

## Learning to Read. . .Again

### Tonight’s Vocabulary

*Exegesis: Exploring in-depth a biblical text.*

*Pericope: A block of text ordered around a central idea.*

### The Process of Understanding a Biblical Text

1. I need to see the text from above. Getting introduced to the text.
  - Figure out **where the text begins and ends**.
  - Read the text from several different translations to get a basic understanding.
    - A good word-for-word translation: New American Standard Bible
    - A good thought-for-thought translation: New International Version
    - A good idea-for-idea translation: New Living Bible or The Message
  - Look at what is happening **before and after the text** to see how it’s located in the flow of the book.
2. Listen closely to what the text is saying.
  - A. Ask the **right questions** of the text.
    - What appears to be the **center of gravity** of the text and what are incidental or secondary items? In other words, what is it that is ordering the rest of the text?
    - What does the text say that is a matter of principle, and which are **applications** of a larger principle?
    - What, if any, items appear to be **cultural** expressions of eternal principles?
    - Which ideas in the text enjoy uniform support throughout the Bible and which ideas differ from other texts in the Bible?
    - Is there conflict in the text or in the background?
  - B. If the text is a story, then try **try putting yourself in the place** of each character in the narrative.
  - C. Pay attention to details in the text that, at first glance, seem odd or out of place.
  - D. Try looking at the text from a number **of points of view**. (How would a rich man react to this text? A poor man? A woman? A child? A city person? A country

person? A feminist? A homosexual? A father? Someone outside the church? An atheist?)

E. Try to figure out not only what the text is saying, but what it is **doing**. (Is it giving an order? Calling attention to something? Singing? Warning? Arguing? Praying? Quoting?)

3. Think about the **historical** context of the text.
4. Consider the **literary style** of the text or the book its from.

### **Some examples**

- Laws
- Genealogies
- Biographies
- Prophecy
- Songs
- Poems
- Proverbs
- Personal Letters
- Parables
- Apocalyptic

5. Finally, consider what the text says to a modern audience, to your church, and specifically to you.