

Basic Training in the Bible—Handout for June 24

The Act of Reading and Reading Acts: The Question of Historical Precedent in Acts

“The model [in Acts] is not so much in the specifics as in the overall picture. By the very way God has moved him to structure and narrate this history it seems probably that we are to view this triumphant, joyful, forward-moving expansion of the gospel into the Gentile world, empowered by the Holy Spirit and resulting in changed lives and local communities, as God’s intent for the continuing church. And precisely because this is God’s intent for the church, nothing can hinder it, neither Sanhedrin nor synagogue, dissension nor narrow-mindedness, prison nor plot. Luke, therefore, probably intended that the ongoing church should be “like them,” but in the larger sense, not by modeling itself on any specific example.” Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 114.

I. The Act of Reading

Reading is a _____

Learning to read well takes _____

II. Reading Acts

Hermeneutical Guide-post #1: _____ does not equal _____

Overall, total pattern in Acts:

- i. the story begins with proclamation of Jesus in Jerusalem with a purely Jewish church, with Peter as leading character (Acts 1–6)
- ii. moves toward proclamation of Jesus which includes the Gentiles in Judea and Samaria, with Stephen, Philipp, and Peter as leading characters (Acts 7–11)
- iii. and finds its goal with proclamation of Jesus reaching the whole Gentile world and ending in Rome, the capital of the Gentile world, with Paul as leading character (Acts 12–28)

Hermeneutical Guide-post #2: _____ is king

When reading biblical, historical narrative, the overall, repetitive narrative pattern and purpose serves as a norm for the church, rather than individual passages.

******In other words, when reading the narrative constantly ask this question: what function does this individual passage have within the whole story and total context?******

III. Exegetical Exercise: Acts 6:1–7

What function does this passage have in the whole story and total context? Is it meant to establish a precedent for including “deacons” in church government? What purpose does it serve?