

Discover

Interpreting the Bible Accurately.
(Isaiah 55:10-11, Galatians 1:6-7)

1. The same Holy Spirit that inspired God's Word, helps us to accurately understand it.

- a. The Holy Spirit superintended the authorship of the Bible.
- b. The Holy Spirit guides us in our understanding of the truth of God's Word. (John 16:13)
- c. We share a historical faith.

2. All scripture is profitable, but not in the same way.

(2Timothy 3:16-17, John 13:4-15, Luke 22:14-20)

- a. Good interpretation works to understand what principles from scripture are applicable across times and cultures.
- b. Good interpretation is based on understanding the authors intent.
- c. The meaning derived must be consistent with all other teachings of scripture.
- d. It is important to distinguish between the "sometimes" and the "always".
- e. Texts have only one meaning but can have different applications.

3. Even the most complex challenges in interpretation can be understood through good interpretation principles.

- a. Figuring out figurative language can be less frustrating when it is interpreted well.
 - i. Take the Bible literally unless there is a good reason not to. (Song of Solomon, John 13:9-10a)
 - ii. There are some good reasons not to take a verse literally:
 - If they are visions or dreams. (Revelation 1:16, Daniel 4:11)

- If the application seems absurd or impossible. (Matt 5:29)
- If the literal meaning involves immorality or sin. (John 6:53-55, Luke 22:14-20)
- If the context assumes it, especially in some prophetic (Rev 5:1-5) and poetic passages. (Psalm 1:1-3)

b. Controversial passages become less controversial when we interpret scripture well. (Leviticus 19:28 ESV)

- i. They usually align with a historical understanding of scripture.
- ii. If we have gotten something wrong in the past that does not mean that we cannot change our minds and actions going forward.

c. Clear passages become obscured when we interpret scripture poorly.

- i. This creates room for further wrong interpretations. Errors can be used to validate other errors. (Gal 1:6-7)
- ii. This opens us up to accusations of inconsistency, bias, relativism, and irrelevancy.

Questions for Application and Discussion:

1. What part of understanding God's Word do you find most difficult?
2. What are some ways that people "distort" the truth of the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
3. How can you personally grow in your ability to avoid distorting the truth of God's word?