

Living by the Book—Interpreting the Book: What Does it Mean? (2 Timothy 2:15)

- In order to live life as God ordained and designed it, you must be able to understand the one instructional manual He wrote that reveals what life is all about and how it is supposed to be lived.
- Paul told Timothy (a young pastor) to “*accurately handle the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15) and he said it requires that he “*be diligent...as a workman*” to get the truth right. The inductive method of Bible Study helps us properly understand and live out God’s truth and this method uses:
 - Observation of the truth to discover, “*What do I see?*”
 - Interpretation of the truth to discover, “*What does it mean?*”
 - Application of the truth to discover, “*How does it change my life?*”
- Understanding what God means by what He says is called “*hermeneutics*”, the science and art of interpretation. It is doing what the Levites did in Nehemiah’s day when “*they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense, so that they understood the reading.*” (Nehemiah 8:8)
- Misinterpreting and misrepresenting God’s Word is the most egregious error one can make and perpetrate on others because it distorts the truth about God and the life He gives us to live for His glory.
- Using the A, B, C’s, we can utilize five tools in our hermeneutical toolbox to properly understand God’s “*word of truth*”

Ask God for understanding

- Just as we learned to seek God’s help before we observed God’s Word in step 1 (Psalm 119:18), we should also look to Him for understanding as we prepare to interpret His truth.
- Why pray? Psalm 119:160, 130, 171
- What can we pray for? Psalm 119:33-34, 73, 125, 144, 169

Bow humbly to the rules of interpretation (consider 5 rules)

- #1: Bow to the rule of the **grammatical-historical principle**: the meaning of a passage is determined by the normal and customary usage of its language in its historical setting and context.
- #2: Bow to the rule of **intent**: There is only one meaning that God intended to communicate, but there can be multiple applications. You don’t read your truth into the Scriptures (eisegesis), but dig out God’s meaning of the truth (exegesis).
- #3: Bow to the rule of **unity**: There is one, unified, consistent, harmonious flow of belief in the Bible that when correctly understood will not be contradictory.
- #4: Bow to the rule of **context**: The meaning of a word or passage must be derived from its context (what comes before or what follows after).

- #5: Bow to the rule of **culture**: You must pay attention to the cultural and historical environment of a passage. The four gospel accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John told the story of Jesus to four different audiences and emphasized four different aspects of Jesus Christ's identity and life.

Consult the original languages

- The meaning of words, phrases and its grammar must be understood from the languages used to write the Scriptures (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek).
- Look up **word definitions** (use concordances or word study dictionaries), **usages** (how words or phrases were used in their context and culture), **synonyms & antonyms**, **grammar** (noun genders, noun cases, pronouns, articles verbs with its tenses, voices, person, moods), **modifiers** (adjectives & adverbs), **conjunctions**, **prepositions**, **contrasts**, **comparisons** (utilize concordances, online Greek grammar resources like stepbible.org)

Draw on Scriptural interpretation

- The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture since God's Word is a unified whole. Use a great cross-referencing tool like The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.
- Let the clear passages interpret the obscure or unclear.

Evaluate your findings

- Check your work with secondary resources like commentaries that have been written by scholars and pastors who have spent a lifetime studying God's Word. Try to do your own study before you check your work with others.
- Excellent commentaries can be whole Bible commentaries like The Bible Knowledge Commentary (OT and NT) or Matthew Henry's Commentary or you can consult individual commentaries for each book of the Bible (check out a rated list at bestcommentaries.com)