

## WEEK 5 | CONTEXT

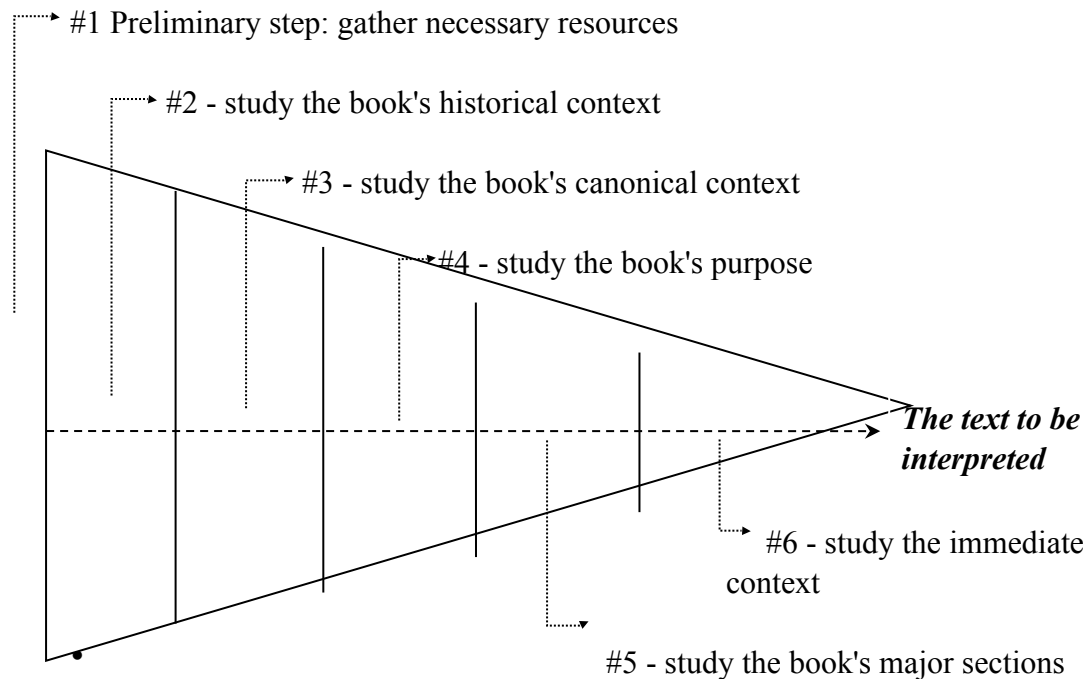
### THE HISTORICAL | The Message in Context

Last week we learned that the goal of good exegesis is to discern the meaning of the text as intended by the original, inspired author. To do this, we must seek to enter the mind of the author as best we are able. We must enter his world—his language, customs, and context—in order to truly understand what he has written and its significance. Thus, before we analyze the text itself we must set it in its context.

Order: when you're studying the context of a text, the following sequence should be followed, moving from broad to immediate context:

- *Step 1:* study the book's historical context
- *Step 2:* study the book's canonical context
- *Step 3:* study the book's central purpose
- *Step 4:* study the book's major sections
- *Step 5:* study the text's immediate context

### A ROADMAP



### ***Preliminary Step: Gather necessary resources***

- Study Bibles
- Introductory Sermons
- Old & New Testament Surveys & Introductions
- Commentaries

### ***Step 1: Study the book's historical context***

The goal of this step is to become familiar with the author, his world and his audience. The following are key questions you should ask:

- Author: Who wrote it?
- Date: When was it written?
- Place of Authorship: Where was it written?
- Original Recipients: To whom was it written?
- Historical Contents: What events are recorded in it?

What kind of context should I focus on?

- Political
- Economic
- Religious
- Judicial
- Agricultural
- Geographical
- Military
- Social
- Domestic

Where can I find this information?

- The biblical book itself
- “Introduction” sections in commentaries and study bibles
- Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias
- Old Testament and New Testament Surveys and Introductions

Gather as much information as possible to recreate the general historical background in which the book was written.

### ***Step 2: Study the book's canonical context***

In this step, seek to understand the book’s chronological placement in the biblical canon. Where does the book fit in the overall progress of revelation? What has come before it? What was written before it? What materials would the author have had access to as he was writing?

This is where the principle of antecedent revelation comes in. We would expect that antecedent (prior) revelation will impact and inform an author as he writes. At the same time, we deny that subsequent (later) revelation changes or corrects prior revelation.

### **Step 3: Study the book's central purpose or argument**

In this step, we are attempting to understand the overall purpose the author had in writing this book. The central purpose is like a thread running throughout the book and ties all the sections together.

Section	Section	Section
<b><i>Central argument:</i></b> <b>the foundation extending through all parts of the book</b>		

Reading the book closely and carefully is the most important part of this step. Why did the author write? What question was he trying to answer? What important issue was he attempting to resolve? Answering questions like this will help in determining the central purpose.

Some clues:

- See if the writer clearly sets it out himself (e.g., Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31)
- Study the exhortative sections (Epistles): how does the author apply the theology he presents? Usually, exhortations flow out of the purpose of the book.
- Note the arrangement of details (Narratives): the way the author selects and arranges historical details suggests what his overall purpose is.

Ex. Judges – the material is deliberately arranged to show that “there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.” When you read the book you see spiraling degradation, a crying out of the people, and a savior (“little” savior). This is a downward trending spiral until Israel is just like Sodom and Gomorrah.

When you can simply and succinctly summarize the book’s central purpose/argument, you know you’ve probably discovered it.

### **Step 4: Study the book's major sections**

In this step, you’ll attempt to draft a working outline of the book—a skeleton of the book’s literary structure that provides a roadmap of the argument’s flow throughout the book. This will provide a bird’s-eye-view of the book that shows where any specific text fits in the overall argument.

<i>Major sections: the weight-bearing pillars extending out of the central argument</i>	<i>Major sections: the weight-bearing pillars extending out of the central argument</i>	<i>Major sections: the weight-bearing pillars extending out of the central argument</i>
<b><i>Central argument: the foundation extending through all parts of the book</i></b>		

Examples:

*Broad Outline of Genesis:* Purpose: to give to Israel a history of beginnings.

Key word: Beginnings

- I. Primitive History (1:1-11:9)
  - A. The Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1-2:3)
  - B. The Generations of the Heavens and Earth (2:4-4:26)
  - C. The Generations of Adam (5:1-6:8)
  - D. The Generations of Noah (6:9-9:29)
  - E. The Generations of Shem, Ham, Japheth (10:1-11:9)
- II. Patriarchal History (11:10-50:26)
  - A. The Generations of Shem (11:10-26)
  - B. The Generations of Terah (11:27-25:11)
  - C. The Generations of Ishmael (25:12-18)
  - D. The Generations of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
  - E. The Generations of Esau (36:1-37:1)
  - F. The Generations of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

NOTE: The careful reader will notice the repeated use of the phrase “the history/generations of,” which is used by the Moses to introduce each new section.

*Broad Outline of Galatians:* Paul wrote the book of Galatians to give a defense of justification by faith alone.

One word: Justification.

- I. Paul’s Biography in Defense of the Gospel (1:1-2:21)
- II. Paul’s Doctrine in Defense of the Gospel (3:1-4:31)
- III. Paul’s Practice in Defense of the Gospel (5:1-6:18)

These are the major divisions (there will be smaller divisions within these larger divisions). Each major section is tied to the purpose (red thread) of the book.

There are several kinds of literary foci that can be present in a book. These will provide clues as to the major divisions:

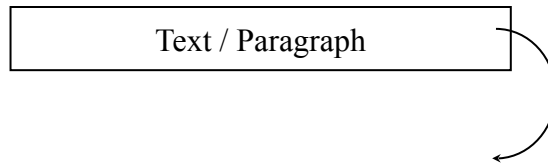
- **Biographical Focus** - a book (or significant portion of a book) provides biographical information about different characters in the story. Example: Genesis. To determine the sections of the book, the student must look for the transitions in biographical information from one character to another. Key question: *Who?* Example: Genesis
- **Historical Focus** - a book (or significant portion of a book) provides historical information about events. Examples: Exodus and Numbers. To determine the sections of such books, the student must look for the transitions from one historical description to the next. Key question: *What?* Example: Exodus
- **Geographical Focus** - a book (or significant portion of a book) focuses on the significance of different geographical localities. Example: Joshua. To determine the sections of such books, the student must look for the transitions from one location to another. Key question: *Where?* Example: Joshua
- **Chronological Focus** - a book (or significant portion of a book) focuses on the chronological timetable of events. Example: Judges. To determine the sections of such books, the student must look for transitions from one time to another. Key question: *When?* Example: Judges
- **Logical Focus** - a book (or significant portion of a book) focuses on the logical flow of an argument. Example: Romans. To determine the sections of such books, the student must look for transitions from one form of argumentation to another. Key questions: *Why?* and *How?* Example: Romans

Kinds of Literary Structure	
Kind	Key Question?
Biographical	Who?
Historical	What?
Geographical	Where?
Chronological	When?
Logical	Why? or How?

### **Step 5: Study the text's immediate context**

In this step, you'll identify the minor arguments and sections that support and connect the major arguments and sections; usually they are identified as separate paragraphs. The basic idea of a text will flow out of the preceding section and into the following section:





<i>Minor divisions: the small rooms</i>	<i>Minor divisions: the small rooms</i>	<i>Minor divisions: the small rooms</i>	<i>Minor divisions: the small rooms</i>	<i>Minor divisions: the small rooms</i>	<i>Minor divisions: the small rooms</i>
<i>Major sections: the weight-bearing pillars extending out of the central argument</i>		<i>Major sections: the weight-bearing pillars extending out of the central argument</i>		<i>Major sections: the weight-bearing pillars extending out of the central argument</i>	
<b><i>Central argument:</i></b> <b>the foundation extending through all parts of the book</b>					

Examples:

*Detailed Outline of Titus:*

- I. Salutation (1:1-4)
  - A. The Writer (1:1-3)
  - B. The Reader (1:4a)
  - C. The Greeting (1:4b)
- II. Ministry Essentials For the Elders (1:5-16)
  - A. The Appointment of Qualified Elders (1:5-9)
    1. The Duty of Titus (1:5)
    2. The Qualifications of the Elders (1:6-9)
  - B. The Refutation of False Teachers (1:10-16)
    1. The Picture of the False Teachers (1:10-13a)
    2. The Duty of Titus (1:13b-14)
    3. The Condemnation of the False Teachers (1:15-16)
- III. Ministry Essentials For the Church (2:1-15)
  - A. The Instructions for the Different Groups (2:1-10)
    1. The Duty of Titus (2:1)
    2. The Instructions to Different Groups (2:2-6)
    3. The Personal Example of Titus (2:7-8)
    4. The Instructions to Slaves (2:9-10)
  - B. The Foundation for Godly Living (2:11-14)
    1. The Manifestation of God's Grace (2:11)
    2. The Results of God's Grace (2:12)
    3. The Expectation of Christ's Return (2:13)

- 4. The Purpose of Christ's Redemption (2:14)
- C. The Restatement of the Duty of Titus (2:15)
- IV. Ministry Essentials for Believers in the World (3:1-11)
  - A. Their Obligations as Citizens (3:1-2)
  - B. The Motives for Godly Conduct (3:3-8)
  - C. The Reaction to Spiritual Error (3:9-11)
- V. Conclusion (3:12-14)
- VI. Benediction (3:15)

<b>STAGE #1 - Overview</b> <b>Understanding the Context of the Text</b>	
<i>Pre- Step</i>	Gather the Necessary Resources
<i>Step #1</i>	Study the book's historical context
<i>Step #2</i>	Study the book's canonical context
<i>Step #3</i>	Study the book's central purpose
<i>Step #4</i>	Study the book's major sections
<i>Step #5</i>	Study the text's immediate context