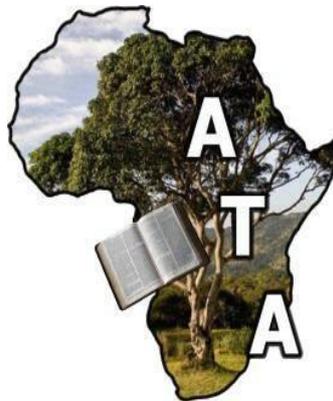


## ATA Bible Interpretation Course



Compiled by Joster Jumbe from Practical Hermeneutics by Professor Hegeman. The Questions and Glossary have been formed by the compiler.

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## COURSE INTRODUCTION

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## COURSE INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is for students to expand their knowledge of Bible Interpretation in Africa. It focuses on the successes and challenges of Bible Interpretation in Africa and steps that African interpreters should take for Africa to have an authentic church.

## COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into 8 lessons and a glossary. It presents Bible Interpretation in God-centered manner.

## COURSE MATERIALS

The lecture notes present the information for this course. The students are required to listen and read them thoroughly.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- a) To study *Bible Interpretation Course* with other students;
- b) To acquire a detailed knowledge of interpretation using the lessons of this course;
- c) To develop a deeper understanding of some interpretation problems in Africa;
- d) To master *Bible Interpretation Course* in order to use it in teaching, preaching; and
- e) To master *Bible Interpretation Course* to gain an understanding of the challenges of the church in Africa.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participate in all hours of common teaching time.

## COURSE EVALUATION

Student Attendance: The points will be given for the hours attended.

## BENEFITS OF THIS COURSE

The course will ground students in Bible interpretation in Africa.

## Lesson One: Introduction to Bible Interpretation

Bible interpretation is also called Hermeneutics. The word Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word "Hermes." It is therefore a process by which we seek to understand the message.

Christians agree that the Bible is the word of God. They believe that God has spoken to us clearly, and that there is only one correct interpretation of any Bible passage. This is the meaning God intended when he breathed his word into the human authors, and the passage was written. A particular passage may have many applications, but it has only one meaning, and that is the meaning the author, through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intended.

Augustine:

"The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained."

Augustine in a letter to St. Jerome:

"I have learned to hold only the Holy Scripture inerrant." In *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 1:87.

Anonymous:

"Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them."

T.J. Bach:

Where God has put a period; do not change it to a question mark.

F.F. Bruce:

"The Bible was never intended to be a book for scholars and specialists only. From the very beginning it was intended to be everybody's book, and that is what it continues to be."

John Calvin:

"Since we are not favoured with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that God has been pleased to preserve His truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers...as if they had heard the very words pronounced by God Himself" (*Institutes*, 1.7.1.).

John Calvin:

John Gerstner:

"If God (or one who has the power of God), proposes that the Bible is the Word of God, what sane person can question it?" (*Hand Theology* 6.7).

John Gerstner:

"If the Bible is the Word of God, it is self-evident that it cannot have one error, anywhere, in all its original text" (*Hand-out Theology*, 6.8).

John Gerstner:

"If you are not capable of being insulted you can't interpret this book correctly" (*Hand-out Theology*, 7.6).

John Gerstner:

"You won't believe what the Bible says if you won't believe how bad you are" (*Hand-out Theology*, 7.7).

John Gerstner:

"The "righteous" can't let this word have free course because that would spell the end of their self-righteousness. They have a vested interest in unsound interpretation" (*Hand-out Theology*, 7.8).

Will H. Houghton:

"Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays hold of you."

C.S. Lewis:

"A sacred book rejected is like a king dethroned."

Martin Luther:

"Unless I am convinced by Sacred Scripture or by evident reason, I will not recant. My conscience is held captive by the Word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe." (Diet of Worms, 1520).

Martin Luther:

"I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf." (*What Luther says.*)

Martin Luther:

"The Holy Spirit Himself and God, the Creator of all things, is the Author of this book" (*What Luther Says*, 1.63).

Martin Luther:

"The Word must stand, for God cannot lie; and heaven and earth must go to ruins before the most insignificant letter or title of His Word remains unfulfilled" (*What Luther Says*, 1.68).

Martin Luther:

"The Holy Spirit is the plainest Writer and Speaker in heaven and on earth. Therefore His words can have no more than one, and that the most obvious sense. This we call the literal or natural sense. But that the things meant by the plain sense of His plain Word may also mean something further and different, and thus one thing signifies another, is more than a question of words and languages. For this is true of all things outside Scripture, since all God's works and creatures are living signs and words of God as St. Augustine and all the teachers declare. But we should not on this account say that Scripture or God's Word has more than one meaning" (*What Luther Says*, 1:91-92).

Justin Martyr:

"When you hear the words of the prophets spoken as though in their own persons, you are not to think that they are uttered by the inspired men themselves, but by the divine Word who moves them."

R.C. Sproul:

"Infallibility means that something cannot err, while inerrancy means that it does not err" (*Grace Unknown*, p. 48).

Belgic Confession. Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture:

We believe that this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it. For since the entire manner of service which God requires of us is described in it at great length, no one-- even an apostle or an angel from heaven, as Paul says--ought to teach other than what the Holy Scriptures have already taught us. For since it is forbidden to add to or subtract from the Word of God, this plainly demonstrates that the teaching is perfect and complete in all respects.

Therefore we must not consider human writings-- no matter how holy their authors may have been-- equal to the divine writings; nor may we put custom, nor the majority, nor age, nor the passage of time or persons, nor councils, decrees, or official decisions above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else.

For all human beings are liars by nature and more vain than vanity itself.

Therefore we reject with all our hearts everything that does not agree with this infallible rule, as we are taught to do by the apostles when they say, "Test the spirits to see if they are of God," and also, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house." Gal. 1:8; Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 10

Westminster Confession of Faith:

"The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them."

London Baptist Confession (1689) Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scriptures:

1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal Himself, and to declare that his will unto His church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former

ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased. (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Isa. 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 1:19-21; Rom. 2:14,15; Psalms 19:1-3; Heb. 1:1; Pro. 22:19-21; Rom. 15:4; 2 Pet. 1:19,20).

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these: **Of the Old Testament:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. **Of the New Testament:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, To Titus, To Philemon, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, The first and second Epistles of Peter, The first, second, and third Epistles of John, The Epistle of Jude, The Revelation. All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life. (2 Tim. 3:16)
3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings. ( Luke 24:27, 44; Rom. 3:2)
4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God ( 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 5:9).
5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellences, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. (John 16:13, 14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20, 27).
6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be

ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Gal. 1:8,9; John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9-12; 1 Cor. 11:13, 14; 1 Cor. 14:26,40)

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them. (2 Pet. 3:16; Psa. 19:7; Psa. 119:130)
8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. ( Rom. 3:2; Isa. 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39; 1 Cor. 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28; Col. 3:16).
9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16).
10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved” (Matt. 22:29, 31, 32; Eph. 2:20; Acts 28:23)

Lausanne Covenant (1974), The Authority and Power of the Bible:

“We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God.(II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16, Matt. 5:17,18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17,18; 3:10,18)”

Voltaire:

"If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man's belief in the Bible."

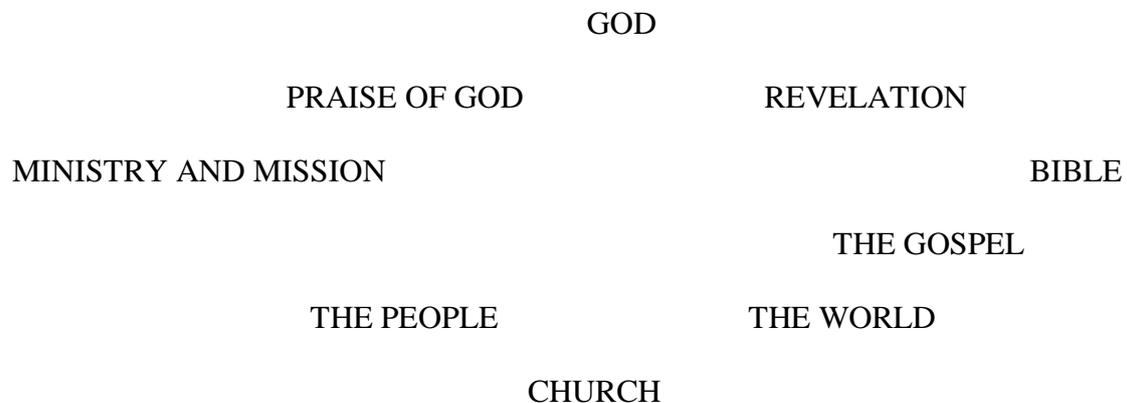
The guiding Scripture for our study in Bible Interpretation is, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17). For that reason it is good to look for doctrines and teachings, identify that which needs to be corrected, give a better alternative and equip the believer to obey the Word and so participate in the works of Christ.

## Questions

1. What is the other name for the phrase Bible interpretation?
2. Why do people reject the Bible?
3. What is an Apocrypha?
4. Why do you think the Holy Scripture is mightier than all synods?
5. What are the similarities among Belgic, Westminster and London Confession of Faith about the Holy Scripture?
6. What is infallibility?
7. Who is the author of Bible?
8. Why do you think there's no difference between the Old and New Testament?
9. What is the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined?
10. Which is the only weapon that can destroy Christian religion?

## Lesson Two: Biblical Interpretation Circle

One's interpretation starts with the knowledge and faith in the only true God. It then proceeds to His double revelation: general and special revelation. The Bible is part of God's special revelation and its major message is about the kingdom and salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ. This gospel message, as communicated in the Bible, is to be communicated by the Church throughout the whole world and to all people. This is accomplished through exercise of the three fold ministries of proclamation, prayer and mediation and service. When God's people are faithful in their interpretation, ministry and mission they will glorify God. This is clearly seen in the circle below:



### INTERPRETATION CIRCLE AND GOD

The starting point for understanding principles of interpretation is the only true God (Pro. 1:7). He is eternal, the creator, one in essence and plural in personhood, Lord, sovereign, universal, has authority over evil, holy, among other attributes, and who has revealed Himself to us. In the New Testament He is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus accepts all of the divine names as applicable to Himself and He receives the worship of His disciples showing that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is God. Despite the universal effects of sin, God's life transforming grace presses on, the inspired Word goes forth and the hearts and minds of the elect believer are illuminated by the Holy Spirit to believe, understand and transformed by the gospel, minister to others and glorify God in true worship.

Most of the religious leaders in Jesus day rejected Jesus as the Messiah, as Son of God, the Son of Man, as Lord, King, Creator and Savior. Today, Feminism, the Jehovah Witnesses, Judaism, Islam, liberal Protestantism, New Age, Mormonism and world religions, as discerned by their statements about God, reject the true knowledge of God and initiate their hermeneutics in error. The interpretation circle begins with the true God and His Word.

## Interpretation Circle and God's Revelation

Do you think God is able to reveal Himself to sinners? The problem is not God's ability (omnipotence) but it is His holiness (sinlessness). Sinners say they want to see God for themselves, "why does He not just show up?" Well, he did and sinners rejected and crucified Him.

The creator of the universe has revealed Himself and by grace continues to do so. His general revelation is to all people and His special revelation is to His people. General revelation includes God's miraculous creation, His providence, natural law, human history, personal events and other ways in which His presence is shown to all people. Special revelation includes the theophanies, the coming of Jesus, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

The believing student has the guarantee that the true interpretation of the Bible and true science are completely compatible and affirm one another for they come from the same reliable source. The "disconnect" between the Bible and science lies not with the Bible and science but in our interpretation and understanding of them.

## Interpretation Circle and the Bible

God chose to use the means of the Bible in order to communicate absolute truth to us. The Bible is central in interpreting truth since it is God's special and written revelation. Truth corresponds to God's character and revelation.

The Bible is the Word of God for all people. It is meant to be understood by young and old, in all languages and by people from all cultures and social classes. It is the responsibility of the Church to translate and communicate the Word worldwide and for all people.

The revealed Scripture is inerrant. The original manuscripts as penned by their authors did not contain errors or contradictions in content. Scripture forbids the adding or taking away from the Biblical text (Rev. 22:19). There are mysteries, paradoxes and unknowns. Examples of the unknown words which theologians give different views are Thummim and Urim (Exod. 28:30, Lev. 8:8) and sons of God (Gen. 6:2) in the Bible. God is not capable of revealing error. Human error enters into the Scripture through copyists, translators and interpreters. A serious student of the Bible will be able to examine and interpret difficult Biblical texts and discern their message. The Christian does not shy away from the important and difficult task of studying the Bible in its original languages and according to the ancient manuscripts.

The translation of Scripture from one language into another need to consider the content (message) and form (grammar) of the biblical text. A literal translation maintains the message and seeks to maintain the grammatical construction and vocabulary usage. When an ethnic language does not have a word for lamb, the word and its definition is introduced into the culture. The dynamic equivalent method of translation is used, the content of the message is maintained but liberty is given to use other words to communicate such a new word or concept.

Ethnic church leaders need to be trained in Bible translation, original languages and linguistics in order to provide a literal translation for their language group. Each ethnic group has the right to know what the originals say. Even though the Bible was written by many human authors who lived in different cultures and times, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit unifies all of Scripture. The Bible student can expect to find harmony between Biblical texts.

The Bible is divided into a variety of literary genres, including history, laws, parables, prophecies, proverbs and poetry. Each genre has its respective way of being interpreted and their message will not contradict the rest of Scripture. The Bible is the best commentary for the Bible. The Bible interprets the Bible. The Word of God interprets the Word as the interpreter seeks God's point of view. The Bible is to be read and understood by all people, from all ages and levels of education. Teachers and preachers are needed in order to help the reader understand. The believer should not be satisfied with an incomplete interpretation of a text and need to submit himself to teachers and preachers who Biblically interpret the Word of God.

Biblical exegesis explores both the grammatical and historical dimensions of the text and context in order to determine what the text says. The meaning of the text cannot contradict the grammar or historical context of the text. There is an all-out assault through the translation of the Bible to present a different and view of God. Due to availability of the computer there are a variety of Bible versions representing the sects as well as traditional church's views. This is true for the Jehovah Witnesses, Roman Catholics, conservative Evangelicals and liberal Protestants. Liberal Protestants have exerted a lot of influence in producing Bible versions that use inclusive language even when Scripture uses masculine terminology and thus appease the feminists and relativists.

The only way to preserve the authenticity and integrity of Scripture is to return to the literal interpretation of the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Each person and people group has the right to know what the Biblical text actually says. Each generation, each people group, needs a faithful rendering of the Bible so they may study for themselves this special revelation. With that in mind, there are many people groups who have portions of the Scripture or even a paraphrase translation of the Scripture, but do not have the complete Bible in their own language. It will be the task of the Church and Christian community to equip the national leaders to study the original languages and science of Bible translation in order to prepare for their language group a literal translation of the Bible.

## Interpretation Circle and Gospel Transformation

The Bible is the means by which the gospel transforms the interpreter. There are a variety of ways in which the transformation caused by the gospel is described. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news about salvation through His life, death, resurrection and reign that is graciously offered by the Father to those who believe in Jesus. The gospel requires that the believer die to sin and live by faith in Jesus. This distinguishes the believing from non-believing interpreter.

How can we logically understand the unique intervention of the gospel news of Jesus in our interpretation of the Bible? How are we to distinguish the truth from

the lie and how can we know if we are faithful in our interpretation or not? Believers are free to use a variety of epistemological methods to show how the gospel interacts with the truth and the lie. This study will use what is called by the author as the evangelical or gospel dialectic. The gospel dialectic recognizes that God's revelation (general or special) constitutes the thesis. Due to the presence of evil and sin, deception and the lie is introduced into the interpretation. The antithesis is the opposite or negation of the thesis. The antithesis can be traced back to a questionable presupposition or intent. How is the interpreter to resolve the opposing claims of the thesis and the antithesis? This is where the gospel interpretation comes in. The gospel of Jesus requires the interpreter to recognize, repent and avoid false presuppositions and erroneous interpretations and by faith embrace the perspective defined by salvation event in Jesus Christ. When a non-gospel conclusion is reached this can be defined as syncretism. In syncretism the thesis and the antithesis co-exist in one system and a gospel transformation is not reached. In biblical terms this is called idolatry.

### Truth, Lie, Gospel and Idolatry: Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis, Syncretism

The starting point of the good news is that God exist and one's interpretation of the Bible can be measured according His being, His Word and His Work. This composite of truth can be called the thesis verification standard. The interpreter bases the thesis on what is clearly revealed in the text. Word studies, Scriptural cross references, grammar, historical context, cultural content, figures of speech, literary structure, authorship, manuscript study and other forms of analysis are necessary. When Biblical truth has been established from the text the interpreter needs to consider what the text opposes. For example, if a Biblical thesis is that "the just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17c) then the antithesis could include the following: 1) the unjust live by faith even though their works are evil (Rom. 1:18-32; 2) the just may condemn the unjust while practicing injustices (Rom. 2:3); 3) the just justify themselves; and any other statement that would contradict the thesis. The gospel response to the thesis and antithesis is that the just who live by faith in Jesus are justified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21-16).

A syncretistic response would be for the just to boast of their own works (Rom. 3:27) or to continue sinning so that grace could abound (Rom. 6:1). The believer is called to live by the justice and mercy of Christ and with such a faith be transformed by the renewing of the mind "that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 11:2). Paul foresees the excuses and improper conclusions his audience may have as concerns justification by faith and he addresses them at length.

The utilization of the evangelical or gospel dialectic helps the Bible student enter into the internal relationships of the text under study. It is not the only means a student can use but when exercised with logical consistency and faithfulness to the gospel, it can be a great tool.

However, a logical approach to interpreting the Bible is not enough. There has to be an existential or experiential encounter and transformation between the message of the Bible and the mind and life of the interpreter (Rom. 12:1-2). When the Word has transformed the spirit, mind and lifestyle of the interpreter, then the interpreter

can become a communicator of the Word. Such a communicator of the Word does not only pass on the contents of the Bible message but becomes himself living evidence of the Word's transforming power.

## Interpretation Circle and the World's Context

The Bible is part of world history and it is a reliable authority as to origin of human history, human culture and the expansion of Judaism and Christianity. Scripture, regardless of its human authorship and place in history, interacts with the world in which it was written. The fact that the Bible was written in primitive languages that are dead, that are, not spoken nor under constant change, is conducive for it to be translated and communicated into all cultures, language groups, social classes, age groups, genders and time frames. Lesson six is dedicated to exploring the contextual dimensions of the Bible.

## Interpretation Circle and the Church

Before the individual interprets the Bible, the Church was used by God to receive, translate, transmit, interpret and defend the Bible. The Church must resist the temptation to place its interpretation at the same level as the revealed Scriptures, for then, in affect; it places its own interpretation above the Scriptures. The historical Protestant position is *sola scriptura*; the authority of the Bible is supreme over all other authorities, including the church, the scholars, the state and personal opinion.

The church that does not uphold the authentic transmission and interpretation of the Bible, as it is passed on to us, loses its purpose and function as being a pillar of truth for the Christians and in the world. The Western church needs to recover its God given task of transmitting the literal text from one generation to another so that the future generation may clearly know what God's revelation and will is.

The translation of the Bible into new languages used to be the function of the institutional church. Protestantism broke away from that model as gifted translators took it upon themselves to translate from the original languages into their own language. From the 18th century until the middle of the 20th century, Bible Societies and para-church mission agencies such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, translated Scriptures. Today the large publishing houses are producing a large variety of Bible translations suited to the individual and cultural needs of a paying audience. Today many new versions, each with their individual and cultural emphasis, are appearing in the churches. The sense of one authoritative version for the congregation is disappearing as denominational authority is waning in the West.

However, some translations have corrupted the word of God politically in order to sell more copies. The New International Version (NIV) is the most widely used Bible version in churches today. The NIV completely removes the words: Godhead, imputation, propitiation, bottomless pit, Calvary, fornication, atonement and hundreds of other words. Whereas the trustworthy King James Bible tells us that people *worshipped* Jesus, the corrupted NIV removes every mention of the word *worshipped* and replaces it with *knelt*. Well you can kneel before a king without

worshipping him. They are attacking the Lord's deity, that is, that JESUS IS ALMIGHTY GOD!

In sharp contrast, modern Bibles are corrupt and; therefore, produce corrupt teachings. Just the fact that the NIV translators completely removed the critically important Word, "GODHEAD" from (Acts 17:29, Rom. 1:20 and Col. 2:9) is reason enough to run away from the NIV as fast as you can. That's not all that the wicked NIV deceivers took out of the Bible. The word "sodomite" is completely gone, as is the words: fornication, trucebreakers, winebibbers, carnal, slothful, unthankful, effeminate, backbiting, vanity, lasciviousness, whoredom, devils, Lucifer, damnation, brimstone, and the bottomless pit. Go and check for yourself.

## Interpretation Circle and Receptors

A human heart that is transformed by the Biblical gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a change agent in the world. The kingdom of God will not come through unregenerate hearts. Transformed people, living out their faith through transformed relationships, participate in the kingdom of God, are active in ministry and missions, and so are used by God to His glory.

The following human faculties constitute the human "heart" or a person's psycho-spiritual make up. Each human faculty plays its part in interpreting.

## Mental Activity: Human Faculty in Operation Relationship to Interpretation

Who is the person that interprets? The Bible teaches about human nature and about needing a new nature. One believes according to who he is in relationship to the true God. The believer has a new nature that operates by faith in Jesus and through the power and illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:24; II Pet. 1:3-10).

Do I understand the information in the Bible? Has the Bible been properly explained to me? If others were to ask you about the details of the Bible would you be able to explain them? Do I know what to do and where to go in order to obtain Biblical knowledge?

As a student of the Bible, does the Holy Spirit convict me of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn. 16:7-11)? What are my "vested interests" in denying the truth of a passage? Do I self-justify my sinful attitudes and actions?

Am I seeking to justify my own will or to do God's will? Do I pray, "Your will be done" or "my will be done?" How does the interpretation of the Bible make me feel? Are my feelings in accordance with the facts of the Bible? Do I actually study the Bible? How is Bible study related to my ministry and mission?

Do you know the true God? Has the gospel of Jesus Christ transformed your life? Do I have a personal devotional life? Do I read the Bible every day, every week? Does Bible study cause me to worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

The interpreter and communicator have a “heart,” and so does God. The “heart of God” is the how God expresses His attributes and relationships. God relates to the believing interpreter as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The passion of the Father is to reconcile all things to Himself through Jesus Christ. The passion of the Son is most clearly seen on the cross and in the resurrection where Jesus accomplishes all that is necessary to bring about reconciliation between God and man. And finally, the passion of the Holy Spirit is, among other things, holiness, truth and perfection. The Holy Spirit applies the Father’s will and the Son’s redemptive work to the believing interpreter perspective of the Bible.

## Interpretation Circle and Ministry

Bible interpretation is not just for individual transformation but also for ministry: serving the Lord for the up building of the Church and the establishment of the kingdom of God throughout the whole world. The offices of prophet, priest and king-ruler of the Old Testament is translated by the preacher, pastor-counselor, and elder of the New Testament. These offices exist to “equip the saints for ministry, for the up building of the Church.” The concept of the priesthood of all believers was rediscovered in the 16th Reformation but not fully implemented by its followers until the rise of evangelicalism at the end the 18th century when lay persons took on more and more responsibilities for missions (William Carey) and ministry (Booth). The rise of faith missions and the para-church evangelical ministries was complimented by the rise of Bible studies, Bible conferences, and Bible Colleges during the 19th and 20th century. The end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century has witnessed the rise of the persecuted church, the expansion of the neo-charismatic church and the rise of internet motivated distance theological education.

## Interpretation Circle and the Glory of God

The final step in the hermeneutical circle and one’s interpretation is to glorify the true God. An interpretation that glorifies God will praise God by worshipping the only true God, balancing both general and special revelation, upholding the Bible as the interpreter to the Bible, presenting the message of the gospel, showing that one’s interpretation brings transformation to one’s heart and all areas of life, faithfully using God’s Word in proclamation, prayer and reconciliation and service and calling God’s people to worship God according to the Word.

To be sure, not all of the believer’s interpretations automatically “praise the Lord.” We stand in need of teaching, reproof, correction and ongoing instruction (II Tim. 3:16,17). For that reason, the confession of sin and preaching of the Word is part of the Christian’s communal worship. Christians are to continually read the Bible, confess sin and strive to participate in the work and ministry of Christ.

The guarantee that the believer is interpreting the Bible in a God glorifying way is that our interpretation can be compared to Scriptures as it is fulfilled in Christ. Our doctrines, ethics, music and life style are measured by the Word of God. Beware of the Christian student, leader or church member who is unwilling to submit to the high standard of God’s Word. We are not speaking of only submitting to church rules, creedal statements or church order, but submitting to the written Word. The Bible

student who does not find within himself the ability to submit to teaching, reproof, correction and ongoing instruction is walking according to his own light rather than being illuminated by the Holy Spirit. How the growing church today needs more “bright students” of the Bible, those illuminated by the Holy Spirit, who points all things to Christ, who in turn glorifies the Father and who always works in accordance with the inspired Word, the Bible.

## Questions

1. List eight elements of the interpretation circle.
2. Mention groups that reject the true knowledge of God and initiate the interpretation in error.
3. What does God use to communicate absolute truth?
4. What is syncretism?
5. Give the meanings of the following terminologies:
  - a. Thesis
  - b. Antithesis
  - c. Syncretism
6. Mention three significant developments in the church at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
7. What is the only way to preserve the authenticity and integrity of Scriptures?
8. Mention literary genres found in the Bible.
9. What is exegesis?
10. What were theophanies?

## Lesson Three: Theological Principles for Bible Interpretation

Theology proper is the study of knowledge of God. For the Christian theologian this means studying what the Bible says about God. It is a logical course of action to start with the very first verse of the Bible, “in the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.”

### First Theological Principle: The Word of the True God

Everyone likes to express his own opinion. We want to be heard and have our opinions respected. It’s important that people speak the truth about us. The same is true for God. He wants us to know the truth about who He is, what He does and why He has made us. For that reason God reveals the truth about Himself in His Word and in the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In this part of the lesson we look specifically at some of the Scriptural names of God and see how that is related to the interpretation of Scriptures. A major way in which God made Himself known to His people in the Old Testament was to associate His name with important events that are recorded in Bible history. As Scripture is read, one sees the unfolding of the greatness of God as He acts in history.

“In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.” Elohim, is the supreme, universal, creator God (Gen. 1:1). Elohim is the eternal God. “In the beginning Elohim created....” He existed before the creation of space and time. The Word of God comes from the counsel of God in heaven and existed before creation of the universe. God is eternal as opposed to the view of the Mormons that the Father has a Father and that the Son is a perfected human being. Elohim’s name is plural. This refers to the mystery of the plurality of the godhead (Mt. 28:19-20). Elohim is not a combination of gods, as in polytheism, but rather one God in three persons (Mt. 28:19-20). The full revelation of this mystery was not revealed until Jesus came. The plurality of the Godhead is rejected by the Jehovah Witnesses who do not consider that Jesus is God or that Holy Spirit exists as a divine person. Elohim is the Creator God: “created” is bara in Hebrew. Only an eternal God can create something that will last for eternity. He is the Creator of material, plant, animal, human and angelic life. As the Creator He is also sovereign over all. As Creator He is the only one who can save us. God created by His Word. He spoke and the various parts of creation came into being. He who created the universe also reveals to us how we are to live in the universe.

Ruah Elohim is the Spirit of God (Gen. 1:2). The name is given in the context of the creation of the world. The Spirit generates creation into existence. He who generates is also He who regenerates the spirit of man for salvation (Jn. 3:5). The generation in creation came through the Father’ Word as so does regeneration (Rom. 10:17). Rauh Elohim works order and creates natural law that operates in accordance with God’s attributes. The Spirit of general revelation is also the Spirit of special revelation.

Yahweh Elohim, the LORD God (Gen. 2:4). Composite names are used in the context of Bible revelation in order to reveal who God is. The name Yahweh comes from (Ex. 3:14), where God reveals Himself as the “I AM WHO I AM.” The

Yahweh Elohim of chapter 2 of Genesis gives the religious commandment and establishes the institution of marriage. God relates to mankind through commandments. God is the author of the major institutions of humanity and in His sovereign Word addresses these institutions with Lordship authority.

El, Elyon is the High God (Gen. 14:18). Elyon is revealed in the context of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, King of Salem. God is a universal God. He is not a god of a particular family or tribe. Melchizedek represents a universal priesthood that God had established. Jesus also belonged to the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110; Heb. 7:17). God's Word reveals His plan for all peoples, not just the people of Israel. Yahweh is the I AM WHO I AM of Exodus 3:14. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush in the desert and showed that as the God of life He is in control of the life of His people.

Malak Adonai means Angel of the Lord (Gen. 16:2). The Angel of the Lord intervenes in the troubles of Hagar. God has messengers. The angel is a messenger who represents God's will and word. In Revelations 2 and 3, Jesus speaks to the messengers of the churches, those who communicate the will and Word of God to God's people.

El Shaddai means Almighty God (Gen. 17:1). God is explaining the conditions of the covenant to Abraham. God commands us to walk in His attributes. He commands us to be perfect (or righteous: NIV). God does not only command perfection and justice but by faith in His power the believer can walk in this "fruit of the Spirit." According to the Word, the believer is not alone, he can appeal to God for His attributes.

Yahweh Sabaoth is the LORD of hosts (I Sam. 1:3). This name first used at the beginning of life and ministry of Samuel the prophet. The LORD is sovereign; even the evil spirits have to obey Him when he sends them out to punish the wicked. So the Word of God applies to both the righteous and the wicked. Even the wicked, including Satan himself, have to submit to the Word when they are called to do so. Jesus said to Satan. "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Mt. 4:10).

Agio pneuματος, the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:18) appears at the onset of the New Testament. (Mt. 1:18) The pneuματος is the translation of Ruah of Old Testament. His work is directly related to the coming and ministry of Jesus Christ. He appears as the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost. His work includes the inspiration of the Biblical authors and the illumination of the believers.

The identification of the Father (Pater) is shown in the New Testament (Mt. 6:9). Not only is this important in relationship to the divine Son (Mt. 3:17, Jn. 3:16) but it is important to identify the spiritual parentage of believers (Jn. 8:42-44). Believers call God the Father, Abba (Rom. 8:15). In relationship to Bible interpretation, one observes a progression in revelation. The doctrine of the Godhead and Trinity was not revealed in the Old Testament. This was disclosed with the coming and going of Jesus (Mt. 28:19-20).

Huios, the Son, is prophesied throughout the Old and revealed in the New Testament. He is identified with the divine name of Kurios, Lord (Matt. 1:20). This is the translation of LORD and Lord of Old Testament (Yahweh and Adonai). To read the Bible without encountering Jesus Christ as LORD is to miss the most important revelation.

Theos is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew, Elohim, Elyon, El, El Shaddai and Sabbaoth. With the revelation of the person of Jesus Christ, the revelation through the Old Testament names had served its purpose. Jesus is a greater and more glorious revelation of who God is.

Many religious leaders in Jesus day rejected who Jesus was and what he taught. They rejected Him as Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man, as Lord, as Creator, as the eternal I AM, as the Logos, as God. Our brief review of some of the names for God in Scripture help us to conclude that in order for us to know God, He has to reveal Himself to us. His self-revelation in Scripture is complimented by His self-revelation in His Son (Heb. 1:1-4). In order to interpret the Bible one has to accept what is written in the Bible and is revealed in Jesus. The interpretation circle begins with the Word of the true God.

## Second Theological Principle: Christ-Centered

Studying the Scripture is not simply an academic exercise; it is seeking to understand the communication between God and His people. We are studying the Word of God to us. Unless we believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and God's personal revelation to us, we will not understand the written Word. The personal Word and the written Word correspond perfectly.

In today's exercise you will see how the book of Psalms contains many prophecies about Jesus. It's amazing how over this span of hundreds of years the Spirit of God was foretelling the great coming of Jesus Christ. Even though the original human authors did not know the prophetic content of their writers, the divine author, the Holy Spirit would use the human authors to write both their poetry, in which the Psalmist converses with God as well as reveal prophetic information about the future.

There are strict interpreters who hold that if the original author, such as the psalmist in Psalm 22 did not intend to prophecy about the future, then the reader today cannot use such writings as prophecy. However, this strict interpreter forgets that Scripture defines prophecy as not being written by the will of man but being inspired and moved by God (I Pet. 1:10-12; II Pet. 1:19-20). Scripture is not just human writings about God but God's inspired Word that uses human authorship for God's purposes.

Psalm 22 is a fascinating study between the relationship of Old Testament authorship and New Testament fulfillment. The fact that a variety of New Testament references are made to the prophetic relationship of Psalm 22 to the suffering and death of Christ shows the Holy Spirit's intent. Scripture interprets Scripture. Scripture is verified by multiple Scriptural evidences. "The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained." But what did the Psalmist have in mind? The Psalmist

was writing about his own suffering, which is also experienced by other believers and it is ultimately fulfilled in the supreme suffering servant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Third Theological Principle: Inspiration and Illumination of the Holy Spirit

The believing Bible student should not study on his own. He studies in the presence of the living God, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is holy and perfect and His deals with us. For that reason, we affirm that the inspiration of Scripture is perfect and without error. In the same way, we believe that the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Bible is perfect and without error.

The Christian believer studies the Word with faith in God. He is not alone. Prior to studying the Word the student prays that God will lead him. By faith the believer carefully follows the prescribed ways of God as revealed in the Word. When we error, and we do error as Christians, we ask for forgiveness, correction and restoration. How can we be sure that the Holy Spirit is leading us in our study of Scripture? Our interpretation needs to be measured by the Scriptures, who in their totality have been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Theologians who consider the Bible as man's reflection about God and man's opinion about how God works will inevitably place Scripture on the same level as other religious writings. The emphasis in Biblical studies would be to determine the intent and message that the human authors had. When one believes that the Bible is the Word of God for man, then both the divine authorship and the human authorship need to be recognized. This is not a 50-50 venture between the divine author and the human author but God superintends 100% the writings of the human author. The author's view is that the Scriptures were written by human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is based on Luke's description of how he wrote Luke and Acts (Luke 1:1-4); on Peter's statements (II Pet. 1:19-20; 2:16), on Paul's instructions to Timothy (II Tim. 3:16-17) and other Scriptures.

The view that Scripture is the product of man's religious imagination makes the Bible a comedy of errors. How arrogant to speak in the name of God and "Thus says the Lord" when the Lord has not spoken. God spoke to Jeremiah the following: "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and has caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:21-22).

For that reason, Christian leaders and church members need to study and speak according to God's revealed and objective Word, the Bible. Truth cannot be negotiated, twisted or contradicted. In the words of Paul to Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

What is your view on the illumination of the Holy Spirit? As with inspiration there are two basic and opposing views about illumination. The first would be that illumination is a deeper or more profound human understanding of the Bible. The

second view is that illumination is the spiritual influence and direction given by the Holy Spirit to the believer in order to understand God's Word.

Is there an essential difference between viewing illumination as a human quality or as a divine quality? The advantage of having divine illumination is that the Holy Spirit's influence is without sin and error. He is holy, separated from sin. Therefore, you can identify His illumination according to God's standard for perfection, the Bible. For that reason, we must hold our churches, preachers, theologians, teachers, church members and ourselves to the standard of being 100% correct. The prophet who boasts that 85% of his prophecies came to pass is a false prophet. The church that is unwilling to correct false interpretations in their doctrine or in their proclamation is a church that is in error and disobedience and in danger of apostasy. The Christian who is unwilling to repent from sin cannot claim to be living in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Christian Bible student does not only study the Word but faithfully obeys its demand.

### Questions

1. How can we be sure that the Holy Spirit is leading us in our study of Scripture?
2. What is Theology Proper?
3. Who is Elohim?
4. Describe the following mean:
  - a. El Shaddai.
  - b. Yahweh Sabaoth.
  - c. Agio Pnuematos.
  - d. Malak Adonai.
5. Why do you think the interpretation should not be negotiated, twisted or contradicted?
6. What is the standard of true prophets?
7. Which doctrine was not fully revealed in the Old Testament?
8. What does the phrase "Comparing Scripture with Scripture" mean?
9. How was the Bible written?
10. What is supposed to be done in order to interpret the Bible?

### Lesson 4: Bible Interpretation and Revelation

Lesson four is dedicated to explaining several foundational principles for Bible interpretation that are related to God's revelation. They include defining revelation and truth; identifying what is absolute; interpreting the Bible with the Bible and recognizing the history of redemption.

### First Principle for Bible Interpretation and Revelation: Revelation

Please excuse my naivety, but if God exists shouldn't He be able to reveal Himself to us? Why doesn't He just show up? God does reveal Himself but God does not fully come to us and there are good reasons for that. One, his powerful brilliance and energy would destroy us like the sun would destroy us if we tried to land there. Secondly, God's holiness would cast away anything tainted with sin and we are sinners. We could name all kinds of other reasons as to why God does not just show up in our church on Sunday morning in all of his glory and splendor. For God to reveal Himself we need mediation and He needs special means to reach us.

The mediator between the Father and us is Jesus Christ. This priestly function was planned before the creation of the universe (Eph. 1:3-5; Heb. 13:20), was represented by the Old Testament priesthood and finally fully revealed in Jesus Christ's priestly sacrifice and intercession at the right hand of the Father after His ascension.

The objective means that the Father has designated to reveal Himself to us on a continual basis is through His written Word. And the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is present with God's people and in the world, but always directs us to Christ the mediator who alone can present us to the Father (John 14:6). In this lesson we see that God has special means to reach His people and in a general way testifies to all persons.

In order to absolutely know the true God, it is necessary for Him to prove that He exists through a variety of evidences. He does that through both general and special revelation. General revelation is how God communicates Himself to all people. This occurs in a variety of ways: i.e. through creation, history and personal experience. The realities of creation, natural law and God's providence communicate to us that God is the Creator, Sovereign and Lord of all (Rom. 1:20: 11:36). The events of history show the actions of God in relationship to cultures and nations. Civilizations have come and gone, yet the people of God have survived and flourished (Gen. 12:2, 3). Finally, God's presence in the lives of people is evident in the functioning of their conscience, intelligence and other mental and religious faculties. The agriculturalists, scientists, governors, parents and every human being exercise the ability to interpret general revelation.

God's special revelation is His redemptive revelation to His people. This comes through His theophanies, the Bible, in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. The Bible, as the written Word of God, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the personal Word of God (Jn. 1:1; Heb. 1:1-2). The Bible is a special book. It is the Word of God in its entirety. 'All Scripture is inspired by God...' (II Tim. 3:16).

Both general and special revelation comes from God. Since God is perfect and cannot contradict Himself, the truths of these revelations, properly understood, will agree. That means that a proper interpretation of natural law, world history and human experience will be in accordance with a proper understanding of the Bible. Notice, that both a proper understanding of general and special revelation is needed! There are times when our understanding or even our translation of the Bible is in error. For example, in the Spanish version, Reina Valera 1960 (traditional Spanish Bible) the human body is not referred to as natural but as animal. The Greek clearly used the word for natural and not the word for animal. In the same version, as well as the Spanish New International Version, in I Cor. 11 uses the emotional expression, *ojalá*, (literally translated as, Oh Ala) which may have been part of the translators 16th century vocabulary but which probably was not part of the apostle's vocabulary. It is highly doubtful that Paul would use the name Ala, or even used a name of god to express his emotions, potentially violating the 3rd commandment.

The Christian has the comfort of knowing that his interpretation of the Bible needs to correspond with the truth of God's general revelation in natural law, human history, ethnic culture and authentic personal experiences. This creates a healthy tension. For example, the current debate about what Genesis and the Bible say about human, biological and geographical creation, and comparing that to the claims of science, has forced both creationists (God created through special and miraculous intervention) and evolutionists (the creation is a product of natural selection) to seriously look at astronomy, geology and the natural sciences. Where the theological and scientific pursuit becomes ugly is when evolutionism is used to justify the abortion of less developed unborn children or the genocide of less developed people or when certain theologies about the origins of man become a license for racial supremacy and ethnic exclusion.

In Genesis 2:5, Adam, the first human being, was made in the image of God and was made from the earth. Some evolutionist claim that if Adam existed then he is a developed animal. If Adam is a superior animal then Jesus, the second Adam, is also a highly evolved animal. In effect, those who worship Jesus are worshipping an animal which is animism. Are humans created in the image of God or in the image of animals or both?

## Second Principle for Bible Interpretation and Revelation: True Absolutely True

There are people who are absolutely right and those who are absolutely wrong. Being absolute in one's thinking is not sufficient. The Islamic jihadists are absolutely convinced that they should commit suicide bombings in order to gain special entrance into heaven. Either one is guided by truth or they are under the deception of the lie. Half right or half wrong is a syncretistic position that does not measure up to the standards of truth. The concept of the absolute, in terms of interpretation, refers to a certain and consistent conclusion that corresponds to an objective standard of truth.

So, what is truth and how can you be absolutely sure? There are many people who are searching for truth. However, most search for truth in untrue ways. The Bible says that God is truth and so, if we are searching for truth we need to search for the true God in a true way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes

unto the Father but by me.” More than billion people today reject that simple truth. It certainly is not the majority position on planet earth! So why vote for Jesus? Really, there is only one answer, because God says so in His Word. God doesn’t just have truth, He is truth. So when the philosopher asks, “what is truth? we can reply that truth is all that which corresponds to God and His revelation.

Christians are friends of the truth. Truth does not scare us but brings us closer to God, who is truth. We are called to embrace truth whenever we encounter it. But it’s not that easy. The opposite of truth is the lie. Since the Scriptures give us a description of the beginning work of Satan with the parents of humanity, we have knowledge that the spirit of sin and deception is at work and that it is very influential in our lives. Our sinful nature is attracted to the lie rather than the truth. Christians are called and enabled by the Spirit to die to sin and live by faith in Christ. We will see, in the course of this study, that God’s intervention is necessary in order to help us be taught, reprovved, corrected and be instructed in God’s way. Although we would love to claim that we can be honest and truth bearers all by ourselves, history and personal experience prove us wrong every day. A study done in England during the 1990’s showed that even evangelical pastors and Roman Catholic priests speak an average of over 400 untruths every day. So, we are not truth, only God is truth and we are called to by faith draw close to Him, be transformed by truth and live according to truth. Belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ activates the truth and resists the lie. By faith in the truth we are set free to serve God, our neighbor and ourselves.

### Third Principle for Bible Interpretation and Revelation: Biblical

How can you be sure that you have the correct interpretation of the Bible? The Bible is its own standard for truth. When your interpretation corresponds to the Bible itself, then you have both a biblical and correct interpretation. The Bible is the best commentary for the Bible. The Bible is the maximum authority for Bible interpretation, for doctrine, for ethics, for morality, for justice and for all human actions.

Jesus submitted himself to the revealed Word as shown in the midst of excruciating cross suffering. “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst” (John 19:28; Psalm 22:15). Jesus remained true to the Scriptures until the very end (Psalm 8:4). “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him” Humanists believe that humans are the center of the universe (Heb. 2:6, 9). What is man...? It is Jesus. Jesus, as the Son of Man is the crown of God’s creation. By faith in Jesus, we become truly human (Mt. 16:18). “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church.” The Church is built on the teaching and apostolic succession from Peter. I Peter 2:4, “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God.” So, by Peter’s own admission, Jesus is the principle rock and we are spiritually built upon Him. The apostles are part of the church’s foundation (Eph. 2:20) but Jesus is the cornerstone.

### Fourth Principle for Bible Interpretation and Revelation: Historical Redemptive

History cannot repeat the past, stop in the present, rather, it relentlessly moves on to its God determined goal. The Bible narrates the progression of God’s history of

salvation. It moves from the creation (Gen. 1-2), to the fall into sin (Genesis 3:1-7), it describes God's promised restoration (Gen.3:15) and moves towards its full consummation (Rev. 21-22). In order to appreciate the history of redemption you have to believe that the biblical historical events are history and not myths or legends.

If the fall of humanity into sin cannot be traced back to the first parents of the human race and if Adam is not the federal head of the human race, then one has reason to doubt that salvation came through one man, Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:18). The apostle John states that those who deny the incarnation of Jesus in the flesh are part of the spirit of the anti-Christ (I John 4:3). The apostle Paul passionately argues this truth when he speaks about the resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15). According to the apostles, if the resurrection is not historical then neither is our salvation.

So, why are certain scholars so motivated to define what the Bible narrates as history as myth? Is it just for the look of knowledge (ignorance?). If it were just for the lack of knowing then that could be resolved through better education. However, most of these scholars are already in the schools of higher learning! This is not ignorance but a deep rooted rebellion against the salvation that God has brought into human history. Before joining any church or Christian institution you would do well to ask about their views of the historicity of Adam, Eve, Noah, Moses, Jesus and the apostles. Once that is clarified, then ask them if they believe in biblical and apostolic doctrine. Usually these two questions are related.

### Fifth Principle for Bible Interpretation and Revelation: Manuscript Study

The greatest marvel in all of literature available to mankind is the preservation of the Old and New Testament. No other document covering so many years, cultures, people groups, authors and religious changes has been preserved with such precision. The Bible is the most ancient document for cultural anthropology, biology, ethnic studies, geology, legal studies, literature, linguistics, philosophy, physics, theology, psychology, sociology, world history and other sciences.

The agreement among conservative scholars as to the reading of the Old Testament is greater than the New Testament. The difference between the New Testament Byzantine text and the Alexandrian text, depending on one's standard of translation, is between 2% and 15%. The student is encouraged to go on-line and study not only the difference with between the Byzantine text with the Alexandrian text but also read up on other ancient texts. This is both a fascinating and necessary study.

Different Bible versions use different collections of Greek manuscripts. For example, the King James Version (KJV) and New King James Version (NKJV) in English, the Reina Valera in Spanish, the Statenbijble in Dutch, use the Textus Receptus (Received Text) which is based on the Byzantine text. The New International Version (NIV) uses the Alexandrian Text. The Alexandrian text is considered to be older than the other collections, although that continues to be a matter of investigation. It is recommended that the Bible student use translations from both traditions, as well as an interlinear or copy of the original languages, in order to compare how words and sentences are translated.

A much more important difference between Bible versions is the method of translation used. The literary method does not necessarily advocate a “wooden” translation but it seeks to transmit, as much as possible, the vocabulary, grammar, syntax of the original text. The dynamic equivalence approach allows for the exchange of words or concepts, which are considered archaic for the contemporary reader, for words that are known to the contemporary reader. The literal translation seeks to translate the words of the original text while the dynamic equivalent method seeks to give a rendition of the original thoughts. The translator’s freedom has given rise to multiple different version and the presents the danger of making the Bible depend on the individual translators working in conjunction with capitalist publishing houses committees rather than being accountable to the international Church of Christ. It is a great help to the students of the Bible when the translators explain the changes they make. This can be done in the footnotes or in separate articles.

Does it make a difference? Take one of the following examples and state briefly what difference there are between the King James Version (KJV) and New International Version (NIV) verses.

#### VERSE(S) KJV, NIV DIFFERENCE

Matthew 6:13 “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” Includes this text omits it because it is not in the older manuscripts of Alexandrian and Western texts and sees it as a copyist addition, noting that it is not in the Luke 11 version of the Lord’s Prayer. This raises the question whether additions were made for liturgical purposes (the saying of the Lord’s prayer in church services). The conclusion is not anti-Biblical in content (see I Chr. 29:11).

Mark 16:9-20, includes it as part of the Received Text. Includes it with a note saying that it is not in some of the ancient manuscripts. Even though there is a difference of opinion as to the external evidence (antiquity of manuscripts) the internal evidence of literary genre (all gospels have Great Commission) and theme of the book (relationship of Mark 1:1, 14, 15 with Mark 16:15, 16) argue for its inclusion. It is the author’s opinion that it was added prior to its canonization (397 AC).

John 7:53-8:1, includes it as part of the Received Text. Includes it with a note saying that it is not in some of the ancient manuscripts NIV Study Bible commentators observe: “This story may not have belonged originally to the Gospel of John. It is absent from almost all the important early manuscripts, and those that have it sometime place it elsewhere (e.g. after Lk. 21:38). But the story may well be authentic.”

#### Questions

1. Mention foundational principles for Bible interpretation that are related to God’s revelation.

2. Who are related to God's revelation?
3. State two types of revelation.
4. What is animism?
5. Who are Islamic Jihadists?
6. What is the truth?
7. What is the best commentary for the Bible?
8. What do humanists think about humans?
9. What is the oldest book for all academic disciplines?
10. Who are referred as church foundation and cornerstone?

### Lesson Five: Principles for Textual Study

The exegesis of a biblical text examines both the content and context of the text. In lesson five the student is presented with principles of Bible interpretation that have to do with the examination of the content of the biblical text. Lesson six will deal with the context of the biblical text. Understanding of the content of the text is influenced by exegetical presuppositions, grammar, literary and historical study.

#### First Principle Textual Content Study: Exegetical Preparation

Hermeneutics are the principles of interpretation and exegesis is putting into practice the research for encountering the intended meaning of the Biblical text. In order to "do exegesis" the interpreter has to collect from the text and context the information that he needs.

Meet an original author! Luke gives the reader a special inside look as to why and how he wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke 1:1-4 identifies the author's methodology for writing both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. According to Luke 1:1, an orderly and historical description of the life of Jesus (historical narrative) and the events that have been fulfilled (prophecy) are documented. From Luke 1:2, Luke identifies his sources as eye witnesses and ministers of the Word. Luke investigated these same matters and writes his account (gospel). Luke wants his reading audience to be absolutely certain in what they have been taught (doctrine,

didactical) (Luke 1:4). Luke did his homework in writing about Jesus and the early Church.

## Second Principle for Textual Study: Grammatical

What would happen if you were playing a game of football (soccer) and one team could play with different rules? One team could push and shove the ball handler while the others could only tackle the ball. The rules for Bible interpretation are the grammar and vocabulary that is used. To change these would be to change the rules of the game of interpretation. The student will read about 3 cases (Jehovah Witness, Roman Catholic, and Feminism) in which the words of the Bible are altered and write their opinion.

### Jehovah Witnesses

“Under the leadership of Nathan H. Knorr (1905-1977) the Watch Tower (WT) Society put away date setting for a time and switched to a different strategy. Since many of their teachings are easily refuted by key verses in the King James Bible, Knorr set out to publish a different Bible for Jehovah's Witnesses to use. The WT Society Bible, called the New World Translation (NWT), blatantly alters many verses that show the errors of Watchtower teaching. The single best example of this is John 1:1, which in the King James Version clearly declares Jesus' deity — "the Word was God." The WT Society denies the deity of Christ, so the NWT renders this phrase "the Word was a god."

“Another example is found in the Old Testament book of Zechariah, chapter 12 verse 10. Jehovah God is speaking and says, "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" understood by Christians as a predictive reference to the crucifixion. Recognizing that Jesus' fulfillment of this prophecy would mean that he is Jehovah God, the Watchtower Society has changed this verse in the NWT to read "they will certainly look to the One whom they pierced through," thus eliminating another reference to the deity of Jesus Christ. The Society made similar changes to many other verses relating to the deity of Christ (Col. 1:16-20; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8). They have also altered verses that expose the WT Society's false teaching on subjects like the reality of eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46), and the personality of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 14:14-16; 1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 19). In this way the Watchtower Society gives Jehovah's Witnesses and potential converts the illusion that the Bible supports its erroneous doctrines.”

### Roman Catholicism

In order to say that Mary did not have any more children than Jesus, the brothers and sisters mentioned in Mark 6:3 are called friends (study the footnote).

### Inclusive Language

The elimination of masculine nouns, pronouns and further references has crept into English Protestant and Evangelical Bible versions (study the footnote). The grammatical study of the text involves two major considerations 1). what is the

grammar and meaning of given text? and 2), what are the reasons why the grammar of the text is changed by others?

### Third Principle for Textual Study: Literary Genre

Do parents talk with their children the same way when they were small children as when they are adults? Should parents tell everything to their children? When children are small they are taught nursery rhymes, riddles, pithy sayings, short songs and simple poetry. When children grow older they learn to read and write and become more familiar with mystery stories, novels, history and fiction. Then, when it's time for work, marriage and business, they are faced with licenses, covenants, work contracts and other legal documents. At the end of their life, the elderly make sure their last testament is in order and may even dedicate time to writing a family biography or other commemorative writings. Throughout the lifespan of the person, a variety of literary styles are used, all depending on the capability of both the communicator and their audience. The Bible is quite similar, a variety of literary genres are used to communicate the experience and history of God's dealings with His people.

Every part of Scripture has its own literary genre. Let us look at some of the most obvious one. Historical literature is the narration of events that happened. Apocalyptic literature deals with the description of the principalities and powers that are operating in the universe and history. Didactical literature is teaching material. Doctrine is the teaching of theology and ethics. Epistles are letters. The Gospels are the 4 accounts narrating the life, teachings, miracles, death, resurrection and Great Commission of Jesus. Legal literature includes commandments, covenant terms. Parables are described by some as earthly stories with a kingdom meaning. The Psalms and the Writings are rich with poetic statements. Prophecy is the forth telling, proclamation of God's truth about the past, present and future. Proverbs are wisdom statements. The Psalms are a collection of songs, poems, wisdom statements.

R.C. Sproul makes the important observation that historical narrative is interpreted by the didactical or teachings of Scripture. Not all of the historical events are normative but they are instructive. He cautions the interpreter to be careful with the interpretation of the parables and the predictive prophecies. Knowledge of the original context will help to interpret these genre types.

### Wrong Identification of Literary Genre and Right Identification

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you (Mt. 5:29). What happens when you treat the hyperbole as the law? What are you supposed to do with a hyperbole? Healing of the blind man (John 9 ). What happens when you interpret this history as mythological or a parable. If Jesus did not historically and really heal the blind man, what would have happened? Proverbs 28:18, "Whoever walks blamelessly will be saved, but he who is perverse in his ways will suddenly fall. What happens when you treat a proverb as doctrine? How is the word "saved" used here?

### Fourth Principle for Textual Study: History of the Text

The role of history of redemption as well as the secular history's relationship to interpretation is covered elsewhere. However, a few words need to be said about the actual history of the Bible text. Here we are concerned about the historical occurrence in the text as it relates to its teaching.

The Bible students need to be aware of how non-historical information or even historical data has been used to justify certain practices. Fee and Stuart conclude that Paul's prohibition of (I Tim. 2:11-15) for the women to teach and have authority over the men in church is culturally relative. The reader is left to conclude that culturally relative opinions are not to be considered universal apostolic doctrine. The reason that is given by Fee and Stuart is that Paul was dealing with a local situation where the women were troublesome in the church at Ephesus. The authors mention (I Tim. 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:6-9) as contextual background.

However, the given context of the "wanton widows" (I Tim. 5:11-15) is not their desire to rule over men (I Tim 2:11-12) but to marry! The historical contexts of I Timothy 2 and I Timothy. 5 are different. I Timothy 2:11-15 addresses the issue of the role of women in relationship to teaching and having authority over men (vs. 11-14) as well as appreciating child bearing (vs. 15). I Timothy 5:3-15 instruct younger widowed mothers to marry while inviting elderly women with a good testimony to enroll into special service in the church. It cannot be said that Paul taught otherwise in other situations (I Cor. 14:34). The fact is that Paul does not give local historical reasons for his prohibition but appeals to truths about creation (vs. 13), the fall (vs. 14) and restoration for child bearing mothers (vs. 15). Paul appeals to the history of redemption in I Timothy 2:11-15, not the history of the church in Ephesus, nor to secular history. To justify women teaching and having authority over men in the church needs to be based on something other than pointing to the cultural relativity of I Timothy 2: 11-15 because such justification goes contrary to Paul teaching in that text.

## Questions

1. What are the rules for Bible interpretation?
2. State Bible verses which Jehovah Witness changed.
3. What is historical literature?
4. What is apocalyptic literature?
5. What is didactical literature?
6. What is doctrine?
7. What are epistles?
8. Mention Bible books that make the Gospels.
9. What is parable?

## 10. What is prophecy?

### Lesson Six: Principles for Contextual Study

The interpretation principles discussed in lesson six are related to the context of the Biblical text. These include the Bible's context, historical considerations, cultural context, and universal considerations.

#### First Principle for Contextual Study: Biblical Context

The context of the Bible are the authors and years it took to write the 66 books. What is unique about the Biblical context, being that the Bible is the Word of God, is that there is organic unity among all the Bible books. The oneness and unity of Scripture is an awe inspiring concept. As the student studies the particular details of Scripture he has at his disposal the rest of Scripture. The whole interprets the particular and the particular reflects on the whole.

The relationship of the parts and the whole is true in other parts of life. The human body functions best when all its parts are healthy and active. One small scratch on the arm may become infected and poison the rest of the body. To break the uniform functioning of the body cells can lead to destructive cancer. Physical health requires that the wholeness of the body be maintained by all its parts.

When the Bible interpreter falsifies one small part of the Scripture, it calls into question the whole canon. One erroneous interpretation can call into question the message of the people. For that reason, Paul strongly opposed Peter when Peter denying the gospel of grace by associating with the pressures brought on by the Judaizers who wanted Gentile Christians and their children to be circumcised. Even though circumcision was demanded on the Israelites after God's covenant with Abraham, the demands of circumcision were fulfilled in the death of Jesus as Jesus fulfilled the demands of the ceremonial law. Now entrance into God's presence would be by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:11-21).

Peter took Paul serious and honored Paul for his vocation as an apostolic author. He warns others to respect Paul's writings, "in which some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of Scriptures" (II Pet. 2:16).

The Bible is the Word of God by which God uses human authors in order to communicate His truth and will to us. One has to be careful in speaking only about Paul's, Peter's, John's or any author's view, when in fact they are writing Scripture. The divine authorship is the greater authorship and the bigger picture.

The Bible is one book and it is unique. The Koran, the Book of Mormon, the Institute of Christian Religion, the Purpose Driven Life and other religious books do not measure up to the standard which the Bible sets for itself and which has been recognized by the Church in the process of canonization.

Fee and Stuart make some important observation about problem texts:

- a. The text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his readers
- b. Whenever we share comparable particulars with the first-century, God's Word to us is the same as His Word to them.

### Text: Particular Teaching of Scripture as a whole

Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What claim is made about this God as it relates to Genesis 1? How does Genesis 1:1 relate to John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-4? Genesis 3:15, "...the seed of the woman." For Moses, the seed (singular) is the coming Messiah. What does Gal. 3:16 say about the seed? Psalm 23.1. The Lord is my Shepherd. For the Psalmist, who is the Lord? Who does Jesus say the Shepherd is? (Jn. 10:11).

### Second Principle for Contextual Study: Secular Historical Context

Christians do not depend on the affirmation of secular history in order to believe the content of the Bible. We believe that an accurate reading of Bible history will correspond with an accurate reading of secular history. Also, the teachings of Scripture are important for the interpretation of historical events.

According to Fee and Stuart: "The historical context, which will differ from book to book, has to do with several things: the time and culture of the author and his readers, that is, the geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author's setting; and the occasion of the book, letter, psalm, prophetic oracle, or other genre." R.C. Sproul adds that the historical context has to be interpreted by the accompanying teachings of history, not the other way around.

For example, the monumental event of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD is affirmed by the Roman historian Josephus as well as by Jewish sources. Perhaps some see it as human aggression and divine judgment. This may be true but the New Testament gives this event both prophetic and doctrinal explanations.

The destruction of the temple in 70 AD was prophesied by the Lord (Matt. 24:1-28; Luke 21:20-24). The Lucan account states: "And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (21:24). Furthermore, this destruction of the temple, is prophesied in (Dan. 9:27; 11:31).

The epistle to the Hebrews gives an elaborate re-interpretation of the temple, the priesthood and of the sacrifices. The earthly temple in Jerusalem is not necessary anymore as Christ has fulfilled the purpose of that religious and ceremonial provision.

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified....Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is,

His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near..." (Heb. 10:12-14, 19-22).

The Protestant reformation was necessary to rediscover that there is only one High Priest, that by faith there is direct access to Him and that a Christian sacrificial and ceremonial service is not necessary. The historical death of Jesus and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD underscore that important fact.

### Third Principle for Contextual Study: Cultural Context

One of the major themes of the New Testament is the trans-cultural movement of Christianity from its Jewish roots and culture to a Gentile environment. The Old Testament people of God were associated with the patriarchs, the tribes and nation of Israel. When Jesus came upon the scene, Israel had been divided and the Jewish people were under Roman domination. Upon the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the Pentecostal outburst, God began to move from people to people and nation to nation. But it was not easy. Not only was there persecution from both the unbelieving Jews and Romans, it was difficult for the new Christians to know what to do with the laws or customs of the Jewish past and current Gentile situation. The ruling principle for dealing with traditional religious customs and cultural practices was to abide by the golden rule and measure one's action in accordance with the advancement of the gospel (Acts 15: 24-29).

Cultural relativism is evident in both legalistic and libertine ways. The legalist may forbid or deny certain teachings about cultural behavior, such as drinking wine, but this means that apostolic teachings about other cultural behaviors, such as those concerning sexual mores and gender roles can also be ignored. Cultural relativism for liberals is verbally affirming some Biblical doctrine but not holding themselves or others to practice Biblical ethics.

The student needs to know four levels of contexts as far as communicating the message of the Bible. These contexts include those of the original human author, the original audience, the interpreter and our context. For example, Genesis 1:1 was penned by Moses (level 1) who was writing for his Jewish audience (level 2). The Hebrew text was translated into a variety of European languages in the 16th century (level 3) and is now read by us in the 21st century (level 4). Whereas the context of Moses writing was to document, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the oral history of the people of God, for a people living with Egyptian and Middle Eastern polytheism, the Protestant translators wanted an authoritative translation not controlled by the Roman Catholic Church but by Scripture and its original languages, and so set in motion a tradition of translating and printing Scriptures that we receive in our secular and evolutionistic world. Each level of Bible communication needs to take into consideration its context but not fall into the temptation of letting the context dictate the content of the Bible. The content of the Word remains the same but it can be applied to a variety of human contexts.

### Cultural View Biblical View: Women's Head Covering

Head covering is the only way a women shows she is under authority. In Paul's discussion he calls for the reader to judge for themselves (I Cor. 11:13). Drinking of

wine. Abstainers do not allow for the drinking of wine (John 2, I Tim.3:3; 4:3; 5:23. Rom. 14:14-18).

## The Sabbath

The only way to celebrate the Sabbath is as the Jews did, on Saturday (View of Seventh Day Adventists). In Romans 14 Paul explains that different days can be used for Sabbath rest and worship. This freedom should not be misused nor should it be a basis for condemnation.

## Fourth Principle for Contextual Study: Universal Context

The Bible is not the property of any nation or denomination or a group of scholars. The Bible belongs with God's people wherever they live. The Bible is multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic and relevant for all people groups. The Bible was not written for only one language group but it was written to be communicated, translated and transmitted to all.

One of the exciting "races" in the mission world is the goal to translate the New Testament into all of the known languages of the world. The advent of the internet and computer helps will greatly assist in this task. However, the translation of the Bible is only the first leg in that relay race. The second leg is to evangelize the people group for whom the Scriptures are being translated. The third leg is to plant a church and develop church leaders and members through preaching, teaching and discipleship. The final leg is for the people group to do missions and reach other people groups.

One of the educational tasks in global education is to encourage and equip ethnic group leaders to participate in the translation of a literal text of the Bible for their people group. Having a paraphrase or dynamic equivalent translation is a contribution to the study of the Bible but each ethnic group needs to know what the original languages of the Bible say. The same is true for the translation of the constitution of the nation one resides in; the literal translation for the national hymn, national laws and other documents of national and group concern. Indigenous judges should not be content with having a paraphrase or a dynamic equivalent translation of the law. The judge, the court, the lawyers, the accused and the people should know what the law actually says. Doesn't the same hold true for Scripture?

## Questions

1. What is the context of the Bible?
2. Why the Bible cannot be compared to Koran, Mormon etc.?
3. Why reformation was necessary?
4. What is the cultural relativism for liberals?
5. Why the Bible is relevant for all people groups of all ages?

6. Which Bible book re-interprets the Old Testament Temple?
7. What is the evidence that New Testament gives doctrinal and prophetic explanation?
8. Mention two observations about text by Fee and Stuart.
9. What is unique about the Bible context?
10. What are the advantages of internet in mission work?

## Lesson Seven: Principles for Personal Study

It is important to interpret the Bible and it's also important to have a hermeneutic to interpret the interpreter. In lesson seven we will examine how the word interacts with the spirit and heart of interpreter through the application of the gospel in an ethical way in all areas of life and through the call to sacrificial service and true worship.

### First Principle for Personal Study: Transformational

R.C. Sproul writes about reading the Bible existentially. This is not in reference to the ideology of Existentialism but a reference to “passionately and personally involved in what we read” by identifying with the characters and experiences of the Biblical characters. I am sure R.C. Sproul would agree with us if we agreed with him and added that the experience of the Biblical characters and events need to be interpreted in light of the transforming gospel of Jesus. But the caution here is not to jump too quickly to the Gospel application. The reader should feel the full impact of the story as written and then apply the gospel. Again we see the relationship to discovering the meaning of the original text (exegesis) and its application for today's meaning (hermeneutics).

Haddon Robinson makes the point that before a preacher preaches the Word he needs to be transformed by that Word. The audience, then, is not just receiving a message but listening to someone who has been transformed by the Word and is now presenting the same Word for the audience to be transformed.

### Second Principle for Personal Study: Biblical Faithfulness

The study of the Bible is much more than a study of ancient religion, history and doctrine. God uses the Bible to communicate with His people. The student needs to KNOW what the Bible text is saying before he can spiritually DISCERN what God communicating to him.

You have heard it said and perhaps you have said it, “The Lord told me.” Now, that is a very important statement! If the Lord spoke with you in audible tones, could I ask you some questions about that? Did he speak with English or an American southern accent? Did you quote from the King James Version or the New

International Version? Did he use “thees” and “thous”? Where were you able to respond back to God? etc.

What is more probable as to what happened was that you were reading your Bible or a verse came to mind and you perceived or discerned that God wanted you to think about that. Since your thoughts responded to a real need you were convinced that God gave you such guidance. That has often happened to me and I pray it will continue to happen every day! However, that is different than hearing an audible voice. It would be more accurate to say, “On the basis of Psalm 23 verse 1, I believe that I need to be more faithful in hearing the voice of my Shepherd and follow Him.”

### Third Principle for Personal Study: Ethical

“Just do the right thing.” Easier said than done. In order to do the right thing according to God’s standards, you first have to have faith in the true God and then submit yourself to Him. Both the Old and Testament teach, “the just shall live by faith.” This does not mean, “just have a little faith and it will all work out.” Nor does it mean that “the unjust live by faith.” It means that in order to be just you need to live by faith in Jesus the Righteous One and trust that His righteousness has been credited to you.

Do you know what “good works” are, in the Biblical sense? Good works is not trying your best or behaving yourself. Non-believers can do that too! Good works are the works of God He accomplished through you. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:8-10).

God cannot accept our human works because they are tainted with sin. What God planned was to send His Son to perfectly do all the works that were needed for our salvation. Now, through faith in the resurrected and reigning Lord Jesus, we can participate in His workings. It is true that our participation in the works of Christ are tainted by sin as well, however, they are His works and He is able to overrule our sin and still accomplish His work.

God works this way with “good works” and God worked that way in order to have human authors write the Bible. The human authors were inspired by the Spirit of God so that “their prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:21).

Now this same Word of God is used by the Holy Spirit to “move” us, to go beyond our will in order to desire and do the will of God, to go beyond our love in order to embrace the love of God and love others as God loves them.

### Fourth Principle for Personal Study: Devotional

The study of Scripture is not a heartless exercise conducted by cloistered ivory tower scholars but it is part of the communication of the heart of God to the heart of the communicator and to the heart of receiver of the Word.

What is the heart of God? To be sure, speaking about the heart of God is an anthropomorphism, the use of human language to describe God. How are the emotions of God shown? From the Old Testament history we receive the impression that God gets angry a lot! However, even though God's anger is evident, it is minimal compared to the patience, mercy and grace that He showed. The clearest display of the heart and passion of God is seen in Jesus, especially in his final hours of suffering and dying on the cross.

The cross and resurrection events are packaged into the gospel message that because of the cross we are to repent from sin and because of the resurrection we are to believe in the risen and reigning Christ. The gospel shows God's unconditional love and grace towards sinners, as well as His ongoing holiness, righteousness and perfection.

The interpreter needs to stop and mediate on the inner sentiments of the heart of God as portrayed in the text and seek to communicate that with others. Such reflection should lead the interpreter to prayer, to speaking with God about the matters under study. This is a time of spiritual communion with the God who speaks to the believer's spirit during devotional study.

How should the heart of the interpreter be in relationship to studying the Word of God? If the Bible is the Word of God then it is only logical that we speak with God in prayer before we study, while we study and after we study. One of the prayers that I pray is to ask God to give us the desire to pray and the desire to study according to His will, not our own will.

Do we take quality time for the study of Bible? When I read the Bible just before going to bed my good intentions last about 5 minutes. What personal burdens are you taking along into your study? If your upset, frustrated, disappointed or have unresolved conflict and sin in your life, this would be time to share that with your Creator, Savior and Perfector.

As you approach the text, identify your prior theological position on the subject matter of the text. Does your church have a position on the teachings of the text? Are you willing to critical examine your own beliefs and the creeds of your church in light of what the text says?

As you study the text, make note of the changes that are happening in your spirit and mind. If your Bible study does not transform you, it will be unlikely to transform others with whom you minister to. According to the text, what changes would you like to see in your life and in the life of the people your minister to?

How do we discern the heart of the person you are ministering to? The study of the Word is not simply for personal and spiritual edification but God is equipping the saints for the work of ministry so that they church will grow and that people will be transformed by the gospel to God's glory. Who are you ministering to? With

whom could you share the message of the text under study with. How do you propose to do that? How do you want that person to be influenced by the message of this text? What are they struggling with? What are their theological presuppositions as to the theme of the text? What is their personal, family and social situation? Does that affect how they will receive the Word? What life transforming changes are you praying for in the life of the people you are ministering the Word to? Are they praying for the same results?

## Questions

1. What is needed by a preacher before preaching?
2. Why study of the Bible is important than any study?
3. How can we do the right thing according to God's standards?
4. What does the phrase "the just shall live faith" mean?
5. What does "good works" mean?
6. Why God does not accept our human works?
7. Who moves us to go beyond our will in order to desire and do the will of God?
8. What is anthromorphism?
9. Why should we ask God to give us the desire to pray?
10. What does the gospel show us?

## Lesson Eight: Principles for Ministerial Study

The Bible is the manual for ministry for the servants for the Lord. This includes the three fold offices of the church: the proclamation (prophet), the intercession-mediation (priest) and the supervisory (ruler).

### First Principle for Ministerial Study: Proclamation

The Bible is the basis for the proclamation ministries of the Christian Church and community. The proclamation ministry includes evangelism and preaching. These ministries, in turn, lead into discipleship and teaching ministries.

In evangelism the Christian seeks to bring the Word of God to unbelievers so that by hearing the Word they may come to faith and follow Jesus Christ. The Word as God's divine instrument is very important in evangelism. God uses imperfect human heralds to bring His perfect Word to unbelievers. The message to the unbelievers centers on the gospel message of who God is and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ.

The preachers proclaim (kerusso) the Word to believers. It is their sacred task to communicate to believers, on a regular basis, what God has revealed in the Bible. This requires understanding the divine author as well as the human authors of the text. It requires a basic understanding of exegesis and communication skills. The nature of proclamation is that truth is announced or declared. Preaching is not a dialogue or conversation between the preacher and parishioner, as they together seek truth; it is the declaration of truth that comes from God. Jesus is the personal Word, the Bible is the written Word and preaching is the oral Word.

### Second Principle for Ministerial Study: Priesthood of all Believers

There are two major levels of intercession and mediation that is needed in the Christian community. One, God's people need intercession before God. Second, God's people need to be reconciled amongst themselves and that requires mediation. Both the Old and New Testament spend a considerable amount of time instructing these functions for the "priesthood of all believers."

The Scriptures instruct the believer how to enter into the presence of God and how to receive the grace that God offers in order to stay in His presence. The book of Leviticus is a prime example of that. The chapters 1-16 explain how the Israelites could enter God's tabernacle and chapters 17-27 explain how they could live in holiness before Him. The priests served in a double function: they would sacrifice for the people, pray for them and they would also instruct the people how to live in God's presence.

### The Ceremonial Religious Life of the Jews in the Old Testament Fulfilled in the Perfect Life, Death, Resurrection and Reign of Christ

Jesus perfectly entered into the Holy of Holies for His people and now, having made the perfect sacrifice, He intercedes before the Father for His people. The letter to the

Hebrews is a detailed explanation how Jesus fulfills the role of both the temple and priesthood for God's people. To read the Bible and miss this crucial priestly reality would be a shortsighted exegesis.

The New Testament church does not re-establish the Old Testament temple, sacrificial system or priestly class. All this has been fulfilled in Christ. However, the spiritual functions of the Old Testament priests are exercised amongst the leadership and membership of the Church. This is what the Protestants call the priesthood of all believers. The Church leaders are instructed to prepare the whole Body to pray, intercede, counsel and serve the Lord. Every Christian is to live in the fulfillment of Christ's work and be a prophet, priest and servant-king.

### Third Principle for Ministerial Study: Didactical

The Scriptures were written so that they can be taught from one generation to the next. The Scriptures were written so that they would be taught to others. Believing parents were to instruct their children (Deut. 6:7-9); the families and individuals were instructed by their religious leaders. For those in Jerusalem, the temple was a center for instruction. The synagogue became the center for religious instruction, both in Israel and for the Jews in dispersion.

Jesus did not limit his instruction to his infrequent visits to the temple. He chose His 12 disciples and instructed them every day of the week! His method, commonly known as discipleship, remains the model for the Christian church today.

The apostle Paul shows how far reaching discipleship should be: Paul came to Christ through a direct revelation of Christ. After several years of training he trained Timothy. Timothy was instructed to teach faithful men who are able to teach others likewise. So the generations of disciples are: Paul, Timothy, Timothy's disciples and the disciples of Timothy's disciples.

Additionally, notice how Paul makes mention of the role that Timothy's grandmother and mother had in bringing Timothy to faith (II Tim. 1:5). The teaching of Scripture played a central role in Timothy's coming to faith (II Tim. 3:15). Discipleship is not simply an individual effort but the responsibility of the whole Body of Christ.

### Fourth Principle for Ministerial Study: Worship of the True God

The worship of true God is the end result of the hermeneutical circle. Unless the student worships the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by believing and obeying Him, the interpretative task is not complete. The Word that began in the eternal counsel of heaven and worked out in history will do its work on earth and bear fruit for heaven.

Let's face it. At the end of the day all of us have to face God. The question is what our relationship and position will be? Our life on earth is a continual preparation for spending eternity with God in heaven. So, if we want to be with Him in heaven, we need to reconcile with Him on earth.

With our heavenly God and goal in mind, we are to interpret the Bible here on earth. In each step of the hermeneutical circle we must take God's presence into consideration. After all, it's His Word!

The interpreter will be known by his interpretation. Satan very piously used the Word of God with both Adam and Eve as well as with Jesus. Jesus answered Satan's wrong interpretation of the Word with the right one: "You shall worship the LORD your God and Him only you shall serve." There are only two interpretations of God's Word: that which glorified Him and that which does not glorify Him. Every dimension of the hermeneutical circle is measured by that glorious standard.

## Questions

1. What is the manual for the servants of God?
2. What are the threefold offices of the church?
3. What does God use to bring his perfect word to unbelievers?
4. What is preaching?
5. What spends a considerable amount of time instructing the functions for the "priesthood of all believers"?
6. How are spiritual functions of the Old Testament priests fulfilled in the New Testament Church?
7. Why are the Scriptures didactical?
8. Who trained Timothy in ministry?
9. What is the end result of the hermeneutical circle?
10. Mention two types of interpretation.

## Glossary

**Academic:** learned, scholarly

**Animism:** the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself possess souls; the belief that natural objects have souls that may exist apart from their material bodies; the doctrine that the soul is the principle of life and health; belief in spiritual beings or agencies

**Anthology:** a published collection of writings (such as poems or short stories) by different authors

**Anthromorphism:** in theological terms, anthropomorphism is making God in some way into the form of man. Mostly, it is the process of assigning human characteristics to God. Human traits and actions such as talking, holding, reaching, feeling, hearing, and the like, all of which are chronicled throughout both the Old and New Testaments, are ascribed to the Creator. We read of God's actions, emotions, and appearance in human terms, or at least in words we normally accept and associate with humans. In several places in the Bible, God is described as having the physical attributes of man. He "sets [his] face" against evil (Lev. 20:6); the Lord will make "His face" to shine on you (Nu. 6:25); He "stretched out his hand" (Exod. 7:5; Isa. 23:11), and God scattered enemies with His strong arm (Psalm 89:10). He "stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth" (Psalm 113:6). He "keeps his eye" on the land (Deut. 11:12), the "eyes of the Lord" are on the righteous (Psalm 34:15), and the earth is His "footstool" (Isa. 66:1). Do all these verses mean that God literally has eyes, a face, hands and feet? Not necessarily. God is spirit, not flesh and blood, but because we are not spirit, these anthropomorphisms help us to understand God's nature and actions

**Anthropology:** is the study of humans, past and present. To understand the full sweep and complexity of cultures across all of human history, anthropology draws and builds upon knowledge from the social and biological sciences as well as the humanities and physical sciences

**Apocalyptic:** relating to or predicting the end of the world, especially as described in the Bible or another religious text

**Astronomy:** the science that deals with the material universe beyond the earth's atmosphere

**Authenticity:** legitimate and true

**Biology:** the study of living organisms

**Cajole:** to persuade someone to do something he might not want to do

**Canonization:** accepting as genuine

**Circle:** a perfectly round shape : a line that is curved so that its ends meet and every point on the line is the same distance from the center; a path that goes around a central point; an arrangement of people or things that forms a circle

**Commentary:** a bible commentary is a written, systematic series of explanations and interpretations of Scripture. Commentaries often analyze or expound on individual books of the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Some commentary works provide analysis of the whole of Scripture

**Communion:** the act or an instance of sharing, as of thoughts or feelings; religious or spiritual fellowship; a body of Christians with a common religious faith who practice the same rites; a denomination

**Deception:** the action of deceiving someone

**Dethroned:** remove (a ruler, especially a monarch) from power. remove from a position of authority or dominance. "he dethroned the defending titleholder" depose, unseat, oust, topple, overthrow, bring down, dislodge, displace, supplant, usurp, eject, drum out "he devised a plan to dethrone his brother, the king"

**Dialectic:** investigating and discovering what is true

**Didactics:** practical application of teaching and learning

**Dispersion:** the state of being dispersed over a wide area; "for example the general dispersion of Hellenistic culture"

**Divers:** many

**Epistemology:** epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion

**Ethics:** a set of principles of right conduct

**Ethnic:** relating to races or large groups of people who have the same customs, religion, origin, etc., associated with or belonging to a particular race or group of people who have a culture that is different from the main culture of a country

**Evolution:** the process by which different kinds of living organisms are thought to have developed and diversified from earlier forms during the history of the earth; the gradual development of something, especially from a simple to a more advanced stage

**Excruciating:** agonizing, severe, acute, intense, violent, racking, searing, piercing stabbing, raging

**Exegesis:** an explanation or critical interpretation of a text

**Existentialism:** a philosophy that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice.

**Faculty:** ability to do something, talent

**Feminism:** the belief that women are and should be treated as potential intellectual equals and social equals to men

**Flatter:** to praise (someone) in a way that is not sincere; to cause (someone) to feel pleased by showing respect, affection, or admiration; to show or describe (someone or something) in a way that is very favorable or too favorable

**Genocide:** the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic group or nation

**Genre:** types such as poems, narratives, parables, epistles etc.

**Geology:** the science that deals with the dynamics and physical history of the earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and the physical, chemical, and biological changes that the earth has undergone or is undergoing

**Heralds:** an official messenger bringing news; a person or thing viewed as a sign that something is about to happen

**Hermeneutics:** biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpretation concerning the books of the Bible. It is part of the broader field of hermeneutics which involves the study of principles of interpretation for all forms of communication, nonverbal and verbal

**Humanists:** is applied to someone who concentrates on human activities and possibilities, usually downplaying or denying the importance of God and a life after death

**Illumination:** the process by which God's Holy Spirit enables us to understand His word and apply it to our lives

**Incarnation:** the doctrine that the Son of God was conceived in the womb of Mary and that Jesus is true God and true man

**Indigenous:** describes a plant, animal or person that is native or original to an area

**Infallibility:** inerrant (without error)

**Inspiration:** that the authors and editors of the Bible were led or influenced by God with the result that their writings are designated the word of God

**Intercession:** the act of interceding or offering petitionary prayer to God on behalf of others

**Intervention:** to come or occur between two times or events to become involved in something (such as a conflict) in order to have an influence on what happens

**Legends:** unverifiable story handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical; the body of stories of this kind, especially as they relate to a particular people, group, or clan

**Liberals:** liberal theologians seek to reconcile Christianity with secular science and modern thinking

**Linguistics:** the scientific study of language and its structure, including the study of morphology, syntax, phonetics, and semantics

**Manuscripts:** a book, document, or piece of music written by hand rather than typed or printed "an illuminated manuscript"

**Meditation:** means “the act of focusing one’s thoughts: to ponder, think on, muse,” contemplation, reflection, rumination, deep thinking, or remembering in the sense of keeping or calling something to mind for the purpose of consideration, reflection, or meditation. Compare for instance the following verses of Scripture

**Monuments:** a type of structure that was erected to remember a person or important event. Genesis 31:46, Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Joshua 4:3, commanded them, saying, "Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight." Joshua 4:5 and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel

**Multilingual:** using several languages

**Myth:** a widely held but false belief or idea, an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts

**Omnipotence:** God is all powerful

**Oracles:** back in ancient times, an oracle was someone who offered advice or a prophecy thought to have come directly from a divine source

**Parable:** a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels

**Paradoxes:** a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true

**Parishioners:** a person who goes to a particular local church; a person who belongs to a parish

**Perpetual:** continuous

**Physics:** is the natural science that involves the study of matter and its motion through space and time, along with related concepts such as energy and force

**Polytheism:** the belief in or worship of more than one god

**Progression:** the process of developing over a period of time

**Propounded:** put forward (an idea, theory, or point of view) for consideration by others.

**Psychology:** is the study of behavior and mind, embracing all aspects of conscious and unconscious experience as well as thought. It is an academic discipline and an applied science which seeks to understand individuals and groups by establishing general principles and researching specific cases

**Reconciled:** restore relations between man and God

**Redemption:** to free someone from bondage as Jesus redeemed sinners from God's wrath

**Relativism:** the belief that there's no absolute truth, only the truths that a particular individual or culture happen to believe. If you believe in relativism, then you think different people can have different views about what's moral and immoral

**Sect:** a group that breaks from the main group

**Sociology:** the study of human social behavior, especially the study of the origins, organization, institutions, and development of human society

**Syncretism:** the combination of different forms of belief or practice

**Synod:** a presbyterian church court above the presbyteries and subject to the General Assembly or an assembly of the clergy.

**Tabernacle:** the portable sanctuary in which the Jews housed the Ark of the Covenant during their years in the desert

**Theophanies:** manifestation of God that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period often, but not always, in human form. Some would also include in this term Christophanies (preincarnate appearances of Christ) and angelophanies (appearances of angels). In the latter category are found the appearances of the angel of the Lord, which some have taken to be Christophanies, reasoning that since the angel of the Lord speaks for God in the first person (Gen 16:10) and the human addressed often attributes the experience to God directly (Gen. 16:13), the angel must therefore be the Lord or the preincarnate Christ. Yet, though the angel is clearly identified with the Lord, he is distinguished from him (he is called "angel," meaning "messenger" similar patterns of identification and distinction can be seen in Gen. 19:1 Gen. 19:21 ; Genesis 31:11 Genesis 31:13 ; Exodus 3:2 Exodus 3:4 ; Judges 2:1-5 ; Judges 6:11-12 Judges 6:14 ; Judges 13:3 Judges 13:6 Judges 13:8-11 Judges 13:13 Judges 13:15-17 Judges 13:20-23; Zech 3:1-6 ; 12:8).

**Transformation:** in the bible transformation means "change or renewal from a life that no longer conforms to the ways of the world to one that pleases God" (Rom. 12:2). This is accomplished by the renewing of our minds, an inward spiritual transformation that will manifest itself in outward actions. The Bible presents the transformed life in Christ as demonstrated through our "bearing fruit in every good work [and] growing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). Transformation involves those who were once far from God being "drawn near" to Him through the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).