A few reminders and key concepts to keep in mind when studying passages:

**Hermeneutics**—the science (and art) of Biblical interpretation. It is a set of principles we use to determine the meaning of the Biblical text. It is concerned with how we interpret the Bible.

**Exegesis**—the application of hermeneutical principles to arrive at the author’s intended meaning. The word itself expresses the idea that we are “drawing out of the text” the meaning that is there (as opposed to “Eisegesis”, imposing our own understanding upon the text).

**Exposition**—the communication of the results of exegeses (the meaning of the text), along with relevance and application, to modern-day learners.

Using the Chart:

**What Should My Goals Be?**

(1) To have a sound interpretation of the passage

(2) To model sound interpretation for your students as you teach them.

**What Should My Sermon Preparation (or personal Bible study) Look Like?**

Answer the following questions:

1) **What did the author mean? (What Happened?)** We must start with Grammatical, Historical and Contextual interpretation of the text. Using these guidelines, we discover what the (human) author’s meaning was that he was communicating to the ancient audience.

Grammatical: Try to determine the normal, everyday meaning and interaction of the words, phrases, and sentences. We must dig into the meaning, form, function and relationships of those words. In many cases, this requires looking at the original languages. Allowing for figures of speech, and understanding that there are different genres in Scripture, seek out a plain sense reading of the text. A good interpretive rule to live by is: “if the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.”

Historical: While the Bible is understandable to everyone, we must realize that it was written thousands of years ago to different cultures. Looking at the author, the date, the occasion and purpose of the writing, we try as best we can to understand what did this passage mean to the audience for whom it was originally written? What were the circumstances of the writing? What was the cultural environment? All these factors help us understand the meaning of the text.

Contextual: We must always take into account the surrounding context of a particular word or passage. What is the immediate thought (pericope) that fits in with the author’s argument? How does this thought further the argument? What is the overall structure of the book? How does this idea fit in with similar thoughts throughout the rest of Scripture?
2) **What does this mean for everyone?** *(What Happens?)* Using the “analogy of Scripture” (comparing Scripture with Scripture), we can extract timeless truths from the passage and learn what the (divine) author’s intended meaning was to audiences of all time. Scripture must interpret Scripture. The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Some principles to keep in mind:

- interpret in light of the context of the whole of Scripture
- interpret in harmony with other passages in Scripture
- interpret the unclear in light of the clear

In addition to the human author, the Holy Spirit is also speaking through these texts to people of all time. There are timeless truths that we can draw out of the passages we study. We must take care to distinguish between culturally bound applications and principles that transcend individual cultures—and that apply to all people from all time.

3) **What does this mean for those I will preach to?** *(What is Happening?)* Only then, after we have done our work in steps one and two, can we proceed to apply these timeless truths to our contemporary audiences. Always filtering these truths through the prism of our own experiences and perspective, we must prayerfully seek out how the Holy Spirit would have you present His Word to your people. Homiletics Professor Don Sunukjian suggests making 3 consecutive outlines to ensure the integrity of this process:

- We start with a “passage outline” *(what happened)*—corresponding to step one, the “Exegetical statement.”
- Then construct a “truth outline” *(what happens)*—corresponding to step two, the “Theological Statement.”
- Finally, prepare a “sermon outline” *(what is happening)*—reflecting step three, the “Homiletical Statement.”

When faithfully done in order, these steps can help ensure we are communicating to our people the truths that God would have us teach.

Used by Permission, Michael Patton, Reclaiming the Mind Ministries, The Theology Program.
1. Exegetical Statement
   “What did it mean then?”
   - Historical interpretation
   - Grammatical interpretation
   - Contextual interpretation
   - Literary Interpretation

2. Theological Statement
   “What is the timeless truth taught?”

3. Homiletical Statement
   “How does it apply to us?”