



# Equipped Disciples Resource Series

## Principles of Biblical Interpretation

As you become a person who is regularly reading and studying the Bible, there are some principles that we would encourage you to use as you interpret Scripture. In theological education institutions, the study of these principles is called Hermeneutics. These principles are important because they give us some 'rules' around how to and how not to interpret Scripture. They can be very valuable in our understanding of the meaning and message God wants to give us as we read the Bible. These principles are very standard in evangelical Christianity. We hope and pray they will be helpful to you!

### General

- Begin with the assumption that the Bible is authoritative
- Let Scripture interpret Scripture
- Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary to fully understand and properly interpret the Scriptures
- Interpret personal experiences with Scripture, not Scripture with personal experiences
- Biblical examples are authoritative only when supported by a command
- The purpose of Bible study is a changed life, not merely for knowledge
- Each person has a personal responsibility to investigate and study the Word of God
- Appreciate and learn from church history, but it is not the law in interpreting Scripture
- Through the Holy Spirit, the promises of the Bible are available to believers of every generation (keeping in mind the proper context of the immediate passages)

### Grammatical

- There's only one meaning, take it literally
- Words are to be interpreted with the correct meaning during the time of the author
- Words ... then sentence ... and context
- Interpret a passage in harmony with its Context
- Consider figurative language (figures of speech)
- Figurative language can also be identified when the expression is considered out of character with the thing described
- The principle parts and figures of a parable represent certain realities. Consider only these principle parts and figures when drawing conclusions.
- Interpret the words of the prophets in their usual, literal, and historical sense, unless the context reveals a symbolic meaning

### Historical

- Since Scripture originated in a historical context, it can be understood only in the light of
- Biblical history
- Though revelation occurred progressively, the entire Bible (revelation of God) forms a unity
- Historical facts or events become symbols of spiritual truths only if the Scriptures designate them so (e.g. typologies)



# Equipping Depot Resource Series

## Theological

- You must understand the Bible grammatically before you can understand it theologically
- A doctrine cannot be considered Biblical unless it sums up and includes all that the Scriptures say about it (theological systems are only as strong as their cohesive and consistent parts)
- When two doctrines taught in the Bible appear to be contradictory, accept both as Scriptural in the confident belief they will resolve themselves into a higher unity
- A teaching merely implied in Scripture may be considered Biblical when a comparison of related passages supports it

## 6 Tips on Biblical Interpretation

1. The Bible is a historical document. Therefore, always ask, “What did the author want the original readers to understand by this statement?”
2. The original authors wanted the original readers to respond in some way. Therefore always ask, “What application did the original author want the readers to make to their lives?”
3. The whole Bible is about God! Therefore we should always ask, “What does the text tell us about God?”
4. The center of the whole Bible is Jesus Christ. The entire Old Testament leads up to him and points to him, and the entire New Testament flows from him. Therefore, we should always ask, “What does this text tell us about the greatness of Christ?”
5. All history can be divided into several major “ages” or “epochs” in salvation history. Therefore, we should read every passage of the Bible with a salvation history timeline in our minds and constantly remember where every passage fits on the timeline.
6. Themes: Because the Bible is a unity (it has one divine Author though many human authors), there are many themes that develop and grow from Genesis to Revelation. Therefore, for each significant element in any text, it is helpful to ask, (a) Where did this theme start in the Bible? (b) How did this theme develop through the Bible? and (c) Where is this theme going to end in the Bible?

Source for these 6 Tips: Ten Tips From Grudem on Biblical Interpretation, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/thabitanyabwile/10-tips-from-grudem-on-bible/>