STUDYING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

(1) WHAT IS BIBLE EXPOSITION?

"*Bible*" – this is the Word of God. At each royal coronation in Westminster Abbey, the monarch is presented with a Bible and told "I present you with this Bible, the most valuable gift this world affords". We have been entrusted with the very Words of God to communicate in meaningful ways to the people around us. Of all the many books that have been written which are about God, this is the only book that is from God – and it is this book that each of us should strive to master in our lifetimes.

"*Exposition*" – this is the opposition of "Imposition". We want to 'expose,' uncover, discover, dig-out the perfect meaning of what God has communicated to us in the Bible's text – rather than 'impose' upon the Bible text our own limited ideas, biases and opinions. The historic-grammatical hermeneutic understands that the author's intended meaning is found in the vocabulary and historic facts expressed by the text – it is our job as interpreters to exposit that intended meaning.

(2) HOW DO WE DO BIBLE EXPOSITION?

The best way to do this is using the "Inductive" bible study method. The dictionary defines this as "collecting information and drawing conclusions from what you have observed". Every good detective works inductively: they collect information from the crime scene, they interpret it to determine its significance and identify the perpetrator, and they apply it when they act upon it to apprehend the criminal.

(1) PRAY for illumination by the Holy Spirit who gave the Word by inspiration

(2) READ, READ, READ, READ a good English translation

(3) USE COMA

- **(a) C**ONTEXT: Think about the historical context and biblical context for the passage
- **(b) O**BSERVATION: **"What does it say?"** Read, paying close attention to the actual words and ideas chosen by God in the text. Print out the text (removing the paragraphs and headings) and annotate it with all your observations and notes.
- **(c) M**EANING: **"What does it mean?"** Determine the meaning of the passage for the first hearers, by praying and meditating on what information you have gathered. Remember Scripture interprets Scripture – the less clear passages by the more clear.
- **(d) A**PPLICATION: **"How should we respond?"** Determine what implications and responses the Holy Spirit desired from the first hearers, and transfer the application to us today

(4) CHECK with a Study Bible or Commentary: Check your findings. Also look up anything that you had outstanding questions or uncertainty about.

(3) PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR DOING BIBLE EXPOSITION

- **Look carefully at the words used** (tenses, commands, descriptions, conditional statements, promises), and **note figures of speech** (similes, metaphors, anthropomorphism, allegory, irony, hyperbole)

- **Ask questions of the text:**
  - Who are the participants?
  - Where is it set?
  - When did it happen?
  - What is the focus/theme?
  - How is it argued or presented or structured?
  - Why (given the context) might it have been written?

- **Look for Repetition**
  e.g. Daniel 3:1-8

- **Identify Key Words or Themes**
  e.g. Ephesians 1:3-14

- **Look for Structure/Development of Thoughts/Argument (look for Linking Words)**
  e.g. Philippians 2:4-11
  e.g. Ephesians 2:1-10

- **Look for Contrasts or Comparisons**
  e.g. Galatians 5:16-25

- **Look at it in Context**
  e.g. look at command not to eat seafood in Leviticus (11:9-12)
  - **Passage context:** The verse's context in the passage
  - **Book context:** The passage's context in the book
  - **Testament context:** Are we in OT (promise and Old Covenant) or NT (fulfilment and New Covenant)
  - **Whole Bible context:** The book's context in the whole Bible
    - Any parallel verses adding illumination?
    - Where are we in the progressive revelation of the Bible's storyline that climaxes in the life and work of Christ: past, present, future?
      Creation -> Fall -> Abraham -> Israel -> Christ -> Us in Christ -> New Creation

- **Consider the Tone/Feel**
  e.g. Revelation 7:1-17

- **Look for Quotations/Allusions to other passages**
  e.g. Mark 15 alludes to Isaiah 53 and quotes from Psalm 22

- **Consider the Genre** (historical narrative, parable, prophetic, poetry, wisdom, epistles, apocalyptic)
  e.g. Genesis 1 – the story of creation is presented as history, rather than poetry or parable.

(4) WORKSHOP: PRACTISING BIBLE EXPOSITION

Read Daniel 1 and do an Inductive bible study on it, using these questions as prompts.

Observation:
- When did it happen? When does it fit into the Bible storyline?
- Where is it set?
- Who are the participants?
- How are the events presented/structured?
- What is the focus/theme?
- Why (given the context) might it have been written?

Meaning:
- Summarise the main point of the passage
- What does it teach us about God?
- What does it teach us about humans?

Application:
- How should we respond to the passage?

Daniel 1

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to
Jerusalem and besieged it. [2] And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the
vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and
placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. [3] Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch,
to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, [4] youths without
blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding
learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language
of the Chaldeans. [5] The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the
wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were
to stand before the king. [6] Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of
Judah. [7] And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he
called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego. [8] But Daniel resolved
that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he
asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. [9] And God gave Daniel favor and
compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, [10] and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I
fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in
worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the
king." [11] Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel,
Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, [12] "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat
and water to drink. [13] Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's
food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." [14] So he listened to
them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. [15] At the end of ten days it was seen that they were
better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. [16] So the steward
took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. [17] As for these four
youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding
in all visions and dreams. [18] At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should
be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. [19] And the king spoke
with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
Therefore they stood before the king. [20] And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about
which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters
that were in all his kingdom. [21] And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.