

Assignment 2

Arthur Hay 10/03/2025

The 5 steps of the interpretive journey

1. Grasping the text in their town

Study the surrounding passages to gain an understanding of the culture of the area at the time to enable you to understand the context of the passage. Read, observe and look at the grammar of the passage to grasp the meaning of the passage to the audience of the time and place. It happened in the past so put it in the past tense.

2. Measuring the width of the river to cross

This is the differences between the Biblical audience and us laid out by time, geography and sometimes also between old and new covenants. These can be many or few, some sections of the river you will be able to hop across and others you will need to build a big bridge, it is these differences that can alter what the passage meant to the audience and what it means to us today.

The differences in the two need to be assessed before trying to bring the two situations together and if the passage is from the Old Covenant theological differences will also need to be taken in to consideration. They also need to be assessed as to the particular circumstances of the situation, Joshua was the leader of Israel about to cross in to the Promised Land, we are not and nor are we about to do that.

3. Crossing the Principalising Bridge

This is to work out the theological principal meant for the audience and how the same principal can be expressed to us today. Look at the differences and similarities between the situation in the passage and our situation today. Joshua was the leader of a nation, we have various positions of leadership within the church.

Look at the meaning to the Biblical audience and see how it applies to the similarities between them and us. God does not change even though cultures do, the principal should be seen in the text and applied universally to all cultures and ages, be relevant and consistent with the rest of scripture and then be summed up.

4. Consulting the Biblical Map

This is where you see how the principal fits with the rest of scripture, it needs to fit and keep consistency with the rest of scripture. Old Testament passages need to be

seen in the light of the New Testament, with the New Testament we have a view people in the Old Covenant did not have and also look to scriptures to enhance the passage, add insight or qualification.

5. Grasping the text in our town

Making the message so we today get the same meaning from it as the audience of the time did, and how it applies to us today. Also, because many Christians around the world are all in very different circumstances, there will be different ways of expressing the passage in different situations. For us in modern Australia with peace and prosperity compared to a church leader in sub Saharan Africa with Boko Haram (Islamic terrorist group) on the prowl, raiding towns, burning Christian homes and businesses, attacking services with machetes, kidnapping and killing people, the same message must be conveyable to both types.

Thank you for addressing this!

Guidelines to developing the Theological Principal

The Theological Principal is the basic message in scripture slanted to the audience of the time and our job is to convey the same theological message but slanted to our time and place. It is necessary to get the basic core message and adapt it to fit the new audience.

A case is the fourth commandment, Exodus 20:8, remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Up to verse 11 there are basic instructions are equally applicable to today, none of the family or household staff are to work, and our generation would have known the generation that had household staff, nor the stranger within your gates would be like a hired tradesman doing a job in or outside the house. In Exodus 16:29 the Israelites were told to stay in their tents on the Sabbath Day and not to go out, but by the time Jesus came to Earth people would go out to attend the Synagogue on the Sabbath like we go to church now, the commandment was just to keep the day holy and in Colossians 2:16 we are told not to let anyone pass judgement over us as to our way of keeping the day holy, amongst other things. We are not nor were the Colossians living in tents on a long journey to the Promised Land having to learn from scratch how to be a holy nation after 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

The Sabbath day as experienced under the OC and NC is a very interesting topic!

The Old Covenant had rules outside the 10 Commandments to set Israel apart as a holy nation to point the way to God for the rest of the lost world. In the New Covenant we are in a direct relationship with God rather than a religious hierarchy. We have the Holy Spirit residing within us to prompt our conscience.

Romans 14:13-23 says not to let your brother stumble, acknowledging that in the New Covenant we can decide for ourselves rather than have hard and fast rules, you can cook on the Sabbath if you want to but if someone else prefers to only eat pre prepared food then do not cause them to stumble by offering them something you cooked on a Sabbath. Both in their own way keep the Sabbath holy, the theological principal of the message to all cultures and generations, even if by different methods.

To come to these conclusions we must meditate on God's word, pray for wisdom and understanding and not just go by our gut instinct. By all means read commentaries and watch videos or You Tube clips but be careful about what fallen humans say, whatever is said needs to be stacked up against other scriptures to make sure the message is consistent.

Thanks Arthur. The consistency of scripture to be our guide is essential and non-negotiable, as there are as you point out so many potential distractions.

The Differences in determining the width of the River to cross

The more differences between the audience of the time and place and us where we are now, then the wider the river. Two examples would be when Nathan confronted David over his adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent remote murder of her husband, and Paul writing to Philemon about Onesimus the runaway slave.

In the first scenario, the theological principal is that adultery and murder are wrong and both breach the 10 Commandments, but that river is quite wide and to get the story across to David for what he did, Nathan creates a small river, wide enough that David can get the message by hearing it in a different set of circumstances, but not so wide that Nathan's message would go over his head. David could get the theological principal from Nathan's illustration to what he actually did.

An excellent comparison, here!

The small river, or stream:

David was a king, Nathan used a rich man

David had many wives and concubines, the rich man had much livestock and possessions

Uriah had one wife, the poor man had one ewe lamb that was also the family pet

David had Uriah killed, the rich man killed the poor man's family pet, lamb.

The wider river:

Today we are not kings or rulers but some of us might have wealth and influence.

Most people have one partner and many of us have cats or dogs, in those days a dog was certainly not man's best friend, in fact they were seen as a low life as Goliath said to David when he felt insulted, "am I a dog".

The biggest difference is this was Old Covenant and we are in the New Covenant.

The river is much narrower in the situation between Paul, Philemon and Onesimus. This is New Covenant so there are far fewer differences and by this time trade and commerce was more sophisticated than in David and Nathan's time. The differences are:

A lazy slave, today would be comparable to a slack employee

A runaway slave, the slack employee abandoning his job and stealing from the business as he left.

Onesimus met up with Paul, got saved and disciplined and was ready to return to his master as a useful slave. Similarly, today someone who gets saved becomes a new person in Christ, there are many testimonies of lives transformed.

Thanks Arthur for completing the assignment with your examples.
Using examples help illustrate what our main points are. I trust other students will benefit from your assignment here. Well done.

John Klassek 24/03/2025