

## Biblical Exegesis Chart

Type of Method	Description	Questions This Method Asks
Textual Criticism	Scholars attempt to recover the most original version of biblical books, because no originals exist, only copies. These scholars compare different translations of the Scriptures to understand more clearly the meaning of a given passage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the many ancient copies and fragments of Bible books, which ones are the oldest?</li> <li>• Can we identify why there are differences between different copies of the same book?</li> <li>• Can we identify why different translations use different words in passages?</li> </ul>
Historical Criticism	Scholars work to uncover the historical situation, or <i>Sitz im Leben</i> , of the writer at the time a particular book or story was written.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the historical situation during the life of the author / editor or of the author / editor's community?</li> <li>• How did the historical situation influence the author's writing?</li> </ul>
Literary Criticism	Scholars look at the Scriptures and seek to understand them as a work of literature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the writer use a particular literary form or device such as a poem, a historical story, a prophecy, a letter, or a gospel?</li> <li>• Did the passage use metaphors, puns, parables, exaggeration, a midrash, or other literary devices?</li> <li>• How did these particular literary forms or devices function in an ancient society?</li> </ul>
Source Criticism	Scholars attempt to identify if the biblical authors used an existing story, myth, or other literature as the basis for their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are other writings from ancient cultures outside the Scriptures similar to a biblical passage?</li> <li>• What is the meaning of the differences between the way a story is told in the Bible and the way it is told in other sources?</li> </ul>

(This chart is adapted from the *Saint Mary's Press*® *Essential Bible Dictionary*, by Sheila O'Connell-Rouseff [Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2005], page 57. Copyright © 2005 by Saint Mary's Press. All rights reserved.)

