

# Steps To Understanding Difficult Bible Texts

From *Grasping The Word Of God* by Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays

[https://zondervan.typepad.com/files/grasping-gods-word\\_excerpt.pdf](https://zondervan.typepad.com/files/grasping-gods-word_excerpt.pdf)



## A. Grasp The Text In Their Town

What did the original author mean by the text?

1. **Read the text carefully and observe it.**
  - o Observe! Observe! Observe!
  - o Scrutinize grammar.
  - o Analyze all significant words.
2. **Study the historical-cultural context.**
  - o Authorship
  - o Recipients
  - o Date
  - o Occasion/purpose
  - o Other historical-cultural elements (geography, social customs, economics, etc.)
3. **Study the literary context.**
  - o Identify the genre (narrative, epistle, poetry, wisdom, apocalyptic, etc.).
  - o Develop an outline of the entire book.
  - o Examine the surrounding context (passage before, passage after).
  - o Place within the grand redemptive storyline of Scripture.

## B. Measuring the Width of the River

What are the differences between the author's original audience and us?

**Items to consider include:**

- Culture
- Language
- Situation
- Time
- Covenant

## C. Cross the Principilizing Bridge

What is the theological principle in the text?

- You're not creating meaning. Rather, your goal is to discover the meaning intended by the author.
- Recall the differences from Step 2.
- Then note the similarities between the biblical situation and your own.
- Identify a broader theological principle reflected in the text, but that relates to the similarities between us and the biblical audience.

### Criteria for the Theological Principle:

- The principle should be reflected in the text.
- The principle should be timeless and not tied to a specific situation.
- The principle should not be culturally bound.
- The principle should correspond to the teaching of the rest of Scripture.
- The principle should be relevant to both the biblical and contemporary audience.

*True "any time, any place, and any circumstance."*

## D. Consult the Biblical Map

How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?

- This is especially important for Old Testament texts. Consider how the New Testament add insights or qualifications to the principle.

## E. Grasp The Text In Our Town

What is the application of the text in our context?

- Would a modern day literal application of the command accomplish the intended objective of the biblical author's original statement?
- If the original author were consulted he would agree that the modern implication fits or if the author heard a lesson would they agree?
- Do your conclusions match the author's other statements or the rest of the Bible?
- Is your heart enticing you to disobey the Scriptures?
- What does church history have to say?