

Lesson 9

Interpretation How can we read it right? (part 2)

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Last week we learned Principle #1 to read the Scriptures right: 'Never read A Bible verse.' Today we tackle the principle #2 & 3 and are reminded why this all matters in the first place.

☀ **Matt Smethurst** (Managing Editor of Gospel Coalition)

Your Bible is evidence that the Maker of the universe is a God who initiates, who reveals, who talks. There are, after all, only two options when it comes to knowledge of one's Creator: revelation or speculation. Either he speaks, or we guess.¹

And so we kicked this series off by...

- 1: **Defining SOLA SCRIPTURA:** The Bible is the supreme authority over what Christians believe & how Christians behave. The Scriptures are the primary way He speaks to us.
- 2: **Old Testament Preservation:** Is we we have now what they wrote then?
- 3: **New Testament Preservation:** Is we we have now what they wrote then?
 - Examine the evidence & go where it leads & it leads to trustworthy manuscripts.
- 4: **Inspiration:** Has God Spoken? **God gave the Scriptures to people through people.**

☀ **John Wesley** said, "*The Bible must have been written by God or good men or bad men or good angels or bad angels. But bad men and bad angels would not write it because it condemns bad men and bad angels. And good men and good angels would not deceive by lying about its authority and claiming that God wrote it. And so the Bible must have been written as it claims to have been written—by God who by His Holy Spirit inspired men to record His words using the human instrument to communicate His truth.*"²

- 5: **THE SUBSTITUTE:** Spotlight of Scriptures: **Sin is serious. God is gracious.**
- 6: **Risen King:** Foundation of Faith **Forgiveness & Fullness are found in Jesus alone.**
- 7: **Recognized Writings & Trustworthy Translations:**
Translations communicate the message of Jesus in a meaningful way.
- 8: **Interpretation:** How can we read it right?

Each side had valid arguments.

- 1) Tyndale believed that people reading a personal copy of the Scriptures would better KNOW God and better SHOW Him to others.
- 2) Critics were concerned that the untrained reader could misinterpret the Scripture, and misuse or even abuse the Word of God

We must get the Scriptures in their language & in their hands AND train them how to rightly interpret it.

¹ <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/take-god-at-his-word-kevin-deyoung-on-the-character-of-scripture>

² John F. MacArthur Jr., Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 368-369.

Principle #1: Never read a Bible verse.

- When you only hear a PIECE of the story, you might not get the POINT of the story.
- Instead of asking “*What does it mean TO ME?*” we should be asking “*What does it MEAN...and then how I apply the principle in my life?*”
- WE don't DETERMINE what it means. We DISCOVER what it means.

Principle #2: Author & Audience before Application

☀ Dr. Wayne Stacey

“I try never to forget that the Bible was the word of God to somebody else before it was the word of God to me.”

- **Cultural Differences:** The original author & audience spoke a different language and lived on a different continent over 2000 years ago. Place ourselves in THEIR context instead of transporting them to OUR CONTEXT.
- **Literary Differences:** “I read the Bible like we do the sports page - trying to understand the intent of the author.”
- ☀ **“Cowboys Scalp the Redskins.” or “It’s raining cats & dogs.”**
- 🕒 We read poetry in a different way than we read history. The hard work is worth the effort as it enables us to answer the question ‘*What does it MEAN?*’.

Principle #3: View Scripture Thru Scripture.

1) Gives us real life examples.

Matthew 18:15-20 Confront, discipline/restore the sinful brother/sister.

So what does that look like? See discipline 1 Cor. 5:1-5 & restoration in 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

2) Gives us clarity when it’s confusing.

There are some parts of the Bible that are tough to interpret. When we come to these areas we should **Read what is UNCLEAR in light of what IS CLEAR.**

3) Shows the Character of our Creator.

Throughout the Scripture we see God as both Just and Merciful.

Old Testament

- ◆ God destroys enemies who fought against His people (JUDGMENT). He also sends Jonah to his arch-enemies in Nineveh, the Assyrian empire. The people turn from their sin and God spares the whole city (MERCY)!
- ◆ God destroys Jericho & everyone there (JUDGMENT), BUT He rescues all of Rahab's family & she is later in the family tree of Jesus as one of his great great great grandmothers (see Matt. 1:5)! (MERCY).
- ◆ When the Jewish people disobey God after years of warnings, He rips them from their homes (JUDGMENT), BUT He eventually brings them back to Jerusalem (MERCY).

New Testament

- ✦ Jesus forgives prostitutes & tax collectors who ask for help (MERCY), BUT He also drops the hammer on religious leaders who reject Him (JUDGMENT Matt. 23 & Jn. 8).
- ✦ Jesus forgives Peter when he denies knowing Him 3 times (MERCY), BUT drops a married couple dead when they lie to God & His servants (JUDGMENT - Acts 5:1-11).
- ✦ Jesus dies on the cross to make full payment for anyone who will turn from their sin and turn to Him (MERCY), BUT He will ultimately condemn those who reject His forgiveness for eternity. They will be held accountable for their sins (JUDGMENT - Matt. 25:31-34).

So....How can we make sure we read it RIGHT?

- 1. Never Read a Bible Verse**
- 2. Author & Audience before Application**
- 3. View Scripture Thru Scripture.**

Let's put these 3 principles to work in John 10.

Principle #1: Never Read a Bible Verse (Context)

John 9: Jesus has healed a blind beggar on the Sabbath. The Pharisees refused to believe that Jesus, whom they called a sinner, could have performed a legitimate miracle from God. The blind man defended Jesus by saying, "*I do not know whether he is a sinner. I do know one thing—that although I was blind, now I can see.*" (John 9:25 NET)

The Pharisees refused to believe the blind man's story and when he continued to defend Jesus, they said, "*You were born completely in sinfulness, and yet you presume to teach us?*" So they threw him out." (John 9:34 NET) Then Jesus found him! Jesus reveals who He is and says this:

John 9:39 (NET)

³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that those who do not see may gain their sight, and the ones who see may become blind."

Then Jesus tells a story.

John 10:1–6 (NET)

¹ "I tell you the solemn truth, the one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. ⁵ They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice." ⁶ Jesus told them this parable, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

* This is NOT teaching that every believer should hear the audible voice of Jesus 2000 years later.

John 10:7–10 (NET)

⁷ So Jesus said to them again, "I tell you the solemn truth, I am the door for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

Many Christians have memorized **John 10:10** and think it's contrasting Jesus to the Devil, but Jesus has been contrasting Himself, not to the devil, but to the Pharisees who were blind guides and didn't care about the 'sheep'. We appreciate this better when we apply...

Principle #2: Author & Audience before Application

Then Jesus said of Himself...

John 10:11-15 (NET)

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand, who is not a shepherd and does not own sheep, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and runs away. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ Because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep, he runs away. ¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and **I lay down my life for the sheep.**

Now, you’ve GOT to see this. This shepherd/sheep language was KNOWN to the audience. And **when we apply Principle #3: View Scripture Thru Scripture just watch what we see!**

Ezekiel 34:23-24 (ESV)

²³ And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.

John 10:16 (NET)

¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not come from this sheepfold. I must bring them too, and they will listen to my voice, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd.

* Mormons say this speaks of Jewish people who Jesus visited in the Americas. But when we view Scripture thru Scripture we see how this applies though the writing called **Acts**.

Galatians 3:26-28 (NET)

²⁶ For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ **There is neither Jew nor Greek**, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for **all of you are one in Christ Jesus**.

John 10:17-18 (NET)

¹⁷ This is why the Father loves me—because I lay down my life, so that I may take it back again.

¹⁸ No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again. This commandment I received from my Father.”

So, what are WE to apply from this 2000 years later?

1. **Be Grateful: Jesus is our Good Shepherd** as well, the one who laid down His life for his sheep - including us!
2. **Be Faithful: Hear the voice of Jesus through Scripture.** That is how we judge whether or not other ‘voices’ are from God or not. All others are imposters. Are you LISTENING to Him...or to someone who DID NOT lay down his/her life for you?

* Read all the passages we gave you today (in your notes) & use the 3 Principles of Interpretation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN w/ Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. Restate the **3 Principles of Interpretation**. Which one of these benefits you the most & why?
2. What are the dangers of bypassing the author & audience & moving directly to personal application? Explain.
3. **View Scripture thru Scripture. Read Matt. 18:15-20** and see how the command of Jesus is obeying in **1 Cor. 5:1-5**. Finally, see discipline result in restoration in **2 Cor. 2:5-11**. How does this encourage or concern you?
4. How might you respond to those who say the God of the Old Testament is different than the New Testament?
5. Why is it so important to read the Scriptures regularly? Are you doing that and/or what are your plans to read consistently this week? Who is checking on you this week?
6. Share prayer thanks & needs. Then pray for one another.