

Understanding + Interpreting the Bible

"Study without prayer is atheism. Prayer without study is presumption" –RW Dale
reality san francisco

Everyone is an interpreter. Everyone is a theologian.

Who determines the meaning?

- Example, The Wizard of Oz¹ (L. Frank Baum 1900)
 - Whoever determines the meaning has the authority.
- How did Jesus see the Bible? (Mark 7:1-13)

open your eyes: observation

Text & Context: first rule of Bible Study.

- Can't divorce a Text from its Context.

Exegesis

- Determining the *intended* meaning of the biblical text using its historical and literary contexts.
 - **Take the bible "literally"?**

Gaining Context | Context rules |

1. Determine Genre
2. Determine Purpose of the Book
3. Determine Immediate Context

open your mind: interpretation

Hermeneutics – the science or art of interpreting the Bible

- Explaining in one language [and culture] what was first written in another language [and culture].²

Culturally Conditioned Bible Passages³

A passage that is conditioned by the culture and must be interpreted to know if it is transferable in part, in whole or not at all.

1. Repeated not Revoked or have Theological Basis. (Permanent/Transferable)
2. Individual Situation. (Principle not transferable)
3. Similar Situation (Principles Transferred)
4. No Cultural Similarities (Principles Transferred)

Guidelines for Determining Whether Bible Practices Are Culture-bound or Transcultural

1. Does the behavior in the biblical culture mean something different in our culture?
2. If the behavior does mean something different, determine the timeless principle expressed in that practice.
3. Determine how the principle can be expressed in a cultural equivalent.

¹ Taken from J. Scott Duvall & J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word* 175

² Roy Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* 19

³ *ibid*, 92-97

open your heart: application

Application flows out of thorough observation and correct interpretation. Application begins with belief, which then results in **doing**.⁴

- You must yield to the Holy Spirit
- Pray the scriptures into your lives
- Allow for accountability in Christian relationships

"God is not nearly so interested in what I know as He is in what I am and how I behave. As Andrew Murray once put it, 'Scripture was not given to us to increase our knowledge but to change our conduct.' The bible was not given only to teach us what to believe and what not to believe; it was also given to show us how to behave and how not to behave. All of our rigorous Bible study must be for the purpose of making the application to life, transferring the truth into day-by-day living."⁵

Applying the Bible

1. Build Application on Interpretation
 - Three wrong ways to Interpret & Apply a section of Scripture⁶
 - Tradition
 - Another Christian
 - Personal Experience
2. Determine What Was Expected of the Original Audience

Application is the chief end we must be willing to obey!

- **Observation, Interpretation and Application lead to Transformation**
- When we don't apply what we know we side with Satan and must see God as ignorant or deceptive.

Satan enjoys seeing Christians get a head-knowledge of victory without a heart-experience, because this lulls believers into a false security, and Satan finds them an easy prey. It is not the reading of truth, or even the enjoying of truth that brings the blessing. It's the doing of truth. -Warren Wiersbe

⁴ Kay Arthur, *How To Study Your Bible* 111

⁵ Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Interpreting the Bible* 221-222

⁶ Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Interpreting the Bible* 61-63