**Syllabus**

**Interpreting Scripture**

**WVS Center for Ministry Formation**

**Location of the Course:** Winfield Church of the Nazarene

10822 Winfield Rd.

Winfield, WV

**Course Dates:** October 23, 2023 to November 20 – 6 pm to 9 pm on Mondays

**Instructor:** Scott Buell

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**Module Vision Statement:**

The very nature of the Bible as the message of God is communication and thus it must be interpreted. The question is not whether to interpret Scripture but whether it is interpreted well or poorly. The module is designed for believers who are called into a ministry of communicating the Word. The primary context of their ministry is the Church, which is nurtured by the Holy Spirit’s application of Scripture to its life and work. To grow in this, ministry students need to learn the appropriate tools and processes of interpretation and to practice the use of such tools and processes. Beyond knowing, students must become lovers of Scripture, seekers after God, and joyfully committed to adopting the message into their own lives and to their contemporary contexts.

Students should have completed *Telling the Old Testament Story of God* and *Telling the New Testament Story of God* (or their equivalent) before beginning this module.

**Educational Assumptions**

1. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit’s presence within and among us.
2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices, and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.
3. Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the instructor and the reading assignments but also from each other.

**Outcome Statements**

This module contributes to the development of the following abilities as defined in the *U.S. Sourcebook for Ministerial Development*.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

CN 15 Ability to describe how the Bible came into being up to contemporary translations

CN 16 Ability to identify the steps of historical, literary, and theological analysis used in exegesis

CN 17 Ability to exegete a passage of Scripture using the steps listed above

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

At the completion of this module the student will:

* Understand that the need for hermeneutics arises from the multiple sources of meaning of texts
* Recognize the formative role of corporate and apostolic understandings for interpretation of Scripture
* Be able to describe the role of author, text, and reader(s) in the issue of meaning
* Be able to compare and contrast the ways Wesleyan and prominent non-Wesleyan presuppositions impact interpretation—including personal vs. corporate interpretation
* Recognize the importance of a sound hermeneutical method for Wesleyan theology
* Be aware of his or her own understanding of inspiration and authority of Scripture and how that understanding relates to Article 4 of the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene
* Grow in his or her joyful submission to the power of the Spirit working through Scripture
* Be able to identify and illustrate the primary methods of scriptural interpretation from major (various) periods of Church history
* Be able to understand and articulate the process of translation from original languages to the version(s) in hand
* Be able to describe the way in which translations participate in the inspiration and authority of Scripture
* Be able to give a general description of the problems of textual corruption and the resources for textual criticism
* Be able to recognize evidences of historical context—author, date, audience, place, etc.—in the biblical books and describe how they shape the meaning of the text
* Be aware of the ways the worldview(s) of the biblical authors compared to the modern worldview(s) affect the meaning of the text
* Be able to identify the immediate context, book context, and canonical context of biblical passages and to describe how those contexts shape meaning
* Be able to recognize the way genre, form, grammar, sentences, and words express the meaning of specific texts
* Be able to recognize ways Scripture teaches theology and theologizes—direct affirmation, inductive, deductive, inferential, narrative, etc.—and appropriate such theology
* Be able to understand, recognize, and appropriately exercise the hermeneutical principles relating to specific genres such as narrative—including OT narratives, Gospels, and Acts—Law, wisdom, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic, and Epistles
* Be able to move through the process of exegesis to contemporary application of the biblical texts in preaching, formation, and Christian education
* Recognize the principles he or she is using in moving from reading of Scripture to personal spiritual formation
* Recognize the role of the context—both interpreter’s and audience’s—in developing application
* Recognize the importance of contextualizing Scripture for a contemporary audience

**Course Requirements**

1. **Class attendance, attention, and participation** are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work.
2. **Assignments - Read the text:**

*How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*: **Fourth Edition,** Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart. Zondervan Academic, 2014.

* It is available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle.

*How We Got Our Bible:* ***Third Edition***, Ralph Earle. Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2010.

* Available on thefoundrypublishing.com and Amazon.

Read the New Testament Book of Philippians FIVE times from at least 3 different translations.

**3. Context Study of the NT Epistle: Philippians – Due on November 6**

Use the Context Mapping Grid to work through the entire NT Epistle to the Philippians as learned in this class. This will take several pages to complete.

**4. Exegetical Paper – Due on November 20 (the last class session)**

Write an exegetical paper using the methods taught and discussed in this class. The paper’s Biblical text must be taken from the NT Epistle to the Philippians.

**Course Outline and Schedule**

Week 1

1. Introduction to Hermeneutics

2. The Biblical text and Bible translations

3. An Overview of the History of Interpretation

Week 2

1. Wesleyan Ways of Interpreting Scripture

2. The Nazarene Article of Faith on Scripture

3. Contextual Study of the books of the Bible

4. Tools for Interpretation

Week 3

1. An Inductive Method to study the Bible

2. Interpreting The Epistles

Week 4

1. Interpreting Old Testament Narratives

2. Interpreting The Prophets

3. Interpreting The Psalms

Week 5

1. Interpreting The Gospels

2. Interpreting The Parables

3. Interpreting Acts and Revelation

**Course Evaluation**

Attendance and Participation 100 points

Reading 100 points

Contextual Study 50 points

Exegetical Paper 100 points

Pass with distinction 315 and above

Pass 245 and above