

Choosing Appropriate Sources for NT Exegesis

1. The source must be academic.
 - a. Check to make sure the book or article is from a reputable publisher (places like Fortress Press, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Wipf & Stock, De Gruyter, Bloomsbury, etc.). Self-published works are less likely to be acceptable, as are works from publishers who exclusively publish popular, mass-market books.
 - b. If you are using an article from a journal, make sure the journal is peer reviewed. If it is, it is much more likely to be acceptable.
 - c. Blogs are unlikely to be acceptable primary sources unless the author is a very well-known name in the field, and, even then, use with caution. A blog is not vetted like a book or a journal.
 - d. Take a look at the author's biography. If they have completed doctoral work and are currently teaching at a university in this or a related field, the book is more likely to be acceptable. Non-specialists, if utilized at all, should only be used in a supplementary role.
 - e. Understand the purpose of the book. Academic works seek primarily to educate, not to inspire or convert. If the purpose of the book is devotional, helping you deepen your walk of faith, grow closer with Jesus, etc., it will not likely be an acceptable primary source. Some authors publish both academic and more popular, devotional literature. In that case, stick to their academic works.

2. The sources should come primarily from the field of biblical studies, not theology.
 - a. New Testament studies is a distinct field from theology, even biblical theology. Your sources should come primarily from the field of biblical studies.
 - b. As a field, New Testament studies seeks to understand the original contexts of the writings of the New Testament (who wrote them, when they were written, where they were written, why they were written), the history of the texts themselves, the original intent of their authors, how best to reconstruct and translate the Greek, and the cultural, historical, literary, and economic factors that would have illuminated their meaning. This is a different (if perhaps related) undertaking to using the text to build a theological system of belief for churches today.
 - c. Theological texts might be able to supplement your efforts to draw out the meaning of a verse, but they should not be your primary sources. Additionally, they should be used sparingly and only when they help exegete the meaning of your particular verse.

3. The sources should lean toward the contemporary.
 - a. Sometimes older sources will have very valuable material, so they should not be excluded automatically.
 - b. However, the conversation on the text has continued after that writing, so to be current, you need to interact with the latest scholarship in the field. Otherwise, you will not receive a hearing. You may also be using information that was subsequently disproven, making your paper out of date before you even begin.
 - c. Therefore, your primary texts should include several works from the last twenty years.