

## **Biblical Interpretation**

### **Course Description**

Courses in Biblical Interpretation should be designed to highlight the historic commitment of the Presbyterian tradition to the Scriptures, tying together an understanding of the "word of God written" (Confession of 1967, I.C.2) with "the true word of God" (Second Helvetic Confession 5.001-2). Presbyterian Christian Educators need to have a foundational comprehension of Scripture as well as the tools to appropriately exegete and interpret the Bible for the context in which they are serving. Courses will need to teach the basic principles of biblical interpretation through the lens of the Reformed Tradition and teach at least one exegetical method. Exegetical models should encourage historical and cultural readings of texts, and instructors should encourage and equip educators to do research using resources from various reputable sources, modern and historical. The goal of these courses is to ground educators in the method required to make them servants "rightly handling the word of truth" in accordance with the certification standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course participants will be able to:

1. state basic principles of biblical interpretation within the Reformed Tradition, together with personal reflection upon them.
2. employ an exegetical method to guide the interpretation of selected biblical passages.
3. use the historical and cultural backgrounds of the biblical texts to aid in a deeper understanding of the meaning.
4. look at the form and function of biblical texts to determine how this information aids in understanding the text.
5. use commentaries, articles, and other resources to enhance their understanding of a text.
6. develop their ability to interpret the Scriptures and to relate them to Christian living in accordance with Presbyterian principles;
7. write an exegetical paper on a text that draws upon the above skills and learnings.
8. prepare an educational event that uses the content from an exegetical paper

### **Foundational Resources:**

- **NRSV Study Bible**
- ***The Book of Confessions***

### **Potential Resources:**

*This is a cumulative bibliography from several syllabi that were previously approved by the Educational Certification Committee.*

*The Anchor Bible Dictionary.* 6 vols. ed. David N. Freedman et al. New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1992. A comprehensive and balanced scholarly resource on all matters pertaining to the Bible.

*Handbook of Biblical Criticism.* 3rd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001. A careful description of terms and methods used by interpreters of the Bible.

*The New International Bible Dictionary.* J.D. Douglas, revising editor. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. Conservative evangelical scholarship.

*The New Interpreter's Bible.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1994. Fine introductory articles on the canon and biblical interpretation that reflect an ecumenical perspective.

*The Women's Bible Commentary.* Sharon H. Ringe and Carol Newsome, eds.. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

Blair, Christine Eaton. *The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults.* Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001.

Blount, Brian K. *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism.* Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995.

Boadt, Lawrence. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction.* New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1984. A somewhat dated but very clearly written approach to the Old Testament from a moderate Roman Catholic scholar.

Bracke, John M. and Karen B. Tye. *Teaching the Bible in the Church.* St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. This classic from a pre-eminent biblical scholar links Christian education and biblical interpretation.

Brueggemann, Walter. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003.

Cohen, Shaye J.D. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah.* 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. A classic description of Judaism from the Roman occupation of Palestine until the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism.

Cousar, Charles B. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Witnesses to God's New Work.* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. A well-written treatment of the basic issues in New Testament studies.

Danker, Frederick W. *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study.* Revised and expanded edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993. An updated classic packed with helpful information for interpreting scripture.

Felder, Cain Hope. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993.

- Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas K., *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 3rd Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001. This practical guide is ideal for beginners—very clearly written and succinct.
- Green, Joel, ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995. A somewhat technical but quite readable survey of various ways to interpret the New Testament from leading scholars, who also include a wealth of bibliographical suggestions for further reading.
- Griggs, Donald L. *The Bible from Scratch: The Old Testament for Beginners*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Griggs, Donald L. *The Bible from Scratch: The New Testament for Beginners*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003.
- Hayes, John H. and Holladay, Carl R., *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Third Edition. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- Miller, J. Maxwell and John H. Hayes. *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. 2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006. A standard textbook on the history of the people of Israel and Judah.
- McKenzie, Steven L. and Stephen R. Haynes, *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993. A summary of the major forms of critical biblical interpretation and how they are used to interpret Scripture.
- Rogers, Jack. *Reading the Bible & the Confessions: The Presbyterian Way*. Louisville, Geneva Press, 1999.
- Tiffany, Frederick J. and Sharon H. Ringe. *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997.
- Wink, Walter. *Transforming Bible Study: A Leader's Guide*. 2nd edition; Nashville: Abingdon, 1989.

### **Certification Exam Readiness:**

By the end of the certification process, in order to successfully complete the examination, the educator will need to be able to identify and use an exegetical method to explore a particular passage. The educator will need to use a variety of resources to complement the exegesis and will need to relate the findings to inform an educational event.

*Approved by the PC(USA) Educator Certification Committee, April 28, 2016*

*The Educator Certification Committee of the PCUSA provides approval for each course and course instructor on an individual basis. This document is meant to provide only an overview of this particular topic and does not provide a blanket approval for all courses.*