

Pondering the Text: Some Exegetical *Reminders*

- I. This lecture is titled “Exegetical *Reminders*” because I assume that you have a sound exegetical method, since you successfully completed “Jesus and the Gospels” or “Life and Letters of Paul.”
- II. “Outside the text there is no salvation.” A. Greimas (structuralist).
 - A. The primary place we look is the text.
 - B. The text as received has meaning. Meaning is informed but not determined by the author’s intentions, the cultural context, or the text’s history.
 - C. The text has integrity. We need to be cautious about how we color texts through our use of other texts.
- III. Look beyond the text as a document.
 - A. The text points to something other/beyond itself. There is the verbalization or written word; then there is the event, concept or idea that it points to. Look beyond the text to the event, concept, or idea.
 - B. Consider those elements of the event, idea or concept that the text may not provide. How was this said? We have the words but what was the tune?
 - C. The written text is the surface manifestation of the underlying “text.” Texts produce “meaning effects”—the underlying text is concerned with meaning.
 1. When you translate a sentence from English into another language, do you substitute word for word? No, you translate the underlying text. The English,
 - a. “What is your name?” rendered in French becomes, “What do you call yourself?”
 - b. “Have you anything to eat?” does not mean “Do you have any food in your house?”
 2. Ask: Why was this said? What was the context and intent of these words?
- IV. Look at the words
 - A. Words are about differentiation; words “slice up the reality pie.” For example, *snow* vs. *slush* implies difference; were there no difference, *snow* would equal *slush*.

B. Pay attention to words and word choices.

V. Texts make sense when they cohere or hold together.

A. A text without coherence is nonsense: Q: If a car had four flat tires, how many pancakes could you make out of an elephant’s ear? A: None, ice cream doesn’t have bones.

B. Groupings, clusters, and trajectories of related words give coherence.

1. Binary oppositions or one-to-one relationships are clues to interpretation.

- a. Oppositions need not be understood negatively: “Jesus said to his disciples” places Jesus *opposite* his disciples.
- b. Sometimes thinking of the opposites of words or ideas, even when they are not expressed in the text, provides clues to interpretation.

2. Clusters in the text often give an indication of how to interpret a word.

- a. “Marriage” can mean “legal contract,” “social function,” “feast,” and “religious ritual.”
- b. The clusters of associations point to an interpretation. Is the word “marriage” used with “pre-nuptial agreement,” “powder blue tuxedo,” or “lifelong faithfulness”?

C. Narratives are about transformation

- 1. What makes a story good is that something happens; there is a transformation.
- 2. Plot out the story using the elements of story--actor, action, object, time, place, props

Verse	Actor	Action	Object	Time	Place	Props

3. Noting the stages of the transformation helps to specify relationships in the text.

4. Non-narrative texts can often be expressed as narratives.

- a. What is the “storyline” about transformation the lies behind or in this text?
- b. Plot it out. You may need to rearrange the sentences to see the underlying story.

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. (Mark 1:12, 13, NRSV).