

Tools to Interpret the Bible

- Various translations of the Bible
- Prayer and meditation
- Greek and Hebrew translations
- Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible
- Bible Encyclopedia
- Bible Commentaries [Womanist Theology, Feminist Theology, Black Theology, Queer Theology, etc]
- Online Journals and papers
- Maps of Ancient and present locations

Various Biblical Criticisms

- Textual Criticism - Try to reconstruct the original wording of the biblical text and establish the history of the transmission of the text.
- Historical Criticism - reconstruct the history of the transmission of the various individual traditions and tradition complexes found in the Hebrew Bible [for example, identify the geographical location, social and political influences, identify the ways in which particular themes are formulated and the role they continue to play through the course of time.
- Source Criticism - determine what written sources were used in the formation of the biblical text and determine the authorship, date, style, setting and intent of each written source.
- Rhetorical Criticism - the art of persuasion/effective communication/verbal expression (classical rhetoric). This includes investigating the relationships among language, persuasion, knowledge and social control. (New Rhetoric). Who is the audience? Who is speaking? Is it deliberative, ceremonial, and judgmental? Is the setting a political assembly, law court, religious festival? What is the argument? Is it logical? What are the emotional reactions of the audience? What is the character or credibility of the speaker?
- Narrative Criticism - text focused. Is it poetic in style? Is the story in the first person? What is the symbolism and point of view? What is the plot of the story? Who are the characters? What is the setting?
- Ideological - to expose and chart the structure and dynamics of power relations as they are expressed in language and discourse. What are the major social, political and economic structures in the society during a particular time? What kinds of power do they exhibit? How would you describe the groups in terms of race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, region, occupation, etc? Is this group dominant in society? What conflicts are the groups involved in? Who is in control in the text?

NOTE: As you read the bible keep in mind the following:

- ❖ Consider what you are bringing to the text as an interpreter

- ❖ What questions is the text itself raising for you? What do you find problematic and objectionable?
- ❖ What do you find valuable or helpful in the text?
- ❖ What do you think the text is about?
- ❖ Bring the reading into your own context
- ❖ Reflect on the ethical implications of your reading of the text.