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Grasping God's Word – A Class on Hermeneutics¹ Spring 2008

**“You must examine all things with great care; hold on to the good things that past the test.”
(1 Thess. 5:21, Personal Translation)**

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE COURSE

This course is an introduction to the interpretation of the Bible, seeking to provide a historical perspective and reliable principles with which to study, interpret, and apply Scripture.

II. GOALS

After completing this course the student should be able to:

1. Recognize literary structural elements in the text.
2. Apply principles of detailed observation to a verse, a paragraph, and to longer units of text.
3. Determine word meanings within texts, and demonstrate the proper use of concordances.
4. Discuss the issue of whether or not the Bible has different levels of meaning.
5. Describe the history of our English Bible and explain the differences in modern translations.
6. Discuss the role of context and historical/cultural background in determining meaning.
7. An intangible goal, but a major goal nevertheless, is that the student will learn to enjoy personal Bible Study.

III. TEXTBOOKS

Required textbook for the course is:

Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Also a non-paraphrased translation of the Bible is required. Acceptable translations include NIV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV, and ESV. Translations not recommended are the Living Bible, the Amplified Bible, Good News for Modern Man, the Message, and other paraphrases. If you are currently looking for a good study Bible, we would recommend *The Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible*, General Editor. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

¹ The Study of Biblical Meaning

Strongly Recommended:

Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word--Workbook*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Goodrick, Edward W., and John R. Kohlenberger. *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

A great electronic Biblical Exegesis and Research tool is Bibleworks 7 which can be purchased at www.bibleworks.com.

IV. ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

General

Bruce, F.F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Frame, John. *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2006

Goldingay, John. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Kaiser, Walter C., and Moisés Silva. *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Leland, Ryken, Wilhoit, Jim C., and Longman III, Tremper. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1991.

Rasmussen, Carl G., *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.

VanHoozer, Kevin J. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

_____. *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends (Cultural Exegesis)*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007

_____. *Is There Meaning in this Text?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Old Testament

Dorsey, David A. *Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary of Genesis – Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004

Kline, Meredith G. *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006

_____. *Structure of Biblical Authority*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997

Longman, Tremper and Dillard, Raymond D. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006

Pratt, Jr. Richard. *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1993

Waltke, Bruce K. and Yu, Charles. *An Old Testament Theology: A Canonical and Thematic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

New Testament

Bruce, F.F. *Paul Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000

Gutherie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

Carson, D.A. and Moo, Douglas J. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005

Ridderbos, Herman N., *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

_____. *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1998

V. COURSE OUTLINE

Abbreviations:

GGW = *Grasping God's Word*, by Duvall and Hays

WCF = Westminster Confession of Faith which can be found at http://www.pcanet.org/general/cof_contents.htm

Lecture No.	Lecture and Discussion Topic	Reading and Assignments Due
Week 1	Introduction	
UNIT ONE—HOW TO READ THE BOOK: BASIC TOOLS		
Week 2	The Interpretive Journey	GGW, Ch. 1, Assignments 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, WCF I-V
Week 3	How to Read the Book (Sentences)	GGW, Ch. 2, Assignments 2-1, 2-3, 2-5 WCF VI-IX
Week 4	How to Read the Book (Paragraphs)	GGW, Ch. 3, Assignments 3-2, 3-4 WCF X-XV
Week 5	How to Read the Book (Discourses)	GGW, Ch. 4, Assignments 4-1, 4-2 WCF XVI-XX
UNIT TWO—CONTEXT: THEN AND NOW		
Week 6	What Do <i>We</i> Bring to the Text?	GGW, Ch. 5, Assignments 5-1 WCF XXI-XXIV
Week 7	The Historical-Cultural Context The Literary Context	GGW, Ch. 6 & 7, Assignments 6-2, 6-4, 7-2 WCF XXV-XXIX
Week 8	Word Studies Bible Translations Bring Concordance/Study Bible to class	GGW, Ch. 8 & 9, Assignments 8-1, 8-4, 9-2 WCF XXX-XXXIII
UNIT THREE—MEANING AND APPLICATION		
Week 9	Who Controls Meaning?	GGW, Ch. 10, Assignments 10-1, 10-2, 10-3
Week 10	Levels of Meaning	GGW, Ch. 11, Assignments 11-1, 11-2