

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Introduction:

1. A Reformation ideal: "The Bible in the hands of every plow-man!"
2. Gutenberg's printing press: mid 15th century
3. Education of the masses...
4. The Critic's assessment: "There will be an endless stream of alternate interpretations and understandings of the Bible..."
5. If this is the case, why is this so??

Assumptions-

1. The Bible was written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Bible is inerrant in its capacity to communicate true context (history), true content (reality), and true intent (purpose)
3. There is one correct interpretation; there are many applications.
4. To be human is to be errant...and this is after-all, the problem!
5. Well meaning brothers in the Lord sometimes have incorrect interpretations.
6. Humility remains one of the chief Christian virtues

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE – A SUMMARY

2Ti 3:16 ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: 17 THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.

Ro 10:17 SO THEN FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD.

Scripture is a progressive revelation of God which is completed in Christ.

- **Principle #1 All Scripture is to be interpreted in light of the teachings and life of Christ as promised in the Old Testament, found in the Gospels and interpreted by the letters. The New Testament supercedes the Old Testament in authority.**
 - Guideline – To understand a particular issue, start first with the teachings and life of Christ and read the remaining portions of Scripture as commentary and explanation of what is found there. (Use the NT teaching when there is a conflict with the OT).

Scripture was written by God through man for man.

- **Principle #2 Scripture must be interpreted using the same rules as other human writings.**
 - Guideline - Context rules meaning. Use the sentence structure, surrounding verses and the book as a whole to establish the parameters of meaning.
 - Guideline - Consider the implications of the historical, geographic and cultural situation.
 - Guideline - Identify the literary style and the implications for interpretation.
 - Guideline - Probe the meaning of every significant word in order to find how the author used them.
 - Guideline - Seek only the one meaning intended by the author unless the Scripture indicates that a second meaning exists.
 - Guideline - Take the passage in its most simple direct and ordinary meaning unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise.

Scripture is supernaturally inspired and true in all its parts.

- **Principle #3 The illumination of the Holy Spirit is necessary for accurate interpretation.**
 - Guideline - Walk in trusting, obedience to Christ.
 - Guideline - Bathe all of Bible Study in prayerful responsiveness to God.
- **Principle #4 All passages must be interpreted in light of the unity of Scripture.**
 - Guideline – Compare Scripture with Scripture to illuminate the meaning of each passage, to clarify ambiguities, and to handle discrepancies.

Every person is limited in ability to fully and accurately communicate.

- **Principle #5 Measures must be taken to offset the limitations of our humanity.**
 - Guideline - Consider the testimony of committed believers throughout the history of the Church (including the consensus of the local church).
 - Guideline - Maintain an attitude of humility; that I as an individual will never know all the true meaning of Scripture and will never be completely free of erroneous interpretations.
- **Principle #6 Truth must be lived and not merely thought in order to be understood and passed on.**
 - Guideline - Live then talk. Trust and Obey and then tell what you know.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ANABAPTIST-CHRISTIAN HERMENEUTIC

- **Christocentric** – the purpose of all scriptures is to reveal Christ (Luke 24:27 – John 1:45)
 - NT supercedes the OT
 - Emphasis on living/being and not merely thinking – **knowing involves obedience**
 - Straightforward, ordinary, common sense meaning (Scripture is understandable)
 - The **community** is essential in interpretation
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LIVING BY THE BOOK- Howard Hendricks

1. Observations- (Bible Study)

- a. Six Things to Look For-
 - i. Things that are **emphasized**
 - ii. Things that are **repeated**
 - iii. Things that are **related**
 - iv. Things that are **alike and unlike**
 - v. Things that are **true to life**
 - vi. Get the **Big Picture**

2. Five Keys to Interpretation-

- a. Content
- b. Context
- c. Comparison
- d. Culture
- e. Consultation

Typical principles of Biblical Interpretation-

- Study the context of the passage and the theme of the book.
- Look up the actual meaning of each word in the original languages.
- Note the verb tenses, the cases, and other grammatical determinants.
- Learn the cultural setting of the passage.
- Determine what the original readers understood it to mean.
- Check out cross-references to see how the words are used in other contexts.
- See how the first mention of the word or topic is presented in the Bible.
- Confirm an interpretation with two or three similar passages.

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1. Spiritual Perception Over Intellectual Understanding
 2. God's Revelation Over Human Reasoning
 3. Genuine Love Rather Than Justification of Selfishness
 4. Christ's Commands Over Man's Theology
 5. One Interpretation and Many Applications
 6. Correct Divisions of Truth Versus Truth Out of Balance

There are two Greek words used in the New Testament that are translated "word" by English translators. The first is "**logos**" and the second is "**rhema**". Some Bible teachers see a huge difference between the two. The first is general revelation, the second is specific revelation given specifically to persons.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.