



*How To
Exegete
the Text for
Powerful
Preaching?*

Four Waves *Of Exegesis*

*Powerful Exegesis Leads to Powerful
Preaching*

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Introduction

Exegeting a Text for Preaching

This one is entitled *Exegeting a Text for Preaching*. After talking to a few individuals, I realized that I should have perhaps entitled it *Interpreting a Text for Preaching*. At any rate, exegeting a text is simply attempting to read the text and interpret it in such a way that individuals can turn the scripture into a sermon.

Here I want to talk about the agenda that we're going to deal with.

- We're going to do a speaker's bio (as we always do in these things);
- we're going to introduce the subject;
- and then we're going to talk about the exegeting a text in terms of four waves or four steps through the same text, looking at the text in four different ways over and over again trying to find out something different in each one on each step-through;
- and finally, we'll have the conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Now what are we doing when we are talking about exegesis? I said earlier I wish I'd used a different term. Sometimes, when we go to seminary, we use big words. What I'm simply talking about in *exegesis* is interpreting the text for preaching. What we are doing is attempting to 'pull out' exegesis, which means to pull out rather than—as you've heard others—*eisegesis*, which is to 'push in' or to read into the text. We want to pull out from the text.

Table Of Contents

| | |
|---|------------------|
| How To Exegete the Text for Powerful Preaching?..... | 1 |
| Sherman Haywood Cox II..... | 1 |
| <u>Introduction.....</u> | <u>2</u> |
| <u>Exegeting a Text for Preaching.....</u> | <u>2</u> |
| <u>INTRODUCTION.....</u> | <u>2</u> |
| <u>Table Of Contents.....</u> | <u>3</u> |
| <u>Author’s Bio.....</u> | <u>5</u> |
| <u>Who am I?.....</u> | <u>5</u> |
| <u>Background and Training.....</u> | <u>5</u> |
| <u>The Four Phases.....</u> | <u>6</u> |
| <u>WAVE ONE – Initial Confrontation with the Text.....</u> | <u>7</u> |
| <u>Purpose.....</u> | <u>7</u> |
| <u>Prayer.....</u> | <u>8</u> |
| <u>Initial Reading of the Text.....</u> | <u>9</u> |
| <u>Questions:.....</u> | <u>11</u> |
| <u>Wave 2 – In-depth Interaction with the Text.....</u> | <u>13</u> |
| <u>Purpose.....</u> | <u>13</u> |
| <u>In-depth Reading of Scripture.....</u> | <u>13</u> |
| <u>Bible Translations.....</u> | <u>14</u> |
| <u>Cross References.....</u> | <u>16</u> |
| <u>Create a Storyline.....</u> | <u>17</u> |
| <u>Analyze the Theology.....</u> | <u>18</u> |
| <u>Analyze Rhetoric and Logic.....</u> | <u>19</u> |
| <u>Analyze Social Characteristics.....</u> | <u>20</u> |
| <u>Analyze History.....</u> | <u>20</u> |

Fill in Missing Information.....21

Wave 3 – Help from other Perspectives.....23

Purpose.....23

Adding Other Perspectives.....23

Wave 4 – Walking in the Text.....26

Purpose.....26

Going Deeper: Senses.....26

Emotions in the Text.....28

Summary: Waves and Creativity.....29

Author's Bio

Who am I?

Background and Training

Who am I? Sherwood Haywood Cox II. I am an African American preacher's son. I'm a Black Preacher's son. I've grown up listening to much preaching including my father as well as others. Even today, I look at many sermons on the web. As I've said many times, it's important for preachers to listen to and look at many preachers. The internet has allowed us to have access to many great preachers throughout the country.

So I am an African American preacher's son. I engage in African American Preaching. I've preached for the last twenty years. I've preached on churches of different ethnic traditions as well as different denominational traditions. I've studied African American Preaching and Seminary. This is another important point. So I've done it. I'm a son of a preacher and I've also studied African American preaching. I made Black Preaching a special study at seminary. I have thirty hours of graduate credit in preaching. I've studied C.L. Franklin's sermons, what happens in the celebration, what happens in the whoop. And I hope to make some of that available and accessible to others. But it's important to recognize that I have studied the tradition and I teach Black Preaching on SoulPreaching.com and this is our second web seminar.

I say all that to just say this is who I am, the presenter of this seminar. I am a Black Preacher. I'm a son of a Black Preacher and I've studied Black Preaching and now I am a teacher of Black Preaching.

The Four Phases

Now I talk about exegesis in terms of four interactions with the text. And we're going to break this down as we get further. The first of these is what I've called a 'wave.' I used the metaphor of a wave for the wave—goes up on the shore and then another wave hits the shore, hits the same place on the shore and what it does is it alters the shore slightly in different ways, and then wave three and then wave four.

So the first wave is our initial confrontation with the text. This is our initial look at the text. We're going to talk about what that means.

Wave two is an in-depth exploration of the text. Now, in our initial confrontation with the text as well as our in-depth exploration of the text, we are largely attempting to understand the text on its own terms. This is before we go look in commentaries, before we look in other sermons, before we look at what others have said about this particular text.

We look at what the text itself says to us then wave three is getting help in exploring the text. Here is when we go and look at commentaries. We look in the books that we've received that we had in seminary. We look at denominational resources and other things.

Finally, we walk through the text. And in my mind, this particular point is a very important point that's missing from much exegetical work—walking in the text. This is where we attempt to place ourselves in the text, look around in the text, experience the text, not just on an intellectual level but on an experiential level.

WAVE ONE - Initial Confrontation with the Text

Purpose

The initial confrontation with the text, or I guess I should say, interaction with a text. This isn't a confrontational thing but our initial interaction with the text.

Now when we are in this initial interaction, the purpose is to capture our most creative interaction with the text. Individuals have asked me how we can have more creativity in our preaching. And I think before we can answer that question, we have to ask how we can put more creative work in our exegesis. It's difficult to have creative sermon presentations when you don't have creativity built into your exegetical process. And so here, the purpose is to capture our most creative interaction with the text.

Another purpose is to capture our devotional reading observations. Sometimes when we exegete a text, we pull out the word studies, we pull out commentaries, we pull out many of these other books and other tools to help us get a deep understanding of the scripture. However, we must—at some point—capture our devotional reading of the text. One of the very helpful things I learned in seminary from my New Testament professor, who stated that the devotional reading of scripture is just as important as some of the more exegetical approaches. It's important to capture our devotional reading. One of my preacher friends actually uses his devotional reading as a basis for his sermon presentation. He captures his devotional readings and then next year, he goes back to his devotional reads from the previous year, reads them, and then uses that as the basis of his preaching and presentations for the present year.

The next thing is it opens up your innermost self. This is the purpose of this initial wave to the interaction with the Spirit through The Word. Here, we are capturing our innermost selves' interaction with the spirit and the text. So this is our most creative, this is our devotional reading, and as well, this is our innermost selves in connection with the word.

Now you're probably wondering, okay, how in the world are we going to do that? Well, that's what we're going to talk about now, a description of how to do it and it's basically two steps: First of all, there's prayer for help from the spirit; secondly, there's the initial reading from the text.

Prayer

Now let's move on and talk about what is this **Prayer**. Personally, I don't think that you should even open up the scripture without going to God in prayer. We need to:

- ask for help in knowing what to say about the text that's going to help the people;
- ask for help in knowing what even needs to be said;
- ask for help in knowing what the scripture has said.

This is a very difficult challenge that we, as preachers, face. And so we need help. Ask for help in applying the scripture today. We not only need help for the past and understanding what the scripture said in the past tense, but we also need help in understanding what the scripture is saying to us and to our people today. The job of the preacher is a very hard one and we need help. And so, we should go to God in prayer as the first step in exegeting a text of preaching.

Initial Reading of the Text

Now the next step, which I believe is a very important one, is the **initial reading of the text**. We need to provide some background to this.

- First, you should read the text in your favorite translation.
- Next, read the text out loud.
- In addition, read the text in context – at least the chapter before, the current chapter, and a chapter after your passage.

So this is your background. You need to find your favorite translation; you need to read the text out loud; you need to read the text in context.

Then as you are reading the text, you should summarize your thoughts, anything that comes to your mind. Quickly go through the text, you're reading it out loud and you're noting anything that comes to your mind. Here are some examples. You may have another sermon that someone else preached that may come to your mind, write it down and note it. Stories may come to your mind: a novel that you read, other books that you've read, an illustration book that you've read. Many things may come to your mind. You want to note it all.

Don't censor yourself, you can fix it up later. Don't censor anything that comes to your mind. Anything that comes to your mind, write it down, because as we get to the other waves of exegesis, we are going to test these initial thoughts. But what's important is as you write these initial thoughts down you are bringing your most creative interaction with the text. Individuals, as I said, want to know how to have creativity in their sermons. Here is where you are going to do a lot of that.

- You are going to have stories that come to your mind that are going to become illustrations.
- You are going to have other things come to your mind that's going to become celebrative

material, that's going to become things that are going to help people to understand, that's going to help you to ask questions.

- That's another thing I didn't write down here... but *questions* that come to your mind as you read the text, you are going to note them.

- Books may come to your mind as you are reading the particular text.

- Things from popular culture... songs may come to your mind. Gospel songs, hymns, and even popular songs—R&B songs—that may support or even detract from the text.

Any of these things that come to your mind, you should place them and write them out on a sheet of paper. It's going to be very helpful to you and very valuable.

Now here are some specific **Questions to Ask:**

What songs or hymns come to your mind as you are reading this text? Note them, write them down. Whether they're hymns from the Christian tradition, whether they're gospel songs, whether they're songs from the past, whether they're even popular songs... write them down.

What stories from television, movies or literature come to your mind as you are reading this text that help to illustrate the text or even detract from the text? There may be a song in the popular culture right now that is disagreeing completely with the text — write it down. That can be very valuable in helping you to interact with the people and also helping you to understand the scripture that you are reading.

What other scriptures come to mind? That's another good question. As you are reading this text, other scriptures may immediately pop into your mind. Note them, write them down. Like I said, do not censor yourself at this point. You are attempting to find your most creative interaction with the text.

Now here is where we push it a little further: *What are the images that are in the text? What are the images that hit you in the text?* “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall now want.” Shepherd is an image, shepherd is a picture. What is a shepherd? What does a shepherd do?

These are some questions that you would want to look at further, but as—in this section of the exegesis in this first wave—you are simply going to write down: Here are some questions that I need to answer if I am going to talk about this particular text.

Finally, *is there any other thing that comes to your mind as you are reading this text?* Once again, we are reading the text—only the text—in our own favorite translation, and we are reading it out loud. And anything that comes to our mind we write it down. Anything that comes to your mind, you write it down. And this will provide the basis.

As I said before, this will become celebration material, this will become illustrations. And also, sometimes, this is where the title of our messages will come. That’s the first wave.

Questions:

Let me go to the next question which is: *Why do we read the text out loud?*

That’s a very good question. I would say that you read it out loud because much of the scriptures was meant to be read out loud. When Paul wrote his Letters, they were sent out to the churches and the churches read them out loud. What we are going to do at this point is—as my homiletics professor told us— is to re-oralize or to make it audible again. We are attempting to do that and that’s why we read it out loud. Do we have to read it out loud? No. But it’s important to recognize that sometimes, you hear things that you don’t see, and sometimes you see things that you don’t hear. When you read it out loud, you are able to hear

the text as well as see in the text. In fact, it might be even more valuable to have someone else read the text and you hear the text, or go online and find some other places—it's difficult to find one in your favorite translation, if your favorite translation is not the King James translation. But that's a very valuable and helpful thing, to just sit there and listen, and you hear things that you may not necessarily see. So why read the text out loud? Because you will hear things that you may not necessarily see.

Here, in reading out loud, someone has said: *'Also causes one to hear the word which produces faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by The Word of God. I have always practiced reading out loud when preaching.'* That's what someone has written in and I would definitely concur.

Let me also say, that not only should you read the text out loud in the first wave of exegesis, but also, you should read your manuscript (if you write a manuscript) out loud when you are practicing before preaching. That's something that is definitely very neglected by our preachers. I think we don't read out loud as much as we should. The text that we got, as I said, were read out loud and you are going to present your sermon out loud. So for that reason, read your text out loud and read your sermon out loud.

Another individual: *'Reading out loud also helps with the memory.'* That's a very important point. I think it's valuable to recognize that it helps you with the memory because more than one sense is—you're using your hearing as well as you're using your audible; you're speaking and you're hearing and you're seeing. You're using more of your senses. So it's definitely a valuable and important point.

Wave 2 - In-depth Interaction with the Text

Purpose

The purpose of this particular wave is to understand the scripture on its own terms. Now before, we just read the scripture quickly, audibly, and we're not really going that deep into the scripture. But here (in the second wave), we are going to go deeper into the scripture. We're looking at the same scripture again but in a deeper way. And we're going to seek to understand the scripture on its own terms. Next, we are going to have an in-depth understanding of the scripture under consideration. And we are going to use, largely, the Bible alone to answer our questions. That's the purpose for this particular wave.

It's very important to get as much out of the scriptures alone before you go to other people. You go to the Spirit in prayer then you read the scripture and seek to understand the scripture before you go to other folk, before you go to other sermons, before you go to commentary. You understand it on its own terms as much as you can before moving forward.

In-depth Reading of Scripture

Now what happens in an in-depth reading of scripture? Here we're going to add this tool, the **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge**. I talked about it in the last web seminar. It's actually a cross-reference system. It is your Bible cross reference system put on steroids. You want this particular tool. Take your scripture and look up as many of the cross references as possible. I mean this is a very in-depth tool. But you're going to look up many of these resources, many of these different scriptures that the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge asks you to look at.

We also want to add other translations of the Bible, including the original (which isn't a translation), but the

original in Hebrew and Greek. If you know Hebrew and Greek, you'll want to add these particular translations or original.

It's important to **not use other materials**. I added this tool, **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge**, but that's just a cross-reference tool. They'll tell you to go to other scriptures. It's kind of like a Concordance which you might use as well. But you don't want to use any other materials that's going to stifle your interpretation of the text.

Here, what you want to do in this in-depth reading is to **create a storyline of the scripture**: What is happening in the scripture? Who are the players? What are they doing? What is the plotline? You want to create a storyline so you understand exactly what is happening.

We also want to **analyze the theology** that is presented in the text.

We want to **analyze the rhetoric used**. Why does the writer use this particular word? Why does the writer use this particular image? You want to analyze that rhetoric: Why does this writer use this particular logic?

Finally, we also want to **analyze the social characteristics** of the text. This is really an important point especially for African American preachers. Here, we want to really look at how the people treat one another in this text. How is power used in this text? That is to analyze the social characteristics.

And then, after that, **then you use other materials**. Then you bring in your other helps. But for a lot of this, you are attempting to do it with the Bible and the Bible alone.

Bible Translations

Now I want to talk a little bit about other translations, which translations to use, and our interpretation of the

scripture. Use all of them, as many of them as you can get your hands on. Use as many of them. But I would say you would want to at least use these four translations:

- The King James Version of the Bible. You want to use the King James version of the Bible. If it's not your primary translation, it should be one that you read for the mere fact that most of the people, especially in many African American context, this is the Bible that's used. It still is the *most popular bible*. Everybody has one. And another important point is that the language of the traditional African American preacher is often the Elizabethan English of the King James version of the Bible. I mean, how many times have you heard preachers talk about Jesus calming the sea and the disciples come to Jesus and say, "Carest thou not that we perish"? It just flows off of our tongues even though it's not the language that we use today. But it is the language of the Black preacher. And so I would encourage you to at least read the King James version of the Bible, see what it says about your particular text.

- Another thing is the New International Version. This is the *most popular new translation*. Many people use it. You want to read the New International version of the Bible just because so many people use it and also because it provides a different look. It's a much different look at the scripture. We really can't talk about many of the differences in here but there's a whole different translational philosophy between the King James version and the New International version.

- Next is the New American Standard Bible which is the *evangelical scholarly translation*. Your conservative evangelicals will make use of the New American Standard Bible. I would definitely encourage you to grab a hold of that for that very reason.

- Finally, there is the New Revised Standard Version. This is a *popular mainline translation* that many of the mainline users—the liberal and mainline people—would make use of. So I would definitely say that you want to at least read it in your favorite translation and then you want to grab at least these four.

Now you can find these four on the web if you don't want to own one of these Bibles. I definitely believe that a preacher should have a number of these. And I would encourage you to get a King James version, NIV, NASB, and New Revised Standard (NRSV). As I said, you want to have a primary translation as well as these four.

Cross References

We're going to move forward to the next step which is... cross-references. What tool do you use for cross-references? The **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** is *THE* tool for cross-references. That is the tool you want. You want to look it up and you want to note anything. It's going to give you other scriptures to go to. You want to look up those other scriptures and note these things that you're learning. When you go back, when you're going into these different translations, you want to note any differences between the translations. There may be differences in wording. There may be even more substantial differences. It is your job to understand what these differences are before you're ready to preach the particular scripture. And also, you're going to use the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge so that you can look at what the Bible itself has said about this particular scripture. There are parallel passages that are in there. And there are also others that will help to illuminate the discussion of this particular text.

Create a Storyline

Now we're ready to create a storyline which is a very important component of understanding the text. You do not understand the text until you know the basic plot of the text that's under consideration.

Who are the major players? Who's the cast of this particular text?

When Jesus came off of the mountain and saw the disciples arguing with someone else: you have Jesus, you have the disciples, you have those who came with Jesus as well as others. You want to know who are the players and what are the players doing.

What are the different players doing in the particular text?

What is the plot?

What is the forward motion? What is happening? Where is Jesus going? Where are the other people going? What is the conflict in the text? How are they and how is it being resolved?

What happens at the end of the text?

And finally, what is God doing in the text?

You want to ask yourself these questions as well as other questions so that you can understand the text.

Now once again, at this point, you are not going to Commentaries which may just lay this out for you. You are reading the text itself to understand these particular questions. You are reading the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge which will provide you cross-references which may help you to understand some of these things. And you are reading other translations of the Bible which may help to illuminate some of these things. But you want to have a basic plotline and understanding of what is going on in the text.

Analyze the Theology

Next, you want to analyze the theology. Now, as I said, as you're doing these things, you are writing these things down. You are going back to what you originally thought. There may be questions on your initial observations. You've looked them up. You've answered some of these questions. Some of these questions may have to do with plot. You write them in, you write them on another sheet of paper. You are attempting to refine the observations you made initially because some things may come to your mind initially that seemed good but is actually not good or not true or not valuable; at that point, you would fix it and update it as you are doing this particular analysis here. Next, after you create the storyline, you want to analyze the theology of the Text.

What does the author say about God? What is the scripture saying about God, about God's interaction with us?

What does the author say about creation, where we came from?

Here, when we're talking about Theology, you want to ask yourself these questions to tease out or to understand the theology in the text.

What does the scripture say about where we came from?

What does the scripture say about how God relates to humanity, covenant?

What does the scripture say about how humanity breaks the relationship with God?

These are some questions that are going to help us make sure that we address the very big and important questions that are in this particular text.

Redemption: What does the text have to say about how God cleans up sin? If anything, it's important to recognize. It may or may not. At least ask the question.

What does this question have to say about community – how we live together?

What does it have to say about destiny – where are we going?

We want to analyze the theology that is in the text.

Analyze Rhetoric and Logic

Next, after we've analyzed the theology, we want to analyze the rhetoric and the logic in the text.

We want to ask, *what are the important words that are used?*

We looked at the different translations, why different words were used. But why were different words used? As much as we can, we want to ask ourselves that question: *why were different words used?*

And what are the *important words that jump out at us?* Or any words repeated; or any words ignored that we think should be used.

How would we rephrase this in our own contemporary language?

What are the arguments that are used in the text?

What's the logic of the author?

What are the images that the author uses?

Why do we think the author used these images?

These are some of the questions that we ask as we analyze the rhetoric. So we've looked at the storyline of the scripture, we've looked at the theology in the scripture, and

now we've looked at the rhetoric and the logic. How is that theology translated into languages? Is this question a rhetoric and logic?

Analyze Social Characteristics

Finally, we want to analyze the social characteristics of the particular text.

Who has the power in the text?

What are these people doing with the power in the text?

How are these people using the power with other people?

Are they using it over people? It's interesting that sometimes in the scripture, especially when in terms of Jesus' power is actually something that is obtained in weakness. There is power in weakness. So that is something that you would want to tease out – *how is power used? Are there different concepts of power? Are there two powers in conflict in these scriptures?*

What are those with power doing in the text?

Is there a political dimension to the action in the text?

How communities work together, how communities interact with others.

And how is God or the gospel affecting the socio-cultural circumstances in the text? Does the Gospel affect my socio-cultural circumstances? Does the Gospel affect how I'm interacting with others?

These are some of the questions that we are going to ask with this particular aspect of the presentation.

Analyze History

Finally, we are going to analyze the history. Now this is separate from the storyline of the scripture for the storyline is studying the scripture as story. But here we're going to

analyze the history of the text. Here, we're going to look behind the text. Now you're going to want to do this as much as possible without referring to other resources. It may be difficult. Sometimes the author is explicitly identified. If so, you want to write that down:

Who was the author?

Who were the original hearers of the text? Paul makes that easy. In his, he says it's the Apostle Paul speaking to the people of Corinth or whatever. But you want to look at it, look at other scriptures in the same way.

When was this particular scripture written?

What is happening in the community that received the scripture at the time the scripture was given?

And what was happening in other surrounding communities at this particular time?

Here you are analyzing the history, as much as possible, ONLY with the scripture.

Fill in Missing Information

Next, after you've done that—only with the scripture—then you're able to go and use some of these other tools:

It's important to have a good Bible Dictionary. You want to use encyclopedias and commentaries to fill in. So you've gone through these, you've done as much as you can, you've created a storyline.

Now you go back to Commentaries, you go back to bible dictionaries to fill in what you couldn't understand, which you couldn't figure out from the scripture itself. You want to analyze the theology, then you go to your bible dictionary which will help you to answer some of the questions. Maybe you didn't pick up something that has to do with sin and this particular commentary shows how it's there. Or maybe you disagree with that particular commentary.

Maybe you're struggling with that commentary. At any rate, you want to refine your observations by looking at commentaries and bible dictionaries, specifically. You want to analyze the rhetoric and logic, as we said. Now hear these important words. You go to the bible dictionary. You go to a lexicon. You go to these other resources to look up these words so that you can seek to understand what these words are: your Bible Dictionary or your Seminary, New Testament Book, Old Testament Book, whatever may help you understand some of these arguments, may help you understand images that you didn't pick up when you looked at the scripture alone.

Next, the Social Dimensions/Socio-Dimensions. You're going back again. You're feeling in the questions that you didn't get answered on your own.

Finally, history. Now this is one that you definitely, probably need help. So you go to your bible dictionary, who's the author, who are the original hearers, when was it written... all of these things are things that you're going to do and analyze, you're going to fill in using the particular—especially—bible dictionaries, maybe bible encyclopedias as well as commentaries.

Wave 3 - Help from other Perspectives

Purpose

Here you're going to other perspectives. Once again, you're going over the same scripture and you're going to allow interaction with other voices. And you're also going to connect to your tradition.

How are you going to do that?

Adding Other Perspectives

Hymnals

You want to find out what the Hymnal says about your particular scripture. One of the nice things is that many hymnals have a Scripture index. You want to look up in the scripture index, look up your text and see what the hymnal has to say. Sometimes that's going to be celebration material; this is going to be illustration material. You look up in your hymnal. Now you should, especially African American preachers, have at least two hymnals. One is the hymnal from your tradition, your denominational tradition. And the second hymnal should be the African American Heritage Hymnal. Once again, you can find the link on SoulPreaching.com/seminar2.

Sermons

You want to look in other sermons. See what other sermons have said about your particular text. Sometimes you can get illustrations there. Sometimes it can help to fill in some of the gaps that you have.

Denominational Resources

Methodists are going to look and see what John Wesley has had to say about this particular text. You want to go to John Wesley. You want to go to Martin Luther if that's an important part of your tradition; John Calvin, see what they

are seeing. African American preachers are going to want to go and see what other African Americans have said about this particular text. Whatever your tradition is, you're going to want to look at your denominational resources, see what they're saying. Not that you're going to necessarily agree with it but you're going to want to interact with it. And it's important to do it later in the exegetical process so it doesn't stifle your own creative interaction with the text.

Poems, television, media, etc.

Now, I've talked about this over and over again, television, poems, movies, and the like – here you're going to want to see what they have to say about your particular text or how they interact. A very good resource for this is TextWeek.com. They have television and movies and popular culture interactions with particular texts. TextWeek.com is a very important resource.

Study Bibles

Study bibles are another important resource to help you, as you're doing this third wave, in understanding the scripture. I don't know if you've seen a study bible but there's commentary right in the study bible itself for a particular scripture. Now what's valuable and helpful about this is that it is a one-volume thing and it's sitting right there. I have three study bibles—well, I have a few more but I would suggest having at least three:

One is the original **African American Heritage Bible** by Cain Hope Felder. He was the editor. It's important to have that particular bible. It has resources to help African American preachers, but it also has commentary on different texts from an African American perspective.

Another study bible that I have is the **NIV Bible** from Zondervan. This provides a conservative evangelical understanding of the text. So the first one was an African American approach, the next one is a conservative evangelical approach to the text.

And next is the **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**, **Oxford Bible**, or the **Harper Collins Bible**. What this provides is the liberal mainline understanding of the text.

So here, you've got three study bible interactions with the text, three understandings of the text. And that definitely gives you very different perspectives of the text.

So what you've done in wave one, you've written down your initial observations. In wave two, you've used other translations of the Bible as well as the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge to understand the storyline, to understand the theology, understand the history, and understand the social characteristics of the text. And then you use the Bible Dictionary to refine that understanding. And now, you are using hymnals to refine your understanding. You're using sermons from your own denominational tradition as well as others. The internet makes this very easy. You look in to see what others have said. And like I said, TextWeek.com is going to help you with that. You use other denominational resources – Sunday School books, anything that's going to help you. Then you are going to use your study bible. You're getting other perspectives on the particular text in this particular wave.

Wave 4 - Walking in the Text

Purpose

So next is wave four, which I think is a very important component. Well, to be honest with you, all of the components are important but this is one that is often missing in our exegetical understanding... and that is to *Walk in the Text*. The purpose of this particular wave is to have an informed creativity. Wave one was a creativity that was not informed. You were pretty much just reading and writing down everything that comes to your mind. Wave four is going to push you back into creativity. But this is after we have interacted with the text. We've interacted with the text from many different translations, we've looked at the theology in the text, we've looked at the history of the text, we've looked at bible dictionaries, we've looked at many different resources, we've looked at other sermons. And now, we're ready to be creative again. So I call this an informed creativity. This allows the one who's exegeting the scripture to experience the Bible and it opens the way to giving the people their hearers, and experience with the scripture.

Going Deeper: Senses

How are we going to do this? We are going to look at the particular scripture from our senses:

We are going to look for **smells in the text**. *What do you smell in the text?* When you're walking around, when you're seeking to understand the text, there is the lily of the valley. What does the lily look like? How does it smell? You may have to go to your Bible Dictionary to find out. But you want to know how it smells. You want to know how it looks like. As I've talked about before, when the prodigal son was in the pigpen, how did that smell? How

did he smell? How does that inform your exegesis of the scripture? You're walking around, you're walking in the scripture looking at the prodigal son in the mud, in the pigpen. You're going to have to use your homiletical imagination but it is an informed use of your homiletical imagination. What do you smell as you're looking over on him? You've been to a farm. You want to incorporate that.

Sights in the text. *What are the sights? What do you see?* As I said before, the lily in the valley, *what does it look like?* The sight of the young man in the prodigal son in the pigpen – *how does it look?* Do you see mud on him? Do you see the depths of degradation as he's bending down in the mud and eating the same things with the pig? You ought to see that before you can preach it. In fact, other folk can't see it till you see it. So you must see it before you can preach it.

Sounds. *What do you hear in the text?* The cock crowing three times. Do you hear the cock crowing yourself? *How does that sound? Is it a piercing sound? Is it a sound that can wake you up, that can wake up the dead?* That's an important point to keep in mind as you are walking through the text.

Touch. *What do you feel in the text?* When you're walking on those streets of gold in heaven, what does it feel like to see a rose that ain't got not thorns in it? What do you feel? You are not ready to preach the text until you walk in the text and you feel the text.

Taste. *What are the tastes that are in the text? How does the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil taste?* How does the fruit that we're going to eat up in heaven taste? The taste.

So we want to go deeper and understand the text by experiencing the text. Walking around in the text is what I called it. One thing that's very helpful for this type of thing is to go to Martha Simmons,

TheAfricanAmericanLectionary.org. We'll go to it later. For every one of the commentaries, the writer breaks these things down and talks about the smells in the text. You are not ready to preach it or even turn it into a sermon until you've done these things. Look at sights in the text, the sounds in the text, the touch in the text, and the taste in the text. These may explicitly get into your sermon, but if they don't, they help you to provide an experience with the scripture when you are preaching.

Emotions in the Text

Now after that, after you've done the senses, you also want to look at the emotion or feeling. *What are the emotions that come upon you as you read the text? Do you get happy when you read the text? Do you get sad when you read the text? And what are the emotions in the text?* Look at each major character. What are their different emotions? How does your emotion interact with their emotions? If you're happy and they're sad, why is that? You want to ask yourself that before you're ready to preach the sermon. This is an exegesis. If you are sad and they are happy, why is that? If you understand and they don't understand, why is that? These are the feelings in the text that you want to do that. This is going to allow you to be cognizant of your emotions with the scripture and also going to help you to help others have an emotional interaction with the scripture.

Summary: Waves and Creativity

So we've got four waves in summary, four waves of interaction. There are four waves for interpreting the scripture. And here we want to look at the role of creativity.

Individuals have asked me, 'how can we get more creative in our sermon presentation?' And as I've said earlier, you do that by getting more creative in your interpretation of the scripture.

Wave One – Unrestrained Creativity

Wave one, you have unrestrained creativity because you're writing down everything that comes to your mind. It's an unrestrained creativity.

Wave Two – In-depth Exploration in the Text

After that is wave two where we have an in-depth exploration of the text. Here is less creativity. There is some creativity here but is less creativity and more testing the observations you made in wave one. We're testing them but we're also asking more questions for an in-depth analytical understanding of the text.

Wave Three – Getting Help From Others

Then we are getting help from others. Here, if there's much creativity—once again, it is from the other individuals who are interpreting the text, who have interpreted the text in sermons or in other resources. So here you are taking your exploration of the text where you have refined your unrestrained creativity and you are enlightening it with help from others.

Wave Four – Informed Creativity

And finally, you are going to take a walk through the text to provide an informed creativity. When you walk through the text and have the smells in the text, it's going to take the sights of the text, and the feelings which you

feel, the sense of touch in the text... it's going to take your preaching to another whole level.