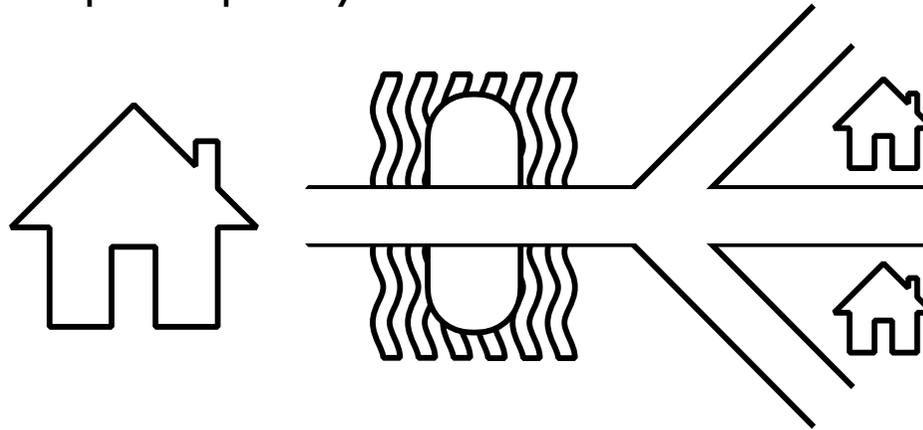


Session 3: Reading the Old Testament

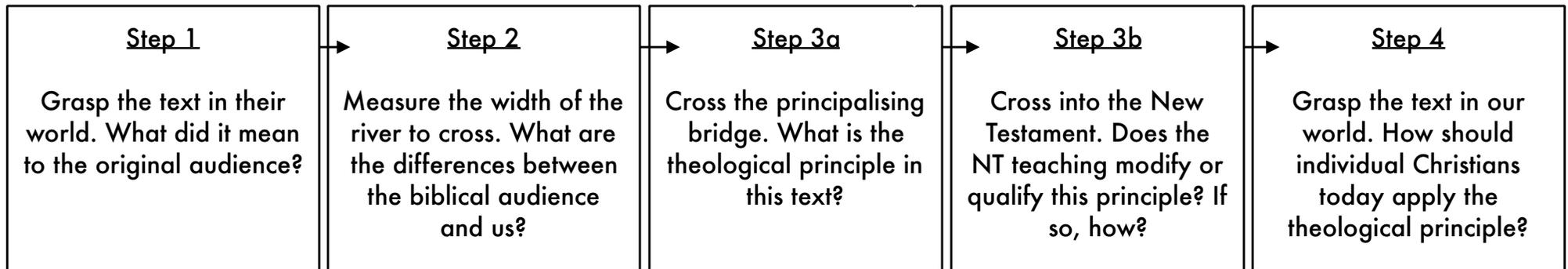
For many people, the Old Testament is particularly confusing to read, since the gap between the original events and our context is so vast. In this session we will look at an extra step in the interpretive journey, and explore some principles for how we should interpret Old Testament Narratives.

Reading the Old Testament

An extra step in the interpretive journey



Adapted from
*Grasping God's
Word* by Duvall and
Hays.



Genre	Narrative	Law	Wisdom	Poetry	Prophecy
Books	Genesis, first half of Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah	Second half of Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes	Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Reading the Old Testament

How should we read OT narrative?

The Old Testament makes up about 75% of the whole Bible. 40% of the Old Testament is narrative.

1	Metanarrative: The whole universal plan of God. The story of redemption						
	Creation		Fall		Redemption		Restoration
2	Election: God choosing and redeeming a people for His name						
	Old Covenant			New Covenant			
	Creation	Abraham	Exodus	Promised Land	etc...		
3	Micronarratives: The smaller stories that make up the bigger narratives						
	Compound Narrative: Abraham Story			Etc...			
	Call	In Egypt	Lot	Covenant	etc...	Etc...	

Question: When Jesus said that the Scriptures testify to him (John 5:39), which level of narrative was he talking about?

Christocentric vs. Christotelic readings. *Telos* = purpose / end / goal

How does this story fit within the metanarrative of redemption, of which Christ is the goal?

What words or concepts does this story contribute to later interpretation of the life of Christ?

What view of God that we later find embodied in Christ can we see here?

How was God's calling and redemption of His people analogous to His calling of us?

Reading the Old Testament

How should we read OT narrative?

OT narratives are not allegories

They are rarely allegorical stories with hidden meanings.

OT narratives often teach implicitly what is elsewhere taught explicitly

They rarely teach doctrines, though they illustrate doctrines that are taught in other places.

2 Samuel 11; Exodus 20:14

OT narratives report what happened, not what ought to have happened

Not every narrative should be read first and foremost as a moral story.

The characters aren't always good examples to emulate. In fact often they are the opposite!

1 Corinthians 10:6

OT narratives are selective and incomplete

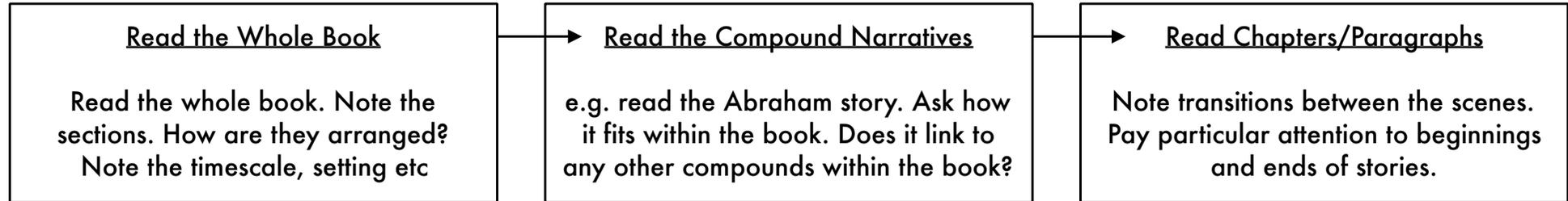
The author (and the Spirit!) have told us only what they consider important for us to know.

We shouldn't expect that these texts will answer every theological question we have.

Four general rules of thumb to bear in mind

Reading the Old Testament

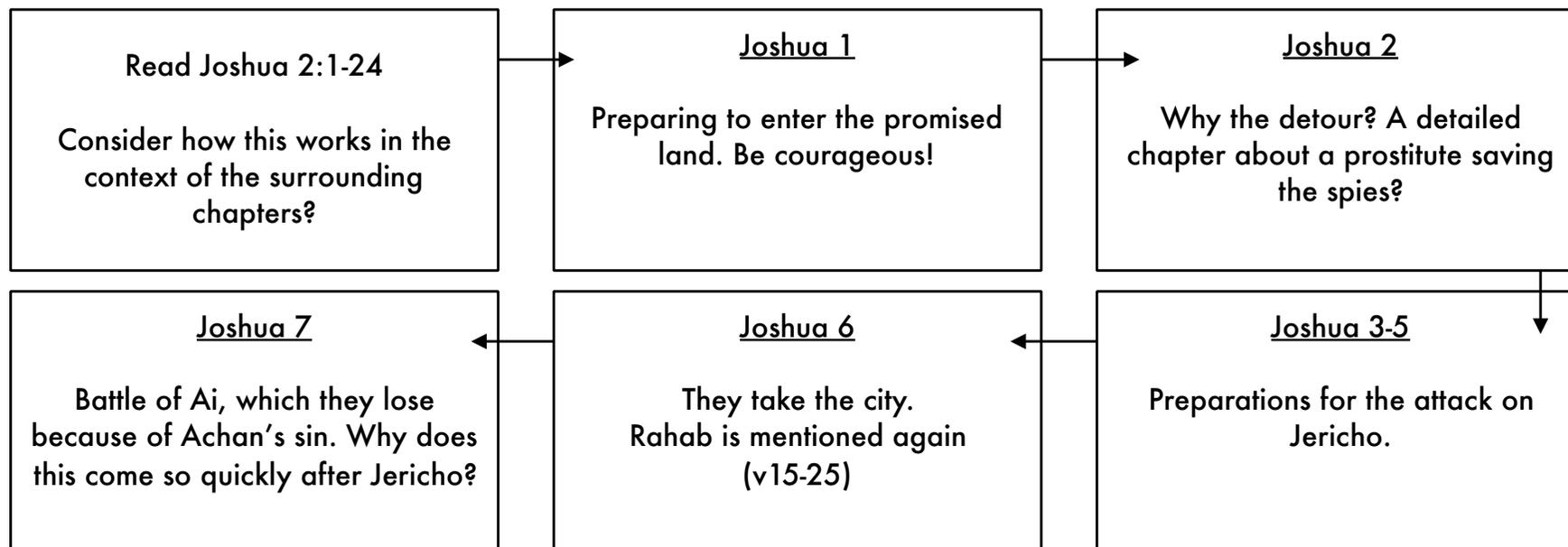
Step 1: Grasping the text in their world



Key features of Narratives				
Plot	Setting	Characters	Narrator	Dramatic tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beginning, middle, end - Exposition: Basic setting, events begin... - Conflict: Tension, disorder, deficiency. This may be internal or external. - Resolution: Is it situation resolved? How? - What's the story about? What moves the story along? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When and where is this taking place? - Note shifts of setting, and consider what those settings might represent: e.g. into the Temple, out of the Promised Land, by a well, in the desert, by the sea, to a place with a name etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protagonist, antagonist, 'agonists'? - We are rarely given descriptions of the characters. Don't expect too much detail! - Are characters portrayed in contrast (e.g. Joseph and Judah) or are they portrayed in parallel (e.g. Mary and Hannah) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Omniscient. They choose what to show and what not to. They tell the story in such a way as to draw you into so you see things for yourself. - Often remain neutral and refuse to explain explicitly, but occasionally drop hints about their point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repetition - Foreshadowing - Inclusion - Chiasm - Irony

Reading the Old Testament

Example: Rahab and the spies (Joshua 2:1-24)



Step 1: Grasp the text in their world	Step 2: Measure the width of the river to cross	Step 3a: Cross the Principalsing Bridge	Step 3b: Cross the Bridge into the New Testament
Rahab the Canaanite is contrasted with Achan the Israelite. Her faith in God saves her and her family, his disdain for God results in his destruction.	Big gap! Different covenant, no longer about the land, not in holy war. We are not Israelites or Canaanites. We don't have the same specific commands as Achan does.	God sees past external factors and saves people who put their faith in him - even unexpected people. God extends grace, but also judges those who trivialise Him.	The NT reaffirms salvation by faith and not ethnicity. God chooses unexpected people in the NT, and Rahab is in Jesus' genealogy. God still judges those who trivialise him. Acts 5:1-11 is similar to the Achan story!

