

BIBLICAL GUIDES TO UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

God speaks to us through the Bible. We want to understand what He wants us to know and how He helps us address the questions we have about life and eternity. So how do we understand the Bible? The following principles come directly from Scripture and help to guide us in reading it and understanding it. Please take some time to read each Scripture through in its context. Think about these eternal truths and principles God shows you and how they can help you understand what He is saying to you in other passages you read and have questions about as they relate to your life today and as you respond to Him.

All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16)

What other Scriptures support and help interpret a passage?

All Scripture is profitable and accomplishes Gods purposes

(2 Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 55:9-11)

The sum of Your word is truth (Ps. 119:160) All of God's Word is true.

Is the command upheld in both Old and New Covenants?

Example: The Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:4; Ephesians 6:2) or

Does the command of the Old Covenant cease in the New?

E.g.: offering of bulls, Numbers 28:11, 19, 27; Hebrews 10:4

No prophecy is a matter of one's own interpretation

(2 Peter 1:20-21) Listen to Scripture not opinion.

Recognize misinterpretation (Genesis 3:1-5; Matt. 4:1-11; Rom. 12:1-2)

The Spirit moved men to speak from God (2 Peter 1:20-21)

They did not speak on their own.

Do not add to or take away from God's Word

(Deuteronomy 4:1, 2; 12:32; Proverbs 3:5-6; Ecclesiastes 3:14; Revelation 22: 7, 18-19)

Do not go beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9)

Every word of God is tested (Proverbs 30:5) God's Word is reliable.

Test everything others say about God's Word (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1-6)

Hold to what is good; discern truth from error according to God.

God's Word is the final authority (John 12:46-50)

Be diligent (Study) (2 Tim. 2:15) God will reward your work (Heb. 11:6).

Handle the word of truth accurately (2 Timothy 2:15)

**How do passages advance/relate to the gospel (good news) of
Jesus' death, burial and resurrection?**

(Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 15:1-11)

God's Word transforms us, renews our minds, shows us God's will

(Romans 12:1-2)

Do God's will & you will know Him & His Word (John 7:17) By doing what God tells us to do we learn He is true and His Word works in us.

"He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7b)

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Please send your comments & suggestions for additions to this list to paul@paulbirston.com

BIBLICAL GUIDES TO INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE II:

The T.E.N. Tool

One helpful tool for Biblical understanding and interpretation to use with the guides on the reverse side of this page is the “T.E.N.” tool. It is helpful to understand a passage of Scripture by asking, what is God saying through the passage,

Then?

Eternally?

Now?

In the process of reading, studying and reflecting on a passage and its relevance to your life now, ask what is God saying through the inspired passage and its writer(s),

Then to the original listeners and readers in the real context of their lives?

Eternally in terms of God’s truths and principles that last forever?

Now to us here in the 21st century in the real context of our lives?

We often think of Scripture in terms of its teaching and application. This is a “two step” approach. This is quite easy to do, for example, with the letters of Paul. He first writes powerful eternal truths about God, the gospel and often about specific problems and then ends his letters with practical instructions. The two step approach is a little harder, however, when we come to passages from Leviticus or Amos. We need a middle “third step” to dig deeper and ask what God might be saying eternally. Old Testament passages are often easier to understand when the New Testament explains them in a new context. The writers of the Gospels and Letters frequently quote and use Old Testament passages in new ways that help us to understand their prophetic and eternal meanings.

Asking what God intends to say eternally is an important step we often leave out and thus we miss much of the power and beauty of Scripture, particularly the Old Testament. Both Testaments in a sense help to interpret each other. It is easier to understand the Old Testament in light of the New and the New in light of the Old. This is equally true of Proverbs which has many timeless truths for families. Sometimes there is a direct trajectory all the way through the Old and New Testaments, as for example in God’s design for marriage from Genesis to Revelation. Other times, there is no direct application to today as in, for example, Levitical dietary practices. But we can say from these that personal holiness and health were and still are important to God and to us.

Try the T.E.N. tool by reading the following Scriptures and ask what God is saying then, eternally and now. The example is helpful because Paul uses the two Old Testament passages to correct the church in Corinth which has many parallels to our own time: **1) Exodus 29:38-46, 2) Isaiah 52:11-12, 3) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18** Then read Proverbs 7 and ask what is God saying eternally to us as parents and to our youth today that can help us in specific ways to stay holy today.

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Introduction

What are some Bible passages that guide you in raising your children today?

How do you know these passages apply today?

Why don't you forbid your sons to shave and your daughters to wear blended fabrics?

You interpret the Bible to apply to your life today.

Here are some guiding passages for our household.

In last class we will talk about one method to help interpret the Bible to faithfully and truthfully apply it today.

Interpretation Exercise

Read the passages and answer these questions based on the words of each passage:

1) Exodus 29:38-46 What is God saying then, eternally, now?
Why are we not offering lambs twice daily?

2) Isaiah 52:11-12 What is God saying then, eternally, now?

3) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 What is God saying then, eternally, now?

4) Proverbs 3 and 7

What are "apple of your eye," "bind them on your fingers," "write them on the tablet of your heart today"?

Do you see a parallel to Titus 2: adorn the doctrine of God by your life