



Lecture #1, Part 3

Course Information

1. Course Description

Survey of basic New Testament Bible facts to provide a usable foundation for personal study, for ministry, and for other courses in biblical studies and in systematic and practical theology.

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A Personal Search For Verifiable Truth

- (4) The fourth reading cycle**
 - (a)** Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - (i)** word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - (ii)** dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - (iii)** paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - (b)** Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - (i)** repeated phrases, [Ephesians 1:6, 12, 13](#)
 - (ii)** repeated grammatical structures, [Romans 8:31](#)
 - (iii)** contrasting concepts
 - (c)** List the following items
 - (i)** significant terms
 - (ii)** unusual terms
 - (iii)** important grammatical structures
 - (iv)** particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 - (d)** Look for relevant parallel passages
 - (i)** look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - a)** “systematic theology” books
 - b)** reference Bibles
 - c)** concordances
 - (ii)** Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - (iii)** Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
 - (e)** Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - (i)** study Bibles
 - (ii)** Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - (iii)** Bible introductions
 - (iv)** Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

At this point we turn to application. You have paid the price to understand the text in its original setting; now it must be applied to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as



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“understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day.”

Application must follow interpretation of the original author’s intent both in time and logic. **One cannot apply a Bible passage to his own day until he knows what it was saying to its day!** A Bible passage cannot mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words only have meaning in context; clauses only have meaning in context; sentences only have meaning in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration.

To say **“thus saith the Lord,”** we must abide in the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to principalize the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, **“our” principles—not the text’s principles.**

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning may be valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. [1 Corinthians 1:26–2:16](#)).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. [1 John 1:9](#)).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. [Psalm 19:7–14](#); [Psalm 42:1](#); [Psalm 119:1](#)).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

1. from **James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, IVP, p. 17–18:**
“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of his Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even



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to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

2. on Kierkegaard, found in **Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1970), p. 75:**

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible *as God's word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

3. **H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible* , p. 19:**

"No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS⁴)
 - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
 - f. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "**the topic sentence**" or "**the central idea of the text.**" This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each



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paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Eddie's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - a. literary context
 - b. historical, cultural insights
 - c. grammatical information
 - d. word studies
 - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
 - a. manuscript variations
 - b. alternate word meanings
 - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 - d. ambiguous textsAlthough the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.