



Series: A Man's Guide to the Bible

Mastery - How to Accurately Interpret the Bible for Yourself

Acts 4:13, Mark 3:14; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Galatians 4:14-15, Acts 9:8-9, 18; 2 Chronicles 7:14; John 3:27; 1 John 3:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:40-44; Acts 2:1-4, Ephesians 1:13

1. Rate your confidence to interpret the bible accurately for yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, when 1 = clueless and 10 = highly competent, teacher level.

2. This week's perspective is that the Bible, "if correctly handled, can be interpreted to tell us 1) what the author originally meant, 2) the timeless message the Spirit has for us today, and 3) how to personally apply that message so we can lead powerful lives transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ." How desirable is it for you to be able to do this and why?

3. Which part of the "How to Accurately Interpret the Bible for Yourself" WORKSHEET do you find most interesting? Explain.

1) Meaning: What Was God Saying Then? Goal: To figure out what the author originally meant.

2) Message: What Does the Text Mean Today? Goal: To discover the timeless message it has for us today.

3) Application: How Does It Apply To Us Now? Goal: To personally apply the text to lead a more powerful life transformed by the gospel.

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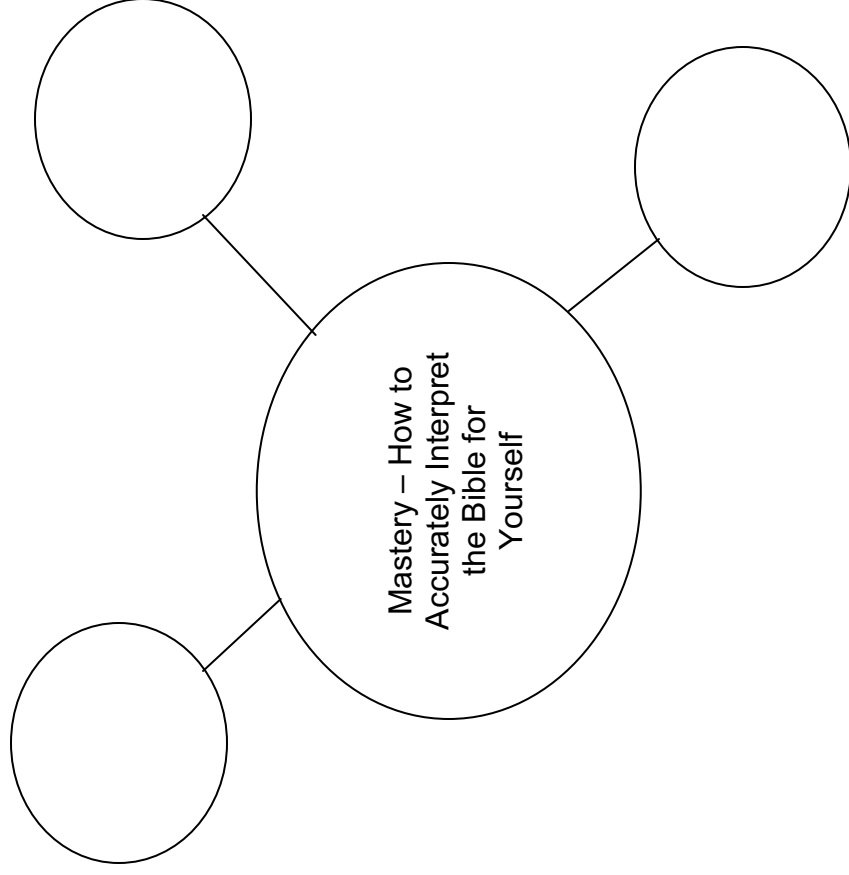
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Note-Taking Outline

The Big Idea: _____



How to Accurately Interpret the Bible for Yourself *What It Says, What It Means, How It Applies*

i. The Starting Point: A Text

The Goal: “To correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

What is the first thing you think of when you read a text?

- How does this apply to my world?
- Answer: It depends on what it meant then, and what it means now
- How do we find that out?

ii. What I Bring to the Text: What do I already know and/or believe that affects my interpretation?

The Goal: To understand my heart so it is most teachable and hungry for God’s message.

Understandings:

- Inerrant Word of God: A flawless record of exactly what God wanted to say exactly the way he wanted to say it.
- Structure: 40 inspired human authors each addressing the needs of his own generation.
- Plot: “Loving Father relentlessly pursues relationship with his children” (covenants, the main thing).
- Old and New Testaments: Like two pieces of treasure map that only make sense together
- Themes: God, salvation (sin, repentance, faith), discipleship (called, equipped, sent)
- Content: redemptive history and doctrine (a catalog of what to believe about faith and life)
- The Message: The good news of the kingdom of God in the person of Christ

Presuppositions:

- Beliefs (e.g., Statement of Faith)
- Worldview (Biblical or syncretistic)
- Degree of Humility (spirit of repentance, prone to error/sin “Luther quote”, leaving room for mystery)

Prayer: Come into the real presence of Christ, prepare for a demonstration of the Spirit’s power

1. Meaning: What Was God Saying Then?

The Goal: To find out what the author meant.

Questions To Ask: (selectively, not necessarily every question every time)

- Who wrote, to whom, when, and why written (occasion, problem, question, need, opportunity)? _____
- Where does it fall in history of redemption/revelation (i.e., didactics interpret history)? _____
- What is question/problem/situation that called this text into being? * _____
*From Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics in The Preacher and Preaching*, p. 136.
- What are the key words? _____
- What is the subject the text is talking about? _____
- What does the text say about the subject? _____
- What other Scriptures help interpret/understand this text? (word studies) _____
- What was the purpose of the text then? _____
- **What did the writer/Spirit want to communicate to his readers then?** _____

Rules For Interpretation: authorial intent, one meaning/many applications, Scripture interprets Scripture, literal reading according to genre (“love your enemies,” “adultery in heart,” common sense, default mode, perspicuity), the difference between possible—probable—necessary meaning of words and doctrines (concepts, ideas), history is not necessarily normative, didactics to interpret narrative (e.g., Holy Spirit), the role of imagination and inferences (what happened between 1 Kings 11:39-40)

Type Of Literature: narrative (historical, biographical), poetry, prophecy, didactic, axioms, parables—Mat 13:34 “Jesus did not say anything to the crowd without a parable”

Literary Devices: figures of speech (Judges 9:5 “killed all 70 sons...but Jotham escaped”), Figurative Language and Metaphor (“the door” or “drink my blood”), Hyperbole (“pluck out your eyes” or “mustard smallest seed”), Idiom (“a piece of cake” “pour out heart” “unclean lips”), Parallelism (Psalm 119:120), Anthropomorphisms (Acts 7:50, “Has not my hand made...”), Personifications (“let the mountains sing”)

2. Message: What Does The Text Mean Today?

The Goal: To discover the timeless message.

Questions To Ask:

- What would we say is happening in today’s language (e.g., no straw but same quota = downsizing)? _____
- What are the cultural (and other) similarities & differences (e.g., judicial law “gored ox”, ceremonial law “sacrifice goats”, moral law “10 Commandments”)? _____
- What about this text is true for all people, in all places, at all times, in all ways? _____
- What’s the unique contribution this passage makes to understanding God, ourselves, and his purposes? _____
- What inferences can we draw that do no violence to original meaning? _____
- Subject: Exactly what is the biblical writer talking about? _____
- Complement: What is the subject saying about what it is talking about? _____
- Exegetical Idea: A complete statement of the main idea presented in the passage (Subj + Comp)* _____
*(Subject, Complement, and Exegetical Idea from *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson)
- How does this text confirm, alter, challenge, or enhance any prior understanding? _____
- What is the purpose of the text today? _____
- **What’s the timeless message the Spirit wants to communicate to his readers today?** _____

3. Application: How Does It Apply To Us Now?

The Goal: To lead a powerful life transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ

Questions To Ask:

- What is an urgent problem screaming for immediate solution that this text addresses? _____
- What is the unique insight and message of this text to that problem? _____
- What is the application of the unique insight and message to my circumstances? _____
- So what? Where and how does God want to transform my life as a disciple and Christ follower?
 - How does this text *call* me to live “in” Christ? _____
 - How does this text *equip* me to live “like” Christ? _____
 - How does this text *send* me to live “for” Christ? _____
- Now what? How will I let it change my life? What will I think, feel, say, or do differently? _____
- **How does the Spirit want me to personally apply the text’s message?** _____

Tools of the Trade

Bible, a concordance, Strong’s, multiple translations, a Bible atlas, a Bible handbook, Introductions for the Old and New Testaments, commentaries, a Bible dictionary (e.g. “Little” Kittle), Logos Bible Software

Good books: Knowing Scripture (R. C. Sproul), Biblical Preaching (Haddon Robinson), Bible Difficulties (Gleason Archer), Halley’s Bible Handbook