

Week 7 Bible Study: Introduction to Interpretation, Message

Interpretation is determining what the passage means.

Interpretation is the 2nd stage in studying the Bible. Interpretation is the active process of trying to *determine* _____ and _____.

Interpreting the message is the discipline of determining the desired _____ 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.

10 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 _____ verses to support it.

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 _____ 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 _____ 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 _____ 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 and discover how our interpretations match up with theirs.