

Schools of Biblical Interpretation

- A. **The Allegorical Approach**
 - ♦ Hidden in each passage is a symbolic spiritual meaning
- B. **The Devotional Approach**
 - ♦ The Bible is useful for devotion and prayer, but need not be studied. This leads to a surface knowledge with little depth.
- C. **The Liberal Approach**
 - ♦ Final result is relativism which cannot prove anything with certainty
- D. **The Literal Approach**
 1. **The Literal Interpretation Principle**
 - The golden rule of interpretation is: "When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense."
 2. **The Contextual Principle**
 - Any conceivable doctrine can be established when a passage is extracted from its surrounding context.
 - "A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text."
 3. **Scripture Interprets Scripture Principle**
 4. **Progressive Revelation Principle**
 - "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."
 5. **The Accommodation Principle**
 - The accommodation of Divine truths to human minds
 6. **One Interpretation per Passage Principle**
 - One meaning, with possibly many applications
 7. **Scripture Harmony Principle (non-contradictory)**
 8. **Audience Principle** – (e.g., believers, non-believers, crowds, etc.)
 9. **Difficult passages interpreted in light of clear passages**
 - The whole counsel of God needs to be factored in
 10. **The Genre Principle**
 - Poetic vs Narrative Prose (OT is 40% poetry)
 - Historical, Biographical, Prophetic, Eschatological
 11. **The Grammatical/Linguistic Principle**
 - Original Languages: Ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek
 - Non-existent punctuation and spacing between words
 - Word characteristics: gender, plurality, and meaning (e.g., what does "propitiation" mean, when does "all" mean "all", and when does "day" mean "eons"?)
 - Tenses: past, present, future, aorist, active, passive, etc.
 - Figures of speech: parables, allegories, metaphors, idioms, hyperboles, paradoxes, etc.
 12. **Historical Background Principle** – (e.g., pre-flood to Roman era)
 13. **The Cultural Background Principle**
 - Material (tools, objects, dwellings, money, weapons, garments, calendars, measurements, etc.)
 - Social (political conditions, customs such as marriage rites, burial rites, etc.)
 14. **The Geographical Principle**
 - Pre-flood vs Post-flood geography
 - Topography and Geo-political boundaries
 15. **Principle of Added Clarification** – if a parallel passage provides more details, the proper interpretation is based on that clarification.

Keep in Mind

- The Holy Spirit does not give infallible interpretations
- Piety is a help to interpretation but not a substitute for knowledge, study and common sense

Some Common Exegetical Fallacies

- Taking figurative language literally
- Taking literal language figuratively
- Over-contextualizing or ultra-literalism
- Modern day ("newspaper") revelation
- Harmonization by denial (i.e., taking liberty with what is NOT recorded in scripture)
- Making the Bible fit into our current knowledge of science
- Fanciful speculation
- Allowing the Implicit to explain the Explicit
 - ♦ The possible (implicit) explaining the certain (explicit)
 - ♦ Clarity (explicit) needs to explain the ambiguous (implicit)

What Hermeneutics is Not:

- **Letterism** – the exaggerated importance of the insignificant elements of grammar and spelling.
- **Provincialism** – believing the system in which one has been trained is the only system.
- **Traditionalism** – assumes certain traditional or familiar interpretations are the only adequate interpretations.
- **Subjective Speculation** – we can only go as far as Scripture goes. If we draw speculative conclusions we run the risk of creating doctrines of men. (e.g., Limbo for babies, Purgatory, baptism for the dead...)
- **Metaphysical or Philosophical** – words signify things directly and to express a given thought which one and only one set of words may be used. (e.g., numerology)

Definitions:

- **Bible Inspiration** is considered:
 - Verbal** – Every word in the original autographs are genuinely from God
 - Plenary** – The Bible is whole, complete and true
 - Inerrant** – There are no errors / contradictions in the original autographs
 - Authoritative** – God's Word is absolute
- **Inspiration**: The supernatural divine influence (not dictation) God used with the personality, experience, and writing style of each Biblical author to convey His truth without error
- **Interpretation**: The application of sound linguistic principles to determine an understanding of Scripture which corresponds as closely as possible to the intended original meaning
- **Illumination**: The act of the Holy Spirit to convict the reader of the truth of Scripture and lead the reader to the understanding of the general truth of God's Word
- **Revelation**: The supernatural communication of truth that man through his own intellect, reason, and investigation cannot discover for himself.
- **Hermeneutics**: The science and art of using linguistic principles and methods to properly interpret the Word of God.
- **Eisegesis/Inference**: Non-critical interpretation of text based on preconceived biases. (Injecting our beliefs into a passage)
- **Exegesis**: Critical analysis of text using sound linguistic principles.
- **Figure of Speech**: An expression which uses language in a non-literal way. Figures of speech in the Bible include:
 - ♦ Allegory/Parable: a short moral story
 - ♦ Hyperbole: an exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect (1Cor 13:1-3)
 - ♦ Idiom: an expression of a given language which is peculiar to itself grammatically (e.g., "he lies like a rug" or Hosea 7:8)
 - ♦ Metaphor: a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison (heart=mind)
 - ♦ paradox: a statement appears to contradict itself (Prov 26:4-5)

Some Interesting Figures of Speech	Equivalence
Gen 1:5b ...and the evening and the morning were the first day	Day = normal 24 hr period of time
Psalms 77:5 I have considered the days of old , the years of ancient times	Days = unspecified time in the past
2 Pet 3:8 ...one day is with the Lord as a 1000 years, and a 1000 years as one day	Metaphor indicating God is not constrained by time
Hos 7:8 - Ephraim is a cake not turned	Israel is half baked
Lk 14:26 - Must "hate" family to be a disciple of Christ	...in comparison to our greater love for Christ
John 6:54 – He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life	Mat 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
John 10:9 I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved	Metaphor illustrating Jesus controls salvation
John 11:11-13 – Our friend Lazarus sleeps	He is dead
1Tim 2:15 ...[women] shall be saved in childbearing	Context – Not saved from hell, but from deception

Did you know? Hermeneutics is a science because it is guided by rules within a system, and it is an art because of the application of those rules.