

LESSON THREE

Biblical Exegesis, Descriptive Research, and Program Development

Biblical Exegesis as Research

Introduction

Biblical *exegesis* (analysis of texts; the explanation or interpretation of texts[specific texts], especially religious writings; an is not usually listed as a type of research, but it uses research methods.

Research Methods

- 1) Think carefully.
- 2) Develop a bibliography.
- 3) Read books and journals.
- 4) Take notes.
- 5) Organize the topic.
- 6) Write the paper

Steps in the Exegetical Process

- 1) Determine the canonical context
 - a) Find out what it is a part of and how it functions within that setting.
 - b) After you have studied the Bible text—your passage and its context—you may want to see how other authors have understood the organization of the chapter and of the book of which it is a part.
- 2) Establish the text.
 - a) Determine as accurately as possible, by means of textual criticism, the original text.
 - b) To find the oldest form of a Bible text, the original languages must be used.
 - c) For those who biblical languages are poor, a comparison of different Bible versions can help.
- 3) Establish the translation.
 - a) What does the original text say.
 - b) To establish the translation, take into account vocabulary and grammar.
- 4) Establish the meaning.
 - a) Goes beyond the simple translation of the text.
 - b) What does the passage mean?
 - c) To determine the meaning of a text, study the *syntax* [the ordering of and relationship between the words and other structural elements in phrases and sentences] of the sentences.
 - i) Look at structure of the sentence and the function of the words.
 - ii) Look for idiomatic [characteristic of native-speaker use; characteristic of, or in keeping with, the way a language is ordinarily and naturally used by its native

- speakers] phrases and *hard-to-translate* prepositions. *Idiomatic phrase*—characteristic of a specific style, or using a distinctive style.
- iii) Look for any element that might modify the first, direct, and obvious translation of the passage.
 - d) Word study
 - i) Look up important nouns and verbs in a concordance to see how they are used in other passages.
 - ii) Concordances.
 - (1) Young's and Strong's.
 - (2) To find all the uses of a certain word, you need to use a Greek or Hebrew concordance.
 - iii) Theological dictionaries.
 - 5) Establish the historical and geographical context.
 - a) What was happening at the time this passage was written that might explain the text.
 - i) Knowledge of the socio-political and economic situation of the time is important to understanding the passage.
 - ii) Knowledge of the geography and climate of the region, as well as of the customs of the people, helps bring the biblical text to life.
 - b) Information may be obtained from biblical archaeology.
 - i) Provide interesting data on the way people lived.
 - ii) Information concerning ancient languages has also come from archaeological discoveries.
 - 6) Establish the original theological meaning.
 - a) What did the passage mean to those who first heard or read it?
 - b) After you have established a clear understanding of the theological meaning of the passage, you can read what commentators say, to check or confirm your conclusions.
 - 7) Establish the application for today.
 - a) The last step of exegesis applies theological meaning to today's church or individual Christian.
 - b) This application forms the basis of preaching and teaching.

Descriptive Research

Introduction

- 1) Descriptive research describes, usually one or more characteristics of a group of people, called a population. Any inferences are left to the readers.
 - a) Descriptive research often involves reporting the characteristics at one point in time or a snap shot.
 - b) Used to describe a problem or issue and so provide background or context for persons unfamiliar with a situation.
 - c) Purpose is to make a reality known.
 - i) On the basis of the description, conclusions may be reached and decisions made.
 - ii) One example: find out how many people watch a particular TV show.
 - iii) Example: to determine whether a new school needs to be built.

- iv) Does not solve a problem; only provides the information necessary to set change in motion.
- 2) Descriptive research also is known as statistical research, describes data and characteristics about a population or phenomenon being studied.
- 3) Descriptive research answers the questions *who, what, when, and how*.
- 4) Descriptive research is factual, accurate and systematic, it does not describe what caused a situation.
- 5) Descriptive research can take many forms.
 - a) Ethnographic and historical research are frequently considered variations of descriptive research.
 - b) Descriptive research involves describing and interpreting events, conditions, or situations of the present.
 - c) Generally, findings and conclusions only apply to the sample or populations studied.
- 6) Research tools.
 - a) Structured interviews.
 - b) Structured questionnaires and surveys.
- 7) Questions and sub-questions generally are stated.
- 8) Some possible purposes.
 - a) To determine the prevalence of a disease.
 - b) The provide the natural history of a disease.
 - c) To discover the resources required to treat the disease.
 - d) To measure attitudes and perceptions about the disease.
- 9) Descriptive research usually studies a situation at a given moment in time.

Purpose

- 1) Collect detailed factual information that describes existing phenomena.
- 2) Identify problems or justify conditions and practices.
- 3) Make comparisons and evaluations.
- 4) Determine what others are doing with similar problems or situations and benefit from their experience in making future plans and decisions.

How Can You Obtain Information?

- 1) Can't depend on how people answer: they will tend to answer in the most favorable light.
- 2) Can't depend on observation: may be tainted by your personal bias.
- 3) Use different sources. To describe a congregation.
 - a) Get information from the church membership records.
 - b) The church treasurer's records.
 - c) The attendance records.
 - d) Lay ministers' reports.
 - e) Survey the members.
 - f) Interview former pastors or other persons who might have important information.
 - g) Personal observations.

Steps in Descriptive Research

- 1) Defining the objectives.
 - a) What information do you want to obtain?
 - b) What facts and characteristics are to be uncovered?
 - c) Determining the function of deacons.
 - i) Who are they?
 - ii) How old are they?
 - iii) Live? Work?
 - iv) How long been church members.
 - v) What do they do?
 - (1) Take care of church property.
 - (2) Keep order during services.
 - vi) How do they view their responsibilities?
 - (1) Whether they feel needed.
 - (2) Adequately prepared.
 - (3) Satisfied.
- 2) Designing the approach.
 - a) Decide on the best way to obtain the different kinds of information.
 - i) Personal interviews.
 - ii) Questionnaires.
 - iii) Information from records.
 - iv) Personal observation.
 - b) Before designing instruments, strategies, and procedures, read wisely.
 - c) To survey the personal devotional habits of young people.
 - i) Read everything written about the topic.
 - ii) Look for studies already done about the devotional habits of young Christians. (The *ATLA Index (Religion Index One)* is an excellent place to look for this information.
 - d) Find instruments already prepared.
- 3) Collecting the data—set up the easiest possible way to record in an organized and orderly fashion every piece of data.
- 4) Writing the results.
 - a) Introduction.
 - i) Background.
 - ii) The definition of the problem.
 - iii) The purpose.
 - iv) The limitations and delimitations.
 - v) The definitions of the terms.
 - b) Review of the literature.
 - c) Chapter on research method employed.
 - i) How the questionnaire was developed, tested, and applied.
 - ii) How the sampling was done.
 - iii) How the interview was designed and carried out.
 - d) Description of the results. What was discovered?
 - e) Summary, conclusions, recommendations.

Sampling

- 1) Representative sampling (stratified sampling).
 - a) Include all the different kinds of people in the group in the same proportion as they are found in the general population.
 - b) Consider gender, age, socio-economic status, race, etc.
- 2) Random sampling.
 - a) Every ten person, regardless of sex, age, etc.
 - b) The larger the population, the smaller the percentage of people who must be surveyed.
- 3) Cluster sampling.
 - a) Selects sample clusters or groups.
 - i) Third grade students.
 - ii) Hispanics.

Surveys

- 1) Tips for preparing questionnaire.
 - a) Know the exact information desired.
 - b) Make it short.
 - c) Ask only for information that obtainable elsewhere.
 - d) Make the topic relevant to people's interest.
 - e) Ask questions that elicit precise, factual data, rather than impressions or opinions.
 - i) How many hours do you read?
 - ii) Not, do you like to read?
 - f) Non-ambiguous.
 - g) Items in logical order.
 - h) Simple format convenient to answer.
 - i) Clear instructions for filling out the form.
- 2) Survey questions.
 - a) Open questions.
 - i) Gives more freedom to answer.
 - ii) Answers varied and must be tabulated correctly.
 - b) Closed questions
 - i) Answers are given; responder chooses.
 - ii) Answers may not be totally inclusive (all possible answers).
 - iii) Form of closed question is the scale—reduces answer to a numerical value.
 - (1) 1=Very valuable.
 - (2) 2=Of some value.
 - (3) 3=of little value.
 - iv) Agree or disagree.
 - (1) Disagree.
 - (2) Not sure.
 - (3) Agree.
 - v) Preparation of elders to lead congregation?
 - (1) Little prepared.
 - (2) Acceptably prepared.

- (3) Well prepared.
- (4) Very well prepared.

Returning Surveys

- 1) Make provision for anonymity.
- 2) Make easy to return.
 - a) Leave papers on a table at the door.
 - b) Provide a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
- 3) Follow-up takes time.
 - a) First ones to respond are usually at one extreme or the other (in favor vs. against).
 - b) Moderate responders may have to be prodded.
 - c) Make an effort to obtain as high a percentage as possible.

Interviews

- 1) Permit a deeper and fuller understanding of the attitudes of a respondent.
- 2) Should record the conversation.
- 3) Explain clearly what information is needed and why.
- 4) Obtain permission to use materials in research.
- 5) Go to interview with a written outline of the questions to be asked.
- 6) For in-depth information on opinions and attitudes, interviews are superior to surveys.
 - a) The number of persons interviewed fewer than those surveyed.
 - b) This is called qualitative research.

Program Development

- 1) In program development, the researcher determines:
 - a) The need for a program.
 - b) Establishes its theoretical basis.
 - c) Sets its objectives.
 - d) Designs the program or curriculum.
 - e) Implements it.
 - f) Evaluates the results.
- 2) Steps in program development.
 - a) Define the problem.
 - i) What is wrong or needs fixing?
 - ii) Describe the group that needs help.
 - b) Set goals and objectives.
 - i) Goals.
 - (1) Describes reality.
 - (2) Final destination.
 - ii) Objectives.
 - (1) Describes the ideal.
 - (2) Smaller and measurable goals along the way—must be expressed as outcomes.

- (3) What will the participants know, feel, and do because of having followed this series?
- iii) Example.
 - (1) Married couples will show an improvement in marital communication as measured by the *Marital Communication Inventory*.
 - (2) Married couples will show an improvement in marital satisfaction as measured by the *Marital Adjustment Test*.
- c) Review the literature.
 - i) Establish the theoretical basis.
 - ii) Similar programs.
 - iii) Content of the program.
- d) Design the program.
- e) Prepare materials and resources.
 - i) Written version of program.
 - ii) Visual aids and handouts.
 - iii) Include everything in the paper that anyone would need to replicate the program.
- f) Implement the program.
- g) Evaluate the program.
- 3) Organizing and writing the report.
 - a) First chapter—introduction.
 - i) Background, statement of the problem, the purpose, the methodology, definition of terms, limitations, and delimitations.
 - ii) Need and objectives must be included.
 - b) Second chapter—review of the literature.
 - c) Third chapter—describes the group for whom the program was designed.
 - d) Fourth chapter—development of the program.
 - i) Setting goals.
 - ii) Presentation of the program.
 - iii) Complete history of the entire program.
 - (1) Preparation.
 - (2) Presentation.
 - (3) Evaluation.
 - e) Fifth chapter—Summary and conclusions.
 - i) Suggestions for future implementation of such a program or for further research.
 - ii) Appendixes.
 - (1) Correspondence, invitation, publicity.
 - (2) Content of the presentations.
 - (3) Illustrations.
 - iii) Handouts.
 - iv) Evaluation questionnaires.
 - f) Bibliography.