Exegetical Methods/ Hermeneutics

Observation

The Interpretive Journey

- 1st Step: Observation
  - Things to look for in sentences
  - Things to look for in paragraph
  - Things to look for in discourses/chapters/book

Sentences

- Repetition of words – look for words and phrases that repeat.
  - 1 John 2:15-17
  - 2 Cor 1:3-7
    - Is comfort being used in every sentence?
    - How many times it is being used as noun and verb?
    - Is comfort used the same way?
    - What are the modifiers for comfort?
    - Who is being comforted? Who comforts?

Sentences

- Contrasts – look for ideas, individuals, and/or items that are contrasted with each other. Look for differences.
  - Prov 14:31
  - Rom 6:23
  - 1 John 1:5-7

Sentences

- Comparison – look for ideas, individuals, and/or items that are compared with each other. Look also for similarities.
  - Prov 25:26
  - James 3:3-6
  - Isaiah 40:31

Sentences

- Lists – anytime the text mentions more than two items, identify them as a list.
  - Gal 5:22-23
  - Gal 5:19-21

Sentences

- Cause and Effect – look for cause-and-effect relationships.
  - Prov 15:1
  - John 3:16

Sentences

- Figures of Speech – identify expressions that convey an image, using words in a sense other than the normal literal sense.
  - Images in which words are used in a sense other than the normal literal sense.
  - Psalm 119:105
  - Matt 23:27
  - Jude 12-13

Sentences

- Conjunctions – notice terms that joint units, like “and,” “but,” “for,” “since”, “because”, etc.
- Hebrews 12:1
- Romans 12:1-2

Sentences

- Verbs – note whether a verb is past, present, or future; active and passive; and the like.
  - Kinds of verbs – past, present, future
  - Progressive idea – 1 Tim 6:9
  - Imperative – Eph 4:2-3
  - Active or passive - Col 3:1
  - Divine passive – Eph 1:11

Sentences

- Pronouns – identify the antecedent for each pronoun.
  - Who is/are the antecedent?
  - Singular or plural?
  - Eph 1:3

Paragraphs

- General and Specific – Note if a paragraph starts with a general statement and moves on to a specific statement.
  - Start a paragraph with a general statement and move on to specific
    - Eph 1:3-14
  - Can also be reversed, from specific to general
    - 1 Cor 13

Paragraphs

- Questions and answers – note if the text is built on a –question-and-answer format.
  - Rhetorical questions – Rom 6:1-2
  - Mark 2:1-3:6 – 5 episodes revolves around question and answer
    - Mark 2:7; 10
    - Mark 2:16; 17b
    - Mark 2:18; 2:19
    - Mark 2:24; 25, 27b
    - Mark 3:4

Paragraphs

- Dialogue – note if the text include dialogue. Identify who is speaking and to whom.
  - Who are speaking? What is the context, Who are the audience/participants? Is the dialogue an argument? Friendly conversation? Lecture/ teaching/
  - John 3 – Jesus and Nicodemus
  - John 4 – Jesus and Samaritan

Paragraphs

- Purpose statement – note sentence that describes the reason, result, or the consequences of some actions.
  - Deut 6:3
  - John 3:16

Paragraphs

- Means by which something is accomplished – note if a sentence indicates that something was done by means of someone/something.
  - Ps 119:9
  - Rom 8:13

Paragraphs

- Conditional clauses – a clause can present the condition by which some action or consequence will result.
  - Note the 'if' and 'then'.
  - 1 John 1:6
  - 2 Cor 5:17
  - Deut 28:1

Paragraphs

- Actions/Roles of people and actions/ roles of God – identify actions or roles that the text ascribes to God or people.
  - Eph 5:1-2

Paragraphs

- Emotional terms – Note all terms that expresses emotion.
  - Gal 4:12-16
  - Jer 3:19-20

Paragraphs

- Tone – what is the overall tone of the passage?
  - Compare Col 3:1-4 and Gal 3:1-4
  - Matt 23:33-35

Discourses/Chapters/Book

- Connections between paragraphs and episodes – How does the passage connect to the ones precedes it and the one that follows it?
  - John 9
  - 9:2 – disciples: "who sin?"
  - 9:8; 10; 12 – neighbours: "isn't this the beggar?"
  - 9:15; 16; 17; 19; 24; 26 – Pharisees
  - 9:35 – Jesus
  - note also the progression of the unbelief of the Pharisees and attitude toward Jesus

Discourses/Chapters/Book

- Story shifts – Is the passage being used as a key to understanding a dramatic shift in the story?
  - major breaks and pivots
  - Eph 1-3 and 4-6
  - Rom 1-8; 9-11; 12-15; 16

Discourses/Chapters/Book

- Interchange – does the passage shift back and forth between two scenes or characters?
  - Mark 5:21-43 – sandwich method

Discourses/Chapters/Book

- Mark 14:1-11

14:1-2: The Chief Priests plot the removal of Jesus

14:3-9: A Woman anoints Jesus

14:10-11: Judas provides the answer to the Chief Priests for removing Jesus

Discourses/Chapters/Book

– Acts 1-8 – Peter; Acts 9-28 - Paul

Exercise

- Find a minimum of 50 Observations:
  – Acts 1:8
  – Romans 12:1-2
  – Matthew 28:18-20
  – John 3:16
  – Phil 3:4-11