Journey Into God’s Word  
Class #2

Acknowledgement:  
Much of this teaching is directly derived from the book – “Journey Into God’s Word” by Duvall and Hays.

Starting Out Right

1. What we bring to the text

• Pre-understanding

Quote – “Preunderstanding refers to all of our preconceived notions and understandings that we bring to the text, which have been formulated, both consciously and subconsciously, before we actually study the text in detail.”

In contrast to “preunderstandings,” biblical presuppositions are what must drive our interpretation.

- We must let our preunderstandings change each time we study a passage.
- We submit our preunderstandings to the text and then interact with it, evaluate it in light of our study, and improve our understanding each time.
- Biblical presuppositions, by contrast, do not change with each reading. They are related to our overall view of the Bible (our “biblical theology”).

• Flawed Interpretive Methods

Quote – “Any attempt to interpret and to apply the Bible involves trying to cross the river. While often unconscious of their interpretive method, many Christians today nonetheless frequently employ an intuitive or feels-right approach to interpretation. If the text looks as if it could be applied directly, then they attempt to apply it directly. If not, then they take a spiritualizing approach to the meaning – an approach that borders on allegorizing the biblical text (which shows little or no sensitivity to the biblical context). Or else they simply shrug their shoulders and move onto another passage, ignoring the meaning of the text altogether.”
2. **What we need for this journey**

“Our goal is to grasp the meaning of the text God has intended. We do not create meaning out of a text; rather, we seek to find the meaning that is already there.”

And we need to remember “we cannot apply the meaning for the (biblical) ancient audience directly to us today because of the river that separates us

**4 STEPS** we need to take to in order to better understand and apply our Bibles.

1. **Grasp the text in Their Town**

*What did the text mean to the biblical audience?*

- Try to see as much as possible in the text.
- Scrutinize the grammar and analyze all significant words.
- Study the historical and literary contexts.
- How does your passage relate to the one that precedes it and the one that follows?
- Then even write out what the passage meant for the biblical audience.
- Be specific.

2. **Measuring the Width of the River to Cross**

*What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?*

- Look for significant differences between our situation today and the situation of the biblical audience.
- Old Testament passage? – Identify those significant theological differences that came as a result of the life and work of Jesus Christ.
- Try to identify any unique aspects of the situation of your passage.

3. **Crossing the “Theological Principle” Bridge**

*What is the theological principle in this text?*

The theological principle is part of the meaning of the text.
In seeking to determine the theological principle that will get you across the river of interpretation and application:

- Recall the differences you identified Step 2.
- Try to identify any similarities between the situation of the biblical audience and our modern situation.
- Return to the meaning for the biblical audience that you described in Step 1 and try to identify a broader theological principle reflected in the text.
- Reflect back and forth between the text and the teachings of the rest of Scripture.

4. **Grasp the text in Our Town**

   *How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle in their live?*

   “We must now grapple with how we should respond to that principle in ‘our town.’ How does it apply in real-life situations today?”

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Copied from the book: “Journey Into God’s Word”