EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK (EPN)[1]

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PASSAGE: **EITHER** **Jonah 4: 1-11** ***OR*** **1 Thessalonians #:##-##**

Instructions: Use this template for your investigation of a biblical text and answer the questions thoroughly and with supporting evidence. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps, just be satisfied that you have adequately gathered all that you can (time permitting). Please do not remove any of the sections or prompts from this document. I will expect to see all of the appropriate sections filled in/prompts addressed each time that you submit your document to grade the step/steps you have completed.

This EPN is your *WORK PRODUCT* that lays the foundation for the final course project. It is *NOT* the project itself, but it contains everything you need to know about your passage before you decide (1) which theological connections to make in a sermon, (2) key points to explain in a bible study, emphasize in staff training, or include in support of a conference topic, and (3) what private and public attitudes/behaviors best reflect the character of Christ.

Important Working Assumptions:

1. Always start with "what" questions before attempting to answer "why" or "how."
2. Always do your own close reading first before referring to a commentary or secondary scholarly resource.
3. Recognize that what you think initially about a text (without prayerful critical reflection) is not the same as what the Holy Spirit intends. Let each author and each passage have its own voice within its own context before ever attempting to apply it to yourself or a ministry context.
4. The original audience is different from us in most every way possible except for their basic human condition and need of Christ. This includes language, culture, social values and norms, religious worldview, politics, family structure, etc. Do not assume you will understand the language or customs of these ancient peoples without preparation and thought.
5. The nature of inspiration is such that God used every day, flawed individuals to preserve a trustworthy/true authoritative message that is efficacious for salvation. Thus, eventually shift your attention *from* solving the identity of the original author *to* understanding the message being conveyed.
6. With every interpretive act you are creating sacred space in which to encounter a free and living God.
7. Do not assume the message will simply reaffirm cherished beliefs. Surprisingly at times, God's message is just as much a word *against* us as a word *for* us.

[1] Adapted from a similar document by Dr. William Barcley of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Also, from Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors.* Third edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. Refer to the appropriate sections of Fee's text for further clarifications and discussions.

You will be using the Bible and scholarly, academic sources in this Exegetical Process Notebook (EPN). Your required textbooks provide bibliographies of modern, well-researched and documented resources for you to use, and you should also make use of electronic versions of such works available online through the Nyack Library. ***You will not be making use of other online, public-domain commentaries and/or teaching/preaching websites, such as, but not limited to, the following:***

1. Barnes' Notes
2. Matthew Henry's Commentary
3. Adam Clarke's Commentary
4. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown (JFB) Bible Commentary
5. Other similar commentaries from the 1700s, 1800s, and early 1900s
6. Online Sermon, Preaching, and Teaching websites

If you have any doubt about whether you should or should not use a source, please contact me *before using it,* and I will be happy to provide you with some guidance. In general, if you cannot determine the author, the date, and/or the publisher, then the source is not appropriate for your use in this EPN.

For ***all*** information that you include from another source, such as your *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, a modern commentary, a modern Bible dictionary, etc., you will cite the source using footnotes in accordance with the Turabian style manual.

Here are what the footnotes for your required texts should look like, with ### representing the page number(s) you would insert (*feel free to cut and paste them into your footnotes when needed*):

Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), ###.

Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), ###.

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), ###.

Craig S. Keener and John H. Walton, eds., *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), ###.

Gary Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012), ###.

Simpson, John W., "Letters to the Thessalonians," ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), ###.

Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

Douglas Stuart, "Jonah, Book Of," ed. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), ###.

Kevin J. Youngblood, *Jonah: A Discourse Analysis of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Daniel I. Block (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015), ###.

STEP 1. SURVEY THE GENERAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

First, you will need to decide whether you are going to engage with Jonah or 1 Thessalonians.

For this EPN, I will be working with: **Jonah**
Read the entire document through in English in one sitting (aloud).

1.1 AUTHOR.
(a) **What do you observe about the identity of the author and his circumstances?**

The Book of Jonah does not tell us who the author is. However, the author seems familiar with Jonah, such as his heritage (son of Amittai), where he went, and what did he do. Also, the author appears knowing the geographic location of places such as Joppa, Tashish and Nineveh.

(b) **What else do you know about the life of the author and his situation at the time of writing that might influence the exegesis of this text?**

Jonah went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish (Jon 3b). Based on the descriptive action "went down to" Joppa, I assumed that the author most likely was a Jew who was familiar with the story of Jonah and knew that Jonah was a prophet. (see the following Bible verses)

Note: Joppa was one of the vital sea trade ports close to the Southwestern tip of the Northern Kingdom. Harry Thomas Frank, ed., *Atlas of the Bible Lands* (Hammond Incorporation, 1997), 15. Joppa was referred to as an Egyptian stronghold in the Amarna letters of the mid-fourteen century BC. Craig S. Keener and John H. Walton, eds., *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 1515.

Bible verses referred to Jonah (NRSV):

1. 2 Kgs. 14:25 "He restored the border of Israel from Lebo-hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which he spoke by his servant Jonah so of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath-hepher. Here, Jeroboam II restored the territory of northern Israel to its previous greatest extend under Solomon. (Craig S. Keener and John H. Walton, eds., *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 648.
2. Mt. 12:39b and16:4a "An evil and adulterous generation ask for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah."
3. Mt. 40 quoted, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.
4. Lk. 11:29-30, 32 "For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation.

Always start with the biblical book in front of you. You can learn quite a bit about the author from his own words (e.g., does his language skill reflect a high level of education, does he appear to quote the Scriptures directly from the Hebrew Bible or has he altered the text in some way (may indicate the use of the Greek Septuagint), is he in prison or under duress of some kind, etc.). Make your own observations; then check the secondary literature (New Testament and Old Testament Introductions, Critical Commentaries, Critical Bible Dictionaries) to see what they add to your initial observations.

1.2. RECIPIENTS:
(a) What are your observations about the identity of the recipients? *Be careful to base your observations on what the text says, not what you have always heard.*

The identity of the recipients is not explicitly stated in the text. However, the Book shares some preunderstandings of Jonah as a prophet, the speaker of God, the name of places such as Joppa and Nineveh, Jonah's rival attitude towards Nineveh, Yahweh as the name of God, and the sailors at Joppa as gentile. Therefore, the recipients most likely are Jewish people.

(b) Are there any hints about their ethnicity or socioeconomic and cultural contexts?

The Book of Jonah seems written to Jewish people. It called Yahweh as their God. It expected the recipients knowing Jonah was a prophet and what he should do-as God's speaker. Israelites consider themselves as the elected people of God, while the Assyrian empire was a threat to their country. Therefore, Jonah, as a prophet of Israel, displeased with God's mercy, compassion and forgivingness approach toward the wicked people of Nineveh, Assyria.

(c) Where do the recipients live? Are there direct or indirect hints that help you identify the geographic region?

I observed that the recipients mostly likely lived in Israel. First of all, the Book used descriptive action "went down to" Joppa (see note in 1.1b). Second, the Book called the "LORD" as their God. LORD in the Old Testament refers to Yahweh, the God of Israel (2 Kings 14:25).

(d) What are their present circumstances?

No information from the Book.

(e) What historical situation occasioned this writing?

No information from the Book.

(f) What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?

The author shared some preunderstandings with the recipients, such as God's name is Yahweh (the God of Israel), while the sailors in Joppa were gentile. It seems that the author and the recipients were part of the people group who shared a similar belief.

Hypothesize about the answers to these questions from your observations. If you are unable to answer any of these questions give an initial reason why not. Perhaps the text only provides suggestive clues with gaps you will need to fill in with caution.

1.3 PURPOSE:
(1) **What can you discern about the author's purpose for writing?** Does the author explicitly say anything about it, or is the purpose implied (through suggestive clues)? *Be attentive here. Authors share certain preunderstandings with their audience that need not be stated (i.e., the author and recipients are privy to information well-known to each that we would have no way of knowing). Your job will be to make the implicit clear, i.e., what is implied needs to be explained carefully.*

The Book of Jonah teaches a lesson: God is merciful and compassionate. The author explicitly stated the attributes of God "you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishment." (Jon. 4:2b) Unlike Jonah, who displeased with God's forgiveness of Nineveh. Jonah do not understand God's compassion and mercy. God looks for the turning hearts of sinners

(2) **What is the overall theme or concern?** *Did you notice words or ideas that were frequently repeated? Did you notice special word choices or exhortations/ideas that fit the overall presentation? What might these repetitions, vocabulary, or ideas tell you about the purpose of the writing?*

The author explicitly stated the attributes of God "you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishment." (Jon. 4:2b) Jonah is displeased by God's compassion and did not want to be part of Nineveh. "He went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city" (Jon. 4:5). Even after the dialogue with Yahweh, Jonah still has no mercy toward the Ninevites.

Satire is used throughout the Book to convey the message of God's compassion. First, the gentile sailors sacrificing to Yahweh after Yahweh's defiant prophet is thrown into the sea. Second, Jonah praised Yahweh for his own deliverance inside the big fish. Still, he was angry at Yahweh's withholding of judgment against Ninevites, who were also created in the image of God. Third, Jonah was rescued from death by Yahweh first, but wishes to die rather than live because the Ninevites gets to live rather than die." (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book, A Guided Tour*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2002), 232.

The motif of "evil" has appeared frequently in the Book of Jonah. (Kevin J. Youngblood, *Jonah: A Discourse Analysis of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Daniel I. Block (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015), 158.

1. Nineveh's evil prompted Yahweh to threaten "evil" upon the city.
2. Yahweh would relent from the "evil" that Nineveh so richly deserves is "a great evil" to Jonah.
3. The displeasure is merely a symptom of a deep-seated evil within Jonah.

(3) **Does the argument or narrative have an easily discerned outline, or does it seem to be a loose, thematic collection of sayings or teachings** (e.g. Sermon on the Mount or James)? *You need not work out the outline here, just observe!*

This story is about God, who has mercy and compassion for all that He has made. He intended to bless all nations on earth through His election of Israel. (Gn. 22:18a) (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book, A Guided Tour*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2002), 232.

Jonah was displeased by God's compassion toward Nineveh but has forgotten one essential commandment "love your neighbor". All nations were created by God's image. The critical point is that God is looking for the turning of people's hearts from sin. Jonah, on the other hand, is looking for his own life and death. Although Jonah said, "salvation comes from the LORD" (Jon. 2:9b), he believed salvation is only for the elected people, Jews, not for the gentile, Ninevites.

STEP 2. CONFIRM THE LIMITS OF YOUR PASSAGE.
Decide where your *pericope* [i.e., "self-contained unit"] begins and ends. *Examine whether or not the paragraphs and divisions in your bibles correctly reflect the limits of your chosen passage.*

For non-language students, it is best to compare the paragraphing of several modern translations (e.g. NRSV, TNIV, NET, AV, NASB, NKJV, etc. Fee, p. 12). Where does the translation differ as far as paragraph length and divisions? Then decide for yourself what the basic unit is. (Your conclusions should be based on your own observations from these texts). *The final decision is part of the exegetical process. Choose passages approximately 5-10 verses for a project this size.*

"The passage I intend to investigate is **Jonah 4:1-8**, Jonah's anger."
(E.g. John 2:1-11, the narration of the wedding at Cana)

STEP 3. BECOME THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PARAGRAPH/PERICOPE (Fee, 12).

3.1. Read the paragraph through in 5-7 translations and *note the differences* among the translations. Copy these translations and mark well these differences using colored highlights. *List the differences here.* (WHY DO THIS STEP? Without knowledge of biblical languages one can miss the different options translators have when moving from one language to another. *THERE IS NO ONE TO ONE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LANGUAGES.*)

For example:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, (Phil. 2:5 NRS)

You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had (Phi 2:5 NET)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (Phi 2:5 ESV)

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: (Phi 2:5 NIV)

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, (Phi 2:5 NAB)

Jonah 4:1

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. (Jon. 4:1 KJV)

But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. (Jon. 4:1 NASB1995)

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. (Jon. 4:1 NRSV)

But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. (Jon. 4:1 NIV)

This displeased Jonah terribly and he became very angry. (Jon. 4:1 NET)

Jonah 4:2

And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. (Jon. 4:2 KJV)

He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. (Jon. 4:2 NASB1995)

He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. (Jon. 4:2 NRSV)

He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. (Jon. 4:2 NIV)

He prayed to the LORD and said, "Oh, LORD, this is just what I thought would happen when I was in my own country. This is what I tried to prevent by attempting to escape to Tarshish, because I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, and one who relents concerning threatened judgment. (Jon. 4:2 NET)

Jonah 4:3

Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. (Jon. 4:3 KJV)

Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." (Jon. 4:3 NASB1995)

And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jon. 4:3 NRSV)

Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jon. 4:3 NIV)

So now, LORD, kill me instead, because I would rather die than live!" (Jon. 4:3 NET)

Jonah 4:4

Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry? (Jon. 4:4 KJV)

The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?" (Jon. 4:4 NASB1995)

And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jon. 4:4 NRSV)

But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jon. 4:4 NIV)

The LORD said, "Are you really so very angry?" (Jon. 4:4 NET)

Jonah 4:5

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. (Jon. 4:5 KJV)

Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. (Jon. 4:5 NASB1995)

Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. (Jon. 4:5 NRSV)

Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. (Jon. 4:5 NIV)

Jonah left the city and sat down east of it. He made a shelter for himself there and sat down under it in the shade to see what would happen to the city. (Jon. 4:5 NET)

Jonah 4:6

And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. (Jon. 4:6 KJV)

So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. (Jon. 4:6 NASB1995)

The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. (Jon. 4:6 NRSV)

Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. (Jon. 4:6 NIV)

The LORD God appointed a little plant and caused it to grow up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to rescue him from his misery. Now Jonah was very delighted about the little plant. (Jon. 4:6 NET)

Jonah 4:7

But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. (Jon. 4:7 KJV)

But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. (Jon. 4:7 NASB1995)

But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. (Jon. 4:7 NRSV)

But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. (Jon. 4:7 NIV)

So God sent a worm at dawn the next day, and it attacked the little plant so that it dried up. (Jon. 4:7 NET)

Jonah 4:8

And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. (Jon. 4:8 KJV)

When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." (Jon. 4:8 NASB1995)

When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live." (Jon. 4:8 NRSV)

When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." (Jon. 4:8 NIV)

When the sun began to shine, God sent a hot east wind. So the sun beat down on Jonah's head, and he grew faint. So he despaired of life and said, "I would rather die than live!" (Jon. 4:8 NET)

3.2 **Determine which of these differences are exegetically significant** (e.g. are the differences a matter of synonyms, grammar, stylistic or theological preference, or textual criticism? Do these differences alter the meaning in any way? Does a particular translation have slightly different theological implications? Which is closer to the original author's meaning given the overall argument?)

In the above example, notice the difference between the choice of "same mind," "same attitude," "same mindset," or "this mind." Do these synonyms mean the same thing? What does each add to the meaning of the text? Notice the words in green: What is the difference between "in you," "toward one another," "among yourselves," and "in your relationships with one another"? What difference might these observations make in a sermon?

Explain these differences as far as you can (develop a hypothesis of which translation you think is the best rendering of the passage and explain why this hypothesis best explains these differences based on supporting evidence). *Pay particular attention to marginal notes that usually refer to matters of textual criticism. NET translator notes (included in the Accordance package) are particularly helpful.*

You will be coming back to these initial observations to check your initial ideas with a good critical commentary for deeper insight. Hypotheses can always be revised the more you investigate.

Among the five Bible translations, the reasons I prefer either the New International Version (NIV) or the New English Translation (NET) are they render the passage better as followings:

<u>Jonah chapter 4:</u>

1. "But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry." (Jon. 4:1 NIV) The very reason for Jonah's angry is that Israelites are the elected people of God while people in Nineveh are wicked and gentile. Therefore, it seems very wrong for Yahweh, showing grace and compassion to Nineveh's wicked people.
2. He prayed to the LORD and said, "Oh, LORD, this is just what I thought would happen when I was in my own country. This is what I tried to prevent by attempting to escape to Tarshish, because I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in mercy, and one who relents concerning threatened judgment. (Jon. 4:2 NET) NET specified Jonah's reason to flee: Jonah tried to prevent God from forgiving Nineveh's people.
3. So now, LORD, kill me instead, because I would rather die than live!" (Jon. 4:3 NET) Jonah exaggerates his displeasing on God showing compassion to the gentile in Nineveh.
4. But the LORD replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jon. 4:4 NIV) Did Jonah have a right to challenge God's decision? God is the creator of this universe. He has the absolute right to do whatever he pleased. Moreover, people in Nineveh are his creation too.
5. Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. (Jon. 4:5 NIV) Jonah still did not understand how profoundly God's grace and compassion are. God's compassion is not only for the Israelites but also for all other nations even though the Ninevites only show the action of repentant artificially. Jonah refused to be part of the city; therefore, he sat outside of the city to see what would happen to the city!
6. The LORD God appointed a little plant and caused it to grow up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to rescue him from his misery. Now Jonah was very delighted about the little plant. (Jon. 4:6 NET) Jonah was very delighted about the little plant (his own deliverance), which he did not grow.

Meanwhile, he did not show any compassion to the people of the big city, which were also created in God's image.

7. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. (Jon. 4:7 NIV) God provided a plant for Jonah's shade; God also provided a worm to chewed the plant. God wanted Jonah to understand He has the sovereignty over all things were created by Him. Therefore, He has the right to provide a plant for Jonah's shade then kill it. Likewise, God has the right to withheld the judgment of Nineveh upon their repentance.
8. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." (Jon. 4:8 NIV) Yahweh provided a little plant, a worm, and a scorching east wind to let Jonah know that Yahweh has his own ways. Jonah, on the other hand, serves as the fool so that Yahweh's story can be told with power and punch. (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book, A Guided Tour*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2002), 232

STEP 4: LITERARY CONTEXT

4.1 Identify the particular literary character of the document (i.e., narratives, psalms, law, Gospel, prophecy, epistle, apocalypse, etc.) and be alert to the fact that specific genre issues will arise.

For **epistles**, do you suspect the letter is *ad hoc* (addressing a specific local situation), formal (perhaps meant for a wider general audience), casual (friendly and exhortative), or perhaps more representative of a treatise or extended sermon (e.g. Hebrews) than a letter (Fee, 17)? *This observation is foundational before working through the next steps.*

For **narratives**, is your pericope/passage a narration of an event or a specific teaching/saying aimed at a particular group or character (e.g., parable, prophetic utterance, poetic utterance, etc.)?

Consider whether this story or saying employs metaphor, overstatement, irony, etc. that will need further investigation (Fee, 23-24; *See Step 5.2 for the rhetorical discussion*).

WHY DO THIS STEP? *You are not going to approach a letter in the same way you approach a narrative that has character, plot, and dialogue. You would not interpret a psalm in the same way you would interpret one of the commandments of Moses. There are different expectations and techniques associated with different kinds of literature*

4.2 Pay detailed attention to the unique characteristics of your passage's genre (refer to the appropriate section in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and the power point presentations throughout the course):

1. (**Epistle**) **To what formal structure of an ancient letter does your particular text belong?** *Is it part of the initial greeting? Is it part of the thanksgiving period typical of Paul's letters? Will this affect your exegesis in any way? (Fee, 17).*

2. (**Narrative**) **Does your narrative describe an event, highlight a character/s, include dialogue, sayings, OT quotations or allusions, attitudes to emulate or avoid, etc.**
    a. How does the dialogue and interaction of characters illumine attitudes or behavior?

b. Does the event highlight something presented earlier in the text, or does it prepare us for something about to follow?

c. If you removed your passage from the larger narrative, how would our understanding of this event or saying be affected? *Be careful of over exegeting and making the section say more than it does.*

4.3 **Give an original, detailed outline of the whole book and note the placement of your text within the outline.** *Do not use the outlines you find by scholars as they lean toward a particular theological position that may/may not reflect your own reading of the entire book. The more you struggle to do these steps yourself, the better you will get at thinking theologically and exegetically.*

What I do: *I use bible software and copy/paste the entire book into a table within a Word document. Using different highlighters, I mark changes in themes, characters, geographical locations, events, or groups of exhortation, teaching, warnings, and commands, etc. I also pay attention to noticeable repetitions and color code them as well. On the side I might jot down one or two words that seem to capture something significant about the progression and interconnectedness of the different stories or arguments.* ***Use any method that makes sense to you.***

WHY DO THIS STEP?

1. *By providing an original outline the text's own voice moves forward, while previous points of view or agendas are forced to recede. (You will test the validity of these other outlines later).*
2. *This step slows one down and forces a closer reading of the entire passage that often reveals previously overlooked details or patterns such as the overall inter-connection of the whole, how the ideas build upon one another, or how the stories, sayings, or events prepare you for what follows.*
3. *You will better situate your passage within the flow of the larger argument of the biblical book, which is the next step in an exegetical investigation*.

The following example from John 1:1-18 includes color coding that will be useful in Step 5 (of your passage only):

EVANGELIST	In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.	INTRODUCTION OF THE WORD AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD
	[3] All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.	RELATIONSHIP OF THE WORD TO CREATION

	What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.	Why: “was” vs. “come into being”?
	[5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.	INTRODUCTION OF LIGHT vs. DARKNESS
ASIDE ON JN the BAPT	[6] There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. [7] He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. [8] He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. [9] The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.	
	[10] He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.	HUMAN CONDITION (BLINDNESS)
	[11] He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.	HUMAN CONDITION (REJECTION)
	[12] But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.	GOD’S REVERSAL/INITIATIVE
	[14] And the Word became flesh and lived among **us**, and **we** have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.	POINT WHERE WORD BECOMES SOMETHING IT WAS NOT INITIALLY WHO ARE THE “WE/US”?
ASIDE ON JN the BAPT	[15] (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said,	

	'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'")	
	[16] From his fullness **we** have all received, grace upon grace. [17] The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.	RELATIONSHIP OF LAW AND EFFICACY OF GRACE
	[18] No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.	SON AS DIVINE REVEALER

Outline: John 1:1-18

I. Christological Encomium/Hymn
   a. 1:1-2 Introduction to the pre-incarnate existence ("isness") of a personified Word
   b. 1:3-4 The Word is an active agent in the world's creation (thus, not a created being)
   c. 1:5 Light is juxtaposed with darkness; but light is stronger
   d. 1:6-8 [1st Aside] Role of John the Baptist: to testify to the light
   e. 1:9-13 Discussion of the human condition of blindness that lead to rejecting the light; But God has a plan of adoption through faith
   f. 1:14 Pivotal point in history: The Word BECAME flesh in spite of identity with God
   g. 1:15 [2nd Aside] Content of John's testimony: Jesus is the greater than me
   h. 1:16-17 Complementary relationship between Law, truth, and grace: Made possible through The one who dwelt among "us" (eyewitnesses?)
   i. 1:18 Jesus introduced now in his role as the revealer of God's nature and will

II. John's Ministry . . . (as you continue to pay attention to the outline of an entire book)

STEP 5: LITERARY ANALYSIS

5.1 STRUCTURE, SYNTAX, AND LOGIC OF ARGUMENT.

WHY DO THIS STEP?

Every author has a structure in mind when writing a narrative or letter. Note how the author prepares the hearer-reader for what follows (Ask yourself, "What leads into my text?" and *"What leads out of this text?"). There is always some logical coherence and structure in the way a letter or story is told. Our job is to figure out this structure and determine how our passage functions to communicate a particular theological perspective.*

5.1.1. **Analyze the structure of your pericope**. You may use a "sentence flow" or "sentence diagram" method (cf. Fee, 41-58). *The idea is to clarify the flow of the author's argument or story. Highlight (color code) repeated words or concepts, pay attention to syntactical relationships, look for chiastic or any other types of organizing structures (see John 1:1-18 example above).*

Use your own method for organizing and asking questions. Think logically and grammatically. Exegesis is about asking good questions. Questions about structure include:

a. *Adverbial questions answer: When? Why? Under what conditions/circumstances? How? Where? For what purpose? Etc.*
b. *Adjectival questions answer: What kind of? Which? How many? Whose?*
c. *Pay attention to coordinate and subordinate conjunctions. Coordinate conjunctions--**and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet**--are button words that hook like things together (e.g. coordinate clauses, subjects, verbs, etc.). Subordinate conjunctions—although, as, because, if, in order that, when, after, before--are button words that hook unlike things together (e.g. a main clause followed by a subordinate clause).*

Example: Luke 1:1-4

Since many have undertaken to set down	ANSWERS WHY WRITE? Gives the reason for writing)
an orderly account	WHAT KIND OF ACCOUNT?
of the events that have been fulfilled among us,	WHICH EVENTS?
[2] just as they were handed on to us	HOW RECEIVED? Gives manner/circumstances of reception.
by those	CIRCUMSTANCES/AGENCY
who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word	WHAT KIND OF AGENTS? Gives credentials
from the beginning,	WHEN?
I too decided . . . to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,	MAIN, INDEPENDENT SENTENCE (Main Idea)
after investigating everything	WHEN?
carefully	HOW?
from the very first,	HOW LONG?
so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.	WHY?

5.1.2 Write a summary here of the information you can derive from your structure above. What lexical, syntactical or other structural indicators are important and why?

5.1.3 **Set out briefly the logic and content of your text** (How does the author unfold each step in his argument? At what point does he reach the main thought or idea?). Show the significance of your paragraph in the overall development of the argument/exhortation/story, etc? (Fee, 19-20).

WHY DO THIS STEP?
It is an unfortunate truth that most pastors and seminary students can describe the content of a biblical passage, but they have no clue as to the development of a biblical author's argument or position. This leads to misunderstandings and a proliferation of clichés that have no power to address the needs of the contemporary context. Do you know the strategy that drives the development of the argument in 1 Thessalonians or Romans? Can you articulate it clearly?

For example, it is one thing to describe the introduction of Jesus as a cosmic figure in John 1:1-18 who comes to earth to reveal God though his own enfleshment, it is quite another to understand how this introduction prepares us for what follows. Why is 1:1-18 followed by testimony ("This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, 'Who are you.'?") How does testimony function in this ancient Jewish culture? It must be important because it is embedded within the prologue alerting us to John's role as testifier to the light. What is the significance that the first public testimony of John is that "I-AM not the Christ" and that every use of "I-AM" afterwards is Jesus' own testimony to who he is? Testimony is scattered throughout the Gospel in strategic places where Jesus' identity is critical to the message. What we begin to suspect is that a scene of judgment is taking place in which the one being tried is not Jesus, but us.

5.2 RHETORIC. What "rhetorical features" (hyperbole, questions, commands, irony, parable, allegory, allusion, etc.) does your text display? How are they important for exegesis?

Hyperbole: exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
Questions: sentences that draw the hearer-reader into an active role by requiring them to provide the Information or answer (has the effect of making people commit to a position)
Commands: authoritative orders; forces one to inquire as to the legitimacy of the authority as well as respond to the request
Irony: Expressing meaning by using language usually signaling the opposite of what one meant (often Humorous)
Parable: Succinct, didactic story that illustrates one or more instructive lessons or principles
Allegory: literary devices/rhetorical devices that convey hidden meanings through symbolic figures, actions, imagery, and/or events, which together create the moral, spiritual, or political meaning the author wishes to convey.
Allusion: an expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference (most often from the Hebrew Scriptures).

5.3 GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS
Students without the biblical languages must proceed with caution. Step 3 should give an early indication of where the grammar or meaning of individual words is dependent on the original language such as the use of grammatical structures (i.e. clauses, prepositional phrases, verb tenses, etc.) or the original meaning of words that are theologically significant (see Step 5.4 below) .

Here you will need to depend on a good critical commentary as well as the Accordance software to discover the Greek/Hebrew behind the translations (the Biblical Hebrew or Biblical Greek Companion for Bible software (e.g., Logos, Accordance, BibleWorks, etc.) users will help explain the terms used by these commentaries so do not be hesitant to consult these resources).

5.3.1 **List any difficult or unusual grammatical features of your text addressed by the scholars** (use several critical commentaries to compare their explanations) and explain their importance for understanding this passage.

5.4 **LEXICOGRAPHY**. *(Note well Fee's warnings, pp.79-80. On this whole section consult closely Fee's Sect. II.4 and pay particular attention to 82-93).*

5.4.1 **Identify any words which are "theologically loaded," ambiguous, repeated or emphasized by the author.**

5.4.2. **Choose one or two of these words listed in 5.4.1 and look them up in a concordance to see where they are used elsewhere in your book and how context brings out different nuances of the meaning**. *Be reflective. For example, the term "life" in John's Gospel appears in several contexts such as eschatological, with the adjective descriptor "eternal," and in relation to Christ himself. There is no right or wrong…just be thoughtful in your observations.*

5.4.3 Next, **look up the word in one of the Hebrew or Greek lexicons** provided in Accordance and **notice the ranges of meanings for this word**. **Which best fits the context?**

STEP 6. CULTURAL CONTEXT

6.1 **List features of your text which you suspect might be illuminated or explained by a greater knowledge of Jewish or Greco Roman history and culture.**

WHY DO THIS STEP? The gap between an ancient culture and the contemporary context is great. They shared common knowledge about religion, society, and cultural values that we know nothing about. By studying these background issues, you avoid anachronism (assuming a society remote in time from us shares our culture or perspectives) and ethnocentrism (assuming the values of another society are the same as ours).

6.2 **Choose one of these ancient issues** noted in 6.1 and, using the bibliography in Fee, Sec. II.5 (and any supplementary bibliography),

(a) explore the cultural background a little further and

(b) explain how this study may aid in an understanding of the cultural milieu of the author.

6.3 **Evaluate the significance of this background data for the understanding of your passage**.

STEP 7. CANONICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

7.1 **How does your passage compare to other passages in Scripture** which address similar issues? (Fee 31-32)

7.2 **What does your passage contribute to the overall teaching of this subject in the Bible?** What specifically would be lost or how would the message of the Bible be less complete if your passage did not exist?

7.3 **What are the theological implications of your passage?**

STEP 8. ACCUMULATE A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SECONDARY SOURCES AND READ WIDELY.

WHY DO THIS STEP LAST? Scholars and secondary sources are your conversation partners. Learn to ask questions of their perspective, argue with them, listen attentively to their point of view, and then state why you think your perspective is just as valid or more valid, much like you would do if having this conversation at Starbucks. To start with their positions without having investigated the issues yourself is the lazy way out of doing the hard work of exegesis . . . in fact, without doing your own investigation you cannot claim to have exegeted the passage to your congregation or to your peers.

8.1 **Find at least 8 commentaries, books or journal articles which deal with your passage and read the contributions of other scholars**. List the sources here using correct Turabian style). *DO NOT USE MATTHEW HENRY OR OTHER DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARIES! These may add some additional insight, but remember, they did not have access to the most recent manuscript or archeological discoveries nor did they live in the complexity of our modern context.*

8.2 **What are some of the most significant differences** (presuppositional, theological, hermeneutical, etc.) **between your approach and that of some authors you have read?**

8.3 **State a few places where significant differences between you and some scholar(s) demand that you deal with their views in your paper and show why they are wrong** (see Fee, 33). *You need not write your full refutation here.*

YOU ARE NOW READY TO WRITE/PRODUCE YOUR PROJECT (PAPER, SERMON, ETC.)!