

Lecture 4

An Evangelical Hermeneutical Manifesto

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- 1) Be the person God saved you to be as He conforms you to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-30; I John 3:1-3). Realize who you are will affect how you understand and interpret the Bible.
- 2) Approach hermeneutics as a spiritual exercise. Allow the process to inform your mind and impact your heart (Matt. 22:37-40). Let your work in the study be a part of your devotional life. Make it a time of worship.
- 3) Settle in your heart and mind the issue of the Bible’s authority, inerrancy and sufficiency (Matt. 5:17-18; John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). If you have doubts in your own mind, you will sow seeds of doubt in those you teach.
- 4) Understand that while we should learn from and listen to reason, experience and tradition, our ultimate authority for life is the Word of God (Isaiah 40:8).
- 5) Realize we are all situated interpreters who exist and live in a particular context that impacts how we hear, see and read. R. Bultmann was at least correct on one thing: “exegesis without presuppositions is impossible.” However, just because we are shaped and influenced by our worldview, presuppositions and situatedness does not mean we are bound by or enslaved to them. We can change, grow and see things differently. Therefore, do not be led into

epistemological or hermeneutical error by “standpoint epistemologies” or “identity politics” that de-emphasize the objectivity of the text and over-emphasize the subjectivity of the reader.

- 6) While we may not know or understand the text exhaustively, we can know it genuinely and truly. Through repeated engagement with the text and by the aid of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-16) we can continually “spiral in” on the meaning deposited in the text by the Divine Author/human author. [Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*]
- 7) We honor the authorially intended meaning of a text because its ultimate author is the Holy Spirit of God. We have a divine mandate to seek the meaning He has communicated.
- 8) A holistic hermeneutic will be text-driven honoring the :
 - a) historical b) grammatical c) theological d) Christologicalhermeneutical interpretation. None of these elements can be neglected.
- 9) Recognize the Bible conveys “One Big Story” with many “little stories” that make up the “Grand Redemptive Story” of the Bible.

Creation → Fall → Redemption → New Creation

- 10) Remember a text cannot mean today what it did not mean then. But, it can mean more in light of 1) the incarnation and 2) the whole canon of Scripture.
(the doctrine of sensus plenary)
- 11) Remember that the Old Testament is also “Christian Scripture.” All of the Bible points to and is about Christ! (Luke 24; John 5). Do not interpret the Bible like a Jewish rabbi.
- 12) In terms of interpretation and also application, look for that in the text which is true anywhere, any place, anytime and under any circumstances. Work to isolate and convey the “universal and abiding” truth in the text before moving on, as you should, to current and specific applications.
- 13) When pursuing the theological understanding of a text always ask 5 essential questions that follow the Grand Redemptive Storyline of the Bible:
- a) What does this text teach me about God?
 - b) What does this text teach me about fallen humanity?
 - c) What does this text teach me about Christ?
 - d) What does God want my people to know?
 - e) What does God want my people to do?

*The hermeneutical process is incomplete without application.

14) As you craft the Major Idea of the Text (MIT) and the Major Idea of the Message (MIM), ask which theological category or categories the text is addressing:

- Revelation (prolegomena, natural and special revelation)
- God (Creation, angelology)
- Humanity (sin, gender, ethnicity)
- Christ (person and work)
- Salvation
- Holy Spirit
- Church
- Eschatology

15) Never forget the meaning of a text is one while the applications and even implications are many. (ex. Eph. 5:18; intoxication applies to more than just wine)

16) Realize the human author may have written more than he understood in terms of the full and complete meaning of a text. Only the divine author, the Holy Spirit, has exhaustive understanding of the text. (see 1 Peter 1:10-12)

17) Because “all truth is God’s truth,” we can learn from even liberal and unbelieving scholars and teachers. **WARNING:** Learn from them but do not be infected or seduced by them. Treat them like a virus to be studied!

- 18) Resist the pressure to adopt a reader-oriented hermeneutic that dismisses the author, relativizes the text and locates meaning in the wrong place (the reader). It will cast you upon a sea of interpretive subjectivity that will never get you home.
- 19) Commit to the hard but rewarding work of the study. Give 10-12 hours minimally to studying each text that you will teach from.
- 20) Always read multiple Bible translations as you study a text (ESV, KJV, NKJV, NASV, NIV, CSB, NLT, The Message).
- 21) Use good commentaries (minimally 5-7 per text) and resources. (See “Carson Explains What Makes a Good Commentary” at The Gospel Coalition Blog, pgs. 10-12).
- 22) Get familiar with good commentary sets. “Building a Theological Library” by Daniel Akin will be helpful.

BEGCNT	HOTC	NICNT	PNTC
BSC	HNTC	NICOT	REC
BST	IVPNTC	NIVAC	TNTC
CCE	NAC	NTC	TOTC
EBC	WEC	ZEC	

* Also can commend Ken Hughes, (Preach the Word), John MacArthur, Warren Wiersbe (“The Be Series”).

23) Become familiar with good authors.

Old Testament

Gleason Archer	Andrew Hill	Alan Ross
Joyce Baldwin	Paul House	John Sailhamier
Daniel Block	Walt Kaiser	Douglas Stuart
Alan Cole	Derek Kidner	Bruce Waltke
John J. Davis	H. C. Leupold	Gordon Wenham
Duane Garrett	Ken Matthews	Leon Wood
Sidney Greidanus	Eugene Merrill	E. J. Young
Victor Hamilton	Alex Motyer	Ronald Youngblood
R. K. Harrison	John Oswalt	Lawson Younger
Richard Hess	Mark Rooker	William Van Gemeren
Jon Akin	Craig Bartholomew	Peter Craigie
Tremper Longman	Peter Gentry	Robert Bergen
Allan Moseley	Jason DeRouchie	Andrew Hill
Daniel Hays	Peter Leithart	Bill Arnold
Stephen Dempster	Heath Thomas	Iain Duguid

New Testament

Greg Beale	D. E. Hiebert	Peter O'Brien
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Craig Blomberg	Craig Keener	Grant Osborne
Darrell Bock	George Knight	John Polhill
F. F. Bruce	Andreas Kostenberger	Chuck Quarles
Don Carson	Colin Kruse	Tom Schreiner
James Edwards	William Lane	Moises Silva
Gordon Fee	I. Howard Marshall	Bob Stein
David Garland	Ben Merkle	John Stott
Timothy George	Doug Moo	Robert Thomas
George Guthrie	Leon Morris	Robert Yarbrough
William Hendriksen	Robert Mounce	Curtis Vaughn
David Alan Black	Ben Witherington	Scott Kellum
Anthony Thiselton	Michael Kruger	Scott Duvall
Mark Strauss	Clinton Arnold	Paul Barrett
Craig Evans	N.T. Wright	G.E. Ladd
Frank Thielman		

24) Listen to good preaching and teaching

Jon Akin	John Folmar	Al Mohler
Thabiti Anyabwile	J. D. Greear	Alan Moseley

Alistair Begg	Tom Schreiner	John Piper
D. A. Carson	Johnny Hunt	David Platt
Matt Carter	David Jeremiah	Adrian Rogers
Matt Chandler	Tim Keller	Stephen Rummage
W. A. Criswell	Bryan Loritts	Jim Shaddix
H. B. Charles	Eric Mason	Kevin Smith
Andy Davis	John MacArthur	Robert Smith
Mark Dever	Ronjour Locke	Sam Storms
Landon Dowdon	Dwayne Milioni	Chuck Swindoll
Ligon Duncan	Tony Merida	James White (Raleigh)
Tony Evans	James Merritt	Blake Wilson
Sinclair Ferguson	Russell Moore	Afshin Ziafat
Scott Pace	Tim Keller	Stephen Smith
Josh Smith	Stephen Olford	Tommy Nelson
E.V. Hill		

25) Utilize good and helpful websites that are free!

www.Biblegateway.com	www.Preceptaustin.org
www.DanielAkin.com	www.Radical.net

www.DesiringGod.org	www.SpurgeonGems.org
www.TheGospelCoalition.org	www.WACriswell.org
www.gty.org (Grace To You)	www.9marks.org
www.truthforlife.org	www.fbcdurham.org
www.sermonaudio.com	www.idcraleigh.com

Carson Explains What Makes a Good Commentary

February 11, 2014

Commentaries.

Some of you see that word and want to yawn. Others see it and want to cheer. You hope to collect lots of them, sets of them. There's an Amazon Wish List to prove it. But commentaries aren't meant to be collected. They're meant to be consulted—week in and week out as you prepare to unlock the treasure chest of God's Word to God's people once again.

In honor of the recently released seventh edition of D. A. Carson's [*New Testament Commentary Survey*](#) (Baker Academic), we asked The Gospel Coalition's co-founder and president a few questions about commentaries—what makes a good one, what they can't do, common pitfalls, how much time we should give them, and more.

What makes for a good commentary? How should an average pastor determine which commentaries to purchase?

Good all-round commentaries help readers think their way through the text—which requires adequate handling of words, sentences, flow of thought, genre, theological presuppositions, knowledge of historical setting, and, ideally, a commentary writer who is humble and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at God's Word. But most commentaries do not do all these things (and other things—e.g., interaction with some other commentaries) equally well. That is one of the reasons one is usually wise to consult at least two or three commentaries with different emphases.

Most commentaries (though there are some exceptions) are quite poor at integrating exegesis of the text at hand with whole-Bible biblical theology. This is a huge lacuna. If you run from exegesis directly to application, you will often get things wrong and tend to drift toward privatized applications. In other words, it is important to understand any part of God's Word in terms of the book, corpus, and entire canon, to grasp how texts drive toward Jesus and the gospel, before too much application is attempted.

More broadly, most commentaries can't do much toward faithful and telling application. Although the biblical text (explained by the commentary) ought to have a major say in shaping your sermon outline, few commentaries will help you at that point—and most of those that try to do so are not very good. Reading commentaries will not necessarily turn you into a good exegete: that requires more focused reading of the text itself.

What are some common pitfalls to avoid in the use of commentaries?

To name a few: (1) If you read the commentaries too soon in the process, instead of wrestling with the text itself, you will not become a skilled reader, and all your material will feel secondhand. (2) If you read the commentaries too late in the process, or, worse, not at all, you are failing to tap into generations of stimulating thought undertaken by Christians and others who have come before you, so you may overlook important things that you should not miss. (3) If you rely too heavily on commentaries at the expense of continuing reading in biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology, your sermons will tend to be reduced to running commentaries, instead of carrying the weight of the burden of a message from the text at hand. (4) Avoid using commentaries as a substitute for careful reading and importunate intercession. One of the things we need in our preaching is unction—and commentaries, in themselves, cannot provide that.

Generally speaking, how much of a preacher's preparation time should be spent using commentaries?

In the early days of your ministry, not more than 60 to 70 percent; as you mature, not more than 50 percent. Any decently trained seminary graduate knows how to do reasonably responsible exegesis. The hardest part of sermon preparation is not exegesis and commentary study (assuming you had good training), but structure, writing, shaping, transitions, flow, vocabulary, introductions, and conclusions.

If a preacher only has time to consult, say, two commentaries per passage, what principles would you give to help guide his choice?

Consult different kinds of commentaries (e.g., at least one on the original text [if the preacher can read Greek and Hebrew], partly so that your tools will remain sharp. In all language work, use it or lose it.). Another commentary might be stronger in actual exposition. Ideally at least one of them will say important things about the genre and structure of thought in the biblical book being studied. Ideally one of them will reflect on the history of interpretation (e.g., what did the church fathers say? what did the Reformers say?); ideally one of them will be strong on words and syntax. Ideally at least one will have been written by someone who transparently hungers to

be mastered by the Word of God. I should add that all commentaries are written from some vantage point or other, and it is important to learn what that vantage point is and make allowance for it. Suddenly, the limitation to *two* commentaries seems unreasonable!

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/carson-explains-what-makes-a-good-commentary>