

NT 615 EXEGETICAL PROCESS NOTEBOOK¹

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PASSAGE: Jonah

Instructions: Use this template for your research. Answer the questions thoroughly and give your reasons from the Scripture passages you are investigating. Include scriptural references for easy referral later when you begin to write your projects. There are no page limits for any of the steps. This “Exegetical Process Notebook” is the work product that you will use for your final project at the end of this course.

STEP 1. SURVEY THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN GENERAL

1.1 Read the entire document in English in one sitting: YES X NO

1.1.1 AUTHOR.

- a) What **do you observe** about the identity of the author and his circumstances from your reading of the biblical book you are investigating?

Since the book of Jonah is a narrative, Jonah himself wrote it, or someone close to him. He is an Israelite. He is close to the Lord since He hears God’s calling for him. He is a prophet who has a message from God to deliver. (Jonah 1:1 and 3:1) He has disdain for the Ninevites. (Jonah 4:1) He is a stubborn man who refuse to obey God and go to Nineveh to deliver God’s message for them. (Jonah 1:3) He is rebellious trying to run away from God yet complete at ease with God, sleeping during the storm, knowing that he is the cause of the storm but not afraid enough to come clean right away. (Jonah 1) A reluctant prophet to the Ninevites, seemingly not delivering the message the way the Lord intended. He just said, “forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” Nothing about God seeing their wickedness and calling them to repent.

- b) What more do you learn about the life of the author and his situation at the time of writing from the **secondary literature** (New Testament and Old Testament Introductions, Critical Commentaries, Critical Bible Dictionaries, etc.)?

I learned that the author is most likely Jonah because it is a narrative. His name means dove. He was a prophet of Israel from Gath Hepher near Nazareth. He also appears in 2 Kings 14:25 were he prophecies a time of safety and prosperity for the Israelites.

He lived in a time when Israel was being attacked by Assyria and were weakened by them. The Assyrians were ruthless and vicious in their attacks on Israel. The city of Nineveh was a major city in Assyria which explains why Jonah and other Hebrews would

¹ Adapted from Dr. William Barclay, Gordon Conwell

<http://www.gordonconwell.edu/charlotte/current/documents/chareg-nt502-barclay-su12.pdf> Accessed Sept. 1, 2016. Also, Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) and, J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001, 2020).

be hostile towards them. (Chad Brand, Eric Alan Mitchell, Steve Bond, Ray Clendenen, Trent Butler 2015)

1.1.2. **RECIPIENTS:**

*Base your answers on what you see in the text itself. You should make educated guesses about the answers to these questions from your observations. Only **after you do your work** should you consult secondary literature.*

- a) The Ninevites were gentiles who were hated by the Israelites.
- b) Jonah a Israelite clearly had disdain for the Ninevites. Yet he was chosen by God to be their prophet.
- c) They lived in the great city of Nineveh.
- d) They are about to be destroyed because they are living in wickedness.
- e) The historical situation that we find in this text is Jonah being swallowed by a fish and God once again going through great lengths to save His fallen children.

1.1.3 **PURPOSE:**

- a) The author's purpose for writing this explicitly, is to show God's power and His great love for the people He created. He also shows us that God's love doesn't begin and end with the Jews. That God's plan was to save all nations. I believe this book also points to the need for a better prophet, that will later come in Christ, who will show the world God's love for His created regardless of nationality. There may be an implied message of God's sense of humor as well (a fish and the plant).
- b) The overall theme is God's extravagant love for His children and God's power.
- c) The narrative does have a storyline. God sending a prophet to warn a people. That prophet fleeing because of his own sinful nature. God using His power to bring the prophet back. The prophet obeying. A people repenting onto salvation. A prophet's anger over God's grace. God's lesson on love in response.

***You want to acquire a working knowledge of the following before writing your papers or doing your projects. You will need to add the research found in commentaries, dictionaries, etc.:**

STEP 2. CONFIRM THE LIMITS OF YOUR PASSAGE.

2.1. Decide where your self-contained passage begins and ends. Compare the paragraphing of seven modern translations (e.g., NRSV, NIV, NET, ASV, NASB, NKJV, etc. See Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*, p. 17).

- a) Where do the translation differ?

At first glance I notice that the translations differ in syntax mainly synonyms.

- b) Decide for yourself what the basic unit is. Provide clear reasons based on your observations. *The final decision will be part of the whole exegetical process.*

I intend to focus on the main theme of God's redeeming love for His children which I believe is summed up in the final chapter of the book.

- c) "I intend to focus on the following passage from Jonah: 4:1-10."

STEP 3. BECOME THOROUGHLY ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PARAGRAPH.

3.1. Read the paragraph through in 5-7 translations (at least 2 from the more formal side of the spectrum, 2 from the middle, and 1 from the more functional side of the spectrum, *see chart on p. 12*).

- a) Copy these translations and mark well the differences among these translations (I like using colored highlighters).
b) Make a list (or chart) of the differences.

3.2 Determine which of these differences are exegetically significant (i.e., how do these differences affect the meaning?).

- a) It does seem like the translators are using different words (synonyms). For example, Jonah 4:1 "furious, temper" The Message; "upset, angry" NLT; "displeased, angry" NKJV, NASB, ASV; "displeasing, angry" NRSVA
b) Some of it is grammar. Especially when you look at functional translations.
c) I believe that it is more stylistic than a theological preference. The message does not change just how it is conveyed.
d)

- a) Are the differences a matter of the translators using different words (synonyms)?
b) Are the differences a matter of grammar?
c) Are the differences stylistic or reflect a theological preference?
d) Are the differences due to variations in the manuscript evidence (i.e., textual criticism)?
Pay particular attention to marginal notes since they usually refer to matters of textual criticism (differences among Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that have survived).

STEP 4: OVERVIEW OF LITERARY CONTEXT

Jonah Tries to Run from the Lord

1 The LORD's message came to Jonah son of Amittai, **2** "Go immediately to Ni neveh, that large capital city, and announce judgment against its people because their wickedness has come to my attention."

Jonah Runs

3 Instead, Jonah immediately headed off to Tarshish to escape from the commission of the LORD. He traveled to Joppa and found a merchant ship heading to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went aboard it to go with them to Tarshish, far away from the LORD.

The Power of the Lord

4 But the LORD hurled a powerful wind on the sea. Such a violent tempest arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break up! **5** The sailors were so afraid that each cried out to his own god and they flung the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter.

Jonah Unconcerned Faith in the Lord

Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold below deck, had lain down, and was sound asleep. **6** The ship's captain approached him and said, "What are you doing asleep? Get up! Cry out to your god! Perhaps your god might take notice of us so that we might not die!"

7 The sailors said to one another, "Come on, let's cast lots to find out whose fault it is that this disaster has overtaken us." So they cast lots, and Jonah was singled out. **8** They said to him, "Tell us, whose fault is it that this disaster has overtaken us? What's your occupation? Where do you come from? What's your country? And who are your people?"

9 He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." **10** Hearing this, the men became even more afraid and said to him, "What have you done?" (The men said this because they knew that he was trying to escape from the LORD, because he had previously told them.) **11** Because the storm was growing worse and

worse, they said to him, “What should we do to you so that the sea will calm down for us?”

12 He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea so that the sea will calm down for you, because I know it’s my fault you are in this severe storm.”

13 Instead, they tried to row back to land, but they were not able to do so because the storm kept growing worse and worse. **14** So they cried out to the LORD, “Oh, please, LORD, don’t let us die on account of this man! Don’t hold us guilty of shedding innocent blood. After all, you, LORD, have done just as you pleased.” **15** So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped raging. **16** The men feared the LORD greatly and earnestly v owed to offer lavish sacrifices to the LORD.

Jonah Prays

Consequences and Repentance

17 (2:1) The LORD sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

2 Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish **2** and said,
“I called out to the LORD from my distress,
and he answered me;
from the belly of Sheol I cried out for help,
and you heard my prayer.

3 You threw me into the deep waters,
into the middle of the sea;
the ocean current engulfed me;
all the mighty waves you sent swept over me.

4 I thought I had been banished from your sight
and that I would never again see your holy temple.

5 Water engulfed me up to my neck;
the deep ocean surrounded me;
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

6 I went down to the very bottoms of the mountains;
the gates of the netherworld barred me in forever,
but you brought me up from the Pit, O LORD, my God.

7 When my life was ebbing away, I called out to the LORD.
And my prayer came to you, to your holy temple.

8 Those who worship worthless idols forfeit the mercy that could be theirs.

9 But as for me, I promise to offer a sacrifice to you with a public
declaration of praise;

I will surely do what I have promised.

Salvation belongs to the LORD!”

10 Then the LORD commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah out onto dry
land.

The People of Nineveh Respond to Jonah’s Warning

Jonah obeys (somewhat reluctantly)

3 The LORD’s message came to Jonah a second
time, **2** “Go immediately to Nineveh, that large city, and proclaim to it
the message that I tell you.” **3** So Jonah went immediately to Nineveh, in
keeping with the LORD’s message. Now Nineveh was an enormous city—it
required three days to walk through it! **4** Jonah began to enter the city by
going one day’s walk, announcing, “At the end of 40 days, Nineveh will
be overthrown!”

The People Repent and God Relents

5 The people of Nineveh believed in God, and they declared a fast and put
on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. **6** When
the news reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took
off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat on ashes. **7** He issued a
proclamation and said, “In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and
his nobles: No human or animal, cattle or sheep, is to taste anything; they
must not eat and they

must not drink water. **8** Every person and animal must put on sackcloth and must cry earnestly to God, and everyone must turn from their evil way of living and from the violence that they do. **9** Who knows? Perhaps God might be willing to change his mind and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we might not die.” **10** When God saw their actions—that they turned from their evil way of living—God relented concerning the judgment he had threatened them with and did not destroy them.

Jonah Responds to God’s Kindness

Jonah takes offense with God

4 This displeased Jonah terribly and he became very angry. **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. **3** So now, LORD, kill me instead, because I would rather die than live!” **4** The LORD said, “Are you really so very angry?”

God’s sense of humor and Loving Message

5 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. **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. **7** So God sent a worm at dawn the next day, and it attacked the little plant so that it dried up. **8** 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!”

9 God said to Jonah, “Are you really so very angry about the little plant?” And he said, “I am as angry as I could possibly be!” **10** The LORD said, “You were upset about this little plant, something for which you did not work, nor did you do anything to make it grow. It grew up overnight and died the next day. **11** Should I not be more concerned about Nineveh, this enormous city? There are more than 120,000 people in it who do not know right from wrong, as well as many animals.”

4.1 Jonah is a narrative with a poem inserted. My paragraph is mainly descriptive of the interaction between God and Jonah. God uses a plant as a metaphor for His children and irony to show Jonah’s concern for a plant but lack of concern for a people.

(See Duvall and Hayes, chap. 18, “Old Testament Narrative,” pp. 355-378).

4.2 Outline of Jonah

- Jonah is given a message of warning for the Ninevites
- Jonah flees not willing to help the Ninevites
- God demonstrates His power
- Jonah faces consequences and repents
- Jonah reluctantly delivers the message
- The Ninevites repent
- God takes offense with God
- God exposes Jonah’s foolishness and Show him God’s love (my part of the text)

4.3 My passage is the conclusion. It is the main idea of the whole story. It shows once again how God goes through great lengths to save His children and how He shows great mercy to those who repent.

Generally, I think it shows how just like in previous books, God is going through great lengths to save His creation from sin. Ahead, I believe it points to the sacrifice of Christ to once and for all turn away God’s wrath from those who repent.

STEP 5: DETAILED LITERARY ANALYSIS, STRUCTURE and SYNTAX, ARGUMENT, LANGUAGE FEATURES, GRAMMAR, AND WORD STUDY.

5.1 STRUCTURE, SYNTAX, AND LOGIC OF ARGUMENT.

5.1.1. 5 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.

6 The LORD God appointed a little plant **Why a plant?**

Beginning

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.

7 So God sent a worm at dawn the next day, and it attacked the little plant so that it dried up.

8 When the sun began to shine, God sent a hot east wind. So the sun beat down on Jonah's head, and

Middle

he grew faint.

So he despaired of life and said,

"I would rather die than live!" Why over a plant?

9 God said to Jonah,

"Are you really so very angry about the little plant?"

And he said,

"I am as angry as I could possibly be!"

10 The LORD said,

"You were upset about this little plant, something for which you did not work, nor did you do anything to make it grow."

It grew up overnight and died the next day.

End Conclusion

11 (Should I not be more concerned about Nineveh, this enormous city?) **main idea**

There are more than 120,000 people in it who do not know right from wrong,

as well as many animals.” **Why add this to the phrase?**

Analyze the structure of your paragraph by starting with a close reading of sentences (cf. Duvall and Hayes, chap. 4, pp. 37-51.). Try using a “sentence flow” method to help clarify the flow of the human author’s argument or story.

Simple “sentence-flow” method:

- 1) **Look at your passage as comprised of sentences that are made up of a series of phrases (chunks) designed to make sense.** For non-English speakers, this step can be challenging. I suggest you work in both your birth language and English translation. See if awareness of the chunks that comprise your sentences makes sense to you.
- 2) On a pad (or using your tech software) **write out your passage line by line in its smallest sensible units, that is phrases or thought units.** Phrases are a group of words that communicate an idea within the sentence and come together to make the sentence meaningful. Example: “I saw a cat **under my bed.**” If I were to write this out in its smallest units, I would lay it out something like this:
I saw (gives me subject and action)
a cat (gives me the object of what was seen by me)
under my bed (tells me where I saw the cat)

This method will help reveal the structure of the sentence and will suggest good questions for you to try and answer. Do NOT worry if you are doing it right. The point is to begin observing the relationship among the phrases (how they fit together and build on one another). Do NOT become preoccupied with the minutiae of this method. Just start doing this in a way that makes sense to you!

- 3) Now focus on making connections by **playing around with the text.** Use colored highlighters, circles, asterisks, etc. to note the relationships and special features: repeated words or concepts, syntactical relationships (how the words relate to one another as to cause and effect, contrasts, comparison, figures of speech, and organizing structures like lists. See Duvall and Hayes, p. 51 review.)

Example:

For God → the one doing the action, “for” connects with the previous verse to explain why God wasn’t condemning the world

right now

So loved → Why “so loved” and not just loved?

The world → the whole world as it is now?

That He gave → He = God, “loved” and “gave” (past act with ongoing results). 2 actions brought together.

His only begotten son → What does “only begotten” mean?

So that → expresses purpose or result? Gives reason.

Whoever **believes in Him** → whoever = anyone

Believes = present ongoing action

“in Him = Son” → object of belief, cannot believe in just anything or anyone

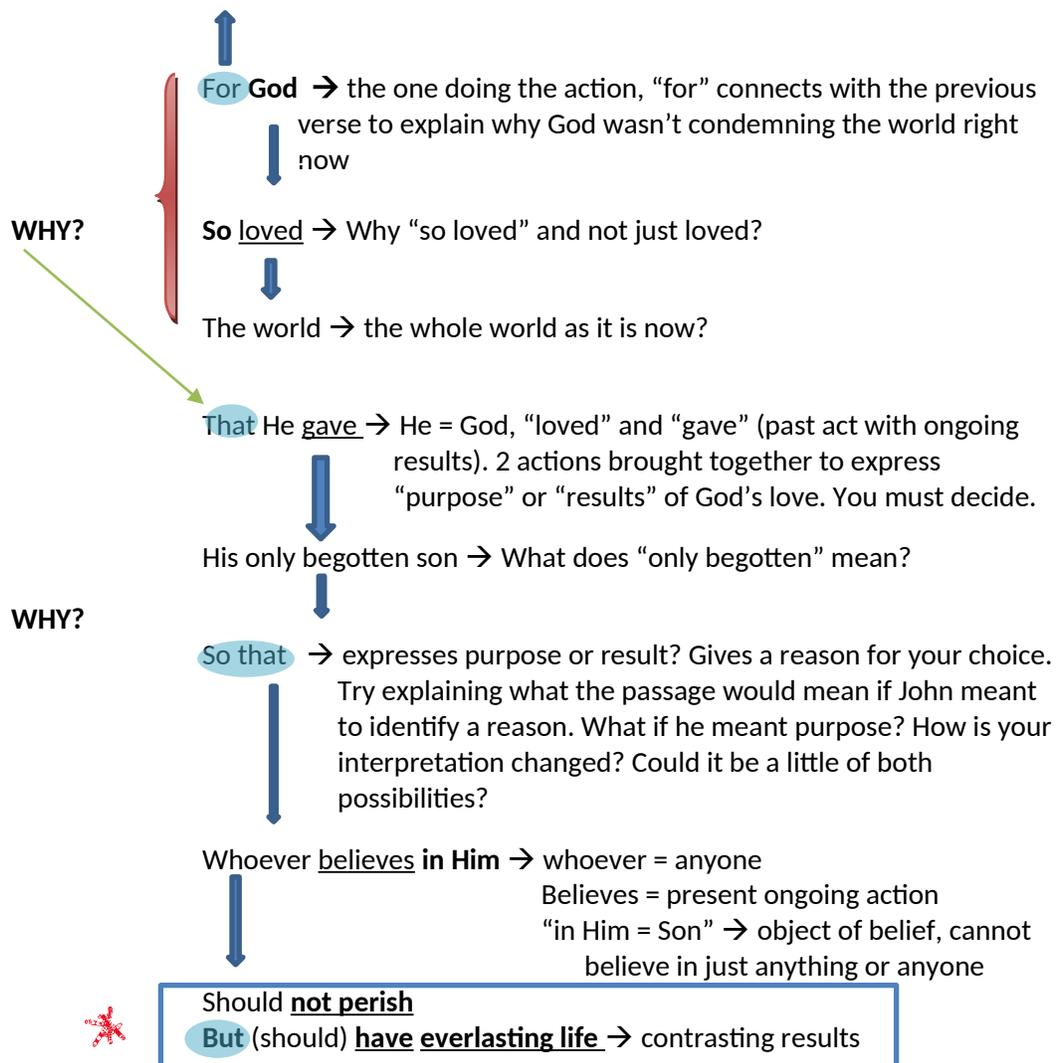
Should **not perish**

But (should) **have everlasting life** → contrasting results

- 4) Use arrows to note the flow of the argument to the main idea. Use an asterisk to identify what you think is the main idea.

Example:

Previous verse John 3:15. Your job is to observe the interconnections.



MAIN IDEA (?)

5.1.2 My pericope has a beginning, middle and end. The plot includes a problem, Jonah wants to see Nineveh destroyed for its sin. A climax, Jonah despairing of life, and a conclusion, God's purpose for sparing Nineveh. The author uses narrative and dialogue to get his point across. The story seems meant to entertain.

Write a summary of the information you can derive from your structure above. What words, relationships, or other structural indicators are important and why? (See Duvall and Hayes, chap. 4 "How to Read a Paragraph," pp. 57-80 for further help).

5.1.3 The main characters are Jonah, the city of Nineveh and God. After the adventure that brought Jonah to the Ninevites to warn them of God's impending judgement, Jonah has retreated to a secluded spot to watch the city. Here God interacts with Him to show Jonah His purpose. The author uses dialogue to show Jonah's despair and God's compassion (for His creation).

The author has a purpose for this part of the narrative. He uses dialogue to show his purpose or the lesson to be learned. The means that the author uses is a plant to get his message through. This pericope summarizes the whole book of Jonah. It helps to know who Jonah is (an Israelite) and who the Ninevites are, to better understand Jonah's disdain and to show God's great compassion for His creation.

*For OT narratives, analyze your passage within the narrative context (who are the main characters, what are they doing now, how do you know what you know about them, what is being said, what is the role of the narrator, etc.). Are there any persons, places, or names that need further investigation in a Bible dictionary? (See Duvall and Hayes, chap. 16, pp. 355-381).

5.2 RHETORIC. The author uses question to drive home the point. "Should I not be more concerned about Nineveh, this enormous city?" He also uses the imagery of the withered plant to help the listener understand his message. It helps the listener to understand the value of the people in Nineveh to God by comparing Jonah's love of a simple plant to God's love of something much greater, His creation.

What "rhetorical features" (hyperbole, questions, commands, irony, parable, allegory, allusion, etc.) does your passage display? Rhetoric is a term we use for persuasion. Certain literary

techniques will drive home a point you are trying to make. You must determine how any rhetorical features the human author uses to drive home his point. (It helps to remember that these writing were meant to be heard, so they are written for performance. Most people were illiterate and depended on others to read these biblical texts). How do these rhetorical features help with understanding the passage?

5.3 GRAMMAR.

For Advanced or Tech astute Students: (You may wish to use a Bible software program that identifies Greek and Hebrew words and grammar behind the English. Then you can look up the grammatical terms in the helpful resources, *Biblical Hebrew Companion* or *Biblical Greek Companion for Bible Software Users*).

Go verse by verse and identify the conjunctions, subjects, verbs, and direct and indirect objects. Then note their specific grammatical form (e.g., verbs can be different moods and different tenses. The software will identify this form for you). Then ask yourself, what insight does this grammatic form give you (in other words, the author could have chosen to use a present tense that implies ongoing action, but he chose a perfect tense which implies past completed action with results that continue into the present). *This section is best done in the original languages; however, if you compare translations, you will begin to recognize some unusual grammar.*

For all students: Make a chart and identify the parts of speech (conjunctions, subjects, verbs, direct and indirect objects. If you have time, note the adjectives and adverbs that give more description)

5.3.2 List here any difficult or unusual grammatical features of your text

Verse #	Conjunction	Subject (noun or noun clause)	Verb (action)	Direct Object	Indirect Object
6			appointed		
6			Plant		
6			rescue		
7	SO				
7	SO				
8	SO				
8	SO				
8			Despaired		
9			Angry		
9			Angry		
10			Upset		
11			right		
11			wrong		

5.3.3 Determine which of the grammatical features above are important for you to investigate further and give your reasons why. Make a list and check with a good exegetical commentary to see if they discuss the grammatical feature. You will want to include the most important features for your paper.

5.4 **WORD STUDIES.** (Note well Duvall and Hayes' discussion and warnings regarding word studies, chap. 9, pp. 165-192.)

5.4.1 The phrase "were upset "and "rather die than live". The words so and angry.

Note here any words which are crucial to the passage, repeated, figures of speech, or that are unclear, puzzling, or difficult.

5.4.2 Upset found in verse 10 means- were troubled, to be troubled about, to look with compassion upon, Had compassion, have compassion, have pity, looked with pity, pity, show pity, sorry, spare, spared.

For this notebook choose **one of the words** listed in 5.4.1 and determine the possible meanings of the word in the original Greek or Hebrew using The S.T.E.P. program (Scripture Tools for Every Person) available for free at www.stepbible.org.

Begin by identifying the Greek or Hebrew word (Duvall and Hayes, pp. 176-178 show you how to use S.T.E.P. for this task).

5.4.3. I believe the meaning to be "to look with compassion upon", based on the theme of compassion found in the rest of the text. But seeing how it is used in other books, "troubled" is probably more accurate.

Using S.T.E.P. the meaning more often means “troubled”.

Determine how the word is used in different contexts (the rest of the Testament you are working in) and by whom.

Check all the occurrences of the Greek or Hebrew word using the “search for this word” feature in S.T.E.P. (See Duvall and Hayes explanation, pp. 178-180). *This step will take time, but it is essential for faithful interpretation.*

5.4.4 What are the ranges of meanings for this word in the author’s own usage elsewhere? Are any of these usages unique to the OT or NT?

Louw & Nida’s lexicon on semantic ranges of words is quite helpful for NT work. Try using the interactive online lexicon at <https://www.laparola.net/greco/louwnida.php> (Type in the English word and the Greek will pop up. Since you know your Greek word, click on the right one and you will be given a range of possible meanings.)

5.4.5 Which meaning is most likely here and why? (Use the questions suggested by Duvall and Hayes, pp. 181-183 to help you determine the best meaning for your passage).

STEP 6. CULTURAL CONTEXT

6.1 List features of your text that you suspect might be clarified by a greater knowledge of Jewish or Greco-Roman history and culture.

6.2 Choose one of these and, using the bibliography in Duvall and Hayes (pp. 120-134), explore the cultural background a little further and 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. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

7.1 How does your passage compare to other passages in Scripture which address similar issues?

7.2 What would be lost or how would the message of the Bible be less complete if your passage did not exist?

7.3 What is the theological importance of your passage?

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

8.1 Find a combination of at least 6 commentaries, books, or academic or pastoral journal articles which deal with your passage and read the contributions of other scholars. List the sources here using the correct Turabian style).

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 you will use other scholars' work to SUPPORT your conclusions, indicating some quotations from them worthy of citing in your paper. *"Be careful not to let them dictate what you conclude about the passage. Be critical of your sources and do not be afraid to disagree with commentators. As always, cite your sources so as not to plagiarize,"* (Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*, p. 506).

8.4 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. *You need not write your full refutation here.*

8.5 Hypothesize what the passage of Scripture you chose to investigate means. Then write out a well-crafted preliminary thesis statement that either explains how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter or question under discussion, what to expect from the rest of the project/paper, and/or makes a claim that others might dispute. *A thesis statement is an essential part of any graduate project/paper, so you need to identify enough resources to support the claims being made. A thesis is often revised once you have gathered enough supporting evidence to begin your Final Project/Paper. The more quality attention is given here, the better your final project will be.*

Sermons may not use this written thesis, but they should reflect the preparation that went into the sermon and a thesis statement (reflected in the Big Idea) is an important part.

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