

# Introduction To Biblical Hermeneutics

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## I. Introduction.

### A. Why Study the Bible?<sup>1</sup>

1. ***Bible Study is essential to*** \_\_\_\_\_ (1 Pet 2:2).
  - a. *Attitude:*
  - b. *Appetite:* Cf. Psalm 19:10
  - c. *Aim:* To Grow—not just to know
  
2. ***Bible Study is essential to spiritual*** \_\_\_\_\_ (Heb 5:11-14). :
  - a. *Biblical rebukes for a human lack of understanding* (Psalm 32:9; Mark 4:21-25; 8:17-21; Luke 12:57; 1 Cor. 2:14-15; 3:16; 5:6; 6:2-3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 10:1; 12:1:
  
  - b. *Biblical appeals to/ commendations for the reason of the readers* (Psalm 119:9-11; Dan. 10:12; John 8:31; Acts 17:11; Rom. 14:5; 1 Cor. 10:15; 11:13; 2 Tim. 2:7; 2 Timothy 2:15; Heb. 5:14; 1 John 4:1)
  
3. ***Bible Study is Essential to Spiritual*** \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Tim 3:16-17).
  - a. *The Scope of Scripture:* ALL Scripture: ILLUSTRATE: Deuteronomy. Have you ever studied it? When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11), he defeated Satan three times by quoting from Deuteronomy. If your victory over temptation depended on your knowledge of Deuteronomy, how would you make out?
  
  - b. *The Nature of Scripture:*

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<sup>1</sup> Howard and William Hendricks, *Living By The Book* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991) 18-22; John R. W. Stott, *Understanding the Bible* (Glendale, Ca: Regal Books, 1972) 211-13.

- (1) Inspired: God-breathed.
- (2) Inerrant: corollary of inspiration

c. *The Benefit of Scripture* (v. 16b):

- (1) For doctrine teaches us what is right
- (2) For reproof teaches us what is not right
- (3) For correction teaches us how to make it right
- (4) For instruction teaches us how to keep it right

d. *The Purpose of Scripture* (v. 17): equipping.

**B. Why is Bible Interpretation Important?**

- 1. *It is essential for understanding and teaching the Bible properly.* We must know the meaning of the Bible before we can know its message for today.

People say, “You can make the Bible say anything you want.” Yet how many of the same people say, “You can make Shakespeare say anything you want?” Of course it is true that people can make the Bible say anything they want—so long as they disregard normal approaches for understanding written documents. **(Zuck)**

- 2. *It is essential for moving beyond \_\_\_\_\_.* Too often people skip directly from observation to application without properly interpreting. Observation is a vital first step, but it is not the only step.
- 3. *Biblical Interpretation is Essential for \_\_\_\_\_ the Bible Properly.* Interpretation should build on observation and then lead into application. If we fail to apply the Scriptures, we cut short the entire process and have not finished what God wants us to do (cf. John 5:39-40; Col 1:28; 1 Pet 2:2). But application based on improper interpretation is equally deadly (note examples from church history)

**C. Definition of Hermeneutics:** Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation. It is a *science* because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an *art* because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation. It determines the methods, techniques, rules, or principles which will best serve in getting at the proper *interpretation* of any part of the Bible.

D. **Necessity of Hermeneutics.**

1. ***The Primary need:*** *To ascertain what God has said in Scripture; to determine the meaning of the Word of God.* There is no profit to us if God has spoken and we do not know what he has said.
  - a. All of our \_\_\_\_\_ (bibliology, theology proper, Christology, soteriology, etc.) rests upon the correct interpretation of Scripture.
  - b. We must know the correct method of biblical interpretation so that we do not confuse the voice of God with the voice of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. It is possible to *misuse* the Scripture. Cf. Satan's "quoting" of Scripture in Matt. 4:6 (cf. Psalm 91:11-12). It is important to note that Satan does not actually (in this case at least) *misquote* the psalmist; rather he misuses the passage by misrepresenting the intent of the writer. There are at least five ways in which the Bible may be misused:
    - (1) The Scriptures may be misused when the text is misread. "I am a way" (John 14:6); "Money is the root of all evil" (1Tim. 6:10); "He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psa. 37:4). Observation prevents this problem.
    - (2) The Scriptures may be misused when you are ignorant about what the Bible says on a given subject.
    - (3) The Scriptures may be misused when you take a verse out of its context.
    - (4) The Scriptures may be misused when you read into a passage and have it say what it doesn't say.
    - (5) The Scripture may be misused when you give undue emphasis to less important things. Majoring on the minors; minoring on the majors.
    - (6) The Scriptures may be misused whenever you use the Bible to try to get God to do what you want, rather than what God wants done
2. ***The Secondary need:*** *To bridge the gap between our minds and the minds*

*of the Biblical writers.*

- a. *A Chronological gap.* The earliest biblical books were written about 3500 years ago, and the latest one was written over 1,900 years ago.
- b. *A Geographical gap.*
- c. *A Cultural gap.*
- d. *A Historical gap.*
- e. *A Language gap.*
  
- f. *A Literary gap.* The literary genres of the Bible are quite diverse and demand vastly different approaches. We can't read Song of Solomon the same way we would read Romans, for example.
- g. *A Supernatural Gap.* A great gap exists between God's way of doing things and our way. The fact that the Bible was written by God puts the Bible in a unique category. God, being infinite, is not fully comprehensible by the finite.
- h. *A Communication Gap.*

*Summary:* These eight gaps can present great obstacles to overcome in understanding the Bible. This is where hermeneutics comes in!

II. **Steps in the Hermeneutical Process.** There are three main steps in the hermeneutical process:

- A. **Step #1:** \_\_\_\_\_: This answers the question, "What does the Bible say?" True interpretation must always begin here. The Bible student becomes a spiritual "Sherlock Holmes;" developing his powers of observation, seeing more than what others see, but which most just pass over. He probes deeply into the text for the *what? who? when? why? where? how? and so what?*
  - 1. ***The Value of observation*** (Psalm 119:18) [ILLUSTRATION: Sherlock Holmes in *The Sign of the Four*– "You see, but you do not observe"] [Puzzle with squares]

2. **Types of observation.** There are natural and supernatural observations, the latter of which requires the illumination of the Holy Spirit (cf. Psalm 119:18; 1 Cor. 2:12-16).
  
3. **Developing observation: Learn to Read!**
  - a. **Introduction:** Our culture has shifted from a word-based to an image-based society. Cf. Jesus 11x to the Pharisees—“Have you never read?” Of course they had read, but they did not understand what they were reading. Three suggestions on how to read:
    - (1) Learn to read better and faster. There is a direct correlation between your ability to observe Scripture and your ability to read. Mortimer J. Adler’s book *How To Read a Book*, as well as Norman Lewis’ *How To Read Better and Faster*.
    - (2) Learn to read as for the first time. Familiarity breeds contempt; it also breeds ignorance. The moment you come to a passage and say “I know this one already,” you are in trouble! Come to every text as if you have never seen it before. This is why it is important to read the Bible in *different translations*.
    - (3) Read the Bible as a Love Letter.
  - b. **Ten Effective Reading Strategies:**<sup>2</sup>
    - (1) Read Thoughtfully. Thoughtful reading involves *study* (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; Ezra 7:10). Don’t throw your mind into neutral when you are studying the Bible. The Bible does not yield its fruit to the lazy (Prov. 2:4). You don’t find precious ore lying near the surface, but at a deeper level.
    - (2) Read Repeatedly.
      - (a) READ ENTIRE BOOKS AT ONE SITTING.
      - (b) START AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BOOK.
      - (c) READ THE BIBLE IN DIFFERENT TRANSLATIONS.
      - (d) LISTEN TO TAPES OF SCRIPTURE.
      - (e) READ THE BIBLE OUT LOUD.
      - (f) SET UP A SCHEDULE FOR BIBLE READING.

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<sup>2</sup> Material on the reading strategies is summarized and adapted from Hendricks, 77-130.

- (3) Read Patiently. “Nothing good happens fast.” The fruit of the Word takes time to ripen. If you are impatient, you’re liable to bail out early and miss a rich harvest; others run to secondary sources (commentaries, etc.) too quickly.
- (a) WORK WITH ONE BOOK FOR ONE MONTH. In a month’s time you can begin to take ownership of a book of the Bible. In a year’s time, you can have 12 books under your belt; in 5 ½ years; all 66! Start with Nehemiah, Jonah, Mark, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, James, and 1 Peter.
  - (b) ZOOM IN AND ZOOM OUT. Start with a wide angle. Get the big picture by reading the book in its entirety. See if you can detect a flow in the material; a progression of events or ideas. Then zoom in on something that seems prominent.  
*ILLUST: Genesis.*
  - (c) ALTER YOUR APPROACH.
  - (d) TWO PRINCIPLES OF PATIENCE. Be patient with the text, and be patient with yourself.
- (4) Read Selectively: Six questions to ask any passage you are reading: WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? WHY? WHEREFORE (So what?)
- (5) Read Prayerfully. Bible study and prayer are not separate disciplines; they are integrally related. Pray before, during, and after your reading of Scripture.
- (6) Read Imaginatively.
- (7) Read Meditatively (*Joshua 1:8; Proverbs 23:7; Psalm 1:1-2; Psalm 119:97; Psalm 19*).
- (8) Read Purposefully: Purposeful reading looks for the aim of the author, Every word contributes to meaning, and your challenge as a reader is to discern that meaning. One of the keys to that is to look for structure.
- (a) PURPOSE THROUGH GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE. This is important because of verbal inspiration.

Grammar is determinative for doctrine.

(b) PURPOSE THROUGH LITERARY STRUCTURE.

(9) Read Acquisitively: The goal is to *retain* what we *read*. This involves personal involvement in what we hear:

(10) Read Telescopically: The final strategy involves viewing the parts in light of the whole. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

(a) LOOK FOR THE CONNECTIVES: “But,” “and,” and “therefore” are connectives in that they link the text together.

(b) PAY ATTENTION TO CONTEXT:

(c) EVALUATE THE PASSAGE IN LIGHT OF THE BOOK AS A WHOLE.

(d) LOOK AT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE BOOK.

4. ***What to observe.***<sup>3</sup> Below is a brief list (adapted mostly from Hendricks) of the types of things that need to be observed.

a. *Things that are* \_\_\_\_\_: There are several different ways to discern the Bible’s emphasis at a given point:

(1) Amount of space the writer devotes to a given subject (e.g. Genesis gives much more space to four people [Genesis 12-50] than events [Genesis 1-11]. Two chapters describe the creation, but over fourteen chapters are devoted to Abraham's career; Gospels focus on the crucifixion, etc.)

(2) Stated purpose of the author in writing his book (Proverbs 1:2-6; John 20:30-31; Acts 1:8; Tit 1:1)

(3) Order. This comes before (or after) that [e.g., work (Genesis 2:15) comes *before* the curse (Gen. 3:17-24)];

(4) Movement from the lesser to the greater, and vice versa.

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<sup>3</sup> Hendricks, 121-22; 143-70; Rosscup, 7-8.

- (5) Climax (a progression of events or ideas that climb to a certain high point before descending) (Exodus 40:34-35; 2 Sam 11; Mark 4:35–5:43)
- (6) Explanation or Reason: The presentation of an idea or event followed by its interpretation (Dan 2, 4, 5, 7-9; Mark 4:13-20; Acts 11:1-18)

b. *Things That Are Repeated*: “Repetition aids learning.” “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Repetition isn’t merely because the writers couldn’t think of anything else to say—it’s their way of pointing out matters of crucial importance.

(1) Terms, phrases, and clauses.

(a) *Repeated in a given context:*

- i) Psalm 119—word of God mentioned in every verse but 4.
- ii) Psalm 136 (“His love endures forever,” 26x in the psalm)—what else do you need to know?
- iii) Matthew 5:21-48—“You have heard it said . . . but I say”
- iv) Luke 14:25-33; “He cannot be my disciple”
- v) Rom 3:21-31: “faith”
- vi) 1 Corinthians 15:12-28 (“if,” 15x) — everything we believe is conditioned on the resurrection.
- vii) Hebrews 11 (“by faith,” 18x)—no matter who, when, or where, they all had the same “by faith” lifestyle.

(b) *Distinctive to a given author/book:*

- i) Matthew: “Kingdom of Heaven.”
- ii) John: “Sign”  
“believe” (79x; always as a verb)
- iii) Mark: “immediately”
- iv) Hebrews: “better”

(2) Characters. E.g. Barnabas, “son of encouragement.” Luke brings Barnabas into the story at strategic points as a model



of spiritual mentoring. MMC my message:

- (3) Incidents and circumstances. E. g. Judges begins each section with “Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord”; remember the cycle in Judges (cf. 21:25).

c. *Things That Are Related:*

- (1) Movement from the general to the specific. For example, Matthew 6 starts with a general reference to “acts of righteousness” (6:1) and then moves to three specific illustrations: (1) giving (vv. 2-4); (2) praying (vv. 5-15); and (3) fasting (vv. 16-18). Genesis 1:1-2 is general; 1:3ff tells how God specifically created.
- (2) Questions and Answers. There are questions that carry their own answers (see Job 38:3). See the whole book of Malachi; the Lord’s questions of His disciples (Matt. 6:27; 26:40; Mark 4:40; 11:27–12:44; Luke 11:1-13). Romans a classic here (6:1, 15).
- (3) Cause and Effect. Key words/phrases: *therefore, so, then, as a result*.
  - (a) Judges pattern (Rebellion-Retribution-Repentance-Restoration)
  - (b) Nehemiah’s prayer (1:4-11)----the people’s disobedience was the cause, and the captivity was the effect. The reverse is also true—repentance (cause) would lead to restoration (effect).
  - (c) In Psalm 1, Scripture is the cause (vv. 1-2), God’s blessing is the effect (v. 3).
  - (d) Mark 11:27–12:44
  - (e) “On that day” (Acts 8:1)—persecution was the cause, and preaching was the effect (Acts 8:4).
  - (f) Romans 1:24-32
  - (g) Romans 8:18-30

- (4) Context: Phil 4:13 to Phil 4:10-14
- d. *Things that are Alike*: [ILLUST: Twins]. The moment we see anything alike - especially when we least expect it - the similarity immediately draws our attention.
- (1) Similes. “As, like.” See Ps. 1:3-4; 42:1; John 3:8, 12, 14; Heb 5:1-10; 1 Pet. 2:2. Also Isa. 44:6-7—Who is like the LORD?
- (2) Metaphors. Similar to a simile, except “like” and “as” are not used. John 15:1 (“I am the vine”); 3:3ff (“You must be born again”). Jesus then used a simile in John 3:14 that was right on Nicodemus’ turf and was apparently effective (cf. Num 21:4-9).
- e. *Things that are unlike*. In Bible study, as in love, opposites attract!
- (1) But.
- (a) Psalm 73
- (b) “You have heard that it was said . . . but I say unto you” (Matt. 5);
- (c) “But” in Acts 1:8; signals a change of direction in Acts 8:26
- (d) Contrast between early church generally (Acts 4:32-37) and Ananias and Sapphira particularly (5:1-11)
- (e) “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident . . . but the fruit of the Spirit is” (Gal. 5:19-22);
- (2) Metaphors.
- (3) Irony.
- f. *Things That are Cultural*.

HOMEWORK: For next class, write down as many things as you can observe from Acts 1:8. Look at (1) The words the verse itself uses; (2) the context in which the verse appears; and (3) Any thing else you know about the background of Acts (when written, who wrote it, purpose of

the book, etc.) that will help you. Use the worksheet (p. 13) as a guide. NEXT WEEK, we will spend much of the class simply pooling (not ignorance, but) observations:



**Exercise #2: Acts 1:8:**

**But you shall receive power**

**when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;**

**and you shall be my witnesses**

**both in Jerusalem**

**and in all Judea**

**and Samaria**

**and even to the remotest part of the earth.**

- I. ***Start with terms.*** The word “but” is the most important word that I see in this context. It is a *contrast*, which indicates a change of direction in the passage. It also forces us back into the *context*, and since this is in the beginning of Acts, let’s go back to the beginning.
  
- II. ***Who are the people involved?*** “You”—observe that this term is repeated—“You shall receive power; you shall be witnesses”. Who are these people? V. 2 tells us that they are the apostles.
  
- III. ***Watch for cause-effect relationships:*** “When the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” The power won’t come until the Holy Spirit comes (cause-effect). It also answers the question of time—the receiving of power will happen *when* the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Who is **He**. The Holy Spirit. Write down what you know about the Holy Spirit. He’s the Person linked with the Power.
  
- IV. ***Define the terms:*** What is a “witness?” What does “Both” mean?
  
- V. ***The importance of place:***
  
- VI. ***Relate the verse to the book as a whole.***
  
- VII. ***There’s No Limit to Observation:***

A. **Step #1: Observation**

B. **Step #2:** \_\_\_\_\_: This answers the question, “What does the Bible *mean*?” As the bulk of this Sunday School class is devoted to principles for interpreting Scripture, we will only be making a few points now.

1. ***Always*** \_\_\_\_\_ ***before you interpret.*** Make sure that your interpretations are based on a sufficient amount of observation. A principle is this: *The more time you spend on observation, the less you will have to spend on interpretation and the more accurate your interpretations will be.* The converse is also true: *The less time you spend on observation, the more you will have to spend on interpretation and the less accurate your interpretations will be.*
2. ***Jumping to conclusions.*** A danger here is jumping to conclusions before we have adequately observed.
  - a. ***Real Life Illustrations:***
    - (1) “The dog’s dead”
    - (2) Counseling situation with wife’s eyes growing big and round while her husband is talking.
  - b. ***Biblical Illustrations:***
    - (1) Aaron and Miriam against Moses (Numbers 12:2)
    - (2) Eli and Hannah in 1 Sam. 1:13. He leapt to the conclusion that she was drunk!
    - (3) David’s brothers against him (1 Sam 17)
    - (4) Acts 14---Lystrians response to Paul's preaching; Acts 28---Malta, the response to the serpent's biting Paul.
    - (5) Jews against Paul in the Temple (Acts 21)
  - c. ***Interpretation Illustrations:***
    - (1) 1 Cor 7:1
    - (2) 1 Thess 5:22
    - (3) Rev 1:10

C. **Step #3:** \_\_\_\_\_ . Cf. James 1:22. The Christian asks, "*How does it relate to me? To others? To God?*" Here is where the facts discovered are lived out!

1. **Definition of Application:** Cf. below. There is a difference between putting down some principle we have gleaned from a passage and actually making an application of that principle to our lives.

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Application</i>
Here, I simply state a fundamental or general truth, that is, a norm, rule, law, or ground of action or conduct	Here, I bring the truth specifically to focus upon personal behavior so that it is in direct contact with some actual attitude, action, word, or situation in my life or the life of another person.
<b>Example:</b> God is light; therefore, I am to live in a manner consistent with that light (1 John 1:5).	<b>Example:</b> Mary, a Christian, is hard-pressed to find a job and earn money for college. She lands a job making phone calls for a magazine sales outfit, not being careful about checking into it. After making a few calls and giving a canned pitch, she becomes painfully aware that she is being used to misrepresent things to potential subscribers. She is part of a lie. She is under conviction because she thinks of 1 John 1:5, God is light. She applies this to her life in an on-the-spot way, confesses her sin to the Lord, and is forgiven and cleansed. She tells the boss that she is leaving. (Mary has taken a principle and made an actual application of it to her life.)

Proper application means that a person makes sure that his application arises out of a solid and sound set of observations and a right use of principles for interpretation. He avoids "angling" for a blessing or a "message from God" at the expense of the literal thought in a passage.

2. **Dangers of Application:** When it comes to application, there are two, opposite dangers that must be avoided—pitfalls that involve *separating* interpretation from application. Christians tend to either give too little attention to application (by stopping their work at interpretation) or too much attention to application (by moving to this stage prematurely, before spending adequate time in observation and interpretation).

- a. Not applying Scripture:



- (1) HEARERS, BUT NOT DOERS. (See James 1:21-27; 4:17). Remember—the Bible was written *for us* (Rom 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6, 11)

Many statements in Scripture indicate that the Bible is given to us for more than satisfying our curiosity about what God is like, what He has done in the past, or what He will do in the future. Its intended impact on lives is seen in that the Bible convicts (Heb. 4:12-13), regenerates (2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Peter 1:23), nurtures (2:2), cleanses (Ps. 119:9; John 15:3; 17:17; Eph. 5:25-26), counsels and guides (Ps. 119:24, 105), prevents sin (v. 11), renews (vv. 50, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156), strengthens (v. 28), sustains (vv. 116, 175), gives wisdom (vv. 98, 130, 169), and delivers (v. 170).

The Scriptures are called a fire, to consume false teaching (Jer. 23:29); a hammer, to shatter people's hard hearts (v. 29); food, to sustain one's soul (Ps. 119:103; Jer. 15:16; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:13-14; 1 Peter 2:2); a light, to guide our paths (Ps. 119:105); and a sword, for offense against Satan (Eph. 6:17; cf. Luke 4:4, 8, 12). In Psalm 119 the psalmist used many verbs to speak of his response to God's Word: *walk according to, keep, obey, follow, trust in, seek out, delight in, meditate on, consider, rejoice in, see, understand, hope in, teach, speak of, remember, not forget, not forsake, not depart from, not stray from, not turn from, believe in, consider, long for, love, stand in awe of, tremble at, sing of, and choose* [Zuck, *BBI*, 280]

- (2) MAKE THE TRUTH ATTRACTIVE. See Titus 1:1; 2:10. Attractive truth is applied truth.

**“...to know and not do doubles the offense of disobedience”** [McQuilkin, 297]

- (3) FOUR SUBSTITUTES FOR APPLICATION.

- (a) We substitute interpretation for application. We settle for knowledge rather than experience. To know and not to do is not to truly know at all. The classic illustration of interpretation without application were the scribes and the Pharisees (see Matt 2:1ff; 23).
- (b) We substitute superficial \_\_\_\_\_ for substantive life-change. Here, we apply biblical truth to areas where we're already applying it, not to new areas where we're not applying it. Result: No noticeable change in our lives.
- (c) We substitute rationalization for \_\_\_\_\_. When truth gets too close, an alarm goes off, and we start to defend ourselves. When truth gets too convicting, you have 16 reasons why it applies to everyone but you.
- (d) We substitute an \_\_\_\_\_ experience for a volitional decision. Nothing wrong with emotion—but that dare not be our only response.

“Understanding, then, is simply a means to a larger end — practicing biblical truth in day-to-day-life. Observation plus interpretation without application equals abortion. In other words, every time you observe and interpret but fail to apply, you perform an abortion on the Scripture in terms of their purpose. The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to transform your life. The ultimate goal of Bible study, then, is not to do something to the Bible, but to allow the Bible to do something to you, so truth becomes tangent to life.”  
 [Hendricks, *Living By the Book*, 283-284]

b.

Misapplying Scripture. The opposite danger (of *not* applying Scripture) is *misapplying* Scripture. If the first extreme is guilty of interpreting without applying, this extreme is guilty of applying without interpreting. This usually happens when one spends little or no time in the first two steps.

(1) *Illustrations of Misapplication.*

- (a) Christian in military service who went AWOL after reading Genesis 31:13.
- (b) Cyrus Eaton and Rockefeller building hotels behind the Iron Curtain (Isaiah 44)

- (c) “Spirit of whoredoms” (Hosea 4:13; 5:4) applied to fellow Christians
- (d) *Matt. 2:11*---"Go home another way!"; "We need to leave here changed!"
- (e) I don't need to study for my exams! Matthew 10:19-20 and Mark 13:11.
- (f) "If any man will come after me, let him!" (Luke 14:26)
- (g) Politician's "favorite verse"—John 16:3 rather than John 3:16]

*All practical lessons, all applications of Scripture, all devotional material, must be governed by general Protestant hermeneutics. The notorious dictum “the end justifies the means” is frequently baptized into the Christian fold under the guise of: “The blessing justifies the means.” In the intense desire to find something practical or devotional in Scripture, we are in danger of obscuring the literal or general meaning of the passage. Too often a very devotional message is conjured up from the Scripture by a method of interpretation which is nothing short of trifling or tampering with Scripture. Don't distort Scripture in order to get a blessing from it. Let the truth of God be its own blessedness [Paraphrased from Ramm, 185-86].*

3.

***Derivation of Applications:*** Most Christians are like poor photographs— overexposed and underdeveloped. Spiritual growth is a commitment to change, and yet the human heart resists nothing as strongly as it resists change. There is a fourfold step/process one must follow in arriving at proper applications:

- a. *Step #1: Interpretation:* The point here is that true application must be based on legitimate interpretation: IMPLICATIONS:
  - (1) The hard work of observation and interpretation must take place BEFORE application can take place. If your interpretation of a passage is erroneous, your application will likely be erroneous [ILLUST: Korean Airlines 007]
  - (2) *Determine if the statement is really directly applicable to you.* It may be given to some other person long ago in his specific need and the exact situation is not to be reproduced for you. For example, are we commanded to build an ark? Leave our country? Sacrifice our son? Pick up manna?

Observe the OT food laws? Slay everyone in our military campaigns?

- (a) Acts 18:9-10:
- (b) John 21:18-21: Two disciples are offered utterly contrasting experiences, yet both within the will of Christ.

The wise step would be to glean a principle from the passage and then look to the Lord to meet you in your specific situation as He met this other person long ago in his specific situation (cf. principalization below).

- (3) *Make the application with sensitivity to progressive revelation if it has bearing on that passage or point* (e.g. praying for the Holy Spirit in Luke 11:13).
- (4) *Find a proper balance by cross-reference.* (Psalm 37:4; cf. John 15:7; 1 John 5:14-15).

b. *Step #2: Principalization*: What does the Bible have to say about genetic engineering? Acid rain? Leveraged buyouts? Prison reform? Arthritis? Obviously, we're going to have to face these kinds of questions. Principalization serves as a bridge between interpretation and application.

- (1) *The Importance of Principles*. A "principle" is a succinct statement of a universal truth; moving from the specific to the general. Some biblical commands, while not speaking directly to situations we currently face, contain principles that should be applied (e.g. Proverbs 20:2; Dan 1:8; 1 Cor 8:1ff).
- (2) *The Bible is more a book of principles than a catalogue of specific directions*. The Bible contains an excellent blend of the general and the specific with reference to principles for Christian living. If the Bible were never specific, we would have difficulty in applying its truth to a specific situation. If it were entirely specific, we would be adrift whenever confronted with a situation not covered by a specific principle. The *emphasis* in Scripture is on moral and spiritual principles, not on itemized lists of rules.

- (3) *Principles That Govern Principles.* Three guidelines to consider as you generalize from the text.
- (a) Principles should correlate with the general teaching of Scripture.
  - (b) Principles should speak to the needs, interests, questions, and problems of real life today. Stott says that it's not difficult to be contemporary if you don't care about being biblical (and vice versa), but to be both is an art. If you've become a perceptive student of our culture, you should know where the needs and problems are. Knowing that, you can begin to look for general truths from Scripture that might apply to the contemporary situation.
    - i) The offering of believers in Antioch (Acts 11:28-30)
      - a) Principle: Christians in one locale should help meet the needs of Christians in other areas.
      - b) Application: I will send money this week to help poor believers in Haiti.
    - ii) The baby leapt in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:41)
      - a) Principle: The unborn have life; therefore abortion is wrong
      - b) Application: I will oppose abortion
    - iii) David did not retaliate against Shimei when Shimei cursed him (2 Sam 16:5-14)
      - a) Principle: Believers should not retaliate against those who cause them harm
      - b) Application: I will not seek to get even with [so-and-so] who wronged

me

iv) God called us to live a holy life (1 Thess 4:7)

a) Principle: Viewing pornographic literature or films is wrong

b) Application: I will not view pornographic literature or films.

(c) Principles should indicate a course of action.

(4) *Cautions in principalizing:*

(a) Distinguish between what the Bible *records* and what it *approves*. Just because something is written in the Bible does not mean that it is approved (lying, adultery, incest, cruelty, deceit are all found in Scripture without a corresponding [dis]approval by the biblical author). Ask: (1) Is there approval/diapproval expressed in *this* passage of the action or speech in question; (2) If not, are there other passages which approve or disapprove of this action/speech? *We may take direct application from all of those incidents that the Bible directly censures or approves.* The woman who poured out the valuable incense was censured by Jesus but approved by Christ, and made an example for all church history (John 12:1ff.). The equivocal behavior of Peter at Antioch was expressly condemned by Paul writing under inspiration, and is a lesson to all not to be guided by pressure or opinion but by principle (Gal 2:11ff). Certainly the rebellion of Saul, the immorality of David, the pride of Absalom, the treachery of Judas, the denials of Peter, and the lying of Ananias and Sapphira stand as examples of what not to do. So the faith of Abraham, the obedience of Moses, the loyalty of Elijah, and the love of John the Apostle stand out as great examples to follow.

(b) *In the lives of men in the Scriptures determine what the outstanding spiritual principle is.* Hebrews 11

is an incredible example of going through the OT and isolating from the lives of its great men a great spiritual virtue for our benefit.

- (c) *In some statements it is the spirit of the statement that is to be our guide* (e.g. cutting off our hands and plucking out our eyes if they offend, in Matt 5:29, 30; seventy times seven in Matt 18:21). If taken literally, these types of statements become mechanical or external guides to conduct — the very things they are intended to correct.
  - (d) In deriving principles from narratives, make sure that the principles are scripturally consistent.
- (5) *Multiplying the Truth.* Hendricks references a lecture by Henry Kissinger, that everything operates in crisis, which proposes a severe challenge to leaders—things happen so quickly that they don't have time to think, only react. Thus leaders have to operate on whatever reservoirs of knowledge and experience they bring to the job. If we stock up on biblical principles, we'll have a powerful set of resources to deal with the situations of life. We may not have a specific verse to plug into the circumstances of the moment, but we can still navigate a godly path by extrapolating from the truth that we already know.
- c. *Step #3: Meditation:* Meditation has become a lost art (except among New Agers!). True meditation is not emptying the mind, but pondering the truth with a view to letting it help and readjust our lives. Meditation is useful in the observation step (see Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:1-2)
  - d. *Step #4: Application:* There are nine questions you should ask in guiding you as you make applications from Scripture:
    - (1) *Is there an example for me to follow?*
    - (2) *Is there a sin to avoid?*
    - (3) *Is there a promise to claim?* We can't claim promises that aren't made to us. Ask these questions:
      - (a) *Is the promise universal in scope* (Rev 22:18)?
      - (b) *Is the promise personal* (Acts 18:9-10)?
      - (c) *Is the promise conditional* (James 4:8)?

(d) *Is the promise timeless or time-bound?*

- (4) *Is there a prayer to repeat?*
- (5) *Is there a command to obey?*
- (6) *Is there a condition to meet?*
- (7) *Is there a verse to memorize?*
- (8) *Is there an error to mark?*
- (9) *Is there a challenge to face?*



I. Introduction to Hermeneutics

II. **Steps in the Hermeneutical Process**

III. Hermeneutical Principles. The hermeneutical principles that follow stem from the nature of Scripture. Like our Lord Jesus Christ, who was the God-Man, the Bible is both a divine and a human book. Ultimately, it was God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16; cf. 2 Pet 1:21), but God also used human writers as channels of that revelation (2 Pet 1:21). As a divine book, it is both supernatural and inerrant, and as such we will never *fully* understand its' contents (cf. Isa 55:8-9). As a human book, it was written to be understood. There are two primary hermeneutical axioms that stem from the divine/human nature of Scripture.

*Axiom #1: The Bible was written by men (2 Pet 1:20-21), therefore it is **like** any other book.* Thus, most of the hermeneutical principles that we apply to Bible study are the same as the ones we would apply to the study of *any* literature.

*Axiom #2: The Bible was breathed out by God (2 Tim3:16); therefore, it is **unlike** any other book.* There are a few principles that recognize the uniquely divine nature of Scripture. For example, we do not seek to understand the Bible so that we may critique it; we seek to understand it so that we may submit to it.

The following corollaries stem from these two axioms.

A. **Corollary #1: The Principle of \_\_\_\_\_.**

1. **Definition:** Scripture is clear and it can be properly interpreted. If “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5), it is as much the nature of God to reveal Himself as it is for light to shine. God’s primary revelation has been through speaking, and we may be quite sure that God has spoken in order to be understood.
2. **Levels of clarity:**
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ clarity: If an interpreter properly follows the normal laws of language, context, cross-references, etc., he can know what the Scriptures specifically mean.
  - b. Internal clarity: This comes from a conscious dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart or mind of the believer, illuminating his mind to see the truth of Scripture as the truth of God (Psalm 119:18; Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:11-16; 1 John 2:20, 27).
3. ***If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.***

4. **Qualifications:**

- a. The clarity of Scripture does not mean that everything in Scripture is equally clear (2 Pet 3:16).
- b. The clarity of Scripture takes into account different levels of maturity among individual believers; the more mature a believer is, the clearer Scripture will become.
- c. The clarity of Scripture does not rule out the need for “teachers” and other biblical specialists who seek to help us understand what the Bible teaches.

B. **Corollary #2: The Necessity of \_\_\_\_\_ Interpretation:** The goal of any biblical interpretation is to discover the original meaning and intention of the text by means of *exegesis* (leading the meaning out of the text) rather than *eisegesis* (bringing a meaning to the text).

1. **Definition:** This method has been referred to as the historico-grammatical method. Literal interpretation is the natural, usual, customary sense of the terms in the culture or the most sensible meaning that is natural (*usus loquendi*, designation).

2. **Defense:**

- a. *It is the \_\_\_\_\_ practice in interpreting literature.* Whenever we read a book, essay, or poem we presume the literal sense in the document until the nature of the literature may force us to another level. It is the best way of getting a meaning! And writers wrote to be understood.
- b. *All secondary meanings depend on the literal base (Foundation).* Christ as the door to salvation corresponds to the door to the sheepfold. The parable of the Sower is understood only within the context of literal “farm” language (cf. also “lions,” incense as a symbol of prayer).
- c. *Only in literal interpretation is there a control, check, or curb on the abuse of Scripture by eisegesis, man’s imaginations foisted on the Bible.*

3. **NOTE:** The literal interpretation of Scripture takes into account figurative language (such as allegories, parables, metaphors, idioms, etc).

C. **Corollary #3: Oneness or \_\_\_\_\_ of the meaning of Scripture (in any**

**one text).** This principle means that a biblical text has *one* basic proper meaning or interpretation, not two or three. The one essential meaning of a text is that meaning which is arrived at by a faithful, proper use of context, word study, cross-reference, knowledge of manners and customs, historical background, and other hermeneutical rules.

D. **Corollary #4: Principle of Context:** Context is King!! 2 Timothy 2:15.

1. ***Why is Context Important?***

- a. Words, phrases, and clauses may (in themselves) have multiple meanings. This is true both in English (e.g. run, hit, trunk, pen) and Greek (e.g. “world,” “faith,” “salvation,” “law,” “in the last days,” *parousia*). The immediate context will help determine which of several meanings is more likely in a given passage:
- b. Thoughts are nearly always expressed by a series of words or sentences, that is, in association, not isolation
- c. False interpretations often arise from ignoring the context.

2. ***Levels of Context:***

- a. *Context of the entire Bible.*
- b. *Context of the OT or NT.* Cf. principle of progressive revelation below)
- c. *Context of the book of Scripture.*

(1) PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

- (a) Explicit Purpose: John 20:31; Rev 1:19
- (b) Implicit Purpose: key words, verses
- (c) Multiple Purposes: 1 Corinthians
- (d) Disputed Purpose: Song of Solomon

(2) STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK: Here it is helpful to know outlines/plans of given biblical books, and to fit your passage within the broader flow of the book. Examples:

- (a) Genesis: narrative structure
- (b) Matthew: topical structure
- (c) Romans: logical structure

(d) 1 John: spiral structure

d. *Context immediately before or after.*

- (1) ISAIAH 7:14: fulfillment in Isaiah's day?
- (2) JOHN 2:19: "temple"
- (3) ROMANS 14-15: Strong and the weak.
- (4) 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1: "touch" is explained by 7:2
- (5) 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29: baptism for the dead. Cf. "we" in vv. 1-28, 30ff; "they" v. 29. One possible explanation is that Paul is referring to a pagan custom, not approving of it but simply referring to it in such a way as to say, "Even pagans recognize resurrection."
- (6) EPHESIANS 5:19-21: 5 participles tell us how to live out the force of "be filled" (5:18). "submit to one another" in 5:21 governs the context in 5:22--6:9.
- (7) 1 THESSALONIANS 5:22: "appearance"?
- (8) HEBREWS 6:4-6: Cf. "We" (6:1-3), "they" (6:4-8), "y'all" (6:9ff).

e. ***Other contexts:*** With this principle, we are concerned primarily with the *biblical* context. There are other contexts to be considered, and most of these will be addressed in connection with other hermeneutical principles. They are simply noted at this point.

- (1) HISTORICAL CONTEXT. When does this take place? Where in history does it fit in? What else was taking place in the world at that time?
- (2) CULTURAL CONTEXT.
- (3) GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT.
- (4) THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT.

E. **Corollary #5: Principle of the Priority of the \_\_\_\_\_ Languages.** The interpreter who interprets Scripture *only* in his modern language is always working with a linguistic veil between himself and the original texts, and he never knows how thin or thick this veil is. This principle simply means to consult the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek to find first-hand what really is said as to word order, word definitions (lexicography), verb tenses, and other points of grammar or meaning. If you do not yet know Hebrew or Greek, it is possible to use other resources to provide the information in English.

1. ***The Importance of Biblical languages.***

- a. *Don't minimize the importance of the original languages.* Without a knowledge of them it is easy to read English meanings back into Greek and Hebrew texts. It is also easy to miss important grammatical connections.
- b. *Don't exaggerate the importance of the biblical languages.* God has always been pleased to use translations of the original languages (cf. LXX in NT times; translations throughout history).

2. ***The Arrangement of Languages.***

- a. *Analytic languages:* stress word order [e.g. English]
- b. *Synthetic languages:* stress word/case-endings [Greek].
- c. *Inflection:* This is where a prefix or suffix is added to a word (or there is an internal word change) to indicate a special meaning of a word (e.g. singulars and plurals; present and past tense verbs; masculines and feminines (eat; ate; egg; eggs, etc). All languages are inflected.
- d. *Declension:* This is where we make changes with adjectives and nouns. “Declining” is the verb used to describe inflection of adjectives and nouns (“house” is singular; “houses” is plural; “He” is nominative; “him” is accusative).
- e. *Conjugation:* This is what we do when we inflect verbs. “Run” [present]; “will run” [future] “ran” [past]

3. ***The Benefits of Biblical Languages:*** Consulting the original languages is important for the following reasons:

- a. *It can clear up possible misunderstandings in the English*

*translations:*

- (1) "appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22).
- (2) "prevent" (1 Thess. 4:15).
- (3) "peculiar" (Titus 2:14).
- (4) "imitation" (Eph. 5:1; 1 Cor. 11:1, etc.).
- (5) "unruly" (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 7, 11).

b. *It can explain idioms.*

- (1) MATTHEW 12:40: "three days and three nights" = "on the third day (2 Chr. 10:5, 12; Esth. 4:16; 5:1; Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; 10:24; Luke 9:32; 1 Cor 15:4, etc.)
- (2) 1 COR. 15:5---"The twelve" had become a regular expression for the group of disciples, and should not be taken to imply that Judas was still part of this group (he had committed suicide), thus making it literally twelve.

c. *It can explain the time element (Genesis 2:19).*

d. *It can show possible distinctions between words (Gal 1:6-7; 6:2, 5).*

e. *It can show where the emphasis falls (Gen 3:16).*

f. *It shows the exact wording so that you see whether so-called cross-references are legitimate ones (e.g. Rev 1:10—Day of the Lord?)*

4. ***What if I have never studied the original languages?*** Lest anyone think that without a firsthand knowledge of the original languages they are doomed to hermeneutical subjectivity, there are several ways in which this hurdle may be overcome.

a. *Use MULTIPLE translations in your study.* Oftentimes comparing different translations will highlight grammatical and lexical nuances from the original.

b. *Use exhaustive concordances.* Strongs' entries are numerically keyed to a Greek and Hebrew dictionary in the back, which are very helpful for word studies (there are similar exhaustive

concordances available for the NASB, NIV, and NRSV). Even better, get a hold of Englishman's Hebrew-English Concordance and Greek-English concordance. They follow the same format as Strongs', except that they group scriptural entries by the original Hebrew or Greek word. Some Bible Study software will also do this for you (e.g. Bibleworks).

- c. *Use theological wordbooks and dictionaries.* Examples include *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody Press); *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, and the 10 volume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (there is a one volume abridgement available)
- d. *Use lexicons* (Hebrew and Greek dictionaries). There are indexes that have been made available to help those who have never studied the originals.
- e. *Other resources can help*, including good commentaries on your particular passage (as with translations, I recommend consulting numerous commentaries), Bible encyclopedias and dictionaries, etc.

#### F. **Corollary #6: Principle of Grammar:**

1. ***Introduction:*** A hallmark of the Reformation was a return to the historical, *grammatical* interpretation of Scripture. This was in direct opposition to the approach to the Bible that had been in vogue for hundreds of years – the view that ignored the normal meaning of words in their grammatical sense and let words and sentences mean whatever the readers (or the church) wanted them to mean.

The Reformers emphasized that God had conveyed His truth in written form, using words and sentences that are to be understood by man in their normal, plain sense. Therefore, the better we understand the grammar of Scripture and the historical setting in which those sentences were first communicated, the better we can understand the truths God intended to convey to us.

2. ***Why is Grammatical Interpretation Important?***

- a. *The Nature of Inspiration.* If we believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, then every word of the Scripture is important. Only grammatical interpretation fully honors the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

- b. *The Goal of Exegesis.* The aim of biblical exegesis is to determine what the text of Scripture itself says and means, and not to read something into it. Thoughts are expressed through words, and words are the building blocks of sentences. Therefore to determine God’s thoughts, we need to study God’s words and how they are associated in sentences. The assertion, “You can make the Bible mean anything you want it to mean,” is true only if grammatical interpretation is ignored.
- c. *The Problem of Communication.* The more a person speaks, the greater the possibility of his being misunderstood. A speaker/writer can be misunderstood if his hearers/readers do not know exactly what he meant by some word(s). Further words given by the speaker helps communicate his meaning.

3. ***What is Grammatical Interpretation?*** Grammar focuses on the meanings of words and sentences and the way they are put together. When we speak of interpreting the Bible grammatically, we seek to determine its meaning by ascertaining four things:

- a. Lexicology: the meaning of words
- b. Morphology: the form of words
- c. Parts of Speech: the function of words
- d. Syntax: the relationships of words

The first of these (lexicology) is examined under the principle of word study below. Under this principle we examine the final three.

4. ***Morphology.*** This term refers to the way words are inflected, that is, put together. Take the word “fuse,” for example. Adding an “s” makes this noun a plural, putting the prefix “re” in front of the word makes it a verb; adding the suffix “al” on the end makes it a different noun altogether. The way in which a word is inflected helps determine the function that word plays in a sentence. For examples in English:

He (nominative); Him (accusative); His (possessive)  
 Run (present tense); ran (past tense)  
 Hate; Heat; Heart (one letter can make all the difference in meaning)  
 Overhang; Hangover (two different words with same components)

In Greek and Hebrew, the meanings of words are changed similarly by inflections at the beginning, middle, or end of the words. These changes will tell you whether a word is singular or plural, verb or noun, subject or object, etc.



5. *Parts of Speech.*

a. *The noun family:*

(1) noun: A word that names *something*, such as a person, place, thing, concept, or even an action. Nouns may be singular or plural in number, and in gender may be masculine, feminine, or neuter.

(2) pronoun: A *pronoun* is a word that substitutes for a noun:

- |     |            |                               |
|-----|------------|-------------------------------|
| (a) | personal   | I, you, he, she, it, we, they |
| (b) | relative   | who, which, that, what        |
| (c) | intensive  | himself                       |
| (d) | reciprocal | one another                   |

(3) adjective: An *adjective* is a word that modifies (qualifies in some way) a noun or pronoun. As they (like adverbs below) enlarge the meaning of the words they modify, quite often they make all the difference.

(4) Article: In English there are two: definite [*the* man] and indefinite [*a* boy]. In Greek there is only the definite article, and often the presence (or absence) of the definite article can make a difference in interpretation (e. g. “the faith” [Jude 3; Phil 1:27, etc.], or “faith”).

(5) preposition: Prepositions are the little words that tell you a relationship between two nouns, whether spatial or temporal. Consider the following examples, all taken from Ephesians:

- |     |                |  |
|-----|----------------|--|
| (a) | Accompaniment  | <i>with</i> Jesus  |
| (b) | Benefit        | <i>for</i> His glory   |
| (c) | Characteristic | the Father <i>of</i> glory; Spirit <i>of</i> Promise; Day <i>of</i> redemption |
| (d) | Conformity     | <i>according</i> to the flesh  |
| (e) | Direction      | <i>toward</i> us   |
| (f) | Entrance       | <i>into</i> the lower parts  |
| (g) | Identity       | pledge <i>of</i> our inheritance   |
| (h) | Location       | <i>in</i> Him; <i>on</i> the earth; <i>at</i> Ephesus.                         |
| (i) | Means          | <i>By</i> his blood  |

- (j) Motion *to heaven; from the dead*
- (k) Opposition *against the devil's schemes*
- (l) Origin *the Word of God.*
- (m) Permeation *through all*
- (n) Position *over all; at His right hand.*
- (o) Time *before the foundation of the world*

b. *The verb family:*

(1) verb: A *verb* asserts something about what a noun/pronoun is or does. Verbs have . . .

(a) TENSE: Past (Aorist, Imperfect, Perfect), Present, and Future. These can make a difference in interpretation:

i) GENESIS 22:10:

ii) ROMANS 12:1-2: Note tense switches.

iii) 1 JOHN 3:6, 9---How can John call for confession (1:8-10) if Christians cannot sin (3:6, 9)? The present tense explanation is probably the best one. The overall direction of a believer will be toward sinlessness if he is a true believer.

(b) VOICE: indicates the relationship of the action to the subject.

i) active: subject performs the action (“I *hit* the ball”). “He *chose* us” (Eph 1:4)

ii) (middle)

iii) passive: subject receives the action (“I *was hit* by the ball”). “Be filled” (Eph 5:18).

(c) MOOD:

i) indicative: a statement “ran”

ii) interrogative: a question “is running?”

- iii) imperative: a command “run!”
- iv) optative: a wish/request “please run”

(d) PERSON: (in Greek; in English this function is performed by a separate word)

- i) first I, we
- ii) second You, Y’all
- iii) third he, she, it, they

(e) NUMBER

- i) singular (He *runs*)
- ii) plural (They *run*)

(2) adverb: An *adverb* modifies or qualifies in some way a verb, adjective, or phrase. In Ephesians, adverbs include “freely” (1:6), “completely” (modifying “humble,” 4:2), and “truthfully” (modifying the imperative “speak,” 4:25).

(3) conjunctions: These are connectives that join words, phrases, or clauses. Examples (all taken from Ephesians) include:

<b>Addition</b>	<i>also, in addition</i>	1:18; 6:16
<b>Comparison</b>	<i>just as, also, as, as . . . so, likewise, so also, moreover, than.</i>	4:32; 5:25
<b>Concession</b>	<i>although, even though</i>	3:8

<b>Conclusion</b>	<i>then, so</i>	4:1, 17
<b>Connection</b>	<i>and, or, either . . . or, neither . . . nor</i>	Psalm 37:4; John 15:4; James 4:8
<b>Condition</b>	<i>if</i>	
<b>Contrast</b>	<i>but, nevertheless, however, yet, otherwise, whereas</i>	2:4, 13; cf. Numbers 13:31; 2 Samuel 11:1; Luke 22:26; John 8:1; Acts 1:8; 1 John 3:17
<b>Correlation</b>	<i>as . . . so</i>	5:24
<b>Emphatic</b>	<i>Indeed, only</i>	
<b>Explanation</b>	<i>Now, for</i>	
<b>Place</b>	<i>where, wherever, in.</i>	

<b>Purpose</b>	<i>that, in order that, so that</i>	1:12, 17, 18; 4:17
<b>Reason</b>	<i>because, for, for this reason, since, as, whereas</i>	1:15; 2:4, 8; 3:1, 14; 6:8
<b>Result</b>	<i>therefore, then, consequently, so, thus</i>	2:11, 19; 4:14; cf. Rom. 5:1; 12:1
<b>Time</b>	<i>when, until, finally, after, as, before, now, then, while</i>	1:13; 4:13; 6:10

(4) interjections: These are single words that express . . .

- (a) A NEGATIVE not, nor
- (b) INTERROGATION why
- (c) AFFIRMATION certainly, indeed
- (d) EXCLAMATION surely, oh, ouch, phooey

6. ***Why know the parts of speech?***

a. Generally, the grammatical *function* of a word in a phrase or sentence influences its *meaning*. Consider the following examples:

(1) The word “cutting” could be a . . .

- (a) NOUN: “The *cutting* of the grass took time.”
- (b) VERB: “He *was cutting* the grass”
- (c) ADJECTIVE: “He made a *cutting* remark.”

(2) The preposition “with” could designate . . .

- (a) ACCOMPANIMENT: “He ate his food *with* his wife”
- (b) MEANS: “He ate his food *with* his fork”
- (c) EMOTION: “He ate his food *with* delight”

b. Specifically, the following examples may demonstrate how knowing certain facts about the parts of speech in phrases and sentences in the Bible can be helpful in interpretation.

(1) Future tenses in Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:10-12 bookend past tense verbs in Isaiah 53:1-9. Why? Because Isaiah 53 is not merely a prophetic declaration of the saving work of Christ; it is a prophetic declaration of Israel’s future recognition of that work as they *look back* and compare

how they initially understood Christ with how they now understand Him (cf. Zech 12:10)

- (2) In Romans 3:23 the first verb (“have sinned”) is in the aorist tense (undefined past action) and could therefore be rendered “all sin” to express action which is true at any time. The second verb “fall short” is in the present tense and should be rendered “are continually coming short” or “come short.”
- (3) The conjunction "for" introduces a reason for the preceding statement(s). In Romans 8, "for" (Greek, *gar*) occurs 15 times. In 1:15-18 (NASB) one reason builds on another: Paul was "eager to preach the Gospel" (v. 15), "for" he was "not ashamed" (v. 16), "for it is the power of God for salvation" (v. 16) "for in it the righteousness of God is revealed" (v. 17).
- (4) Galatians 3:16, the singular *seed* in contrast to the plural *seeds* is crucial to Paul’s argument
- (5) In Ephesians 2:13-22, the aorist (past) tense is used for what has been accomplished by the death of Christ (“have been brought near,” 13; “made the two one,” 14; “destroyed the barrier,” 14; “preached peace,” 17). But the present tense is used for the *effect* of Christ’s death upon believers (“making peace,” 15; “we both have,” 18; “is joined together,” 21, “are being built together,” 22).
- (6) In the phrase “the apostles and prophets” in Ephesians 2:20, the article *the* appears only once. It is not repeated before *prophets*. Therefore, there is one foundation consisting of both apostles and prophets, not two foundations.
- (7) The importance of conjunctions is seen in Ephesians 4:11. The first four occurrences of the word “and” (NASB) is the same Greek word (*de*), but the fifth occurrence of "and" (between "pastors" and "teachers") is a different word (*kai*), and can best be rendered by a hyphen ("pastor-teachers").
- (8) In Revelation 3:10, the Greek preposition *ek* means “out from,” not “out through,” as some suggest. This is a strong argument for a pretribulational rapture (cf. John 17:15)

7. **Syntax.** The word "syntax" comes from the Greek *syntassein*, which means "to place in order together ." According to Webster's Dictionary "syntax" is "the way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, or sentences." It is a branch of grammar .

Single words by themselves seldom convey a complete thought. Like bricks in a building, words are single elements that together make sentences, the basic units of thought. The single words "man," "hard," "ball," and "hit" do not convey a meaningful thought. Therefore they need to be put together. However, the way they are arranged can change the meaning, as seen in these sentences.

"The man hit the ball hard."

"The ball hit the man hard."

"The man hit the hard ball."

"The hard man hit the ball."

"The hard ball hit the man."

- a. **Phrases:** A phrase consists of a short grammatical group of words without a verb.

(1) **Prepositional phrases:** (Cf. under prepositions above). Cf. "in love" in Eph 1:4-5.

(2) **Participial phrases:** A participle is a word usually ending in "ing." It is verbal in nature and is dependent on a main clause. Examples in Ephesians are "speaking the truth in love" (4:15), "making the most of every opportunity" (5:16), and "giving thanks to God" (v. 20).

- b. **Clauses:** A clause is a grammatical unit of words comprised of a subject being discussed and a predicate (the verb indicating action, state, or condition). Clauses can stand alone (independent) or depend on an independent clause (dependent clause; you can always tell a dependent clause by the fact that you cannot say it by itself and make a complete sentence).

- c. **Sentences:**

(1) **Types of sentences:**

- (a) **SIMPLE:** A simple sentence has only one independent clause ( at least a subject and a predicate). An example is in Colossians 3:2, "[You] set your mind on things above."

- (b) COMPOUND: A compound sentence has at least two independent (and coordinate) clauses. An example is seen in Col 3:19: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them."
- (c) COMPLEX: A complex sentence has at least one independent clause and one dependent clause. "We always thank God" (1:3) is an independent clause, and "because we have heard" (v. 4) is a dependent clause.

(2) Purposes of sentences: Sentences, as to their purposes, may be as follows:

- (a) A STATEMENT- to assert a fact, opinion, complaint, emotion, observation, and so forth. Statements may be affirmations (mentioning a positive side) or negations (giving a negative side) .
- (b) A QUESTION- to raise an inquiry.
- (c) A COMMAND- to give an order or charge. (A command in the negative is a prohibition.)
- (d) A REQUEST- to ask for something.
- (e) A WISH- to express a desire.

(3) Interpretive significance: (John 5:39; Acts 2:38)

d. *Word order/repetition*: The order of words is also a significant part of syntax, which should not be overlooked in Bible interpretation. In English the order of words takes on significance. "God is love" and "Love is God" are sentences with the same words, but the order changes the meaning. In Greek, emphasis can be given to words, phrases, or clauses by placing them at the beginning of a sentence (and sometimes at the end) in contrast to the normal word order of subject, verb, and object. For example

- (1) "In Him" is at the beginning of Ephesians 2:21 and thus is emphasized, whereas normally the prepositional phrase would follow the verb "is joined together."



- (2) In I Corinthians 1:17 the word "not" is placed at the beginning of the sentence in Greek, in order to emphasize the negative idea.
- (3) In Hebrew the normal word order is verb, subject, object. Thus if the subject or the object comes first, that is emphasized. In Isaiah I: 14 the order is object, verb, subject, thus stressing the object: "Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts My soul hates." Emphasis in Hebrew is also given by repetition. An example is "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty" (6:3).

- G. Corollary #7: Principle of Word Study.** Often light is shed on how a word is used in a given passage by studying its use in different passages. An original language concordance is very helpful here, as well as Bible Dictionaries and Lexicons [Illus: "joy," "thinking" in Philipians]
- H. Corollary #8: Principle of Historical Appropriateness.** Interpret a passage in such a way that your treatment of it is fitting, appropriate, or in harmony with the situation *at that point in Scripture*. This is related to the principle of progressive revelation (cf. below). Several questions help here: To whom and by whom was the book written? Why was it written and what role did the historical setting play in shaping the message of the book? What are the customs and surroundings of the people? [Illust: "Scarlet cord" of Rahab; Exodus 22 and lending money with interest]
- I. Corollary #9: Principle of Culture.** This principle is a specific application of *historico*-grammatical hermeneutics. In any culture or age, the writers of a document as well as the readers are influenced by their social setting. A knowledge of the following "cultural" categories affects one's interpretation of various biblical passages:
1. **Political:** Ruth 4:1; Dan 5:7, 16; Jon 1:1-3; Luke 14:26; Phil 3:20
  2. **Religious:** Exod 7-12; 23:19; Mark 12:13-28; 1 Cor 8:1
  3. **Economic:** Ruth 4:8, 17; 2 Kings 6:4-6; Job 22:6; Matt 22:21
  4. **Legal:** Ruth 4:6; 2 Kings 2:9; Col 1:15
  5. **Agricultural:** 1 Sam 12:17; Job 39:1; Psa 1:4; Matt 13:31-32
  6. **Architectural:** Josh 2:15; Mark 2:1-12; Matt 24:2; Acts 1:13
  7. **Clothing:** Genesis 37:3; Job 38:3; Matt 22:11; 1 Cor 11:5-6
  8. **Domestic:** Deut 25:5-10; Judg 4:18; Matt 25:1-13; Mark 7:11; Luke 9:59; John 13:23; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:1-3
  9. **Geographical:** 1 Sam 23:29; Luke 10:30; John 4:4; Rev 3:16
  10. **Military:** Hab 1:10; 2 Cor 2:14
  11. **Social:** Num 18:19; Job 2:12; Mal 1:2-3; Luke 10:4; John 9:22; 13:14;

Rom 12:19-21; 16:16;

ISSUE for later discussion! To what extent are biblical passages culturally limited? What criteria can be used for determining which customs carry over today?

- J. **Corollary #10: Principle of Accommodation of Revelation.** God has intentionally accommodated His revelation so that people could understand it (principle of clarity of Scripture) [ILLUST: *Anthropomorphisms; Analogies*]
- K. **Corollary #11: Principle of Legitimate Application** (cf. discussion above under application): This principle means that any application we make of a particular passage flows naturally from a proper interpretation. There may be many possible applications, but only one true interpretation, of a given passage.
- L. **Corollary #12: Principle of Genre Identification.** Before launching into the study of a biblical book (or passage), the student needs to know what that book's author meant it to be. Literary genre is crucial to interpretation.

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Biblical Examples</i>
<i>Exposition</i>	Argument or explanatory material set forth in logical order. Structure is key.	NT epistles; Sermon on the Mount
<i>Gospels</i>	Theological biographies of Christ	Matt, Mark, Luke, John
<i>Legal</i>	Law [Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial]	Exodus 20 – Deuteronomy

<i>Narrative</i>	A historical story conveying a message. They are selective and move to a climax.	Genesis-Exod 20, Joshua-Esther, Jonah, Acts
<i>Parables</i>	A brief tale illustrating a moral principle	Matthew 13, etc.
<i>Poetry</i>	Worship literature, including parallelism and figures of speech	Psalms
<i>Prophetic</i>	Proclamations and Predictions; apocalyptic	Isaiah-Malachi, Revelation
<i>Wisdom</i>	Maxims based on experience and observation	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes

M. **Corollary # 13: Principle of Checking.** This principle simply means that we check whatever scholarly, specialist sources (books or journal articles) would stand the best chance of giving reliable information on a passage or point. While we are individual interpreters of Scripture, we are also part of a wider interpretive community (the church) in which God has raised up teachers over the years. Beware of any interpretation only you come up with! Sources to check include atlases, commentaries, concordances, dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, books on biblical history, biblical introductions and surveys, biblical manners and customs, systematic theologies, and other specialized works.

IV. **Hermeneutical Axiom #2: The Bible is *Unlike Any Other Book* (Divine).**

A. **Corollary #1: The Authority of Scripture.** The Christian student comes to the Bible believing in its divine inspiration and consequent authority (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21, OT “thus saith the Lord;” NT “it is written”). Therefore, rather than

sitting in judgment on the Scripture, he allows Scripture to sit in judgment on him. He applies critical thinking to Scripture to more accurately understand it, not to correct or disagree with it.

- B. **Corollary #2: The Unity of Scripture (Principle of cross-reference).** Though 40 different *human* authors penned the Scriptures, superintending all of them was the One Divine Author (Corollary #1). Therefore, other passages in Scripture—especially if they are by the same human author—will often shed light on a given passage. [Augustine: “The whole Scripture interprets individual Scriptures”]. One must always interpret the obscure passages in light of the clear ones. [ILLUSTRATION: John 3:5 may be understood by Ezekiel 36:25-27]. The NT use of the OT often sheds light on the meaning of OT passages [Matt 2:15 quoting Hosea 11:1].
- C. **Corollary #3: The Principle of Progressive Revelation.** The Bible sets forth a movement at God’s initiative in which God brings man through the theological infancy of the Old Testament to the maturity of the New Testament (see Matt 5:17-20; Gal 3:23–4:7; Heb 1:1-2).
1. ***Illustrations from real life:***
    - a. *Child-training* (cf. 1 Cor 13:9-11)     immaturity → maturity
    - b. *Learning Math*     simple → complex
    - c. *Dr. Barrett’s plastic fish*     implicit → explicit
  2. ***Biblical illustrations:*** (corresponding to illustrations above)
    - a. *OT food laws* (Lev 11:7-8; Dan 1:8; contrast Acts 10; Rom 14:14; Col 2:16-17; 1 Tim 4:4-5)
    - b. *Doctrines of salvation* (Gen 15:6; John 14:6; Rom 10:9-10); *resurrection* (Gen 22:8; John 8:56-58; 1 Cor 15; Heb 11:19-20)
    - c. *The virgin birth* (Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18-25)
  3. ***Warnings:*** Don’t (1) read the specificity of later revelation back into earlier revelation; (2) deny the existence of the seed form of later revelation in earlier revelation.
- D. **Corollary #4: Principle of the Analogy of Faith.** *Positively*, this principle states that there is one unified, consistent, harmonious system of faith (belief) in the Bible. *Negatively*, this means that no point, when correctly understood, will contradict something else in the Bible. Two passages may not teach the exact same thing (as in a cross-reference), but those two things will coordinate with and complement one another, not contradict one another. For example, James 2:14-26 does not contradict passages like Romans 3:20; 4:1-5. Paul is saying that a

believer is saved by grace through faith in Christ apart from works; James is saying that true saving faith inevitably results in good works (also in agreement with Paul, Eph 2:9-10). This principle states that Paul and James will never contradict each other.

V. **Selected Bibliography:** For further study, I would recommend the following books (authors in **bold print** designate those that were the most helpful for the preparation of these notes)

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