

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

STUDENT'S MANUAL BI 210R 3.1

TRINITY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The REACH Program

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Christians are in a very real sense “People of the Book.” Their authoritative text is the Bible, comprised of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. Evangelical Christians generally agree upon the authority of the Bible. As the “Word of God,” Scripture has commonly held a very high place in the life of Christians – both individually and collectively. Evangelical Christians use terms like “inerrancy,” “infallibility,” and “inspiration” to refer to the nature of the Bible’s accuracy, trustworthiness, and origin. Whatever view of the Bible’s nature and origin Christians hold, most claim that in some form the Bible is God’s “special revelation” of himself and of his plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. Thus, the Bible is necessary for us to understand the meaning of life and to come to know God and his ways. But to understand the Bible requires that we interpret it. To interpret demands that we read it. How do we read the Bible faithfully today so long after it was written?

This is the reason for this course. You will plunge into the depths of this great book. Though Christians claim the Bible is God’s special revelation, in many ways the Bible is not mysterious reading. It is literature, a compilation of various every-day forms of writing. You will read stories, letters, poems, and parables. You’ve possibly read much of this before in many different contexts. This course, however, will prepare you to read the Bible more intentionally, starting anew from a foundation of important principles, with a bag of tools and a stock of questions to ask of the text, as well as questions to ask of yourself as you read the text. While the Bible is literature, written by human hands, it is divinely inspired and can have a life-altering result. We hope that this course will set you anew on your quest to understand the Bible, to listen to and to “grasp” the meanings in the Bible, and to understand your life and its meaning differently as a result.

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. Course Description

This course is designed to acquaint the student with a basic understanding of the principles of biblical interpretation as well as the primary tools of biblical research. The student will then apply these principles and tools to the study of a section chosen from a selected New Testament epistle. *Three hours.*

II. Course Objectives

- A. The student will learn interpretive principles relating to literary context in his/her study of the Bible.
- B. The student will learn interpretive principles relating to historical-cultural background in his/her study of the Bible.
- C. The student will acquire a basic knowledge of how the canon was formulated and how various translations of the text emerged throughout history.
- D. The student will acquire a basic knowledge of historical and cultural approaches to the practice of biblical interpretation.
- E. The student will begin to identify his/her own pre-understandings when engaging in the interpretive process and become sensitive to points where that pre-understanding should be challenged and/or revised.
- F. The student will acquire and use basic tools of biblical exegesis and biblical research.
- G. The student will become familiar with the different genres of the Bible and will be able to identify the genres of specific texts.
- H. The student will integrate the principles of Bible interpretation through an experiential but exegetical study of a text from Ephesians in an applied learning paper.
- I. The student will begin to work out his/her own understanding of the nature of the Bible and its authority and will apply that understanding to his/her methodology of interpretation.
- J. The student will be able to define hermeneutics, exegesis, and theology and will become familiar with issues of meaning and significance in interpretation.

III. Texts

- a. Duvall, J. S. & Hays, J. D. (2005). *Grasping God's word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- b. Duvall, J. Scott & Hays, J. Daniel. (2005). *Workbook: Grasping God's word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- c. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2003). Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman. ISBN-13: 978-0805428360
- d. The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance (2007). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN-13: 978-0310262855
- e. Zondervan NIV Study Bible (rev. ed.). (2008). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0310938965

IV. Course Outline

A. Session One

1. Overview: How to Read the Bible: Basic Tools
Grasping God's Word, Part 1 (Chapters 1-4).
2. The Goals for This Session
 - a. The student will define hermeneutics, exegesis, and theology.
 - b. The student will become familiar with the Duvall-Hays principal learning tool, the Interpretive Bridge.
 - c. The student will delineate some challenges of interpreting the Bible: chronological distance, cultural distance, geographical distance, language distance, and covenant differences.
 - d. The student will learn principles for interpreting sentences, paragraphs, and discourses by practicing these principles on select biblical texts.
 - e. The student will write a personalized "goal for hermeneutics."
3. Assignments Due
 - a. Read *Grasping God's Word*, Part One (Chapters 1-4)

b. From *Grasping God's Word* Workbook, complete:

Chapter One: Assignments 1, 3

Chapter Two: Assignments 2, 3 and 4

Chapter Three: Assignments 1, 4

Chapter Four: Assignments 1, 2

c. Read through the Book of Ephesians

4. Note

The purpose of these assignments is to give you a chance to practice interpretation along with your reading. You should keep your workbook open as you read the text and complete the corresponding assignments after you read each chapter. You should be spending between 12-15 hours per week on this course. But it may take a few weeks to develop a comfortable rhythm that both enables you to complete the assignments and challenges you to work more effectively than you are hitherto accustomed to doing. Depending on your background in Bible study and your learning style/speed, you may need to focus on “quality” over “quantity” at first. If you find you cannot complete each assignment satisfactorily, focus on what you can accomplish and work hard. The end goal is to become better Bible readers.

B. Session Two

1. Overview: Contexts: Now and Then (Literary and Historical)

Preunderstandings, Historical-cultural and literary contexts, word studies and bible translations (*Grasping*, Part 2)

2. The Goals for This Session

a. The student will identify his/her own presuppositions in biblical interpretation: the nature of the Bible, the formative nature of his/her culture and theology, and the goal of hermeneutics.

b. The student will apply the recognition of those pre-understandings to his/her own interpretive process and practice..

c. The student will identify the literary context of biblical texts, and practice interpreting a text within its literary context t

- d. The student will learn how to do an effective word study, avoiding common fallacies frequently associated with word studies.
- e. The student will become aware of various translations of the Bible, and the issues that surround translation theory, in order to choose which translation to use for varying tasks.

3. Assignments Due

a. Read *Grasping*, Part 2 (Chapters 5-9)

b. From *Grasping Workbook*:

Chapter 5: Assignment (You may complete the assignment in two double-spaced pages)

Chapter 6: Assignments 1, 4, and 5

Chapter 7: Assignment 2

Chapter 8: Assignments 1, 2, 3, 4

Chapter 9: Assignments 1 (“3 translations, not 5”), 2

c. Read Ephesians in one sitting. Familiarize yourself with the section divisions of Ephesians provided in Duvall-Hays *Workbook*, p. 156.

d. Try to decide which of these sections you will exegete for your ALP at the end of the course. (You will submit a final decision week three, and be working on your paper from now on.)

C. Session Three

1. Overview: Meaning and Application

Levels of meaning, role of the Holy Spirit, application: (*Grasping*, Part 3)

2. The Goals for This Session

a. The student will understand how the “reader-response” school of interpretation differs from the “authorial intent” theory of interpretation on the question of “where is the locus of meaning?”..

- b. The student will differentiate between various kinds of “readings” of the Bible: i.e., allegorical, spiritual, grammatical-literal, and assess maverick reading methods like the Bible Code, gematria, and other esoteric methodologies.
- c. The student will explore differing views of the Holy Spirit’s role in the interpretive process and articulate his or her own understanding of that role.
- d. The student will comprehend and use the Principilizing Bridge to traverse between (original) meaning and (contemporary) application in biblical texts.

3. Assignments Due

- a. Read *Grasping*, Part 3 (chapters 10-13)
- b. From *Grasping Workbook*:
 - Chapter Ten: Assignment 3
 - Chapter Eleven: Assignment 1
 - Chapter Twelve: Assignment 1
 - Chapter Thirteen: Assignments 2, 3
- c. Decide which of the sections of Ephesians in Duvall-Hays *Workbook*, p. 156, you will exegete for your ALP at the end of the course. Write it on a piece of paper, along with a brief identification of the principal themes:
 - a) of your chosen piece
 - b) of the section just preceding it
 - c) of the section that follows it in Ephesians

and give to instructor when we meet for class three.

D. Session Four

- 1. Overview: The Interpretive Journey: New Testament
 Reading the New Testament (*Grasping*, Part 4, chapters 14-17)
- 2. The Goals for This Session

- a. The student will identify and distinguish the New Testament genres of history (Acts), Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation (visionary).
- b. The student will apply principles for the interpretation of each of these genres to interpretation of representative texts.
- c. The student will gain skills in recognizing pre- and post-context clues to the meaning of individual texts (i.e., will see how surrounding context contributes to understanding the meaning of a given text)
- d. The student will define “exegesis” and “eisegesis,” noting the importance of careful exegesis in moving toward correct understanding.

3. Assignments Due

- a. Read *Grasping*, Part 4 (chapters 14-17)
- b. From *Grasping Workbook*:
 - Chapter 14: Assignments 1 and 2
 - Chapter 15: Assignments 1 (cf. p. 248 in text), and 2
 - Chapter 16: Assignment 1
 - Chapter 17: Assignments 1

E. Session Five

1. Overview: The Interpretive Journey: Old Testament

Reading the Old Testament: (*Grasping*, Part 5, chapters 18-22)

2. The Goals for this Session

- a. The student will identify and distinguish the Old Testament genres of narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, wisdom.
- b. The student will acquire principles for the interpretation of each of these genres and apply those principles to the interpretation of representative texts.
- c. The OT student will add the “Cross into the NT” step to the Interpretive Journey

- d. The student will interpret any other part of the Old Testament by the Mosaic Law, yet will at the same time recognize that in Christ the old covenant has been completed and therefore no longer rules over the believer.

3. Assignments Due

- a. Read *Grasping*, Part 5, chapters 18-22
- b. From *Grasping Workbook*, Complete:
 - Chapter 18: Assignment 1
 - Chapter 19: Assignments 2 and 4
 - Chapter 20: Assignments 1
 - Chapter 21: Assignments 2 and 3
 - Chapter 22: Assignments 2

V. Course Requirements

- A. Complete all assignments listed in **Section IV** of the course syllabus. Including those listed below.
 1. Complete all written assignments on time, as assigned in the course schedule.
 2. Complete the assigned textbook readings on time, as assigned in the course schedule.
 3. Complete the Applied Learning Paper on time—see instructions in assignments section, page 15.

VI. Course Policies

1. APA Documentation

All written work (e.g. worksheets/essay questions, reflection papers, final projects, etc.) in the REACH Program must conform to the APA parenthetical notation style (please consult *A Pocket Style Manual* listed above). This includes:

- an APA title page (including a running header and page number)
- an “Abstract” page with a 1-2 paragraph summary of your paper (an abstract is only necessary for your Applied Learning Papers, but not for your smaller assignments)
- In-text citations (with author(s), date, and page number (if applicable))
Note Well: Even discussion board postings and PowerPoint presentations, for example, must use in-text citations when you cite another person’s work or ideas.
- a “References” page (it is not called a “bibliography”)

- one inch margins
- 12 point font
- double spaced

Failure to use and cite others' work or ideas properly will lead to charges of academic dishonesty. See below for more information.

2. Academic Integrity

As a member of the Trinity community, we ask you to hold yourself and others to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Violations take many forms, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plagiarism: using another's work or ideas without proper documentation, which requires citing the author or authors' name(s), date of publication, and page number (if applicable)
- Cheating: using notes, books, or crib sheets during closed-book quizzes or exams, or copying from another's student's work
- Submitting Previous Work: submitting your work that was previously turned in for credit
- Ghosting: writing a paper or taking a quiz (or any other evaluation) in place of another student
- Aiding and Abetting: helping others to commit acts of academic dishonesty, or failing to report those who have or plan to commit dishonest acts

Faculty members will investigate all violations of academic integrity, whether deliberate or non-deliberate. If a violation is confirmed, the student may receive an "F" for the assignment and the course. In such a case, the student may not drop the course. The faculty member will document the case of dishonesty, explaining the incident and the action taken. The Associate Dean of Nontraditional Education will receive a copy of this report, and a copy will be placed in the student's file. In serious cases of academic dishonesty, the Associate Dean may choose to meet with the student and faculty member to review the case. Multiple violations may lead to a student's dismissal from the program.

3. Late Work

All assignments must be turned in on or before the date they are due. Any assignment turned in late will be deducted as follows:

- a. 10% off for up to one day late
- b. 20% off for up to two days late
- c. assignments more than two days late will receive a zero

An extension on the time needed to submit final course requirements (such as the ALP) will be granted only in unusual circumstances and if the instructor and the Associate Dean grant the request.

4. Attendance Policy

Because of the accelerated and collaborative nature of the REACH courses, students are required to attend every class session. Missing a single class means a significant portion of contact with the instructor and the learning community has been lost.

For face-to-face courses, students missing one class session will be penalized between one-half and one full letter grade. Students missing two class sessions will receive an “F” for the course. Any student missing more than 30 minutes of a course session will be considered absent for the full course session.

For online courses, students must participate actively in class discussions and activities. Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction of one-half to a full letter grade at the discretion of the instructor.

5. Basic Writing and Speaking Proficiency

The REACH Program expects you to maintain basic standards of writing and speaking proficiency. If you believe you need support in one or both areas, please contact your academic advisor and/or use the resources in the following section.

Grading Sheet for BI 210R
Introduction to Biblical Interpretation

Student Name: _____

1. Weekly Assignments _____
 - a. Assignments for Session #1: _____ out of 40 points
 - b. Assignments for Session #2: _____ out of 40 points
 - c. Assignments for Session #3: _____ out of 40 points
 - d. Assignments for Session #4: _____ out of 40 points
 - e. Assignments for Session #5: _____ out of 40 points
2. Class Participation: _____ out of 40 points _____
3. Applied Learning Paper: _____ out of 100 points _____
4. Total Points (out of 340 points possible): _____
5. Course Grade: _____

Grading Scale:

Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade
92-100	A	72-77	C
90-91	A-	70-71	C-
88-89	B+	68-69	D+
82-87	B	62-67	D
80-81	B-	60-61	D-
78-79	C+	0-59	F

ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Applied Learning Paper (Exegetical Paper)

In this paper you will choose a text from **Ephesians** (from the list given on page 156 in *Grasping Workbook*) and you will apply the principles and procedures that you have learned in this course as you interpret the passage you have chosen. Due to the nature of this course, this paper is an “exegetical” paper. You are to attempt to bring the meaning “out of” the text, thinking along the lines of the original setting of the writing as much as possible. Keep in mind that the goal of interpretation is to discover the objective *meaning* of the text while seeking to apply that meaning to your life in a way that changes you and/or your perception of truth, Christian existence, and God. You should be looking to emerge from this process with a greater understanding of the biblical passage and with a deeper understanding of life.

Detailed instructions for this paper are included on pp. 154-155 of the *Grasping Workbook*. This paper should be between 9-13 pages.

Be sure to follow the instructions closely for constructing this paper. Refer to the checklist (p. 155, *Workbook*) occasionally to make sure you are on target.

This paper is worth 40% of your course grade.

In line with REACH policy, the paper will not be accepted late unless an arrangement is made between the student and the instructor prior to the due date. In case of such a special arrangement, the grade will be reduced significantly.

Grading Criteria:

Form and style (typing, spelling, grammar, etc.)	10 %
Research	10 %
Main Idea and Outline	20 %
Context (historical and literary)	20 %
Content	30 %
Application	10%