

HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES Open Book Biblical Exegesis Exam

The following comments are intended as helpful advice from the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee to candidates preparing to take the Open Book Biblical Exegesis Exam. These are not specific instructions; those are found on the examination itself.

Section I: Exegetical Study and Response to Exegetical Questions

Categories of questions: Note that there are four categories of exegetical questions; A, B, C and D the categories represent broadly the type of work done in exegesis. The questions are designed to address particular issues appropriate to each category and pertinent to the passage under study. Thus, with each exam, the categories of questions will remain constant, but the content of the questions will change.

- A. The Language of the Text – Questions in this category will focus on grammar and syntax, word usage, translation, and text-critical problems. They will presume a working knowledge of Greek or Hebrew (and occasionally both); as such they are an excellent opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate that he or she can use the biblical languages effectively in exegetical work. Candidates will answer six (6) questions, including at least one from each of the four categories in Section A.
- B. Literary Issues – Questions in this category will cover a wide range of topics pertaining to the literary character of the text, including but not limited to:
- Boundaries of the passage
 - Context
 - Genre
 - Structure and composition
 - Motifs, similes, and metaphors
 - Literary relationships to other biblical texts
- C. Principal Contents and Theology – Questions in this category will examine the significant contents and theological themes addressed or suggested by the passage.
- D History of Composition and Interpretation – Questions in this category will address the passage's historical/sociological setting, authorship, redaction history, and its interpretation by subsequent communities of faith.

Section II: Exegetical Focus

Candidates are expected to produce a brief statement of exegetical focus drawn from their exegetical work on the passage. Candidates should remember that their study of the passage may and should include other insights in addition to those addressed in Section I. While the focus should be consistent with answers to the selected questions, candidates should draw on all their work, whether contemplated by the exegetical questions or not, in distilling a statement of exegetical focus.

The focus statement is not a summary of exegetical results. Rather, it is a statement of the principal meaning of the passage, upon which the sermon or lesson plan will be built. It should be no longer than two or three sentences. A single well-considered sentence is quite acceptable.

Section III: Application

Candidates are required to make some contemporary use of their exegetical work in the form of either a sermon outline or a lesson plan. The sermon outline or lesson plan should be clearly centered on the

exegetical focus and consistent with the candidate's responses to the exegetical questions.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to provide a brief (2-3 sentences) description of the situation and audience to which the lesson or sermon would be taught or preached. This helps readers evaluate the appropriateness of language and imagery and the intelligibility of the argument or presentation. While the absence of such a description will not be considered grounds for failure, it will surely be noted by readers.

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Other helpful hints:

1. Double-space your text. For the convenience of readers, the main body of your essay answers should be either double-spaced; outlines (including sermon outlines and lesson plans, as well as other short outlines within the body of the essays) may be single-spaced.
2. Label your answers. Be sure to identify your essays in a manner consistent with the section and number of the question. For example: the second question of Section I.C should be identified as "I.C.2" or simply, "C.2". It is not necessary to include a repetition of the question, although you may do so if you wish. If sections of the exam are not clearly labeled, the exam will be returned ungraded.
3. Demonstrate a working knowledge of the language(s). Remember that part of the requirement of this exam [Book of Order G-14.0310d(1)] is the demonstration of a working knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. Choose to answer questions that will enable you to display your knowledge of the language. Questions in Section I.A are designed to require you to demonstrate at least minimal competence; you should make use of Greek or Hebrew in responding to them.
4. Remember your audience. Readers of the ordination exams are both clergy and elders, and with differing levels of familiarity with the language and tools of exegesis. While some have academic specialization in biblical studies, most do not. Write simply and directly. Avoid excessive use of technical terms, but be precise in your descriptions of grammar and syntax.