to learn how to minister to those who come from an honor/shame context.]

## Keller, Timothy. The *Prodigal Prophet* New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2018

## [The ultimate goal of biblical interpretation is seeing and savoring the glory of

## Christ. In this book, Keller unfolds the beauty of Jesus through Jonah. We will

## discuss chapters 1-9 in our coaching groups. We recommend that you wait to read this till

## the night before we discuss each chapter.]

*ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1433502415. The ESV Study Bible is one of the most helpful single-volume resources for studying the Bible. It contains a wealth of notes and articles addressing everything from the meaning of individual verses to the big picture of God’s story. [NOTE: When you buy the print version, you also get free online access to the ESVSB. If you don’t want a print version of the ESVSB, you can simply buy one of the electronic versions available at esv.org.]

*NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*: New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 2018. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0310450403> Note: This Bible recently changed names from the Zondervan NIV Study Bible. (We would recommend purchasing the digital version at <https://www.olivetree.com/store/product.php?productid=42748>. Or, you can purchase it on BibleGateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com> (Also, be sure to purchase the Zondervan edition, not just the NIV Study Bible. And, if you search for the Study Bible app in the app store, you can find it by searching for “NIV Zondervan study bible” – it is still under that title in the app store.)

## Recommended Texts

Bartholomew Craig G. and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama Of Scripture: Finding Our Place In The Biblical Story*. Gruand Rapids: Baker. 2004.

Doriani, Daniel M. *Getting the Message: A Plan for Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application.* Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 2001.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Biblical-Theological Foundations and Principles*. Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Kostenberger, Andreas and Richard Patterson. *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011.

Roberts, Vaughan. *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the story-line of the Bible*. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-0830853649

Richards, E. Randolph. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grover: Intervarsity, 2012.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and Expanded. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006.

**Learning Tasks:**

1. **Reading/watching**: You will engage with five books in this class. (1) *Grasping God’s Word* provides a great overview of the biblical interpretation process and various literary forms we find in the Bible and will be a supplement to the lectures. (2) *God’s Big Picture* are nine videos based off the book by the same title that traces the entire story of the Bible. You are required to interact with the material in the videos by filling out the notetaking sheet. We will discuss *GBP* in our coaching groups. (3) *The ESV Study Bible* and the *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* are great resources for studying the Bible. They are resources you will continue to consult long after the class ends. (4) We will use Keller’s *Prodigal Prophet* devotionally and will be a complement to our times in the narratives. We will be discussing chapters 1-9 from this book. (6) *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* is a wonderful introduction to a biblical theology of honor and shame. The last day of class you will submit a reading report to your coach indicating how much of the required reading you completed.
2. **Preparation for the First Class**: There is required work that needs to be completed prior to the first class session. See “Pre-Class Assignments” below.
3. **Participate in a Coaching Group:** Much of the learning in this class will take place in a small group context. You will be assigned to a coaching group with eight to ten of your peers. You will have a chance to practice the skills you are learning under the watchful eye of a coach.
4. **Study a Passage**: You will complete five worksheets which will give you the opportunity to practice the specific skills on which we focus that day. You will be able to incorporate all of your work into your final exegetical paper. The worksheets are all in Google Drive in one Google Doc. You will do a worksheet and then share (or comment) the file with your coach to let them know you completed it. As you continue to work through the worksheets, you will have all of your work in the one Google Doc.
5. **Write an Exegetical Paper**: You will communicate what you have learned from studying your passage in an exegetical paper.

# Course Grade

Reading 15 % (Turn in the reading report to your coach)

Exegetical Assignments 50 %

Exegetical Project 35%

Total 100pts

Grading Scale:

94-100 A

92-93 A-

90-91 B+

84-89 B

82-83 B-

80-81 C+

74-79 C

72-73 C-

65-71 D

0-65 F

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**Pre-Class Work**

Prior to the first class, you need to read (or watch) the following:

* Roberts, *God’s Big Picture* Videos [fill out the video notetaking sheets] - <https://www.godsbigpicture.co.uk/watch>
* Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word* 
  + Part 1 – Ch. 2-5 [52pp]
  + Part 2 – all [48pp]
  + Part 3 – all [44pp]
  + Part 4 – Ch. 15 [22pp]
  + Part 5 – Ch. 18 [[22pp]
  + Appendix 1 – Inspiration and Canon [12pp]
* Read Johnson, “[Hearing the Music of the Gospel](https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/hearing-the-music-of-the-gospel.pdf)” (NOTE: We will discuss this article in the first class session.)
* Georges and Baker – Part 2 (ch. 4 and 5)
* Complete worksheet #1 (Observations) by Friday before class begins.

Here is a link to a [Google Sheet Checklist](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1inmN2mAPpLIp6upAXtUK3HpzGRFZa1pOUT4h20qhQX0/copy) to help you. You will be asked to make your own copy.

**Note for God’s Big Picture Videos**

**(Electronic copy will be provided in the Google Drive)**

1. If you were to describe each of the following kingdoms to someone, what would you say are the main characteristics of each kingdom (what are the main events, timeline, etc…)?
2. In each kingdom, who are God’s people, where is God’s place, and how is God ruling/blessing?

**Pattern of the Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Perished Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Promised Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Partial Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Prophesied Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Present Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Proclaimed Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Perfected Kingdom**

Main characteristic/events/timeline

God’s people

God’s place

God’s rule and blessing

**Worksheet #1**

**Observation**

Step 1: Select your passage. The two options for the class are 2 Samuel 9 or Mark 4:35-41.

Step 2: Using the “Observation Key,” record observations about your passage below. Spend at least 30 minutes making observations. Disclaimer: There may not be observations for every category in your passage.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Setting** |  |
| **Characters** |  |
| **Plot** |  |
| **Tension** |  |
| **Dialogue** |  |
| **Geography** |  |
| **Proportion** |  |
| **Shift/Turn** |  |
| **Repetition** |  |
| **Cause/Effect**  **Decision/Consequence** |  |
| **Key Words/Phrases** |  |
| **Connectives** |  |
| **Contrasts**  **Comparisons** |  |

**Observation Key for Narrative**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Observation Key:**  **Knowing What to “Look For”** | |
| **Setting** | The setting is the location, time, and/or set of affairs prior to the tension that drives the story. |
| **Characters** | Who are characters in the story? How are they described/presented in the narrative? Are any physical details provided about them that may be significant? Sometimes the names of characters have special significance. |
| **Plot** | How does the story develop? Where does the story turn or shifts? |
| **Tension** | Every story has a tension. Define the nature of primary tension that drives the plot. |
| **Dialogue** | Dialogue is important. Take special note of what the characters say. Oftentimes the central message of the passage is given through a speech. |
| **Geography** | Pay attention to words that indicate location. Use a map to measure distances. |
| **Proportion** | Note shifts in the amount of space given to topics. Scripture gives more space to some events/people than others. Two ways to look at this is through wide lens vs. zoom lens and fast vs. slow speed. When the narrative slows down and zooms in, he is alerting you to pay attention to some of the most important elements in the passage. |
| **Shift/Turn** | Shifts or turns in the passage might indicate the beginning of tension, the escalation of tension, the resolution, or following actions/lessons. |
| **Repetition** | Are there repeated words or phrases? Are there repeated thoughts? |
| **Cause/Effect**  **Decision/Consequence** | Is there a cause/effect relationship (if . . . then . . .)? Pay close attention to each decision and what results from it. |
| **Key Words/Phrases** | Look for words and phrases that are central to the meaning of the passage. Repeated terms or concepts may provide a clue. |
| **Connectives** | Connectives reveal important relationships. “For, because, or therefore…” often indicate a reason or cause. “But” often introduces a contrast. “So that, to, in order to…” often indicates purpose. |
| **Contrasts**  **Comparisons** | How does the writer use contrasts, comparisons and illustrations to amplify the concepts he wants to communicate? Comparison is the association of similar things while contrast is the association of things that are different. “But,” “however,” “rather,” or “on the other hand…” indicate contrast. “Like” and “as” indicate a comparison. How is the beginning of the story (one state of affairs) compared or contrasted with the end of the story (the concluding state of affairs)? |