

Eight Steps to Developing Exegetical Messages

1. Prayerfully conduct a careful **Initial Reading**.
 - a. Read through the entire book of Scripture (or at least the few chapters surrounding your passage) in at least two reliable translations (e.g., RSV, NIV, NASB, NRSV, REB, NJB, ESV, CEB, KJV, NKJV). Use the footnotes of these translations to identify significant textual or translation variants in your passage.
 - b. Note the primary themes of the book and its genre, e.g.:
 - i. Narrative
 - ii. Law
 - iii. Poetry
 - iv. Proverb
 - v. Prophecy
 - vi. Epistle
 - c. Define the pericope (passage) from which you will develop a message and note its “fit” in its immediate context and in the flow of the book.
 - d. Identify the specific genre of the passage.
 - e. Begin compiling three lists to be updated and revised in the course of your investigation:
 - i. a list of everything in the text you and your audience need to know more about in order to comprehend the passage.
 - ii. a list of discoveries you make in your study that have promise of being mentioned in your sermon or class.
 - iii. a list of possible “theme statements” summarizing the message(s) the text conveys, around which you might organize your sermon or class.
2. Examine the **Historical Context** of the passage.
 - a. Author/audience
 - b. Situation, significant events
 - c. Geography
 - d. Culture
3. Investigate the **Language and Structure** of the passage.
 - a. Select three or four words to investigate in detail, in the original language to the extent possible and especially as used in the book and author under investigation.
 - b. Grammar (e.g., pronouns and antecedents, verb tenses)
 - c. Figures (metaphor, parable, hyperbole, apocalyptic, typology)
 - d. Sketch the rhetorical flow of the passage, identifying the narrative or argumentative “turning points” in the text.
4. Compose a preliminary **Paraphrase** of the passage, incorporating what you have learned thus far, and prioritize your list of possible theme statements in light of this paraphrase.

5. Consider the **Canonical Context** of the passage. Apply the “Rule of Scripture” and consider how other Scriptures might clarify or sharpen the significance of your text.
 - a. Parallel passages and similar content
 - b. Themes throughout Scripture

6. Explore the **Theological Implications** of the passage. Consider how the teaching of your passage relates to the great Christian theological traditions, to the theological tradition in which you stand, and to the “Rule of Faith.”
 - a. Teaching about God and his relationship with his people
 - b. Theological principles

7. Consider your audience and make appropriate **Application(s)**.
 - a. What to believe (and which current beliefs / assumptions stand in contrast)
 - b. What to do (and what habitual actions / dispositions this will change)
 - c. What to hope for (and which underlying fears, hesitations, or competing godless hopes this hope will dislodge)

8. Prayerfully **outline and compose** a sermon or lesson.
 - a. Choose and refine one of the Theme Statements you have formulated (1.e.iii above) as the main point from the text around which you will construct a message for the church.
 - b. Incorporate as appropriate points from your “information needed” and “message possibilities” lists (1.e.i–ii above)