

# BITES

## **TOOL 1 – Historical Awareness**

We need to develop a sensitivity towards history. To truly appreciate history, demands time and patients. We must realise that between us as ‘post-modern’ human beings and the ancient, biblical times, there is a time span of more than 5000 years. The bible cannot be read and understood responsibly without an historical awareness.

## **TOOL 2 – Language (Biblical Hebrew and Greek)**

Knowing or having access to the original language in which the biblical text was written in, is not negotiable. We need to use the Hebrew and Greek language tool to get to a more appropriate understanding of the biblical text.

## **TOOL 3 – Sensitive to context**

Nothing exists in isolation, this is also true for the biblical text. We must read the Old Testament within its ancient near-eastern socio-cultural context, and the New Testament within its first-century Mediterranean, Hellenistic-Jewish context.

## **TOOL 4 – Recognizing ancient worldview / paradigm**

The ancient (both ancient near-eastern as well as the first-century Mediterranean) worldview is vastly different compared to ours. They

would have understood and interpreted everything in life based on their worldview.

## **TOOL 5 – Spirituality and theology**

This tool has a lot to do with how and where we were brought up and of course to which denomination we belong to. Both our household (family life) and our faith community give shape to our spiritual nature and of course how we view God.

## **TOOL 6 – Method of interpretation**

There are two primary methods or approaches to biblical interpretation:

### **Synchrony**

a synchronic approach considers a language without taking its history into account. Synchronic linguistics aims at describing language rules at a specific point of time, even though they may have been different at an earlier stage of the language. Typical methods:

- ✓ Textual analysis (grammar, syntax etc.)
- ✓ Literary form analysis (poetry, history, narrative etc.)
- ✓ Lexical analysis (determining the meaning of words)
- ✓ Theological analysis (biblical theology etc.)

## Diachrony

a diachronic approach considers the development and evolution of a language through history. Typical methods:

- ✓ Historical criticism:
  - Textual criticism
  - Reductional criticism
  - Socio-scientific criticism
  - Source criticism
  - Form criticism
- ✓ ‘Sitz im Leben’ (determining a socio-historical, cultural-political as well as socio-religious context(s))

The most responsible tactic should be to take both these approaches seriously. To simplify it, if you read the bible as a book from beginning to end and interpret it as it stands you follow a synchronic approach; but if you start reading the bible within its cultural context, you follow a diachronic approach. The following ‘methods’ or considerations also play a major role:

- ✓ Literarily (the truth is equal to what is read in the biblical text)
- ✓ Metaphorical (read and understand the biblical text as metaphors / stories / legends that convey a message about God)
- ✓ Symbolic (read and understand the biblical text as symbolism, and by understanding the symbolism the message of the text is unraveled)
- ✓ Allegorical (almost like metaphorical).