

“How to Interpret the Bible”

1 Corinthians 2:14

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I. Introduction

- A. A lot of people make the Bible say what they want it to say.
 - 1. “That’s just your own interpretation.” Or “Everyone has his own interpretation of the Bible.”
 - 2. The Bible is God’s Word, and when the Bible speaks, God speaks.
 - 3. Many feel the Bible is too hard to understand.
 - 4. It is God’s revelation
 - a) Illustration- Story of the Ethiopian official (Acts 8)
 - 5. Problems:
 - a) A time gap
 - b) A space gap
 - c) The customs gap
 - d) A language gap
 - e) A spiritual gap

II. Qualifications for Interpreting the Bible

- A. You must be born again (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- B. You must have reverence for and interest in God and His Word.
- C. You must have prayerful dependence and humility.
 - 1. No interpretation is infallible
- D. The Bible must be approached with a willingness to obey its teaching.
 - 1. “Every Christian’s Bible” – D.L. Moody
- E. You must have dependence on the Holy Spirit (Spirit of Truth)
 - 1. Even with the Spirit’s help, we must use the ability God has given us to understand His Word.
 - 2. It’s both the word of man and the Word of God.
 - 3. We study it like any other book, but also study it like no other book.

III. The Rules of Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

- A. Work from the assumption that the Bible is the authority
 - 1. Not:
 - a) The church or church history
 - b) The Pope or pastor
 - c) Tradition
 - d) Reason

e) Experience

- B. The Bible interprets itself. Scripture best explains Scripture.
1. (Isaiah 7:14)
 2. (Matthew 1:23)
 3. Let the clear interpret the unclear.
- C. Interpret personal experience in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in light of personal experience.
1. Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)
 2. (2 Peter 1:16-21)
- D. Biblical examples are authoritative only when supported by a command.
1. Illustration- David committed adultery
 2. Mormon leader Brigham Young had more than 30 wives.
 3. Jesus' love- "A new commandment" (John 13:34-35)
 4. A Biblical example can verify what you think the Lord is leading you to do.
 - a) Illustration- If you feel God wants you to stay single
 - b) Illustration- Jesus got up early in the morning to pray. If you feel God is leading you to do that, great, but do not command others to follow.
- E. Correct interpretation is essential before you can make correct application.
1. Illustration- (Acts 16:31)
 2. (1 Corinthians 7:9)
 3. "Living stones" (1 Peter 2:5)
 4. Ask:
 - a) What does it say?
 - b) What does it mean?
 - c) How does it apply?
- F. A doctrine cannot be considered Biblical unless it sums up and includes all that the Bible says about it.
1. Jesus' life and teaching
 2. Book of Acts
 3. Taught in epistles
 4. Kind of genre
- G. Interpret a passage in light of its context.
1. Illustration- Danger of preaching from one verse with no background
 2. Illustration- (1 Corinthians 7:1)
 3. (Matthew 16:28-17:2)
 4. Faith teachers
 5. Children of Abraham
- H. Scripture has only one meaning and should be taken literally.
1. It uses figures of speech, parables, similes, metaphors, and symbolism.
 2. Ask yourself:
 - a) Because I don't want to obey it?
 - b) Because it doesn't fit my preconceived theological bias?

- I. When two doctrines are clearly taught in the Bible, yet appear to be contradictory, accept both as Scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves into a higher unity.
 - 1. Illustration- The Trinity
 - a) The dual nature of Christ
 - b) The sovereign election of God and the responsibility of free will of man.
- J. The primary purpose of Bible study is to change our lives, not increase our knowledge.
 - 1. Look for Jesus
 - 2. Knowing God

IV. Conclusion

- A. To give the Bible its rightful place is to bring glory to God, health to the church, and light to the world.
- B. Things to know
 - 1. God
 - 2. Jesus
 - 3. Holy Spirit
 - 4. Humanity and sin
 - 5. Salvation
 - 6. The Church
 - 7. Future things
- C. Things to do
 - 1. Repent
 - 2. Believe
 - 3. Grow
 - 4. Love