Exegesis is studying or writing about what a scripture says in its original language and context. This is not writing a sermon (homiletics) or an interpretation (hermeneutics). In an exegesis, you present evidence from various fields of biblical study to clarify, as much as you can, what the original author was trying to convey.

**Common Resources**

This process covers many different areas, so it is good to be familiar with the common resources.

1) **Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias:** Both of these contain short entries on key words and concepts related to biblical texts. Use them for keywords in your passage including the author, book title, central topics, and key names of people and places. Since they are brief, they can give an overview of a study or offer a broader consensus that scholars give to many differing readings.

2) **Commentaries:** Commentaries are available (1) in single volume books published by individual authors and (2) as a series of books by multiple authors covering the entire Bible. Most of the reference material on student exegesis papers will come from commentaries.

3) **Concordances:** A concordance is an index of locations for specific words in the scriptures. English concordances are usually keyed to a specific translation, and you may need to cross-reference from your preferred text in order to identify the word in your concordance. Websites and software make concordances readily available, but only in-depth exegesis projects will require them.

4) **Journal articles:** Biblical study is an active field, and new material is always being published in scholarly journals. However, these resources are often intended for more specialized audiences with greater background in the source languages and the history of the time period when the texts were written. They can be very difficult to read and usually should not be a student's primary resources.

**Possible Study Plan**

The order of study varies, but the goal is to become a helpful guide on the content of the chosen text. As such, you should know the material well. Reread your passage as often as possible. If your professor has not already specified a procedure, this method can be useful in developing your understanding:

- Read your passage several times. Include any reflection questions in your personal study Bible.
- Read overview materials (encyclopedias, dictionary entries, and/or introductions in commentaries).
- Read the entire book from where your passage is found.
- Read several translations of the text to get a basic feeling for the translation differences.
- Read the section of commentaries dealing with your specific section of text.
- Once you have read this section of commentaries, then you can read about specific areas like key words or articles on specific translation issues.
Other Key Issues

- The Society for Biblical Literature (SBL) sets the most common style format for exegesis. Your professor, however, may require a different style in your class.

- Don’t let your exegesis become a collection of word studies. Make sure you are attending to the style, structure, and context of your passage.

- Translations are either primarily formal (word-for-word) or dynamic (thought-for-thought). Translations on the dynamic end of the spectrum emphasize thought content and impact over direct word correlation. Though paraphrastic translations of the Bible are great for devotional reading, they are not designed for in-depth exegesis. Some examples of Bible paraphrases include The Message, The Living Bible, The Good News Bible, and the Contemporary English Version.

- If you do not find evidence backing up “implications” of the text, do not include them. The kinds of material left unstated should have parallels or descriptions in other works from the same time. If nothing else, trust your reader to find an implication solely aided by the clarity of your analysis.

- Allow time to draft, review, re-read, revise, proofread, and edit your paper. Clarity is vital to a good exegesis. Do not procrastinate! Get started, even if you can only take on one small piece at a time.

- If you refer to other texts for content, do not suggest that a later book was used by an earlier author. For example, you can look at Revelation for parallels in an exegesis of Philippians but cannot claim that Paul was referring to it or inspired by it.

Materials Available in the APU Libraries

- Baker Exegetical Commentary
- The IVP New Testament Commentary Series
- The Anchor Bible Commentary
- The New International Commentary
- Africa Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary
- Sacra Pagina Commentary
- The IVP Bible Background Commentary
- Word Bible Commentary

Sample Outline

I. Introduction
   A. Identify passage
   B. State methodology

II. Historical Context
   A. Authorship
   B. Likely date of composition
   C. Original audience
   D. Place in larger history
      (Israel, Apostolic Age, international context, etc.)
   E. Events, places, and dates in the text

III. Literary Context
   A. Major themes of book
   B. Place in structure of book
   C. Literary genre (gospel, epistle, parable, hymn, etc.)
   D. How other works by the same author shed light on the text

IV. Textual Analysis
   A. Formal structure (acrostic, chiasm, narrative, etc.)
   B. Intertextuality (references in or by the text, parallel comparisons)
   C. Line-by-line study, flow of thought
   D. Key words (and translation questions if applicable)
   E. Theological message or significance

IV. Summary and Conclusion

This is a standard exegesis outline, but it is important to remember that this sample structure may vary depending on what your professor asks for.