

Engaging with the Bible

Wednesday August 12, 2015



We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, in their original writing, as fully inspired of God and accept them as the infallible, authoritative, inerrant Word of God and therefore as the supreme and final authority for faith and life.



Fully Inspired,
in their original writing



- Authenticity, Inspired authorship
 - The proof of fulfilled prophecy
 - Archaeological confirmation
 - Preservation and restoration of the Biblical text
 - New Testament texts supported by early church scholars
 - New Testament validation of Old Testament
 - New Testament validating of itself
- Establishing the Canon



Principles of Interpretation

The challenge

- The Bible was written:
- over a period of roughly 2,000 years
- 66 books by 40 or more authors
- using three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek).
- The authors wrote in different genres and had different vocabularies, personalities, cultural backgrounds, and social standings.

Our challenge

- The Holy Spirit moved each of them to produce His inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word while allowing their various writing styles and personalities to be expressed in its pages.
- It was written in a culture very different from our modern world and has been translated from its original languages.

Our challenge

Principles of Interpretation

Everybody can

We believe everyone can understand the scriptures. The Reformers believed in the perspicuity (clearness) of Scripture, especially in relation to its central message of the gospel, and they believed each believer had the right to interpret God's Word. Roman Catholic doctrine held (and still holds) that Scripture can only be interpreted by the Magisterium (teaching office of the church).

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

(2 Corinthians 4:2)

Principles of Interpretation

How to

1. You need faith and the Holy Spirit to interpret Scripture

- The Bible doesn't make sense to non-believers. It is God's love letter to believers. When an unbeliever reads the Word, he is reading someone else's mail. The Bible is a spiritual book that must be understood by spiritual people. - Rick Warren

Principles of Interpretation

2. Interpret it literally as much as possible

- interpret the Word of God in its most obvious and literal sense, but recognize what kind of literary form it uses.
- narration, lists, greetings, conversation, poetry, song, fiction, parable, allegory, history, quotation, argument, prayers.

Principles of Interpretation

3. Consider the context

- What does the following mean? “It was a ball.” “*”
- The baseball umpire saw the pitch drift to the outside and said, “*” / We went to the dance last night, in fact it was so formal “*” / As I was walking along the golf course I spotted something small and white in the tall grass, “*” / I had so much fun at the game night, “*”

Principles of Interpretation

3. Consider the context

- Context determines meaning.
- The nearest context must given the most weight in interpretation.
- Think through the context of the sentence, the paragraph, the section, the book, The Testament and the author.

Principles of Interpretation

4. History is helpful

- A cultural gap exists between our culture and the cultures in the day the Bible was written. The more we can learn about that culture, norms, idioms, religions and expectations the more likely we will interpret their meaning accurately. (Historical criticism)

Principles of Interpretation

5. Let Scripture interpret Scripture

- Interpret difficult passages with clear ones. This is sometimes called the law of non-contradiction (Theologians call it the “analogy of faith” or “analogy of Scripture,”). Because the Bible is God’s word, and God is true, the Bible will not contradict itself. Shed light on difficult passages with the light of others.

Principles of Interpretation

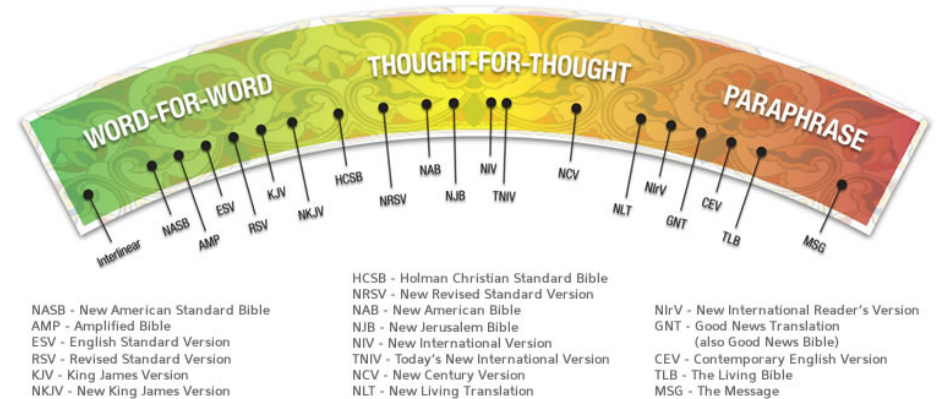
6. It should never mean now what it didn’t mean then

- Clarify the meaning of what the author intended to say.
- Next clarify how that historical meaning applies to us today.

Principles of Interpretation

Types of Bibles

Types of Bible Translations



Study Tools

<https://www.biblegateway.com>

<http://www.biblestudytools.com>

<http://www.blueletterbible.org>

<http://biblehub.com>

Online Bibles

<http://www.ewordtoday.com/comments/>

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/>

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/>

<http://www.studylight.org/com>

<http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/>

<http://home.ctcweb.net/~cochac/library.htm>

Bible Commentaries

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionaries/>

<http://biblehub.com/dictionary/>

<http://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/>

Bible Dictionaries

<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/rwp/>
<http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/>
<http://www.ntgateway.com/greek-ntgateway/greek-new-testament-texts/>
http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Greek_Index.htm

Greek Interlinear and help

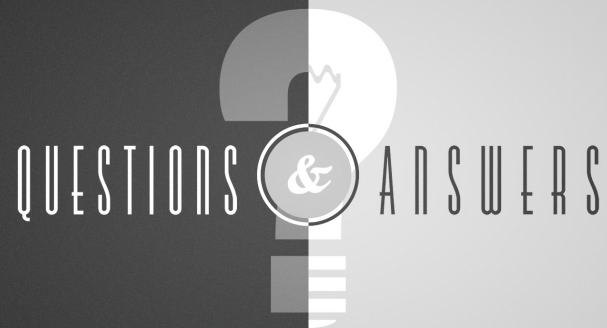
<https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/?version=NIV>
<http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-reading-plan/>
<http://www.backtothebible.org/bible-reading-plans>

Bible Reading Plans

Things to practice

Biblical Meditation

- **Use your imagination** - revolve the idea in your mind
- ask Holy Spirit to add colors and images
- **Write it out in your own words** - say what the scriptures are saying
- **Think of cross references** - what other scriptures has the Lord been highlighting to you or have stood out to you?



Use your imagination

¹² “Listen to me, Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am He; I am the first and I am the last. ¹³ My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.

Isaiah 48:12-13



Write it out in your own words

¹⁷ How precious are Your thoughts concerning me, O God, How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.

Psalms 139:17-18

Think of cross references

¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:14



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Canonology is the science to determine which books measure up to the standards of “Scripture” or “Divine Inspiration”. The name comes from the word “canon” which meant a straight rod," or "a carpenter's rule." Books that measure up are considered God-breathed 2 Timothy 3:16.

Canonology



The primary mechanism of acceptance is whether the early church accepted the writings as authentically apostolic, that is they had inspired authorship. Other factors included their proof of fulfilled prophecy, archaeological confirmation, the preservation of the text and the claims of scripture itself. (1604 NT citations of 1276 OT texts)

Canonology



Historical criticism is the science that deals with authorship, date, historical circumstances, authenticity of contents and literary unity of the book. This study helps us bridge the cultural gap between ours and the cultures represented in the scriptures. It helps us bridge the geographical gap (political, geological, botanical geography) and the historical gap (political, economic, religious)

Historical Criticism



Textual criticism is the science that aims to determine the original wording of the inspired text as accurately as possible. It deals with the original languages (Ancient Hebrew, Ancient Chaldee, Koine Greek) to close the etymological gap and studies the etymology of words, verbs and conjunctions, connective words, syntax, vocabulary and grammar. We do not have any original documents but only copies of copies.

Textual Criticism

The literary genre should be determined. The literary style (Narrative, legal, polemic, historical, wisdom, logical discourse, poetical, apocalyptic, prophetic). The literary expression (parables, psalms, riddles, types, allegories). The literary figures of speech (metaphors, similes, idioms)

Textual Criticism

Hermeneutics is the science that determines the principles by which the scriptures should be interpreted. Hermeneutics is a more widely defined discipline of interpretation theory, because it includes the entire framework of the interpretive process, encompassing written, verbal, and nonverbal communication.

Hermeneutics

Exegesis is the science of the application of the rules of hermeneutics. It is hermeneutics applied to "guide out" what the scriptures say. As a critical explanation of the text, exegesis considers that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the scripture and so the words of those texts convey a divine revelation. Therefore because of its divine authorship, the Bible has a "fuller meaning" than its human authors intended or could have foreseen. This needs to be brought forth in a responsible manner.

Exegesis