

A young man with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt, is seated at a desk, leaning forward and focused on writing in a spiral-bound notebook. He is surrounded by several books and papers, suggesting a study or research environment. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the room and the window.

# Interpretation

# Interpretation

Determining what  
the passage means.



# Interpretation



Interpretation is the **2<sup>nd</sup> stage** in studying the Bible. Interpretation is the active process of trying to *determine message* and meaning.

# Message

# Meaning

# Message

## THIS WEEK!

# Meaning

## NEXT WEEK!

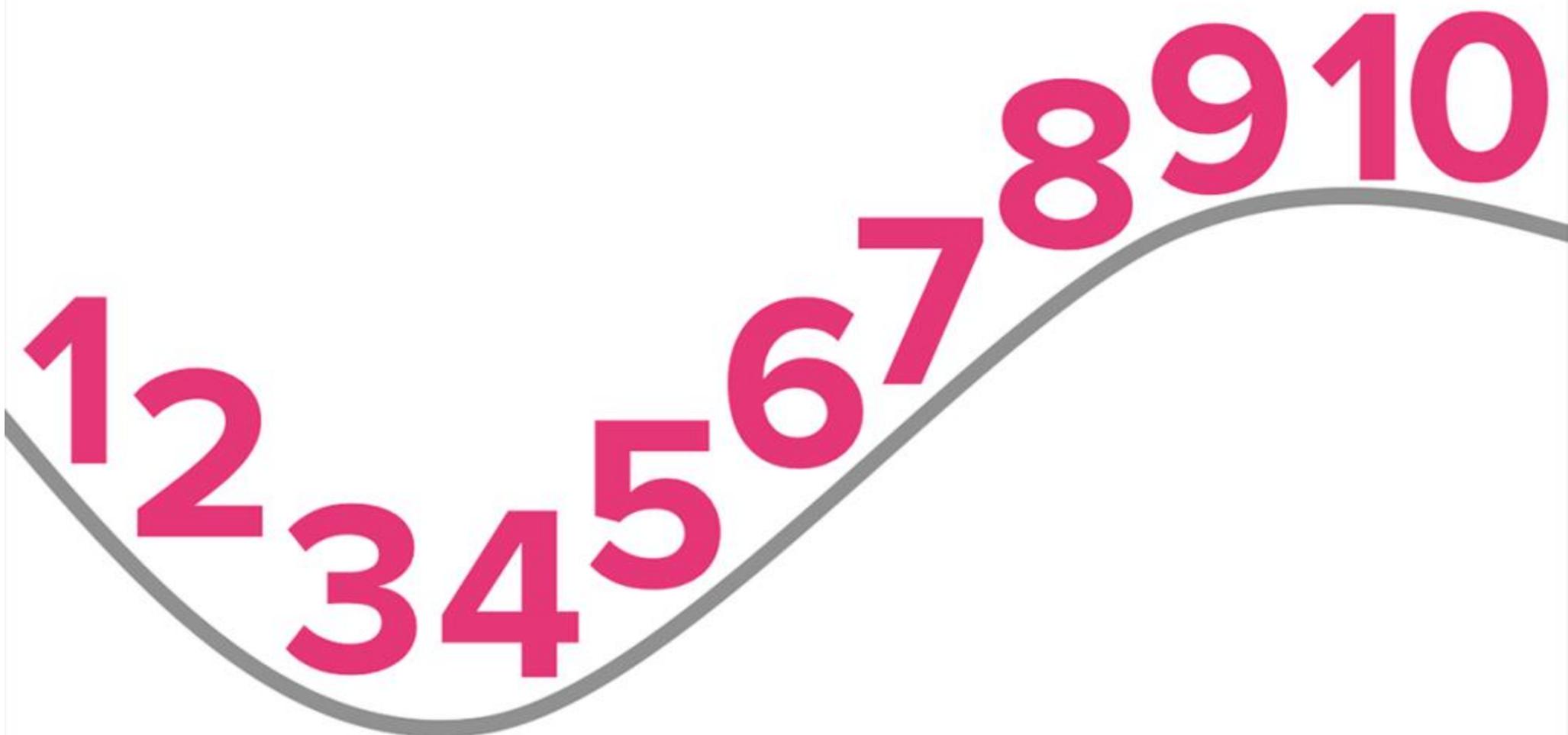
Interpreting the message  
is the discipline of determining  
the desired intention of  
what was said.



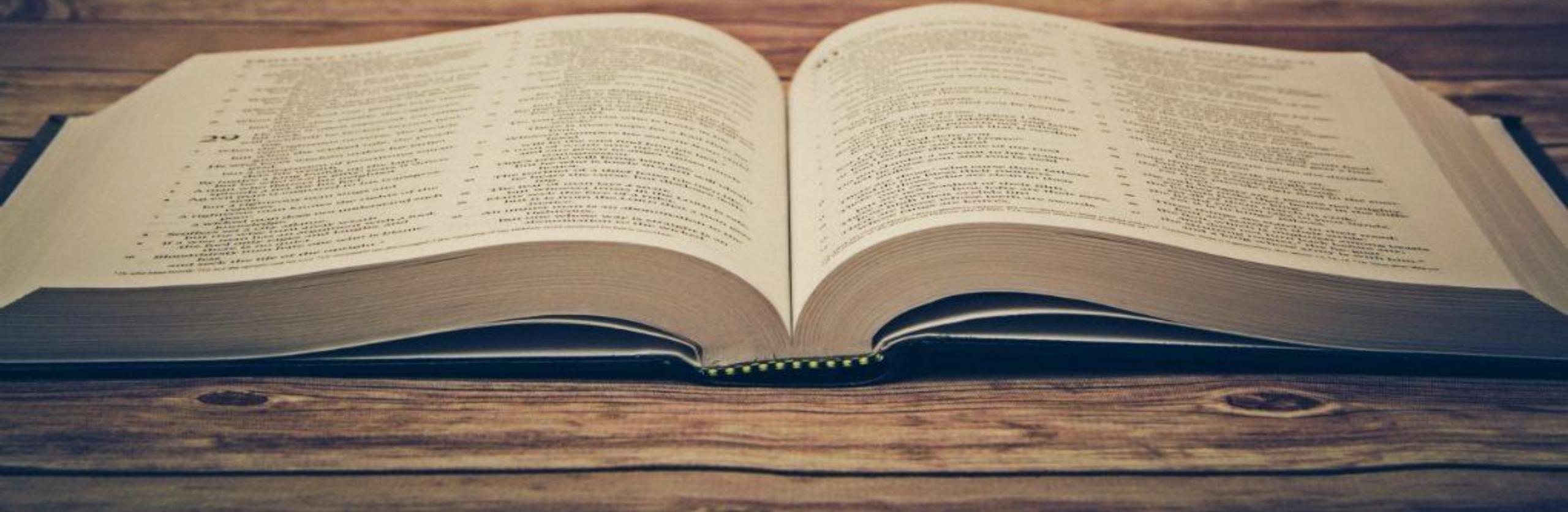
# Message

Interpreting the overall message of a passage is the process of attempting to come as closely as possible to God's original, specific and direct intent of the passage.

# Steps for Determining the Message



**Step 1**  
Remember the full counsel  
of the Word of God.



**The first step**  
to discovering the  
message is to always  
keep in mind all the  
other clear teachings  
in the Word of God.



We must have a basic, yet overarching understanding God's Word. This way we will not accept a teaching simply because someone has used one or two **isolated** verses to support it.

*Ex: John 15:7 “Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you...”*

## Step 2

Remember that scripture will never contradict scripture.



**The second step**  
to discovering the  
message is to always  
keep in mind that  
scripture will never  
contradict scripture.

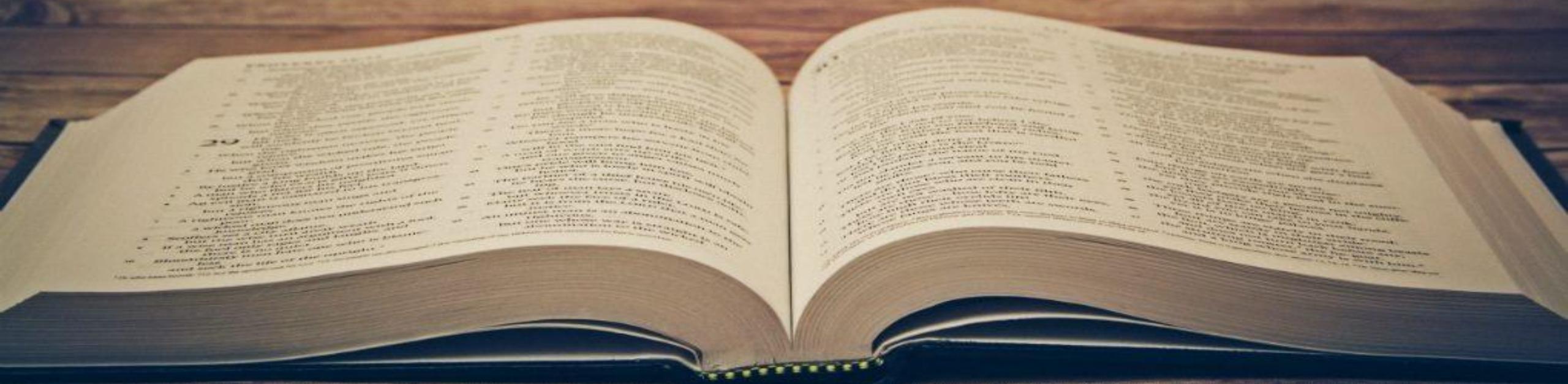


The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture.

Remember, all Scripture is inspired by God. It is God breathed; therefore, Scripture will never contradict itself. Sometimes, however, you may find it difficult to reconcile two seemingly contradictory truths taught in Scripture, such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Don't take a teaching to an extreme that God doesn't.

# Step 3

Remember that context rules.



The third step  
to discovering the  
message is to always  
keep in mind that  
scripture must always  
be interpreted within  
the **immediate** context  
in which it is found.



The word “context” means that which goes with the text. If you lay the solid foundation of observation, you will be prepared to consider each verse in light of the **surrounding** verses, the book in which it is found, and the entire Word of God. As you study, ask yourself: **Is my interpretation of this passage of Scripture consistent with the theme, purpose, and structure of the book in which it is found?**

# Step 4

Interpret the passage literally.



**The fourth step**  
to discovering the  
message is to always  
remember that God is  
not obscure &  
mystical. He is usually  
clear & direct and  
wants us to know the  
truth.

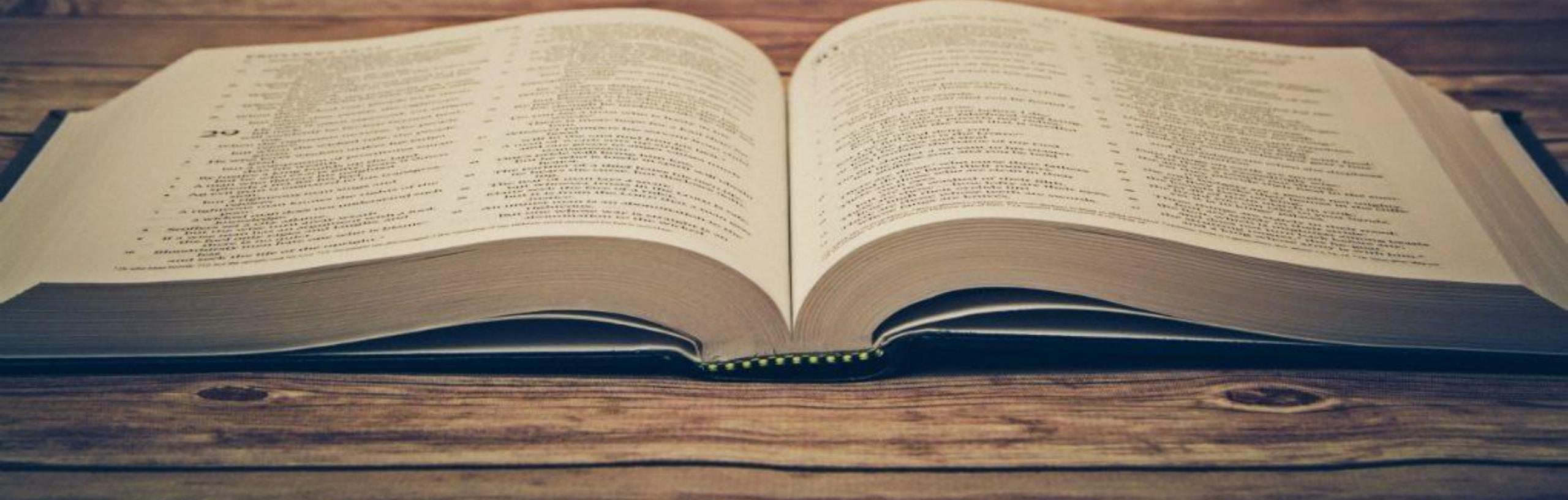


The Bible is not a book of mysticism. God spoke to us that we might know truth.

Therefore, take the Word of God at face value – in its natural, normal sense. Look first for the **clear** teaching of Scripture, not a hidden meaning.

# Step 5

## Interpret the passage in light of other clear doctrines.



**The fifth step**  
to discovering the  
message is to always  
keep in mind other  
clear teachings &  
doctrines in the Bible.

God's word has  
uniformity.



By clear doctrines we mean;  
we know clearly that God is Holy,  
God is Righteous etc. If a passage  
appears to suggest otherwise...  
your interpretation is wrong.

We know clearly that salvation is by faith and not by works. If a passage appears to suggest otherwise...  
your interpretation is wrong.

# Step 6

Do not base new doctrines on  
an obscure passage.



**The sixth step**  
to discovering the  
message is to never  
make new claims or  
develop doctrinal  
positions/ideas on the  
basis of very obscure,  
random or minor  
passages.



**The sixth step**  
is to always interpret  
the passage in light of  
other clear, direct,  
major portions...and  
not obscure or  
difficult portions.



An obscure passage is one in which the meaning is not easily understood. Because they are difficult to understand they should not be used as a basis for establishing doctrine. Likewise, an obscure passage with new claims/doctrines should not usurp a very clear passage with solid widely accepted/supported doctrines.

**Step 7**  
Keep in mind  
Chapter/Paragraph summaries.



# The seventh step

is to always interpret  
the passage in light of  
the Chapter and  
Paragraph summaries.

Those summaries  
clearly indicate the  
author's intent.



Again as you study, ask yourself: Is my interpretation of this passage of Scripture consistent with the theme, purpose, and structure of the book in which it is found? Is it consistent with and does it support further my summaries?

# Step 8

## Write a summary paragraph.



**The eighth step**  
is to write a summary  
paragraph of what you  
believe to be God's  
original desired message  
& intent of the Book &  
Chapters.



In this summary you are not trying to simply restate what was said...we have already done that. In this summary we are trying to communicate what God's goal was in directing the author to write the passage. We are trying to determine what God's intent within His message was.

*“God’s desire in the 4rth Chapter of Ephesians was to communicate \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ to the believers in/around Ephesus.”*

# Step 9

Write new paragraph summaries.



**The ninth step**  
is to write new  
paragraph summaries  
based around message  
and intent. *“God’s desire  
in paragraph one was  
that...”*



*“In paragraph one, God wanted the believers to know...”*

*“In paragraph two, God wanted the believers to begin...”*



# Step 10

## Check conclusions by using reliable commentaries.



# The tenth step

is to eventually double check your conclusions against a reliable commentary or esteemed biblical author.

Our interpretations should not regularly contradict these sources.



In this final stage, we want to browse a reliable Bible commentary or two...such as Mathew Henry's Bible Commentary found at [BibleHub.com](https://BibleHub.com) and discover how our interpretations match up with theirs.