

# Principles of Bible Study Interpretation



# The Big Picture – How to Study the Bible

1. Observation – “What do I see?”
2. Interpretation – “What does this mean?”
3. Application – “How does this work?”



# The Two Fold Objective of Bible Study

1. **How does this work for me?** The Word of God has to first work in my life, then it can be shared with others.
2. **How does it work for others?** The more I see it working as applied in my own life, the more equipped I become to share with others as a person in process of becoming more like Christ.

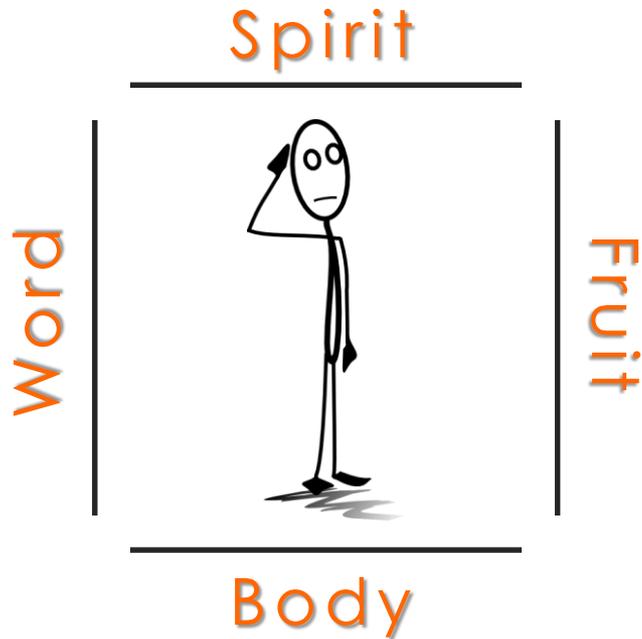
An orange square graphic with a slight drop shadow, containing the text "This is the Storehouse".

This is the  
Storehouse

# Interpretation – Keys to Remember

- Always study scripture with the Holy Spirit. Bible study is a partnership. We must be diligent to do our part and the Holy Spirit will bring illumination of the truth.
- Always interpret scripture with Learning & Living in mind. The Word completes its task when it is understood and applied. Like a seed that must be planted or bread that must be eaten.
- Always remember truth leads to truth and scripture will interpret scripture

# Interpretation – The Governing Matrix



- How do we know our interpretation is right?  
How do we stay anchored to truth and keep ourselves from drifting into error?
- Use proper methods for interpretation of the Word
- This Matrix gives us boundaries to any spiritual interaction.

# Interpretation - Introduction

- “The aim of good interpretation is simple – to get at the ‘plain meaning of the text’” \*
- The first task is carefully and systematically study the text to discover its original, intended meaning
- We must get the “there & then” before the “here & now”

# Interpretation - Introduction

- There is only one meaning or intent for a particular text in its original setting. *Do you agree?*
- The original meaning must be maintained as the interpretation is brought into the “here & now”



# Interpretation - Introduction

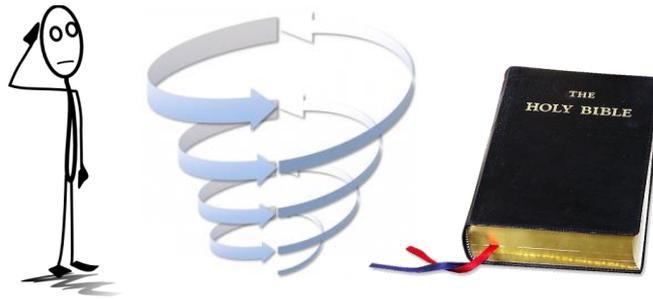
- The reader is always interpreting “We invariably bring to the text all that we are, with all of our experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas” \*
- Our first response is usually wrong since we are so far removed from the original setting. Diligence is required to build the right framework for correct interpretation.
- Learn how to hold loosely to your initial responses allowing the Holy Spirit to change or build on those ideas.

# Interpretation - Terms

- **Exegesis** – The science of interpreting any literary work or text – has to do with the “there & then,” the author and the recipient – This is understanding what we read
- **Hermeneutics** – Rules for interpreting any literary work or text. How do we get from there to here? – This is interpreting what we read
- Gordon Fee says everyone does a little exegesis and a lot of hermeneutics all the time. When we read the Bible we automatically make a transfer to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in our minds.

# Interpretation - Terms

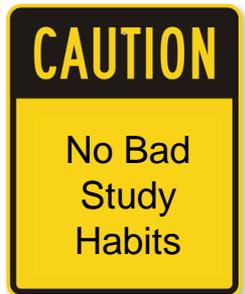
**Hermeneutical Spiral** – “The honest, reflective, humble interpreter remains open to change, even to a significant transformation of preunderstandings. Since we accept the Bible’s authority as mediated through the Holy Spirit, we remain open to correction by its meaning.” \*



# Interpretation - Cautions

## 1. Be careful about selective interpretations

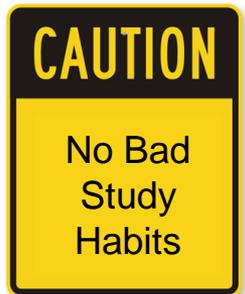
Avoid guessing at interpretations or applying the meaning of one text to another text. We find similarities, patterns, and relational familiarity with authors or biblical characters, but that serves as a support for correct interpretation not a substitute for interpretation.



# Interpretation - Cautions

## 2. Be careful about wrong or popular interpretations

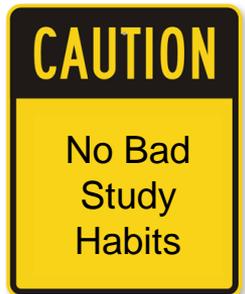
Don't settle for a second-hand relationship with the Living Word of God. We live in a consumer society where we want truth handed to us in a Sunday morning message or a five minute devotional. Do your own study! Be careful not to repeat incorrect interpretations or simply accept them without further investigation. Look at Mark 10:24.



# Interpretation - Cautions

## 3. Be careful not to make interpretations more palatable

Don't put any additional meaning into the text and don't change the meaning you suite your needs. We have a tendency to take the favorable interpretations and leave the unfavorable ones. Don't "re-interpret" a text to get a more popular or suitable meaning. Look at Luke 14:26.



# Interpretation - Cautions

## 4. Be careful to always interpret in context

Correct exegesis will always fit with the observed context and be in harmony with the broader context and setting of the text. Context serves as an excellent interpretive guideline.

