

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

HERMENEUTICS – A set of principles by which we study scripture.

EXEGESIS – Implementation of valid interpretation of these principles.

(2 TIM 2:15) – You must be a student of the scriptures. A student is one who works hard at proper understanding of the scriptures.

WHAT IS BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS?

Biblical hermeneutics is the science of properly interpreting the various types of literature found in the Bible. For example, a psalm should often be interpreted differently from a prophecy. A proverb should be understood and applied differently from a law. This is the purpose of biblical hermeneutics—to help us to know how to interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.

Some mistakenly view biblical hermeneutics as limiting our ability to learn new truths from God's Word or stifling the Holy Spirit's ability to reveal to us the meaning of God's Word. This is not the case. The goal of biblical hermeneutics is to point us to the correct interpretation, which the Holy Spirit has already inspired into the text. The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to protect us from improperly applying a Scripture to a particular situation. Biblical hermeneutics points us to the true meaning and application of Scripture. Hebrews 4:12 declares, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Biblical hermeneutics is keeping the sword sharp! There are two primary laws that make up biblical hermeneutics.

LAW #1 – The Bible should be interpreted literally.

The most important law of biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. Literal Bible interpretation means we understand the Bible in its normal/plain meaning. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. Many make the mistake of trying to read between the lines and come up with meanings for Scriptures that are not truly in the text. Yes, of course, there are some spiritual truths behind the plain meanings of Scripture. That does not mean that every Scripture has a hidden spiritual truth, or that it should be our goal to find all such spiritual truths. **Biblical hermeneutics keeps us faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and away from allegorizing and symbolizing Bible verses and passages that should be understood literally.**

LAW #2 – The bible must interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION - This refers to understanding the culture, background, and situation, which prompted the text.

Tools for this: Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries.

GRAMATICUAL INTERPRETATION - This recognizing the rules of grammar and nuances of the Hebrew and Greek languages and applying those principles to the understanding of a passage.

Tools for this:

Hebrew – Strong’s Concordance, New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance, Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon.

Greek – Strong’s Concordance, New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon.

CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATION - This involves always taking the surrounding context of a verse/passage into consideration when trying to determine the meaning. You should also look to the whole of scripture when studying a certain topic such as “salvation”.

PRIMARY STUDY TOOLS

1. Different Bible Translations – AMP, GWORD, NET, NLT, CJB
2. Topical Bible – Naves
3. Bible Commentaries
 - a. Clarke’s Commentary (Old & New Testament)
 - b. Spurgeon (Psalms, Proverbs)
 - c. Keil & Delitzsch (Old Testament)
 - d. Barne’s Notes (New Testament)
 - e. John Wesley’s Notes (Old & New Testament)
4. Bible Dictionaries – Webster’s, Smith’s
5. Encyclopedia’s – International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
6. Bible Programs – Accordance (Mac), PC Study Bible (Windows)