

# Agros: Find, Train, Support Hermeneutics Workshop Session 1 “The Interpretive Journey”

---

## What hermeneutics is not:

a replacement for \_\_\_\_\_,

a replacement for \_\_\_\_\_,

or a necessity for \_\_\_\_\_.

## Why study hermeneutics

1. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Matt. 4:19-20)

To avoid the \_\_\_\_\_ approach

2. And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ graves, that I may rebuild it.” (Neh. 2:5)

To avoid the \_\_\_\_\_ approach

3. “I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. Then I said, ‘What are these, my lord?’ The angel who talked with me said to me, ‘I will show you what they are.’ So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, ‘These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.’ And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, ‘We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.’ (Zech. 1:8-11)

To avoid the \_\_\_\_\_ approach

## The basic steps of the journey in hermeneutics

1. Grasping the text in their town
2. Measuring the width of the river to cross
3. Crossing the principlizing bridge
4. Consulting the biblical map
5. Grasping the text in our town

## An example: Joshua 1:1-9

Open your Bibles to Joshua 1:1-9. Have a member of your group read the passage out loud, and then discuss your way through each of the five steps of the journey.

---

**Step 1)** Grasping the text in their town: what did the text mean to the biblical audience?

- Make observations
  - What are repeated words or ideas?
  - What was happening in history?
  - What was happening in the biblical story?
- Synthesize the meaning of the passage for them in one or two sentences
  - Hint: use past tense verbs and refer to the biblical audience in your summary
  - \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

**Step 2)** Measuring the width of the river to cross: what are the differences between us?

- List specific differences that could be relevant to our interpretation of the passage (culture, language, situation, covenant)

**Step 3)** Crossing the principlizing bridge: what is the theological principle in this text?

- Identify similarities between your audience and the biblical audience
- Synthesize the meaning of the passage as a general theological principle
  - It should use present tense verbs and should be reflected in the text
  - It should not include differences between us and them, not tied to a specific time, situation, or culture (unlike step 1)
  - It should account for similarities between us and them, being applicable to both
  - \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

**Step 4)** Consulting the biblical map: does our theological principle fit with the whole Bible?

- Write down any verses that support this theological principle
- Write down any verses that might apparently contradict this theological principle

**Step 5)** Grasping the text in our town: how should we live out the theological principles today?

- Our theological principles should be similar, but our applications should have variety
- Write down one way that this theological principle could be applied to...
  - An exhausted farmer in the middle of a busy planting season
  - A single mom who is discouraged by her lack of spiritual growth
  - A high school graduate wanting to know what God's will for his life is

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 2 “How to Read the Book—Sentences”

---

#### **1. Repetition of words**

- How many times is the word repeated in this sentence?
- How many times is this word repeated in the wider context?
- Does the repeated word always serve the same function?
- Does the repeated word utilize the same meaning each time it occurs?

#### **2. Contrast**

- What word signals the contrast?
- What ideas, people, or items are being contrasted?
- What differences are being pointed out?

#### **3. Comparisons**

- What ideas, people, or items are being compared?
- What similarities are being pointed out?

#### **4. Lists**

- How many items are in the list?
- What items are in the list?
- Is there any significance to how the items are organized into groups or a specific order?

#### **5. Cause and Effect**

- Does the cause have one effect or more than one?
- Which one is the cause and which one is the effect?

#### **6. Figures of Speech**

- What word or phrase is being used in a sense other than its normal, literal sense?
- What does the figure of speech add that a literal statement would not have?

#### **7. Conjunctions**

- What function does the conjunction serve? (Connecting: and; Contrasting: but; Concluding: therefore, so; Causing: for, because, since)

#### **8. Verbs**

- What is the tense of the verb? (present, past, future, perfect)
- What is the voice of the verb? (active, passive)
- Is the verb an imperative?
- Who is the subject of the verb?
- Does the verb have a direct object or an indirect object?

#### **9. Pronouns**

- What is the antecedent of the pronoun?
- Is the pronoun personal or possessive?
- What is the person (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>) and number (singular or plural) of the pronoun?

### **Practice identifying these kinds of observations**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), read the following verses and write down what kind of observations they are examples of.

---

1 Peter 1:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 119:105 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 15:1 \_\_\_\_\_ Romans 6:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 25:26 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 Timothy 1:8-11 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Practice with 1 John 1:5-7**

Now, working with a different member in your group (or two if necessary), make notations of at least 30 observations on the sentences below. Use all nine kinds of observations.

---

“This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him

is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie

and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship

with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Practice the journey. For time’s sake, we will assume step 2. Guided by the observations you’ve made, work with your whole group to write out the theological principle in one or two sentences. Refer to step 3 on your first handout for help.

---

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 3 “How to Read the Book—Paragraphs”

---

#### **1. General Statement with Specific Examples**

What is the overview/summary/general statement?

What are the specifics that support the general statement?

#### **2. Questions and Answers**

Is the question rhetorical?

Who asked the question?

Was the question answered?

#### **3. Dialogue**

Who are the participants?

What is the setting? Public or private?

What is the spirit of the dialogue (argument, lecture, discussion)?

What is the objective of the dialogue?

#### **4. Purpose/Result Statements**

Key words that signify these statements: that, so that, in order that, or an infinitive verb

#### **5. Means**

These statements answer the question: how was something accomplished?

Who or what accomplished the action, result, or purpose?

#### **6. Conditional Clauses**

What is the conditional clause (if)?

What is the result clause (then)?

#### **7. The Actions/Roles of People and the Actions/Roles of God**

What is the relationship between the action/role of God and the action/role of people?

#### **8. Emotional Terms**

What words have emotional overtones?

What words are relational?

#### **9. Tone**

What is the overall tone of this paragraph (warning, encouraging, triumphant, sorrowful)?

### **Practice identifying these kinds of observations**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), read the following paragraphs and write down what kind of observations they are examples of.

---

Eph. 5:15-21 \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 7:41-50 \_\_\_\_\_

John 4:7-15 \_\_\_\_\_ Deut. 6:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Psa. 119:9 \_\_\_\_\_ Phil. 2:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 2:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_ Lam. 3:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Practice with 1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), first make at least 20 sentence-level observations, then make 10 paragraph-level observations.

---

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Practice the journey. For time’s sake, we will assume step 2. Guided by the observations you’ve made, work with your whole group to write out the theological principle in one or two sentences. Refer to step 3 on your first handout for help.

---

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 3 - Additional Practice Sheet

---

#### **Practice with Matthew 6:25-34**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), make as many observations as you can, and the finish by writing the theological principle in one or two sentences.

---

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

## **Practice with 1 Corinthians 15:50-58**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), make as many observations as you can, and the finish by writing the theological principle in one or two sentences.

---

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.



Agros: Find, Train, Support  
Hermeneutics Workshop  
Session 4 “How to Read the Book—Discourses”

---

**A discourse is a unit of connected text that is larger than a paragraph. It is also called a story, pericope, episode, unit of thought, or chapter.**

**1. Connections between paragraphs and episodes**

Look for repeated words and themes that link one paragraph to another  
Identify logical connections between paragraphs (for example: cause-and effect)  
Note and classify conjunctions between paragraphs (see session 2 handout)  
Pay attention to time sequence in narratives.

**2. Story shifts: major breaks and pivots**

Major breaks occur in letters and pivots occur in narratives  
Major breaks are often signaled by verbs or a change in topic  
Pivots are often signaled by important choices or a change in time/location

**3. Interchange**

This occurs when two stories are compared and contrasted to develop the overall story  
Pay attention when the narrator flows effortlessly between telling two stories  
Stories organized this way are meant to interpret one another

**4. Chiasm**

Search for repeated words (esp. Hebrew), similar ideas, or contrasting ideas  
Does the end of the discourse parallel the beginning of the discourse?  
Do parallel items fall into a reversed order?  
Is there a center to the chiasm which contains the central idea?

**5. Inclusio**

This occurs when a discourse has a similar word or concept at the beginning and end  
Remember that inclusios may span several chapters

**Practice identifying these kinds of observations**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), skim through the following discourses and write down what kind of observations they are examples of.

---

Dan. 3-4 \_\_\_\_\_ Gen. 38-39 \_\_\_\_\_

Col. 1:3-14 \_\_\_\_\_ Psa. 76:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 1:1; 15:39 \_\_\_\_\_ Hebrews 11 \_\_\_\_\_

## **Practice with 2 John**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), first make at least 20 sentence-level observations, then make 10 paragraph-level observations. Finish by writing the theological principle.

---

The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

Working with a different member in your group (or two if necessary), do the same as above.

---

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister greet you.

Now make discourse-level observations between these paragraphs.

---

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 4 - Additional Practice Sheet

---

#### **Practice with Mark 8:14-30**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), first make at least 20 sentence-level observations, then make 10 paragraph-level observations. Finish by writing the theological principle.

---

Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” They said to him, “Twelve.” “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?” And they said to him, “Seven.” And he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

Working with a different member of your group (or two if necessary), do the same as above.

And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Working with a different member of your group (or two if necessary), do the same as above.

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Now make discourse-level observations between all three paragraphs.

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 5 “New Testament Letters”

---

#### **A characteristic of NT Letters: situational**

Be careful not to conclude \_\_\_\_\_ from just one letter.

Work to understand the \_\_\_\_\_ being addressed.

#### **The structure of NT Letters: introduction, body, conclusion**

The introduction often includes a prayer of gratitude that introduces themes that will be developed later.

The body of each letter differs significantly, because the specific situations of each original audience are different.

The conclusion contains a variety of elements, but most of them include a grace benediction.

#### **Unique elements of the interpretive journey for NT letters**

##### **Step 1) Grasping the text in their town**

- Read to discover the *historical situation* of the letter
  - Questions about the author: Who was he? What was his background? When did he write? What was the nature of his ministry? What was their relationship? Why did he write (look especially in the introduction and conclusion for this)?
  - Questions about the audience: Who were they? What circumstances are mentioned? How was their relationship with God, the author, and each other? What was happening at the time the letter was written?
- Read to discover the *literary outline* of the letter
  - Using the methods from sessions 1-4, make observations and write summaries
  - Organize the summaries into a list to create an outline of the letter

##### **Step 2) Measure the width of the river to cross**

- For NT letters, the width is relatively narrow (few differences between us)

##### **Step 3) Cross the principlizing bridge**

- In NT letters, the author often states the theological principle

##### **Step 4) Consult the biblical map**

##### **Step 5) Grasp the text in our town**

## **Practice identifying the historical situation of Galatians**

Remember that NT letters have specific *historical situations* to address. Trying to understand these can help us resolve some interpretation challenges. Working with your whole group, work through the following questions related to the first step of the interpretive journey.

---

What is Paul's relationship with the Galatian church? See Galatians 4:12-16.

What situation caused Paul to write to the Galatian church? See Galatians 1:6-9.

How does the Galatians' situation impact Paul's tone? See Galatians 3:1; 4:20; 5:12.

Who caused this situation to come about? See Galatians 2:11-12.

How would you describe the false teaching that Paul is likely responding to? See Galatians 5:1-6.

Paul gives a long explanation of how he received his gospel from God and not from men (Gal. 1:11-2:14). What circumstances in the Galatian church likely led him to write this portion?

How does the Galatians' situation explain the long doctrinal instructions (Gal. 1:6-5:12), but the brief moral instructions (Gal. 5:13-6:10)?

How does the historical situation help us explain the seeming contradiction between Paul's statement in Galatians 2:16 and James' statement in James 2:20-24?

### **Practice identifying the literary outline of 3 John**

An important part of interpreting NT letters is their *literary outline*. Most letters have a strong, logical flow of thought. Understanding that logical relationship between your passage and the surrounding paragraphs can help resolve some interpretation challenges. Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), begin by making observations of 3 John, dividing it into sections, and writing summaries of each section.

---

1 The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. 2 Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. 5 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, 6 who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. 7 For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. 8 Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth. 9 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. 10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church. 11 Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God. 12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself. We also add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true. 13 I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink. 14 I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face. 15 Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends, each by name.

Write your summary theological principles of 3 John below this line. Place the verses that are included in that section in parentheses after the principle. For example, the first summary could look like: Christian love and joy comes from other Christians' faithfulness to the truth (vv. 1-4).

---

With your group, discuss and write out the relationship or connection *between* each of your summary theological principles for 3 John. For example, if you divided this letter into five sections, then you should describe four different relationships (How does the first and second section relate? Second and third? Etc.) Refer to the handouts from sessions 2-4 for help.

---

Understanding the literary outline or the flow of thought in a letter can help us resolve some interpretation challenges. Discuss and write responses to the following interpretations, trying to show how they mistake the flow of thought in the letter. Does it fail to recognize the connection with the previous section? Does it fail to consider more developed explanations in following sections?

---

The greatest joy in life comes to parents who have kids that become faithful Christians (v. 4).

You should only support ministries that advance the truth but don't care about love (v. 8).

It is "wicked nonsense" to ever "put someone out of the church" (v. 10).

Gaius (v. 1) should "put himself first" more often like Diotrephes (v. 9) to get stuff done.



# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 6 “Gospels”

---

#### **A characteristic of the Gospels: stories with theological agendas**

Differences from the modern biography’s purely historical agenda:

- The Gospels do not cover the entire life of Jesus.
- The Gospels arrange events topically more than chronologically.
- The Gospels devote a large section to Jesus’s death.

#### **Two main interpretive questions to ask**

- 1) What is this single episode telling us about Jesus?
- 2) What is the gospel writer trying to communicate to his readers by the way he connected multiple episodes together?

#### **Observations to make in individual stories**

- Make observations of: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- Look for interpretive instructions from the author.
- Take special note of anything that is repeated, even chapters apart.
- Be alert for and pay special attention to places where the story shifts to direct discourse.

#### **Observations to make of a series of stories**

- Look for connections between the stories and ask how they relate to one another
- Some possible connections: common themes or patterns, logical connections, transitions, conjunctions

#### **Special literary forms to be aware of in the Gospels**

- Exaggeration: overstating a truth for the sake of effect (e.g. Matt. 5:29-30)
- Metaphor and simile: non-literal comparisons that often evoke emotional responses
- Narrative irony: contrasting the reader’s expectations of the story with what actually happens
- Rhetorical questions: questions that make a point rather than seek an answer
- Parables: a story whose details represent something in reality
  - Look for one main point for each main character or group of characters, and make sure the points could have been understood by Jesus’s original audience

## **Practice with Mark 8:22-26**

Remember that the Gospels have theological agendas, which means that we are expected to look for significance in each story, and how that story connects to the other surrounding stories.

Working with the whole class, work through the following questions related to this passage.

Read Mark 8:22-26 out loud. Discuss the first interpretive question: What is this single episode telling us about Jesus? Share any possible interpretations (even if you wouldn't agree with them).

Let's see if the previous episode is connected to this episode. Read Mark 8:14-21 out loud. Is this direct discourse or a story? What does that mean? What concept is repeated in this episode that occurred in our main passage? What kind of connection does that make with our main passage? What does Jesus expect of them?

What stories did Jesus refer to in Mark 8:14-21? Where do those stories occur in Mark? Is the first story followed by a discourse or point that relates to our main passage? (Hint: there are two)

What are the common themes in this series of episodes? How do the healings in 7:31-37 and our main passage relate to those themes?

Is there a story or discourse after our main passage that connects to this series of episodes?

How would you interpret Mark 8:22-26 based on its connection with this series of stories?

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 7 “Old Testament Poetry”

---

#### **The poetry of the Old Testament focuses on our emotional response to God**

It teaches us the process of \_\_\_\_\_ our emotions with truth.

At times, this process includes expressing the author’s wrong beliefs about God to God.

#### **Structural elements of OT poetry**

These structures can help us identify intentionality in the author that we might not recognize. Slowing down to identify these structures can help us make stronger observations in the first step of the interpretive journey.

Parallelism: when two lines of poetry are used to convey one single thought

- Synonymous parallelism: the two lines use similar words and have similar meanings
- Developmental parallelism: the second line develops or expands the idea in the first line
- Illustrative parallelism: the second line gives an example of the idea in the first line
- Contrastive parallelism: the second line is contrasted with the first line

Acrostics: when each successive line starts with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet

#### **Figurative imagery of OT poetry**

These ten varieties of imagery help us identify the author’s emotional intentions in the passage. Slowing down to recognize the imagery can help us make stronger observations in the first step of the interpretive journey.

- Simile: uses “like” or “as” to draw a comparison
- Metaphor: draws a comparison directly without using any words to signal it
- Hyperbole: consciously exaggerates for the sake of dramatic effect
- Personification: attributes human features to nonhuman things
- Anthropomorphism: attributes human features to God
- Zoomorphism: attributes animal features to God
- Representation: represents something or someone with part of that thing or person
- Apostrophe: addresses a person as though they are present when they are not
- Irony: says the exact opposite of what is actually meant
- Wordplays: uses multiple meanings of one word

### **Practice step 1 with Psalm 116:1-4**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), practice taking the first step of the interpretive journey with the following passage. Make observations of all of the structural elements and the figurative imagery in the passage.

---

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;

I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"

### **Practice the journey with Psalm 43**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), practice taking all five steps of the interpretive journey with the following passage. In step 1, make observations of all of the structural elements and the figurative imagery in the passage.

---

Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people,

from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me!

For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you rejected me?

Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me;

let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling!

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,

and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

# Agros: Find, Train, Support

## Hermeneutics Workshop

### Session 8 “Old Testament Prophets”

---

#### **The nature of prophetic literature**

It contains multiple genres that should be interpreted appropriately: short sermons, visions, narrative, poetry, and symbolic acts

It is composed of anthologies, which are collections of shorter, independent units that may not have strong connections with one another.

#### **Historical, cultural, and theological context of prophetic literature**

The nations of God’s people, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, are turning away from the Lord. God sends the prophets to enforce his covenant with them. Most of them prophesy during the events in 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

#### **The basic prophetic message**

- 1) Since you have broken the covenant, you must repent
- 2) If you do not repent, then God will send judgment
- 3) However, there is still hope beyond the judgment of God for the remnant of his people

#### **Unique elements of the interpretive journey for prophetic literature**

##### **Step 1)** Grasp the text in their town

- Keep the basic prophetic message in mind to categorize every passage you interpret
- Make sure you account for the extreme historical situations
- Make sure you account for the theological context of the biblical storyline

##### **Step 2)** Measure the width of the river to cross

- We are not under the old covenant like they were, so we are not facing its curses
- We are not a geopolitical nation, so we are not facing invasion

##### **Step 3)** Cross the principlizing bridge

##### **Step 4)** Consult the biblical map

- This step is especially important in prophetic literature, as the NT gives us inspired examples of how to interpret the OT prophecies for Christians
  - See if your passage has any direct cross-references in the NT
  - Try to find NT passages that support your theological principle

##### **Step 5)** Grasp the text in our town

#### **Predictive passages**

The predictions of the prophets are a mixture of a near view and a far view, possibly referring to one of three events: the return of the Jews from exile, the first coming of Christ, the second coming of Christ.

Some predictions appear conditional and many of them use poetry as their genre.

### **Practice the interpretive journey with Micah 6:6-8**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), practice the entire interpretive journey on the passage below. In step 1, see if you can find historical context from another biblical book, determine which point of the basic prophetic message this passage fits into, and whether it includes poetic or predictive elements.

---

“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you

but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

### **Practice the interpretive journey with Jeremiah 31:10-14**

Working with one other member in your group (or two if necessary), do the same as above.

---

“Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away;

say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.’

For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the  
goodness of the LORD,

over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd;

their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my  
goodness, declares the LORD.”