

## Exegetical Questions

From Paul Scott Wilson's book, *The Practice of Preaching*

### *Initial Literary Reading of Biblical Text*

FOCUS	QUESTIONS
1. Character	Who are the main characters? What are they like? How can they be described?
2. Plot	What happens in this text? Why does it happen? What is the sequence of events?
3. Context	What happened before this section? After? How does context affect the meaning here?
4. Conflict	What is the main conflict here? What caused it?
5. Resolution	What is needed for resolution? Who must do it? Or, if conflict is resolved, will resolution last?
6. Author	What can be said about the human author or writer? Why was it written?
7. Audience	For whom is it written? What effect was intended?
8. Reader Identification	With whom in the text do I identify? Why have I made that choice?
9. Form	What is the form (or genre) of this passage? Is it a song? Letter? Law? Epic? Parable? Saying?
10. Function	What is the function of this passage in terms of the entire work?
11. Structure	How could the structure be sketched? Does it build to a climax? Does it have separate parts?
12. Style	What is distinctive about the author's style? Are there distinctive phrases or key words?
13. Power	Who has money? Power? Who is poor? Powerless?
14. Patterns	Are there unusual patterns? (e.g., three times of questioning? Two acts that fail? Four journeys?)
15. Connections	Do any of the above connect with similar things elsewhere in the Bible?

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| 16. Translations | How do several English versions compare? What does the original Greek or Hebrew say?       |
| 17. Parallels    | Do parallel accounts differ (e.g., between the Gospels, or Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles)? |
| 18. Puzzles      | What is surprising or does not fit? What questions do I take to the commentaries?          |
| 19. Emotions     | Do I like this text? Dislike it? Why? With what feelings am I left?                        |

*Initial Theological Reading of Biblical Text*

1. God in the text: What is God doing in the text itself?
2. God behind the text: What is God doing behind the text, in the larger events?
3. Judgment—What is God’s judgment (i.e., law, condemnation, identification of human failing)?
4. Change—What change is demanded of humanity?
5. Hope—What is the hope (i.e. grace, Good News, empowerment)?
6. Empowerment in the text—Does the text itself indicate what god does to enable change?
7. Empowerment beyond the text—What is God doing in the larger story to which this text belongs?
8. Identity—What does this tell us about who we are? Who God is?
9. Belief—What are we asked to believe?
10. Action—What is God instructing and therefore enabling us to do?
11. Christology—What does the cross and resurrection say to Christians concerning themes raised in this text?

**At the end of each exegetical study include the following:**

- 1) A *focus statement*, which is the thematic core of the sermon. It should
  - i) *unify* the whole text (integrative)
  - ii) *encapsulate* the gospel (evangelical)
  - iii) have an *impact* on life (realistic)

It should be stated in a sentence or two.

- 2) A *function statement* is a description of what the preacher hopes the sermon will achieve—its purpose. (see Long)