

The Five Looks

A Model to Help You Read the Bible for Yourself

Introduction and Prayer

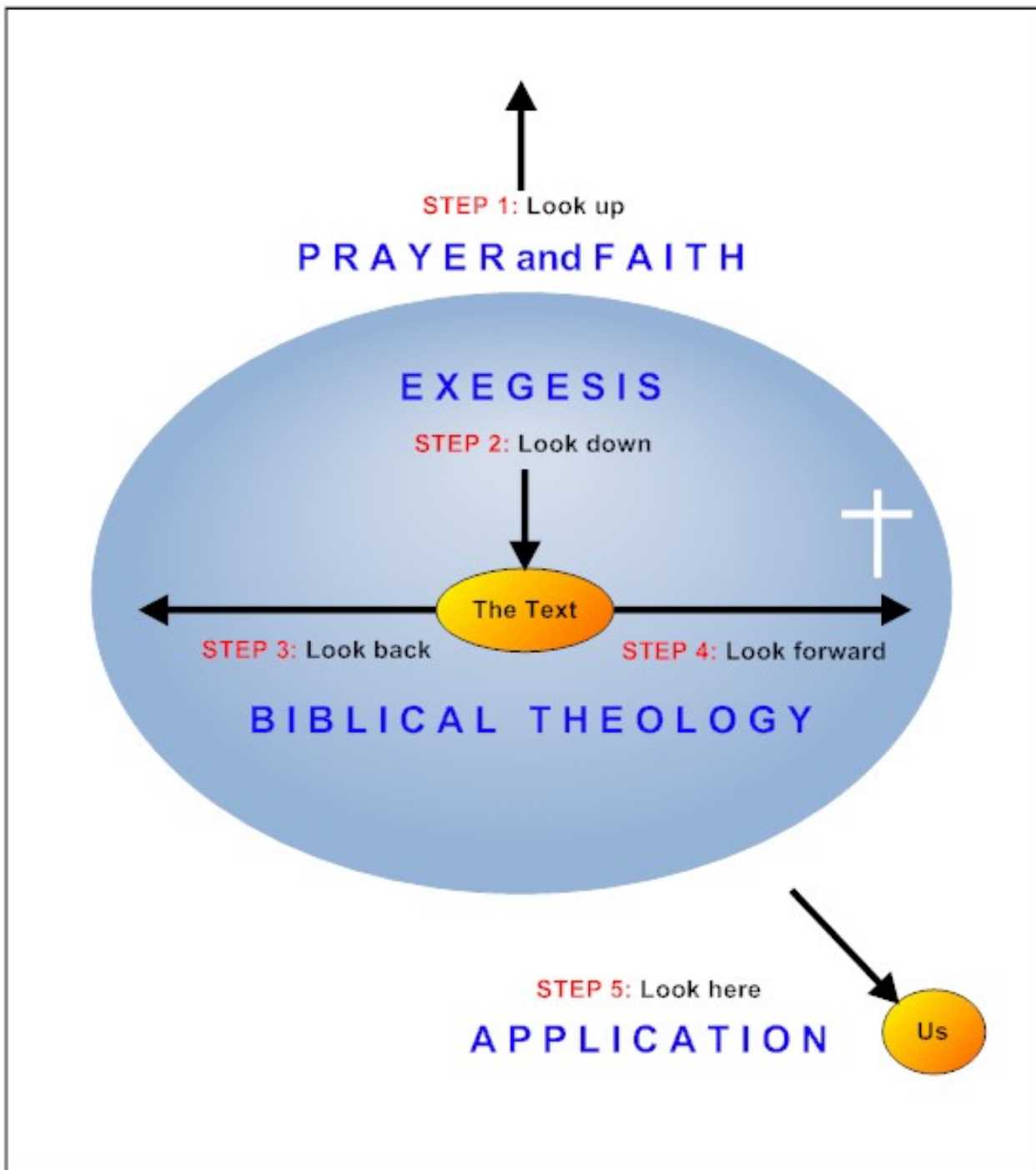
The Five Looks

Introducing a Model for Biblical Interpretation

Five Steps...

- Look up,
- Look down,
- Look backward,
- Look forward, and
- Look here.

Takes seriously the idea that God caused the Bible to be written **by humans for other humans** ...



A Short Overview

STEP 1: Look up!

- Arises out of the fact that the Bible is God's word.
- So, we **look up** to God in **PRAYER AND FAITH**.

We trust that he will help us...

- Interpret his word through his Spirit,
- that he will speak to us through it,
- and that he will be at work in us to transform us through it, working in us to help us believe and obey what we hear.

STEP 2: Look down!

Arises out of the Bible being the words of human beings and that these humans lived in a particular context, with their own language, culture and history.

'Look down' means looking at the text itself and studying it very carefully.

This task is known as the task of **EXEGESIS** (i.e. ***drawing out*** from the text what it meant its original context).

STEP 3: Look backward!

Step 3 is about beginning to grasp what place this passage has in the whole of the Bible.

- We ask ourselves how this passage of the Bible fits into how God has already revealed himself.
- We examine how passage fits ***theologically*** into God's revelation that has been given previously.

- Because we are dealing with the word of God, there will be a unity and coherence across all of scripture which we will seek to identify and understand.

STEP 4: Look forward!

- This is the place where we recognise that this passage of the Bible is part of God's great purposes in Jesus Christ.
- We ask how this particular passage fits into God's Christ-shaped purposes for the world.
- Steps 3 and 4 belong together.
- They are all about the task called **BIBLICAL THEOLOGY**, which is focussed on **what God is doing in his world through his Son**, Jesus, the Christ.

STEP 5: Look here!

- Step 5 is all about **APPLICATION** or **CONTEXTUALISATION** .
- Here we ask how what Scripture said then impacts upon us now in a situation that is somewhat distant from the original readers or hearers.

Important things to remember in using the model

1. Not a linear process.
2. Constant interaction between text and other elements.
3. A dynamic process.
4. Not every part of the model will apply to all passages.

5. Each genre of the Bible will have some special needs and tools that might not be as significant for others.
6. Biblical interpretation is not simply an academic exercise but a spiritual one, needing the constant guidance and help of God through his Spirit.
7. It is therefore a prayerful exercise, constantly asking God to be at work while we do our work on the text.

Further explanation

Exegesis

Getting Started

Looking at the Passage in its Context

For example...

Biblical Context

Literary Context

- ***Type of Literature:***

Questions to ask...

- What sort of genre is this (e.g. parable, law, history, prophecy, poetry, letter)?
- What rules, methods, patterns, or styles apply to this sort of writing?
- How is this sort of writing meant to be read?
- What sort of information should I expect from this type of literature?

Historical and Geographical Context:

Questions to ask...

- Do we know **who** wrote this passage? Who were they? Where were they? What do we know about them, particularly from this passage or the book in which it occurs?
- Do we know **to whom** this passage was written? Who were they? Where were they? What do we know about them from this passage, book, or other places in scripture?
- Do we know **when** this passage was written? What was going on in the world at that time? Who were the important people or nations?
- **Where** were the people to whom this passage was written? Is that important in any way? How is it important?

Content

- **Structure:** What is the structure of the passage and/or the flow of thought and action?
- **Key Words and Phrases:**
 - Words which are completely new to us or to those we are teaching.
 - Words which we have encountered before and which already have some meaning because of our prior knowledge (e.g. 'grace', 'judgment', 'love', 'peace', etc.).
 - Words which appear to be significant to the author in this passage.

Imagery, Metaphors, and Word Pictures:

Ask these sorts of questions...

- Is the author using images, metaphors, or word pictures? If so, what is conveyed by their use?
- How does it colour or enhance the point being made?
- How does it relate to the surrounding context?

What's this all about?

The ultimate question that we have been working toward...

- ‘What is this passage all about?’ or ‘What is the main point of this passage?’

One way of answering this question is to ask yourself these two questions:

1. What might this passage have told the original readers or hearers about...
 - God?
 - The world?
 - Themselves and other people?
 - The situations that they face?
2. What thoughts and or feelings do you think it might have been designed to arouse in the original hearers in the situation in which they were in?

Two helpful things to do at this stage:

- The *first* is to see if we can summarise the main point of the passage in a **one sentence summary statement**.
- The *second* is to write a **one sentence summary of what sort of response might be required** to what is said in the passage.

Biblical theology (Look back! Look forward!)

This is where we ask where the ideas and central point fit into the larger theological context of the Bible.

Our goal? To find out what this passage contributes to the teaching of the Bible as a whole.

Look Back!

The first questions that we ask here are questions that look back. We ask

things like:

- What connections are there between this passage and what God has revealed about himself, humanity, and his purposes *already* in the Bible?
- Does this passage pick up key ideas or allusions from other parts of the Bible that come before it?
- Does this passage add to those ideas?
- What *new* things do we learn about God, humanity, and God's purposes from this passage?
- What things are *confirmed* about God, humanity, and God's purposes from this passage?
- Are there any promises fulfilled here?
- Are earlier threats carried out here?

Look Forward!

The Bible tells a story that is 'going somewhere'

It has a goal.

Moreover, God's goal or 'end' finds its centre and guarantee in Jesus Christ.

This point has implications for our reading the Bible.

When we read it, we should read it in the light of God's purpose in Christ and as a book that will reach its goal or end in God's purposes in Christ.

So...

- Look back to see how this passage of the Bible builds on what we already know of God's purpose.'
- Look forward to how it will be fulfilled or find its climax in God's purpose in Christ.

The sorts of questions to ask:

- How do the ideas in this passage fit into God's wider plans that find their centre in Christ?
- Does this passage *start* a new idea about God, humanity, or God's purposes in the world?
- Does this passage *add to* an idea about God, humanity, or God's purposes in the world that has already occurred in the Bible before this?
- Does this passage *bring to a climax or conclusion* an idea about God, humanity, or God's purposes in the world that has already occurred in the Bible before this?
- Is this passage or key ideas within it picked up by later parts of the Bible? How are these ideas used?
- What promises are made in this passage and where are they fulfilled in the Bible?
- Are there threats made here? If so, are they picked up later in the Bible?

If the passage you are looking at is in the OT, it is good to ask these additional questions.

- How is the main theological point of this passage connected to...
 - The identity of Jesus (i.e. who Jesus is)?
 - The life of Jesus?
 - The work of Jesus on the cross (i.e. what Jesus accomplished in his death)?
 - The resurrection of Jesus?
 - The reign and return of Jesus?

- The future of the world made possible through Jesus?

Summing up

Try to finish these sentences...

- The significance of the central idea of this passage in the rest of the Bible is...
- This can be taken into account by amending my one sentence summary of the main point of the passage in this way...

Application/Contextualisation (Look here!)

First thing:

Ask what sort of response the original passage might have required (which we did above).

Second thing:

Ask what sort of response **we** should make to this word from God and what sort of response should we urge God's people to make to God's word.

Communicating the message

We ask...

What will be theme of this talk/Bible study?

Finish this sentence...

The theme of this sermon/Bible study is...

What will be the main thrust of this sermon/Bible study that will communicate the theme of this passage to these people?

Answer this question...

The main thrust of this sermon/Bible study will be...

Conclusion