

# INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

"Acts 17:11" and "2 Timothy 2:15"

## CLASS #3 | Interpreting the Text

**"I" INTERPRETATION;** With "observation" we ask the question, "What does the text SAY?", and with "interpretation" we ask the question, and discover and uncover, "What does the text MEAN?" In "interpretation" we answer the "observation" questions (who, what, when, where, why, and how). A good definition of "interpretation" is "untying a tight knot."

To interpret the Bible rightly, it is vital that we use a LITERAL-HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL method of interpretation. This means that we take the Scripture "literally," commonly used in its dictionary sense, "...the natural or usual construction and implication of a writing or expression; following the ordinary and apparent sense of words; not allegorical or metaphorical." We must also be sensitive to the historical context and setting of the Scripture being studied, and we must be understanding the grammar and word usage of the author of that passage.

Biblical interpretation can take into consideration the following; 1) the meanings from the original languages; 2) the historical Middle Eastern context; 3) the literary style and the purpose the Text was written. Interpretation requires intensive labor, but at the same time should also be joyful.

### **I. Terminology sometimes used in Interpretation:**

**A. Hermeneutics:** Principles and methods in which scholars interpret the Bible. Many hermeneutical principles are utilized in the IBS method of studying the Bible.

**NOTE:** We cannot interpret the Bible by just abiding by the IBS or certain hermeneutical "laws". If we are **not** continually coming to the Lord to illuminate the Text, Biblical hermeneutics can lead to dead, man made "letter of the law" formulas for interpretation. If the Holy Spirit is not involved with the interpretation process, all we have is powerless and lifeless human scholarship.

(Eph 1:17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, **may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,**

**B. Exegesis:** An exposition or explanation of a Text, coming from the Greek word meaning "out of" or "to lead out". Letting the Biblical text speak for itself as we pull out the truths from the Scriptures.

**C. Eisegesis:** An interpretation that reflects the personal ideas or viewpoint of the interpreter; reading something into a text that is not there.

**D. Homiletics:** The oral presentation of a Biblical text in the form a meaningful message or sermon.

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## II. Guidelines in Bible Interpretation:

1. Interpret the passage "literally", or better yet "naturally"; “the golden rule of Bible interpretation” whenever possible. “If the plain sense makes common sense, don’t seek any other sense lest it be non-sense.”
2. Interpret the passage figuratively only when told to do so, or if the literal meaning is absurd or immoral.  

(Matt 5:29-30) If your right eye causes you to sin, **pluck it out and cast it from you...** And if your right hand causes you to sin, **cut it off and cast it from you...**

(Rev 1:20) **The mystery of the seven stars** which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.
3. Always be mindful of the Biblical, historical, geographical, and cultural context of the text  

(1 Cor 10:28) But if anyone says to you, "**This was offered to idols,**" do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness."
4. Read “around” the text. Discover what’s being said in the verses before and after your text.
5. Consider the author’s reason (human and Holy Spirit) for writing a particular book or passage, i.e. 1 Peter is written to a church suffering from Nero’s persecution.  

(1 Peter 3:14) But even if you should **suffer for righteousness' sake**, you are blessed. "**And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.**"
6. Avoid making assumptions from the text. The interpretation of the Bible is not reading our subjective thoughts into the text, but God’s objective truth being brought to light from the text itself.  

(Rev 3:20) Behold, **I stand at the door and knock.** If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.
7. When interpreting a passage, understand that there is only one main interpretation, however there may be a variety of appropriate applications.  

(2 Cor 2:13) I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia. 14) Now thanks be to God who **always leads us in triumph in Christ**, and through us **diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.**

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## III. Pitfalls in Bible Interpretation:

1. Coming to the text with a preconceived mindset of what the text means because of past familiarity with the particular verse or passage.
2. Misreading the text: John 14:6 “I am **the** way...” not “I am **a** way...”
3. Distorting the text: John 1:1 “...and the Word was God” not “...and the Word was a god”
4. Contradicting the text: Gal 5:19; Pretending that fornication does not really mean “fornication”.
5. Limiting interpretation because of Biblical culture: 1 Cor 8 - offering meat to idols
6. Relativism: Choosing what Biblical truths you think are relevant for us today. Or, it may not be the correct interpretation, but it’s true for me it’s true.
7. Intellectual pride: 1 Cor 8:1, “Knowledge puffs up...” and “pride goes before the fall”
8. Arguing or stating dogmatically issues in which the Bible is silent or obscure.
9. Not knowing that the italicized words in your Bible text were added for clarification.
10. Not knowing that the chapter and verse numbers were added later for clarification.
11. Not thinking that Bible interpretation is labor intensive.
12. Trying to force your interpretation on the text. ex. Annihilationist - forever isn’t forever.
13. Trying to force Scripture into chronological order.  
Ex: Gen. 2 gives the details of Gen. 1.
14. Not knowing our own personal limitations in interpreting the text. It's ok to say "I don't know".
15. Not acknowledging that even some of the greatest commentators in the body of Christ can be wrong on their interpretation.
16. Not considering "progressive revelation" between the New and Old Testaments. For instance, eating pork was forbidden in the OT but is allowed in the NT (see Acts 10; 1 Tim 4:3).

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## IV. Noting Literary Styles in Bible Interpretation:

**A. Exposition;** Instructional and extortive writings; the logical, straightforward explanation of a body of written truth; as in the epistles of Paul; **Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Timothy, the epistles of Peter, John, James and some of Jesus’ teaching.**

**B. Narrative;** the historical accounts of peoples’ lives in various settings. Narratives usually have a plot, characters and lessons being taught; as in the OT books of **Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, Kings and Chronicles;** in the NT the **Gospels and Acts.**

**C. Prophecy and apocalyptic;** not only predictive of future events but the warning of judgment and cataclysmic events of local or global proportions; as in the book of **Daniel, Zechariah and Revelation.**

**D. Parables;** a brief, simple, memorable tale that illustrates a moral principle; parables usually have one main point of truth; look for symbolism, parallels and analogies; **Matthew 13 has eight “Kingdom” parables.** i.e. The parable of the sower; Matt 13:1-9, 18-23

**E. Wisdom literature;** a short, wise teaching of truth shared from the learned; as in the books of **Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.**

**F. Poetry;** The arrangement of ideas into patterns. They use symbols and analogies to express ideas. There is also an appeal to the emotions and imagination and is sung in worship; as in the books of **Psalms and the Song of Solomon.**

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## Charting: Homework Assignment #3; John 8:1-12

Chart John 8:1-12 using the IBS format of OIA

1. **OBSERVE** what the text **SAYS**. Look for Jesus.
  - a. Read over and around the text many times.
  - b. Circle all the names and pronouns for Jesus.
  - c. Box all action words to get an idea of the action taking place.
  - d. Number each time an event, thought or action changes.
  - e. Ask (but don't record) the following questions: Who did what; when, where, why and how.
  
2. **INTERPRET** what the text **MEANS**.
  - a. How were the scribes and Pharisees trying to trip Jesus?
  - b. Why was Jesus sitting?
  - c. In what part of the Temple was Jesus teaching?
  - d. Think through the story in your own words.
  
3. **APPLY** the text to your life personally.
  - a. In what type of situation might we ignore accusers as Jesus did?
  - b. What would be a modern day application of the Pharisees accusing the woman?
  - c. What would be an example of throwing stones at a sinner?
  - d. Explain the plan of salvation using John 8:1-12.
  - e. Explain the plan of sanctification using John 8:1-12.

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## **John 8:1-12 (NKJV)**

1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,

4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

5 "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."