

Handout 1-D

Methods of Critical Reading

Studying the Bible includes critical methods of research that connect biblical texts to historic events, understand past customs, and explain literary styles no longer in use today. Specific types of critical reading include the following:

- **Exegesis.** The scholarly explanation of a Bible passage. The word *exegesis* means “to bring out or explain.” Exegesis tries to discover what a text meant in its original time and place of composition.
- **Hermeneutics.** The scholarly explanation of a Bible passage that is primarily concerned with what the text means for people today.
- **Source Criticism.** This type of study focuses on the source of each passage. Scholars have identified four sources, or oral traditions, for the Old Testament. By identifying the source of the passage, scholars can determine the message of a particular story or event.
- **Form Criticism.** This type of study examines the special form of a poem, law, hymn, or narrative and then tries to determine the cultural-historical situation from which it came.