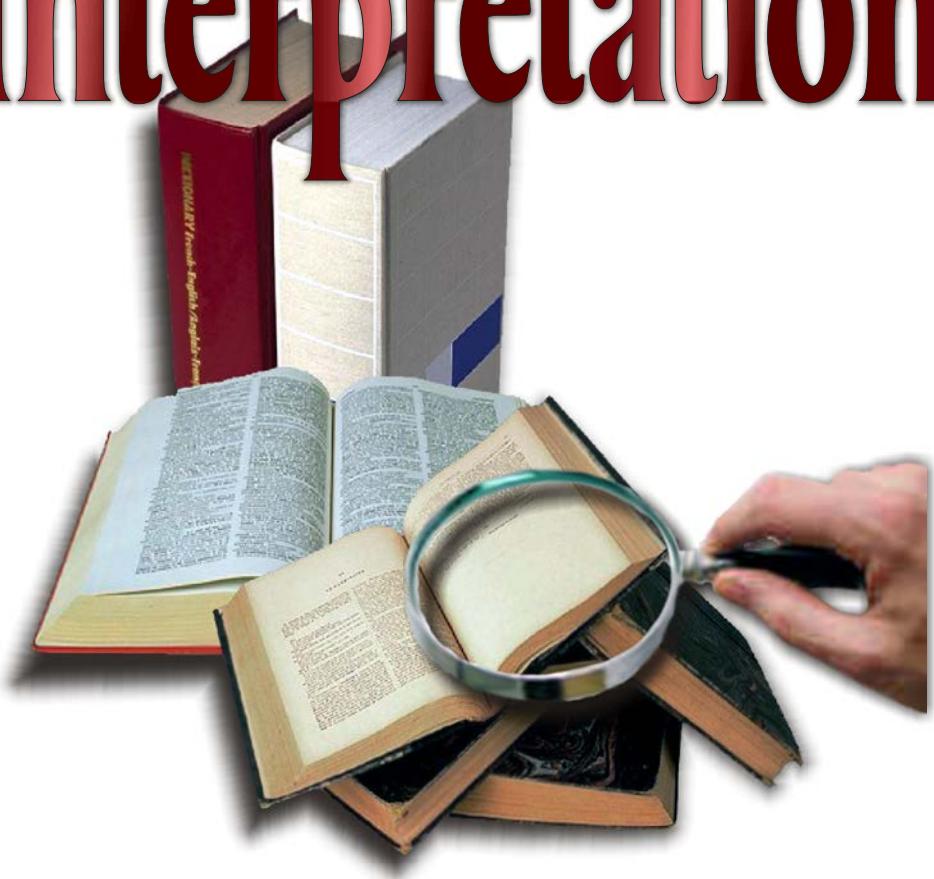


*Study Guide*

# Biblical Interpretation



by Charles Speer

**SUNSET**  
International Bible Institute



# Biblical Interpretation



## BIBLICAL STUDIES

Taught by Charles Speer

Arranged for study by  
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## **Biblical Interpretation Study Guide**

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quotations within critical articles and reviews, including translation.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The textbooks used with this course were selected because we consider them to be the best available and very supportive materials for this course. The books “*How to Understand the Bible*” by: W. Robert Palmer, “*The Cultural Church*” and “*Who Is My Brother*” by: F. LaGard Smith, will reinforce the teaching you will receive from viewing the taped lessons by Charles Speer. As with all books there may be some things with which you and I would not agree. The principle, “use what is good and discard what is not good” applies to all textbooks used with our courses. Please be wise enough to discard any and all teaching that is not biblical.

## **Instructions and Assignments for Level II Students (Non Transferrable)**

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Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the DVD/VHS video tape or audio tape. As you view/listen to the lecture, follow along in the course study guide.

### **Tests**

There will only be two tests to complete this course. The mid-term is to be given over the first six (6) lessons, a final will be given at the end of the study over the last six (6) lessons. Tests will be **85%** of your grade. The student must obtain a 70% or better on each test.

### **Memory Work**

All the memory verses assigned must be completed and either written or quoted in the presence of the administrator.

There will be 20 verses to memorize in your study of **Biblical Interpretation**. The Test Administrator will report to us all memory work completed. This will be **10%** of your grade.

#### **Due by the Mid-Term Exam:** (10 verses)

Acts 2:38	Luke 1:2-3	2 Timothy 3:16-17
2 Peter 1:19-22	1 John 5:13	

#### **Due by the Final Exam:** (10 verses)

Deuteronomy 12:32	Deuteronomy 29:29	Isaiah 1:18-20
Matthew 28:18-20	Revelation 22:18-19	

### **Other Assignments**

- All the Self Exams (found at the end of each lesson) must be completed. (**5% of your grade**)
- All assignments must be completed to pass the course.
- **All work must be received within two weeks after the final test.**
- Level II students must obtain a 70% or better on each test to pass this course.

### **Grade Values**

Mid-term and Final Tests	85%
Memory verses	10%
Study Guide Self Exams	5%

## **Instructions and Assignments for Level III (Transferable)**

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Each lesson is built around the instruction on either the VHS tape, DVD, CD, or audio cassette tape. Listen to the lecture on the tape as you follow along in the course Study Guide book..

### **Reading**

Three books will be required. "***How to Understand the Bible***," by: W Robert Palmer, "***The Cultural Church***," by: F. LaGard Smith, and "***Biblical Interpretation***" by: Charles Speer. These books must be read in their entirety and a two (2) page evaluation of "***How to Understand the Bible***" and "***The Cultural Church***" must be submitted with your Final Exam. (**5 % of your grade**)

### **Writing**

Write a commentary on the book of Jude, using what you have learned during this course and turn it in with your Final Exam. This must be in your own words, not from other people's work (other commentaries, etc.). Each verse should cover at least half a page. Your commentary should be between 10-12 pages. (**This will be 15% of your grade**)

### **Memory Verses**

Memory work will be done on the honor system. You are asked to write your verses from memory on your test in the presence of the administrator. After you have completed the test, correct the verses with a different colored pen. Or you may quote them to the administrator during the course and he will keep track of the verses completed and report them to us. Please be diligent in doing your memory work. All memory work must be completed to pass this course. You will have thirty-six (36) verses to memorize. (**10% of your grade**).

#### **Due Before The Mid-term** (16 verses)

Luke 1:2-3   I John 5:13   I Cor. 2:14-16   II Timothy 3:16-17  
Hebrews 1:12   II Peter 1:19-21   John 5:39-40, 8:31-32

#### **Due Before the Final** (20 verses)

Matthew 28:18-20   Isaiah 1:18-20   Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, 29:29  
Acts 2:38   Proverbs 30:6   John 12:48, 14:15, 15:10  
II Thess. 2:14   Rev. 22:18-19   Romans 15:4-6

### **Exams**

Self- Exams: All Self Exams are to be completed at the end of each lesson.

There will be two major tests to complete for this course. The mid-term test is to be done at the end of lesson six (6) and the final will at the end of the study, after lesson twelve (12). All assignments must be finished by the time of your final test. Each test has to be passed with a 70 or better to pass this course. (**This will be 70% of your grade**).

### **Grade Value Percentage**

Reading of the textbooks and a two page evaluation	5%
Memory work	10%
Written Commentary	15%
Mid-term and final test	80%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

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## LESSON ONE

# INTRODUCTION

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### INTRODUCTION

he name of this course is “Biblical Interpretation.” The more technical name for this subject is “Sacred Hermeneutics,” which is the study of the methods of determining the meaning of our biblical text, interpreting the Bible. Some people might ask, “Why should we study such a thing?” Others might say, “Doesn’t the Holy Spirit within a person give him understanding of Scripture? If that is so, then why do we even need a methodology, as it were, to help the person decide what the text means?” This theory is what we call illumination.

Another might suggest, “Experience shows us that everyone has his own interpretation and that is as it should be. Therefore, we don’t need a standardized hermeneutic because it simply won’t work.” This sounds like existentialism. Still others might comment, “Why bother? The Bible is just too hard to understand, anyway.” This person has simply given up and, therefore, sees no benefit in such a study. I would like for us to look at each one of these to see if they are valid arguments.

---

**LESSON AIM:** To convince of the need for good biblical interpretation methods.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Noting some unacceptable approaches to biblical interpretation.
  2. Reasons why men can understand the Bible alike.
  3. Reasons why men do not understand the Bible alike.
- 

### QUESTIONS CONCERNING INTERPRETATION

#### A. The Question of Illumination

1. Calvinism declares that a man is totally depraved and that means that he is incapable of doing good in and of himself. In fact, man is even incapable of understanding scripture by himself.
2. The Holy Spirit must force such an unregenerate person to accept the gospel initially. And we call that irresistible grace.
3. The Spirit must continue to enlighten such a one even after he becomes a Christian, and we call that illumination.
4. This doctrine simply isn’t true. A passage sometimes cited in support of illumination, but one which actually speaks against that particular view, is 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.

**NOTE:** The context of this passage is not that of any individual Christian having the power from the indwelling Spirit to discern the meaning of Scripture, but rather refers to individuals only in the first century who had miraculous spiritual gifts that allowed them to reveal the mind of God and discern when the mind of God was being spoken. Because Christians today do not have these miraculous spiritual gifts we must rely on other means for interpreting Scripture, and it is not illumination. It is more like perspiration that yields a correct interpretation of Scripture. Were illumination true, everyone who is a Christian would be able to interpret all passages alike. But who will admit that is a reality? The essence of what we are seeing here, then, is that illumination is not correct.

### B. The Question of Existentialism

1. Experience teaches us that people come up with different interpretations.
  - a. Does that necessarily mean or imply that any person is welcome to his own interpretation of any passage of Scripture?
  - b. Reason will not allow such a conclusion.
  - c. If that were true, we would end up with no absolutes.
  - d. God could not define what is authoritative in Scripture. There would be no authority in Scripture.
2. Every book is written with an intended meaning in the mind of the author.
  - a. Did God write a book to man?
  - b. Did He write it to communicate certain ideas that He had in His mind and in His will?
  - c. If so, then we must come to know God's mind and His will.
  - d. When He wrote a passage, He had one thing in mind.

**NOTE:** If not, then each person becomes his own authority, his own interpreter, instead of God giving His authoritative will in the Scripture. Each person becomes the authoritative interpreter of those words for his own life. That makes self the god of one's life. That is self-idolatry, and that is not right.

### C. The Question of Despair

1. Some parts of the Scripture are indeed difficult to understand.
  - a. Revelation, Ezekiel, Zechariah, are difficult books, and there are other parts of Scriptures that are hard to understand.
  - b. Peter says about Paul's letters that some parts of his letters were very hard to understand.
  - c. And if Peter, an inspired apostle, had some difficulty with Paul's letters, then what about us who are uninspired?
2. This view implies that God gave a book that is too hard to be understood.
  - a. He wanted to communicate some things to man like love, salvation, husband-wife relationships, among many others. "But it is too hard for man to understand!"
  - b. If it is too hard for man to understand, then we are in trouble.
  - c. Either God is not capable of accomplishing such a feat (and that challenges His very nature as a powerful God) or God is capricious, and He is sadistic in nature in giving us a book that we cannot understand.

- d. Neither of those implications is tolerable. (See 1 Corinthians 2:10-13).
- 3. The Spirit searched the mind of God and took those thoughts which are eternal, beyond man's understanding in a sense, but was able to put those into words which a man could understand.
- 4. Once men, apostles and prophets, had understood those things by revelation, they were allowed by control or inspiration of the Holy Spirit to speak and to write those things to man in spiritual words which man could understand. (See Ephesians 3:2-6)
- 5. So it must be true that God gave man a book, the Bible, which he can understand and we can understand it alike.
- 6. That doesn't always mean we will understand it alike, but it does mean that we can.

### **REASONS MEN CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE**

#### **A. God Calls Upon Man to Understand**

- 1. The word "understand" implies that men can understand the Bible alike.
  - a. One of the great songs in Scripture is Psalm 119.
    - 1) It is the longest passage of Scripture,
    - 2) In this particular psalm, much emphasis is given to the word of God, our attitudes toward it, and our dependence on it.
  - b. What are the results of studying the word of God? There is revealed in this passage some ways in which we can understand the Bible alike.
    - 1) Verse 34 - "*Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.*" The psalmist asks God for understanding. Now he knows that he cannot understand it totally by himself, but he believes that the Lord will help him understand it, and therefore he can.
    - 2) Verse 73 - "*Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.*" Again, his plea for understanding.
    - 3) Verse 144 - "*Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.*"

**NOTE:** What is necessarily implied or inferred by those verses is that without understanding the reader cannot do what is right. He cannot obey. How can he keep God's law if he does not understand God's law the way God made it to be understood?

#### **B. God Expects Man to Understand**

- 1. If we are to understand the Bible or any other book, we must understand it as God or the author intended, or we do not really understand it at all.

#### **C. Two Examples:**

- 1. The Walls of Jericho (Joshua 6).

- a. God gave some very specific instructions to Joshua, “*You march around the city once a day for the first six days. And then on the seventh day you march around seven times.*” (vs. 3-4).
- b. He gave some other specific instructions.
  - 1) Of holding certain things in their hands.
  - 2) Of being quiet on certain days and then on the seventh day shouting and blowing the trumpets.
- c. Those specific instructions to Joshua were given to be understood.
- 2. Noah in the Ark (Genesis 6).
  - a. Noah was also given specific instructions how to build that ark.
    - 1) Build it this long, this wide, this high.
    - 2) Specific instructions of window and door.
    - 3) How to put the pitch on the outside and within.
  - b. Noah obeyed exactly what God intended for him to do, and they were saved as a result.
  - c. If they had not obeyed the intentions of God, as God saw it, they would not have obeyed, and they would not have been saved.
- 3. Application.
  - a. Salvation from sin and hope of heaven is determined on the basis of faithful obedience.
  - b. We must understand things in the Bible as God really intended for us to understand them.
  - c. Salvation depends upon our knowing the truth, and that demands that we should, and can, understand it (John 8:32).
  - d. Truth is reality as defined by God, not by man’s interpretation.
- 4. Our salvation from sin depends on our ability to know truth as God intended it and to obey it as God intended it, not just as I see fit to understand it and obey it.

#### D. Unity is at Stake

We need to understand the Bible alike because different interpretations destroy the unity among believers.

- 1. Jesus prayed for unity among believers (John 17:20-21).
  - a. He prayed for His apostles,
  - b. He prayed for the disciples that would follow Him.
  - c. Jesus prayed that believers would be united as He and the Father are.
    - 1) Followers would be united in Christ Jesus.
    - 2) Show the world that God had indeed really sent Jesus.
- 2. Paul’s call for unity among believers (Ephesians 2:14-18).
  - a. Jesus is our peace.
  - b. He destroyed all the barriers between Jews and Gentiles.
  - c. The cross of Jesus Christ was intended to bring unity to all peoples.
  - d. All peoples could become members of the same body, which is the church.
  - e. But it was only through tearing that dividing wall down by Jesus’ sacrifice on Calvary, that men could be united.
- 3. Paul’s call for unity among believers (Ephesians 4:3). “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

**E. The Basis:** Ephesians 4:4-6

- |               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. One body   | 5. One faith          |
| 2. One Spirit | 6. One baptism        |
| 3. One hope   | 7. One God and Father |
| 4. One Lord   |                       |

**NOTE:** If there is one God, and there is one Lord, and there is one Spirit, and no one would deny that, in the same way there is one church and one faith and one baptism. If we look at the church, which there is one church and one body. If we look at it differently than that, then we have violated this passage. We must understand that the one way is the way that brings unity. We must be united on these particular doctrines or issues for there to be unity among us.

**F. Paul's Appeal for Unity**

1. Among believers (I Corinthians 1:10). "*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.*"
2. Therefore, if Paul said to the Corinthians that he wanted them to be united, then he expected them to be united.

**NOTE:** We can conclude that men can understand the Bible alike. More specifically, that God expects them to do so if they are to be saved. Why do men not understand the Bible alike? Well, we should, but men don't. Why don't they? Some conclude that we just cannot understand it alike, but we have already seen that this is not the case. Surely God would not bind something upon us of which we are incapable of doing.

**REASONS WHY MEN DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE**

**A. Because of Ignorance**

1. We lack a full knowledge of the word.
  - a. Perhaps it is because we are distracted.
  - b. So many things come into our lives and take away from the time we would have to study Scripture.
2. We rely too heavily on what other people, preachers, and teachers tell us.

**B. Because of Prejudice**

1. We bring preconceived notions to the Scriptures.
2. We have backgrounds that cause us to think a certain way.
3. We may have prejudices that we bring to Scripture.
4. It is important for us to come to the Scriptures without these prejudices. (Viewing Scripture through rose colored glasses).

**C. Because of Improper Hermeneutics**

1. Everybody has a hermeneutic.

2. We have certain rules that we apply to interpretation.
  - a. They may be good ones.
  - b. They may be faulty.
3. There is a correct hermeneutic, and this course will help us to discover it.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, when we consider the possibilities of interpreting Scripture, there are three.

1. First, God could not give us a book that we can understand. Limits the power of God.
2. Second, God could give us such a book but He did not. Indicts God. He is unjust. He is unfair.
3. Third, God did give us a book that we can, and that we should, understand. He says we are going to be judged by His book. Then surely He must have given us such a book that we can understand.

Let us close with these Scriptures.

Psalm 119:130      "*The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*"

Matthew 24:15      "*Let the reader understand.*"

Matthew 13:9      "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*"

## **DISCUSSION**

1. If unity is to be found among the body, (as Christ wants), what doctrines must we agree on and why?
2. As far as the way to salvation, are there any passages that are hard to understand? (Where a person would not know how to come into a saved relationship with God.) If so what are they and why do you think they are hard to understand?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ONE**

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1. What is Illumination? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is Existentialism? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why should all men be able to understand the Bible alike? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What is necessary or implied that man must do to understand God's law or word?

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5. Name three reasons why we need to understand the Bible alike.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Name three reasons why men do not understand the Bible alike.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is the definition of hermeneutics? \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON TWO

# THE PROPER ATTITUDE FOR GOOD BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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### INTRODUCTION

In our first session we introduced the course by discussing whether our Bible could and should be understood alike. Some people have said that because people do not understand it alike, we should not think that we can. However, if God could deliver a book to man in which He reveals His will and His plans for man, then that same God is powerful enough to make it such that man can understand it alike. If we do not, it is not God's fault.

In this session, we want to talk about the proper attitude of a good Biblical interpreter. Our attitude toward the Bible and toward His word is crucial. We believe that God demands that we understand it, and that we have a good attitude toward Him.

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### LESSON TEXT: Psalm 119

### LESSON PREVIEW: You will . . .

1. Learn eight things which make the Bible a "peerless" book.
  2. Discover five attitudes which the believer must have toward the Word of God.
- 

### THE BIBLE, A PEERLESS BOOK AND THE REASONS FOR ITS PEERLESS NATURE

#### A. It is Literary Excellence

1. Its doctrines are holy.
2. Its precepts are binding.
3. Its histories are true.
4. Its decisions are immutable.

#### B. Necessities We Must Do

1. Read it to be wise.
2. Believe it to be saved.
3. Practice it to be holy.

**C. It is Truth**

1. It contains the truth that saves (John 8:31-32).
2. It holds the secret of contentment (Philippians 4:10-13).
3. It holds the truth about God's nature, man's tendencies, and life in general.  
It is as deep as you want to go or can go.

**D. It is Accurate**

1. It is accurate in that it says just exactly enough.
2. It is not intended to be a science book, but when God speaks through a man by inspiration, there is not even one scientific error found in the pages of Scripture.
3. Even though this book was written in a time of ignorance and superstition, it was never wrong. Archeology has only corroborated its witness.
4. Even though it was only intended to speak about eternal and spiritual things, it is not wrong about other things, either.

**E. It is Complete**

1. It is a comprehensive book on God, His nature, His character, His workings, and on man, his nature, his future, where he came from, what he is doing here.
2. Peter affirms its completeness. "*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness*" (2 Peter 1:3).
3. Jesus states its completeness. "*All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I said to you*" (John 14:25-26).
4. Paul affirms its completeness. "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
5. It is complete for everything that man needs on this earth in terms of his Spiritual life.

**F. It is Relevant and Fresh**

1. It deals with the unchangeable things of life, that which is true for all men in all cultures, in all ages, and in all situations.
2. The Bible is relevant and fresh to every single person in every single situation.
3. It supplies our needs regardless of our backgrounds or cultures.
4. It touches our inner feelings and spirit, each person every time.
5. It challenges and instructs. It aids the whole man. It talks to the body, to the soul, to the emotions and the spirit.

**G. It is Powerful - it Reveals Christ in the Word**

1. It changed Saul the persecutor to Paul the apostle.
2. Its power united Gentiles and Jews together in the same body. Their histories and cultures had only bred hatred towards each other.

3. It gives comfort power to those that have lost a loved one. It is what is read at funerals.
4. It enables a person with few talents to make a difference in people's lives.
5. It brings joy to the heart when trials surround it.
6. And it has enough power and wisdom to cause us to read it over and over. It is God's word.

#### **H. It is Indispensable**

1. We cannot do without this book.
2. We have to have it to survive in this world.
3. Our spirits need the eternal principles taught in it that we might survive. To cope in a world that is too hurtful and intimidating for our minds and heart to take.
4. We have to have it to find out how to please our God and how to be saved and how to have a close relationship with Him. The Bible is indeed indispensable.

#### **I. It is God's Own and Only Book**

1. We do not need any other so called revelations because there are not any. The Bible is it.
2. It is the only revelation.

### **PROPER ATTITUDES TOWARD GOD AND HIS WORD**

Psalm 119 is full of descriptions of the right kind of attitudes toward and the right kind of methods of how to study and retain the word of God.

#### **A. The Desire to Seek God**

1. A great desire to seek God with our whole hearts. "*Blessed are they who keep His statutes and seek Him with all their heart*" (Psalm 119:2).
  - a. It's more than just reading the words. "*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life*" (John 5:39-40).
  - b. The thought behind seeking God is to know Him, to have a relationship with Him, to be owned by Him, to love Him (Jeremiah 9:23-24).
  - c. We must come to seek God, and to be known by Him and to know Him (Galatians 4:9).
  - d. This should be the greatest priority of our life.
2. An attitude of wanting to know God and His son Jesus (John 17:3). "*Now this is eternal life; that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.*"
  - a. Do not let the word become an end within itself.
  - b. There is the danger of becoming Bible worshipers rather than God worshipers.
  - c. The search for God and Jesus is with the whole heart.
    - 1) Psalm 119:10, "*I seek You with all my heart.*"

- 2) Psalm 119:34; "*Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law and obey it with all my heart.*"
- 3) Psalm 119:69b, "*I keep Your precepts with all my heart.*"
- 4) Psalm 119:145, "*I call with all my heart; answer me, O Lord, and I will obey Your decrees.*"
3. We must be whole hearted. People say, "I want to know God," but their heart is not in it.

**B. Desire to Seek Understanding From Him (Psalm 119:18-19)**

1. God's word tells us how to have and to preserve life.
2. A strong sense of need for and dependency upon God (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:40, 66).
3. A strong sense of expectancy about what I will receive from this relationship with God through the word (Psalm 119:18).
4. Some find the Bible uninspiring; they do not know the truth and greatness it holds, or they do not know how to get it out (Psalm 119:98-99).
5. Knowing God brings joy and peace, because His way works, because of the hope that it gives (Psalm 119:127).

**C. Reverent Awe of God**

1. Psalm 119:161, "*...my heart trembles at Your word.*" When He speaks I listen in fear.
2. Verse 120, "*My flesh trembles in fear of You.*"
3. Proverbs begins in chapter 1 verse 7, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*"
4. Proverbs 9:10, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*"
5. We must have a healthy respect for and awe of God.
6. Just like Moses did at Mount Sinai when he saw the burning bush.
  - a. Like Daniel when he heard the messenger of God speak.
  - b. Like John, as the angel came with the heavenly abode and the plans for the future.
7. Just because the words are written in the Bible and not spoken aloud by God, doesn't mean the Lord isn't speaking.
  - a. It is not a magazine, math book or a TV special, it is God speaking to us.
  - b. We cannot afford to treat this book or our relationship with God as if we can take it or leave it.
  - c. If this is the word of God, then you must treat it with respect.
  - d. This is from the same Lord that is an avenging God on those who obey not the gospel (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).
  - e. This book is from a God who is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).
  - f. He is a holy God (I Peter 1:16).
  - g. I will be judged by His word. Jesus says; "There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words" (John 12:48).
  - h. Psalm 119:120, "*My flesh trembles in fear of You; I stand in awe of Your laws.*"

#### **D. Submissive Attitude**

1. God is always right.
  - a. “*The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart*” (Psalm 19:8). He is always right.
  - b. The psalmist had discovered, or had come to trust, that God was always right, and therefore he was willing to submit. Psalm 12:6a, “*And the words of the Lord are flawless.*”
2. God always knows what He’s saying. The psalmist knows that it is right and it is right on target.
  - a. He did make this world.
  - b. He did make us.
  - c. So it stands to reason that He knows the ins and outs of everything about which we would want to know.
3. We must trust Him implicitly. He is telling us the truth, and if we obey His word things will be as He said.
  - a. We must approach God with openness in relation to His word, just like we do in prayer.
  - b. His word is effective. If the word is to have its effect, cutting like a sharp sword, dividing soul and spirit (Hebrews 4:12), then I must be rid of all prejudice and preconceived notions.
4. This attitude accepts His word as authoritative, as a “thus saith the Lord.” Paul said in Romans 3:4, “*Let God be true and every man a liar.*” We must make a decision to trust Him and to trust His word.

#### **E. Thanksgiving and Praise**

1. A necessary attitude (Psalm 119:7). “*I will praise You with an upright heart as I learn Your righteous laws.*”
2. A joyful attitude (v. 14). “*I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.*”
3. A thankful attitude (v. 62). “*At midnight I arise to give you thanks for Your righteous laws.*”
4. An active and constant attitude (v. 164). “*Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous laws.*”
5. The Psalmist is joyful over what he obtains from his study of God’s word. He knows God and His word and how precious that relationship is.

### **CONCLUSION**

This psalm is 176 verses long, the longest chapter in the Bible, and its theme is the word of God. It is as though the author cannot say enough to extol the merits of the law of the Lord and the Lord Himself. Verse 175, “*Let me live that I may praise You, and may Your laws sustain me.*” Praising God. All of the attitudes spoken of so far have to do with the attitudes toward God Himself. But so often in those verses there was a parallel between one’s attitude toward God and one’s attitude toward the word.

The same attitudes toward God that are repeated should be our attitude toward the word itself. If your attitudes are not as Psalm 119 would reveal, the rest of this study will not be as meaningful as it needs to be. Take time to read the

psalm and get in place anything that might be out of place in terms of your attitude toward God and your attitude toward His word.

### **DISCUSSION**

1. Discuss the proper attitudes toward God and His word from Psalm 119.
2. Discuss what some people add to or take away from the Bible and why.
3. Why would someone think the Bible is not complete? Why do some think it is indispensable?

### **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWO**

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1. Did God give us a book that we could understand and understand it alike?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What are four of the nine reasons for the Bible's peerless nature?

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name four reasons why the Bible is indispensable.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_

4. List three verses that let us know that the Bible is complete.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Give five proper attitudes we should have towards God.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON THREE

# BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

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### INTRODUCTION

 To this point, we have talked a good deal about proper attitudes toward God Himself and toward His word, the word being the vehicle through which He reveals Himself and aids us in coming to know Him personally. In this session, we want to continue that investigation of a proper attitude toward the Bible. We will be investigating basic assumptions that underlie good biblical interpretation.

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**LESSON AIM:** To outline the underlying axioms of conservative biblical interpretation.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Survey some typical views of inspiration.
  2. Note the necessary basic assumptions that must be accepted to accomplish good biblical interpretation.
- 

### DIVERSITY OF VIEWS OF INSPIRATION

Before we look into the specifics, let's think about the diversity of the overall or general views of the Bible that people hold.

#### A. Many Revelations Given

Some people believe that the Bible is not the only revelation from the Supreme Being(s). It is only one of several revelations from Supreme Beings.

#### B. Bible Contains Truth

1. The Bible simply contains the truth from God.
2. Not necessarily total truth in every single part.
  - a. The Bible needs to be demythologized.
  - b. By doing that, we could strip away everything except the golden nuggets of truth that might be discovered or recaptured for us today.

#### C. Errors in Manuscripts

1. The composite original language or manuscript of our day is unreliable.
2. Everything in Scripture is suspect of actually being the original words of the writer.

#### D. The Writers

1. Others question the validity of the supposed authors.
2. Did the apostles really write those books?
3. Or did their close associates, which might be called prophets, really write those books?
  - a. This view challenges the book's credibility.
  - b. This view questions Scripture's inerrancy and infallibility.

#### E. It is Not Worth Submission

1. Many people just choose to negate the authoritative nature of Scripture.
  - a. Feel no sense of responsibility to submit to its teachings.
  - b. This is called the “practical atheist.” He will say he believes in God, but the practice of Christianity is another thing to him.

**NOTE:** The whole of what we will study in the rest of this course is pure rubbish if one accepts any one of the preceding views. Why bother to interpret that which is error-ridden and not authoritative?

### BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

The following basic assumptions must be accepted before we proceed any further with our methods of Biblical interpretation.

#### A. God Has Spoken

1. The creation would demand that there be a creator.
  - a. Has that creator spoken to man through other means besides creation's beauty and design and through the judgments of His wrath on evil-doers? (Romans 1:18-20).
  - b. The Deist denies the Lord's involvement since creation.
  - c. There is no way for God to reveal His will in words or even to interrupt or interfere in the affairs of man and his universe.
  - d. The Deist's God is a silent God. There but not involved.
2. God took the initiative to speak to us first.
  - a. He knew we wouldn't make the effort to be in fellowship with Him (Isaiah 53:6).
  - b. Scripture says He has spoken. The Bible says “Thus saith the Lord,” or something like that over five thousand times.
  - c. Peter tells his readers, “*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation, for prophecy never had its origin in the will of man. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:20-21).
  - d. Therefore, God has spoken through men of His choosing.

#### B. The Bible is God's Revelation of His Will

1. The Bible claims to be God's revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21).
  - a. God's revealed word resides in the Bible. (See 2 Peter 1:19). “*And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it.*”

- b. Peter claims that what is written secures our faith in what actually happened. (2 Timothy 3:16).
- c. God revealed Himself in Scripture. It is all God-directed, all God-breathed.
- 2. God's Spirit inspired men to speak and to write (I Corinthians 2:10-13).
  - a. The Spirit searched the mind of God and took those concepts which were of deity and gave them to man in such a form that they could understand them.
  - b. It can be understood by those who read it (Ephesians 3:2-5).
  - c. Paul has written about the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he says by reading that, you can understand what he understands about that gospel.
- 3. In pre-Christian times, God spoke to men of old through what He called prophets, men who were inspired by God through the Holy Spirit, to speak words of God (Hebrews 1:1-2).
  - a. Some of these men include Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah and Amos.
  - b. These men spoke to the people of their time.
  - c. They spoke the word of revelation from God to those particular people, and it has been written down for our use as well.
- 4. All Christians are amenable not to the Old Testament, but to Christ's words. That is the content of the New Covenant.
  - a. The words of Jesus are not just those recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
  - b. Jesus says that He gave those words to the apostles (John 17:8, 14).
  - c. The word that He was to give to them was to come to them through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26; 15:26-27).
  - d. Jesus is going back to the Father, but will send the Spirit (John 16:12-15).
  - e. These men in turn were speaking and writing the very words of Jesus.
- 5. The New Testament writers claim inspiration by the Spirit to speak and to write the things that they do (1 Corinthians 14:37; II Thessalonians 2:15; Ephesians 3:4-6; I Peter 1:20-21, 3:4-6).

### C. Our Manuscripts Are Close to the Originals

The original text has been passed onto us in good form. This assumption takes into account two areas:

1. Canonicity - (higher criticism) the study of the genuineness of the individual books that we have in our Bible.
  - a. Does it belong in the total text? Or is it a book that does not belong there? Canonicity asks this.
  - b. Transmission - deals with the text of the book itself in the original language of writing.
  - c. There is considerable unanimity among conservative scholars that what we have in our Bible is indeed what is represented there to be: the writings of people whom God intended to have their writings there.
  - d. Higher criticism studies Canonicity.

2. Lower criticism - (sometimes called textual criticism). Textual criticism attempts to establish the text.
  - a. There are thousands of variant readings on variant passages in the various manuscripts that we have in the Bible.
  - b. 99% of the text that we have is unquestioned.
  - c. No major doctrinal belief is affected by the variants in any way.
3. We can rely on our Hebrew and Greek texts from which our translations are made and from which we read in the English or other vernacular languages.
4. The King James Version was translated into English in 1611.
  - a. In the ensuing 350 years, we have found many excellent manuscripts to add to what they had when they translated their Bible.
  - b. Our modern translations, which are made from many manuscripts, agree remarkably well with the King James.
  - c. We are secure in believing our text is reliable.

**D. The Bible Has Been Accurately Translated**

1. Unlike the critics, who's knowledge of the original language is non-existent or limited at best.
2. Translations, not paraphrases, are usually done by a committee of linguistic scholars.
  - a. People who know the original languages of Scripture.
  - b. They also know the language into which it is translated. They can put that together accurately.
  - c. 47 men translated the King James and 101 scholars the American Standard Version.
3. Some translations are better than others.
4. The translators of one translation may choose a slightly different philosophy of translation.
  - a. American Standard Version chooses the philosophy of a word-to-word translation.
  - b. New International Version scholars attempt to capture the thought, not so much the word-for-word.
  - c. Their "philosophy" is called the "dynamic equivalent."
5. These men and their translations area good pool of knowledge.
  - a. Now that doesn't mean there are not any errors in our translations. There are errors in all translations.
  - b. Some translations are better than others, but there are errors in even the best.
  - c. You will lose something when you go from the original language to another language.
6. A translation is simply going to have some inherent problems.
  - a. It is rarely an exact word for word from an original language to the translation.
  - b. The English language is so complex and large in vocabulary, the exact word equivalent from Greek to English is hard to find sometimes.

**NOTE:** The best way for someone who does not know the Greek and Hebrew to study the Bible from the English language is to compare several translations, and by doing so, he can ascertain the meaning in almost all cases. We can indeed trust our translations to give us a good rendering of what God says in His word.

#### **E. The Bible is Inerrant and Infallible**

1. The Bible has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. We referred to I Corinthians 2:10-13 and Ephesians 3:2-5 earlier. But a host of other passages could be brought in to establish the same things.
2. The Corinthian passage speaks of what we call verbal and plenary inspiration.
  - a. Each word was chosen by the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Some have suggested the concept of what we call “thought only” inspiration.
  - c. But this denies individual word inspiration. Thoughts, however, are only expressed exactly by exact choice of words.
  - d. If the thought is inspired, then so are the words.
3. Because the individual words are inspired, the Bible is free from error.
4. It is inerrant and infallible in the original writings.

#### **F. The Bible is Complete, Final, and Sufficient**

1. Jesus’ grave is empty, a triumphant over death. Raised once, which is sufficient.
2. It is complete in every respect.
3. It is final. Jude writes, “*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*” (Jude 3).
4. By the end of the first century, revelation was over.
5. The faith, as it is called, had been given to man and written down.
6. The Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha have not been reputed as being Scripture. No serious scholar considers them on par with what is in the Bible.
7. There have been no new revelations since 100 A.D. Joseph Smith, Ellen G. White, Charles T. Russell, and the rest have not been inspired prophets.
  - a. They add nothing to Scripture.
  - b. It is complete, it is final.
8. It is sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4).
  - a. It is God’s word for us and we have it.
  - b. That means we have sufficient knowledge from God to secure our salvation without anything else until Jesus comes again.

#### **G. The Bible is Intelligible and Understandable**

1. If God wanted to communicate His love for us, He could.
2. He did so in language that we, with some effort, can understand.
  - a. The term “revelation” (which means uncovering) indicates that we can understand.
  - b. The Lord refers to His word in Scripture as “revelation.”

- c. If the Bible is unintelligible or cannot be understood, it is not revelation at all.

#### **H. The Bible is Authoritative in Religious Matters**

- 1. Since it is from God, and since He is Lord, His word is authoritative.
- 2. Since it is inerrant and infallible, it is authoritative.
- 3. Everything about Scripture demands a response. The Bible is full of commands, examples, and exhortation to be followed.
- 4. They do not just apply to the recipients to whom they were written initially.
- 5. Jesus says in John 12:48-50, "*There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of My own accord, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say.*"
- 6. You must accept Jesus and His word as authoritative or you reject Him.
  - a. On that basis you will be judged.
  - b. The Bible is the standard by which we will be judged.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Having accepted these basic assumptions, we are now ready to proceed with the methodology of biblical interpretation. But look back over these basic assumptions, and make sure that you accept them. Because if not, then we cannot proceed beyond this point. But once these basic assumptions have been accepted, then we can proceed to a very good method that will help you understand more Bible perhaps than you have ever understood, and thrill your life.

#### **DISCUSSION**

- 1. What would give people the idea that there are many revelations given to us?
- 2. To get to the truth that God has given us should we demythologize the Bible? Why? Reason it out.
- 3. Do we really have what was written by the original writers of the Bible? And if so is there enough for us to understand what God wants and expects from us?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON THREE**

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1. Give eight reasons for our basic assumptions of Biblical interpretation.  
1) \_\_\_\_\_  
2) \_\_\_\_\_  
3) \_\_\_\_\_  
4) \_\_\_\_\_  
5) \_\_\_\_\_  
6) \_\_\_\_\_  
7) \_\_\_\_\_  
8) \_\_\_\_\_
2. (**True or False**) The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are part of Scripture.
3. What does the term revelation mean? \_\_\_\_\_
4. (**True or False**) The Bible does contain truth, but first we need to demythologized it.
5. (**True or False**) The Deist says God has been active ever since creation.
6. What does Canonicity (higher criticism) study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What does Lower criticism (textual criticism) study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Since the Bible is inerrant and infallible it is therefore \_\_\_\_\_
9. If you do not accept Jesus and His word as authoritative you \_\_\_\_\_
10. Since God is Lord, His word is \_\_\_\_\_
11. Therefore, since the Bible is from God it is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Scripture demands a response. The Bible is full of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that we must follow.
13. What do the New Testament writers claim? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. In Pre-Christian times, God spoke to men through \_\_\_\_\_. Today He speaks to us through \_\_\_\_\_.

## LESSON FOUR

# SUCCESSIVE READINGS WITH AN ANGLE

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### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Review

In our first three lessons, we have introduced the need for a good method of, and application of biblical interpretation. We have also scrutinized our attitudes toward God and toward His word with special emphasis in our last session on some basic assumptions that must be accepted before we can proceed any further in our quest to understand Scripture.

#### B. Definitions

The rest of what we will do can be broken down into two parts: “**exegesis**” and “**hermeneutics**.” Now realize that we are going to relegate a narrower definition or connotation to the term hermeneutics than it usually takes on, but for our purposes in this course, it will be beneficial.

“**Exegesis**” is the study of how to determine what the Scripture meant in its day to those to whom it was written initially. We might say it this way: Exegesis is what it meant in the past. Not that it does not mean the same things today, but first of all we are seeking the original meaning and application. That is our first priority. It is out of that first understanding of what it meant to those people that we decide what it means for us today. In other words, what did Romans mean to the Roman Christians to whom Paul wrote it initially? What did Jude mean to the people to whom he wrote it initially? That is our first step. Exegesis is getting the meaning out of the text. The word “exegesis” is from a Greek word, part of which is the word “ek” (meaning “out of”). We want to get “out of” the text what it meant to those people initially.

The second part of our biblical interpretive method is called “**hermeneutics**.” Literally, this means the study of biblical interpretation. We can include the concept of exegesis in this study of hermeneutics, but we will restrict its definition and its use here. In Homer’s Odyssey, Hermes is the Greek god who is primarily the messenger for the other gods, but especially for Zeus. As a messenger, he was to speak and interpret the message to the recipient. “Hermeneutics,” then, is the study of interpretation of a message from the gods. Of course, in our case, it is Jehovah God’s message as He reveals Himself in the Bible. In our study, we will assign the connotation of what the biblical text means to us today as “hermeneutics.” In other words, hermeneutics is the meaning of the biblical text to the present day, to today’s people, to today’s situations, to today’s culture and so forth. Sometimes it is very simple, but not always. Look at the following example.

The Corinthian Christian women were told by Paul to wear the traditional veil, I Corinthians 11. That showed that they were in submission to men.

**Question:** Should we abide by that same command today?

Were you to survey our churches, at least in the western world, you would find that very few women wear a veil. They do not even wear hats, which sometimes were substituted for a veil.

**Question:** If the veil was to be worn by the Corinthian Christian women, why is it that we choose not to enforce that command today? Why do we believe that some commands in Scripture apply to our situation today and some do not?

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**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Define “exegesis” and “hermeneutics.”
  2. Survey inadequate forms of Bible study.
  3. Begin the study of “Successive Readings.”
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## OUR TYPICAL BIBLE STUDY METHODS

We will call this method of exegesis, “Successive Readings with an Angle.” However, it is not the most common approach to Bible study by any means!

### A. Arbitrary Reading

1. Most Bible reading is done simply for devotional purposes.
2. Not read with a particular purpose in mind. Just reading to be reading it. That is not to say that this kind of reading has no value, but that kind of reading will not facilitate what we are calling “exegesis.”

### B. Incomplete Reading

1. We rarely read complete books of the Bible at one sitting. Usually it is a chapter today, a chapter tomorrow. When we do that, we tend to lose some of the continuity in a book.
2. Such a method usually hinders seeing an overall view of a book of the Bible.
3. The continuity and the flow of the book are lost. Again, exegesis is hindered.

### C. Cursory Reading

1. Not often read with pen and paper close at hand.
2. Notes must be taken lest we forget thoughts and observations. By the time we get to the next chapter we have sometimes forgotten what is in the previous chapter or what is in the previous verse, for that matter.

#### **D. Commentary Study**

1. Most of what we have learned in terms of specifics has often come from commentators.
  - a. What does this particular man say? What does this particular book say?
  - b. Too many times we read a passage, go to our library, open a book and decide it is the right interpretation rather than from our own study.
2. We need to do our own study first before consulting men's interpretation.

### **SUCCESSIVE READINGS WITH AN ANGLE IS THE FIRST STEP IN OUR EXEGETICAL METHOD**

Reading whole books at one sitting is not an easy task, but a necessary one. We would suggest that the student begin with small books so that you will readily see the fruit of your labors. We need that kind of success so that we will attack the bigger books later in our study of God's word.

### **FIRST READING - "THE MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE"**

#### **A. You May Want to Read Aloud**

1. We are not accustomed to that. If you have other people around, you might not want to read aloud for fear of embarrassment.
2. In the New Testament times the Scripture was read aloud in the assembly.
  - a. Maybe they only had one copy, and that is how it was heard initially, and that is how it was to be interpreted: from a reading aloud.
  - b. Paul's instruction to Timothy, "*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching*" (I Timothy 4:13).
3. This first reading needs to be done aloud and without pen and paper.
  - a. Read it aloud and listen to how it sounds.
  - b. Try to read interpretively.
  - c. Read it as if you knew just exactly how the writer was saying it.
  - d. Try to sense the mood and the atmosphere in your aloud reading.

#### **B. Read it Quickly**

The Reason You Should Read Quickly and Rapidly is . . .

1. You should avoid attention to details. You are not looking for a theme.
2. You are not looking for an outline.
3. You are not looking for special little things that the author says.

#### **C. In Our Western World We Have an Analytical Mind**

1. We look for logical steps, reasoning, and things put together in a package.
2. Avoid the temptation to slow down and focus on details or analysis.

#### **D. Questions for Consideration**

1. Is the language of this book fast paced?
  - a. Is it quick?
  - b. Is it moving?
  - c. Or is it rather slow and methodical?

2. This will tell you something about the book.
3. The answers will tell you something about the mood of the author and perhaps the atmosphere in which the recipients reside.
4. Are there a lot of friendly references in this book, or not?
5. Is the man who writes this book close to this audience?
  - a. Or is it a distant relationship?
  - b. In Romans chapter 16, Paul addresses many close friends there.
6. Is the tone hard-driving?
  - a. Or is it personal and tender?
  - b. Galatians is very hard-driving.
  - c. Philippians is very personal and tender.
7. The atmosphere, or mood is what we are looking for.
  - a. Is it tense and intense?
  - b. Is it laid back and gentle?
  - c. Compare Galatians, a very intense, and tense book with Philippians, a book that is laid back, gentle, and even quiet.
8. Is this book on an intellectual level?
  - a. Is it logic?
  - b. Is it reasoning?
  - c. Is it a mind endeavor?
9. Is this book on a feeling level?
  - a. Maybe it is not a book that deals with a lot of doctrinal or teaching matters.
  - b. Maybe it deals with the emotions and feelings.
  - c. You can sense that with this first quick reading.
10. How does the book make you feel?
  - a. Tense or contemplative?
  - b. Did it make you tense?
  - c. Did it make you contemplative?
  - d. Did it make you feel warm, angry, scared, jubilant, joyous, or sad?
  - e. Often our own personal emotional reaction to a book as we read it reveals the tone and mood of the author.

**E. Every New Testament Book Was Written to Someone Specific, and Addressed a Need of the Recipients, or the Author**

1. The mood may immediately give you an inkling into the situation.
2. Galatians illustrates this. Paul is upset with these people.
  - a. Something is wrong in the Galatian churches (Galatians 1:6-10).
  - b. It is very tense.
3. On the other hand the letter to the Philippians is very upbeat and warm (same author wrote both). Philippians 1:7-8
4. Paul is pointing, driving home points the Galatians accept. Yet to the Philippians, it is embracing in his words.
5. This indicates a different situation and group of people who are receiving the letters.

**F. Kind of Literature**

1. The Bible books are written in different literary styles.

2. The Holy Spirit didn't just choose one particular style of writing to write the whole Bible.
3. A Treatise.
  - a. The book of Romans is what we might call a "treatise" or lecture.
  - b. Romans is the kind of book that builds blocks, logical reasoning, and straight forward thinking.
4. Apocalyptic.
  - a. Revelation, Zechariah and Ezekiel are what we call "apocalyptic" literature.
    - Symbolical literature - full of pictures.
    - Not of logic or of treatise, not even of sermons. They are filled with pictures.
  - b. It makes an impression on you. For what purpose?
  - c. That particular audience needed that kind of literature to receive the needed message.
5. Poetry.
  - a. Psalms is filled with beautiful poetry to express the nature of God, or the loneliness of a writer, or the beauty of a personal relationship with God.
  - b. Proverbs is poetry, also.
  - c. Song of Solomon - Lovely poetry to express the love between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship.
  - d. How else could it be expressed?
6. Sermonic.
  - a. Amos - what great sermons that man delivered!
  - b. The gospels are filled with sermons of Jesus.
7. History or Narrative.
  - a. Genesis, 1 and 2 Samuel, Acts, the gospels.
  - b. Specific events which have significant meaning in the plan and purpose of God.
8. Technical.
  - a. Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Exodus.
  - b. Books that talk about the detail of the sacrifices and all the specific things that need to be done to bring those sacrifices about.
  - c. How to build the tabernacle exactly according to plan.
9. Epistles or Letters.
  - a. Letters to personal people, to friends, to churches.
  - b. We have already referred to Galatians and Philippians.

**NOTE:** What we are saying here is that the type of literature and literary devices that are chosen by the Holy Spirit were chosen to convey moods, whether it be intellectual, emotional, exhortative, or sharing. If you can perceive those sorts of things, it will help you in determining what is going on in the book.

See Chart 4-A on page 28 for an example of the "Mood and Atmosphere of Jude"

**Warning:** We are not particularly adept at this kind of reading, and that is because we are looking for too many kinds of detail. Do not overlook this kind of reading as a starting place for the correct interpretation of Scripture.

## SECOND READING - THE RECIPIENTS

### A. Written To Real People

1. A record of people who lived at that time.
  - a. Who were they?
  - b. What were they like?
2. Not directly written to us.
3. This reading is much more meticulous than the first reading.

### B. Two Kinds of Information That You Are Looking For

1. Stated material. In terms of the recipients.
  - a. You are looking for what the text actually states about these people.
  - b. Where they lived, are they saints, are they materialistic, are they hard-hearted, some specific things that are stated in the text.
  - c. What does it actually say?
2. Implied. What is implied or what is inferred about the recipients, the people to whom it was written?
  - a. Stated information is usually easier and everybody gets those.
  - b. As you read ask yourself, "Why would the author include this particular information?"
  - c. Paul didn't write the same thing to the Romans and Philippians.
    - 1) Why? Both are Christians.
    - 2) The implication is that they did not need the same thing.
  - d. If it is material they need to hear.
    - 1) What does it say about them?
    - 2) What does it imply about them?
  - e. Look at what is stated, but ask yourself about what is implied.

**Heed This Warning:** As you go through make sure you distinguish between what is specifically stated about these recipients and that which is implied. You may go too far with your implications. Be careful.

**Remember:** Use a pen and paper as you record this data.

### C. Record Material

1. Location:
  - a. Where are these people located.
  - b. The people in Galatia do not think the same way the people in Philippi do. (Different cultures, back-ground, and situations.)
2. Environment:
  - a. What is the environment in which these people are living?
  - b. Are they being persecuted?
  - c. Are they at peace?
  - d. What is the situation there?

- e. What is their environment?
- 3. Culture:
  - a. Customs, values, morals, character.
  - b. Past, present, etc. (Titus 1:12-13 example)
  - c. The language of Philippians tells a great deal about their character.
    - 1) They were transplanted Romans.
    - 2) Well educated.

**NOTE:** Strengths, example - I Thessalonians 4:9-10. They were strong here, and it is stated, but sometimes what is not stated indicates their strengths because the writer didn't see fit to establish that. But you are also looking for their weaknesses. And this is a key because this will probably tell you why the letter was written.

- 4. Problems:
  - a. Sometimes it is specifically stated as in I Corinthians 5, "you have this problem."
  - b. Chapter 6, "you have this problem."
  - c. And in chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10, "you have this problem."
- 5. Weaknesses: Romans chapters 12 and 13 tell a little bit about what might be implied about the weakness in the Roman church.

**NOTE:** When you are looking at a book, look to the practical section and see what specific things are said to them. It will imply where they are weak and may indicate why the book was written.

- 6. Knowledge Level:
  - a. Are they immature?
  - b. New converts?
  - c. Long-time Christians?
  - d. Have they been well taught?
  - e. Are they grounded in the faith or have they forgotten what they were taught?
- 7. Relationship to the Author.
- 8. Political Situation:
  - a. Persecution from government.
  - b. Are they at peace?
- 9. Economic level:
  - 1. Church containing slaves or upperclass? How does that work?
  - 2. How is their leadership? Strongmen and women? Elders?
  - 3. What about heterogeneous or homogeneous population?
    - a. Lot of Jews there?
    - b. Lot of Greeks there?
    - c. Or is there a mixture?
    - d. Lot of slaves or free?
    - e. Or is there a mixture?

**NOTE:** Here is the point. When you have taken these things and have collected the

data and looked at it and reviewed it and analyzed it, then you should be able to come up with what we call a “personality profile,” and this personality profile will help you decide what these people are like. So when you have done this data collecting, then you should be able to say, “I know what these people are like. I know what that church is like. I have been a member of a church just like that.” That is the goal: to feel like you have been there and know the people, to feel like you have been in their worship assemblies. You know their strengths. You know their weaknesses. You know their past and their present.

#### **D. Look at Philemon, Jude, and II Peter as Examples of the Recipients**

1. Look at the research that we have done and what conclusions and observations that we have come up with (**See Charts 4-B, C & D beginning page 30**).
2. You can see by this particular chart that we have collected data.
  - a. The verses are on the left.
  - b. That's the verse from which we decided this particular information is important.
3. Then you will notice what we have decided, out to the right side, in each of these cases.
  - a. Whether it is stated or implied.
  - b. We have put a question mark out to the side of it to indicate to our self that this is something that is implied and may need to be taken with consideration.
4. Notice what we have done. Do you see the method.
  - a. In the verses that are presented, we have labeled what is specifically stated or what is specifically implied by what is stated there.
  - b. And from that, we have come up with the conclusion.
  - c. So we have reviewed the information.
  - d. We have analyzed it and put it together and come up with a conclusion, which you can see at the bottom.

### **CONCLUSION**

These are the first two readings in our hermeneutical method. We think that a review will help you. Read for the mood and the atmosphere. Then read for the recipients. We hope you are beginning to catch on to the method, and we hope you will try it on some short books before we come back together next time.

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### **CHART 4-A**

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#### **MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE OF JUDE**

The major mood of Jude is negative and discouraging. The greeting is upbeat, but unfortunately, it is so short. The greeting is a bit of sunshine that is quickly covered up by gray clouds and then the rainy season begins. It rains and rains and rains and rains. Just when you are about to drown in the gray, a glimmer of hope comes through again, near the end of the book. It is a tense book, not exactly recommended bedtime material for young children. If it was a musical score for a movie, most of it would be a funeral march or at least ominous sounding music.

**CHART 4-B****RECIPIENTS OF PHILEMON**

VERSE(S)	COMMENT	IMPLIED	STATED
1	Knew Paul and Timothy Named Philemon “Dear Friend” of Paul’s “Fellow worker” of Paul’s. Worked with him in gospel preaching, perhaps in Colossae, or in supporting him in preaching there or in mission work.	I I I I	S
2	Had mutual friends with Paul in Colossae. Implies that Paul had been there Married to Apphia Worked closely with the local preacher Hosts the church in his home A man of some wealth	I I I I I	S
5	A man of notable and commendable Christian character Faith Love for saints Benevolent spirit in reference to the use of his funds for the church.	I	S S
6	Lacks activity in soul-winning	I	
7	Reinforces what verse 5 says about the way he helped brethren, perhaps specifically he's in the way of taking care of traveling brethren. He's a Barnabas.	I	
9	Moved, motivated more by a loving brother than by an order from an apostle. Indicates a willing spirit, not a grumpy, hard-to-motivate person.	I	
11	Had slaves.		S
13	Helped Paul while in prison, probably through donations of money.	I	
14	Can be trusted to do what's right when he learns of it. Does not need to be ordered, nagged, or brow-beat.	I	
15	Understands and appreciates God's workings in the world and in people's lives to bring about the salvation of people.	I	
16	Had slaves. Appreciates the relationship brothers in Christ have to one another.	I	S
17	Loves Paul as a partner in the work of the gospel.		S
19	Probably a convert of Paul’s.	I	
17-20	The kind of man/brother/friend upon which one could call for a big favor without feeling put out and inconvenienced.	I	
21	An obedient spirit. A generous spirit. Usually does more than asked.	I	
22	Hosts Paul when he stays in town. Man of prayer for Christians, especially preachers.	I	S
23-24	Other preachers know him well and love him too. He's probably taken care of them too.	I	

## SUMMARY

Philemon is quite a man! He may have been wealthy when Paul converted him. We wonder if that was in Ephesus (Acts 19:9-10). Perhaps his business brought him there. So his wealth was apparently not a stumbling-block to him. He didn't trust in his wealth.

This new Christian grew in the Lord and became a man of great faith. Of special note is his love for brethren. This love for the church is seen in several ways. First, he hosts the church in his home, and we don't think it's just because he owned the biggest house among the brethren there. Second, he seems to be a benevolent man with his money. Many saints, and we are sure the ones in Colossae especially, were the recipients of his financial help. Third, he loved preachers and what they did. Paul and his companions were the recipients of his hospitality when in Colossae, and Paul (his dear friend) has received support from him while in chains in Rome. This love for preachers is because they win the lost. He has not forgotten what preachers did for him!

The other most notable characteristic of Philemon is his genuine and willing spirit of doing what is right. He's the kind of person that when he learns what is right, he does it. That kind of character and inner spirit is what Paul relies on to act properly in this circumstance. Paul knows he merely has to suggest something, and Philemon will do it.

One weakness of note is his inattention to sharing the gospel with the lost himself (if the NIV translation of v. 5 is correct).

We would have to say that this man knows how to be a good friend. It's not just money for Paul. Paul knows their relationship is strong enough to call on him to do him a big favor, one that is hard to do. Only a special kind of relationship can bring that to pass.

**CHART 4-C**

VERSES	RECIPIENTS OF THE EPISTLE OF JUDE	
COMMENTS		
1	Knows of James Christians - Called - Loved - Kept - Saints	Jewish church near Jerusalem? Have been a faithful church?
3	“Beloved”	Close friends
5	“Already know this”	Knowledgeable of Israelite and traditional history Jewish church?
12	“Love feasts”	Worshiping and fellowshipping group
12	“Feeding (shepherding) themselves”	Organized church with elders? Bad leadership
8-13	Jewish stories and legends	Jews?
17	“remember what the apostles foretold”	Knew apostles' teachings Apostolic church?
20	“build yourselves up in ... faith”	Weak in faith or “the faith” Undiscerning?
21	“keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for and hope?”	History of being a people of love eternal life”
22-23	“Be merciful ... snatch ... hating”	Capable of over-reacting?
24	“Keep you from falling”	Vulnerable, in danger

**SUMMARY:**

We would surmise this to be a Jewish church, perhaps near Jerusalem because of their familiarity with Jude, James, and the apostles. They seem to be an “older” church, ordered and organized with a leadership, possibly elders (v. 12).

As to their character, we judge them to be lovable because of Jude's expressions of affection (vv. 3,17,20), and his reference to staying in God's love (21). These are good people who understand the wonder and beauty of God's salvation through Jesus (v. 3). They have been taught well in the past and knew the O.T. (And perhaps the lessons of those stories) and the apostles' doctrine (v. 17). So they are educated in spiritual and religious things. However, they seem to be undiscerning or tentative: Undiscerning as to the nature, motives, and teachings of these evildoers, or tentative in that they recognize the falsehood and don't discern the inevitable consequences of allowing such to go on and therefore are tentative about standing up against them.

Perhaps their tentativeness, timidity, is egged on by a false sense of well-being. After all, they are a worshiping, fellowshipping group (v. 12)! There is happiness and love among them. What they don't realize is that a person who has cancer can often smile and feel and look fine on the outside while dying on the inside!

**CHART 4-D****RECIPIENTS OF II PETER****DATA COLLECTION**

VERSE(S)	COMMENT	IMPLIED	STATED
1 : 1	They have a faith like unto the apostles because of the righteousness of God.	I	
1:5-9	They lack growth in the Christian graces.	I	
1.10	They needed confirmation in their faith	I	
1:12-15	They are not fully knowledgeable of the things they need to know.	I	
1:16	They may be enamored by teachers who tell stories rather than being grounded in the knowledge of Christ	I	
2:3	Confirms 1:16 comment		
3:1	They needed reminding of previous revelations	I	
3:11	They needed bolstering up in their holiness or of distortion and alertness.	I	
3:15-16	They might be subject to misunderstanding of some of Paul's writings.	I	
3:17-18	Two problems reflect their condition. a. Not alert b. Not growing	I	

**SUMMARY**

This would seem to be an older church, a Jewish church (maybe near Jerusalem), that knew the apostles well (cf 1:1).

They seem to be “lazy in the faith.” They are not growing in the knowledge of Jesus. Therefore they are not alert to the dangers of false teachers. Because of their poor discerning ability they are beginning to listen to the “stories” of teachers instead of listening to the word.

**DISCUSSION**

1. Why would we read for the mood and atmosphere? And what do you hope to gain from this reading?
2. As we read about the recipients, how does knowing about them help us in understanding the Bible and what God is saying to us?

**SELF EXAM LESSON FOUR**

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1. Define Exegesis \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Define Hermeneutics \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. List seven kinds of Biblical literature. (Genres)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the difference between Stated Materials and Implied Materials?

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5. As you record your findings, concerning the recipients, what are nine main topics one looks for?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

6. When we distinguish between what is specifically stated and what is implied what do we need to be careful not to do? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON FIVE

# SUCCESSIVE READINGS-PART II

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### INTRODUCTION

The topic today is called “exegesis.” This part of the course of biblical interpretation will help us decide what the text meant to its original writers and recipients. In other words, exegesis is the determination of what the Scripture meant to its original writer and, of course, to its original recipients. That is our first step. Before deciding how it applies to us today, before going off and deciding, “Now this passage means this today, and we’ve just got to do it this way today,” first of all, let’s decide what it meant to those people.

Our particular method of exegesis we called “Successive Readings with an Angle.” Reading a whole book at one sitting, with a particular angle in mind. The first two readings were for information about the mood or the atmosphere, and the recipients. Now, let us look at other angles in this lesson.

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**LESSON AIM:** To continue our investigation of a particular way to read the Bible.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. To understand the “Occasion and Purpose” reading.
  2. To comprehend the “Special Emphases and Theme” reading.
  3. To learn how to do the “Paragraphing and Outlining” reading.
- 

### THIRD READING: “OCCASION AND PURPOSE”

Our third reading has to do with what we call “Occasion and Purpose.” What is happening in this book, and why was it written? These two, occasion and purpose, go together, and can be deduced from the same reading. However, if you find that you cannot do these two together, then split them up and make them separate readings.

#### A. Occasion: What is Happening? What is the Problem?

1. What is happening with the author.
  - a. What is the situation with the writer.
    - 1) Is this writer in prison?
    - 2) Is he far away from the people to whom he is writing?
    - 3) Is he coming soon?
    - 4) Is he sick?

**NOTE:** The purpose of this letter may be related in part to the condition of the writer himself. He may want to explain his condition.

- b. He may want to explain his intentions to certain hearers or recipients.
- 2. What is happening with the recipients.
  - a. Relationship between author and recipients.
  - b. Are there tensions between the writer and the church or the individual to whom it is written?
  - c. Example, Galatians. They have been led astray by false teachers.
  - d. John writes the book of Revelation to a group of people. (John is on Patmos. That is what is going on with him). They (the church) are being persecuted all over Asia Minor by the Roman empire.
- 3. What is their problem?
  - a. Are they lazy?
  - b. Are they indifferent?
  - c. Are they materialistic?
  - d. Are they in danger of doctrinal apostasy?
- 4. Timothy in Ephesus. There are some false teachers there. (This is the occasion) Paul predicted that this would happen in Acts 20:29-30.
- 5. The same is true in Corinth. II Corinthians chapters 10 through 13 make it clear. There are lots of false teachers there, and that is what is going on in the Corinthian church.
- 6. Sources of information. What is stated and what is implied. The stated facts:
  - a. In 1 Corinthians 5 we learn that the occasion is that a man is living in sexual immorality with his stepmother.
  - b. In chapter 6, one Christian is taking another Christian to the court systems instead of the church to resolve conflict.
  - c. Those are the stated ones.
- 7. The implied information also tells us of the occasion. They are harder to discern and usually come from what is implied in the specific applications or exhortations that are in the book (particularly Paul's letters).

**NOTE:** Now these imply that they had weaknesses in other areas. Otherwise, you would have to say these were general, and should have been made to all people in all situations. That does not happen.

Each book was written to a particular recipient with a particular need or problem.

- a. An example - Jude.
  - 1) Jude had a very close relationship to the audience (vs. 1, 3, 17, and 20).
  - 2) They were influenced by certain men about which they are unaware or are just ignoring their situation. Verse 4 tells us that these people have secretly slipped in.
  - 3) Verses 8-10 and 12 tell us that they might be leaders, or teachers.
  - 4) Verse 12, tells us that there is a good fellowship in this church, and these men are a part of that fellowship.
  - 5) Verse 21, tells us that these people have a loving nature about them. They are Jude's friends.
  - 6) Verse 19, they are being divided.
  - 7) Verse 24, they are in danger of falling away.

## SUMMARY

There is an urgent situation which has arisen in this church with whom Jude has close ties, and Jude has heard about the situation. He loves them, and we would assume they love him. He had planned to write a letter of joy and rejoicing in the gospel. So the situation is this. Over a period of time a group of men has gained access to influential positions in the church. They have “secretly slipped in,” (vs 4). So it was not evident at first what they were or what they were about. After gaining positions of authority, perhaps in the eldership, they have begun to influence the congregation through their teaching and their lifestyle. The church is in grave danger, and they do not seem to know it, or if they do, they aren’t doing anything about it. (That is the occasion).

### B. Discovering the Purpose

Why did he write the book? The occasion that is happening with the church will dictate the need for a letter and therefore its purpose.

1. Openly Stated purposes.
  - a. Stated purposes in 1 John:
    - 1) First statement of purpose: “*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin . . .*” (1 John 2:1-2).
    - 2) Another statement of purpose: “*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life*” (1 John 5:13).
    - 3) John says, “*The reason that I am writing this book is so that you can read its contents and know for certain you are in Christ and possess eternal life.*”
  - b. Paul’s statement of purpose in Titus: “*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and might appoint elders in every town, as I directed you*” (Titus 1:5).
  - c. The statement of purpose in 1 Timothy: “*Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing these instructions so that if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God*” (1 Timothy 3:14-15).

**NOTE:** Paul says he cannot get there right away. He is coming. Timothy is the evangelist there and that church needs to be taught how they should behave themselves. So he is writing these things to give instruction.

- d. The statement of purpose in Luke: “*Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,*” (Luke 1:2-3).
2. Deduced purposes.
  - a. The writer may not feel the need to specifically state the purpose.
    - 1) The knowledge between them of what the need is determines the purpose.
    - 2) It will be obvious to both writer and recipients.
  - b. Deducing the purpose of Romans.

- 1) A purpose is not specifically stated. You can deduce the threat of division along Jew-Gentile lines. Paul writes this book to promote unity among the brethren.
- 2) Deducing the purpose of Jude.
  - ◆ Stated purpose: (Jude vs. 3)
  - ◆ Dduced purpose: Convince them of the need to fight for the faith.
  - ◆ It's a must, the original language says that.
- 3) Exhorting them, urging them intellectually and emotionally. To inform or alert them to the situation.
- 4) There is a sense of urgency stated here.
- 5) Wrote the book not to defend the faith but to stir them to defend the faith among them-selves, against the false brothers who have secretly crept in and are undermining the faith of the brethren there.

## **FOURTH READING: “SPECIAL EMPHASES AND THEME”**

### **A. The Approach**

“Special Emphases” and “Theme” seem to go together.

**NOTE:** If you cannot do them both in one reading, split them up. No problem. However, like “Occasion” and “Purpose,” “Special Emphases” and “Theme” seem to go together. If you get one you get the other. They are dependent.

1. Theme: The one main point or thrust of the book, usually one theological truth presented by the author to persuade the recipients to correct the problem.
  - a. The Holy Spirit has chosen a particular theme to accomplish the purpose.
  - b. You can state your purpose, but how are you going to convince the people that is what they should do?
  - c. It is a method of accomplishing the purpose.
  - d. The overall proposition for which the writer is arguing is called the theme.
2. Special emphases are topics of importance that receive considerable space, time, and discussion in the writer’s presentation.
  - a. Not just one time honorable mention things or topics.
  - b. These are topics that receive relatively long development and emphasis in the book. When strung together in a book, in a particular way designed by the Holy Spirit, these special emphases develop, prove and present the theme.
  - c. The special emphases are the building blocks of the theme.
  - d. They must be convinced of a particular doctrinal theme to be motivated to make a change or to act.

### **B. How to Proceed**

1. What are you looking for in terms of special emphases, and how does that

- relate to the theme?
2. List these special emphases as you go through the book. They are blocks of material on one particular subject.
  3. Once you have listed those particular special emphases through the book, then back off, look at them, analyze that data, and see what theme is being presented throughout those special emphases.
  4. When considered all together, what is it that these special emphases are trying to drive home?

**C. Examples – “Special Emphases” and “Theme” of Haggai and Jude  
See Chart 5-A, page 40**

As you look at them, you notice the verses there and the specific things that are said. Description and position of blessings of a Christian; the faith; description of false brothers (lifestyle, motives, tongue); judgement on evildoers; results of tolerance of evil; greatness of God; mercy to unsuspecting brethren; attention to bolstering one's own faith. Here is what we came up with as the theme based on the analysis of those special emphases: “God has always and will always condemn those whose lifestyle and teachings do not conform to truth.”

**FIFTH READING: “PARAGRAPHING AND OUTLINING”**

**A. Use and Limitations of Paragraphing and Outlining**

1. A logical outline of the book.
  - a. Not all Scripture was meant to be outlined, paragraphed and analyzed. (See the Psalms and Proverbs)
  - b. Most of Scripture, however, can be treated in an outline form without perverting it.
2. These two items, paragraphing and outlining, are ones that go together. The outline depends on the paragraphing, just as we have seen before in the occasion and purpose.

**B. How to Paragraph the Text**

1. Un-paragraphed text. How do we paragraph? Suggestions.
  - a. Find a King James Version that has no paragraph divisions (other translations do paragraph for you). Or type out your own favorite translation in block form.
  - b. See the text as a whole.

**CHART 5-A****MAIN EMPHASES AND THEME**Main Emphases and Theme of Haggai

Part of Text	Main Emphases
1:2-11	“The Lord has not blessed the building up of your own personal gains because you have failed to put the building of the Lord’s house as a priority.” “Blessing Follows Priorities Straight.”
1:12-15	“When the leader, Zerubbabel, the people, repented and began to build the Lord’s house, the Lord blessed them.”  “Repentance Lead to Blessing”
THEME:	Build the house of the Lord, and God will bless you now and in the Messianic Kingdom.

Main Emphases and Theme of Jude

Part of Text	Main Emphases
1-4	Introduction: Need to fight the false teachers.
5-7	God has always damned the disobedient and unbelieving.
8-19	These false teachers are similar and will receive the same judgement.
20-25	These are the ways to fight for the faith.
THEME:	God has always and will always condemn the ungodly.

**See Chart 5-B, page 42**

- c. Try to decide the paragraph divisions yourself.

**See Chart 5-C page 44**

- d. Do not let the translators and arrangers unnecessarily influence your decision about paragraphing. (They could be wrong.)
- e. Look for units of thought.
  - 1) Each unit is a paragraph.

- 2) A unit of thought will often begin with a thesis sentence.
2. Thesis sentences.
  - a. A thesis sentence is a single statement of what is in the paragraph, in other words, the theme of the paragraph, the main thought.
  - b. Not of the book, or the section, but just of that one paragraph.
  - c. Put parentheses in your block style text around each paragraph.
  - d. Now compare your decisions about paragraphing with the translators and arrangers. They have done this before and we need their expertise.
3. Look at the text and decide what paragraphs go together, or what sentences go together to make up a paragraph.

**NOTE:** This is your first step, to decide what you think the paragraph division of the text is. You may want to put parenthesis around the paragraphs as you see them.

4. Make a parallel chart, and put the verse divisions of that particular text down as you think they break into paragraphs.
  - a. Take another translation and put it on paper also.
  - b. Then make a final decision as to what the paragraph breakdown is.

### C. Obtaining the Outline

1. Block paragraphing chart.
  - a. Once you have made a final decision about your paragraph breakdown, write down the thesis sentence of each paragraph.
  - b. Draw a block around each of the thesis sentences. This is your first attempt at making the text into an outline form.

#### See Chart 5-D, pages 45

2. Surveying in the blocks.
  - a. Look at the blocks, see if several paragraphs go together in thought.
  - b. Do they go together to develop a bigger topic or a bigger thought?
  - c. Look at the thesis sentence of each one of these blocks, and make a decision as to whether they stand alone or whether they combine with others to make a major point.
  - d. If a paragraph stands alone, it is probably a Roman numeral all its Wording the outline.
  - e. Word that Roman numeral in phrase form and put it above the first paragraph of that Roman numeral.
  - f. Do that for each Roman numeral throughout your outline.
  - g. If there is more than one block or paragraph under a Roman numeral they are sub-points of the outline.

### D. Example Of Jude - See Chart 5-D and 5-E, pages 45 and 46

1. You can see that the first block, what we thought was, introductory material, verses 1 through 4.
2. Introduction; Purpose of the Letter; Occasion; and Theme.

3. And then we saw for several para-graphs one major thought. And so we called that Roman numeral I, condemnation of evildoers, old and new alike (5-19).
4. The next few blocks or paragraphs develop that particular point.
  - a) A: Old Testament examples for New Testament likeness, verses 5-7.
  - b) B: New Testament evildoers will receive the same. Why? Because these peoples' character is similar. Their condemnation is to be, also, verses 8 through 13.
  - c) And then C: under Roman Numeral I. New Testament evildoers were prophesied, verses 14-19. Their existence and plight were predicted by the Old and New Testament's.
5. We also found the Roman Numeral II: Prevention of a fall, verses 20-23. You are to bolster your spiritual lives and help the weak if you are to survive.
6. It was not really a Roman numeral. It seemed to be the conclusion in verses 24-25. God is able to deliver you from this impending danger.
7. Now in longer books, the special emphases may be your Roman numerals in the overall outline of the whole book.
  - a) Within these special emphases sections, you may also want to do a paragraph and outline analysis as we have done here in Jude.

## **CONCLUSION**

This concludes our successive readings with an angle part of the exegesis. But really, it is just step one in our exegesis. Now it is time for a more detailed study. Steps 2 and following will deal with some of that detail. Start with smaller books and then you can go on with bigger books. You will be pleased with the fruit of your labor.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. What difference would it make if we read the letter (book) in one reading or several?
2. Why would knowing the recipient's demeanor be of value to us?
3. If the text is already paragraphed in your Bible, why redo it to your thinking after experts did the version you have?
4. Can we really outline a letter or book and understand? Does it apply to us today?

## **CHART 5-B**

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Print out of the text of Jude in New American Standard Version – no verse or paragraph designations as shown below.

Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this

condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argues about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgement, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feast when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever. And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there shall be mockers following after their own ungodly lust." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building your selves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen.

**CHART 5-C**


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**PARAGRAPHING COMPARISONS  
IN TRANSLATIONS**


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<b>SPEER</b>	<b>NIV</b>	<b>NAS</b>	<b>RSV</b>	<b>ASV</b>	<b>NEB</b>	<b>FINAL</b>
1-2	1	1-2	1-2	1-2	1	1-4
3-4	2	3-4	3-4	3-4	2	5-7
5-7	3-4	5-16	5-7	5-16	3-4	8-13
8-19	5-7	17-23	8-13	17-23	5-7	14-19
20-23	8-10	24-25	14-16	24-25	8-9	20-23
24-25	11		17-23		10-11	24-25
		12-13		24-25		12-13
		14-16			14-15	
		17-19			16-18	
		20-23			19-21	
		24-25			22-23	
					24-25	

**CHART 5-D****BOX DIAGRAM OF PARAGRAPHS**

Draw one box for each paragraph in FINAL decision on paragraphs in the text. Make the boxes big enough to insert the thesis sentence of each paragraph and the verses that designate that paragraph. Separate those boxes by enough space to superimpose the outline.

**Block Paragraphing Chart: Thesis sentences.**

The form consists of a large rectangular area with four vertical lines running parallel to the right edge and one vertical line running parallel to the left edge, creating five equal-width columns. This layout is designed to accommodate five separate boxes for drawing the Box Diagram of Paragraphs.

**CHART 5-D****FINAL OUTLINE OF PARAGRAPHS OF JUDE****INTRODUCTION (1-4)**

*|Introductory Matters -- Address, Purpose, Occasion, Theme|*

**I. CONDEMNATION OF EVILDOERS-OLD AND NEW ALIKE (5-19)****A. OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES FOR NEW TESTAMENT LIKENESS (5-7)**

*|The Old Testament examples of God's condemnation of evildoers are examples. |*

**B. NEW TESTAMENT EVILDOERS WILL RECEIVE THE SAME (8-13)**

*|Because these people's character is similar, their condemnation is to be the same also. |*

**C. NEW TESTAMENT EVILDOERS WERE PROPHECIED (14-19)**

*|Their existence and plight were predicted by Old Testament and New Testament prophecy. |*

**D. PREVENTION OF A FALL (20-23)**

*|You are to bolster your spiritual lives and help the weak if you are to survive. |*

**CONCLUSION (24-25)**

*|Conclusion and Doxology: God is able to deliver you from danger. |*

**CHART 5-E****FINAL OUTLINE OF PARAGRAPH OF JUDE**

Theme: God has always and will always judge the evildoer.

**I. Introduction (1-4)**

Jude introduces himself and the recipients, as well as tell the purpose and occasion for the letter (1-4)

**II. Condemnation of Evildoers – Old and New (5-19)****A. Old Testament examples Of God's condemnation (5-7)**

The Old Testament examples of God's condemnation of evildoers is an example of what He does (5-7)

**B. New Testament evildoers will receive the same condemnation (8-13)**

Because these people's character is similar, their condemnation is to be also (8-13).

- C. New Testament evildoers were prophesied (14-19)  
Their existence and plight were predicted by Old Testament and New Testament prophesy (14-19)

### **III. Prevention of a Fall (20-23)**

You are to bolster your spiritual lives and help the weak if you are to survive (20-23)

### **IV. Conclusion and Doxology (24-25)**

God is able to deliver you from this impending danger (24-25)

- A. And then we saw for several paragraphs one major thought. And so we called that Roman numeral I, condemnation of evildoers, old and new alike (5-19).
  - 1. The next few blocks or paragraphs develop that particular point.
    - a. Old Testament examples for New Testament likeness, verses 57.
    - b. New Testament evildoers will receive the same. Why? Because these peoples' character is similar. Their condemnation is to be, also, verses 8 through 13. And then...
    - c. Under Roman numeral I. New Testament evildoers were prophesied, verses 14-19. Their existence and plight were predicted by the Old and New Testament's.
  - 2. We also found the Roman Numeral II: Prevention of a fall, verses 20-23. You are to bolster your spiritual lives and help the weak if you are to survive.
  - 3. It was not really a Roman numeral. It seemed to be the conclusion in verses 24-25. God is able to deliver you from this impending danger.
  - 4. Now in longer books, the special emphases may be your Roman numerals in the overall outline of the whole book.
    - a. Within these special emphases sections, you may also want to do a paragraph and outline analysis as we have done here in Jude.

## **CONCLUSION**

This concludes our successive readings with an angle part of the exegesis. But really, it is just step one in our exegesis. Now it is time for a more detailed study. Steps 2 and following will deal with some of that detail. Start with smaller books and then you can go on with bigger books. You will be pleased with the fruit of your labor.

**Class Discussion**

1. What difference would it make if we read the letter (book) in one reading or several?
2. Why would knowing the recipient's demeanor be of value to us?
3. If the text is already paragraphed in your Bible, why redo it to your thinking after experts did the version you have?
4. Can we really outline a letter or book and understand? Does it apply to us today?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON FIVE**

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1. Define exegesis:  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Define theme:  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Define special emphases:  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is a thesis sentence?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON SIX

# FURTHER STEPS IN THE EXEGETICAL PROCESS INTERPRETING WHOLE BIBLE BOOKS

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### INTRODUCTION

**W**e have entitled this session, “Further Steps in the ‘Exegetical Process.’” We are in the process of looking at a method whereby we can see the overall thrust of whole books of the Bible. To have a whole book in hand, so to speak, to know basically what it says in total and what it says to you and me . . . well, that’s exciting! I think a lot of us know bits and pieces of the Bible, but sometimes we don’t have whole books in hand to know what the real thrust of the book is.

Up to this point in our study, we have read the text of a book in the Bible five times, and each time we are looking at a different aspect or a different angle in the book. Now we are ready to peruse some extra biblical literature, and this for the first time, in our approach. We have let the Bible speak to us five times without letting any other source material influence our thinking. Now we are looking for the first time at extra biblical literature. Even now we just want to look at introductory material in commentaries or other related source material. Step one, then, was the successive readings of scripture. Now we are ready for step two. Step two is called “Review the Secondary Literature on Introductory Matters.” As much as time allows and you have resources available, you want to pursue this kind of approach. Peruse sources that include background material of your Bible book.

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**LESSON TEXT:** None

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Selected sources for background material on books.
  2. Analyzing text by rewriting it in a certain form.
  3. Analyzing significant words in the text.
  4. Taking one’s research to a conclusion, commentary and public presentation.
- 

### STEP TWO: REVIEW THE SECONDARY LITERATURE

#### A. Possible Resources

1. Bible Encyclopedias such as the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE).

2. Bible Dictionaries - There are good ones put out by a number of different publishing companies. (Examples: Zondervan and Anchor) These focus in on books of the Bible and will tell you a great deal about the background information of those books
3. General Introductions to the Bible, the New Testament or the Old Testament.
  - a. Donald Guthrie has an excellent book in this category, entitled New Testament Introduction.
  - b. There are introductions to the Old Testament and New Testament written by men with the name of Harrison (two different men).
  - c. Merrill Tenney has written a good book which relates to the introductory material of the New Testament.
3. There are commentaries on a particular books in the Bible. (Which have introductory material.)

**NOTE:** A suggestion is to choose three or four particular source materials, and preferably not all from the same source.

#### **B. What's To Be Gained? What Questions Do You Ask?**

1. What kinds of things are you interested in?
2. What are you looking for from these source materials?
3. What do they say about who wrote the book? Author.
  - a. There is some discussion among critics as to who wrote certain books of the Bible.
  - b. You want to be familiar with that material.
4. When the book was written, in other words, the date of writing. Date.
  - a. Some critics question the authenticity of the proposed authors, and therefore challenge their place in our canon.
  - b. For instance, Jude, 2 Peter, and James through the centuries have been challenged in regard to authenticity and therefore whether they really belong in the canon.
  - c. We are persuaded they do, but it would be good for you to know the arguments relating to their canonicity.
5. The destination to which the book was written.
6. The recipients to whom it was written.
7. What the occasion of the writing was.
  - a. What is the purpose?
  - b. What is the theme?
8. Are there special emphases in this book?
9. Are there special lessons to be learned from this book?
10. What kind of style is this book written in?
11. What kind of literature is used in this book?
12. Are there unusual features of the book?

#### **SUGGESTION**

Take one sheet of paper for each of the aforementioned categories, and as you read a source, note what the particular author says about any of the topics on the appropriate sheets of paper. Also, out to the side, after you have written a comment,

by that particular person, note who said that. In other words, in what source did you find this. As you read additional sources of material, add only what new thoughts that particular author adds to the data you have already collected. The second book you read may say the same thing as the first book. You don't want to re-record that material. You already have that. But if he says something different or new, then put that on your sheet under the particular category that you are considering, and note who said that. Once you have collected the data, peruse it and draw your own conclusions. We would suggest you write those conclusions at the bottom of the piece of paper on which that material is gathered.

### **C. What Do You Do With the Materials**

1. You want to take that material and compare it with your old research, the research you have done from the previous readings.
2. For instance, how do these authors' observations compare both to what you have discovered about the theme and to the purpose and the occasion?
3. That may tell you whether you are on track or not, or maybe they are off.
4. You need to save these sheets, because in the future, when you restudy that book, you will want to add information that you collect in the future when you read new source material.
5. These will be ever growing list of data about the book.

## **THE EXAMPLE WE HAVE BEEN USING - THE BOOK OF JUDE**

### **A. This Particular Sheet Relates to the Author or the Authorship of the Book of Jude**

1. You can note some of the information that we have gathered in just beginning.
2. Example: Lenski, who is a commentator and has written commentaries on New Testament books, has stated that Jude was a brother of James, and he was also the Lord's brother.
3. Many other commentators agree with that view, but Lenski was the first one we read, and so we put him down.
4. The second thing you will notice is that the particular author whose name is Blum didn't think that Jesus' brothers believed in the Messiahship of Jesus.
  - a. Jude was one of them.
  - b. And he did not believe in the Messiahship of Jesus until after the resurrection.
5. Another commentator thinks Jude is Thaddeus of Matthew 10:3, and he adds some other information about him.
6. Some people have said in their research that Clement of Alexander, Eusebius, Origin, Athanasius, and Jerome attested to the authorship of Jude being the real writer of this book.

**CHART 6-A****SECONDARY LITERATURE-AUTHOR**

1. Jude is the brother of James, who is the brother of the Lord Jesus. That makes Jude also the brother of Jesus (Lenski).
2. The brothers of Jesus did not believe in the messiahship of Jesus until after the resurrection of Jesus (John 7:5; Acts 1:14) (Blum, Expositor's Greek N.T.)
3. Jude is Thaddeus of Matthew 10:3. He is an apostle. Mentioned in John 14:21-22; Acts 15:22 sent with Paul and Barnabas and Silas to Antioch (Another commentator)
4. Clement of Alexander, Eusebius, Origin, Athanasius, and Jerome attest to Jude being the author.

Summary: Although there are varying thoughts among the scholars of who Jude is, the consensus seems to be that Jude is the fleshly brother of the Lord Jesus, also the brother of James who was the brother of the Lord.

**B. This Sheet Has to Do With “Unusual features” of the Book of Jude**

1. This is one of the few books that quotes from an apocryphal book, a book that is not included in the canon or the Old Testament.
2. It is the book of Enoch, Lenski and other commentators note this.
3. This book focuses on the identity of heretics or false teachers, and focuses in on what those people are like.
  - a. That is not a characteristic of every New Testament book.
  - b. Jude is rather unique in that regard.
  - c. This book is known to be very much like 2 Peter, chapter 2 particularly.

**CHART 6-B****UNUSUAL FEATURES OF JUDE**

1. The quotation from the book of Enoch, discussed by Lenski.
2. Identity of these particular heretics (Blum, Expositor's Greek N.T.)
3. Relationship of Jude to II Peter 2 (Lenski, Blum, Barnes' Notes)

## **SUMMARY OF SECONDARY LITERATURE**

### **A Few of the Items Considered**

- AUTHOR:** Jude, the Lord's brother, is the consensus, but some dissent.
- DATE:** Keyed to II Peter, whether pre- or post-II Peter  
The range of dates is from 40-80 A.D., even into the second century by liberal scholars.
- DESTINATION:** Unknown, perhaps a letter to circulate among several churches.
- OCCASION:** Heresy among the people, perhaps gnostic antinomianism.
- CANONICITY:** Origin, Jerome, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Clement of Alexandria accept Jude as belonging to the canon, but Eusebius dissents.

**C. A Third Sheet Has To Do With The “Summary Of Secondary Literature”**

1. After you have gathered all this material you want to sum it up on the last sheet.
2. Put all the material together and draw your own conclusions.
3. Here is what we have gathered on the book of Jude.
  - a. Who is the author?
    - 1) It is Jude.
    - 2) He is the Lord's brother.
  - b. That is the consensus of opinion among most of the commentators.
  - c. Albert Barnes dissents, but he is in the minority.
4. What is the date for writing this book.
  - a. The key is, that it is like II Peter. Is he “pre” or is he “post,” II Peter?
  - b. You can see that there is a variety of people's opinions on this.
  - c. They are not sure when it was written, but most probably between 40-80 A.D.
  - d. Some say into the second century A.D., but that is very unlikely.
  - e. The conservative scholars believe the book was written near the end of the 60's or some time just previous to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
5. What is the destination of this book?
  - a. It is uncertain, but the reason for that is that this may have been an encyclical book.
  - b. In other words, it was circulated among a number of churches.
6. What is the occasion?
  - a. Heresy has come into the church.
  - b. Some people think it is of gnostic background. We are not for sure on some of those things.
7. The canonicity of this book?
  - a. Origin, Jerome, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Clement of Alexandria accepted Jude as the writer.
  - b. Eusebius didn't.

8. The church fathers had their varying views.
9. What is the nature of this book?
  - a. It has a strong similarity to 2 Peter 2.
10. An example of the thing we are talking about in step 2, gather this information, draw some conclusions, and compare it to the research that you already have.

### **STEP THREE - ESTABLISH THE TEXT**

#### **A. Establish the Text, the Original Language Text**

1. You say, "Well, I do not know anything about the original language."
2. Most of us do not, and so most of us will by-pass this step since our working knowledge of the original language in which the biblical text was written is minimal or non-existent.
3. For those of us who are capable linguists in Hebrew and/or Greeks, we may want to take this step.

### **THE PROCEDURE - WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS STEP**

#### **A. It Involves Studying the Text From the Standpoint of Variants**

1. Variants are the varied readings from the different copies of the original writings of the Bible.
2. Many copies have been made of the Old and New Testament over the centuries, but the problem is those copies do not always agree with each other.
3. If you are a skilled linguist and you know something about the background of these manuscripts; where they came from and what their characteristics are, then you can make a decision as to what the correct reading of the text is.
  - a. Once those decisions are made on your part, you have before you what you believe is the closest you can get to the original text, called "the autograph."
  - b. If you are able to take this step, and you do come up with a preferred original language text, save it for the next step.
  - c. Or, you may like to translate it into English for the next step of our exegesis process.

### **STEP FOUR - REWRITING THE TEXT**

#### **A. "Analysis of Sentence Structure" or "Rewriting the Text"**

1. Once we have done the overall view exercises which have preceded this one, the successive readings, it is time to become even more analytical in our approach.

#### **Example:**

You go to an art gallery, and are looking at paintings on the wall. Probably the first thing you are going to want to do is back away and get an overall view of that painting, to perceive the overall impression. Once you have that overall

view, then you are going to want to move in close and examine more closely the detail of the painting, the brush marks or the colors that have been used.

In our study approach, we have done the first. We have backed away from the Bible, and we have viewed the “art work” of Scripture from a distance. We have received overall impressions. But now with that in mind, we want to move in for a closer look at some of the details, never forgetting the big picture. The details must always be couched in the framework of the big picture.

**B. “Analysis of Sentence Structure,” or “Rewriting the Text”**

1. Its technical name is “syntax,” how the sentences fit together in the text.
2. If you are trained in the original language of the text, you may wish to do this in that language rather than English (or your own particular vernacular).
3. We could approach this several ways.
  - a. One is if you know how to diagram sentences you may think, “I think I will just diagram the sentences of the text, and that will help me pull it apart and look at the parts of it.”

**C. The “Thought Approach” or “Thought Diagram”**

1. Rather than a breakdown of words and phrases as part of the sentence structure it is a breakdown of the language in terms of thought.
2. This is not intended to be an English lesson, but rather a lesson in breaking down the text into small units of thought which can be understood.
3. We are looking for thought relationships rather than grammatical relationships.

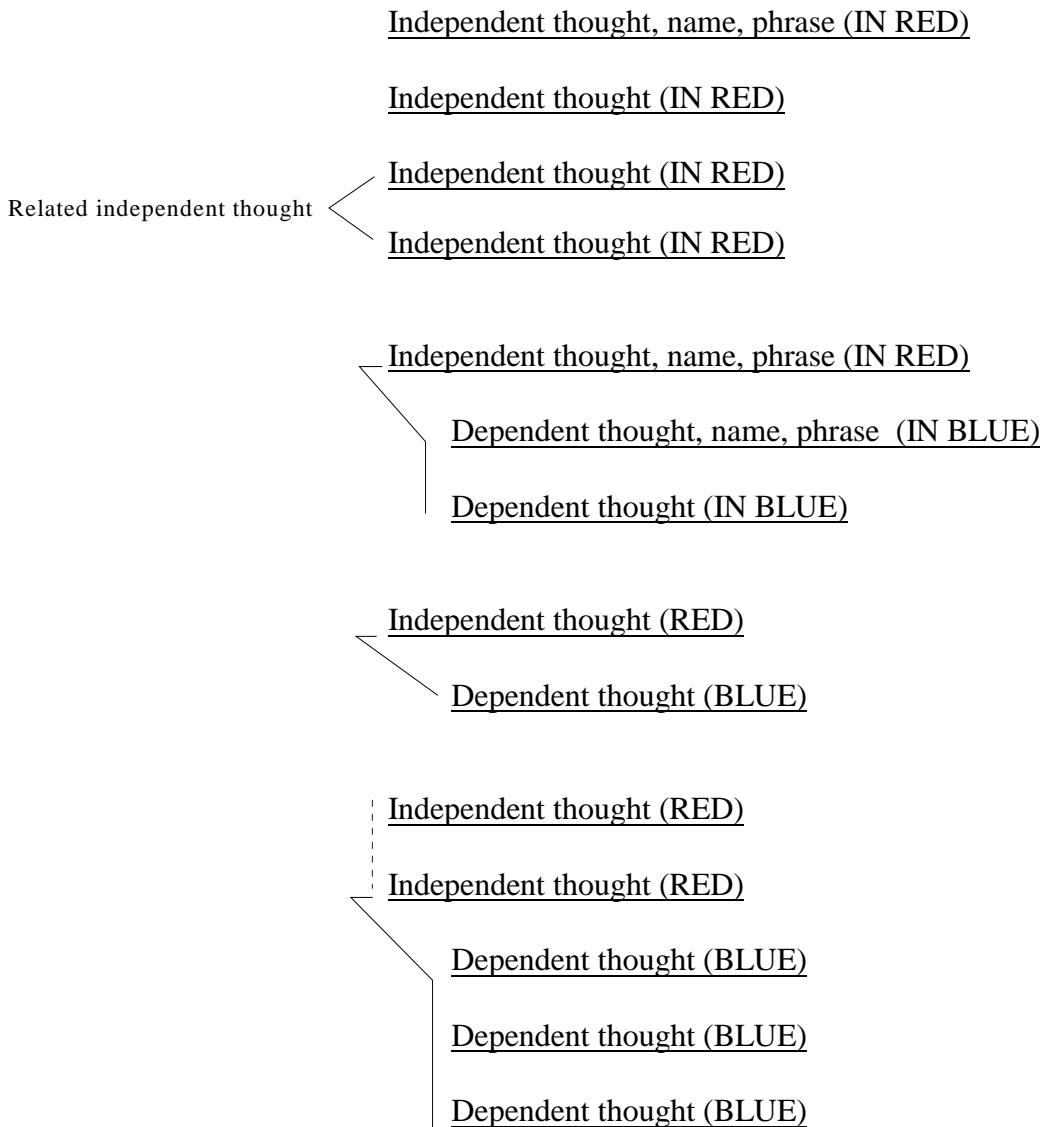
**D. First, You Want to Note the Main Words or Names or Phrases or Particular Clauses in the Text Around Which There May Be Supporting Description or Evidence**

1. We will denote that thought as an independent thought, is one that can stand all alone.
2. We will write it in red ink on a line beginning at the left margin of the paper.
3. Then just below that independent clause on the paper, you are going to want to indent.
4. On the line(s) below that independent thought, you are going to put the dependent clauses or the supporting phrases or names.
5. Make that blue in color so it will stand out in distinction from the independent thoughts above it.
6. We would like you to connect the independent thought with the dependent thought or thoughts on the lines below.
7. Draw a line from the left margin of the independent thought to the left margin of the dependent thoughts.
8. If you feel that there are two independent thoughts that are closely related or are parallel or compound in nature and describe something together, but they are independent to a degree.
9. Connect these independent thoughts on the left margin of your paper by a dotted line.

## THE MODEL - A TEXT RE-WRITTEN

### **CHART 6-C**

#### **REWRITING THE TEXT (FORMAT)**



**A. On Your Paper, the Text Has Been Re-written in This Form**

1. At the top, there is the independent thought, name, or phrase in red ink.
2. It is all the way over to the left margin.
3. Below it, as you go down the page, you see other independent thoughts that are parallel to it.
4. Notice that when two independent thoughts are related together in thought, that they are connected by the dotted line on the left side of the piece of paper.

## B. What Happens When We Have Independent Thoughts and Dependent Thoughts Below Them?

1. In the second illustration, there is an independent thought or name or phrase, and again that is in red.
2. But then we indented and put dependent thoughts right below it, and as you will notice, we connected them on the left side of our paper.
3. When we have more than one independent thought as well as dependent thoughts.
  - a. Again we connect them with a dotted line, and we connect the dependent thoughts to the independent thoughts by solid lines.

### THE EXAMPLE

#### A. Let's Do This With Our Example From Jude

1. We have noted on the piece of paper a few verses to begin the text.
2. The text begins by reading, “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.”

**NOTE:** We thought “Jude” was an independent thought. Below that first independent thought there are two descriptions of Jude. They are dependent, so the others are independent. You notice that “*a servant of Jesus Christ*” and “*a brother of James*” are both phrases or descriptions of Jude. Jude is the main independent thought, and then below it are two descriptions of Jude.

3. The next phrase in that text is “*to those who have been called and are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ.*”
4. Who are the “those”?
  - a. That seems to stand out. Who are they?
  - b. They are described in three ways: those who “*have been called*,” those who “*have been loved by God*,” and those who were “*kept by Jesus Christ*.”
5. The next phrase is, “*Be yours.*”
  - a. What does he want to “*be yours*” or what does he want to be given to these people?
  - b. Three things: “*mercy, peace, and love.*”
  - c. We have chosen independent thoughts to put on the left side, and supporting material below it.
6. The benefit.
  - a. So when you are done with this exercise, you can see at a glance the significant names, words and thoughts.
  - b. You can see what material and thoughts go together, this will help you see the writer’s development of his argumentation.
7. Rather than just seeing only bits and pieces, you will be able to see the logical development of the author’s presentation.

**CHART 6-D****REWRITING THE TEXT - JUDE****JUDE (RED)**

servant of Jesus Christ (BLUE)  
a brother of James (BLUE)

**TO THOSE (RED)**

who have been called (BLUE)  
who are loved by God the Father (BLUE)  
kept by Jesus Christ (BLUE)

**MERCY, PEACE, LOVE (RED)**

be yours (BLUE)  
in abundance (BLUE)

**DEAR FRIENDS (RED)****I WAS EAGER TO WRITE TO YOU (RED)**

about the salvation we share (BLUE)

**I FELT I HAD TO WRITE (RED)**

urge you to contend (BLUE)

**FOR THE FAITH (RED)**

once for all entrusted to the saints (BLUE)

**FOR CERTAIN MEN RED**

whose condemnation was written about long ago (BLUE)  
secretly slipped in among you (BLUE)

**THEY ARE (RED)**

godless men (BLUE)  
who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality (BLUE)  
deny Jesus Christ our Sovereign and Lord (BLUE)

**STEP FIVE: ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT WORDS****A. Limitations of Word Studies**

- Exegesis does not consist solely of word studies. They can be very useful however. (See "Exegetical Fallacies" by: D.A. Carson)

**Caution:** Sometimes the gleanings from our word studies have become the focal point of our interpretations, as if to build the interpretation of the text around what word studies reveal.

The significant points and illustrations of the text and other things that come from word studies are simply meant to enhance the interpretation of the text, to illustrate the interpretation that comes from the text, not to replace contextual interpretation.

## B. So, What Procedure do We Follow

### Note the Attached Sheet as We Go along

1. Use the re-written text from the previous step.
2. Notice that we circled certain words. We circled those in black what we call "significant words." To use another term, "non-routine words."
3. What are non-routine words? They are words that are difficult to understand, or words with which we are not familiar.
4. They are words that are profound in meaning such as "justification," "sanctification."
  - a. Those are the words that we need to do word studies on.
  - b. Non-routine words that are crucial to the text, or words that are frequently used in the text.
5. Having circled those words, the next step is to use several word study sources, that are available to you to obtain the basic meaning of these words.
6. There are many good word studies available: (Included is a Bibliography with this series of lessons, page 64).
  - a. What you are looking for in these word studies are the following:
  - b. The basic root meaning of the word, the range of meanings in all uses in the New or the Old Testament.

## C. Focus on: What Does This Word Mean in the Context of Your Passage?

1. If available, you might want to check out the use of the word in other literature which was written at the same time that your Scripture was written.
2. That may tell you what it means in your Scripture.
3. Anything not obvious to the English reader's translation should be noted in your word study.
4. For instance, we lose something in translation, don't we? So we want the very best English, e.g. word or words.
5. Now draw any conclusions about the use of the word to develop the thought in which you find it in the text.

**CHART 6-E****WORD STUDY ON ‘CONTEND’ FROM JUDE 3****ANALYTICAL GREEK NEW TESTAMENT**

1. The word is ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι
2. It is present infinitive passive or middle (same form in Greek)

**NEW TESTAMENT GREEK GRAMMAR** by: Ray Summers

1. Infinitive is a verbal (function in usage or meaning) noun (function in the sentence)
2. Here, it acts like a verb and can have one of the following connotations:
  - a. Express purpose of main verb.
  - b. Express result of the main verb.
  - c. Express temporal ideas.
    - “Before” + infinitive
    - “While” + infinitive
    - “After” + infinitive
  - d. Express cause + infinitive
3. Infinitive as a noun: Not used that way here.

**ENGLISHMAN'S GREEK CONCORDANCE**

It is a HAPAX, meaning that this particular form of the word only occurs here in Jude in the New Testament.

**ARNDT AND GINGRICH GREEK LEXICON**

This and other lexicons refer to its uses in classical Greek that have it referring to athletic contest, warfare, etc.

**SUMMARY**

1. This word is a one-time use in the New Testament, only here in Jude. Its uniqueness is to be attributed to its place in Jude, the need to make a very strong emphasis. The preposition on the front of the word EPI ties the word to the dative to follow. That is “for the faith.” It’s obvious that these people, Christians, are to contend for the faith, not other less important things. It focuses one’s effort on the faith.
2. Putting together the word studies from all the sources, it appears that the word and its root words are very similar in meaning and connotation in most places in the New Testament all have the same idea. They seem to have been used for athletic games in the Greek stadiums. The participants, who were to be well trained and prepared, were to fight well in the match, or run well in the race. Wrestling, boxing, and running seem to be the three events noted in the New Testament uses. Either could be in view with Jude. Built into the word’s meaning is effort, labor, struggle, and agony. It is a very intense activity on the part of the participant. It is not a ho-hum, lazy effort.
3. It’s infinitive form ties it to the preceding verb form. That is “exhorting,” a principle. He is exhorting them to contend.

4. It is clear that these Christians are to build themselves up in the most holy faith (in preparation and training) in order to be able to fight, contend, strive, struggle, and agonize to keep the faith pure and purely presented in their church. Face up to these false teachers with the truth and do not be intimidated or driven off of the truth by smooth sounding arguments. Teach the ones who have already accepted these false, damning doctrines and teach these doubters so that they will return to believe in and trust the basic doctrines of the gospel. Do not give up! *Suffer* for the sake of the gospel and the lifestyle that results from salvation.

## **STEP SIX - COMMENTARY**

### **A. A Verse by Verse Commentary**

1. Whether the student does this or not depends on how much depth he wants to go into.
2. We suggest this, that you take there search that you have done so far and put it all together.
3. One way is to use the collected material to write a verse-by-verse commentary on the text.
  - a. Include basic meaning of the text, and the thought development and word studies.
  - b. Leave some space at the bottom of the page.
  - c. Read some more commentaries, this time concerning the interpretation of the text in those blank spaces, fill in what the commentaries have to say.
  - d. Read two or three, and then you will have collected not only from your own research but also from the research of the commentaries.

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### **CHART 6-F - Examples from parts of a commentary.**

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#### **COMMENTARY**

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.

##### **Verse One**

##### **A. Expositor's, page 387.**

The author is “Jude”. There were 8 different Jude's in the NT, but by a process of elimination probably the Jude of this letter is the brother of Jesus and James (cf. Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). He calls himself a “servant” (*doulos*; lit., “slave”) of Jesus Christ. It probably implies that he is about to write what his master wants him to say. Linking himself to his brother, James, makes sense if the brother is well known to the recipients. This James is one of the six persons with that name in the New Testament. He was the author of the epistle of James.

The readers are “the called” (*kletois*) which is synonymous with “a Christian” (Kelly, p. 243). They are “loved by God the Father”, lit., “beloved in God the Father” in Greek. Those to whom Jude is writing are “kept by Jesus

Christ.” There is no “by” in the Greek text. As the text stands, it could be translated “kept for Jesus Christ,” as God the Father preserves the Christian for His Son (cf. vv. 24-25, John 17:15).

B. Tyndale, p. 155, 156, 157.

We can learn a good deal about a man by listening to what he has to say about himself. Jude makes two significant claims about himself. First, he is a servant of Jesus Christ. Both Jude and James, it seems were the brothers of Jesus and made a point of calling themselves His bond slaves! What a change from the days before the resurrection, when His brothers did not believe Him, but thought Him deranged (John 7:5, Mark 3:21, 31). Now Jude's aim in life was to be utterly at the disposal of the Messiah Jesus. A paradox of Christianity is that such glad devotion a man or woman finds perfect freedom . . .

C. Charles Speer's commentary

Verses one and two comprise the salutation.

Jude -- Expositor's Commentary says that there are 8 different Jude's in the NT. Barclay notes that there are 5 people called Judas. They are Judas of Damascus, Judas Barsabas, Judas Iscariot, a second Judas in the apostolic band and Judas the brother of Jesus.

“a servant of Jesus Christ” -- Jude uses his relationship to Jesus as being a servant instead of the fleshly half-brother. This shows an attitude of humility and of acceptance of his older brother after initial disbelief. He is relaying the message of his master.

“And brother of James” -- This link is what helps define who the author is. This is the only Jude and James brothers in the flesh mentioned in the New Testament. James was well known in the church and so this connection would give more acceptance of the letter.

“To those who are called.”

## STEP SEVEN - A PRESENTATION

**A. The Final Step, That We Suggest to You, in Our Exegesis Process is That You Prepare a Presentation**

1. Work up a lesson. Work up a sermon if you are a gospel preacher.
2. Put it all together. You are going to use all the material that you have used up to this point.

**B. Use the Totality of Your Research**

1. It should come from the overflow of your acquired knowledge of the text.

## CONCLUSION

Those are the steps of exegesis. We have come to the end of our process of exegesis.

The next place we are going is hermeneutics. We know what it means in the original text, and now we want to know how that applies to us today. So we will be investigating that in our future lessons.

## DISCUSSION

1. Why would we want to go back to the original text when studying a book? Are we limited in doing so?
2. What would be involved in this procedure from the stand point of variants?
3. How do you think that re-writing the text will help you personally? In your studies with other people?

## SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SIX

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1. What are some questions you might ask about a writing you are studying?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_
2. What do we mean when we say establish the text? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What does “Syntax” mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What does “Thought Approach” or “Thought Diagram” mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is an apocryphal book? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is an independent thought? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Bibliography for Word Studies:**

**Arndt and Gingrich**

**Kittel**

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**Reinecker**

**Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the New Testament**

**Thayer,**

**Vincent, Marvin**

**Vine, W. E., Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.**

**Wuest, Kenneth**

There are many word study resources on CD Rom. Check the bookstores and computer software outlets.

## LESSON SEVEN

# FUNDAMENTAL RULES OF INTERPRETATION OF A PASSAGE

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### INTRODUCTION

**W**e are now beginning the second part of our course on “Biblical Interpretation.” As you will recall, the first part of our course was called “Exegesis.” We have spent a number of sessions describing a method by which one can decide what the original text meant to the original recipients. In the second part of our course we will deal with “Hermeneutics,” what does it mean to us today? The way we worded that might make you think that we don’t believe that it means the same thing today that it meant then. Not so! We believe the Bible is age-lasting, that it is culturally transferable, and that it is relevant to all peoples of all nations of all times. A good illustration of ongoing relevancy is found in the book of Jude, verses 5 through 8. The writer cites a number of “old days” incidents. Some of those “old days” incidents are recorded in the Old Testament, and one has reference to a non-biblical event, rebellious angels. Jude says that these incidents serve as examples of a principle that is still applicable in his day. That principle is: God holds evildoers responsible and will punish them if they do not repent. We believe that if Jude by inspiration believed that principle held for his day, it still holds for our day, and that is by inference.

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**LESSON TEXT:** None

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. Showing how poor interpretive methods color an interpretation.
  2. Explaining how specific approaches result in good exegesis.
  3. Show that the Bible is age-lasting and culturally transferable and relevant to all peoples of all nations for all times.
- 

It does take some good interpretive methods to properly apply the biblical principles, commands, examples, inferences and the silence of Scripture. In other words, to apply biblical things to our modern day situations we are going to have to have some help. It is not always a simple thing to determine what applies and how it applies. We need some good guidelines, some good methodology, some good technology, to do well with this interpretation and application business.

We will begin our investigation of hermeneutics by outlining in this lesson some general rules of Biblical interpretation. One more important parameter of our Biblical interpretative methods is they must be Biblical. Do the inspired writers use Scripture in the ways that we plan to use and apply their writings?

## GENERAL RULES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

**A. NUMBER ONE: “Every Passage of Scripture Has But One Meaning”**

1. When God says something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through a chosen speaker or writer to a particular audience, then those words have a particular meaning.
2. The Lord expects and intends for us to determine the intended meaning.
3. In the essentials of the Christian faith, the recipient’s salvation depended upon their correct interpretation, and it is not different for us today.
  - a. We must understand the essentials of salvation and spiritual growth the way God intended them to be understood.
  - b. The essentials don’t change.
  - c. They are the same today as in the first century.
4. The way people were saved in the first century is the same way they are saved in the twentieth century.
  - a. Now possibly and probably there are multiple applications, but that is not the same as a meaning.
  - b. There is still just one meaning.
  - c. There may be typologies in the Old Testament, but there is still just one meaning.
  - d. When any of these situations are present there is still just one basic meaning for the recipients.
5. If we accept this, the allegorical approach, which was popular in the second century, it goes against this particular rule of Biblical interpretation.
  - a. The existentialist says, “Whatever it means to me is the right interpretation.”
  - b. Many so-called scholarly approaches to Biblical interpretation today are allowing multiple meanings.

**B. NUMBER TWO: “The Simplest is Often the Best”**

1. The simplest and most obvious meaning is usually the correct one.
  - a. Call it common sense if you want to, but remember that these Biblical books were written by farmers, shepherds, and fishermen.
  - b. They wrote to people like themselves. Simple folks, normal people like you and me.
  - c. Do you think that God was trying to hide that which people really needed to know for their salvation and spiritual growth? Certainly not! That is not our God.
  - d. He was not trying to couch vital truths in the garb of vague or unrecognizable language so as to fool the recipients or us.
  - e. In other words, the Bible was written to be understood from a public reading of the book without all the commentaries that we have today. Read it at face value.
2. In the Old Testament, the Law of Moses was read to the people publicly once a year, and that was to be understood from a public reading because the people did not have their own personal copy.
  - a. All they had was a public reading of Scripture in the Old Testament, and God intended for them to understand it from that reading.

3. The same thing is true of the New Testament. Paul tells the Colossian Christians to pass the letter that he wrote to them on to the Laodicean church. They in turn were to obtain the letter that he had sent to them for their own reading. (Colossians 4:16)
  - a. New Testament books were to be read publicly and to be understood.
  - b. Yes, there is figurative language in Scripture at times. The Lord chooses to use that kind of literature to express Himself.
  - c. Yes, the Lord at times tells us that He intends to keep its meaning a secret.

**NOTE:** For instance, Revelation is couched in Old Testament language. It was written to New Testament Christians, but in Old Testament language perhaps to keep its meaning a secret from hostile Romans who might have persecuted the Christians had they known that book was a presentation of their downfall. He tells us that the book is written in figurative language in chapter 1:1-2. Thus we know right away this book may be a bit difficult to understand, but the Lord told us that. The churches of that day will understand that language because they have people who know the Old Testament.

In Daniel chapter 12, the Lord tells Daniel that the prophecy which He is giving them will be sealed up till the “time of the end.” In other words, He doesn’t want the meaning told yet. However, He will tell us clearly. He will indicate clearly in the text that, that will be the case. Otherwise, we shouldn’t assume an interpretive posture that says, “This is very difficult to understand.” Cultural differences between Old Testament or New Testament times and today, from then to now, can get in the way of our interpretive process, but don’t make it harder than it is! William Ockham, a reformer called for simplicity in interpretation. In other words, again, don’t make it harder than it is unless the text indicates that you should make it somewhat difficult. Obviously, Zechariah and Ezekiel with their figurative language is telling us this may be a little more difficult, but not simple Scriptures.

#### C. NUMBER THREE: “A Writer’s Own Interpretation Predominates”

1. Always allow a writer’s explanation of a passage to be the primary one.
  - a. Let the person who wrote the text tell you what it means.
  - b. Let Paul tell you, by context, by explanation, and inference, what he means by a concept or word.
  - c. Although he may use the same terms, do not go to the book of James to find out what Paul means when he uses the word “works” or “faith” or “law.”
  - d. Another author should not be the primary interpreter of another author’s work.
2. The Holy Spirit inspired all of Scripture, II Timothy 3:16, but even the Holy Spirit did not necessarily choose to use the same word in the same way every time.
  - a. We are not necessarily to assume different writers in different books used the same word the same way.

- b. In fact, the same writer may use the same words to mean slightly different things in the same book.
- c. John doesn't mean exactly the same thing by belief or faith that Paul or James does.
- 4. The Holy Spirit wrote all those books, but they may have shades of different meaning in the different books.
  - a. Sometimes even in his own gospel, John attributes a different connotation to the same word, a different part of the book, a different purpose in that section of the book.
  - b. It connotes a slightly different thing.
- 5. What you are looking for is a specific explanation of that particular concept or word, and that may be revealed in the text.
  - a. Jesus tells a parable. What does it mean?
  - b. It means what Jesus explains it to mean, and often times Jesus will do that.
  - c. Jesus' own disciples do not seem to understand some of His parables, and so He tells them its meaning.
- 6. Through the centuries, and even into our own day, these parables have been the target of some pretty far out interpretations.
- 7. Let Jesus tell us what they mean. Let the whole context of the gospel writer tell us what they mean.

#### **D. NUMBER FOUR: “The Context”**

- 1. Always interpret a passage in light of and in harmony with its context.
- 2. It is probably the most violated rule of Biblical interpretation.
  - a. It is also called the “rule of analogy of faith.”
  - b. In other words, our interpretation should agree with the context.
- 3. The question arises, What do you mean by context? What is a context?
  - a. It is the material, the subject matter that surrounds the text which is of interest to you.
- 4. There are several different contexts.
  - a. “Canonical context” - in harmony with the whole of Scripture.
  - b. There is an “overall context” of a book, or “book context”
    - 1) That is the occasion, purpose and the theme of the whole book.
  - c. Then, there is the “bigger context,” or “sectional context.”
    - 1) It is the thrust of a special emphasis section of the book.
    - 2) The thrust or emphasis of several chapters in the book.
  - d. Finally, there is the “immediate context.”
    - 1) That might be the paragraph or the ten verses preceding and succeeding your particular text.
    - 2) The immediate context is a smaller part of a special emphasis section in the book.
- 5. Before you ascribe an interpretation to a passage, know what precedes it, and know what follows it.
  - a. Such analysis will prevent you from improperly using a text as a proof text concerning some modern day application, in which interpretation violates the context.
  - b. You can't just jerk a passage out of context and use it to establish some point that you want to make.

- c. How does it fit into the context.
- d. What does it mean there?
- e. You need to figure that out to be true to biblical interpretation.

**E. NUMBER FIVE: “The Circumstances of a Text”**

1. Find out as much as possible about the circumstances surrounding a text.
  - a. This is akin to “D” above and will help you determine the thrust of the immediate context.
  - b. Asking a series of questions will help in this regard:
    - 1) What kind of literature or genre is the author using here?
    - 2) Who is writing the literature?
    - 3) To whom is it written?
    - 4) Who is speaking?
    - 5) To whom is it spoken?
2. For instance, in Genesis 3:4, somebody said, “*You shall not surely die.*”
  - a. God did not say that.
  - b. Adam did not say that.
  - c. The Devil said that, and we need to know who said it to properly interpret it.
3. In Job 2:9, somebody said, “*Curse God and die.*”
  - a. God did not say that!
  - b. Job did not say that!
  - c. It was Job’s wife who said that.
  - d. We need to know who spoke it and to whom it was spoken.
4. In Luke 7:34 somebody said, “*Jesus is a wine-bibber.*”
  - a. Who said that?
  - b. Jesus did not say it.
  - c. It was those enemies of His who were opposed to Him.
5. John 9:31, a misunderstood passage for sure.
  - a. Somebody said, “*God heareth not sinners.*”
  - b. Some people have said, “God does not hear the prayers of people who are not Christians.”
    - 1) That is not true.
    - 2) The person who said that in that particular verse was not inspired when he said it.
    - c. The writer, John, was inspired in recording that.
6. We need to know who spoke it and to whom it was spoken to properly interpret the passage.
  - a. Also, we need to know about whom it is spoken.
    - 1) Is it spoken to the recipients?
    - 2) Is it spoken about a third party?
    - 3) Is it spoken about God or the author?
    - 4) About whom is it spoken?
    - 5) From whence was it spoken?
    - 6) From whence was it written?
    - 7) Was it spoken from Rome?
    - 8) Was it written from Rome when Paul was in prison?
    - 9) Where was it spoken?

- b. It might just be a record of what was spoken in another context.
  - 1) When was it written?
  - 2) When was it spoken?
  - 3) How was it spoken?
  - 4) What is the tone?
  - 5) What is the mood?
  - 6) You might need to read it aloud to discern that.
- 7. Finally, what is actually said?
  - a. What is the content of what was said?
  - b. We call this the historical and contextual setting.

#### **F. NUMBER SIX: “Keep Other Scriptures in Mind”**

- 1. An interpretation must be done in light of all other Scriptures.
  - a. Suppose you want to build a house. You cannot draw the floor plan of that house by simply looking at the frontal view.
  - b. If you only look at Scripture from a partial view, you only have a partial view of Scripture.
- 2. Same Material – Different Author.
  - a. Use of identical terminology by different authors does not necessarily demand unanimity of meaning in all contexts in all books.
  - b. Should we ever go to another book to decide what Paul means by such and such a concept?
  - c. They are related. They may not mean exactly the same thing in James and John as they mean in the book of Romans.
- 3. The relationship between their meanings should be determined to obtain the whole of truth on a matter.
  - a. The Holy Spirit did inspire all of the Scripture.
  - b. The Holy Spirit would not contradict Himself from one passage to another.
  - c. He might be giving different connotations to a word or a subject, but not contradiction.
  - d. He would be lying if that were the case.
  - e. Therefore, all passages on a particular subject should be consulted to learn the whole truth about that subject matter.
- 4. Same Material - Same Author.
  - a. This is the “Sum of the Word” principle and may be illustrated by Ephesians 3:18: *“How wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”* Psalm 119:160: *“All your words are true;”*
  - b. You want to understand the totality of Christ’s love?
  - c. Study the same writer’s comments elsewhere about that subject.
  - d. Paul writes about something in Romans.
    - 1) Does he write about it some-where else?
    - 2) Galatians is very similar.
  - e. Galatians will help us understand Romans and vice-versa.
    - 1) The same subject may elsewhere be discussed by different authors.
  - f. James does discuss faith and works just like Paul does in the book of Romans. It is related material.

5. Same Time Settings.
  - a. We also want to know if another writer in another book, or maybe the same writer, writes during the same time setting.
  - b. He might be saying some of the same things because he is writing from the same time setting context.
  - c. Paul writes at least four books from prison and those are very similar in some respects.
  - d. We want to know if the same cultural setting is elsewhere.
    - 1) What is Corinth like? It is probably a lot like Rome.
    - 2) By reading Corinthian letters, we can better understand the Roman letters.
    - 3) Psalm 119:160 in the American Standard version says, “*The sum of Thy word is truth.*”

#### **G. NUMBER SEVEN: “Plain Passages Predominate”**

1. Let plain passages explain obscure ones.

**NOTE:** To state it another way, “When you have a plain and an obscure passage of Scripture on a subject, let the plain one rule or dominate your interpretive process.”

2. **Caution!** Of course, we cannot conclude that because a passage is hard for us to understand, it is necessarily obscure.
3. One axiom of primary importance is, everything that is essential to our salvation and to our Christian living has been clearly revealed in Scripture.
4. Do not hastily relegate tough passages to the category of obscurity.
  - a. It may be that your culture, your prejudice, your lack of knowledge is getting in the way of interpretation.
  - b. Figurative language can be tricky!
  - c. Passages containing figurative language may be obscure too.
5. The Lord uses a great deal of figurative language in Scripture to illustrate and to enhance literal expressions of truth.

**NOTE:** Therefore, one should look for the literal passages first. Interpret those. Then, let the figurative passages describe and illustrate and enhance the literal passages. There is a danger here, and it is to allow an obscure or figurative passage to become the basis for a false belief such as the peace meal use of apocalyptic language to establish the doctrine of Premillennialism. A passage here and a passage there which are difficult to understand because of their figurative nature have sometimes been used to establish the doctrine of Premillennialism.

Another example is the reference to “baptism for the dead” in 1 Corinthians 15:29. It has become the basis for establishing the practice today of baptizing living people for the sake of saving dead people. That’s not what Paul had in mind at all!

#### **H. NUMBER EIGHT: “Handle the Word Well”**

1. Rightly divide the word.
  - a. Know the sections of Scripture according to various parameters.
2. Divided by “Covenants.”
  - a. Know sections of Scripture according to covenants.
  - b. Is this Scripture related to the covenant made with Noah in the book of Genesis?
  - c. Does it relate to people that are under the Abrahamic covenant, such as the Israelites who received the land and nation promises?
  - d. Is this passage having to do with the Mosaic covenant?
  - e. Does it have to do with the new covenant under which Christians live?
3. Does this passage of Scripture relate to certain promises that God has made in His word such as the Abrahamic promise, such as the promise that He made to the Levitical priests in the Old Testament.
4. Know under what promises and covenants and dispensations that a passage is under.
5. Divided by “Dispensations.”
  - a. There are basically three dispensations in Scripture.
  - b. There is the Patriarchal age, the Mosaic age, and the Christian age.
6. Now we need to know where the passage fits in terms of the dispensation, because God had different laws and different commands under each one of those dispensations.
7. Divided by “History and Culture.”
  - a. We need to know the historical and cultural setting.
  - b. As much of the background as we can come to know will help us interpret well.
  - c. Cultural applications in the text need to be recognized.
8. History in the world or in Palestine at the time needs to be known to help us understand the scenario before us in the text.
9. Divided by “Language.”
  - a. We need to know the kind of book it is, the kind of literature it is; but you also need to rightly divide the language itself.
  - b. This in terms of studying the Greek(if you know it), or of breaking down the sentence structure and re-writing the text.

#### **I. NUMBER NINE: “Be Logical”**

1. “Use logic and good sense.” The Lord said in the book of Isaiah 1:18, “Come let us reason together,”
2. He did give us a mind, and He gave us a mind that is capable of interpreting Scripture.
3. This is not an attempt to reduce all of Scripture to what we might call “constitutional” or “propositional” law, or that which can be put into syllogisms.

**NOTE:** However, we must be careful because our common sense if affected by our cultural background may render us illogical! Our common sense may not be Scripture’s common sense. Scripture is logical. It has a common sense about it, and that is the kind of common sense that we need to use to interpret Scripture properly.

### **J. NUMBER TEN: “Know God’s Limits on Revelation”**

1. Know the limits of divine revelation.
  - a. Let God have some secrets and let Him have some limits.
  - b. There is a limit to our human understanding of an infinite, immortal God.
  - c. Who dares to think that they can understand fully the vastness and completeness of the mind of God?
  - d. It is impossible for those of us who are human beings. Deuteronomy 29:29, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of the law.”*
  - e. So don’t make more of Scripture than is there for you to make.
2. We are warned in Scripture not to add to or to take away from the word of God.

### **CONCLUSION**

This lesson has been an attempt to bridge the gap between our studies of exegesis and hermeneutics. These basic rules of interpretation of Scripture will relate to both processes.

They will help us determine what it meant to those people in that time, and it will also help us determine what it means to us today.

### **DISCUSSION**

1. How people were saved in the first century is how they are saved today, or has culture changed this?
2. Why should we try and understand how a word is used in context? Do not words always have the same meaning?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON SEVEN**

---

1. We must understand the essentials of salvation and spiritual growth the way God intended them to be understood. True \_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_

2. Why can we not use other writers to explain another writers work? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is overall context? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the bigger context? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the immediate context? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. List nine things one looks for in finding the circumstances surrounding a text.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

f. \_\_\_\_\_

g. \_\_\_\_\_

h. \_\_\_\_\_

i. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Everything that is essential to our salvation has been clearly revealed in Scripture.

True \_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_

8. What does it mean to divide by Covenants? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What are the three dispensations in Scripture?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON EIGHT

# TOOLS OF THE TRADE

---

### INTRODUCTION

 e have been emphasizing the importance of and the results of successive readings of the text of the Scripture without looking at outside sources or secondary literature up to this point. We did not touch those books until we had read the text a number of times. Then we looked for some background information in those sources.

These extra source materials can be very helpful in adding to our primary knowledge that we gained from the text itself. These sources can suggest other possibilities that can be compared with the interpretations that we have already come up with from our previous study. However, these books shouldn't become the interpretations that prevent our seeing the text first, and thus spoil our first impressions.

---

**LESSON TEXT:** None

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. What Bible should you use?
  2. What other books will help you to interpret the Bible?
- 

### WHAT KIND OF A BIBLE

#### A. The Best Bible For You

1. What kind of Bible should you have?
2. You probably want a special kind of Bible for your study at home.

#### B. What Are Some Characteristics or Some Things to Look For in a Bible?

1. First, look for a Bible with clear and large print.
2. It should be in a readable format.
  - a. Some have one column all the way across the page; some have two columns.
  - b. What you don't want are verses that are scrunched up.
  - c. You want it spread out so your eyes can see the text.
  - d. Look for how much white space is between the lines. It is easier for your eyes to pick up the scripture if there is a little more space.
  - e. You may want some space between the lines so that you can underline.
  - f. You might want a wide margin for writing notes out to the side.
3. You might want what are called marginal readings in the side of the text.
  - a. The text may have some variant readings in the original manuscripts that might indicate another way of reading it.

- b. Some Bibles have those variant readings or those marginal readings that you can compare with what has been put in the particular translation.
- 4. A center reference column can be very helpful too.
  - a. It either goes down the center of the page, or if it is a one column Bible, the cross references are out to the side on the right or left margin.
  - b. This allows you to compare what you are looking at with Scriptures in other places in the Bible that say related things.

**NOTE:** Wide margins, for putting notes and outlines, will allow you to have some information right there in the text next time you study.

- 5. You might also look for a Bible with a limp cover. A durable leather cover that is going to last you a long time and will fold over in your hand when you are trying to hold it.
- 6. Look for quality heavy paper.
  - a. What you want is a Bible whose pages are thick enough to be able to be turned and will hold up to the wear of study.

## WHAT AIDS SHOULD BE INCLUDED

### A. Maps Are a Useful Feature

- 1. We need to get a grip on where the Bible scene is taking place.
- 2. A student can look at a map in the back and see where this is taking place and what is around it.

### B. Other Optional Features

- 1. Some include, concordance, dictionary, outlines, summaries.
  - a. In your Bible a small concordance is convenient to have. It allows you a quick reference to a Scripture or a word.
  - b. A small dictionary, quick reference.
  - c. An introduction and outline of a particular book in the Bible.
  - d. In some Bibles, you will find a harmony of the gospels.

**NOTE:** You might find commentary notes at the bottom of the page. We would consider these remarks as the opinions of men.

**NOTE:** Some Bibles have articles on archeological findings. One problem with such articles is that the information is usually out of date rather soon because of the rapid growth of knowledge in this field.

- e. Another feature in some Bibles is a topical index of subjects.
  - 1) If you want to study about "faith," it is listed with a few Scriptures underneath.
- f. Some people like thumb tabs in their Bible.
  - 1) You can quickly locate a particular book of the Bible.
  - 2) If you do not know the books of the Bible well, that can be a helpful tool.

**NOTE:** Our caution is this: The more optional features that you include in your Bible, the heavier and the larger it becomes. In addition, the publisher charges you significantly for each of these “extras.”

We suggest that you have these extras in other books which include only one kind of aid each. There is no need to buy them twice.

## WHAT TRANSLATION

### A. The Bible, You Need A Good Translation

1. There is a lot of discussion and a lot of opinion on this matter.

**NOTE:** Some people are convinced that, concerning a particular translation, the one they use is better. We probably just need a good balance in attitude toward this matter.

2. For those who do not know a great deal about translation philosophies and procedures or original languages of the Bible, the question arises, “How can I make a sensible decision about a translation for my usefulness in my home?”
3. Look at some characteristics of a good translation.
  - a. A good translation is one that is done by a committee of people, people from a wide representation versus a one-man translation which sometimes can carry the prejudices of that one person.
  - b. If you have a wide range of people working on it, the prejudices of one person usually cannot get into the text.

### B. An Accurate Translation is Needed

True to the words of the original language, and true to the original thought and grammar.

1. That is a difficult balance to attain sometimes.
2. Some translations are stronger in one area and some are stronger in another area.
  - a. One translation might be very strong in word-for-word translation, but may miss some of the thought because the word translation doesn’t always convey the complete thought of the original language.
  - b. Others are interested in conveying the thought, but may, in the effort, discard some of the word-for-word accuracy.
3. Important in a good translation is readability.
  - a. How does it read?
  - b. Does it read well?
  - c. Does it flow?
  - d. Does it communicate?
4. All of the translations do have errors and they all have weaknesses.
  - a. You can avoid the mistakes, however, by employing your original language skills.
  - b. Using interlinear translations or several good translations is the best way.

- c. Suppose you do not know any original language.
- d. Get several good English translations before you, and compare what they say. You can comprehend what the Bible is saying.

**NOTE:** Many people feel that the New American Standard is the best translation available right now because it sticks to the word by word translation very well. The word accuracy is very good, based on the old American Standard Version, which not too many people use today. It is a little stiff sometimes. On the other hand, the New International Version, which is very popular today, is often accurate in terms of a thought. Sometimes it is not too accurate in terms of the word-for-word correspondence. So, again, you have got a balance here. Choose one that is best for you under the circumstances under which you function.

## YOU NEED A GOOD CONCORDANCE

### A. First, the English Concordances

1. Perhaps the earliest published English concordance was Merbeck's in 1550.
2. Cruden's Concordance followed in 1737, and it has gone through dozens of revisions and has consistently been the most popular English concordance.
  - a. It has been designated as a complete concordance, but it is not meant to be an exhaustive. It is not the best for a preacher, or the more serious students of God's word.
  - b. The make-up of the concordance is the listing of passages and phrases wherein each important Biblical word is found.

### B. There Are Two Main Greek-English Concordances We Use Today.

1. The first of these is Young's Analytical Concordance by Robert Young.
  - a. This concordance is keyed to the King James version. It lists almost all English words and every passage reference underneath in Biblical order.
  - b. The lists under each English word are several depending upon the Hebrew or Greek words used in that Scripture.
  - c. If you find the page where the word "heaven" is listed, you will notice that there are several words in Hebrew and Greek which are translated in our English Bible by several English words "heaven."
  - d. If you are looking for a particular passage, you may have to go through several lists of original words to find the passage that you are looking for.
  - e. Another benefit of this concordance is; if you are looking for how a particular word in the original language is translated, then you can find it easily in this place.

**NOTE:** This particular concordance gives proper names also. These proper names and the definitions of those names are given in alphabetical order in the text itself. They are not reserved to the end of the concordance.

- f. Another feature of this book is that there are lexicons at the back.

- 1) Lexicons are Hebrew and Greek dictionaries.
- 2) In these lexicons, you can find the original language word.
- 3) You can find how it is stated, how it is pronounced, and how it is translated into English.
- 4) Also, you can find articles written concerning the canon of the Scripture in Young's.
2. The second book that we want to refer to in terms of an English concordance is Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.
  - a. James Strong's book is very similar to Young's in some ways.
  - b. It is keyed to the King James version, and it too lists almost all English words in alphabetical order.
    - 1) Each listing, however, is without the Greek or Hebrew word.
    - 2) That is the main difference from Young's. Young's listed the original words, this one does not.
  - c. Looking up the word "heavens" in Strong's on page 490 and 491, you find from Genesis to Revelation a straight list of every time the English word "heavens" occurs in the King James Version.
  - d. You can not tell which original word is used right off. You have to look another place for that.
  - e. This concordance, like Young's, has proper names in alphabetical order.
    - 1) At the back, we find an interesting feature, 47 little words; and, the, that, thou, theirs, et. al.
    - 2) They are not listed in the main part of the concordance.
    - 3) Another feature is that it, like Young's, has a Hebrew and Greek dictionary at the back. This includes proper names.

**NOTE:** These words are keyed to the main part of the concordance by numbers, so as you are looking at the main part of the concordance, you would look out to the side of that particular passage, and find a number. Then go to the index of the concordance, (the lexicon in the back) and find the particular Hebrew or Greek word that matches that number.

Each of these concordances has their advantages depending on what you wish to use each one for.

#### C. Other Significant Concordances

1. There are other concordances which you need to be aware of. They are particularly for people who understand the original language.
2. There are special concordances for the Hebrew and Chaldee, and for the Greek.
3. A concordance for the Septuagint which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, though the original was written in the Hebrew and Aramaic language.

#### D. What Can A Concordance Do For Us

1. It can help you study what a word means.
2. Look up a word, study all those passages on that word, you can find out what that word means in the Bible.

3. It might help you study shades of meaning between two words which are Greek synonyms but are translated by one English word.
  - a. For instance, there is the word "love" in Scripture.
  - b. You might think that it is always the same word in the original language, but it is not.
  - c. Different words mean different things.
4. A concordance can help you compare the ways different authors use the same word.
  - a. For instance, Paul uses the word "faith" one way.
  - b. James uses exactly the same word, and uses it differently.
5. A concordance can help you.
  - a. Study all the passages on faith by Paul, all the passages on faith by James.
  - b. You can then compare how they differ in their usage.
  - c. Gather material for the study of a particular topic.
  - d. Then you can come to some conclusion about what the Bible says about that particular subject.
  - e. Can help you do character studies. What do we know about Andrew? Look up Andrew and study all the passages where he is mentioned.
  - f. I know a particular word, but I just do not know where it is found. We use the concordance to look up that word, and then find the passage.

## **TOPICAL BIBLE**

- A. One is Nave's Topical Bible, But There Are Several Kinds of Topical Bibles**
1. A topical Bible categorizes passages by subject.
  2. For instance the subject of "heaven" is arranged in alphabetical topical order.
    - a. It won't list all the passages about heaven, but it will give you a lot of them.

## **BIBLE DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS**

- A. A Good English Word Dictionary Should Be Close At Hand**
1. If your vocabulary is lacking, a dictionary will come in handy more often than not when reading the commentaries.
  2. It will aid you when reading the Scripture as well.
- B. A Few Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias**
1. You need some good reference books for general background or information on books in the Bible or related material.
  2. We would like to suggest at least two dictionaries or encyclopedias.
    - a. The first one is by Zondervan. It is called the Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible.
    - b. This is a five or six volume set.
  3. Another one that is very good is called the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.
    - a. This set of five books has been revised in recent years. It, too, is like a dictionary.

4. The Anchor Bible Dictionary is a very thorough dictionary on the market.

**NOTE:** Some of these are more expensive than others, so use care in buying the best book(s) for you. Many interesting subjects can be found in these dictionaries or encyclopedias. Maybe you want to read something about archeology in a particular place in the Bible or historical backgrounds or cultural things. Maybe you want to do a study of the temple or the tabernacle or the foreign gods of nations which the Israelites encountered or countries, etc. After you have read those particular articles, you also need to look at the end of the article. Usually there is a bibliography. It will list other references where you can find information if you wish to research the subject further.

5. One other dictionary of significance is the McClintock-Strong series.
  - a. It is older than the Anchor Bible Dictionary set, but very thorough.

## GREEK DICTIONARIES FOR WORD STUDY

### A. Greek Dictionaries or Lexicons for Those Who Know A Little Bit More About the Original Language.

1. The basic one in this field is called "Arndt and Gingrich" (or Bauer's, the original author).
  - a. This is a Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament.
2. There are others by Liddell and Scott which relate to another place in time as far as the Greek language is concerned.
3. Open Arndt and Gingrich to a word called "uranos," (*οὐρανός*) and this is the Greek word from which we get "heaven."
  - a. You can see a rather extensive discussion of that particular Greek word.
4. Another Greek lexicon available is Thayer.
5. You may want to use what is called an analytical Greek lexicon.
  - a. You can look in the Greek text and say, "What does this word mean?"
  - b. If you cannot use Thayer's or Arndt and Gingrich, you may want to use an analytical, but you will have to learn how to use that.
6. Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.
  - a. This is a one volume set, but there is a multi-volume set also.
  - b. This particular work allows the student to do extensive word study work.

## HEBREW DICTIONARIES

### A. There Are Hebrew Lexicons and Dictionaries Available as Well

1. The best known is one called Gesenius.
2. There is a Hebrew and English lexicon put out by Brown, Driver, and Briggs.
3. There is an analytical Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon available as well.
  - a. These are for the serious Bible language student.

## BIBLE ATLAS

### A. A Bible Atlas is Worth its Weight in Gold and Teaching Outlines

This is because a perception of the geography gives a particular perspective to the text.

1. It will have certain basic maps, usually in the middle of it.
2. You will find basic maps as well as a discussion of some of the archeology, historical and cultural backgrounds that go with the people of that time.

## COMMENTARIES - A FRIEND OR FOE

### A. At the Appropriate Time in Your Research and Exegesis, Commentaries Can be Very Helpful

But there is a tendency to run to them too early in the process.

1. They are helpful tools at the appropriate time.
2. We would like to suggest several rules for using a commentary.
  - a. First, you need to precede its use with your own research and thought.
  - b. Secondly, you need to use several different kinds of commentaries with different viewpoints.
  - c. Third, you need to respect and suspect the commentator's view.
    - 1) There are many benefits from using commentaries.
    - 2) They will help you determine the proper reading of the text.
    - 3) They can supply meanings for words in the text.
    - 4) They can give needed historical and cultural background for you.
    - 5) They can summarize the wisdom of the ages on the particular passage.
    - 6) They can present an honest presentation of the live options in terms of the interpretations that have been given on that passage.
    - 7) They can present the person's own conclusions and reasons for them.
    - 8) They can provide possible outlines for teaching and preaching purposes.
    - 9) And they can show you how it fits into the context.

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON EIGHT**

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1. What are five things one should look for in a good study Bible?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What aides or optional features might one want in a study Bible or to go along with their Bible?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Why would one need a concordance? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Of what use are dictionaries and encyclopedias in a Bible study? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Why do you think Greek or Hebrew dictionaries would be of help? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What are three good rules to follow when using a commentary?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. What are some of the things one finds in a Bible atlas that would be helpful?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON NINE

# WHAT COMMANDS ARE BINDING ON US TODAY?

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### INTRODUCTION



How do we determine what in Scripture applies to us today? What is binding on us today? What is the authority in our lives today?

We begin this session with a section of our study called “Special Sacred Hermeneutics.” This is the manner in which we determine the specifics that God speaks to us and requires of us, that is our goal. Someone might flippantly assert, “Well, the Bible is our authority. It all applies!” That is true to a degree, but it is an oversimplification.

---

**LESSON TEXT:** None

**LESSON PREVIEW:** You will . . .

1. There are many commands given by God to His people. Are all of them binding on us today? Which ones are and which ones are not?
  2. How do we decide?
- 

### THE NEW TESTAMENT IS AUTHORITATIVE

#### A. Jesus Does Have All Authority

1. In Matthew 28:18 the Lord said before He returned to heaven, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.*” And so He claimed all authority.
2. Hebrews 1:1-2, the Hebrew writer says, “*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe.*”
3. Paul in Ephesians 1:22-23 says, “*And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him (Jesus) to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.*”
4. The Apostle Paul makes it clear that Jesus has all authority and that authority is for the sake of the church.

#### B. The New Testament Contains Jesus’ Authoritative Word

1. Jesus’ authority not in His Physical attributes (Isaiah 43:3ff).
2. Jesus’ all authority is in His word because that word is the standard of our lives.

3. It is the standard by which we will be judged on the last day.
4. Jesus Himself said in John 12:48; "*There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.*"
5. If we had a textbook and we said, "Now on the last day of this particular class, you will be tested over this textbook."
  - a. The textbook becomes the standard of judgment of how you did in the course.
  - b. Jesus says the Bible, "My words as written in the Scripture, are indeed the standard of judgment by which you will be judged on the final day."

### C. All Authority Given to Apostles and Prophets

1. Jesus gave that all authoritative word to the apostles and prophets that were inspired to speak and write that word.
2. If Jesus' word is authoritative, one might say, "Well, that just means the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, because those are the only records of Jesus' actual words."
  - a. What about the rest of the New Testament that is not the word of Jesus while He was here on earth?
  - b. Jesus gave that all authoritative word to the apostles and the prophets.
3. Before He went back to Heaven, Jesus prayed in the garden. "I have given them (the apostles) your word, Father" (John 17).
  - a. The word that the Father gave to Jesus, Jesus in turn is saying, "I gave it to the apostles."
  - b. How did they get it? Jesus went back to Heaven.
  - c. Is He going to speak to them in some way?
  - d. They got it by means of the Holy Spirit.
4. Before Jesus returned to heaven, He made some promises to His apostles.
  - a. One is recorded in John 14:26. "*But the counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything that I have said to you.*"
  - b. Jesus says, you will know what I want you to say, and you will remember what I said to you while I was here on the earth because the Holy Spirit will make that clear to you.
  - c. So, what the apostles will speak or what will be revealed to them, will be the words of Jesus Himself.
5. Jesus said in John 16:12-14, "*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you.*"
  - a. The apostles were promised that the Spirit would take the words of Jesus, even though He had gone back to heaven, and convey them to the apostles so that they would know, what the words of Jesus were.
  - b. That Spirit would guide them into all truth, not truth about non-spiritual matters, but rather truth Jesus would address Himself.
6. What are the apostles and prophets going to do with this word of Jesus?

- a. They are going to speak it, and write it.
  - b. They are going to do that by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  - c. That is so we, even in this generation, can understand it.
7. Paul makes a very significant statement in Ephesians 3:2-6.
- a. He says, “*Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly . . .*”
  - b. Paul says, “Listen to this. It has been revealed to me by the Holy Spirit what God wants me to say, and I have written this down.”
  - c. Paul says, “*In reading this (in other words, in reading my letter), then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel.*”
8. Paul claims that by reading his letter, readers could understand what has been revealed to him by inspiration from the Holy Spirit.
- a. What did the Holy Spirit give him?
  - b. The Spirit gave him and other apostles and prophets the words of Jesus Himself.
9. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:14-15, “*He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*”
- a. The things that the Spirit has revealed to me, I have passed on to you.
  - b. In two ways, Paul is saying. “I have spoken it or I have preached it, but I have also written it down.”
  - c. The letters to the Thessalonians, are evidence of that very thing.
10. Reading the New Testament, you and I as well as those people could understand the very words of Jesus.
11. In 1 Corinthians 14:37. Paul says, “*If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing is the Lord’s command.*”
- a. But who is the Lord? That’s Jesus.
  - b. What Paul is writing is not his own word.
  - c. It came by inspiration of the Spirit, and he wrote it down and the Lord Jesus Christ gave it to the Spirit.
  - d. The Spirit gave it to Paul, and Paul wrote it down.
12. When we read Corinthians as well as other writings of Paul, we are reading the very words of Jesus.
- a. That makes the New Testament our guide and the authority in our lives.
  - b. Remember what Jesus said in John 12:48. “*My words will be your judge on the final day.*”
13. Jesus’ words now take in more than just the words He spoke here on this earth.
- a. It’s all of the New Testament, because He inspired all of it.
  - b. God, the Father, is the one who wants His message to be heard by men.

- c. He does that by, giving it to the apostles and prophets by the method which we call ***revelation***.
- 14. How are the apostles and prophets going to speak and write that?
  - a. They received it by revelation, now they are going to speak it and write it by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. That is what we call ***inspiration***. They speak it and they write it.
  - c. That spoken and written word was passed on to the people who heard them through preaching or reading their letters.

**NOTE:** Those letters have been printed and translated so that people in any generation or any country can now read the very words that Paul and others spoke by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They are still authoritative. It is still the word of Jesus. It will still be our judge on the final day, because it is infallible and inerrant, and therefore, the authoritative words of Jesus Christ.

### WHAT IS BINDING TODAY

That is the underlying message so far, but what we really want to know is, what is binding on us today? We will begin that study by talking about the commands of the New Testament. Commands in the New Testament are binding on us today.

#### A. What Commands

1. We might call this hermeneutic “direct” commands or “express” commands.
2. We are talking about imperatives spoken by our Lord or one of the apostles or prophets in the New Testament, since they were also speaking the words of Jesus.
3. Some examples: The Lord Jesus will say in Luke 17:3, “*If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.*”
  - a. That is a command that was given by Jesus to some other people.
  - b. It is a command that we believe applies to us today.
4. Paul speaks the words of Jesus in Ephesians 5:25, “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*”
  - a. There is a command.
  - b. It is from the Lord, and is therefore, authoritative in our lives today.
5. Revelation 2:10, “*Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*”
  - a. We believe that it applies to us as well.
  - b. But the question is, “How do we know these apply to us today?”

#### B. The Dilemma

1. Those commands were not spoken to you specifically.
  - a. They were spoken to people in the churches of Asia.
  - b. They were spoken to the church in Ephesus.
  - c. They were spoken to the apostles and disciples to whom Jesus was speaking at the time.

2. Upon what basis, then, do you take these commands and bind them on all people, particularly Christians today?
3. We need to articulate the hermeneutic that permits us to apply those commands today.

### C. The Example

1. The principle of taking a command from the past, spoken in the past, to somebody else, and applying it to another time, is something that Jesus and John the Baptist did.
  - a. In Matthew 14:4, John the Baptist said, "*It is not lawful for you to have her.*"
  - b. He was speaking to Herod and said, "You cannot have this woman."
2. Why? Because the law of Moses given to the Jews in the Old Testament said you could not have another man's wife.
  - a. That was written a long time ago to people to whom Moses was speaking, but John says, "It still applies to you, Herod!"
  - b. John took a command, given to some people in the past, and applied it to his day and said it was authoritative in his day.
3. Jesus did exactly the same thing in Matthew 15:4. He said, "*Honor your father and your mother.*"
  - a. We recognize that as one of the Ten Commandments that was written a long time ago.
  - b. How do we know it applies today? Jesus said it did.
  - c. Jesus said that even though it was written in the past to somebody else in a different time it still applies to people of His day.
  - d. He adds these words, "*And he who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.*"
  - e. Jesus believed it applied to His day though spoken some thousand or fifteen hundred years previously.
4. We are told to keep the commands of Jesus.
  - a. If Jesus thought commands of old applied to His day, what about the things that Jesus said in His day?
  - b. Do they apply to us today even though we are removed almost two thousand years?
5. When Jesus spoke commands by inspiration through His apostles, they were spoken almost two thousand years ago.
  - a. Do they apply today to us?
  - b. John 15:10, Jesus said, "*If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love.*"
  - c. Jesus expects us, or expects the people to whom He spoke, to obey His commands.
  - d. John 14:15, "*If you love Me, you will obey what I command.*"
6. But Jesus said that to the apostles, not specifically to me.
  - a. How do we get it to us today? Jesus said that to them.
  - b. How do I know that applies to me today?
  - c. Jesus said to the apostles, "Go into all the world, go to all nations, and baptize people who want to become disciples."

- d. Once they are in Christ through that process, through baptism, they are to be taught to observe all Jesus commands (Matthew 28:18-19).
- 7. Inference would demand that new Christians do all Jesus commanded.
  - a. An apostle would teach them, baptize them, and then teach them all that Jesus commanded.
  - b. What are some of the things that Jesus commanded?
  - c. He commanded them to love Him.
  - d. He commanded them to follow Him.
- 8. The people that the apostles taught were to obey the commands that Jesus had given disciples in another context.
  - a. The process continues on into every generation.
  - b. Therefore, the process continues until now.
  - c. Therefore, Jesus' commands, though spoken two thousand years ago, apply to any and all people today.

**Remember:** Jesus' words make up the whole of the New Testament. It is not, then, just Jesus' words as He spoke here on this earth that are binding on us today. It is the whole New Testament, the whole new covenant under which we live. Yes indeed, the New Testament commands therein do apply to us today. It is not a book that is irrelevant. It is not a book that no longer applies because it is not spoken to us today.

### THE RESTRICTING GUIDELINES

There are some limiting or regulating factors of what is binding on us today.

#### A. Given Under Another Covenant

- 1. Is the command given to someone who lived under a different and no longer binding covenant applicable to us to-day? No, it is not.
- 2. There may be a command in Scripture, but if it was not given to those who lived under the same covenant relationship with God that we now live under today, it does not apply.

**Example:** Did you know that instrumental music was commanded by God through a prophet in the Mosaic covenant? (II Chronicles 29:25).

- 3. It was commanded for the Jews to use mechanical instruments of music in their worship under the old Mosaic covenant.
- 4. But we do not live under that covenant today.
  - a. That covenant does not define our relationship with God.
  - b. We do not offer sacrifices.
  - c. We do not go to the tabernacle or temple to do those things.
- 5. There is not a Levitical priesthood, because all of that went with the command concerning mechanical instruments of music.
- 6. That was strictly a Jewish covenant, to a Jewish nation, but Jesus nailed that covenant to Calvary (Colossians 2:14).
  - a. The commands to build a tabernacle or a temple.
  - b. The commands to offer animal sacrifices.
  - c. The command to Abraham to offer his son Isaac.

- d. The command to Noah to build an ark does not fit into the covenant relationship of which we are a part.
- 7. Thus they are not binding on us today because they were commands given to people who do not live under the same covenant we now live under today.

### **B. Selective Commands**

- 1. Is the command to a certain person or group and is strictly applicable to that particular group and no one else, including us today?
- 2. Was something said to a group that only applies to them?
- 3. In Colossians 4:16, Paul says, "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."
  - a. That command is in the New Testament.
  - b. It is a command, but there are other commands given in this letter to the church at Colossi that are binding on us today, but not this one.
  - c. Why not? It only applied to them.
- 4. How can we read the letter to the church of the Laodiceans?
  - a. We do not even have it!
  - b. How can we pass on the Colossian letter to the Laodiceans?
  - c. It does not apply to us, because it could only apply to them.
- 5. 2 Timothy 4:9 and 13 were written from prison.
  - a. Paul told Timothy, to do this, "*Do your best to come to me quickly . . When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.*"
  - b. It is a command, and commands usually apply to us, but not this time.
  - c. It was only given to Timothy for that unique situation.

**NOTE:** We realize those are simple examples, but there may be other things in Scripture which are not as easily discerned as just applying to the initial recipients. These examples do illustrate the principle that if a command is given only to that group of people for a particular situation, then it doesn't apply to us today.

### **C. Cultural or Custom Only**

- 1. The third limiting or regulating factor is the command in reference to a custom or cultural item that would not be relevant to us today?
  - a. "*Greet one another with a holy kiss*" (Romans 16:16).
  - b. That is a command, but it commands the cultural way of greeting close friends.
  - c. It is not necessarily the way it is done in every culture today.
  - d. Today it might be a hand shake, a bow or a hug only.
- 2. Therefore, must we kiss only, and leave off these other methods of greeting one another warmly? No, of course not.
- 3. That was a cultural way of expressing a principle.
- 4. In John 13:14 Jesus said to the apostles, "*You also should wash one another's feet.*"
  - a. That is a command.

- b. That culture's way of showing brotherly love and hospitality, because of the dusty roads and open sandals that they wore.
- c. There was a need for washing feet. It was a part of their culture. It was also a way of expressing hospitality and love.
- 5. Do not, however, dismiss a command in Scripture too quickly just on the basis of it being culturally and not unilaterally binding on us.
- 6. Make sure that it is only the New Testament days' cultural way of fulfilling a more general command or principle from God.
- 7. The general command or principle behind the kiss is this. "Show love to your brother when you meet him."
  - a. The foot washing principle is this: be humble before your brother.
  - b. Any cultural way of showing that today is binding on us, not the specific way New Testament culture showed the fulfillment of that principle or command.

#### **D. Other Revelation on the Matter**

- 1. Another limiting or regulating factor involved here is, "Is there another command that limits or clarifies the command under consideration at the time?"
  - a. Romans 13:1 commands us, "Everyone must submit to the governmental authorities."
  - b. Paul tells the Roman Christians that they must be in submission to the governmental authorities.
  - c. Does that mean in all cases? No.
  - d. This is tempered by certain circumstances.
- 2. Peter claims in Acts 5:29, "*We must obey God rather than men!*"
  - a. When a government's demands clearly conflict with Biblical authority, we are not obligated to obey Romans 13:1, though it is a command.
  - b. Jesus was accused of violating the Sabbath regulations, but He said those commands are tempered by human need, the need for healing or the need for food (Matthew 12:1-4).

#### **CONCLUSION**

Where does that leave us today? Where does that take us? What is binding on us today? In a general way we can say that if Jesus or His inspired apostles or prophets gave the command in the New Testament to the people of God as recorded, it is binding on us today unless it is ruled out by one of those regulating or limiting principles. What are they?

1. It was spoken to people under a different covenant.
2. It was spoken to an individual or a church only in their situation, and obviously not applicable to us today.
3. It was simply a cultural way of that culture expressing how a principle was to be carried out.
4. It can be narrowed in application by another command in Scripture or limited by another command in Scripture which would say, this is the way you do it under certain circumstances.

Let it be pointed out, however, that even under these regulating or limiting circumstances, there are often general commands or principles behind the specific that can be and should be obeyed. Let's approach the commands of Scripture very carefully. Let's assume from the outset that they do apply, and then if there is a limiting factor, then we can allow ourselves to be excused.

But let's be very careful about that. We want to do what God wants us to do, don't we? We want to obey what is binding on us today in terms of commands. We want you to study the Scripture, to know exactly what God says for you to do and to be submissive to his will, for we will be judged on the final day by His word.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. What is the authority in our lives today and why is it?
2. Can men, today, read and understand the Bible alike concerning how one receives salvation? If yes, how do you know?
3. Commands in the Bible were not spoken directly to us, so how do we bind these commands on all people today especially Christians?
4. Do Christians submit to governmental authorities always? If yes, why? If no, why?

## **SELF EXAM FOR LESSON NINE**

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1. Give three Scripture references that show Jesus' authority.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
2. There is not really a standard by which we will be judged. (T/F) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What two things were the apostles and prophets going to do with the word of Jesus?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are two verses of Jesus that say we should obey His commands?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is a command given under another covenant still binding on us today? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What are two verses that deal with culture, that are not binding on us today in the physical application but in principle still are binding.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON TEN

# BIBLICAL EXAMPLES AS PRECEDENTS

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### INTRODUCTION

opefully, it is the desire of each one of us to be and to do exactly what pleases God. The only way to find out what does please God is to study the Bible, especially the instructions given to Christians in the New Covenant. That is what the New Testament is. However, we need some guidelines to determine what parts of the New Testament should be adhered to.

In our last lesson we talked about how and when commands in Scripture are binding upon us today. In this lesson, we will examine the question of the relationship of examples in Scripture to our lives today. In other words, which examples in Scripture are binding on us today? What applies to me? And what in these examples is binding on us today?

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**LESSON TEXT:** None

**LESSON PREVIEW:** Many examples in Scripture are not binding on us today. Many examples in Scripture are binding on us. Which is which?

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### PRELIMINARY MATTERS

**A. Definition of “Example”**

1. We will use it in this way in this study.
2. Example connotes: “An example is an attitude or an action of anything in Scripture.”

**B. Examples Teach**

1. Let us agree that examples do teach by implication.
2. The word “example” encourages and demands imitation by us.
3. The New Testament, our covenant for today, uses this particular hermeneutic.
4. Those past incidents or attitudes do teach, and therefore assume the role of an example.
5. Example, Matthew 12:1-8, Jesus is in conflict with the Jews over a supposed Sabbath violation.
  - a. To defend Himself, Jesus refers to David’s example of entering the tabernacle in the Old Testament taking the shew bread and eating it.
  - b. Jesus said that incident serves as an example of a principle that is binding on Sabbath-keepers of His day.
  - c. Thus something that happened along time ago is established by Jesus as a precedent for His own day.

6. In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus is again in conflict with the legalist of His day, He asserts that the original relationship between Adam and Eve serves as a teaching example.
  - a. The principle of one man and one woman in marriage for life applies to people of His day too.
  - b. In other words, something that happened thousands of years previously had a bearing upon how people in Jesus' day were to view marriage, divorce, and remarriage.
  - c. Something that happened in Old Testament does apply to Jesus' day
7. Another excellent example is recorded in Jude.
  - a. Jude cites a number of Old Testament incidents wherein God punished people who were doing evil and would not repent.
  - b. He says in verse 8, "*In the very same way,*" the false teachers of his day will be judged and condemned.
  - c. All those old days incidents serve as examples of a principle that is still binding on the people of Jude's day.
8. What is that principle?
  - a. That God will judge and condemn the evildoer.
  - b. Again, an example from the Old Testament that applied to the people of the New Testament day.

### C. Examples Are Binding Today

1. Paul writes, "*For everything that was written in the past* (Old Testament or the past), *was written to teach us, . . .*" (Romans 15:4).
2. Just as fathers attempt to teach their children by their examples and references to others' examples, so our heavenly Father attempts to teach us today through examples recorded in Scripture.
3. They do teach relevant and binding principles and practices for us today.
4. The New Testament writers saw the Old Testament, in certain respects, as examples they were binding on the Christians of their day.
  - a. If they were binding on the Christians of Jesus' and Paul's day, then why would they not be binding upon the Christians of our day?
  - b. Would the examples recorded in the New Testament not also be relevant and binding upon us today?

### KINDS OF EXAMPLES

We want to consider, the kinds of examples that the Bible contains.

#### A. Condemned Examples

1. These are attitudes or actions which are obviously not to be imitated by anyone!
  - a. We could say that the negatives of these examples would be binding but the actual way that these particular people went about doing something was binding on no one.
  - b. If their example was followed, condemnation would be the result.
  - c. Jude presented some people that had behaved in ways that were unacceptable.

2. Another example from the New Testament. I Corinthians chapter 11, Paul says, the way in which you are treating the Lord's Supper here is unacceptable to the Lord.
3. Acts chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira, presented an offering of money to the Lord's people.
  - a. They sold a piece of land, and gave the money to the apostles and said, "This is from our hearts, and we want to give it to you."
  - b. Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive the apostles.
  - c. They thought they had deceived them. They said, "This is all we have," but they lied, and their example is condemned.

#### **B. Approved Examples**

1. These are patterns or attitudes and behaviors that are acceptable for more than just the original practitioners, but not necessarily binding on all of us today.
2. Daniel made a habit of praying on his knees three times a day (Daniel 6:10).
3. That is an excellent practice or example of how to carry on the exhortation to pray.
  - a. Worthy of imitation, but it is not necessarily binding upon us today.
4. Another example is the method of Paul in Ephesus - a training school.
  - a. He used that method to evangelize the whole area (Acts 19:10).
  - b. The School of Tyrannus was an excellent example of a tool of evangelism and edification.
5. Preaching till midnight! (Acts 20:7)
  - a. An example that is approved but not necessarily binding.

#### **C. Approved, Authoritative Examples**

1. We might call them binding examples.
2. These are examples that display behaviors and thoughts which Christians today must adopt if they are to be pleasing to God.
3. They are not optional. They are not expedients.
4. Principle or Practice?
  - a. Some will say that no examples at all are binding on us today.

**NOTE:** What they mean is that in reality it is a principle behind the example that is binding, and the behavior is the way in which that principle is fulfilled or carried out.

It seems that it is a matter of semantics here, both the principle and the practice are binding in some cases.

The emphasis on looking more for the principle than just focusing on the practice itself merits our consideration, but not at the expense of dispensing altogether with the specific way in which God desires that the principle be put into practice.

5. Specific examples of approved, authoritative examples that are binding on us today.
  - a. The Lord's Supper upon every first day of the week in Acts 20:7 is an example that the New Testament church involved itself with but is also binding upon the church today.

6. What about evangelizing the whole world?
7. As you read the book of Acts, you see the church spreading out, evangelizing the whole world.
  - a. Is that an example that is binding on us today? It certainly is.
  - b. How about disciplining an impenitent, immoral brother, I Corinthians 5?
  - c. Or do we just let people go and do what they want? No, that example also is binding on us today.

## GUIDELINES TO DETERMINE WHEN AN EXAMPLE IS BINDING

### **Introduction**

The question arises, When are the examples binding? What makes them binding today? We just noted some examples. On what basis can we say definitively that those examples are binding on us today? How do we determine when an example is not approved and when it is approved, authoritative or binding? Is this practice essential? Is it binding in all circumstances, or is it simply incidental or one way of fulfilling God's will but not the only way? Or, is it limited to being binding in only certain circumstances?

### **Guidelines**

#### **A. General Rule of When An Example is Binding**

1. First we can say that if the practice or if the example was required of all Christians in New Testament times in all circumstances, then that is binding on us today.
2. In I Corinthians 4:17, Paul says, "*He (Timothy) will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*"
3. Chapter 14:33-34 of the same book says, "*As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission as the Law says.*" It is a practice in all the churches, Paul says.
4. In 1 Corinthians 7:17 we read; "*Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.*"
  - a. It is required of us if it is required of all the churches.
  - b. So also, if it was optional with the Christians, then it is also optional with us today.
5. If it was required of all Christians in all circumstances in the first century, then it would appear that it is required of us today as well. (General Rule)

#### **B. An Example is Optional When Specific Conditions Are Present**

1. When is an example optional for us in all cases?
2. First, when the example applies to specific conditions that applied only in that day and time.
  - a. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7 Paul talks about the fact that he is a single man.

- b. He says, "This is an example for you today, for the Christians in the first century."
- c. However he qualified that in 7:26 by saying, this is a good practice or example, "*because of the present crisis,*"
- d. It seems as though persecution or rampant immorality in that particular society caused Paul to say this.
- 3. Now, in saying that in this particular chapter, he tells them that his example and his admonition is optional for them.
- 4. Thus, it would be optional for us today if we were under similar circumstances today.

#### **C. Optional When Cultural**

- 1. The infant church in Jerusalem was composed of individuals who found themselves displaced from their distant home setting in Acts chapter 2 and 4.
- 2. Now, having been converted on the day of Pentecost or soon thereafter, they stayed on longer in Jerusalem.
- 3. When they came, they had no way of anticipating that they would become Christians.
- 4. They came for a Jewish feast, but were converted while there.
- 5. There was the necessity for them to stay in Jerusalem and be taught more about the Christian faith before returning home.
  - a. There was also the necessity of providing for their physical needs.
  - b. The resident Christians who lived in and around Jerusalem began to sell their possessions, gave the money to the apostles to take care of the financial needs of those who were visiting Jerusalem (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37).
- 6. This method of supplying the needs of those who are in need was approved.
  - a. It was an approved example, but it is optional for us in all cases, but wise in similar circumstances.
  - b. The principles are binding but not the way they were carried out.

#### **D. When is An Example Binding, or When is it Not Particularly Binding**

- 1. When the example reflects a cultural application of a binding principle, it is not binding on us today.
- 2. Paul urges and encourages the Corinthian women to continue to wear the veil when in public.
  - a. This was a public sign of their submission to men. (11:5-6).
  - b. Perhaps some of them had misinterpreted their new-found freedom in Christ and their fellow citizenship in the kingdom, and the blessing of the miraculous spiritual gifts.
  - c. They may have thought, "We are on the same level with men in terms of who is in submission to who."
  - d. They were removing their veils in rebellion against the old traditional way of showing submission to men.
  - e. Paul is urging them to retain the cultural way of expressing submission.

- f. That, in addition to God's taught way or shown way, of showing submission by the relatively longer hair that women have in relation to men in a culture. That was called the "natural covering." (I Corinthians 11:14-15).
- 3. If there are similar customs in our society today, then the veil becomes binding.
- 4. There are certain societies in our world today where the veil is still worn by women to show their submission to men, and it should be continually worn, God would say.
  - a. However the veil is not a show of submission in American culture, therefore, it is not binding on American Christians.
  - b. The Christian woman is to follow the principle as best expressed by the culture in which she lives.
- 5. There is an exhortation in the book of Romans that says, "*Greet one another with a holy kiss.*"
  - a. Though it is a command, it also implies the existence of a certain cultural practice in the early church (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, and other places).
  - b. Apparently a kiss as a greeting was practiced by the Greeks in many parts of the Roman world, Rome Corinth, Thessalonica, and perhaps among the Jews as well.
  - c. This cultural way of showing affection to brethren is not binding on us today, but the principle is.
- 6. What is the principle?
  - a. That of showing love and affection for brethren.
  - b. Our culture expresses this principle by hugs, smiles, words, handshakes, kisses at times, or bows, or however our culture shows loving affection to other people follows this principle.
- 7. Should we have foot-washing?
  - a. Foot-washing was practiced in the New Testament church.
  - b. Jesus washed His apostles' feet, and encourages them to wash one another's feet as His example.
- 8. Again, there is a principle behind the example.
  - a. The principle is that we must show humble service to other people, especially to our brethren.
  - b. The manner in which Jesus used to show that was one way that culture showed it.
- 9. We must find and activate the parallel cultural applications of that principle in our culture.
  - a. Foot washing is not binding, but certainly the principle is and the way our culture would express that principle.

#### **WHEN IS AN EXAMPLE ALWAYS BINDING**

That is what we really want to know, not whether it is cultural, not whether it just applied to specific conditions in that culture. When does it apply all the time to us?

## GUIDELINE

### A. A Parallel Cultural Practice

1. When there is a parallel situation today with exactly the same cultural applications of the underlying principles.
2. If the traditional way of showing submission to men is wearing a veil today, then we should follow that.

### B. A Cultural and Parallel Practice

1. When the example or the application has nothing to do with culture, but the situation is parallel today.
2. Such an example is Jesus' exhortation to the rich young man.
  - a. He told the rich young man to sell all that he had, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus.
  - b. If money has become a god to us, if we cannot part with it.
  - c. If it stands between us and salvation.
  - d. The solution is to do exactly what the rich young ruler should have done; sell all, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus.
3. We shouldn't dismiss this example as only a one-timer.
  - a. The same should be said for sharing our goods and selling things to share with those in need (Acts 2:45).
4. Again, that was an example that is binding in similar circumstances today.

### C. A Cultural Practice of Ethics and Worship

1. When the example or practice has nothing to do with culture and reflects a binding principle of Christian ethics or worship.
2. We need to look for the command or the principle behind the example or the practice.
  - a. It may be stated simply, or it maybe implied.
  - b. Example: The apostles disobeyed the ruling authorities when the ruling authorities tried to forbid their preaching of Jesus.
  - c. The example is that they continue to preach Jesus.
  - d. But there is a command behind it. Peter stated it in Acts 5:29; "*We must obey God rather than men.*"
3. Look for a command behind the example that is binding.

**NOTE:** Baptism was not a cultural or an incidental or an individualistic example in the New Testament. Why? Because behind all those examples of people being baptized into Christ, we find specific commands (cf. Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16). Commands behind the example of being baptized strongly imply that it is binding on us today.

The partaking of the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week is seen as an example in Acts 20:1-7 and 1 Corinthians 11:17ff. There is not a specific command worded just that way that says we should partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, but there is an implied command. Jesus said, "*This is My body, which is for you. . . . the new covenant in my blood.*" And then He said, "*Do this. . . .*" whenever you eat it or whenever you drink it . . . *in remembrance of me.*" Paul quotes from

Jesus in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. Then further, Paul says, “*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes,*”

(I Corinthians 11:26). The example of Acts 20 and 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 16 when they met on the first day of the week imply that the command was for every Sunday when the saints meet to remember Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.

#### **D. Long Term Reasons**

When is an example binding at all times?

1. When the example has long-term reasons given for its keeping.
2. The reasons given in the text for keeping something, are not just cultural or short-term, but rather long-term.
3. In 1 Corinthians 14:33-34, Paul gives us his reason for women keeping silent in the assemblies.
  - a. “*As the Law says,*” the Law of Moses.
  - b. Implying that this practice is not merely a cultural matter in Corinth, but long-lasting.
4. Paul, talking about the same thing, women’s role, says, “*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*” I Timothy 2:11-14.
5. His reason for the women’s behavior goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden: a long-standing, age-lasting, earth-lasting reason.

#### **E. A Theological Principle is Embedded in the Practice**

1. When the example (or the “form”) is inextricably tied to the theological principle (which I will call the “core”) behind the example.
2. There is no other way to follow the principle or carry it out except the exemplary way revealed in Scripture.
  - a. Example, the elements of the Lord’s Supper strongly suggest such a connection between themselves and the meaning of the principle.
  - b. Unleavened bread only, not steak or ice cream, can represent the body of Jesus.
  - c. And fruit of the vine only, not water or coke, can represent the blood of Jesus.
3. How about the mode of baptism?
  - a. The mode of baptism necessarily implies the principle behind it.
  - b. Paul reminds the Roman Christians, “*But thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin, you whole heartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin, and have become slaves to righteousness*” (Romans 6:17-18).
4. The teaching which they obeyed inform was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
5. The manner in which that obedience could be rendered was and only is in baptism or immersion in water. “*Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were,*

*therefore, buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:3-4).*

6. How can sprinkling or pouring convey that form of teaching? It cannot.
7. Only immersion can.
8. When the example is inextricably tied to the theological principle behind the example, the example is binding on us today.

## CONCLUSION

What, then, can we say or add to or take away from the biblical examples when considering what is binding on us today? In principle, the answer is nothing. Listen to these Scriptures.

**Deuteronomy 4:2,** “*Do not add to what I command you, and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.”*

**Proverbs 30:6,** “*Do not add to His words, or He will rebuke you and prove you a liar.”*

Those Scriptures say we cannot add to or take away from the words of the Bible. With all these extenuating circumstances that we have been considering, we are not intending to violate the sacredness of Scripture’s commands or examples, but as we have seen in this session, there are some guidelines for deciding whether a New Testament example is binding on us today. Please take care when you read the Bible, and ask yourself, “Does this example apply to us today?” Do not just simply dismiss it. Do not push it out, but ask yourself, “Is this a cultural example? Are there other extenuating circumstances that make it non-binding on me today, or is it really binding on me today?” God bless you in your study of His word.

## DISCUSSION

1. The Lord’s supper, an implied command, is to be taken every first day of the week. Some people are teaching that we can take it any day of the week or as we wish, monthly, quarterly or yearly? Is this logical, or Biblically based? How would you teach them?
2. In reference to baptism, how could you prove to another person that this is necessary for salvation and to have a relationship with God and other Christians. (Do not just throw out a bunch of Scriptures or opinions, prove it logically using God’s word).
3. Concerning the woman’s role in the church, due to our culture and the times we live in, are women now allowed to take a leadership role in the worship service, such as song leading, waiting on the table, public reading in worship service, or teaching an adult mixed class?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TEN**

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1. What is the definition of an example? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name three kinds of examples.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
3. When the example reflects a cultural application of a binding principle, it is binding on us also. (True or False) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the principle behind the example of foot-washing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What are two scriptures that teach us that we cannot change God's word by either adding to or taking away from it?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Name five guidelines where an example is or would be binding on us today.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON ELEVEN

# THE SILENCE OF SCRIPTURES

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### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Our Apparent Inconsistency or Dilemma

In 1809 Thomas Campbell, a transplanted Presbyterian preacher from Scotland and Ireland to America, stated the following: "That rule (which we must follow) is this: That where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Perhaps he was trying to state a part of his hermeneutic, which after all sounds a lot like I Peter 4:11, "*If any man speaketh, speaking as if it were the oracles of God . . .*" and Romans 12:6, "*If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it . . .*" Certainly his attempt to articulate a major tenet of good hermeneutics is to be commended, but unfortunately it is too simplified. If applied unilaterally, it does not always work! For instance, the Bible says little about the method of going into all the world and preaching the gospel (Matthew 28:19), but we usually do say a lot about it, and we believe we are allowed to do that. We say, "You can go by train. You can go by plane. You can go by boat." So we do speak where the Bible is silent. We have concluded that silence in that case permits freedom of speech and action. On the other hand, the Bible is silent in regard to polygamy, but we believe that silence forbids that practice.

#### B. Our Task

Where do we draw the lines, and on what basis do we draw the lines regarding when silence of Scripture permits and when silence of Scripture forbids? This point of silence is often the center or the crux of different interpretations. One person or group will contend that silence prohibits while the other argues for allowance or freedom in such cases. It is an obvious difference in hermeneutical approach. Hopefully this lesson will shed some light of consistency upon this matter. We use the word consistency because usually both groups or points of view or positions apply both rules of silence, prohibition in some cases and allowance in some cases. We do not find that anyone unilaterally prohibits when Scripture is silent, and we do not find that they unilaterally permit when Scripture is silent. If that is the case, we need to make a concerted effort to discover when it is that Scripture does prohibit and when it does allow.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Various Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** Urge for consistency in this manner. Base our decisions on good hermeneutical purposes.

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## AUTHORITY PATTERN

### A. Diagrams

1. Let us begin by talking about what we call “Authority Pattern Diagrams.”
2. J.D. Thomas in his book, We Be Brethren, uses this valuable tool also.
3. These diagrams will help us see the implications of the silence of Scripture.

### B. Definitions: Let Us Define Three Terms - Generic, Specific, and Optional

1. Generic is an authorized, and therefore binding, attitude or practice given by God as a general requirement.
  - a. It has no specification inherently in it as to how a practice is to be done.
  - b. It gives us a general exhortation, but does not tell us specifically how to carry it out.
2. Specifics are certain ways of carrying out or accomplishing the generic.
3. The generic is general; the specific says is the way to carry it out.
4. Optional specifics means the Scripture was silent and it is left up to us.

### C. Examples: Illustrations of the Terms Generic and Specific

1. Let's call the generic “build the ark.” “Build the ark, Noah.”
2. Biblically, that could be considered a command or an example.
3. The specific or specifics underneath that are;
  - a. Build it out of gopher wood.
  - b. Put pitch on the inside and out.
  - c. Use one window, and use one door. (See diagram one)

### Diagram One

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#### “Build an Ark”(Required)

##### Required Specifics



### D. In This Case, the Generic and the Specifics Are Required of Noah

1. The specifics can fall into two different categories: Required specifics and optional specifics.
2. A *required specific* means that the Scripture specified and authorized it, and it had to be done that way.
3. It was an authorized command or example.
4. An *optional specific* means that the Scripture was silent on that matter, and it was left up to the individual person or church as to how the generic was to be carried out.
  - a. For example, another generic is, “Go into all the world.”
  - b. Underneath that generic are some required and some specifics.

(See Diagram Two)

**Diagram Two****Generic (Required)****“Go into all the world”****Required Specific****“Preach the Gospel”**

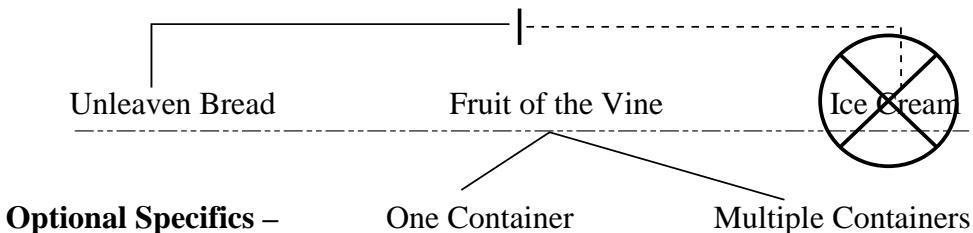
- c. In the first case, “Preach the gospel” is the “required specific” underneath the required generic.
- d. In another diagram, however, “the world.”
- e. That is a required generic, but look at some of the optional specifics underneath that. (See Diagram Three)

**Diagram Three****Generic (Required)****“Go Into All the World”****Optional Specific****Plane      Train      Boat**

- 5. We can go by plane, train or boat. All are “optional specifics.”
- 6. So you can have “required specifics” or “optional specifics.”

**E. Law of Exclusion**

- 1. An important aspect of these diagram is that if there is a required specific, that specification necessarily infers the exclusion of other specifics in the same category which are not allowed elsewhere in Scripture.
- 2. If they are permitted somewhere else in Scripture, then they become “required specifics” also.
- 3. Examples. Let’s illustrate it this way (See Diagram four).

**Diagram Four****“Keep the Lord’s Supper”**

- 4. The generic that is required is, “Keep the Lord’s Supper.”

5. Underneath that there are some required specifics.
  - a. For instance, using unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.
  - b. Notice, I've got another specific there, ice cream and cake, and we have marked through it.
6. The Scripture said, "Use unleavened bread and use fruit of the vine."
  - a. It did not say anything about ice cream and cake.
  - b. The Scripture is silent on that.
7. Are we allowed to use it or not?
  - a. It is in the same specific category as unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.
  - b. Therefore, when a specific is stated, and it is required, it excludes all others in the same category.
8. Notice some "optional specifics."
  - a. Under the specific (which becomes a generic to what is below it), fruit of the vine, can we say to use one cup or can we use multiple cups?
  - b. The Scripture is silent on that.
  - c. But in this case it is optional because the Scripture did not give us a required specific.
9. Some specifics are required and some specifics are optional.

## WHEN SILENCE PERMITS AND FORBIDS

### A. We Want to Know When Silence Permits

1. The extremists would say, "The un-commanded in Scripture is, therefore, allowed because the Scripture does not specifically condemn the un-condemned."
2. However, to speak about freedoms where the Bible does not forbid is to speak where the Bible is silent, and that is the very charge that is made against the one who wants the silence of Scripture to forbid in certain cases.
3. There is inconsistency in the argument that silence always permits.
4. Let's recall those authority diagrams for just a minute.
  - a. They indicate that in some cases silence permits the freedom of several possibilities.
  - b. Those are the optional specifics.
5. A few specific examples will illustrate this generally accepted point.
  - a. As we have already noted, the Great Commission commands us to go into all the world.
  - b. It does not specify the method of going or even the particular places to find an audience.
  - c. Without specifics on this matter, we must make wise and prayerful choices in order to accomplish the generic command itself.
6. It would appear, therefore, in this case that the silence of Scripture permits us to do certain things.
7. There are examples in Scripture of how some people in the first century traveled by foot or on boat, but those methods of movement are surely not restrictive in today's situation.
8. There are also examples of preaching house to house and in the marketplace, as well as on top of a hill.

9. These, too, give some direction and some insight, but do not exclude other places today, like tent meetings, on television, radio, evangelistic meetings, on street corners and through the printed page.
  - a. In other words, silence permits certain methodology not specifically stated in Scripture.
10. Another example comes from James 1:27: "*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*"
  - a. How is that to be done?
  - b. How is that to be carried out?
  - c. Families are encouraged to lookout for their own, but widows without family or funds to care for themselves are to be cared for by the church (I Timothy 5).
11. Orphans would be in the same category.
  - a. But no method of taking care of them is specified in Scripture.
  - b. Churches have through the years used several methods, such as foster care, adoption, and the institutional home.
  - c. One may be better than others, but all are allowed because of the silence of Scripture.
12. As another example, Paul says in Galatians 6:10, "*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*"
  - a. That command leaves the door wide open as to the "optional specifics" of how to help these people.
  - b. How could Scripture give a comprehensive list of how we are to do good?
13. Therefore, we are free to mow our neighbor's lawn, while he is away, and we may take food to a brother or sister whose loved one has died.
  - a. We may give some financial aid or advice to whomever needs it, Christian or non-Christian.
  - b. All of these, and a host of other good deeds, are allowed.
  - c. Why?
  - d. Because of the silence of Scripture.

## WHEN SILENCE FORBIDS

### A. The Law of Inclusion

What is binding on us today is only what is included in the principle or command.

#### **Definition**

1. Sometimes the silence of Scripture does forbid rather than permit.
2. A command in Scripture only authorizes what is included in the command.
3. What is not included is excluded from being a part of it or being authorized by the command.
4. The authority for doing, the right to do, something other than that which is specifically authorized, must be found elsewhere in Scripture.

**NOTE:** Look at the authority pattern diagrams. If required specifics are commanded by Scripture, other specifics in that same category are not included, and therefore excluded, unless authorized elsewhere in Scripture.

**Examples:**

**A. The Scriptural Principle**

1. There are some good Old Testament examples of behaviors that are stated to be right, that are necessarily excluded elsewhere.
2. Let's state the specific principle given in Scripture.

**Deuteronomy 4:2,** “*Do not add to what I command you, and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.*”

**Deuteronomy 12:32,** “*See that you do all that I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.*”

**Proverbs 30:6,** “*Do not add to His words, or He will rebuke you and prove you to be a liar*”

3. Any unauthorized addition, then, is considered a lie, an untruth, and, of course, is not authorized by Scripture.

**B. Example of the Sexual Relationship**

1. Note how this principle applied in some Old Testament examples.
2. In the Garden of Eden, the Lord established the monogamous relationship in marriage (Genesis 2).
  - a. It is the commanded and exemplified, and therefore, the authoritative pattern.
  - b. Polygamy is not included in the pattern.
  - c. Neither is homosexuality.
  - d. Thus the pattern given in the Garden of Eden forbids these.
3. Even though it was not specifically forbidden, that silence forbids those other kinds of relationships.
4. If we argue against these, we do it on the basis that silence excludes.

**NOTE:** Since the polygamous and homosexual relationships are in the same category (that of sexual relationship) as the monogamous one, and since the monogamous one is the one authorized, all others in the same category are excluded.

They are wrong. Silence forbids them.

**C. Example of Noah**

1. Noah was told to build an ark out of gopher wood.
2. Whatever kind of wood that specifically was is sometimes debated, but it was stated to be *gopher wood*.
  - a. A special kind of wood.
  - b. The command in Scripture only authorizes that specific kind of wood.

- c. It did not authorize any other kind of wood.
- d. All other kinds are unauthorized and excluded.
- 3. For Noah to have used any other kind would have been disobeying God.

#### **D. Example of Moses**

- 1. Moses was instructed by God upon Mount Sinai, as to how, to build the tabernacle (Exodus 25:40).
- 2. In verse 40 of chapter 25 God says, “*See that you make them* (some pieces of furniture in the tabernacle) *according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*”
- 3. The Hebrew writer in the New Testament called this a warning to Moses not to do it any other way (Hebrews 8:5).
- 4. How could the Tabernacle have been built according to the pattern had Moses allowed extras in the same category?
- 5. Perhaps one reason the Lord wanted the tabernacle to be built according to a specific pattern is that it served as a type of the church and of heaven (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23).
- 6. If the pattern was distorted, then the Jewish perception of the realities that will follow will also be distorted.
- 7. God wanted it built just that way for a very good reason.
- 8. His silence forbade deviation.
  - a. God was silent on the deviation, but that still excludes them.
  - b. He did not have to say, “Do not do it this way,” “Do not do it that way.”
  - c. All He had to do is say, “Do it this way,” and that excludes everything else in the same category.

#### **E. Example of Jeremiah**

- 1. Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord gives us the principle in His book: “*The people of Judah have done evil in My eyes, declares the Lord. They have set up their detestable idols in the house that bears My Name and have defiled it. They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, something I did not command, nor did it even enter My mind.*” (Jeremiah 7:30-31).
- 2. The Lord condemns their idolatry and their burning of their children, even though He had not specifically condemned the latter, the burning of children, in the original giving of the law.
- 3. He expected them to understand the implications of these forbidden things, even though He was silent about them.
  - a. That included no child burning.
  - b. They stood condemned on the basis of silence.
  - c. They had added specifics that were not optional in a category of commands that God had given in the Law of Moses.

#### F. Example From Uzziah

1. Uzziah, once a great king of Judah, became very proud.
2. He decided that he was quite capable of carrying out the duties of a priest and offering incense in the Temple – (2 Chronicles 26:16).
3. Azariah the priest said to him, “*It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God.*” (vs. 18)
  - a. It had been specifically stated in the Law that the Levitical priests were to do this job.
  - b. The silence of Scripture did not specifically forbid the king, but Uzziah was condemned because he failed to assume exclusion of all others except the priests, based on silence.

#### CONCLUSION

Numbers 15:37-40 is a good conclusion to this Old Testament section. “*The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all My commands and will be consecrated to your God.’*”

To add to “required specifics” some specifics of your own choosing and term them as “optional specifics,” He says, is going after “the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.”

#### NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

Though we do not live under the old covenant requirements, the principle of silence (that silence forbids in certain cases) is true in the New Testament as well.

#### A. Temptations of Jesus

1. One of Jesus’ temptations in the desert, as recorded in Matthew chapter 4, was that He was tempted to throw Himself down from the highest point of the Temple and raise Himself up again.
2. The Devil quoted a Scripture: “*He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone*” (Psalms 91:11-12).
3. Jesus responds with Scripture saying that the silence of that text on certain circumstances is further defined by what is specifically stated in another text:
  - a. “*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*” (Deuteronomy 6:16).
4. The silence of one passage may be filled in by a statement from another passage; but if it is not, what do we do?
  - a. The same thing we have been doing in the Old Testament examples.
5. The commands and examples of Scripture state that sinful, believing penitent adults are to be baptized for the remission of sins (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38).

- a. There is no specific prohibiting infants being immersed, sprinkled or poured in water.
- b. However, the command only authorizes what it includes.
- c. And what is that?
- d. Adults!
- 6. It does not include, and therefore does not authorize, infants being baptized in any mode, since adult immersion and infant immersion are in the same specific category. Silence forbids.
  - a. Only adult immersions are allowed.
  - b. Infant baptism is excluded, and, therefore, wrong on the basis of silence.

**B. Example: Worship of Mary**

- 1. The New Testament is silent on the worship of or prayers to Mary.
- 2. It is specific in its exhortation to worship and serve and pray to God the Father.
- 3. Worship of Mary or God would be in the same category.
- 4. Thus prayer and worship to Mary is excluded, again, on the basis of silence.

**C. Example: Church Government**

- 1. In reference to how the local church is to be governed, the New Testament states that elders are to be appointed according to qualifications given in Scripture, and that they are to lead the local congregation.
- 2. There is no sanction for any other kind of government, certainly not the centralized, pyramid-type that we find in so much of the religious world today.
- 3. Again, that kind of government is excluded on the basis of silence.

**D. Example: The Instrument in Worship**

- 1. Mechanical instrument of music maybe considered under this approach.
- 2. We are commanded to sing and pluck the heart strings (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).
- 3. Thus the music that is to be made by Christians in order to worship God and edify other Christians is that which is singing, and singing which produces an expression of love in the heart to God and brethren.
- 4. If there is to be an instrument involved, it is the mouth or the vocal cords and the spirit and the heart.
- 5. There is no mention in the new covenant regulations of mechanical instruments.
  - a. Thus, there is silence on that.
  - b. However, mechanical instruments fit into the same category as singing and making melody with the heart, the kind of instrument to be used to praise God with music.
- 6. Since the New Testament authorizes the latter only and is silent about the former, mechanical instruments, then they are excluded as a pleasing way to worship God.

## CONCLUSION

Let us conclude with a few thoughts. First, reading from Revelation 22:18-19, “*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.*”

The writer of that book said we must not add to words of Revelation or we will reap the consequences. If we are not to add to the book of Revelation, surely we are not allowed to add to any other book. That is a necessary inference. If we cannot add to Revelation, then how can we add to any other part of the Scripture? In I Corinthians 4:6 Paul states the same principle. He says: “*Do not go beyond what is written.*” In other words, here is what is written. Here is what is specific. You are not allowed to go beyond that and say it is all right. It is a consistent and trained biblical interpreter that knows when silence permits and when silence excludes.

We must come to grips with this, though, or we will continue to disagree and be split religiously by misapplication of the silence of Scripture.

May God bless your study and your interpretation of the areas of Scripture wherein God does not speak; in other words, the silence of Scripture.

## DISCUSSION

1. What is the Law of Exclusion and how do we use this?
2. How does the Law of Inclusion work? Give some examples.
3. Why is instrumental music in worship wrong and how do we prove it using Scripture?
4. How do we know that the first day of the week is the only time that we may partake of the Lord’s supper?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON ELEVEN**

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1. What is generic? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is a specific? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. A *required specific* means? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. An *optional specific* means? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. The New Testament is a pattern for the church today. True \_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_
6. Why was it wrong for Uzziah to carry on the duties of a priest? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Silence of Scripture permits and forbids. (True / False) \_\_\_\_\_
8. A command in Scripture only \_\_\_\_\_ what is included in the command.

## LESSON TWELVE

# INTERPRETATION DIFFERENCES

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### INTRODUCTION

**W**e introduced our study of Biblical Interpretation by asserting and proving that men can and should understand the Bible alike. In the following lessons, we have attempted to give some guidelines by which a proper interpretation of Scripture could be obtained. But the fact remains that we still have disagreements in interpreting Scriptures. They do occur and exist. We have explained those by alluding to our lack of knowledge so that we make judgements on interpretations without all the knowledge. Sometimes we come to the Scripture with preconceived ideas or prejudices, and that caused us to come up with a poor interpretation. We may have a poor hermeneutical process, and that causes us to have differing interpretations, some of which are wrong. So the Christian religious world is divided because of disagreements over interpretation of Scripture. We have a multitude of different beliefs based on different interpretations. We need to address this phenomena of differences in interpretation in a more specific way.

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**LESSON TEXT:** Ephesians 4; Romans 14.

**LESSON PREVIEW:** Survey Romans chapters 14-15.

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### DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION

**A. All Who Profess to Believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and Believe the Bible is the Word of God, Must Come to Agree in the Essentials**

1. There are some doctrines in the Christian faith that must be believed and must be accepted for there to exist a relationship with God and with fellow believers.
2. God does not allow a person to believe and practice anything he wishes and still be in a saved relationship.
3. We are justified through faith, and that faith is a trust in and obedience of God's revealed word.
4. If one can believe and practice anything he wishes, he is not believing God or His word at all.
  - a. There can be no justification or salvation in such cases.

**Question:** What are those essentials that we must believe and accept in order to be in a relationship with God and with one another? And what of the other things that we might term non-essential?

5. This is not an easy question, and may explain why some people's list of essentials is too short.
  - a. Some may think that repentance is not essential to salvation.
  - b. Some people's essentials list is too long others are too short.
6. A key Scripture in this regard is Ephesians chapter 4.
  - a. Paul instructs the Ephesian Christians in the subject of Christian unity.
7. Paul gives four ways to keep that unity and to keep peace.
  - a. Paul says you must adopt loving attitudes toward one another.
  - b. Paul says you better get busy using your God given gifts to build up the body and individual Christians.
  - c. Paul says you must keep yourself pure in all areas of Christian living, Ephesians 4:17ff.
  - d. It is for all Christians to hold to certain key essential doctrines in common, Ephesians 4:4-6.

### ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES WE MUST HOLD IN COMMON

**A. The Concept of One Body/Church, not a Multiplicity of Churches**

1. Paul says there is one body.

**B. We Must Acknowledge There is One Spirit**

1. Who inspired the word of God.
2. Who lives in us to help us live for Jesus.

**C. There is One Lord**

1. Jesus is His name.
2. He was deity in the flesh.
3. He was humanity as any other man.
4. He was the Savior on the cross.
5. He was raised from the dead to save us.

**NOTE:** This is an essential doctrine that we must accept and believe, or we have no fellowship with God.

**D. There is One Faith**

1. One set of doctrines which are from God to the exclusion of all other so-called revelations.
2. Scripture uses the terms, "the faith," "the gospel," "the truth," and that is what saves.
3. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are the focal point of that truth in the gospel that saves. (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

**E. There is One Baptism, Ephesians 4:4-6**

1. It is not sprinkling.
2. It is not pouring.
3. It is immersion only of adults.
  - a. For the remission of sins.
  - b. For the reception of the Holy Spirit.

- c. To be added to the Lord's church by the Lord only.
- 4. Without baptism first there is no . . .
  - a. Obtaining of the Holy Spirit.
  - b. Forgiveness of sins.
  - c. Or being saved.

#### **F. One God and Father**

- 1. Not multiple deities, Jehovah God is the one God. (El Shaddai is the one God).
- 2. He created all things, controls all things, rules all things, and He will end it all.
- 3. He will judge all people.

**NOTE:** These are the essentials in terms of the doctrines that must be believed in order to be saved and must be held by all for there to be a relationship with one another and for there to be unity.

- 4. We cannot accept a person as a Christian who . . .
  - a. Denies the deity of Jesus.
  - b. Denies the essentiality of baptism for salvation.
  - c. Or denies the concept of the one church.
  - d. Paul says these are essentials we must accept.
- 5. The ecumenical approach to unity will fail to fulfill Jesus' prayer for unity. John 17.
  - a. It allows too much diversity of belief.
  - b. Not enough on the essentials to accomplish the unity Jesus prayed.
- 6. If the ecumenical approach is true,
  - a. One almost ends up with no absolutes.
  - b. And being able to believe and to say nothing definitely in such an approach.

#### **NON-ESSENTIALS**

We do not have to agree in the non-essentials. That does not mean that we cannot determine what is truth from Scripture. The Lord does not require of us to agree in all of the non-essentials as revealed in the New Testament.

#### **A. That Does Not Mean We Cannot Determine What is Truth From Scripture**

- 1. The Lord does not require us to all agree on all the "non-essentials."
- 2. Just as the ecumenical approach will fail, so will trying to bind on Christians, beliefs and practices that do not constitute "essentials."
- 3. Every religious group has been fractured by this faulty approach.
- 4. Initially due to the fact, too many doctrines are on our "essentials" list.

**NOTE:** We are not saying that we cannot determine from Scripture what these doctrines mean as far as God is concerned. We are saying that God does not ask us, nor require of us, that we are united in belief on all things that Scripture reveals. Let us make it clear from the outset that we are not talking about opinions in this matter. Opinions are those beliefs that cannot

be doctrinally determined as right or wrong by Scripture. We are speaking about non-essential to salvation and fellowship doctrines.

5. We did not say these doctrines were not important, God gave them in His word and that makes them important.
6. We did not say they cannot be properly discerned and interpreted. They can and should be.
7. This is based on the fact that God gave them to us and He does not give us what we cannot discern.

**B. When Christians Disagree in Non-Essential Doctrines, What Do We Do? Romans, Chapters 14 and 15.**

1. The Roman church is mixed, Jewish and Gentile Christians.
2. They have been squabbling, condemning, or making condemning judgments of one another.
3. The Jews came from a religious background of feasts, Sabbaths and new moon celebrations.
  - a. Certain days and foods were special under the law of Moses.
  - b. They were commanded under law to keep certain days as sacred and to refrain from certain unclean foods.
4. The Gentiles came from a background in the mystery cults, idolatry worship.
  - a. They came to Christianity with some similar excess baggage.
  - b. They also had certain days and foods that were special.
5. Paul designates one of these groups, "the strong in faith" the other as "the weak in faith."
  - a. The strong are those whose consciences will allow them to eat any kind of meat.
  - b. The weak cannot eat that meat, and he believes that the other person should not eat that meat either.
  - c. The strong believe all days are the same.
  - d. The weak brother considers one day, the feast days, more sacred than others and wants the stronger to agree with him.
6. It is not clear which is the strong brothers, the Jewish or the Gentile.
  - a. For our purpose, it will not hurt us to not know for sure. The point is that these matters are doctrinal in nature.
  - b. There is a right view and a wrong view.
7. Paul says, "*As one who is in the Lord Jesus* (and inspired by the Holy Spirit to know these matters) *I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself,*" Romans 14:14.
  - a. In a parallel passage Paul gives a doctrinally right statement. I Corinthians 8:4-7.
8. Paul asserts that the doctrinal position of the stronger brother is right and the doctrinal position of the weak brother on the matter of foods and days is wrong.
  - a. Paul gives an inspired view of what is right and wrong.

## NON-ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES ALLOWABLE DISAGREEMENTS

**NOTE:** Under these circumstances, when brethren disagree on doctrinal beliefs other than the essentials and both are sincerely dedicated to the Lord. That is what Paul states in Romans 14:6-8 about both the strong and the weak brother. When we disagree on doctrinal matters that are unessential, non-essential, but we are both dedicated to the Lord, what do we do? Look at the following principles.

### **A. The First Principle**

*“Accept one another as brothers in good standing with the Lord.”* Romans 14:1, 15:7.

1. The burden, especially being on the stronger brother, the doctrinally correct person.
2. Stop judging one another as a hell-bound people. Romans 14:1, 3, 4, 10, and 13.
3. Why?
  - a. Because God has accepted him. Romans 14:3.
  - b. Because he is God’s servant. Romans 14:4.
  - c. Just as Christ accepted you. Romans 15:7.

### **B. The Second Principle**

Study and be convinced about your belief. (Romans 14:5).

1. We must be willing to study and discover the truth on any matter.
2. We cannot say, “I’m not even going to look at that matter, or study about it because nobody seems to be able to agree on it.”
3. If the issue is hard and many people do not seem to be able to agree on it, do not let that cause you to give up.
  - a. You have an obligation to try to find the truth.
  - b. You are to study a particular issue about which you are concerned.

### **C. The Third Principle Paul Will Say is Very Crucial**

1. If you brethren cannot talk about it without causing contention or strife between you and other brethren, keep it to yourself (Romans 14:22).
2. If you start to share it and the atmosphere is a volatile one, even if you are right, the heat in that relationship will cause the other brother to be defensive and even speak about that which is doctrinally and practically right in a bad way (Romans 14:16).
3. He urges the doctrinally right brother to keep it to himself, not to say anything about it, because the other person will be defensive and he will say that is wrong.

### **D. The Fourth Principle Paul Will State is, Remember That Both of You Are Sincerely Dedicated to the Lord and God Accepts You and Him**

1. Appreciate a brother’s security.
2. It is not as if the weak brother is weak because he is weak in his dedication to the Lord (Romans 14:6).

*"He who regards one day as special does so to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God and he who abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord."*

3. Apparently both groups, strong and weak, love the Lord, and they were practicing their various beliefs because they wanted to please the Lord.
4. It was an action dedicated to God; it wasn't selfishness.
5. They were doing it because they believed the Lord desired it of them.

#### **E. The Fifth Principle From Paul is, the Lord Will Do the Judging in These Matters**

1. It is not our business in these non-essential doctrines, to judge whether a brother is in Christ or not.

2. He is still in Christ. (Romans 14:9-12).

*"For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God."*

3. It is God's judgment in these matters because so much of the attitude of the person is considered by Him.

4. This is on the inside where we as humans cannot see what is there. God must be the judge.

5. A person who is wrong in some non-essential doctrine could have the right attitude and still be in a saved condition, whereas, it is possible for someone who is doctrinally right but attitudinal wrong to be in a lost condition!

#### **F. Forego Your Rights if Necessary**

1. Paul says, You need to be even willing to forego the practice that is doctrinally right and forego the sharing of your correct doctrinal position if it causes the weak brother to be influenced by you into doing something which violates his conscience and thus condemns him. (Romans 14:13, 23).
2. If you believe something is right and you force that on a weak brother who believes that it is wrong and he starts to practice that because of your influence and so violates his conscience, he is condemned.

#### **G. Put Spiritual Priorities in Order**

1. The next principle that Paul will bring forth is: The kingdom, or the church or one's spiritual life has more importance than that all should agree on nonessential doctrines all the time.
2. In Romans 14:17 Paul says, *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."*
3. Some matters of doctrine are weightier than other matters.
4. Jesus stated the very same principle in Matthew 23:23-24.

## **H. Promote Peace and Edification**

1. The next principle, Paul says, “Do what leads to peace and edification.” (Romans 14:19).
2. Temper everything you say and do with the idea:
  - a. Does this build him up?
  - b. Does this promote peace and unity between us?
  - c. Otherwise, we ought to refrain from saying it or doing it.

## **I. Please Others in the Lord**

1. The next principle is related to the previous one.
  - a. “Do what pleases others.”
2. In Romans 15:1-4, he says this is what Christ did.
3. Jesus did not seek to make everyone around Him agree with everything He knew was right.
  - a. Jesus was doctrinally perfect, yet He did not cause everyone to be doctrinally perfect before He fellowshiped them.
  - b. Why, then, should we?

## **J. Promote Unity Principle**

1. We do these things because they promote unity.
2. Treat the other brother this way Romans 15:5-6, *“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
3. Unity is more important than agreement in the case of non-essential doctrines.
4. Unity is an essential doctrine and practice in this case.
  - a. Why? Because it will take a unified church to attract and retain people.
  - b. So that the seed promise may be fulfilled by bringing Gentiles into the Lord’s church and keep the unity.

## **CONCLUSION**

We must agree with one another on the essentials, and we have outlined those from Ephesians 4:4-6. We must agree on these if we are to continue to be in fellowship with God and in fellowship with one another. Of course, we must be willing to study and discuss any biblical matter, believing that we can understand them and that we can eventually understand them alike. In the meantime, we must be willing to refrain from condemning those who are dedicated to the Lord but who do not see the non-essentials as we do. That is our challenge. Read Romans 14 and 15 carefully and be able to discern what is an essential doctrine of Christ, what is a non-essential doctrine. Have that balanced view that says, “We must hold these, we must agree on these to be in fellowship, but the other things we will continue to study, and discuss, but we do not have to agree on all those doctrines to be in fellowship with God and with one another.”

**DISCUSSION**

1. What brings a person into a saved relationship with God?
2. Do we keep something to ourselves, to keep unity and peace, if we know it is not doctrinally correct? If not, how do we approach it?
3. How do we know the difference between essential and non-essential doctrines of Christ?
4. Must we agree in the essentials? If not, can we have a relationship with God? With each other?
5. Does your attitude make a difference and could it really make a difference in your salvation? Why?

**SELF EXAM FOR LESSON TWELVE**

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1. What are four ways that Paul gives for keeping unity and peace?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What are three things that would prevent us from accepting another as a Christian?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. When does one first obtain forgiveness of sins? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. The \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus are the focal point of truth in the gospel that saves according to I Corinthians 15:1-4.
  
5. What is baptism for?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. If no one (it seems) can agree on a certain topic we should not bother with it ourselves. True or False \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. When we are doing what leads to peace and edification, as in Romans 14:19, we should temper everything we say and do with the idea,
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Otherwise, \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. All who profess to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and the Bible as the word of God, must agree in the essentials. True or False \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. We are justified through \_\_\_\_\_, and that \_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_ in and \_\_\_\_\_ of God's word.
  
10. Unity is more important than agreement in the case of non-essential doctrines. True or False \_\_\_\_\_

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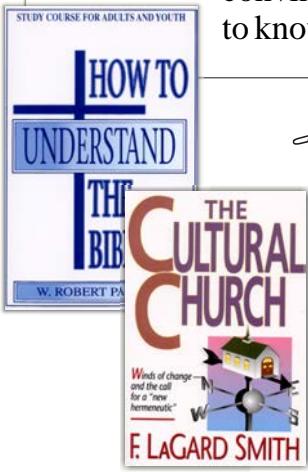
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# ~~Study Guide~~

## Charles Speer



Charles Speer received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Southern Methodist University in 1970. From there he went directly to Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas. After graduation from there in 1972, Charles went to work with the Northside congregation in Dallas for five years. In 1977 Charles and Cara were married and moved to Weatherford, Oklahoma, where he preached for eight years. Their two children, Bryn and Jamin, were born in Weatherford. In 1985 the Speer family attended six months of mission training at Sunset School of Preaching before leaving for New Zealand where they worked for three and a half years training preachers for New Zealand, New Guinea, and other points in the south Pacific at South Pacific Bible College. Since 1989, Charles has been working full time with Sunset International Bible Institute. (Formerly Sunset School of Preaching.) Charles has a passion for the word of God and believes deeply that we need to have more respect and love for the word of God. He emphasizes the need for a strong family life and the need to take the gospel to the lost. This study will convince you of man's need to study the Bible to know God and His word.



 "How to Understand the Bible" and "The Cultural Church" are companion books to this study.

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