

Session 1: God's Story

The Bible is a collection of books that tell many stories, and yet one story. In this first session, we will think about the overarching narrative of the Bible, and consider the task of exegesis.

Session 1: God's Story



What is the Bible?

	Narrative	Law	Wisdom	Poetry	Prophecy	Apocalyptic	Gospel	Epistle
OT	Genesis, first half of Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah	Second half of Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes	Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	Daniel		
NT	Acts					Revelation	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude

Narrative - 502 chapters, 43% (historical accounts, parables, biographies)

Poetry - 387 chapters, 33% (songs, wisdom literature, some of the prophets)

Prose Discourse - 300 chapters, 24% (speeches and letters)

Session 1: God's Story



What is the Bible?

Christian Old Testament
Penteteuch
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
History
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
Poetry
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
Prophets
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

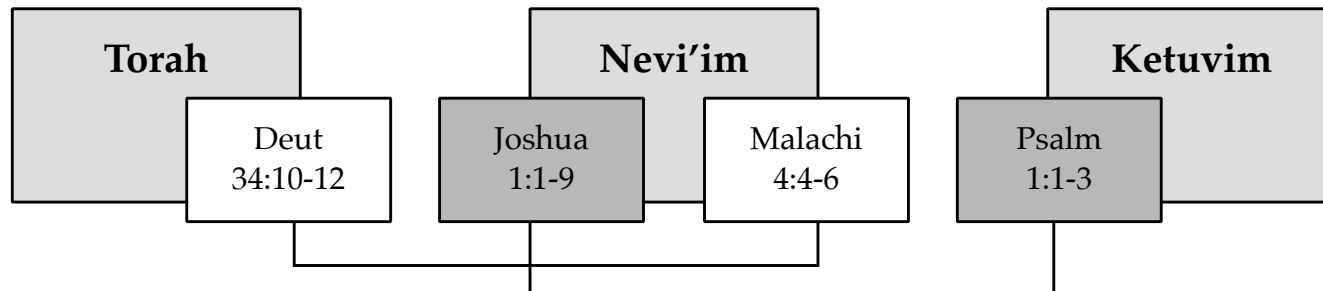
Hebrew Bible (TaNaK)
Torah
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Nevi'im (The Prophets)
Former prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
The Twelve: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
Ketuvim (The Writings)
Psalms, Job, Proverbs, [Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther], Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

‘Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself... “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”’ (Luke 24:27, 44)

Session 1: God's Story



The Structure of the TaNaK



‘Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.’
(Deut 34:10-12)

‘Moses my servant is dead... I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you... Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.’
(Joshua 1:1-9)

“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”
(Malachi 4:4-6)

‘Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - whatever they do prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)

Session 1: God's Story

Christ in all Scripture



Photomosaic of Louis Armstrong, created by Robert Silvers

(Illustration from Tim Mackie, *The Bible Project*)

Session 1: God's Story

Question for discussion:

The Bible is an ancient collection of texts, and reading it is like taking a journey to a foreign land. A good traveller will just not assume that everything will be familiar to them, but will make preparations before travelling. Imagine you were about to make a journey to a foreign land, what information would you need before you go, and what might you need to take with you? How might that metaphor apply to our reading of Scripture?



Session 1: God's Story



Exegesis: God's Word to Them

Context	
Historical Context	Literary Context
- Who - Author and Recipient(s). What is their relationship? - What - What's written? How's it structured? What's the tone? - Why - What was the purpose of it being written? - Where - Author and Recipient. - When - When was it written?	- What is the genre? - What is the surrounding context? - Immediate Context - Rest of the section - Rest of the book - Rest of the author's work - Rest of the Bible

Content		
Things to look for in sentences	Things to look for in paragraphs	Things to look for in discourses
- Repeated words - Contrasts and Comparisons - Lists - Cause and Effect - Figures of Speech - Conjunctions (but, and, for, therefore...) - Verbs - Pronouns	- General and specific details - Questions and answers - Dialogue - Purpose statements - Means by which things are accomplished - Conditional clauses - Actions / roles of people, or God - Emotional terms	- Connections between paragraphs and episodes - Story shifts. Breaks and pivots - Juxtaposition and interchange - Chiasm (a, b, c, d, c', b', a')

Goal of exegesis: Summarise the passage in a sentence (past tense)

Session 1: God's Story



Things to bear in mind when approaching different genres.

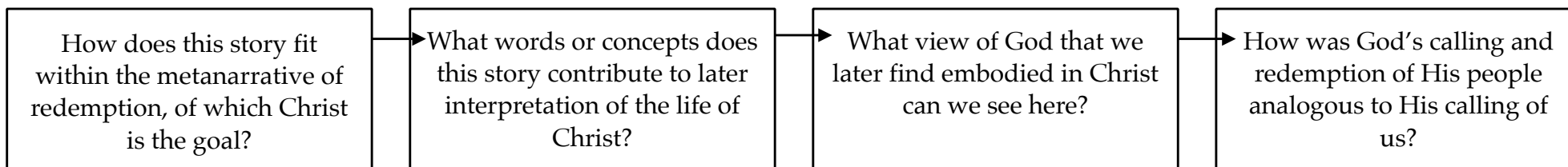
Narrative	Law	Wisdom	Poetry	Prophecy	Apocalyptic	Gospel	Epistle
Purposeful stories. Consider the following: Plot Setting Characters Narrator Dramatic Tools	Law vs Laws Apodictic and Casuistic? Reveals something of God's character Grace gift (John 1:16-17) Prophetic (Matt 11:13)	Wisdom is the ability to make godly choices in life. Sayings must not be extracted from their context. Not hard and fast guarantees, but general rules Proverbs are typically: Practical Parabolic Pithy	Addressed to the mind, through the heart. Look for poetic devices such as metaphor. Occasional Purposeful There are different types of Psalm: Lament Thanksgiving Praise Salvation-history Celebration Wisdom Songs of Trust	Prophets called God's people back to Him. Covenant enforcement. <2% is Messianic <5% describe the New-Covenant age <1% is about events yet to come	<i>Apokalupsis</i> = disclosure Literary prophecy - an intricate art form Symbolic: Numbers: 3, 4, 7, 10, 12, 1000 Allusions to places or people Images and metaphors: throne, crown, mountain, horn	Narrative, but with other elements: sayings, teachings Non-exhaustive. Written for particular communities and needs.	Occasional Part of ongoing dialogue: in person, or letter Designed to be read in one go Look for clues about: Author Recipients Date, time, purpose. Divisions

Session 1: God's Story



Christ in all Scripture

1	Metanarrative: The whole universal plan of God. The story of redemption					
	Creation		Fall		Redemption	Restoration
2	Election: God choosing and redeeming a people for His name					
	Old Covenant				New Covenant	
	Creation	Abraham	Exodus	Promised Land	etc...	
3	Micronarratives: The smaller stories that make up the bigger narratives					
	Compound Narrative: Abraham Story				Etc...	
	Call	In Egypt	Lot	Covenant	etc...	Etc...



Session 2: Our Story

How should God's story shape our story? In this second session, we will consider what we mean by 'the authority of Scripture' and look at some of the tools required to apply God's word to our lives.

Session 2: Our Story



How does God's story shape our story?

'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' (2 Tim 3:16-17)

'Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.' (Matt 7:24)

Question: What do we mean by the Authority of Scripture?

God's Story			
ACT I: Creation	ACT II: Fall	ACT III: Israel	ACT IV: Jesus

'The NT would form the first scene in the fifth act, giving hints as well of how the play is supposed to end. The church would live under the 'authority' of the extant story, being required to offer something between an improvisation and an actual performance of the final act.' (N.T. Wright)

Do you practice the following at your church?			
Teach that murder is wrong	Y/N	Wash one another's feet	Y/N
Offer animal sacrifices	Y/N	Celebrate communion	Y/N
Practice circumcision	Y/N	Encourage people to lift hands in worship	Y/N
Forbid women to have elaborate hairstyles or wear jewellery and fine clothes	Y/N	Greet one another with a holy kiss	Y/N

Biblical and Systematic Theology

Biblical Theology:

Traces the unfolding history of God's revelation to and redemption of His people.

Organised historically: How did people understand God and His work *at this point* of Salvation History?

Perhaps has a greater appreciation for the diversity of Scripture and themes that are distinctive to a particular book, or author.

Systematic Theology:

Synthesises and summarises what the Bible as a whole teaches about topics like God, humanity, Christ, salvation, etc

Organised topically: What does the whole Bible teach about the doctrine of x?

Strongly emphasises the unity of Scripture and asks 'what is the full extent of truth we can know about this doctrine'

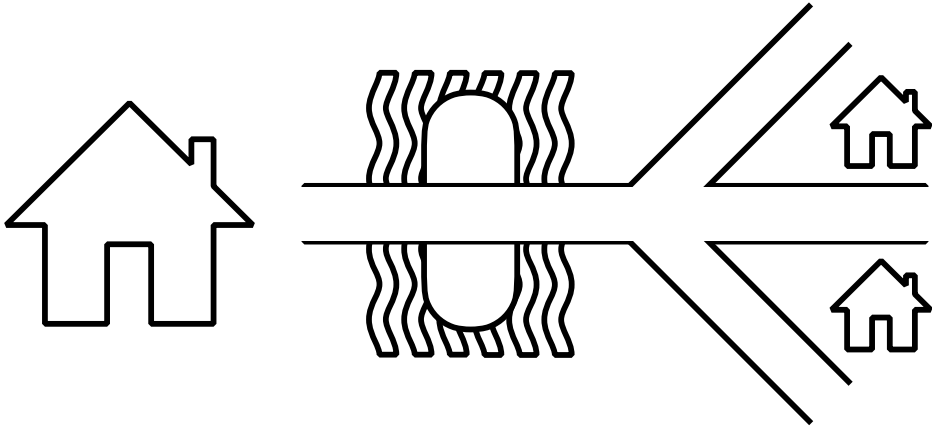
'At their best, biblical theology and systematic theology interact and help to deepen one another. Systematic theology provides doctrines of God's sovereignty, of revelation, of God's purposes, and of the meaning of history that supply a sound framework of assumptions for the work of biblical theology.

Biblical theology at its best deepens the appreciation that systematic theology should have for the way in which, in interpreting individual texts and in uncovering their relation to a whole topic, the context of texts within the history of redemption colours the interpretation.

Biblical theology may also bring to light new themes that can be the starting point for systematic-theological explorations into new topics that can receive fuller attention. For instance, the theme of life and death as it develops in the course of the history of revelation can become the starting point for discussing ethical questions about modern medicine and the issue of euthanasia' (Vern Poythress)

Google Earth vs Tube Map (Matthew Hosier)

The Interpretive Journey



Adapted from
Grasping God's Word
by Duvall and Hays.

<u>Step 1</u> Grasp the text in their world. What did it mean to the original audience?	<u>Step 2</u> Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?	<u>Step 3a</u> Cross the principalising bridge. What is the theological principle in this text?	<u>Step 3b (for OT texts)</u> Cross into the New Testament. Does the NT teaching modify or qualify this principle? If so, how?	<u>Step 4</u> Grasp the text in our world. How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle?
<u>Exegesis</u> God's word to <i>them</i> Careful study to discover original intended meaning. Asking the right questions, to do with the context and the content.	<u>Hermeneutics</u> God's word to <i>us</i> Broadly, hermeneutics has to do with the whole field of interpretation. More narrowly, it is to do with seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. Good hermeneutics needs to be controlled by good exegesis. A text cannot mean what it never meant. When we share comparable particulars with the first hearers, God's word to us is the same as His word to them			

Session 2: Our Story



The Interpretive Journey, summarised.

Exegesis (God’s word to them)		Hermeneutics (God’s word to us)		
Step 1: Grasp the text in their world		Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross	Step 3: Cross the Principalising Bridge	Step 4: Grasp the text in our world
Context	Content	What are the differences between our worlds?	What theological principles bridge the gap?	How can I apply the principles in my world?
- Historical Context: Who, what, why, where, when? - Literary Context: What is the genre? What is the context of the passage in its section, book, author’s work, all of Scripture?	- What do I notice about the sentence, paragraph, discourse? - What is the author saying? - Why is he saying it in this way?	- Culture - Language - Time - Situation - Covenant / place in Redemptive History - How big is the gap?	- What are the similarities between the worlds? - Principles should be present in the passage, timeless, not culturally bound, consistent with the rest of Scripture	- How did the principles address the original situation? List key elements. - Find parallel situations that contain all of those key elements. - What would it look like to apply the principles in these parallel situations? Be specific, think about <i>how</i> as well as <i>what</i>.
Use a mixture of internal evidence and external sources (commentaries, study Bibles etc)			Write out the principle(s). (Present tense)	
Summarise the passage in a sentence (past tense)				



Crossing the Bridge

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)			
What was God’s word to them?	How wide is the river to cross?	What principle bridges the gap?	How can I apply the principle?

Washing Feet (John 13:1-17)			
What was God’s word to them?	How wide is the river to cross?	What principle bridges the gap?	How can I apply the principle?

Session 2: Our Story



Crossing the Bridge

The Holy Kiss (2 Cor 13:11-14)			
What was God's word to them?	How wide is the river to cross?	What principle bridges the gap?	How can I apply the principle?

Hairstyles, jewellery and fine clothes (1 Peter 3:1-6)			
What was God's word to them?	How wide is the river to cross?	What principle bridges the gap?	How can I apply the principle?

Recommended resources



A selection of books and videos to help you engage with the Bible

General Resources

- [How to Read the Bible for all its Worth - Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart](#)
- [Grasping God's Word - J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays](#)
- [The Bible Project](#) videos and resources
- [The Epic of Eden - Sanda Richter](#) is a brilliant introduction to the Old Testament. Short, clear, accessible and highly recommended.

Commentaries

Choosing a good commentary can be tricky, but [bestcommentaries.com](#) is a great place to look for reviews and recommendations. If you want to study a book in depth you may want to choose a selection of commentaries; some technical and some more devotional. But if you want to read in a devotional way, then a lighter, less technical commentary might be best. Here are some general recommendations:

- The [Tyndale](#) and [Bible Speaks Today](#) series are generally reliable and fairly accessible, though not as in depth as you may like.
- [The New International Commentary on the Old Testament](#) (NICOT) and [New International Commentary on the New Testament](#) (NICNT) series are more in depth, but also more technical.
- The [Word Biblical Commentary](#) series is *very* technical. Full of Greek/Hebrew. Only recommended if you want something *really* detailed!
- The [Pillar New Testament Commentary](#) series and [Apollos Old Testament Commentary](#) series are great. They are towards the technical end of the spectrum, but strike a good balance between being in-depth and accessible.
- Tom Wright's [For Everyone](#) series are great little commentaries on the New Testament. They are more devotional, and not very in depth, but are great for helping with personal reflection. John Goldingay has written an [Old Testament for Everyone](#) series, which is similar in style and feel.

Recommended exercises



Pick one of the following exercises for your own personal study

Do you find the idea of Scripture being acts 1-4 of a 5 act play helpful? How might it affect your approach to reading the Bible? (1,000 words)

- - - - -

Using the table below, take one of the following passages through the interpretive journey:

- The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23)*
- Jesus’ teaching about worry (Matthew 6:25-34)*
- Paul’s instructions about head coverings (1 Cor 11:1-16)*

What was God’s word to the original hearers?	How wide is the river to cross?	What principle bridges the gap?	How can I apply the principle in my world?