

## Sr. Bible Class Hermeneutical Paper Outline

Directions to be followed for Hermeneutical Papers:

1. Pray. Spend time in prayer before beginning each project. Ask God to speak to you and to give you wisdom, discernment, and clarity of mind as you read the passage that you intend to study. Feel free to repeat this step as often as necessary.
2. Read the text.
  - A. Read and re-read the text that you are to study.
  - B. Read the broader context of the passage (circles of context).
  - C. Try to read the entire book in which the passage is found (ideally in one sitting).
  - D. Take note of any observations that you make and/or any issues that come to mind as you read the text.
3. Identify and discuss the genre-specific features of the passage.
  - A. Identify the genre and subgenre of the passage (ex. Epistle/Pauline epistle, or Prophecy/oracle of salvation).
  - B. Note the features of this text/genre type (ex. Chiasm, framing, hyperbole, parallelism, idiom, irony, repetition, lists, tone, contrasts and comparisons, cause-effect, characterization, word play, structure, narrative point of view, scene, speeches, set-up, plot, etc...).
  - C. Note that the text under study may have several of these features, or it may have a different genre from the surrounding material (ex. A poem within a narrative, a proverbial saying within a story, or a prophetic message within a historical account, etc.)
  - D. Think about and incorporate the specific interpretive issues for each literary genre discussed in class.

**For Purposes of your paper, section 3 should be ~1-2 paragraphs<sup>1</sup> long.**

4. Identify the historical and cultural setting of the passage as best as you can (ex. During the Babylonian exile, timeframe between Paul's first and second missionary journey). Think about issues of topography, ethnicity, politics, culture, etc...
  - A. You can usually pick up the setting by reading the broader backdrop/context of the passage, or by reading parallel passages in other biblical books.
  - B. You may also want to refer to biblical encyclopedias, atlases, and commentaries.

**For purposes of your paper, section 4 should be 1 paragraph long.**

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<sup>1</sup> For all intents and purposes, a paragraph should be *at the minimum* a solid 5-6 sentences in length.

5. Note the original audience of the passage as best as possible (ex. Post-exilic returnees, believers in Corinth, etc.).
  - A. Note that at times the message contained in a passage may have been directed to a group/person different from those to whom the book was written (ex. A Gospel may include a saying to the disciples within a book that has a larger audience in mind).
  - B. Note that the audience isn't always clear, or the audience may need to be identified in general terms.

**For purposes of your paper, section 5 should be ~1/2 – 1 paragraph long.**

6. Note the original purpose/function of the passage as best as possible (ex. To answer questions sent by church leaders, to repudiate social injustice, for worship en route to the temple in Jerusalem, etc.).

**For purposes of your paper, section 6 should be ~1/2 – 1 paragraph long.**

7. Identify the main point(s)/thrust of the text being studied.
  - A. Read and re-read the text and its circles of context some more; this time read within as many translations as possible (KJV, NKJV, ASN, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV, ESV, the Message, the Living Bible, etc.).
  - B. As you read, work to articulate the main thrust/idea of the passage. What is primarily being taught, or what is the argument?

**For purposes of your paper, section 7 should be 1-2 paragraphs long<sup>2</sup>.**

8. Consult helps. During this step in the process, you should use Bible commentaries, encyclopedias, atlases, etc... to *supplement and enhance* what you have already done in your personal study of the biblical text.

**For purposes of your paper, section 8 of your paper should simply list all of the sources<sup>3</sup> that you consulted during your study of the text. When appropriate, footnote sources that you use for each section.**

9. Identify appropriate lines of application.
  - A. What is time bound vs. timeless, what is cultural vs. supracultural, what is Israel-specific vs. Church-oriented vs. generic to human beings, etc.
  - B. Focus on transferable principles which are extractable from the meaning of the passage.
  - C. Note that not every passage should be transferred to our contemporary situation in terms of “what should we do” but may be more of “what should we realize more fully about God/His ways, etc.” (the fact that all Scripture is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness should

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<sup>2</sup> Section 7 should be 1-2 “beefy” paragraphs that are full of info. Think encyclopedic paragraphs. Section seven is the main point or thrust of your paper.

<sup>3</sup> Author, title, publishing city, publisher, date, and page #.

relieve us from the pressure of forcing contemporary applications from every passage).

**For purposes of your paper, section 9 should be ~1 paragraph long.**

Paper Guidelines:

1. Papers should be typed, 10-12 point font, and line spacing should be 1.5.
2. Each paragraph is to be at the minimum 5-6 sentences long.
3. Do your own work on these papers. Study groups and sharing of info is not permitted.
4. Each paper should be a minimum of 2 pages in length, but should not exceed 3 pages.
5. Do not use a cover page. Just type your name in the upper right hand corner and use the text as a title. Your title should be centered and typed in bold at the top of the first page, immediately after your name (ex. of title: **Genesis 12:1-9**).
6. Organize the sections of your paper along the outline of this handout. You are to do all 9 steps, but only steps 3-9 should appear on this paper. It is OK to type up the paper in outline form (keeping in mind that you must still give me proper 5-6+ sentence paragraphs).
7. You do not need a formal bibliography as you will have accomplished that in step 8.
8. **Special Note:** For paper #6, the New Testament use of the Old Testament, you will only use the following 3 sections. 1.) the meaning of the OT passage in its context, 2.) the meaning of the NT passage in its context, 3.) the use of the OT passage by the NT passage. One page per section will be fine.