“Exegesis” is a word used in Biblical Studies for the process of interpreting a passage from the Bible. The word simply means to “bring out” the meaning of the passage. An exegesis paper is a research paper that uses scholarly sources in order to interpret the historical meaning and modern application of a Biblical passage. Below the process is simplified into three parts:

**WRITING THE FIRST PART: THE INTRODUCTION (PART A)**

“Introduction” is a technical term referring to the background information listed below. This material typically covers the entire biblical book under study. Use scholarly sources to gather information and then write a discussion about each topic:

A. **Author:** Who wrote the book? Discuss possible options and show what evidence supports each. Draw a personal conclusion as to which you think is most likely.

B. **Date:** When was the book written? Discuss the evidence supporting each possibility and draw a personal conclusion as to which you think is most likely.

C. **Audience:** To whom was the book written? Discuss who would have received and read the book the first time. Example: “Romans” was not written to all Romans everywhere, but to the Christians in Rome, made up of groups of various Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, some who were slaves, others with positions in government.

D. **Where Written:** Place or territory where the author wrote the book.

E. **Historical Situation:** What was happening at the time when the author wrote the book? This is usually not the same time as the events described in the book.

F. **Concern of Book:** What is the book about? Discuss themes of the whole book.

**TRANSITION BETWEEN INTRODUCTION AND TEXT**

- Name the passage being studied.
- Describe how the passage functions in its immediate context. How does the passage fit with what comes before and after? How does the passage relate to the themes of the book?

**EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT (PART B)**

A. All quotes must be in NRSV.

B. **Style and/Literary Form:** Consider the structure of language usage. What type of literature is it: prose or poetry, history or allegory, apocalyptic, literal or symbolic, lament or hymn, law or discourse, sermon, letter, parable?
C. "The literal meaning": Explain in your own words the single meaning of the passage. Only rarely will a passage indicate that it has more than one meaning. Avoid allegorizing and spiritualizing on your part. Describe the meaning the author intended for the first readers of the book.

D. Key Words: While explaining the passage, look for and define key words and phrases. What does each word mean? Use Bible dictionaries, word studies and commentaries to define words. Do not use general English dictionaries.

APPLICATION (PART C)

• Summarize the meaning of the passage in a sentence or two, and then describe how we can live out that meaning today. Discuss what the passage tells us about how we relate to God, to other people, and to the world around us.

REQUIRED FORM FOR THE EXEGESIS PAPER—MLA Style

A. Margins: top, bottom, left, and right all will be 1 inch.

B. Begin the paper with a title page containing the following information: Name, Warner webmail address, Course Number, Title (Old Testament Exegesis or New Testament Exegesis), Scripture (Book x: x-x), Date. You may also print the Scripture passage on the title page, if you wish.

C. Double Space the entire paper, including block quotations and the “Works Cited” information.

D. Pagination: Place last name followed by the page number (without a period) in the top margin at the right side of the paper.

E. At the end of the paper start a new page with the heading centered at the top of the page—WORKS CITED. On this page list all sources cited in the paper.

F. Alphabetize sources by authors’ last names. Always include a minimum of three sources. Be sure sources are from creditable scholars.

STUDENTS IN 3000 LEVEL COURSES ADD THE FOLLOWING:

SYNTHESIS OF THE TEXT (PART B2)

• Summarize the message of the passage in a sentence or two.
• Compare this message with other passages, first in similar kinds of books, then in larger divisions. How does the passage relate to both Old Testament and New Testament teachings?
• Describe the theological and practical significance of this passage. How does its message relate to standard theological concepts? (What does it say about who God is and how God works among us?) What ethical concerns are present? (What does it say about how we should live?) In what ways can Christians incorporate this teaching into their lifestyles?

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