



Helpful Questions To Ask When Reading Scripture

1. **What is the literary world “of the text”?**
 - a. Is it a story, hymn, letter, poetry, etc.?
 - b. Is this the beginning, middle, or end of the text?
 - c. What are its themes, motifs?
 - d. How does this text’s placement within the whole biblical text affect the way that it is read?
2. **What is the world “behind” the text, or the historical world?**
 - a. Who is the (implied) author of this text?
 - b. What was the original language of the text?
 - c. Where was it written? In what time period?
 - d. Who was the original audience?
3. **What is the world “in front of” the text?**
 - a. What is the world/perspective of the reader?
 - b. What are you as a reader bringing to the text?
4. Who has the power in this story?
5. Is there a specific marginalized group mentioned in the text?
6. How is the marginalized group portrayed or not portrayed?
7. Is there a woman or woman’s point of view in this text?
8. How are women portrayed in the text? Do they speak?
9. Are there any other suppressed or absent voices in the text?
10. Do you find yourself reading “against the grain” or “with the grain” Why?

Recommended Resources

Bibles

- *The New Oxford Annotated Study Bible with Apocrypha* (NRSV), 5th ed. (Oxford, 2018)
- David Bentley Hart (translator), *The New Testament: A Translation* (Yale, 2017)
- Robert Alter (translator), *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (Norton, 2018)

Early texts of Christian scriptural interpretation

- *The Didache* (easily accessible online)
- Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles, Reader’s Edition* (Oxford, 2020)
- *Popular Patristics Series* (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press)
- *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (IVP, 30 volumes)

What the Bible is and how to read it

- Robert Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, revised and updated (Basic Books, 2011)
- Joseph K. Gordon, *Divine Scripture in Human Understanding: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Bible* (Notre Dame, 2019)
- William P. Brown, *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (Westminster John Knox, 2017)