

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study – July 2021

CS-121 The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible

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Pre-online work (To be completed before July 19, 2021)

Book List

1. Required

Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*

Hays, John and Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*

2. Suggested

Davis, Ellen, *Opening Israel's Scriptures*

Introductions (to be entered into Blackboard for all to see and respond to)

1. In two or three sentences, describe the congregation(s) you currently serve.
2. What three things would you like us to know about you?
3. If you've been to Wesley before, what has been your favorite part?
4. What are you most looking forward to about this class?
5. Does anything make you anxious thinking about this class?

After you have answered these questions, respond to the answer of a couple of your classmates as you would if you were in a face-to-face conversation.

Constructing a Basic Bible Study Vocabulary – Group-curated definitions

- A. Skim through the first chapters of your required books. Do you see any words that are not familiar to you? Do you see some words you know but that seem to be used differently from what you are used to? List at least 5 such words here.
- B. Give a short definition to any 5 words listed by your classmates – or any of the words you yourself listed. Be sure that your definition has to do with Bible study and not some other use of the term.
- C. Feel free to add to or edit what others have written.

Context

Co-text

Manuscript

Masoretic text

Codex

Scroll

Papyrus

Metathesis
Dittography
Text criticism
Form criticism
Rhetorical criticism

This dozen terms contains many words that have several meanings, depending on where they are found and how they are used. Choose two terms from the list and write a short definition *as they are related to biblical study*. Then look at the definitions your classmates have written. Can you make improvements to any of them? Remember, that the point is not to write the most words about a term, but to define it relative to biblical study.

Finding Your Way Around the Bible

A. Order From Genesis through Judges, Christian and Jewish Bibles put the books in the same order. Ruth, however, does not come between Judges and I Samuel in a Jewish Bible. Similarly, I&II Chronicles is in two very different spots in the two orderings. In neither case is the ordering random. Christian Bibles print the books in roughly chronological order according to the content of each book. Jewish Bibles print the books in roughly chronological order according to when each book reached the form in which we now have it. Think about the different placements of Ruth and Chronicles. Can you come up with some possible different effects due to those different placements?

B. Upper and Lower Case. Original biblical manuscripts, in Hebrew (and a tiny bit of Aramaic) for the Old Testament and in Greek for the New Testament, were quite different from our English printed Bibles. There were no punctuation marks, for instance, because punctuation marks had not yet been invented. There was no distinction between “upper case” and “lower case” letters.

There are English words whose meaning is vastly different, depending on whether the first letter is upper or lower case. Think of “Polish” and “polish,” for instance, or “job” and “Job.” Can you find an example in the Bible where the meaning might be different if an upper case letter were printed as lower case or vice versa?

C. Punctuation. What about punctuation marks? There’s a popular joke about commas saving lives. Look at the difference between “Let’s eat, Grandma” and “Let’s eat Grandma.” Or see how different these two sentences are: “Woman: without her, man is nothing” and “Woman, without her man, is nothing.” And of course the simple change between a period and a question mark at the end of a sentence can make a difference. “John likes maple syrup.” “John likes maple syrup?”

Find a text in the Bible and change one or more punctuation marks to give a different meaning.

In addition, there were neither chapter divisions nor verse divisions. How do you think someone could refer to a specific passage without the use of chapter and verse numbers?

For in-class time

As you are working through these exercises, make note of other questions that come to your mind. Please make a list of them to turn in on the first day of on-line class.