

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

FROM GOD TO US How We Got the Bible –What We Do With the Word *2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21*

Our key passage for our study has been 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” This is an important passage that tells us where God’s Word came from (God) and what it does (“... it is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”). Scripture make this internal claim about itself, but the external evidence confirms and validates these claims. Peter even tell us in 2 Peter 1:19-21, our other key text for this study, that God’s Word is “completely reliable. “¹⁹We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” – 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

So far in our study on how God’s Word came to us we have looked at God’s part in our receiving God’s Word. We’ve talked about how we could not know God apart from Him revealing Himself to us, so we dug into God’s revelation of himself and His inspiration of man to begin to record what God revealed. Then we talked about the transmission of what God had inspired, the writing down of what was revealed. Last time we were together we talked about canonicity, the canon of Scripture, and how the precise 66 books that make up our Bible came to be recognized as the inspired Word of God. A few key take away from last week’s study that are very important to remember are:

Key Takeaways on the Canon of Scripture:

- (1) **The canon is closed** – There is no new revelation or books being added to the Bible. It’s a closed canon.
- (2) **The writing of Scripture were canonical the moment they were written** – That is Scripture was Scripture the moment the pen touched the parchment, the moment God spoke it (revealed it) and inspired man to write it down. Technically man did not determine what was “canonical,” God did.

(3) **The basis of Christianity is found in the authority of Scripture** - If we cannot identify what Scripture is, then we cannot properly distinguish any theological truth from error.

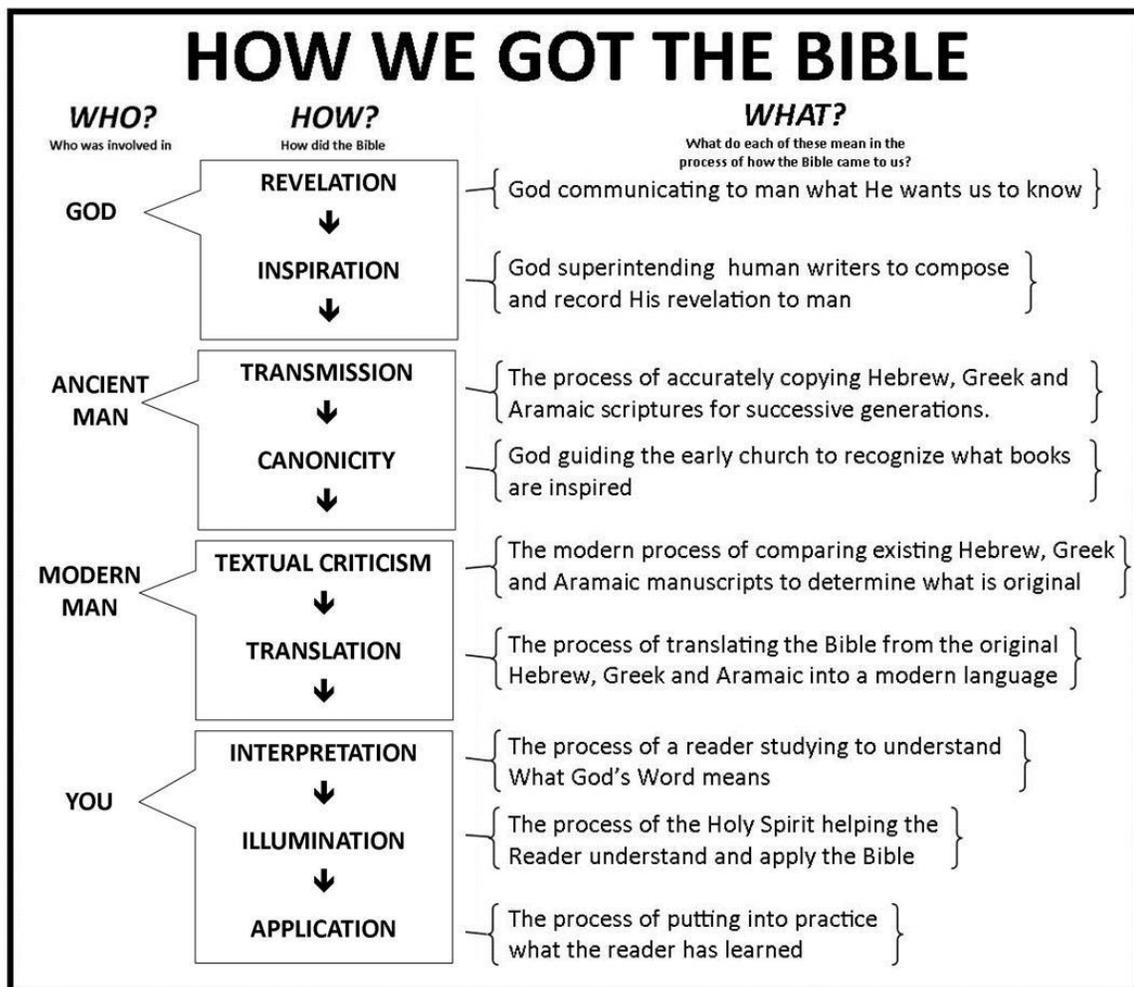
In this study we want to move pretty quickly through the next several steps of how God's Word came to us. This study will talk about our part in receiving God's Word and what we do with it. In this study will look briefly at textual criticism, translation and interpretation.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Someone has written;

It's not enough to own a Bible, you have to open it.
 It's not enough to open your Bible, you have to read it.
 It's not enough to read your Bible, you have to study it.
 It's not enough to study your Bible, you have to apply it.
 It's not enough to apply the Bible, you have to live it.

Do you think this reflects how "most" people approach God's Word? Why or why not? What do you think is being said here? Why is this so important? Why do you think more people don't approach God's Word this way?



Again, in this study we want to briefly take a look at our part in receiving and putting into practice Gods' Word. We are going to look briefly at textual criticism, translation and interpretation. Let's begin with a quick look at "textual criticism."

A LOOK AT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

"Textual Criticism" has as its intended purpose to help us perhaps answer a few important questions regarding the Bible

Questions that Textual Criticism May Help Us Answer:

1. If the "original manuscripts" don't exist, how do we know for certain what they said? – By the science of textual criticism we are able to arrive at the original manuscripts actual words with certainty.
2. How do we know for certain that the Bible we are reading today hasn't been changed or altered in some way?
3. How can we be certain that the original wording of Scripture hasn't been lost through hundreds and thousands of years of translation?

A Definition of Textual Criticism: *Textual criticism is a method used to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said.*

What is "textual criticism"? Simply stated, textual criticism is a method used to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said. There are several very important parts to that definition that help us to understand exactly what textual criticism does and why it's important.

3 Important Parts to the Definition of Textual Criticism:

1. **The problem...** "**Original Manuscripts**" - Here is the definition again of textual criticism, "Textual criticism is a method used to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said." Therein lies the problem that textual criticism seeks to solve. The original manuscripts of the Bible are either lost, hidden, or no longer in existence. We don't have them and that is the problem that textual criticism seeks to solve or at least help us with.
2. **The process...** "**Determine**" - Here is the definition again of textual criticism, "*Textual criticism is a method used to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said.*" What we do have is tens of thousands of copies of those original manuscripts dating from the 1st to the 15th centuries A.D. (for the New Testament) and dating from the 4th century B.C. to the 15th century A.D. (for the Old Testament). In these manuscripts, there are many minor and a few somewhat major differences. Textual criticism takes us through a process of "determining" from all those copies and fragments what the original text actually said with assurance or certainty.
3. **The procedure...** "**Method**" – To do this there is a method, and that method is called "textual criticism." Many actually refer to "textual criticism" as a science of research. It is indeed a very technical research science that takes place to determine with certainty what the original text of the Bible said. This method called "textual criticism" is very important because it helps us to know that what we have in the Bible today is actually what it claim to be... the actual inspired Word of God as He revealed it to us.

What exactly does this method of “textual criticism” look like? How is it done? Here is what we are going to do to help us begin to develop an understanding of how textual criticism works. I am going to give you the three (3) methods of textual criticism with a brief description of each. Then we are going to take an actual vote to see which method you actually feel makes the most sense and would most help us arrive at what the original manuscript of the Bible said. Then we will take a deeper look at what method of textual criticism is actually used for what translation and which one today is considered the most reliable for helping us arrive at the original manuscript.

3 Methods of Textual Criticism: There are three primary methods to textual criticism...

1. **The Textus Receptus** - The first is called the Textus Receptus. The Textus Receptus is more than just a method of textual criticism. It was a manuscript of the Bible that was compiled by a man named Erasmus in the 1500s A.D. He took the limited number of manuscripts he had access to and compiled them into what eventually became known as the Textus Receptus. *The Textus Receptus is the textual basis behind the King James Version and New King James Version.*
2. **The Majority Text Method** - A second method is known as the Majority Text. The Majority Text takes all of the manuscripts that are available today, compares the differences, and chooses the most likely correct reading based on which reading occurs the most. For example, if 748 manuscripts read "he said" and 1429 manuscripts read "they said" - the Majority Text will go with "they said" as the most likely original reading. *There are no major Bible translations that are based on the Majority Text.*
3. **The Critical/Eclectic Text Method** - The third method is known as the critical or eclectic method. The eclectic method takes an “eclectic” approach and involves considering external and internal evidences for determining the most likely original text. External evidence makes us ask these questions: in how many manuscripts does the reading occur? what are the dates for these manuscripts? in what region of the world were these manuscripts found? Internal evidence prompts these questions: what could have caused these varying readings? which reading can possibly explain the origin of the other readings? *The New International Version, New American Standard, New Living Translation, and most other Bible translations use the Eclectic Text.*

How have these methods affected our Bible today? Which method was used in translating the Bible I read? These methods actually begin to help us formulate different translations that we have today and how they work and what they say?

3 Methods of Textual Criticism and the Bible Translations Based in Them:

1. **Textus Receptus** – The King James Version and the New King James Version which is simply a modernized translation based off of the King James Version both use the Textus Receptus as its method of textual criticism to determine what the original manuscripts said. *What do you think might be the problem with this?*
2. **The Majority Text Method** – When the methods are first described to someone, the person typically picks the Majority Text as the method that should be used. It is essentially the "majority rules" and the "democratic" method, and it seems on the surface to make the most sense to the most people because if most of the manuscripts and fragments say it one way

surely that must be what it said. Right? However, there are not translations of the Bible based on this method... none! ***Why do you think that might be the case?***

- 3. The Critical/Eclectic Text Method** – Some consider this the most reliable and surest method of textual criticism, however, this could be questioned given who is in charge of the textual criticism. This is the method that virtually all of our “modern” translations today use... the New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, the New Living Translation.

A LOOK AT BIBLE TRANSLATION

The next important step in the process of how the Bible came to us would be translation... basically how the Bible came to be in a language that we can understand. We began our study of the process of translation last week by looking at some important and sometimes controversial and troubling questions that may accompany the subject of translation:

5 Good Questions Concerning Translation:

- 1. Has anything been lost in translation?**
- 2. How do we know that the translations that we have are accurate and accurately reflect what the original manuscripts of the Bible said?**
- 3. What is the best translation that we have?**
- 4. Why do some consider the King James Version of the Bible the only legitimate translation of the Bible and all other modern translations heretical?**
- 5. What is the difference between a translation, a version and a paraphrase?**

Again we may not be able to fully or adequately answer all of these questions, but we can give some assistance in our understanding of how to get at the answers to questions like these. The Bible has continued to be the bestselling Book year after year, and in America, we’re surrounded by Bibles, that can be both a good and bad thing.

It is important to understand some of the terms that go along with and often get associated with the subject of Bible translation.

4 Important Terms Associated with Bible Translation:

- 1. Translation** – “A *translation is a rendering of the Bible in a language different than the one in which it was written.*” A translation is intended to be as literal as possible and still be easily read. There are basically two types of translations.

2 Types of Translations:

- (1) Versions** – Versions are the various translations of the Bible within one modern language.

Example: English Versions = King James Version, American Standard Version, New International Version, English Standard Version, etc.

- (2) Version Revisions** – Some modern versions could also be called “revisions” because they are largely based on a previous version which has been updated. The following chart will help you to understand how version revisions work.

Example: Today’s New International Version (TNIV & NIV), New American Standard Version, New King James Version, etc.

VERSION

REVISION OF VERSION

New International Version	Today’s New International Version (TNIV) and
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(1973, 1978, 1984)	New International Version (2005, 2011)
American Standard Version	Revised Standard Version
(1901)	(1946/1952 revision)
	New American Standard Version (1960)
King James Version	New King James Version
(1611)	(1982 revision)
(1612)	

2. **Paraphrase** – “A *paraphrase* is a less literal rendering of the Bible, restating the text to give the original sense but not attempting to literally translate each term in the original language.” A paraphrase attempts to translate the ideas from the original text without being constrained by the original words or language. The end result is something that is very readable, but certainly not exact or true to the original texts as far as translation goes. **Examples: Living Bible, Phillips, Today’s English Version (formerly called Good News for Modern Man), The Amplified Bible (verses are greatly expanded to explain each phrase), The Message**
3. **Interlinears** – “An ‘*interlinear*’ is a Bible study tool which contains an exactly literal rendering of each Hebrew or Greek term.” Interlinears are actually copies of the Hebrew and Greek text with a literal English translation printed below. It follows the word order and grammar of the original language whether or not it is easily readable in the modern language (English for example). Interlinears can be helpful for study purposes (particularly if the reader has some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek), but are not useful as a Bible for regular reading. **Example: Today’s Parallel Greek-English New Testament**
4. **Children’s Bible Story Books** – “*These are even less literal than paraphrases. No attempt is made to ‘translate’ the Bible text.*” These books merely selectively “retell” the story portions of the Bible. One good example for the youngest children (3-7) is Kenneth Taylor’s “New Bible In Pictures For Little Eyes.” Bible Story Books are different than most Children’s Bibles which are actually regular translations or paraphrases printed with pictures appropriate to children. (International Children’s Bible, NKJV Explorers Bible for Kids, NIV Adventure Bible, etc.) **Example: New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes**

The chart below compares the various “Bibles” according to how literal they are and may help you to understand the differences and how each may be useful in understanding and getting the most out of God’s Word.

MOST LITERAL TO LEAST LITERAL COMPARISON CHART

Most Literal

Least Literal

Interlinears	Versions	Paraphrases	Bible Story Books
Today’s Parallel Greek-English New Testament	King James Ver. (NKJV) New International Ver. English Standard Ver. New American Standard New Living Translation	The Living Bible Philips Translation Today’s English Ver. Amplified Bible The Message	New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes Children’s Bibles (some, not all)

Observation: Since neither translations nor paraphrases are exactly literal, there will always be a degree of “interpretation” in them. That is, to put the Greek or Hebrew words and phrases into readable English, the translator has to decide to some degree what each term means. Paraphrases have more “interpretation” than translations. That makes paraphrases easier reading because it seems everything is explained. But for that reason, they also will be less reliable, because you only know what the person doing the paraphrase thought a particular verse or phrase means. So it is best to stick with translations for most study and reading. Modern translations are very readable and yet they allow the reader to draw more of his own conclusions when the meaning is vague. Paraphrases are valuable for younger readers and perhaps for reading through large portions at a time for getting the “big picture”

Versions and paraphrases themselves are not “inspired” by God. Some ultra-conservative Christian groups wrongly suggest that the King James Version has special authority as a version over all the others. It is true that the KJV has had the greatest impact of any translation and for the longest time (1611 through the present). But there is no special divine authority attached to it over others. It is also true that some versions have misleading portions because they were done by a cult (New World Translation – Jehovah’s Witnesses). Other versions have certain renderings that are controversial because they were done by scholars that do not have an evangelical perspective (Revised Standard Version – a more liberal biblical scholarship – endorsed by the National Council or Churches; Douay Version and the New American Bible – Catholic scholars, etc.). Ultimately, the reliability of a particular version depends not on some special authority from God but upon the accuracy, knowledge, and spiritual integrity of the scholars doing the translation.

All of the major English translations (versions) that we have today are excellent and reliable. I have my preferences, but appreciate them all. If I was to suggest a couple of the best today I would recommend the **New King James Version** and the **English Standard Version**. For readability I would still suggest the **New International Version**. You will see that there is not a great deal of difference between any of these.

What about study bibles? Yes, yes, yes! I highly suggest them! You might as well take advantage of the scholarship available to you though a good study Bible, but some are better than others. Paul tells us in Ephesians, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” ([Ephesians 4:11–12](#)). Now my question is – what is the difference in a gifted expository teacher explaining the Scriptures from the pulpit and a gifted expository teacher explaining the Scriptures with notes inside a Bible? To me, there is no difference.

It’s sometimes said that the best Bible is the one that you read. Maybe that’s true, but why not make the Bible that you read one that takes pains to faithfully reproduce the text from the original languages in the most accurate way possible?

A LOOK AT INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

The term “interpretation” or “interpret” may carry with it various meanings in the English language. It can be a very “subjective” term such as an artist own interpretation of something that may vary from the photo-real, to surrealism, to the abstract. In other words our English

word “interpret” or “interpretation” can be very subjective (personal, individual, idiosyncratic, slanted and biased)...our own personal interpretation. Our English word “interpret” or “interpretation” can also have a more precise and exact meaning... more objective (impartial, unprejudiced, factual, actual). Webster’s Dictionary may define “interpret” or “interpretation” in one of two ways.

2 Dictionary Definition of Interpretation:

1. **Subjective** (*personal, individual, idiosyncratic, slanted and biased*) dictionary definition of interpretation – *“The act of conceiving in the light of individual belief, judgment, or circumstance, to represent by means of art”*
2. **Objective** (*impartial, unprejudiced, factual, actual*) dictionary definition of interpretation - *“The act of explaining or telling the meaning of something in understandable terms.”*

For the purposes of our study and when applying the term “interpretation” in the context of Biblical study the definition will always be the more objective English definition. A good definition for “interpretation” for the purposes of our study is...

Definition of Biblical Interpretation: *“The process of a reader studying to understand what God’s Word means.”*

God is capable of accurately relaying His Word to us in a way that we can understand. It is crucial that we interpret properly to determine the intended meaning rather than forcing ideas into the text.

Let’s go back to 2 Timothy for a minute, where our key text is found. Paul has a lot to say about the Word of God and not only where it came from and what it profits us, but also how we are to handle it. Notice Paul’s word in 2 Timothy 2:14-15, ¹⁴*Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.* ¹⁵*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* We are to “rightly divide” or “correctly interpret” God’s Word. But how do you do that? What are your thoughts?

Some Important Related Words: There are a couple of important words/phrases associated with Biblical interpretation that may sound technical and bit scholarly, academic and intellectual yet these words/phrases are essential to understanding good interpretation of Scripture and how to do it.

5 Important Words/Phrases in Biblical Interpretation:

1. **Hermeneutics** – *“The branch of theology that focuses on identifying and applying sound principles of biblical interpretation.”* *The word “hermeneutics” comes from the Greek word “hermeneuo,” which means to explain or interpret.
2. **Hermeneutical Principles** - *“The interpretative principles used and applied to correctly and accurately interpret Scripture.”*
3. **Exegesis** – *“To ‘read out of’ or interpret out of the text what the author intended it to mean.”* *In other words, exegesis is finding the AIM (Author’s Intended Meaning) of the

passage because its true meaning is determined by the sender of the message, not the recipient.

4. **Eisegesis** – *“To ‘reads into’ the text one’s own ideas and thoughts—what the reader wants the text to mean.”*
5. **Historical-grammatical Approach** – *“An approach in hermeneutics that seeks to find the plain (literal) meaning of the words based on an understanding of the historical and cultural settings in which the book was written, and follow standard rules of grammar, according to the book’s particular genre, to arrive at an interpretation.”* *Bible-believing Christians generally follow this method of interpretation known as the historical-grammatical approach.

While the Bible is generally plain in its meaning, proper interpretation requires careful study and is not always an easy task. Consider that the Bible was written over a period of roughly 1,600 years by 40 or more authors using three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek). The authors wrote in different genres and had different vocabularies, personalities, cultural backgrounds, and social standings. The Holy Spirit moved each of these men to produce His inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21), but He allowed their various writing styles and personalities to be expressed in its pages. It was written in a culture very different from our modern world and has been translated from its original languages. These are just some of the factors that must be taken into account as we interpret... that make interpretation any given passage of Scripture a challenge.

Why Interpretation Is So Important?:

Jesus told something of a parable at the end of His great “Sermon on the Mount,” that is sometimes called “The Wise and Foolish Builders.” Take a look at Matthew 7:24-27,

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Jesus parable or teaching tells us why it is absolutely imperative that we not just hear God’s Word, but that we understand it and put it into practice. He is reinforcing the necessity of good and accurate Biblical interpretation so that we may know and practice what God says to us in His Word.

3 Things Good Biblical Interpretation Does For Us According Jesus: (according the parable of the wise and foolish builders)

1. **It is a sign of wisdom**
2. **It gives us a solid foundation for our life**
3. **It helps us to face the challenges and struggles of life with victory and peace.**

The Bible is God’s Word, but some of the interpretations derived from it today are not. There are many cults and Christian groups that use the Bible... claiming “their interpretations” are

correct. Too often, however, the interpretations not only differ dramatically but are clearly contradictory. This does not mean that the Bible is a confusing document. Rather, the problem lies in those who interpret and the methods they use.

We need, as best as can be had, the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting God's Word. Because we are sinners, we are incapable of interpreting God's word perfectly all of the time. We make mistakes. We often come at Scripture with our own faith presuppositions (assumptions) and prejudices. We try to make Scripture match up with our way of thinking, our beliefs and practices... in other words, we try to make Scripture match up with our theology rather than us matching up to Scriptures theology. The body, mind, will, and emotions are affected by sin and make 100% interpretive accuracy impossible. This does not mean, however, that accurate understanding of God's Word is impossible. But it does mean that we need to approach His Word in the right/correct way:

Some Basics in How To Approach the Word of God: *(there may best be identified as the prerequisites for coming to God's Word and seeking to correctly interpret it... if you don't come like this you won't correctly or accurately get at what it is saying)*

1. **Approach God's Word with reverence** – Don't treat God's Word as you would just any book. Remember that this is the very word of Holy God, the only God, the God who created everything out of nothing by mere spoken word... and He desires to speak to you through His Word. Therefore we should always approach God's Word with a certain "fear and trembling," with awe, and reverence.
2. **Approach God's Word with care** – Don't treat God's Word callously, carelessly, or as if you have it all figured out. I can assure you, you don't! When we say approach it with care, come at God's Word as a clean slate, teachable, ready to learn and ready to diligently dig in and dig deeper, and undeterred... I'm going to keep digging, researching and digging some more until I get at God's Word.
3. **Approach God's Word with humility** – This may go with the last one a bit, but again don't treat God's Word flippantly as if you have it all figured out. Be humble and teachable when you come to God's Word. Let God's Word speak for itself, don't try to impose your own ideas and belief on it. Be teachable and a clean slate!
4. **Approach God's Word with reason** – God gave you your brain... use it! Think! Reason through Scripture. Be ready to think and think deeply about what you read. Don't be content to just skim and casually glance through God's Word think on it, reason it, meditate on it! Let it soak in. Chew on it. Ask questions of it and of yourself in relation to it.
5. **Approach God's Word with the Holy Spirit** - Additionally, we need, as best as can be had, the guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting God's Word. After all, the Bible is inspired by God and is addressed to His people. The Holy Spirit helps us to understand what God's word means and how to apply it.

Again, the Bible is God's message to man and we can have perfect confidence that God is capable of accurately relaying His Word to us in a way that we can understand. As such, it is crucial that we learn how to interpret properly so that we can determine what Scripture is really saying.

An Important Acrostic To Remember in Biblical Interpretation A.I.M.:

A = Authors

I = Intended

M = Meaning

It is crucial that we learn how to interpret properly so that we can the Author's Intended Meaning (AIM) rather than forcing our own ideas into the text. That is the goal of Biblical interpretation, hermeneutics and the hermeneutical principles that help us to proper take A.I.M. at Scripture. A given document means what the author intended it to mean. The alternative would make communication futile. There would be no point in writing anything if the readers are simply going to take what they want from the passage, rather than what the writer intends. All communication is predicated on the presupposition that language conveys the author's or speaker's intention (unless, of course, the person is trying to deceive us, which is something God does not do since He wants us to understand His Word). On the human level, to lessen the errors that come in our interpretations, we need to look at some basic biblical interpretive methods.

WHAT ARE SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRATION?

On the human level, to lessen the errors that come in our interpretations, we need to look at some basic biblical interpretive methods. These are important principles for interpretation, though basic.

10 Basic Principles of Hermeneutics in Question Form:

1. Who wrote/spoke the passage and who was it addressed to?
2. What does the passage say?
3. Are there any words in the passage that need to be examined?
4. What is the immediate context?
5. What is the broader context in the chapter and book?
6. What are the related verses to the passage's subject, and how do they affect the understanding of this passage?
7. What is the historical and cultural background?
8. What do I conclude about the passage?
9. Do my conclusions agree or disagree with related areas of scripture and others who have studied the passage?
10. What have I learned and what must I apply to my life?

CONCLUSION

Remember, the goal of interpreting God's Word is not to simply accumulate knowledge so that you can be the best at Bible trivia. The reason it is important to study and accurately interpret the Bible is so that we can know God better, know what He expects from us, and know how we can live in a way that pleases Him. Let me, in closing, share something I shared with you at the beginning of this study this evening. I think we can leave with this:

Someone has written;

It's not enough to own a Bible, you have to open it.

It's not enough to open your Bible, you have to read it.

It's not enough to read your Bible, you have to study it.

It's not enough to study your Bible, you have to apply it.

It's not enough to apply the Bible, you have to live it.