RE 215 Christian Scriptures

Interview Paper

**Due:** Wednesday, Dec. 1, in class

(These papers will not be accepted via e-mail because the interview handouts should be turned in as well. See below.)

In this final unit on biblical interpretation, we have seen how a reader’s socio-cultural background interacts with the words in the text *to create meaning*, meaning not shared by all readers of the text. In this paper, students will explore how this interaction of reader and text relates to meaning by interviewing 3 readers and analyzing their interpretations of the same passage.

**STEP 1: PREPARE TO WRITE THE PAPER:**

1. Spend some time with the passage before you conduct interviews:
   1. Read the passage carefully in your Study Bible (the footnotes too!)
   2. Take some notes on how you might interpret this passage.
   3. Take some notes on how you think your social location might lead you to interpret your passage this way.
2. Set up three 20-minute meetings with your friends, family, colleagues. (Attempt to interview as **diverse a range of people as possible**.) What do I mean by diverse? Try to choose participants who are a different race, sexual orientation, nationality, faith, denomination, political ideology, etc. At each of these meetings you will:
   1. Give the reader ONE of the attached worksheets (**give all your readers the same passage**) and ask them to read the text *carefully*. (Give them as much time as they need.)
   2. Then direct the reader to follow these directions:
      1. Please underline the one or two sentences from this passage that are most important.
      2. Please explain in writing (space given on worksheet) why these sentences are significant. How do they relate to the overall meaning of the passage? (Be as explicit as possible.)
      3. Once the reader has ***written*** their response, you are to have a conversation with the reader, attempting to discern what aspects of her/his social background have influenced her/his interpretation. Take notes on this conversation. Be sure to ask enough follow-up questions to get a good sense of your reader’s thoughts. (**SEE ATTACHED INTERVIEW GUIDE**.)

**STEP 2: WRITE THE PAPER:**

1. You can’t include in your paper all of the observations you have made in these interviews, so:
   1. describe 3-4 of most interesting findings about how different people offer subtle or drastically different interpretations
   2. explain in detail how your findings illustrate the influence of one’s social background on interpretation/the meaning of the text.
2. Finally, answer the question we’ve pondered in our discussion of ideological criticism: *Is there ever a time when you can say another's reading is just plain wrong*? If so, according to what criteria? What boundaries or constraints are there to “proper interpretation”? What constitutes a “good” interpretation of a biblical passage?

**IMPORTANT:**

✪ Do NOT consult outside sources for this paper. This paper is to demonstrate your own thoughts and work with interpretation

✪ Paper should be **4-6 pages**, double-spaced, 12-pt. font (Times New Roman), 1-inch margins

✪ Upload interview notes as part of your paper, email interview notes to me, or drop them by my office

Interview Guide

After your interviewee has completed his/her/their written responses, you will want to follow up with questions to really flesh out when the interviewee thinks and why he/she/they think that.

Some sample questions:

1. What is your relationship with the Christian New Testament? Is it an authority for how you live your life? Is it a sacred text? Is it just another work of religious literature?
2. What, for you, is the point of the Christian New Testament?
3. What have been taught about the Christian New Testament?
4. How do you think your involvement with a particular social group, religious ideology, or political ideology influences your interpretation of this passage?
5. How do you think your previous knowledge (or lack thereof) of this passage influence your interpretation of this passage?
6. How do our present current events influence your interpretation of this passage?
7. Do you think your interpretation is the absolutely right one? Why?

\*\*A good interviewer also asks good follow-up questions. Never let an interviewee get away with one or two word answers. Keep asking good questions to get good answers!\*\*

**Interview Questionnaire**

**Interviewer:**

**Interviewee:**

**Please read the following passage (Mark 10:17-31, New American Bible):**

17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? [3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/mark/mark10.htm#foot3) No one is good but God alone.

19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.'"

20 He replied and said to him, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth."

21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

22 At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. So Jesus again said to them in reply, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

26 They were exceedingly astonished and said among themselves, "Then who can be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God."

28 Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."

29 Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel

30 who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come.

31 But many that are first will be last, and the last will be first."

**Questions to Consider:**

1. Please underline the one or two sentences that seem to you to be most important in the passage.
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