

# Counsel the Word: From the Text to the Counselee

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## Introduction

- Goal: To demonstrate the necessary steps to take a text and use it appropriately in counseling. *Job 42:7*  
*James 3:1 "stricter judgment" 2 Cor. 5*
- Nothing is better than knowing and understanding the biblical text. For all biblical counselors, the text is primary. Since we counsel from an authoritative God using a sufficient Word, it is essential that we get the meaning of the text right and understand how to appropriately apply the text in a consistent manner with that meaning.
- Understanding the Bible involves a two-part process: interpreting and applying. Paul described it to Timothy when he wrote: "Till I come, **1** give attention to reading, **2** to exhortation, **3** to doctrine ... Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.<sup>16</sup> Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim 4:13-16). To Titus he wrote, "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine" (Tit 2:1).
  - 1 READ the text
  - 2 Explain the MEANING of the text
  - 3 APPLY the text (significance)  
*(exhortation)*

## I. Basic Principles of Interpretation: Meaning of the text<sup>1</sup>

- What did the author mean? It has to do with what the author said (content), where he said what he said (context), and why he said it when he did (connection).
- How important is it to read the text carefully? The text must be read careful enough to understand the author's deliberate, word-by-word and phrase-by-phrase use of all parts of the text.

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Wayne Slusser, Sonrise Baptist Church, Ozark, MO – teaching series, 2009.

content  
context  
connection

CONTEXT IS KEY!

NO the meaning does NOT change.

the meaning is anchored in history.

- What is the context of the text? Consider the larger context by the particular passage, paragraph, theme, and book (even take time to review where the book is in the Bible and the genre of writing).
- Does the meaning change? The author intended his readers to understand what he wrote. As such, the author sets the limits on the meaning communicated in the text; it is what he consciously willed to write.
- How many meanings are in a text? There is just one. What a text meant when it was written is what it will always mean because it is anchored in history. Meaning does not change.
- Questions to ask whenever you read a text for meaning:

There is only one meaning for the text.

- 1) Who is involved? Who are the characters in the story/episode? Who are the recipients of the letter?
- 2) When is it taking place? and where is it taking place? (setting)
- 3) What is the author trying to teach? (authorial intent)

REASON → GOD HOLDS VS ACCOUNTABLE!

II. Basic Principles of Interpretation: Application / Significance of the text

How does this text apply to this counselee in this situation?

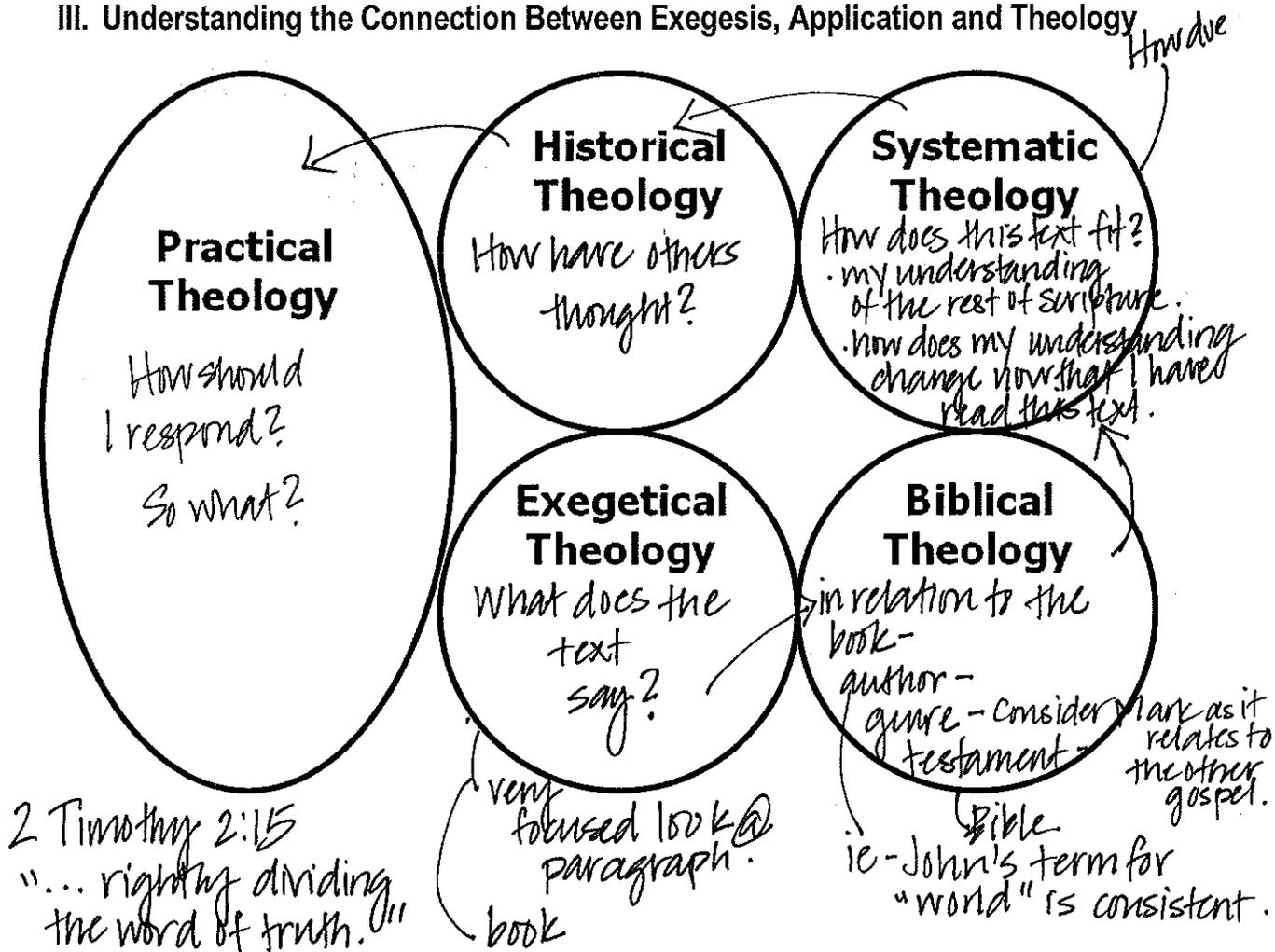
- What is the context or situation of the interpreter (your counselee)?
- The interpreter should find the relationship of the meaning to his/her situation.
- The interpreter uses the meaning that is consistent with the passage and applies to his situation, which may be quite different.
- There can be several (many) applications.
- It is important to make sure the meaning and application are consistent with each other.
- Questions to ask whenever you read a text for significance:

• 1 MEANING  
• countless APPLICATIONS.

- 1) What do these verses reveal about God? You're setting up the scenario so that you understand there is a 'bigger issue' at hand; not just your present problem or situation.
- 2) What do I learn about myself in relation to God? The disciples are very helpful for this.
- 3) What should I resolve to do in response to these verses/passage?



### III. Understanding the Connection Between Exegesis, Application and Theology



### IV. Pitfalls to Avoid with Meaning and Application

- Exegetical Theology: Taking a verse out of context. Context is critical!
- Biblical Theology: Crossing authors, genres, testaments
- Systematic Theology: Creating system-driven interpretations
- Historical Theology: Depending too much or too little on the past
- Practical Theology: *don't want to depend too much or too little on John Calvin.*

*Sometimes we "know" what we think and drive it into a particular passage.  
ie. Reformed system.  
- stuffing scripture into that system.*

- Making applications that are not congruent with the rest of the process

- Communicating your application as meaning instead of your applied wisdom

*ie. don't want to be so dogmatically that the counselee misses the meaning.*

*Eph - some husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church - Applied meaning - pick up dirty laundry.*

### V. Key Questions for the Counselor to Ask When Counseling a Text

- Have I understood the meaning clear enough to explain it in simple terms?
- Have I drawn clear lines between the “then” (meaning) and the “now” (significance)?
- Have I created good homework for this CE that clearly helps teach the text both now and in the future?

## VI. Application Time – On Your Own – Study Guide

### Meaning:

- What did the author mean? It has to do with what the author said (content), where he said what he said (context), and why he said it when he did (connection).
  
- What is the context of the text? Consider the larger context by the particular passage, paragraph, theme, and book (even take time to review where the book is in the Bible and the genre of writing).
  
- Questions to ask whenever you read a text for meaning:
  1. Who is involved? Who are the characters in the story/episode?  
Who are the recipients of the letter?
  2. When is it taking place? and Where is it taking place? (setting)
  3. What is the author trying to teach? (authorial intent)

### Application:

- What is the relationship of the meaning to the counselee's situation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Questions to ask whenever you read a text for significance:
  - 1) What do these verses reveal about God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - 2) What do I learn about myself in relation to God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - 3) What should I resolve to do in response to these verses/passage?

### Communicating the Passage:

- What are ways that I can express the meaning and application of this passage in ways that are clearly understood?
  
- Questions to ask when you are considering how to communicate a text:
  - 1) Are there hard terms or concepts that need to be explained?
  
  - 2) Are there any common illustrations that fit this passage that might shed light on what the passage means?

### Homework from the Passage:

- Are there portions of this passage that if heard and obeyed will help this counselee put to practice the meaning / significance of this text?
- Are there portions of this text that could or should be memorized?
- Before or after presenting the text, have the counselee write what he understands the passage to mean and his own implications for thinking and acting.
- Once the counselee has implications consistent with the meaning of the text, then have him track his progress during a specific time period living consistent with the truth presented.
  - 1) What applies to the counselee's thinking?
  - 2) What applies to the counselee's conduct?
  - 3) What applies to the counselee's attitude?
  - 4) What applies to the counselee's affections / love / desires?
- Look for specific principles in a text to determine how you can highlight those (i.e., using the virtues in this passage, write as many creative ways you can imagine to live consistent with that virtue in the following categories: family, work, neighborhood, church, community).