



PRACTICAL HERMENEUTICS.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

BY:

DR. CORNELIUS (NEAL) HEGEMAN

**SEMINARIO INTERNACIONAL DE MIAMI
MIAMI INTERNATIONAL SEMINARY
(MINTS)**

**14401 Old Cutler Rd.
Miami, Florida 33158. USA
786-573-7000
hejkm@aol.com**

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PREFACE

The purpose for this course on practical hermeneutics is to give the distance education Bible student tools by which to study their Bible. The profile of the distance education student is one who is working full time, does not have ready access to residential seminary or Bible college courses, is involved in proclamation ministry, has interest in meeting once a week for further Bible study and has access to an Internet service. This course is designed from such a student.

Since *Practical Hermeneutics* is being translated into a variety of languages several adjustments are made. Access to the English materials will not be functional and practically speaking, it is assumed that the resource available to the student is a Bible, several commentaries and internet service. International internet services have Bible versions, Concordances, Bible dictionaries and Lexicons, secular dictionaries and other academic tools. These resources are very limited but they will have to do until more resources are made available. As much as possible, the resources quoted in the footnotes are internationally translated. If not, the translators are free to add their own, as long as they are compatible.

The greatest tool the believing student has available is the Bible, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the faithful and ministering Church. The student in Russia, or Turkey, or Colombia has several versions of the Bible handed down through the ages. The Holy Spirit illuminates our minds to be perceptive, logical and consistent. God has planted and grown His Church throughout the world. The Church is accessible through mission out reaches, a variety of ministries as well as through the worshipping community of believers, the Church. Therefore, this course will use Scripture as its main source, rely on the talents and gifts God has given to the leadership of the Church for guidance and teaching and rely on logic as the instrument in order to think through the implications of the text.

Since we will not be appealing extensively to external resources such as academic studies, archeological finds, linguistical helps, we will rely on the internal resources of the Biblical text. Such an approach is not a detriment but a great advantage to the student since the Biblical context is the greatest tool for determining the meaning of a text.

Having said this, our approach is not a substitute for the serious study of the ancient cultures, history, languages, linguistics and philosophies. One of the greatest needs in Biblical studies today are for serious students in all ethnic groups to work on the translation of Scripture from the original languages to their own language. I am in agreement with Ralph Winter when he observes that a people group is not reached until 20% of the population is attended a Christian church and the church has at least some leaders who are able to interpret the Bible from the original languages of the Bible. This unreached people principle may be applicable to areas in the Euro-American scene as well.

This course in Practical Hermeneutics is followed by another course in Practical Exegesis and yet another in Practical Homiletics. The adjective 'practical' is used to distinguish the course from the traditional scientific and academic treatment these subjects are given.

The major reading sources for this course are Gordon D Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, Baez-Carmargo Gonzalez, *Breve Historia del canon bíblico*; Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible*. R.C. Sproul's, *Knowing Scripture*; and Geerhardus Vos. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*.

A special thanks to Eric Pennings, Jared Reid, Roger Smalling and Allen Vander Pol for reading this course (in English or Spanish) and making their contributions to it.

HERMENEUTICS: PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

COURSE INSTRUCTIONS

LESSON ONE	INTRODUCTION
LESSON TWO	THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE
LESSON THREE	THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION First Principle: The Word of the true God Second Principle: Christ-centered revelation Third Principle: inspired and illuminated by the Holy Spirit
LESSON FOUR	PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION AND INTERPRETATION First Principle: Revelation First Principle: Absolutely true Second Principle: Biblical Fourth Principle: Historical redemptive Fifth Principle: Fourth: Manuscript study
LESSON FIVE	PRINCIPLES FOR TEXTUAL CONTENT STUDY OF THE BIBLE First Principle: Exegetical preparation Second Principle: Grammatical Third Principle: Literary genre Fourth Principle: History of the text
LESSON SIX	PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEXTUAL STUDY First Principles: Bible context Second Principle: Secular historical context Third Principle: Cultural context Fourth Principle: Universal context
LESSON SEVEN	PRINCIPLES FOR PERSONAL STUDY First Principle: Transformational Second Principle: Faithful Third Principle: Ethical Fourth Principle: Devotional
LESSON EIGHT	PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTERIAL STUDY First Principle: Proclamation Second Principle: Priesthood of all believers Third Principle: Didactical Fourth Principle: Worship of true God

FOOTNOTES
BIBLIOGRAPHY
APPENDIX

COURSE INSTRUCTIONS

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

The student will be introduced to the science of Bible interpretation.

SUMMARY OF COURSE CONTENT

Lesson one introduces the student to the opinion of others as to how to interpret the Bible. Lesson two reviews the hermeneutical circle. Lessons three to seven are dedicated to the explanation of 20 principles for interpreting the Bible. Lesson eight recommends three Bible study methods.

COURSE MATERIALS

The student manual consists of eight lessons. The eight hour conference will orient the students according to the student manual. The students will also read the book of R.C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* or watch the video series with the same title as part of the their reading requirements (other reading can be substituted).

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

There are five general objectives for this course on hermeneutics. First, the student will participate in class and study groups. Second, the student will seek to comprehend the basic concepts of hermeneutics. Three, the student will develop hermeneutical and exegetical skills. Fourth, the student will be exposed to proven Biblical interpreters will be given. Finally, the student will show mastery over the basic concepts of hermeneutics.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE

1. The student will attend 15 hours of class or interactive mentoring in person or via Internet.
2. The student will complete the homework assignments at the end of the lessons in the student manual.
3. The student will complete a special project where he/she studies a Bible text using the principles and methods taught in the course.
4. The student will become familiar with the writings and materials of other authors.
5. The student will take a final exam.

EVALUATION OF THE COURSE.

1. The student will attend 15 hours of class or interactive mentoring. For every class hour attended one point will be given (15% of total).
2. The student will complete the homework assignment at the end of each lesson in the student manual. For every homework assignment completed, two points will be given (15%).

3. The student will complete a special project where he/she studies a Bible text using the principles and methods taught in the course. The student will complete the assignment prior to the last class (30%).
4. The student will become familiar with the writings and materials of other authors. For the BA student, a three page report (for MA, 5 pages) will be written as to the content of Knowing Scripture, both from the book and/or video (20%). The BA student will read a total of 300 pages and the MA student 500. The syllabus readings, as well as the Sproul reading, are part of the total pages read; the rest is determined by the student.
5. The student will take a final exam (20%). The final exam tests the student in the understanding of the hermeneutical circle and the definition of the principles of Bible interpretation as presented in this course.

BENEFITS OF THE COURSE

The study of God's Word is transformational for the student and for people he or she relates to. It is our hope that the student will use the study of God's Word for Christian ministry.

CLASS RECORD

The teacher of the class will fill in the appropriate grade for each segment of study.

Student Name	Level of study	Class attendance (15%)	Homework completed (15%)	Reading and viewing report and oral presentation (20%)	Special Bible study project (30%)	Final Exam (20%)	Final Grade
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TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

1. Instruct the students to keep one class ahead for scheduled homework so that they come to class prepared.
2. Class time will be spent by reviewing last week's homework assignment; by reviewing the written lesson for that day and by explaining future homework, readings and special project.
3. By the end of the course the teacher will have the grades for class attendance, for homework prepared for class, for completing readings and reading reports, for the mark for the special project, the mark of the final exam and the final grade. This class record needs to be sent to the Academic Dean of MINTS (hegjkm@aol.com). If the class record is not sent to MINTS the grades can not be recorded at the MINTS central office.

LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTON

The guiding Scripture for our study in hermeneutics is, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17). For that reason it is good to look for doctrines and teachings, identify that which needs to be corrected, give a better alternative and equip the believer to obey the Word and so participate in the works of Christ.

REVIEW OF SOME OF THE PRINCIPLES FOR HERMENEUTICS

This course will introduce principles for interpreting the Bible. In lessons 3-8, each of the principles will be defined, shown from Scripture, tested by raising objections and studies through a variety of homework exercises.

PRINCIPLE	BRIEF EXPLANATION OF PRINCIPLE
ABSOLUTE	Biblical interpretation corresponds to God and His revelation.
BIBLICAL	The Bible is to be interpreted with the Bible.
BIBLICAL CONTEXT	The Bible is one book, both Old and New Testament, in which all its parts are harmoniously connected.
CHRIST-CENTERED	Biblical interpretation is Christ centered. Jesus is God’s personal revelation.
DIDACTICAL	The Bible teaches authoritatively in all areas of life. The Bible teaches us so we can teach others.
CULTURAL	Understanding of the social and cultural context is important for understanding the
CONTEXT	Biblical text and the relationship of our context to the Bible.
DEVOTIONAL	The interpretation of the Bible is part of the heartfelt communication between God and His people.
ETHICAL	The right interpretation of the Bible leads to responsible ethical action
EXEGETICAL	The Biblical text’s content and context are studied to determine what the text meant to the original author and readers as well as for us.
FAITHFUL TO BIBLE	Biblical interpretation is to be consistent with what the text says.
GRAMMATICAL	Biblical interpretation is according to grammatical rules.
HISTORICAL	Biblical interpretation affirms secular historical facts as well as Biblical history.
CONTEXT	
HISTORY OF TEXT	The history of a text needs to be interpreted by the teaching of the text.
HISTORICAL	The Bible text needs to be put into its historical-redemptive context of creation, fall,
REDEMPTIVE	restoration and consummation.
INSPIRATION AND	The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Word is the Spirit who leads and guides the
ILLUMINATION	believer to understand God’s Word
LITERARY GENRE	The Bible text is to be interpreted according to the type of literary genre it belongs to.
MANUSCRIPT	Careful study will be made of the Bible manuscripts in their original languages.
STUDY	
PRACTICAL	A faithful interpretation leads to corresponding ethical action.
PRIESTHOOD OF	The Scriptures instruct believers to exercise the priestly function of prayer and
ALL BELIEVERS	mediation.
PROCLAMATION	The written Word becomes the oral Word through faithful proclamation.

REVELATION	The special and general revelations of God correspond perfectly. The Bible affirms natural law and true science.
TRANSFORMATIONAL	The Bible as the Word of God has the power to instill faith that will spiritually transform its readers, influences their relationships and change the world.
UNITY OF SCRIPTURE	The Bible is one book in which all of its parts are harmoniously connected.
UNIVERSAL CONTEXT	The Bible is for all peoples, all languages, all social groups, all generations, both genders and for all times.
WORD OF GOD	The Word of God is God's self-revelation to us and in order to understand the written Word we need to have faith in the living Word, Jesus Christ.
WORSHIP OF TRUE GOD	The true interpretation of the Bible will cause the believer to worship the true God.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

The student is asked to read and contemplate on the following sayings. It would be good to write your reaction on a piece of paper.

Hermeneutics is "etymologically related to Hermes, a Greek god. Hermes was the messenger of the gods, corresponding to the Roman god, Mercury...hermeneutics prescribes the process by which we seek to understand a message" (R.C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown*, p. 55).

Athanasius..."The Holy Scripture is mightier than all synods...The whole of our Scriptures, the Old Testament and the New Testament, are...a book wholly inspired by God from beginning to end."

Augustine..."The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained."

Augustine in a letter to St. Jerome..."I have learned to hold only the Holy Scripture inerrant." In *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 1:87.

Anonymous... "Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them."

T.J. Bach...Where God has put a period; do not change it to a question mark.

F.F. Bruce..."The Bible was never intended to be a book for scholars and specialists only. From the very beginning it was intended to be everybody's book, and that is what it continues to be."

John Calvin..."Since we are not favoured with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that God has been pleased to preserve His truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers...as if they had heard the very words pronounced by God Himself" (*Institutes*, 1.7.1.).

John Calvin..."For if we consider how slippery is the human mind...how prone to all kinds of error...we can perceive how necessary is such a depository of heavenly doctrine, that it will neither perish by forgetfulness, nor vanish in error, nor be corrupted by the audacity of men." (*Ibid.*)

John Gerstner..."If God (or one who has the power of God), proposes that the Bible is the Word of God, what sane person can question it?" (*Hand Theology*, 6.7).

John Gerstner..."If the Bible is the Word of God, it is self-evident that it cannot have one error, anywhere, in all its original text" (*Handout Theology*, 6.8).

John Gerstner..."Another Warning. This book does not flatter, cajole, or cultivate. It blows your hard-built-up self esteem. Abandon pride all who enter here" (*Handout Theology*, 7.5).

John Gerstner..."If you are not capable of being insulted you can't interpret this book correctly" (*Handout Theology*, 7.6).

John Gerstner..."You won't believe what the Bible says if you won't believe how bad you are" (*Handout Theology*, 7.7).

John Gerstner..."The "righteous" can't let this word have free course because that would spell the end of their self-righteousness. They have a vested interest in unsound interpretation" (*Handout Theology*, 7.8).

Anonymous..."The errors are not in the Bible but in our intentions."

Will H. Houghton..."Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays hold of you."

C.S. Lewis..."A sacred book rejected is like a king dethroned."

Martin Luther... "Unless I am convinced by Sacred Scripture or by evident reason, I will not recant. My conscience is held captive by the Word of God and to act against conscience is neither right nor safe." (Diet of Worms, 1520).

Martin Luther..."I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf." (*What Luther says*.)

Martin Luther... "The Holy Spirit Himself and God, the Creator of all things, is the Author of this book" (*What Luther Says*, 1.63).

Martin Luther... "The Word must stand, for God cannot lie; and heaven and earth must go to ruins before the most insignificant letter or title of His Word remains unfulfilled" (*What Luther Says*, 1.68).

Martin Luther... "The Holy Spirit is the plainest Writer and Speaker in heaven and on earth. Therefore His words can have no more than one, and that the most obvious sense. This we call the literal or natural sense. But that the things meant by the plain sense of His plain Word may also mean something further and different, and thus one thing signifies another, is more than a question of words and languages. For this is true of all things outside Scripture, since all God's works and creatures are living signs and words of God as St. Augustine and all the teachers declare. But we should not on this account say that Scripture or God's Word has more than one meaning" (*What Luther Says*, 1:91-92).

Justin Martyr..."When you hear the words of the prophets spoken as though in their own persons, you are not to think that they are uttered by the inspired men themselves, but by the divine Word who moves them."

R.C. Sproul..."Infallibility means that something cannot err, while inerrancy means that it does not err" (*Grace Unknown*, p. 48).

Belgic Confession. Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture

"We believe that this Holy Scripture contains the will of God completely and that everything one must believe to be saved is sufficiently taught in it. For since the entire manner of service which God requires of us is described in it at great length, no one-- even an apostle or an angel from heaven, as Paul says--ought to teach other than what the Holy Scriptures have already taught us. For since it is forbidden to add to or subtract from the Word of God, this plainly demonstrates that the teaching is perfect and complete in all respects.

Therefore we must not consider human writings-- no matter how holy their authors may have been-- equal to the divine writings; nor may we put custom, nor the majority, nor age, nor the passage of time or persons, nor councils, decrees, or official decisions above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else.

For all human beings are liars by nature and more vain than vanity itself.

Therefore we reject with all our hearts everything that does not agree with this infallible rule, as we are taught to do by the apostles when they say, "Test the spirits to see if they are of God," and also, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house." Gal. 1:8; Deut. 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 10

Westminster Confession of Faith..."The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them."

LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION (1689) Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scriptures

1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal Himself, and to declare that his will unto His church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased. (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31;

Ephesians 2:20; Romans 1:19-21; Romans 2:14,15; Psalms 19:1-3; Hebrews 1:1; Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19,20)

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these: OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, To Titus, To Philemon, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, The first and second Epistles of Peter, The first, second, and third Epistles of John, The Epistle of Jude, The Revelation. All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life. (2 Timothy 3:16)

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings. (Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2)

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God. (2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9)

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. (John 16:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20, 27)

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed. (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:8,9; John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12; 1 Corinthians 11:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 14:26,40)

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the

unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them. (2 Peter 3:16; Psalms 19:7; Psalms 119:130)

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. (Romans 3:2; Isaiah 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39; 1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28; Colossians 3:16)

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16)

10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.” (Matthew 22:29, 31, 32; Ephesians 2:20; Acts 28:23)

LAUSANNE COVENANT (1974). 2. THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE BIBLE

“We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God.(II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16, Matt. 5:17,18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17,18; 3:10,18)”

Voltaire..."If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man's belief in the Bible."

EXERCISE. 1. List three of the author's principles and give a brief definition for each one.

2 .Read through what people have said about the Bible and share which are your two favorite ones and say why.

LESSON TWO

THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE

When you interpret, you are not only interpreting a text but you give meaning to all of life and its reality. Your interpretation reflects on the whole and all its parts. The hermeneutical circle seeks to do justice to such a cosmic outlook.¹

The hermeneutical circle consists of all of the major components of your world and life view, your cosmology.² It includes reflecting on God, God's revelation, the Bible, the world, the gospel, the Church, the people involved, Christian ministry and mission in the world and the glory due to God's because of His Word. The author's thesis is that Biblical hermeneutics must begin and end with God and that it must take into consideration all the other facts mentioned in order to present a balanced view.

The Biblical cosmology presented in this study is derived from the Golden Rule and the Good News. The Golden Rule is *to love God above all else and your neighbor as yourself* and it identifies the primary role of loving God first, followed by loving other people and oneself. The Good News is *that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life* and this qualifies the kind of love that identifies the Church, its message, its people, its mission in the world. Bible interpretation that violates the Gold Rule and the Gospel cannot be considered Christian nor Biblical.

Let us consider how hermeneutics relates to our Biblical cosmology. One's interpretation starts with the knowledge and faith in the only true God. It then proceeds to His double revelation: general and special revelation. The Bible is part of God's special revelation and its major message is about the kingdom and salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ. This gospel message, as communicated in the Bible, is to be communicated by the Church throughout the whole world and to all people. This is accomplished through exercise of the three fold ministries of proclamation, prayer and mediation and service. When God's people are faithful in their interpretation, ministry and mission they will glorify God.

GOD

PRAISE OF GOD

REVELATION

MINISTRY AND MISSION

BIBLE

THE GOSPEL

THE PEOPLE

THE WORLD

CHURCH

¹ The usage of the term 'circle' does not imply that one's interpretation is self repeating. One could speak of a hermeneutical spiral. See Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*.

² Albert Wolters, in *Creation Regained* defines world view as, "the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things." (p. 2).

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND GOD

The starting point for understanding, including epistemology (doctrine of knowing) and hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) is the only true God (Proverbs 1:7). He is eternal, the creator, one in essence and plural in personhood, Lord, sovereign, universal, has authority over evil, holy, among other attributes, and who has revealed Himself to us. In the New Testament He is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus accepts all of the divine names as applicable to Himself and He receives the worship of His disciples showing that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is God. Despite the universal effects of sin, God's life transforming grace presses on, the inspired Word goes forth and the hearts and minds of the elect believer are illuminated by the Holy Spirit to believe, understand and by transformed by the gospel, minister to other and glorify God in true worship.

Most of the religious leaders in Jesus day rejected Jesus as the Messiah, as Son of God, the Son of Man, as Lord, King, Creator and Savior. Today, Feminism, the Jehovah Witnesses, Judaism, Islam, liberal Protestantism, New Age, Mormonism and world religions, as discerned by their statements about God, reject the true knowledge of God and initiate their hermeneutics in error.³

The hermeneutical circle begins with the true God and His Word.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND GOD'S REVELATION

Do you think God is able to reveal Himself to sinners? The problem is not God's ability (omnipotence) but it is His holiness (sinlessness). Sinners say they want to see God for themselves, "why does He not just show up?" Well, he did and sinners rejected and crucified Him.

The creator of the universe has revealed Himself and by grace continues to do so. His general revelation is to all people and His special revelation is to His people. General revelation includes God's miraculous creation, His providence, natural law, human history, personal events and other ways in which His presence is shown to all people. Special revelation includes the theophanies, the coming of Jesus, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

The believing student has the guarantee that the true interpretation of the Bible and true science are completely compatible and affirm one another for they come from the same reliable source. The "disconnect" between the Bible and science lies not with the Bible and science but in our interpretation and understanding of them.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND THE BIBLE

God chose to use the means of the Bible in order to communicate absolute truth to us.⁴ The Bible is central in interpreting truth since it is God's special and written revelation. Truth corresponds to God's character and revelation.

The Bible is the Word of God for all people. It is meant to be understood by young and old, in all languages and by people from all cultures and social classes. It is the responsibility of the Church to translate and communicate the Word worldwide and for all people.

³ An excellent internet resource to find out about world religions and sects is www.carm.org

⁴ Is there truth that is not absolute? The reason we affirm truth with the adjective is to affirm its nature. Truth is all that which corresponds to reality as defined by God's revelation. Truth is the expression of what really is.

The revealed Scripture is inerrant. The original manuscripts as penned by their authors did not contain errors or contradictions in content.⁵ Scripture forbids the adding or taking away from the Biblical text (Rev. 22:19). There are mysteries, paradoxes and unknowns in the Bible, but God is not capable of revealing error. Human error enters into the Scripture through copyists, translators and interpreters. A serious student of the Bible will be able to examine and interpret difficult Biblical texts and discern their message. The Christian does not shy away from the important and difficult task of studying the Bible in its original languages and according to the ancient manuscripts.

The translation of Scripture from one language into another need to consider the content (message) and form (grammar) of the biblical text. A literal translation maintains the message and seeks to maintain the grammatical construction and vocabulary usage. When an ethnic language does not have a word for lamb, the word and its definition is introduced into the culture. The dynamic equivalent method of translation is used, the content of the message is maintained but liberty is given to use other words to communicate such a new word or concept.

Ethnic church leaders need to be trained in Bible translation, original languages and linguistics in order to provide a literal translation for their language group. Each ethnic group has the right to know what the originals say.

Even though the Bible was written by many human authors who lived in different cultures and times, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit unifies all of Scripture. The Bible student can expect to find harmony between Biblical texts.

The Bible is divided into a variety of literary genres, including history, laws, parables, prophecies, proverbs and poetry. Each genre has its respective way of being interpreted and their message will not contradict the rest of Scripture.

The Bible is the best commentary for the Bible. The Bible interprets the Bible. The Word of God interprets the Word as the interpreter seeks God's point of view.

The Bible is to be read and understood by all people, from all ages and levels of education. Teachers and preachers are needed in order to help the reader understand. The believer should not be satisfied with an incomplete interpretation of a text and need to submit himself to teachers and preachers who Biblically interpret the Word of God.

Biblical exegesis explores both the grammatical and historical dimensions of the text and context in order to determine what the text says. The meaning of the text cannot contradict the grammar or historical context of the text.

There is an all out assault through the translation of the Bible to present a different and view of God. Due to availability of the computer there are a variety of Bible versions representing the sects as well as traditional church's views. This is true for the Jehovah Witnesses, Roman Catholics, conservative Evangelicals and liberal Protestants. Liberal Protestants have exerted a lot of influence in producing Bible versions that use inclusive

⁵ To the question, "which of the thousands of NT manuscripts are the originals?" we cannot always point to the oldest manuscripts as the most authentic since they can also have been corrupted. First of all, the answer lies in the internal evidence of Scripture itself. Are the content of the manuscript in conformity to other Scriptures? So, potentially, a newer copy of a manuscript can be more faithful than an older copy. There are older apocrypha and Gnostic texts that contain Scriptural content than NT manuscripts and we do not accept them due to their content not their age. Secondly, the copying process or the transmission of the Old and New Testament requires faithfulness in the copyist intention. If the intention was a literal and exact replica, then omission and errors can be explained through a careful study of the manuscripts in question. However, if there is a revisionist intention then we are left without much hope in determining the exact reading. In other words, if the copyists used the paraphrase method for copying, we would not be left with an authentic representation of the original text.

language even when Scripture uses masculine terminology and thus appease the feminists and relativists.⁶

The only way to preserve the authenticity and integrity of Scripture is to return to the literal interpretation of the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Each person and people group has the right to know what the Biblical text actually says. Each generation, each people group, needs a faithful rendering of the Bible so they may study for themselves this special revelation. With that in mind, there are many people groups who have portions of the Scripture or even a paraphrase translation of the Scripture, but do not have the complete Bible in their own language. It will be the task of the Church and Christian community to equip the national leaders to study the original languages and science of Bible translation in order to prepare for their language group a literal translation of the Bible.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND GOSPEL TRANSFORMATION

The Bible is the *means* by which the gospel transforms the interpreter. There are a variety of ways in which the transformation caused by the gospel is described.⁷ The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news about salvation through His life, death, resurrection and reign that is graciously offered by the Father to those who believe in Jesus. The gospel requires that the believer die to sin and live by faith in Jesus. This distinguishes the believing from non-believing interpreter.

How can we *logically* understand the unique intervention of the gospel news of Jesus in our interpretation of the Bible? How are we to distinguish the truth from the lie and how can we know if we are faithful in our interpretation or not? Believers are free to use a variety of epistemological methods to show how the gospel interacts with the truth and the lie.⁸ This study will use what is called by the author as the evangelical or gospel dialectic.⁹ The gospel dialectic recognizes that God's revelation (general or special) constitutes the thesis.¹⁰ Due to the presence of evil and sin, deception and the lie is introduced into the interpretation. The antithesis is the

⁶ Chronology of Gender-Neutral Translations: 1983. *An Inclusive Language Lectionary*. 1985. *New Jerusalem Bible*. 1986. *New American Bible*, revised New Testament. 1987. *New Century Version*. 1989. *Revised English Bible* 1990. *New Revised Standard Version*. 1992. *Good News Bible, 2nd ed.* 1993. *The Message*. 1993. *The Five Gospels* (Jesus Seminar). 1994. *The Inclusive New Testament*. 1995. *Contemporary English Version*. 1995. *God's Word*. 1995. *New International Reader's Version*. 1995. *New International Version, Inclusive Language Edition*. 1995. *New Testament and Psalms, An Inclusive Version*. 1996. *New Living Translation*. 2002. *Today's New International Version* [see www.bible-research.com., Michael Marlow, "The Gender-Neutral Language Controversy" (2000).]

⁷ A traditional evangelical paradigm to describe gospel transformation is that faith comes by hearing the Word. The interpreter moves from unbelief to belief through the operation of the Holy Spirit through the written Word. A rationalist description of gospel transformation would emphasize the presentation of information until the interpreter is convinced of a superior interpretation.

⁸ Epistemology refers to the doctrine or science of knowing. One does not have to be absolute but rather consistent in one's epistemological method. The gospel dialectic as proposed by the author is one method of thinking, certainly not the only one.

⁹ The use of the thesis, antithesis and synthesis is called the dialectic. This is a term used in logic and it is a neutral term. Materialists, Marxist and nihilist also use the term with presuppositions that are determined by the user. The evangelical dialectic proposes that the truths of Scripture and truth need to be activated by gospel responses and in that way counteracts the antithesis and avoids syncretism.

¹⁰ The thesis can be called truth, propositional truth, presupposition or absolutes. Granted, others may wish to define the thesis as some other reality but this is the method used by the author.

opposite or negation of the thesis.¹¹ The antithesis can be traced back to a questionable presupposition or intent. How is the interpreter to resolve the opposing claims of the thesis and the antithesis? This is where the gospel interpretation comes in. The gospel of Jesus requires the interpreter to recognize, repent and avoid false presuppositions and erroneous interpretations and by faith embrace the perspective defined by salvation event in Jesus Christ. When a non-gospel conclusion is reached this can be defined as syncretism. In syncretism the thesis and the antithesis co-exist in one system and a gospel transformation is not reached. In biblical terms this is called idolatry.

TRUTH	LIE	GOSPEL	IDOLATRY
thesis	antithesis	synthesis	syncretism
Position that corresponds to God's revelation and reality.	Position to contradict the thesis	Response of the thesis to antithesis on basis of gospel message	Unresolved synthesis; thesis and antithesis co-exist

The starting point of the good news is that God exist and one's interpretation of the Bible can be measured according His being, His Word and His Work. This composite of truth can be called the thesis verification standard. The interpreter bases the thesis on what is clearly revealed in the text. Word studies, Scriptural cross references, grammar, historical context, cultural content, figures of speech, literary structure, authorship, manuscript study and other forms of analysis are necessary. When Biblical truth has been established from the text the interpreter needs to consider what the text opposes. For example, if a Biblical thesis is that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17c) then the antithesis could include the following: 1) the unjust live by faith even though their works are evil (Romans 1:18-32; 2) the just may condemn the unjust while practicing injustices (Romans 2:3); 3) the just justify themselves; and any other statement that would contradict the thesis. The gospel response to the thesis and antithesis is that the just who live by faith in Jesus are justified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-16). A syncretistic response would be for the just to boast of their own works (Romans 3:27) or to continue sinning so that grace could abound (Romans 6:1). The believer is called to live by the justice and mercy of Christ and with such a faith be transformed by the renewing of the mind "that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 11:2). Paul foresees the excuses and improper conclusions his audience may have as concerns justification by faith and he addresses them at length.

The utilization of the evangelical or gospel dialectic helps the Bible student enter into the internal relationships of the text under study. It is not the only means a student can use but when exercised with logical consistency and faithfulness to the gospel, it can be a great tool.

However, a logical approach to interpreting the Bible is not enough. There has to be an existential or experiential encounter and transformation between the message of the Bible and the mind and life of the interpreter (Romans 12:1-2). When the Word has transformed the spirit, mind and lifestyle of the interpreter, then the interpreter can become a communicator of the Word. Such a communicator of the Word does not only pass on the contents of the Bible message but becomes himself living evidence of the Word's transforming power.

¹¹ The Evil is the opposite of good, the negation of good. Sin, in the biblical sense, is the transgression of the law of God.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND THE WORLD'S CONTEXT

The Bible is part of world history and it is a reliable authority as to origin of human history, human culture and the expansion of Judaism and Christianity. Scripture, regardless of its human authorship and place in history, interacts with the world in which it was written. The fact that the Bible was written in primitive languages that are dead, that is, not spoken nor under constant change, is conducive for it to be translated and communicated into all cultures, language groups, social classes, age groups, genders and time frames. Lesson six is dedicated to exploring the contextual dimensions of the Bible.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND THE CHURCH

Before the individual interprets the Bible, the Church was used by God to receive, translate, transmit, interpret and defend the Bible. The Church must resist the temptation to place its interpretation at the same level as the revealed Scriptures, for then, in affect; it places its own interpretation above the Scriptures. The historical Protestant position is *sola scriptura*; the authority of the Bible is supreme over all other authorities, including the church, the scholars, the state and personal opinion.

The church that does not uphold the authentic transmission and interpretation of the Bible, as it is passed on to us, loses its purpose and function as being a pillar of truth for the Christians and in the world. The Western church needs to recover its God given task of transmitting the literal text from one generation to another so that the future generation may clearly know what God's revelation and will is.

The translation of the Bible into new languages used to be the function of the institutional church. Protestantism broke away from that model as gifted translators took it upon themselves to translate from the original languages into their own language. From the 18th century until the middle of the 20th century, Bible Societies and para-church mission agencies such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, translated Scriptures. Today the large publishing houses are producing a large variety of Bible translations suited to the individual and cultural needs of a paying audience. Today many new versions, each with their individual and cultural emphasis, are appearing in the churches. The sense of one authoritative version for the congregation is disappearing as denominational authority is waning in the West.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND RECEPTORS

A human heart¹² that is transformed by the Biblical gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a change agent in the world. The kingdom of God will not come through unregenerate hearts. Transformed people, living out their faith through transformed relationships, participate in the kingdom of God, are active in ministry and missions, and so are used by God to His glory.

The following human faculties constitute the human "heart" or a person's psycho-spiritual make up. Each human faculty plays its part in interpreting.

¹² The "heart" is the composite of one's mental and spiritual qualities.

MENTAL ACTIVITY VERBS	HUMAN FACULTY IN OPERATION	RELATIONSHIP TO INTERPRETATION
To be	Human nature	<i>Who am I?</i> Who is the person that interprets? The Bible teaches about human nature and about needing a new nature. One believes according to who he is in relationship to the true God. The believer has a new nature that operates by faith in Jesus and through the power and illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:24; II Peter 1:3-10).
To know	Intellect, rationality, logic, memory	<i>Knowledge</i> of the Bible. Do I understand the information in the Bible? Has the Bible been properly explained to me? If others were to ask you about the details of the Bible would you be able to explain them? Do I know what to do and where to go in order to obtain Biblical knowledge?
Ought	Conscience	<i>Guilt?</i> As a student of the Bible, does the Holy Spirit convict me of sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn. 16:7-11)? What are my “vested interests” in denying the truth of a passage? Do I self-justify my sinful attitudes and actions?
To will	Will	What <i>motivates</i> my study? Am I seeking to justify my own will or to do God’s will? Do I pray, “Your will be done” or “my will be done?”
To feel	Senses, Sentiments, Emotion	How does the interpretation of the Bible make me <i>feel</i> ? Are my feelings in accordance with the facts of the Bible?
To relate	Relationships, Community	Do language, gender, social group, culture, age and other contextual factors influence my interpretation of the text?
To do	Action.	Do I actually study the Bible? How is Bible study related to my ministry and mission?
To worship	Spirituality. Church.	Do you know the true God? Has the gospel of Jesus Christ transformed your life? Do I have a personal devotional life? Do I read the Bible every day, every week? Does Bible study cause me to worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

The interpreter and communicator have a “heart”, and so does God.¹³ The “heart of God” is the how God expresses His attributes and relationships. God relates to the believing interpreter as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The passion of the Father is to reconcile all things to Himself through Jesus Christ. The passion of the Son is most clearly seen on the cross and in the resurrection where Jesus accomplishes all that is necessary to bring about reconciliation between God and man. And finally, the passion of the Holy Spirit is, among other things, holiness, truth and perfection. The Holy Spirit applies the Father’s will and the Son’s redemptive work to the believing interpreter perspective of the Bible.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND MINISTRY

Bible interpretation is not just for individual transformation but also for ministry: serving the Lord for the up building of the Church and the establishment of the kingdom of God throughout

¹³ To say that God has a heart is an anthropomorphism, a human term used to describe God. God the Father and Spirit do not have a physical body with a heart. Each person of the Trinity has mental and spiritual capabilities as expressed in communications, relationships, knowing, feeling, etc.

the whole world.¹⁴ The offices of prophet, priest and king-ruler of the Old Testament is translated by the preacher, pastor-counselor, and elder of the New Testament. These offices exist to “equip the saints for ministry, for the up building of the Church.” The concept of the priesthood of all believers was rediscovered in the 16th Reformation but not fully implemented by its followers until the rise of evangelicalism at the end the 18th century when lay persons took on more and more responsibilities for missions (William Carey) and ministry (Booth). The rise of faith missions and the para-church evangelical ministries was complimented by the rise of Bible studies, Bible conferences, and Bible Colleges during the 19th and 20th century. The end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century has witnessed the rise of the persecuted church, the expansion of the neo-charismatic church and the rise of internet motivated distance theological education.

HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE AND THE GLORY OF GOD

The final step in the hermeneutical circle and one’s interpretation is to glorify the true God. An interpretation that glorifies God will praise God by worshipping the only true God, balancing both general and special revelation, upholding the Bible as the interpreter to the Bible, presenting the message of the gospel, showing that one’s interpretation brings transformation to one’s heart and all areas of life, faithfully using God’s Word in proclamation, prayer and reconciliation and service and calling God’s people to worship God according to the Word.

To be sure, not all of the believer’s interpretations are automatically “praise the Lord.” We stand in need of teaching, reproof, correction and ongoing instruction (II Tim. 3:16,17). For that reason, the confession of sin and preaching of the Word is part of the Christian’s communal worship. Christians are to continually read the Bible, confess sin and strive to participate in the work and ministry of Christ.

The guarantee that the believer is interpreting the Bible in a God glorifying way is that our interpretation can be compared to Scriptures as it is fulfilled in Christ. Our doctrines, ethics, music and life style are measured by the Word of God. Beware of the Christian student, leader or church member who is unwilling to submit to the high standard of God’s Word. We are not speaking of only submitting to church rules, creedal statements or church order, but submitting to the written Word. The Bible student who does not find within himself the ability to submit to teaching, reproof, correction and ongoing instruction is walking according to his own light rather than being illuminated by the Holy Spirit. How the growing church today needs more “bright students” of the Bible, those illuminated by the Holy Spirit, who points all things to Christ, who in turn glorifies the Father and who always works in accordance with the inspired Word, the Bible.

EXERCISE

1. Mention each segment of the hermeneutical circle and give a brief, one sentence explanation of each segment.

¹⁴ Grant Osborne observes, “The hermeneutical enterprise also has three levels. I will discuss them from the stand point of the personal pronoun that defines the thrust. We begin with a third-person approach, asking “what it meant” (exegesis), then passing to a first-person approach, querying “what it means for me” (devotional) and finally taking a second-person approach, seeking “how to share with you what it means to me” (sermonic).” *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, p. 6.

LESSON THREE

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION

Theology proper is the study of knowledge of God. For the Christian theologian this means studying what the Bible says about God. It is a logical course of action to start with the very first verse of the Bible, “in the beginning *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth.”¹⁵

FIRST THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE: THE WORD OF THE TRUE GOD

Everyone likes to express their own opinion. We want to be heard and have our opinions respected. It’s important that people speak the truth about us. The same is true for God. He wants us to know the truth about who He is, what He does and why He has made us. For that reason God reveals the truth about Himself in His Word and in the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Word of God is God’s self-revelation to us and in order to understand the written Word we need to have faith in the living Word, Jesus Christ. (Are you able to put this principle in your own words?)

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will learn to appreciate that God has a self revelation, that His written self-revelation is the Bible and that it is understood through faith in Jesus Christ.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

John 1:2-3. “He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. How is it possible for someone to write that God created the universe?

Response #2. If God is powerful enough to create the universe then he must be capable enough to tell us about it. He does so in Genesis 1:1.

Objection #2. Why should Moses’ writings about the origins of the universe be considered more authoritative than other writings?

Response #2. The authorship of Moses is affirmed by the Old Testament prophets, by Jesus and the apostles. The content of the writings of Moses are consistent with the rest of Scripture. God

¹⁵ R.C. Sproul in *Knowing Scripture* (p. 46) states correctly that for the 16th century reformers the first principle of hermeneutics was the analogy of faith, the rule that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. This is also called *sola scriptura*. Does this priority continue today? I would prefer to call *sola scriptura* the central principle for Bible interpretation rather than the primary one. One has to believe in the true God and be illuminated by the true God in order to practice *sola scriptura*. The rules for hermeneutics for Sproul include: analogy of faith; interpreting the Bible literally (according to literal sense of the grammar), analysis of literary genre; understanding figures of speech, such as the metaphor; singular meaning of the text; the grammatico-historical method, source criticism. Some of the rules proposed by Sproul are: read the Bible like any book; read it existentially; the didactic gives interpretation to the history; interpretation goes from the explicit to the implicit; the meaning of words are to be carefully studied; watch out for parallelisms; distinguish between law and proverb; not difference in the letter and the spirit of the text; be careful with parables and with predictive prophecy.

is able to inspire prophets like Moses in order to give us an authorized description of these important events.

READ THE REFLECTION. In this part of the lesson we look specifically at some of the Scriptural names of God and see how that is related to the interpretation of Scriptures.¹⁶ A major way in which God made Himself known to His people in the Old Testament was to associate His name with important events that are recorded in Bible history. As Scripture is read, one sees the unfolding of the greatness of God as He acts in history.

“In the beginning *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth.” *Elohim*, is the supreme, universal, creator God (Genesis 1:1). *Elohim* is the eternal God. “In the *beginning Elohim* created...” He existed before the creation of space and time. The Word of God comes from the counsel of God in heaven and existed before creation of the universe. God is eternal as opposed to the view of the Mormons that the Father has a Father and that the Son is a perfected human being. *Elohim’s* name is plural. This refers to the mystery of the plurality of the godhead (Mt. 28:19-20). *Elohim* is not a combination of gods, as in polytheism, but rather one God in three persons (Mt. 28:19-20). The full revelation of this mystery was not revealed until Jesus came. The plurality of the Godhead is rejected by the Jehovah Witnesses who do not consider that Jesus is God or that Holy Spirit exists as a divine person. *Elohim* is the Creator God: “created” is *bara* in Hebrew. Only an eternal God can create something that will last for eternity. He is the Creator of material, plant, animal, human and angelic life. As the Creator He is also sovereign over all. As Creator He is the only one who can save us. God created by His Word. He spoke and the various parts of creation came into being. He who created the universe also reveals to us how we are to live in the universe.

Ruah Elohim is the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2). The name is given in the context of the creation of the world. The Spirit generates creation into existence. He who generates is also He who regenerates the spirit of man for salvation (Jn. 3:5). The generation in creation came through the Father’ Word as so does regeneration (Romans 10:17). *Rauh Elohim* works order and creates natural law that operates in accordance with God’s attributes. The Spirit of general revelation is also the Spirit of special revelation.

Yahweh Elohim, the LORD God (Genesis 2:4). Composite names are used in the context of Bible revelation in order to reveal who God is. The name *Yahweh* comes from Ex. 3:14, where God reveals Himself as the “I AM WHO I AM.” The *Yahweh Elohim* of chapter 2 of Genesis gives the religious commandment and establishes the institution of marriage. God relates to mankind through commandments. God is the author of the major institutions of humanity and in His sovereign Word addresses these institutions with Lordship authority.

El, Elyon is the High God (Genesis 14:18). *Elyon* is revealed in the context of Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek, King of Salem. God is a universal God. He is not a god of a particular family or tribe. Melchizedek represents a universal priesthood that God had established. Jesus also belonged to the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110; Heb. 7:17). God’s Word reveals His plan for all peoples, not just the people of Israel.

Yahweh is the I AM WHO I AM of Exodus 3:14. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush in the dessert and showed that as the God of life He is in control of the live of His people.

Malak Adonai means Angel of the Lord.(Genesis 16:2) The Angel of the Lord intervenes in the troubles of Hagar. God has messengers. The angel is a messenger who represents God’s

¹⁶ For a more detailed look at the names of God see Hegeman, Doctrine of God (MINTS, 2004).

will and word. In Revelations 2 and 3, Jesus speaks to the messengers of the churches, those who communicate the will and Word of God to God's people.

El Shaddai means Almighty God (Genesis 17:1). God is explaining the conditions of the covenant to Abraham. God commands us to walk in His attributes. He commands us to be perfect (or righteous: NIV). God does not only command perfection and justice but by faith in His power the believer can walk in this "fruit of the Spirit." According to the Word, the believer is not alone, he can appeal to God for His attributes.

Yahweh Sabaoth is the LORD of hosts (I Samuel 1:3). This name first used at the beginning of life and ministry of Samuel the prophet. The LORD is sovereign; even the evil spirits have to obey Him when he sends them out to punish the wicked. So the Word of God applies to both the righteous and the wicked. Even the wicked, including Satan himself, have to submit to the Word when they are called to do so. Jesus said to Satan. "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Mt. 4:10).

Agio pneuemos, the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:18) appears at the onset of the New Testament. (Mt. 1:18) The *pneuemos* is the translation of *Ruah* of Old Testament. His work is directly related to the coming and ministry of Jesus Christ. He appears as the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost. His work includes the inspiration of the Biblical authors and the illumination of the believers.

The identification of the Father (*Pater*) is shown in the New Testament (Mt. 6:9). Not only is this important in relationship to the divine Son (Mt. 3:17, Jn. 3:16) but it is important to identify the spiritual parentage of believers (Jn. 8:42-44). Believers call God the Father, Abba (Rom. 8:15). In relationship to Bible interpretation, one observes a progression in revelation. The doctrine of the Godhead and Trinity was not revealed in the Old Testament. This was disclosed with the coming and going of Jesus (Mt. 28:19-20).

Huios, the Son, is prophesied throughout the Old and revealed in the New Testament. He is identified with the divine name of *Kurios*, Lord (Matthew 1:20). This is the translation of LORD and Lord of Old Testament (*Yahweh* and *Adonai*). To read the Bible without encountering Jesus Christ as LORD is to miss the most important revelation.

Theos is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew, *Elohim*, *Elyon*, *El*, *El Shaddai* and *Sabaoth*. With the revelation of the person of Jesus Christ, the revelation through the Old Testament names had served its purpose. Jesus is a greater and more glorious revelation of who God is.

Many religious leaders in Jesus day rejected who Jesus was and what he taught. They rejected Him as Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man, as Lord, as Creator, as the eternal I AM, as the Logos, as God.

Our brief review of some of the names for God in Scripture help us to conclude that in order for us to know God, He has to reveal Himself to us. His self-revelation in Scripture is complimented by His self-revelation in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-4). In order to interpret the Bible one has to accept what is written in the Bible and is revealed in Jesus. The hermeneutical circle begins with the Word of the true God.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Write down one of the Old Testament names for God and show how knowing what the name means helps you understand the text that it is in.

SECOND THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE: CHRIST-CENTERED

Studying the Scripture is not simply an academic exercise; it is seeking to understand the communication between God and His people. We are studying the Word of God to us. Unless we believe in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and God's personal revelation to us, we will not understand the written Word. The personal Word and the written Word correspond perfectly.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. Biblical interpretation is Christ-centered.¹⁷ Jesus is God's personal revelation to us.

GET TO THE GOAL. In order to understand the Bible one has to believe and understand Jesus Christ. Students will be challenged to see the association of Jesus with both the Old and New Testament.

MEMORIZE ONE OF THE BIBLE VERSES

Matthew 5:17. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

John 5:39..."And these (Scriptures) are they which testify to Me."

II Cor. 1:19. "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us."

Hebrews 1:2. "but in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things."

READ THE REFLECTION. In today's exercise you will see how the book of Psalms contains many prophecies about Jesus. It's amazing how over this span of hundreds of years the Spirit of God was foretelling the great coming of Jesus Christ. Even though the original human authors did not know the prophetic content of their writers, the divine author, the Holy Spirit would use the human authors to write both their poetry, in which the Psalmist converses with God as well as reveal prophetic information about the future.

There are strict interpreters who hold that if the original author, such as the psalmist in Psalm 22 did not intend to prophecy about the future, then the reader today cannot use such writings as prophecy. However, this strict interpreter forgets that Scripture defines prophecy as not being written by the will of man but being inspired and moved by God (I Peter 1:10-12; II Peter 1:19-20). Scripture is not just human writings about God but God's inspired Word that uses human authorship for God's purposes.

Psalm 22 is a fascinating study between the relationship of Old Testament authorship and New Testament fulfillment. The fact that a variety of New Testament references are made to the prophetic relationship of Psalm 22 to the suffering and death of Christ shows the Holy Spirit's intent. Scripture interprets Scripture. Scripture is verified by multiple Scriptural evidences. "The New is in the Old contained; the Old is in the New explained." But what did the Psalmist have in mind? The Psalmist was writing about his own suffering, which is also experienced by other believers and it is ultimately fulfilled in the supreme suffering servant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁷ To be centered means to focus on.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection # 1. One has to resort to allegorization to relate Jesus of the New Testament to the events of the Old Testament.

Response # 1. It is not sinful to allegorize, for biblical author's use allegories, figures of speech and typologies (I Cor. 10:4). Typologies for Jesus are common in Scripture. For example, Jesus is identified as the second Adam. The New Testament teaches that Jesus was the second Adam in that as the new federal head of God's people, He comes to bring righteousness (Romans 5:12-21). Jesus can be also compared with the prophets, priests and kings of the OT, in that Jesus fulfill all their offices.

Objection # 2. The Old Testament is the Scripture of the Jews, many who do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. How can you relate their Scripture with Christian themes?

Response # 2. Both the Old and New Testament are Christian Scriptures. There are many Jews who believe in Jesus as the Messiah. The original apostles were Jews, as was the family of Jesus. Jesus claimed to bring fulfillment to the promises of God in the OT (Mt... 5:17). The apostle Paul affirms that in II Cor. 1:19.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Review the following chart and see how prophetic statements about Christ were made in the Psalms and fulfilled in the Gospels.¹⁸ Write down ten prophecies and their fulfillment.

INFORMATION ABOUT JESUS ¹⁹	PROMISES IN THE OLD TEST.	FULLFILLMENT IN CHRIST
Rulers would conspire	Ps. 2:1	Mt. 12:14
He is the Messiah, He will deliver	Ps. 2:2	Mk. 8:27-29
Rulers plot against Him	Ps. 2:2	Mk. 3:6
He is the King, He will rule	Ps. 2:6	Jo. 1:49
Believers will come from all nations to Him	Ps. 2:8	Acts 1:8
He will be worshipped by infants	Ps. 8:2	Mt. 21:15,16
His body will not corrupt in death	Ps. 16:8-11	Acts 2:27,31
Resurrect from the dead	Ps. 16:10	Acts 2:25-32
God the Savior will come	Ps. 18:46	Lu. 1:47
"My God, My God..."	Ps. 22:1	Mt. 27: 46
Insulted	Ps. 22:7	Lu. 23:36
Passersby ridicule Him	Ps. 22:7	Mt. 27:39
He trusted in God	Ps. 22:8	Mt. 27:43
Type of physical suffering on cross	Ps. 22:14	John 19:28-37
Piercing of the hands	Ps. 22:16	Jo. 20:27
Spectacle before the people	Ps. 22:17	Lu 23:35
Kept watch over Him	Ps. 22:17	Mt. 27:36
Gambled His clothes away	Ps. 22:18	Mt. 27:35
He will shepherd His people	Ps. 23	Jo.10:11
False accusations	Ps. 27:12	Mt. 26:64
Last breath	Ps. 31:5	Lu. 23:46
Bones will not be broken	Ps. 34:20	John 19:33
False witnesses	Ps. 35:11	Mk. 14:57

¹⁸ The prophecies about Christ from the Psalms raises the interesting question whether or not the original authors of the Psalms knew the prophetic content of their message. The answer is "probably not." Their writing may have had a historical or personal situation in mind, but by the Spirit's inspiration, the historical event and its inscription is used for prophecy. This does not violate what the text meant for the original author but it adds a prophet dimension for what the text means for the reader today.

¹⁹ For a more comprehensive treatment about Jesus see Hegeman, the Doctrine of Christ (MINTS), 2003.

Distant watchers	Ps. 38:11	Lu. 23:49
Prayer to do God's will	Ps. 40:6-8	Mt. 26:39
He will be betrayed by a trusted friend	Ps. 41:9	Mt. 26:14
He ascended into heaven	Ps. 68:18	Lu. 24:51
His own brothers would not believe Him	Ps. 69:8	Jo. 7:5
He will cleanse the temple	Ps. 69:9	Mt. 21:12
He suffered for others	P. 69:9	Rom. 15:3
Drink vinegar	Ps. 69:21	Lu. 23:36
Will be worshipped	Ps. 72:11	Mt. 2:11
God's mercy is shown	Ps. 103:17	Lu. 1:50
He will rule over His enemies	Ps. 110:1	Heb. 1:8
Sit at right hand of God	Ps. 110:1	Acts 7:55,56
Son and Father would send the Holy Spirit	Ps. 110:1	Acts 2:33
He will intercede as High Priest	Ps. 110:4	Heb. 5:6
He is the cornerstone.	Ps. 118:22	Acts 4:10; Eph. 2:20
Stumbling block for unbelieving Israel	Ps. 118:22; Is 8:14,15; 28:16	I Pe. 2:6-8
The blessed King has come	Ps. 118:26	Lu. 19:38
A Redeemer is born	Ps. 130:8	Mt. 1:21
A Savior for House of David	Ps. 132:11; Is 11:1	Acts 13:23
Raised to the throne in heaven	Ps. 132:11	Acts 2:30

THIRD THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE: INSPIRATION AND ILLUMINATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The believing Bible student should not study on his own. He studies in the presence of the living God, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is holy and perfect and His deals with us. For that reason, we affirm that the inspiration of Scripture is perfect and without error. In the same way, we believe that the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Bible is perfect and without error.

The Christian believer studies the Word with faith in God. He is not alone. Prior to studying the Word the student prays that God will lead him. By faith the believer carefully follows the prescribed ways of God as revealed in the Word. When we error, and we do error as Christians, we ask for forgiveness, correction and restoration.

How can we be sure that the Holy Spirit is leading us in our study of Scripture? Our interpretation needs to be measured by the Scriptures, who in their totality have been inspired by the Holy Spirit.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPAL. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Word is the Spirit who leads and guides (or illuminates) the believer to understand God's Word

GET TO THE GOAL. The Bible student will be taught to see that the Holy Spirit is a divine person whose help we need in understanding the Scripture. This calls for prayer and knowing the Bible in order to understand the Word and thankfulness when we do understand it.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

John 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth."
II Timothy 3:16. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."

READ THE REFLECTION. What is your view of the inspiration of the Bible? There are two basic views of Scripture: 1) Scriptures are the words of human authors about God; 2) Scriptures is the Word of God for humans.

View #1 can be subdivided into two more views:

- 1.1. Scriptures is only the word or opinion of human authors about God or
- 1.2. Scriptures is the combination of human opinion and God's inspiration.

View # 2 also has different variants:

- 2.1. Scriptures were orally dictated by God to human authors;
- 2.2. Scriptures were written by human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Theologians who consider the Bible as man's reflection about God and man's opinion about how God works will inevitably place Scripture on the same level as other religious writings. The emphasis in Biblical studies would be to determine the intent and message that the human authors had. When one believes that the Bible is the Word of God for man, then both the divine authorship and the human authorship need to be recognized. This is not a 50-50 venture between the divine author and the human author but God superintends 100% the writings of the human author. The author's view is that the Scriptures were written by human authors who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is based on Luke's description of how he wrote Luke and Acts

(Luke 1:1-4); on Peter's statements (II Peter 1:19-20; 2:16), on Paul's instructions to Timothy (II Tim. 3:16-17) and other Scriptures.

The view that Scripture is the product of man's religious imagination makes the Bible a comedy of errors. How arrogant to speak in the name of God and "Thus says the Lord" when the Lord has not spoken. God spoke to Jeremiah the following:

"I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and has caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:21-22).

For that reason, Christian leaders and church members need to study and speak according to God's revealed and objective Word, the Bible. Truth cannot be negotiated, twisted or contradicted. In the words of Paul to Timothy: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

What is your view on the illumination of the Holy Spirit? As with inspiration there are two basic and opposing views about illumination. The first would be that illumination is a deeper or more profound human understanding of the Bible. The second view is that illumination is the spiritual influence and direction given by the Holy Spirit to the believer in order to understand God's Word.

Is there an essential difference between viewing illumination as a human quality or as a divine quality? The advantage of having divine illumination is that the Holy Spirit's influence is without sin and error. He is holy, separated from sin. Therefore, you can identify His illumination according to God's standard for perfection, the Bible. For that reason, we must hold our churches, preachers, theologians, teachers, church members and ourselves to the standard of being 100% correct. The prophet who boasts that 85% of his prophecies came to pass is a false prophet. The church that is unwilling to correct false interpretations in their doctrine or in their proclamation is a church that is in error and disobedience and in danger of apostasy. The Christian who is unwilling to repent from sin cannot claim to be living in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Christian Bible student does not only study the Word but faithfully obeys its demand.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTION

Objection #1. Any claim to having a "Holy Spirit illuminated interpretation" is subjective to the interpreter's opinion.

Response #1. Sad to say, many claims to having an interpretation illuminated by the Holy Spirit are fraudulent, but it should not be that way. The way any claim to the Holy Spirit's working is verified is through appealing to multiple evidences in Scripture.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. In one sentence explain your view of the inspiration of Scripture and in another sentence write about the illumination of the Holy Spirit for Bible interpretation.

LESSON FOUR

BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND REVELATION

Lesson four is dedicated to explaining several foundational principles for Bible interpretation that are related to God's revelation. They include defining revelation and truth; identifying what is absolute; interpreting the Bible with the Bible and recognizing the history of redemption.

FIRST PRINCIPLE FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND REVELATION: REVELATION

Please excuse my naivety, but if God exists shouldn't He be able to reveal Himself to us? Why doesn't He just show up? God does reveal Himself but God does not fully come to us and there are good reasons for that. One, his powerful brilliance and energy would destroy us like the sun would destroy us if we tried to land there. Secondly, God's holiness would cast away anything tainted with sin and we are sinners. We could name all kinds of other reasons as to why God does not just show up in our church on Sunday morning in all of his glory and splendor. For God to reveal Himself we need mediation and He needs special means to reach us.

The mediator between the Father and us is Jesus Christ. This priestly function was planned before the creation of the universe (Ephesians 1:3-5; Hebrews 13:20), was represented by the Old Testament priesthood and finally fully revealed in Jesus Christ's priestly sacrifice and intercession at the right hand of the Father after His ascension.

The objective means that the Father has designated to reveal Himself to us on a continual basis is through His written Word.

And the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is present with God's people and in the world, but always directs us to Christ the mediator who alone can present us to the Father (John 14:6).

In this lesson we see that God has special means to reach His people and in a general way testifies to all persons.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The special and general revelations of God correspond perfectly. The Bible affirms natural law and true science.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will be encouraged to examine both special and general revelation and see how they correspond. When differences occur the student will seek to clarify the issue as clearly as possible.

READ THE REFLECTIONS. In order to absolutely know the true God, it is necessary for Him to prove that He exists through a variety of evidences. He does that through both general and special revelation. General revelation is how God communicates Himself to all people. This occurs in a variety of ways: i.e. through creation, history and personal experience. The realities of creation, natural law and God's providence communicate to us that God is the Creator, Sovereign and Lord of all (Romans 1:20: 11:36). The events of history show the actions of God in relationship to cultures and nations. Civilizations have come and gone, yet the people of God have survived and flourished (Gen. 12:2, 3). Finally, God's presence in the lives of people is evident in the functioning of their conscience, intelligence and other mental and religious

faculties. The agriculturalists, scientists, governors, parents and every human being exercise the ability to interpret general revelation.

God's special revelation is His redemptive revelation to His people. This comes through His theophanies, the Bible, in Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit. The Bible, as the written Word of God, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the personal Word of God (Jn. 1:1; Heb. 1:1-2). The Bible is a special book. It is the Word of God in its entirety. 'All Scripture is inspired by God...' (II Tim. 3:16).

Both general and special revelation comes from God. Since God is perfect and cannot contradict Himself, the truths of these revelations, properly understood, will agree. That means that a proper interpretation of natural law, world history and human experience will be in accordance with a proper understanding of the Bible. Notice, that both a proper understanding of general and special revelation is needed! There are times when our understanding or even our translation of the Bible is in error. For example, in the Spanish version, *Reina Valera* 1960 (traditional Spanish Bible) the human body is not referred to as natural but as animal. The Greek clearly used the word for natural and not the word for animal. In the same version, as well as the Spanish New International Version, in I Cor. 11 uses the emotional expression, *ojalá*, (literally translated as, Oh Ala) which may have been part of the translators 16th century vocabulary but which probably was not part of the apostle's vocabulary. It is highly doubtful that Paul would use the name Ala, or even used a name of god to express his emotions, potentially violating the 3rd commandment.

The Christian has the comfort of knowing that his interpretation of the Bible needs to correspond with the truth of God's general revelation in natural law, human history, ethnic culture and authentic personal experiences. This creates a healthy tension. For example, the current debate about what Genesis and the Bible say about human, biological and geographical creation, and comparing that to the claims of science, has forced both creationists (God created through special and miraculous intervention) and evolutionists (the creation is a product of natural selection) to seriously look at astronomy, geology and the natural sciences. Where the theological and scientific pursuit becomes ugly is when evolutionism is used to justify the abortion of less developed unborn children or the genocide of less developed people or when certain theologies about the origins of man become a license for racial supremacy and ethnic exclusion.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. There must be some validity to the US public school system's prohibition against teaching Biblical creationism in public elementary and high school.

Response #1. One of the reasons the US public schools prohibit such teaching is an attempt to respect a perceived boundary between Church and State. It is believed that creationism is a religious position and not a scientific one. This has, in part, led to the growth of the private school system, including Christian universities and graduate schools, that allow for free scientific expression.

Objection #2. The Bible is a book of subjective faith and Science is the book on facts of objective scientific reality and so it is impossible that special revelation and general revelation can ever correspond since they use different presuppositions for their knowledge.

Response #2. All scientists operate with faith presuppositions, whether they are Christian or not. The evolutionary claims about the origin of the universe, planet earth and humanity takes are

being challenged by scientists and theologians alike. Even the law of physics and geology are undergoing presuppositional redefinition. Not all science is objective.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. In this exercise we see the relationship Biblical revelation and current scientific claims. In one short paragraph, how do you see the relationship between what Genesis 2:5 says and what evolutionists say?

PASSAGE	SPECIAL REVELATION CLAIMS	CURRENT SCIENTIFIC CLAIMS	WHAT'S AT STAKE
Genesis 2:5	Adam, the first human being, was made in the image of God and was made from the earth	Some evolutionists claim that if Adam existed then he is a developed animal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If Adam is a superior animal then Jesus, the second Adam, is also a highly evolved animal. In effect, those who worship Jesus are worshipping an animal which is animism. 2. Are humans created in the image of God or in the image of animals or both?

SECOND PRINCIPLE FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND REVELATION: TRUE ABSOLUTELY TRUE

There are people who are absolutely right and those who are absolutely wrong. Being absolute in one's thinking is not sufficient. The Islamic *jihadists* are absolutely convinced that they should commit suicide bombings in order to gain special entrance into heaven. Either one is guided by truth or they are under the deception of the lie. Half right or half wrong is a syncretistic position that does not measure up to the standards of truth.

The concept of the absolute,²⁰ in terms of interpretation, refers to a certain and consistent conclusion that corresponds to an objective standard of truth.

REVIEW OF PRINCIPLE. The Bible corresponds to who God is and God is truth. All truth comes from God. All interpretation must conform to God's standard of truth.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will seek to distinguish between the truth and the lie.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

John 8:31. "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him. "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 17:17. "Your Word is truth."

Romans 3:4. "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar."

READ THE REFLECTION. So, what is truth and how can you be absolutely sure?²¹ There are many people who are searching for truth. However, most search for truth in untrue ways. The Bible says that God is truth and so, if we are searching for truth we need to search for the true God in a true way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes unto the Father but by me." More than billion people today reject that simple truth. It certainly is not the majority position on planet earth! So why vote for Jesus? Really, there is only one answer, because God says so in His Word.

God doesn't just have truth, He is truth. So when the philosopher asks, "what is truth? we can reply that truth is all that which corresponds to God and His revelation.

Christians are friends of the truth. Truth does not scare us but brings us closer to God, who is truth. We are called to embrace truth whenever we encounter it. But it's not that easy.

The opposite of truth is the lie. Since the Scriptures give us a description of the beginning work of Satan with the parents of humanity, we have knowledge that the spirit of sin and deception is at work and that it is very influential in our lives. Our sinful nature is attracted to the lie rather than the truth. Christians are called and enabled by the Spirit to die to sin and live by faith in Christ. We will see, in the course of this study, that God's intervention is necessary in order to help us be taught, reprov'd, corrected and be instructed in God's way. Although we would love to claim that we can be honest and truth bearers all by ourselves, history and personal experience prove us wrong every day. A study done in England during the 1990's showed that

²⁰ Something absolute is independent and non-conditioned. "Etymology: Middle English *absolut*, from Latin *absolutus*, from past participle of *absolvere* to set free, absolve." ("absolute," Merriam Webster Online, MWO).

²¹ Veracity is truthfulness. John Calvin..."For if we consider how slippery is the human mind...how prone to all kinds of error...we can perceive how necessary is such a repository of heavenly doctrine, that it will neither perish by forgetfulness, nor vanish in error, nor be corrupted by the audacity of men."

even evangelical pastors and Roman Catholic priests speak an average of over 400 untruths every day. So, we are not truth, only God is truth and we are called to by faith draw close to Him, be transformed by truth and live according to truth. Belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ activates the truth and resists the lie. By faith in the truth we are set free to serve God, our neighbor and ourselves.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. We cannot be absolute about a Bible teaching because absolutes do not exist.

Response #1. The statement that absolutes do not exist is an absolute statement and therefore an inherent contradiction.

Objection #2. There are too many errors in the Bible in order to know what is absolute and what is not absolute.

Response #2. There are errors in Bible translations but not in the original revelation. These errors are not due to God's inspiration, for God cannot err. The errors have come in the transmission of the text from the originals to our present day versions. They may come through the copyist, the translator or other interpreters. In order to correct these errors the Lord has permitted that thousands of manuscripts be examined and compared in order to determine the reliability of the copyist and translated text.

Objection #3. The Bible cannot be absolute because it contains historical and ethical information that is erroneous.

Response #3. There are reports of erroneous and unethical thoughts and conduct documented in the Bible. For example, the temptations and lies of Satan are based on falsehoods of Satan. However, the *reporting* of error does not mean that the report is erroneous. Also, a distinction has to be made between what the original manuscripts contain and what the copyists have transmitted.

Objection #4. The Bible was written by sinful authors and sinners are prone to error so they must have erred in writing the Bible.

Response #4. God used many human authors and they are all sinners and capable of error. However, God is the primary author of Scripture and used the human authors as instruments for His inspiration (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21). God cannot err in His inspiration.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Identify a text which do not seem absolute and see if you can make an absolute conclusion about what it says.

THIRD PRINCIPLE FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND REVELATION: BIBLICAL

How can you be sure that you have the correct interpretation of the Bible? The Bible is its own standard for truth. When your interpretation corresponds to the Bible itself, then you have both a biblical and correct interpretation. The Bible is the best commentary for the Bible. The Bible is the maximum authority for Bible interpretation, for doctrine, for ethics, for morality, for justice and for all human actions.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible is to be interpreted²² with the Bible.

GET TO THE GOAL. Students of the Bible will be trained to interpret the Bible with the Bible.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

Gen. 3:1. “Has God indeed said?”

Mark 1:2. “It is written.”

John 10:35. “The Scripture cannot be broken.”

READ THE REFLECTION. Jesus submitted himself to the revealed Word as shown in the midst of excruciating cross suffering. “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst” (John 19:28; Psalm 22:15). Jesus remained true to the Scriptures until the very end.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. The Church, not the Bible itself, will come up with the authoritative interpretation of the Biblical text.

Response #1. The Church and any other source other than the Bible itself can be in error. Only the Bible is the highest source of authority to which the Church, our conscience and society must submit.²³

Objection # 2. Even though the Scripture is interpreted by the Scripture, at the end of the day it is subject to human interpretation.

Response # 2. The Bible is God’s revelation. It stands by itself, whether it is interpreted or not. We need to make the distinction between revelation and interpretation and understand that God’s revelation comes from God and that our interpretations need to be in conformity with God’s written revelation.

²² To interpret means “to explain or tell the meaning of” (“interpret,” MWO). R.C. Sproul speaks of the analogy of faith,” the analogy of faith is the rule that Scripture is to interpret Scripture: *Sacra Scriptura sui interpretis* (Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter). He calls this the primary rule of hermeneutics for the Reformers. (*Knowing Scripture*, p. 46).

²³ Belgic Confession, Article 7. That the Bible is the highest authority, higher than the interpretation of the Church, scholars and personal opinion is called *sola Scriptura*.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Explain one of the following non-biblical interpretations of a biblical text.

VERSE	NON-BIBLICAL VIEW	BIBLICAL VIEW
Psalm 8:4. "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him"	Humanists believe that humans are the center of the universe	Hebrews 2:6, 9. What is man.....? It is Jesus. Jesus, as the Son of Man is the crown of God's creation. By faith in Jesus, we become truly human.
Mt. 16:18. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church."	The Church is built on the teaching and apostolic succession from Peter.	I Peter 2:4. "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God." -So, by Peter's own admission, Jesus is the principle rock and we are spiritually built upon Him. The apostles are part of the church's foundation (Eph. 2:20) but Jesus is the cornerstone.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND REVELATION: HISTORICAL REDEMPTIVE

History can not repeat the past, stop in the present, rather, it relentlessly moves on to its God determined goal. The Bible narrates the progression of God's history of salvation. It moves from the creation (Genesis 1-2), to the fall into sin (Genesis 3:1-7), it describes God's promised restoration (Gen.3:15) and moves towards its full consummation (Revelation 21-22).

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible text needs to be put into its historical-redemptive context of creation, fall, restoration and consummation.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will study the history of redemption, starting with the creation, fall, restoration and consummation in Christ.

READ THE BIBLE VERSES

Psalm 145. 1-4. "I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You. And I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts."

Luke 24:44. "Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures."

READ THE REFLECTION. In order to appreciate the history of redemption you have to believe that the biblical historical events are history and not myths or legends.

If the fall of humanity into sin can not be traced back to the first parents of the human race and if Adam is not the federal head of the human race, then one has reason to doubt that salvation came through one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:18).

The apostle John states that those who deny the incarnation of Jesus in the flesh are part of the spirit of the anti-Christ (I John 4:3). The apostle Paul passionately argues this truth when he speaks about the resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15). According to the apostles, if the resurrection is not historical then neither is our salvation.

So, why are certain scholars so motivated to define what the Bible narrates as history as myth? Is it just for the look of knowledge (ignorance?). If it were just for the lack of knowing then that could be resolved through better education. However, most of these scholars are already in the schools of higher learning! This is not ignorance but a deep rooted rebellion against the salvation that God has brought into human history. Before joining any church or Christian institution you would do well to ask about their views of the historicity of Adam, Eve, Noah, Moses, Jesus and the apostles. Once that is clarified, then ask them if they believe in biblical and apostolic doctrine. Usually these two questions are related.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. Since the Bible was written by so many different authors, it is futile to relate the ancient literature and the more recent literature.

Response #1. More than 40 human authors are involved in the writing of Scripture. The Bible claims that the Holy Spirit is the author inspiring the human authors (II Tim. 3:16). Jesus relates Moses writing with other Old Testament authors who lived in different centuries.

Objection #2. The Bible's main purpose is to give us moral teachings, the history is not important.

Response #2. Biblical history gives concrete examples of the results of moral behavior or immoral behavior. If what the Bible claims as history is myth, then the Bible's claim for moral authority can also be considered mythical and subjective.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Read about the history of redemption in the following Scripture and in one paragraph show how reading these texts in sequence helps your interpret.

TEXT	CREATION	FALL	RESTORAT- ION	CONSUMAT- ION	CONCLUSION
Mt. 19:1- 12	Vs. 4.	Vs. 8.	Vs. 14.	Vs. 12.	

FIFTH PRINCIPLE FOR BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND REVELATION: MANUSCRIPT STUDY

The greatest marvel in all of literature available to mankind is the preservation of the Old and New Testament. No other document covering so many years, cultures, people groups, authors and religious changes has been preserved with such precision. The Bible is the most ancient document for cultural anthropology, biology, ethnic studies, geology, legal studies, literature, linguistics, philosophy, physics, theology, psychology, sociology, world history and other sciences.

The agreement among conservative scholars as to the reading of the Old Testament is greater than the New Testament. The difference between the New Testament Byzantine text and the Alexandrian text, depending on one's standard of translation, is between 2% and 15%. The student is encouraged to go on-line and study not only the difference with between the Byzantine text with the Alexandrian text but also read up on other ancient texts.²⁴ This is both a fascinating and necessary study.²⁵

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible is meant to be studied in its original languages as presented in the thousands of manuscripts available to us. Text criticism includes the study of grammar, transmission, reliability and context of the Biblical text.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will be encouraged to access the Bible in its original language and deepen their knowledge of text.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

Mark 1:2. "It is written."

Luke 1:1-4, gives us an inside look as to how a Biblical author prepared for his writing.

READ THE REFLECTION. Different Bible versions use different collections of Greek manuscripts. For example, the King James Version (KJV) and New King James Version (NKJV) in English, the *Reina Valera* in Spanish, the *Statenbijble* in Dutch, use the *Textus Receptus* (Received Text) which is based on the Byzantine text. The New International Version (NIV) uses the *Alexandrian Text*. The Alexandrian text is considered to be older than the other collections, although that continues to be a matter of investigation. It is recommended that the Bible student use translations from both traditions, as well as an interlinear or copy of the original languages, in order to compare how words and sentences are translated.²⁶

A much more important difference between Bible versions is the method of translation used. The literary method does not necessarily advocate a "wooden" translation but it seeks to transmit, as much as possible, the vocabulary, grammar, syntax of the original text. The dynamic equivalence approach allows for the exchange of words or concepts, which are considered

²⁴ Since our course is geared both towards distance educational resources and other language groups, a recommended way to begin ones study is to read the scholars notes on the translation of the New King James Version, which uses the Byzantine tradition and the New International Version, which uses the Alexandrian text. Wikipedia is also a good place to be introduced to the variety of related themes.

²⁵ For the English speaking student, the

²⁶ Fee and Stuart, "The trouble with using only one translation, be it ever so good, is that one is thereby committed to the exegetical choices of that translation as the Word of God. The translation you are using may be correct, of course; but it also may be wrong" (p. 29).

archaic for the contemporary reader, for words that are known to the contemporary reader. The literal translation seeks to translate the words of the original text while the dynamic equivalent method seeks to give a rendition of the original thoughts. The translator's freedom has given rise to multiple different version and the presents the danger of making the Bible depend on the individual translators working in conjunction with capitalist publishing houses committees rather than being accountable to the international Church of Christ.

It is a great help to the students of the Bible when the translators explain the changes they make. This can be done in the footnotes or in separate articles.²⁷

OBSERVE THE OBJECTION

Objection #1. The differences in the manuscripts mean that Scripture can not be authoritative.

Response #1. The authority of Scripture lies in the message of the content and not in the process by which it was transmitted.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Do you see the differences of translation between Bible versions? Does it make a difference? Take one of the following examples and state briefly what difference there are between the King James Version (KJV) and New International Version (NIV) verses.

VERSE(S)	KJV	NIV	DIFFERENCE
Matthew 6:13 "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen"	Includes this text	Omits it because it is not in the older manuscripts of Alexandrian and Western texts and sees it as a copyist addition, noting that it is not in the Luke 11 version of the Lord's Prayer.	This raises the question whether additions were made for liturgical purposes (the saying of the Lord's prayer in church services). The conclusion is not anti Biblical in content (see I Chr. 29:11).
Mark 16:9-20	Includes it as part of the Received Text.	Includes it with a note saying that it is not in some of the ancient manuscripts	Even though there is a difference of opinion as to the external evidence (antiquity of manuscripts) the internal evidence of literary genre (all gospels have Great Commission) and theme of the book (relationship of Mark 1:1, 14, 15 with Mark 16:15, 16) argue for its inclusion. It is the author's opinion that it was added prior to its canonization (397 AC).
John 7:53-8:11	Includes it as part of the Received Text	Includes it with a note saying that it is not in some of the ancient manuscripts	NIV Study Bible commentators observe: "This story may not have belonged originally to the Gospel of John. It is absent from almost all the important early manuscripts, and those that have it sometime place it elsewhere (e.g. after Lk. 21:38). But the story may well be authentic."

²⁷ www.sociedadbiblicainternacional.org/articulos publicados. Luciano Jaramillo Cárdenas, "Preguntas Acerca del Nuevo Testamento."

LESSON FIVE

PRINCIPLES FOR TEXTUAL STUDY

The exegesis of a biblical text examines both the content and context of the text.²⁸ In lesson five the student is presented with principles of Bible interpretation that have to do with the examination of the content of the biblical text. Lesson six will deal with the context of the biblical text. Understanding of the content of the text is influenced by exegetical presuppositions,²⁹ grammar, literary and historical study.

FIRST PRINCIPLE TEXTUAL CONTENT STUDY: EXEGETICAL PREPARATION

Hermeneutics are the principles of interpretation and exegesis is putting into practice the research for encountering the intended meaning of the Biblical text.³⁰ In order to “do exegesis” the interpreter has to collect from the text and context the information that he needs.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The study of the Biblical text’s content and context to determine what the text meant to the original author and readers requires the ingathering and examination of the information in the text.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will deepen his appreciation for using methods of investigation and Bible study methods in order to study the message of the Biblical text.³¹

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE TEXT

Luke 1:1. “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us...”

READ THE REFLECTION. Meet an original author! Luke gives the reader a special inside look as to why and how he wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke 1:1-4 identifies the author’s methodology for writing both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. According to Luke 1:1, an orderly and historical description of the life of Jesus (historical narrative) and the events that have been fulfilled (prophecy) are documented. From Luke 1:2, Luke identifies his sources as eye witnesses and ministers of the Word. Luke investigated these same matters and

²⁸ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read...*p. 23.

²⁹ Exegesis. “etymology: New Latin, from Greek *exegesis*, from *exegeisthai* to explain, interpret, from *ex-* + *hegeisthai* to lead: an explanation or critical interpretation of a text.” (“exegesis,” MWO). Fee and Stuart note that in exegesis asks about context and content. In context, the historical and literary contexts are studies. For content, the authors suggest the use of dictionaries, handbooks, translations and commentaries.

³⁰ Different authors bring out a variety of nuances as to the relationship between hermeneutics and exegesis. Fee and Stuart in *How to Read the Bible*, p. 13, define exegesis as discovering what the text *meant* (past) and hermeneutics is defining what the text *means* (present) for today. R.C. Sproul (*Knowing Scripture*, p.46) defines hermeneutics as the science of interpretation. “The purpose of hermeneutics is to establish guidelines and rules for interpretation.”

³¹ Bible study terms. context: surroundings. Deductive Bible study: study the text through general doctrines. Devotional study: includes prayer, praise, confession of sin and worship as part of the study. Eisegesis: to give outside meaning to the text. Exegesis: to explain (from the text). Inductive Bible study: draw information directly from the Bible text. Referencing: compare text with other biblical texts. Verification: truth is established by the witness of two or more witnesses.

writes his account (gospel) Luke wants his reading audience to be absolutely certain in what they have been taught (doctrine, didactical) (Luke 1:4). Luke did his homework in writing about Jesus and the early Church.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. One does not have to know how to do textual analysis in order to interpret the Scripture.

Response #1. Jesus spend three years training His disciples. This included a careful examination of the content as well as intent of Old Testament passages. The New Testament authors give detailed explanation to Old Testament passages. In fact, their credibility depended on their usage of Old Testament Scripture. The New Testament authors compliment each other in writing about the life, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Their personal doctrinal writings (the Epistles) are needed to give a balanced view of Christian doctrine.

Objection #2. I can just open my Bible and God will speak to me.

Response #2. What will you do if you turn to the passage in which Judas hangs himself?

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. In order to interpret the text one has to gather all of the date available and then seek to interpret what they meant to the original author and the original readers. This has to be done prior to coming up with a meaning of the text for today. Choose a text of your choice and gather the following information

EXEGETICAL WORK SHEET

Text:
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of our text?
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts: -how does the text related to the theme of the chapter and book it's in? -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions. What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean?
Commentary notes

SECOND PRINCIPLE FOR TEXTUAL STUDY: GRAMMATICAL

What would happen if you were playing a game of football (soccer) and one team could play with different rules? One team could push and shove the ball handler while the others could only tackle the ball. The rules for Bible interpretation are the grammar and vocabulary that is used. To change these would be to change the rules of the game of interpretation.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible was revealed in ancient languages, which are to be understood and interpreted according to their grammar. One's interpretation must agree with the grammar of the Biblical text.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will be shown the importance of maintaining the grammatical integrity of the Biblical text and thereby preserve the revealed message of the text.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE TEXTS

Matthew 4:4. "Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Matthew 5:18. "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will be no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

READ THE REFLECTION. The student will read about 3 cases (Jehovah Witness, Roman Catholic, and Feminism) in which the words of the Bible are altered and write their opinion.

1. Jehovah Witnesses.

"Under the leadership of Nathan H. Knorr (1905-1977) the Watch Tower (WT) Society put away date setting for a time and switched to a different strategy. Since many of their teachings are easily refuted by key verses in the King James Bible, Knorr set out to publish a different Bible for Jehovah's Witnesses to use. The WT Society Bible, called the *New World Translation* (NWT), blatantly alters many verses that show the errors of Watchtower teaching. The single best example of this is John 1:1, which in the King James Version clearly declares Jesus' deity — "*the Word was God.*" The WT Society denies the deity of Christ, so the NWT renders this phrase "the Word was *a god.*"³²

"Another example is found in the Old Testament book of Zechariah, chapter 12 verse 10. Jehovah God is speaking and says, "*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced*" understood by Christians as a predictive reference to the crucifixion. Recognizing that Jesus' fulfillment of this prophecy would mean that he is Jehovah God, the Watchtower Society has changed this verse in the NWT to read "they will certainly look *to the One* whom they pierced through," thus eliminating another reference to the deity of Jesus Christ. The Society made similar changes to many other verses relating to the deity of Christ (Colossians 1:16-20; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8). They have also altered verses that expose the WT Society's false teaching on subjects like the reality of eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46), and the personality of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:1; Jude 19). In this way the Watchtower Society

³² Google search. Facts about the Jehovah Witness

gives Jehovah's Witnesses and potential converts the illusion that the Bible supports its erroneous doctrines.”³³

2. Roman Catholicism.

In order to say that Mary did not have any more children than Jesus, the brothers and sisters mentioned in Mark 6:3 are called friends.³⁴ (study the footnote)

3. Inclusive language

The elimination of masculine nouns, pronouns and further references has crept into English Protestant and Evangelical Bible versions.³⁵ (study the footnote).

The grammatical study of the text involves two major considerations. 1) what is the grammar and meaning of given text? and 2), what are the reasons why the grammar of the text is changed by others?

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ www.blueletterbible. See Mark 6:3. *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, “brother.” “Denotes “a brother, or near kinsman;” in the plural, “a community based on identity of origin or life.” It is used of: (1) Male children of the same parents, Matt, 1:2; 14:3; (2) Male descendants of the same parents, Act 7:23,26; Hbr 7:5; (3) Male children of the same mother, Mat 13:55; 1Cr 9:5; Gal 1:19; (4) people of the same nationality, Act 3:17,22; Rom 9:3. With “men” (aner, “Male”), prefixed, it is used in addresses only, Act 2:29,37, etc.; (5) any man, a neighbor, Lk 10:29; Mat 5:22; 7:3; (6) persons united by a common interest, Mat 5:47; (7) persons united by a common calling, Rev 22:9; (8) mankind, Mat 25:40; Hbr 2:17; (9) the disciples, and so, by implication, all believers, Mat 28:10; Jhn 20:17; (10) believers, apart from sex, Mat 23:8; Act 1:15; Rom 1:13; 1Th 1:4; Rev 19:10 (the word “sisters” is used of believers, only in 1Ti 5:2); (11) believers, with aner, “Male,” prefixed, and with “or sister” added, 1Cr 7:14 (RV), 15; Jam 2:15, Male as distinct from female, Act 1:16; 15:7,13, but not Act 6:3. * [* From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, p. 32.] Notes: (1) Associated words are adelphotes, primarily, “a brotherly relation,” and so, the community possessed of this relation, “a brotherhood,” 1Pe 2:17 (see 5:9, marg.); philadelphos, (phileo, “to love,” and adelphos), “fond of one’s brethren,” 1Pe 3:8; “loving as brethren,” RV; philadelphia, “brotherly love,” Rom 12:10; 1Th 4:9; Hbr 13:1; “love of the brethren,” 1Pe 1:22; 2Pe 1:7, RV; Pseudadelphos, “false brethren,” 2Cr 11:26; Gal 2:4. (2) In Lk 6:16; Act 1:13, the RV has “son,” for AV, “brother.” (3) In Act 13:1.”

³⁵ www.bible-researcher.com, Michael Marlowe “The Gender-Neutral Language Controversy.” (2001). “Although the liberal organizations that sponsored the earlier gender-neutral versions plainly avowed their ideological motives for such revisions, advocates of the revised NIV (writing for a conservative audience) produced some literature that defended some of the changes on scholarly or linguistic grounds alone. The word *anthropoi* was mentioned as a word in the Greek text which is sometimes quite properly translated “people.” Examples were given where a plural “they” put in place of the generic “he” does not appear to affect the meaning at all, and the change was defended on the ground that the gender-inclusive meaning of the sentence is better conveyed by such a “dynamically equivalent” rendering. But critics ⁽⁹⁾ drew attention to places where the systematic substitution of plurals did significantly interfere with the sense. For example, in Psalm 1, the one man whose delight is in the law of the Lord is set in opposition to the many ungodly ones around him. But when the man is made to disappear into a group of genderless people, then a part of the meaning of this passage is lost. It was also noticed that the Messianic interpretations of some Old Testament passages were eliminated in the pursuit of genderless language, as in Psalm 8:4, where the phrase “son of man” becomes “human beings” (compare to Hebrews 2:6). The revisers’ motives were questioned concerning the revision of Acts 1:21. The passage relates Peter’s suggestion that a new apostle be picked from the men who had been with them from the beginning. The word used here is not the debatable *anthropos*, but the undoubtedly masculine *aner*, which corresponds to our word “Male.” Yet the revised NIV (and the early printings of the *New Living Translation*) provided a genderless rendering at this point.”

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Are you aware that some Bible versions have changed the grammar of the text. Write one paragraph to show how the Jehovah's Witnesses have changed the meaning of John 1:1.

TEXT

John 1:1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

WHAT IS THE GRAMMAR AND MEANING OF TEXT

and (conjunction)
 the (definite article)
 Word (logos, noun)
 was (linking verb, imperfect active indicative singular in Greek)
 God (theos, noun, only true God, not any god)

WHY WOULD SOME PEOPLE WANT TO CHANGE THE TEXT?

The Jehovah Witnesses, who do not believe that Jesus is God, add the indefinite article "a" in the last phrase so that it reads; "and the Word was a god."

THIRD PRINCIPLE FOR TEXTUAL STUDY: LITERARY GENRE

Do parents talk with their children the same way when they were small children as when they are adults? Should parents tell everything to their children? When children are small they are taught nursery rhymes, riddles, pithy sayings, short songs and simple poetry. When children grow older they learn to read and write and become more familiar with mystery stories, novels, history and fiction. Then, when its time for work, marriage and business, they are faced with licenses, covenants, work contracts and other legal documents. At the end of their life, the elderly make sure their last testament is in order and may even dedicate time to writing a family biography or other commemorative writings. Throughout the lifespan of the person, a variety of literary styles are used, all depending on the capability of both the communicator and their audience.

The Bible is quite similar, a variety of literary genres are used to communicate the experience and history of God's dealings with His people.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE AND REPEAT THE WORD 'LITERARY' TEN TIMES. The Biblical text is to be interpreted according to the type of literary genre it belongs to.

GET TO THE GOAL, YOU ILLERATE. Students will be able to identify different literary figures of speech,³⁶ literary genre,³⁷ and understand how they are to be interpreted.

DON'T MEMORIZE THE BIBLE TEXT, IF THEY ARE TOO LONG AND YOUR BRAIN IS TOO SMALL

Mark 4:10-12. "But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. And He said to them, ""To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that ""Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them"

Luke 24:44. "Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

READ THE REFLECTIONS BACKWARDS. Every part of Scripture has its own literary genre. Let us look at some of the most obvious one. Historical literature is the narration of

³⁶ Figures of speech. Anthropomorphism: attribute human qualities to something (*the hand of God*). Hyberbole: make a point by using exaggeration (*eyes lust- pluck it out*). Euphemism: use of understatement (*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*) I Cor. 7:1. Fables (Judges 9:8-15). Metaphore: implied comparison (*We are sheep of his pasture*, Ps. 100:3). Metonymy. To associate two things that are alike. Personification. Attribute personal qualities to an object (*rocks cry out*). Riddles (Judges 14:14). Simile: comparison using "like" (*All of us like sheep have gone astray*, Is. 53:6. type: prefigure a future revelation with symbol understood in the present. Boaz, the redeemer of Ruth was a type for the Redeemer Christ. [Taken from Robert McQuilkin. *Understanding and Applying the Bible*. Chapter 12.]

³⁷ Literary genre terms. History: narration of events that happened. Apocalyptic: literature dealing with the description of the principalities and powers that are operating in the universe and history Didactical literature: teaching materials. Doctrine: teaching of theology and ethics. Epistles: letter. Gospels: the 4 gospels narrative the life, teachings, miracles, death, resurrection and Great Commission of Jesus. Legal literature: these include commandments, covenant terms. Parables: described by some as earthly stories with a kingdom meaning. Poetry. the psalms and the Writings are rich with poetic statements. Prophecy, the forth telling, proclamation of God's truth about the past, present and future. Proverbs: wisdom statements.

events that happened. Apocalyptic literature deals with the description of the principalities and powers that are operating in the universe and history. Didactical literature is teaching material. Doctrine is the teaching of theology and ethics. Epistles are letters. The Gospels are the 4 accounts narrating the life, teachings, miracles, death, resurrection and Great Commission of Jesus. Legal literature includes commandments, covenant terms. Parables are described by some as earthly stories with a kingdom meaning. The Psalms and the Writings are rich with poetic statements. Prophecy is the forth telling, proclamation of God's truth about the past, present and future. Proverbs are wisdom statements. The Psalms are a collection of songs, poems, wisdom statements.

R.C. Sproul makes the important observation that historical narrative is interpreted by the didactical or teachings of Scripture.³⁸ Not all of the historical events are normative but they are instructive. He cautions the interpreter to be careful with the interpretation of the parables and the predictive prophecies. Knowledge of the original context will help to interpret these genre types.

EXERCISE IN ENJOYMENT

See the list of Bible texts that are wrongly interpreted when the literary genre is not properly identified. Give your response to why one of these interpretations is wrong.

TEXT	WRONG IDENTIFICATION OF LITERARY GENRE	RIGHT IDENTIFICACION
If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you (Mt. 5:29).	What happens when you treat the hyperbole as the law?	What are you suppose to do with a hyperbole?
Healing of the blind man (John 9)	What happens when you interpret this history as mythological or a parable.	If Jesus did not historically and really heal the blind man, what would have happened?
Proverbs 28:18. "Whoever walks blamelessly will be saved, but he who is perverse in his ways will suddenly fall.	What happens when you treat a proverb as doctrine?	How is the word "saved" used here?

³⁸ R.C. Sproul, *op.cit.*, p. 68-69.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE FOR TEXTUAL STUDY: HISTORY OF THE TEXT

The role of history of redemption as well as the secular history's relationship to interpretation is covered elsewhere. However, a few words need to be said about the actual history of the Bible text. Here we are concerned about the historical occurrence in the text as it relates to its teaching.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The history of a text needs to be interpreted by the teaching of the text.³⁹

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will gain insight into interpreting the historical content of a particular text.

MEMORIZE BIBLE VERSE

Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of the Law."

READ THE REFLECTION. The Bible students need to be aware of how non-historical information or even historical data has been used to justify certain practices. Fee and Stuart conclude that Paul's prohibition of I Tim. 2:11-15 for the women to teach and have authority over the men in church is culturally relative.⁴⁰ The reader is left to conclude that culturally relative opinions are not to be considered universal apostolic doctrine. The reason that is given by Fee and Stuart is that Paul was dealing with a local situation where the women were troublesome in the church at Ephesus. The authors mention I Tim. 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:6-9 as contextual background. However, the given context of the "wanton widows" (I Tim. 5:11-15) is not their desire to rule over men (I Tim 2:11-12) but to marry! The historical contexts of I Timothy 2 and I Timothy. 5 are different. I Timothy 2:11-15 addresses the issue of the role of women in relationship to teaching and having authority over men (vs. 11-14) as well as appreciating child bearing (vs. 15). I Timothy 5:3-15 instruct younger widowed mothers to marry while inviting elderly women with a good testimony to enroll into special service in the church. It cannot be said that Paul taught otherwise in other situations (I Cor. 14:34). The fact is that Paul does not give local historical reasons for his prohibition but appeals to truths about creation (vs. 13), the fall (vs. 14) and restoration for child bearing mothers (vs. 15). Paul appeals to the history of redemption in I Timothy 2:11-15, not the history of the church in Ephesus, nor to secular history. To justify women teaching and having authority over men in the church needs to be based on something other than pointing to the cultural relativity of I Timothy 2: 11-15 because such justification goes contrary to Paul teaching in that text.⁴¹

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Comment on: "If Paul's teaching about women in the early church is culturally relative, wouldn't his teaching about homosexuality also be cultural relative? How do you determine whether something is culturally relative or not?"

³⁹ R.C. Sproul, *op.cit.* "Historical narratives are to be interpreted by the didactic," p. 68.

⁴⁰ Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴¹ Fee and Stuart go against their own rule of interpretation: "The text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his readers. " Rather Fee and Stuart needed to follow their other rule: Whenever we share comparable particulars with the first-century, God's Word to us is the same as His Word to them. (pp. 60f).

LESSON SIX

PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEXTUAL STUDY

The hermeneutical principles discussed in lesson six are related to the context of the Biblical text. These include the Bible's context, historical considerations, cultural context, and universal considerations.

FIRST PRINCIPLE FOR CONTEXTUAL STUDY: BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The context of the Bible are the authors and years it took to write the 66 books. What is unique about the Biblical context, being that the Bible is the Word of God, is that there is organic unity among all the Bible books.⁴² The oneness and unity of Scripture is an awe inspiring concept. As the student studies the particular details of Scripture he has at his disposal the rest of Scripture. The whole interprets the particular and the particular reflects on the whole.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible is one book in which all of its parts are harmoniously connected.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will seek the organic unity of Scripture.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

Jn. 10:35. Jesus said that Scripture cannot be broken.

II Tim. 3:16. All Scripture is inspired.

READ THE REFLECTION. The relationship of the parts and the whole is true in other parts of life. The human body functions best when all its parts are healthy and active. One small scratch on the arm may become infected and poison the rest of the body. To break the uniform functioning of the body cells can lead to destructive cancer. Physical health requires that the wholeness of the body by maintained by all its parts.

When the Bible interpreter falsifies one small part of the Scripture, it calls into question the whole canon. One erroneous interpretation can call into question the message of the people. For that reason, Paul strongly opposed Peter when Peter denying the gospel of grace by associating with the pressures brought on by the Judaizers who wanted Gentile Christians and their children to be circumcised. Even though circumcision was demanded on the Israelites after God's covenant with Abraham, the demands of circumcision were fulfilled in the death of Jesus as Jesus fulfilled the demands of the ceremonial law. Now entrance into God's presence would be by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:11-21).

Peter took Paul serious and honored Paul for his vocation as an apostolic author. He warns others to respect Paul's writings, "in which some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of Scriptures" (II Peter 2:16).

⁴² The organic unity among Biblical texts is at the hermeneutical level, not at the exegetical level that seeks to determine the meaning of different texts. The fact the poetry of the psalms can be used for prophecy (Ps. 8:2 and Mt. 21:15,16) in the Gospels crosses stick literary principles and points to a function that goes beyond the original knowledge of the psalmist.

The Bible is the Word of God by which God uses human authors in order to communicate His truth and will to us. One has to be careful in speaking only about Paul's, Peter's, John's or any author's view, when in fact they are writing Scripture. The divine authorship is the greater authorship and the bigger picture.

The Bible is one book and it is unique. The Koran, the Book of Mormon, the Institute of Christian Religion, the Purpose Driven Life and other religious books do not measure up to the standard which the Bible sets for itself and which has been recognized by the Church in the process of canonization.

Fee and Stuart make some important observation about problem texts:⁴³

1. The text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his readers
2. Whenever we share comparable particulars with the first-century, God's Word to us is the same as His Word to them.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. It is impossible to find unity among authors who lived hundreds of years apart, represented different societies and cultures and who belonged to different religions (Judaism and Christianity).

Response #1. The unity of Scripture is not found in a common language, culture, human authorship or common religion. The unity of Scripture is found in its divine authorship and common message.

Objection #2. There are errors in the Bible.

Response #2. Please show what these errors are. Conservative Bible scholars studying the manuscripts of the Bible recognize errors in insertions, copying and transmission of the manuscripts. However, the existence of thousands of manuscripts helps the Bible scholars explain what has happened to the variances in the text.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. In the following exercise the student will comment on one text and show how the particular teaching relates to the whole of Scripture.

TEXT	PARTICULAR TEACHING	TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE AS A WHOLE
Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."	What claim is made about this God as it relates to Genesis 1?	How does Genesis 1:1 relate to John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-4?
Genesis 3:15 "...the seed of the woman."	For Moses, the seed (singular) is the coming Messiah	What does Gal. 3:16 say about the seed?
Psalms 23:1. The Lord is my Shepherd.	For the Psalmist, who is the Lord?	Who does Jesus say the Shepherd is? (Jn. 10:11).

⁴³ Fee and Stuart, *op. cit.*, p.60f.

SECOND PRINCIPLE FOR CONTEXTUAL STUDY: SECULAR HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Christians do not depend on the affirmation of secular history in order to believe the content of the Bible. We believe that an accurate reading of Bible history will correspond with an accurate reading of secular history. Also, the teachings of Scripture are important for the interpretation of historical events.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. Biblical interpretation affirms secular historical facts and Biblical history.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will learn to appreciate the historical accuracy of the Bible as well as interpret historical events through the teachings of Scripture.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSE

Luke 1:3. “Therefore since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account to you.”

READ THE REFLECTION. According to Fee and Stuart: “The historical context, which will differ from book to book, has to do with several things: the time and culture of the author and his readers, that is, the geographical, topographical, and political factors that are relevant to the author’s setting; and the occasion of the book, letter, psalm, prophetic oracle, or other genre.”⁴⁴

R.C. Sproul adds that the historical context has to be interpreted by the accompanying teachings of history, not the other way around.

For example, the monumental event of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD is affirmed by the Roman historian Josephus as well as by Jewish sources. Perhaps some see it as human aggression and divine judgment. This may be true but the New Testament gives this event both prophetic and doctrinal explanations.

The destruction of the temple in 70AD was prophesied by the Lord (Matthew 24:1-28; Luke 21:20-24). The Lucan account states: “And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (21:24). Furthermore, this destruction of the temple, is prophesied in Daniel 9:27; 11:31.

The epistle to the Hebrews gives an elaborate re-interpretation of the temple, the priesthood and of the sacrifices. The earthly temple in Jerusalem is not necessary anymore as Christ has fulfilled the purpose of that religious and ceremonial provision.

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified....Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near...” (Hebrews 10:12-14, 19-22).

The Protestant reformation was necessary to rediscover that there is only one High Priest, that by faith there is direct access to Him and that a Christian sacrificial and ceremonial service is not

⁴⁴ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible...*p. 23.

necessary. The historical death of Jesus and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD underscore that important fact.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. How do you expect people today to believe that Jesus fed the five thousand?

Response #1. Put yourself in the place of the original hearers of this miracle. If Jesus had promised to feed the five thousand and had not done so, there would have been a social scandal which we would still be hearing about today. Jesus would have been rejected for lying and deceiving the people. There is absolutely no mention of this in secular history. Even the critics of Jesus knew He was a miracle worker and not just a parable teller. Remember, the people had been with Jesus for probably more than a day without eating. Jesus would not speak with the people about food and then not feed them. Jesus would not speak about healing if He did not heal. Jesus would not promise salvation if He did not save.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Was the destruction of the temple in 70AD necessary or a fluke of history? (One paragraph response).

THIRD PRINCIPLE FOR CONTEXTUAL STUDY: CULTURAL CONTEXT

One of the major themes of the New Testament is the trans-cultural movement of Christianity from its Jewish roots and culture to a Gentile environment. The Old Testament people of God were associated with the patriarchs, the tribes and nation of Israel. When Jesus came upon the scene, Israel had been divided and the Jewish people were under Roman domination. Upon the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the Pentecostal outburst, God began to move from people to people and nation to nation. But it was not easy. Not only was there persecution from both the unbelieving Jews and Romans, it was difficult for the new Christians to know what to do with the laws or customs of the Jewish past and current Gentile situation. The ruling principle for dealing with traditional religious customs and cultural practices was to abide by the golden rule and measure one's action in accordance with the advancement of the gospel (Acts 15: 24-29).

Cultural relativism is evident in both legalistic and libertine ways. The legalist may forbid or deny certain teachings about cultural behavior, such as drinking wine, but this means that apostolic teachings about other cultural behaviors, such as those concerning sexual mores and gender roles can also be ignored. Cultural relativism for liberals is verbally affirming some Biblical doctrine but not holding themselves or others to practice Biblical ethics.

READ THE PRINCIPLE. Understanding of the social and cultural context is important for understanding the Biblical text and the relationship of our own context to the Bible.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will grow in their understanding and appreciation of Jewish and Biblical time religious and cultural beliefs and customs as well as their own. They will see how the gospel applies to the Biblical context.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSE

Romans 14:13. "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."

READ THE REFLECTION. The student needs to know four levels of contexts as far as communicating the message of the Bible. These contexts include those of the original human author, the original audience, the interpreter and our context. For example, Genesis 1:1 was penned by Moses (level 1) who was writing for his Jewish audience (level 2). The Hebrew text was translated into a variety of European languages in the 16th century (level 3) and is now read by us in the 21st century (level 4). Whereas the context of Moses writing was to document, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the oral history of the people of God, for a people living with Egyptian and Middle Eastern polytheism, the Protestant translators wanted an authoritative translation not controlled by the Roman Catholic Church but by Scripture and its original languages, and so set in motion a tradition of translating and printing Scriptures that we receive in our secular and evolutionistic world. Each level of Bible communication needs to take into consideration its context but not fall into the temptation of letting the context dictate the content of the Bible. The content of the Word remains the same but it can be applied to a variety of human contexts.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Take one of the examples below and explain in one paragraph how the biblical view is different than a certain cultural view.

	CULTURAL VIEW	BIBLICAL VIEW
Women's head covering	Head covering is the only way a woman shows she is under authority	In Paul's discussion he calls for the reader to judge for themselves (I Cor. 11:13)
Drinking of wine	Abstainers do not allow for the drinking of wine	John 2, I Tim.3:3; 4:3; 5:23. Romans 14:14-18.
The Sabbath	The only way to celebrate the Sabbath is as the Jews did, on Saturday. (View of Seventh Day Adventists)	In Romans 14 Paul explains that different days can be used for Sabbath rest and worship. This freedom should not be misused nor should it be a basis for condemnation. ⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Fee and Stuart, *op.cit.*, For a good discussion on the role of culture and ethics, pp. 62f.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE FOR CONTEXTUAL STUDY: UNIVERSAL CONTEXT

The Bible is not the property of any nation or denomination or a group of scholars. The Bible belongs with God's people wherever they live.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible has a universal scope as it is meant to be known in all languages, by all peoples and throughout the whole world.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will appreciate the universal character of the Bible observe the global mission motive in the texts of Scripture.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

Matthew 28:19. "... make disciples of all nations."

Revelation 5: 9b-10. "Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

READ THE REFLECTION. The Bible is multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic and relevant for all people groups. The Bible was not written for only one language group but it was written to be communicated, translated and transmitted to all.

One of the exciting "races" in the mission world is the goal to translate the New Testament into all of the known languages of the world. The advent of the internet and computer helps will greatly assist in this task. However, the translation of the Bible is only the first leg in that relay race. The second leg is to evangelize the people group for whom the Scriptures are being translated. The third leg is to plant a church and develop church leaders and members through preaching, teaching and discipleship. The final leg is for the people group to do missions and reach other people groups.

One of the educational tasks in global education is to encourage and equip ethnic group leaders to participate in the translation of a literal text of the Bible for their people group. Having a paraphrase or dynamic equivalent translation is a contribution to the study of the Bible but each ethnic group needs to know what the original languages of the Bible say. The same is true for the translation of the constitution of the nation one resides in; the literal translation for the national hymn, national laws and other documents of national and group concern. Indigenous judges should not be content with having a paraphrase or a dynamic equivalent translation of the law. The judge, the court, the lawyers, the accused and the people should know what the law actually says. Doesn't the same hold true for Scripture?

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. In the following Bible texts the student will identify the universal and missiological themes.

Genesis 12:1-3

Psalm 2:7-8

Romans 15:10

LESSON SEVEN

PRINCIPLES FOR PERSONAL STUDY

It is important to have a hermeneutic in order to interpret the Bible and it's also important to have a hermeneutic to interpret the interpreter. In lesson seven we will examine how the Word interacts with the spirit and heart of interpreter through the application of the gospel in an ethical way in all areas of life and through the call to sacrificial service and true worship.

FIRST PRINCIPLE FOR PERSONAL STUDY: TRANSFORMATIONAL

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Bible as the Word of God has the power to instill faith that will spiritually transform its readers and influence the relationships in their world.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student's life will be transformed by listening, believing and obeying the Word of God

MEMORIZE ONE OF THE BIBLE TEXTS

Romans 10:17. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Romans 12:1-2. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

II Peter 1:2-4. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

READ THE REFLECTION. R.C. Sproul writes about reading the Bible existentially.⁴⁶ This is not in reference to the ideology of Existentialism but a reference to "passionately and personally involved in what we read" by identifying with the characters and experiences of the Biblical characters. I am sure R.C. Sproul would agree with us if we agreed with him and added that the experience of the Biblical characters and events need to be interpreted in light of the transforming gospel of Jesus. But the caution here is not to jump too quickly to the Gospel application. The reader should feel the full impact of the story as written and then apply the gospel. Again we see the relationship to discovering the meaning of the original text (exegesis) and its application for today's meaning (hermeneutics).

Haddon Robinson makes the point that before a preacher preaches the Word he needs to be transformed by that Word. The audience, then, is not just receiving a message but listening to someone who has been transformed by the Word and is now presenting the same Word for the audience to be transformed.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. From the text, Romans 12:1-2, identify the Biblical truths and indicate the corresponding transformational action

⁴⁶ Sproul, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-68.

SECOND PRINCIPLE FOR PERSONAL STUDY: BIBLICAL FAITHFULNESS

The study of the Bible is much more than a study of ancient religion, history and doctrine. God uses the Bible to communicate with His people. The student needs to KNOW what the Bible text is saying before he can spiritually DISCERN what God communicating to him.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The interpreter is to be mentally, emotionally and spiritually faithful to what the text says.⁴⁷ The interpreter must respond in faith to the message of the Word.

GET TO THE GOAL. The interpreter will be guided to personally respond to the study of the Word in a way that is in accordance with the Word.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSE

“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)

READ THE REFLECTIONS. You have heard it said and perhaps you have said it, “The Lord told me.” Now, that is a very important statement! If the Lord spoke with you in audible tones, could I ask you some questions about that? Did he speak with English or an American southern accent? Did you quote from the King James Version or the New International Version? Did he use “thees” and “thous”? Where you able to respond back to God? Etc., etc., etc.

What is more probable as to what happened was that you were reading your Bible or a verse came to mind and you perceived or discerned that God wanted you to think about that. Since your thoughts responded to a real need you were convinced that God gave you such guidance. That has often happened to me and I pray it will continue to happen every day! However, that is different than hearing an audible voice. It would be more accurate to say, “On the basis of Psalm 23 verse 1, I believe that I need to be more faithful in hearing the voice of my Shepherd and follow Him.”

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. We cannot possibly be perfectly faithful to God’s high standards so why try to do the impossible?

Response #1. If God gives us high standards He is able to help us fulfill them as well.

Objection #2. The standards of the Bible are outdated, so why seek to be faithful to Biblical commands?

Response #2. The moral commands, such as the Ten Commandments, in distinction with the civic and religious ceremonial mandates, are trans-cultural (Mt. 5:17) and applicable to our times. Basic human needs and morality are common to all human cultures.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Psalm 119 is a poetical statement by King David about his relationship to God. The role of the Word of God is crucial for understanding David’s love, faith and hope. Psalm 119 is subdivided into an acrostic of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. For each of the Hebrew letters and consequence subdivision, a summary statement can be made about the Word of God. The student will compete the final 11 segments by giving a brief summary statement for the missing letters.

⁴⁷ Faithfulness: to act in accordance to a preset standard.

Letter of Hebrew alphabet	Principle statement about God's Word and the believers relationship to it
Aleph 119:1-8	The believer is to walk in heartfelt obedience according to the law (<i>torah</i> : God's commands), statutes (<i>edot</i> , rules, demands), precepts (<i>piqqudim</i> , regulations), decrees (<i>huqqim</i> , decisions).
Beth 119:9-16	The Word is good for the youth. It calls for heart commitment, of memorizing Scripture, being willing to be taught, to declare, to worship and to delight in it.
Gimel 119:17-24	The servant who keeps and is counseled by God's Word is alienated from the cursed who plot against God's Word.
Daleth 119:25-32	The servant endures suffering but continues in the Word
He 119:33-40	The servant prays to be taught in order to be revived and be protected from sin.
Waw 119:41-48	The servant prays that God will give strength to rebuke the enemy and bear witness to Word before the rulers.
Zayin 119:49-56	Remembrance of God's Word is the servant's comfort and guide in situations of conflict.
Heth 119:57-64	The servant reflects on his "portion in life" and seeks to return to God's ways and live in friendship and love of the Lord.
Teth 119:65-72	The servant admits going astray before his affliction but he returns to God's precious Word despite the taunt of the arrogant.
Yodh 119:73-80	The servant recognizes that the same God who made him, who gives him understanding is the God who forgives and strengthens.
Kaph 119:81-88	In desperation the servant calls out to God and remembers His decrees.
Lamed 119:89-96	
Mem 119:97-104	
Nun 119:105-112	
Samek 119:113-120	
Ayin 119:121-128	
Pe: 119: 129-136	
Tsadde: 119:137-144	
Qoph 119:145-152	
Resh 119:153-160	
Shin 119:161-168	
Tau 119:169-176	

THIRD PRINCIPLE FOR PERSONAL STUDY: ETHICAL

“Just do the right thing.” Easier said than done. In order to do the right thing according to God’s standards, you first have to have faith in the true God and then submit yourself to Him. Both the Old and Testament teach, “the just shall live by faith.”⁴⁸ This does not mean, “just have a little faith and it will all work out.” Nor does it mean that “the unjust live by faith.” It means that in order to be just you need to live by faith in Jesus the Righteous One and trust that His righteousness has been credited to you.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The right interpretation of the Bible leads to ethical action.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will be able to identify the ethical action required by the teachings of Scripture.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSES

James 2:14. “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?”

Matthew 5:17. “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

READ THE REFLECTION. Do you know what “good works” are, in the Biblical sense? Good works is not trying your best or behaving yourself. Non believers can do that too! Good works are the works of God He accomplished through you. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

God cannot accept our human works because they are tainted with sin. What God planned was to send His Son to perfectly do all the works that were needed for our salvation. Now, through faith in the resurrected and reigning Lord Jesus, we can participate in His workings. It is true that our participation in the works of Christ are tainted by sin as well, however, they are His works and He is able to overrule our sin and still accomplish His work.

God works this way with “good works” and God worked that way in order to have human authors write the Bible. The human authors were inspired by the Spirit of God so that “their prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21).

Now this same Word of God is used by the Holy Spirit to “move” us, to go beyond our will in order to desire and do the will of God, to go beyond our love in order to embrace the love of God and love others as God loves them.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. How can documents, written thousands of years ago, have moral authority for the readers today?

Response #1. If one holds to an evolutionary view of man’s origins and development, then documents written long ago will have played the role in the formation of man and are not significant today. If one believes in the creation of Adam and Eve, humanity has a common

⁴⁸ Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17

nature and similar needs. The myth about Adam being the primitive, sub human being, is a myth. The reality is that Adam was created in God's image, not in the image of animals. Prior to the entrance of sin into the world, the constitution and nature of Adam must have been optimum. The commands given to Adam and Eve prior to their sin are still applicable today.

Objection #2. The ethics of Jesus and Paul were valid for their day but not today.

Response #2. If the ethics of Jesus are only applicable to His time then the same would be true for the salvation that He brings. However, the claims of Jesus go far beyond his time. He claims to fulfill the Law and Prophets of the Old Testament and He institutes the new covenant in the New Testament.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Read Romans 13:8 and identify the ethical content of the text.

FOURTH PRINCIPLE FOR PERSONAL STUDY: DEVOTIONAL

The study of Scripture is not a heartless exercise conducted by cloistered ivory tower scholars but it is part of the communication of the heart of God to the heart of the communicator and to the heart of receiver of the Word.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPAL. The interpretation of the Bible is part of the heartfelt communication between God and His people.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will develop the devotional side of studying the Bible.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSE

Psalm 119:11. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

READ THE REFLECTION. What is the heart of God? To be sure, speaking about the heart of God is an anthropomorphism, the use of human language to describe God. How are the emotions of God shown? From the Old Testament history we receive the impression that God gets angry a lot! However, even though God's anger is evident, it is minimal compared to the patience, mercy and grace that He showed. The clearest display of the heart and passion of God is seen in Jesus, especially in his final hours of suffering and dying on the cross.

The cross and resurrection events are packaged into the gospel message that because of the cross we are to repent from sin and because of the resurrection we are to believe in the risen and reigning Christ. The gospel shows God's unconditional love and grace towards sinners, as well as His ongoing holiness, righteousness and perfection.

The interpreter needs to stop and mediate on the inner sentiments of the heart of God as portrayed in the text and seek to communicate that with others. Such reflection should lead the interpreter to prayer, to speaking with God about the matters under study. This is a time of spiritual communion with the God who speaks to the believer's spirit during devotional study.

How should the heart of the interpreter be in relationship to studying the Word of God? If the Bible is the Word of God then it is only logical that we speak with God in prayer before we study, while we study and after we study. One of the prayers that I pray is to ask God to give us the desire to pray and the desire to study according to His will, not our own will.

Do we take quality time for the study of Bible? When I read the Bible just before going to bed my good intentions last about 5 minutes.

What personal burdens are you taking along into your study? If your upset, frustrated, disappointed or have unresolved conflict and sin in your life, this would be time to share that with your Creator, Savior and Perfector.

As you approach the text, identify your prior theological position on the subject matter of the text. Does your church have a position on the teachings of the text? Are you willing to critically examine your own beliefs and the creeds of your church in light of what the text says?

As you study the text, make note of the changes that are happening in your spirit and mind. If your Bible study does not transform you, it will be unlikely to transform others with whom you minister to. According to the text, what changes would you like to see in your life and in the life of the people your minister to?

How do we discern the heart of the person you are ministering to? The study of the Word is not simply for personal and spiritual edification but God is equipping the saints for the work of

ministry so that they church will grow and that people will be transformed by the gospel to God's glory. Who are you ministering to? With whom could you share the message of the text under study with. How do you propose to do that? How do you want that person to be influenced by the message of this text? What are they struggling with? What are their theological presuppositions as to the theme of the text? What is their personal, family and social situation? Does that affect how they will receive the Word? What life transforming changes are you praying for in the life of the people you are ministering the Word to? Are they praying for the same results?

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. The study of Scripture is designed for classical studies in culture, linguistics and religion rather than for subjective purposes.

Response #1. Without denying the importance of studying Scripture for classical purpose, the Word is also the food for the believer's soul.

Objection #2. Only those trained in Biblical studies and pastoral work are capable of interpreting the Bible for devotional reasons.

Response #2. The Scriptures were written for the believers, not for the scholars. Both Hebrew and Koine Greek are languages of the people, not of the scholars. The Bible uses a variety of styles that will communicate to different people. As God's people read the Scripture they will grow in knowledge and appreciation of ancient Bible history and its religious development.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. What devotional reading of Scripture has touched your heart his week. Briefly explain.

LESSON EIGHT

PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTERIAL STUDY

The Bible is the manual for ministry for the servants for the Lord. This includes the three fold offices of the church: the proclamation (prophet), the intercession-mediation (priest) and the supervisory (ruler).⁴⁹

FIRST PRINCIPLE FOR MINISTERIAL STUDY. PROCLAMATION

The Bible is the basis for the proclamation ministries of the Christian Church and community.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The written Word becomes the oral Word through proclamation.

SET THE GOAL. The student will observe the proclamation content in the Bible.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE VERSE

Romans 10:17. "Faith comes by hearing the Word."

READ THE REFLECTION. The proclamation ministry includes evangelism and preaching. These ministries, in turn, lead into discipleship and teaching ministries.

In evangelism the Christian seeks to bring the Word of God to unbelievers so that by hearing the Word they may come to faith and follow Jesus Christ. The Word as God's divine instrument is very important in evangelism. God uses imperfect human heralds to bring His perfect Word to unbelievers. The message to the unbelievers centers on the gospel message of who God is and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ.

The preachers proclaim (*kerusso*) the Word to believers. It is their sacred task to communicate to believers, on a regular basis, what God has revealed in the Bible. This requires understanding the divine author as well as the human authors of the text. It requires a basic understanding of exegesis and communication skills. The nature of proclamation is that truth is announced or declared. Preaching is not a dialogue or conversation between the preacher and parishioner, as they together seek truth; it is the declaration of truth that comes from God.

Jesus is the personal Word, the Bible is the written Word and preaching is the oral Word.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. The Bible is ancient literature and not a manual for preaching.

Response #1. If the Bible is the Word of God which is written in order to communicate with His people, then there must be a bridge between what is written and the message that must be communicated. Preaching is not a conversation or a dialogue between people, but it literally means to announce and proclaim God's truth and His standards for His kingdom. Preaching is part of God's design to communicate with His people.

Objection #2. One does not have to know the contents of Scripture in order to preach, preaching is simply motivational speaking.

⁴⁹ Lord's Day 12 of the Heidelberg Catechism develops the "office of all believers" as being prophet, priests and kings.

Response #2. Gospel preaching is encouraging for the believer but offensive for the unbeliever (II Cor. 2:14-17).

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Fill in the blanks as to who is preaching and what the theme is.

TEXT

Acts 1:4-8

Acts 1:15-22

Acts 2:14-39

Acts 3:12-26

Acts 7:1-53

Acts 8:5

Acts 9:26-37

Acts 9:20

Acts 10:34-43

Acts 13:5

Acts 13: 14-41

Acts 17:22-31

Acts 20:7

Acts 20:18-35

Acts 22:1-21

Acts 24: 10-21

Acts 25:1-23

Acts 28:17-31

PROCLAMATION EMPHASIS IN BOOK OF ACTS

Final exhortation by Jesus about Pentecost and the Great Commission

Peter preaches the good news of Jesus on the basis of the prophecies of Joel and the Psalms

Stephen's great sermon about the real Israel before his martyrdom

Phillip preaches Christ in the city of Samaria

Phillip preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch about Isaiah 53

Peter preaches to Cornelius household about the inclusion of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul preaches in the synagogue of Salamis during his first missionary journey

Paul preaches in Antioch in Pisidia about Jesus being the Son of David in whom the promises to David are fulfilled.

Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus

Paul's defense before Felix, governor in Caesarea

Paul preaches while in confinement in Rome

SECOND PRINCIPLE FOR MINISTERIAL STUDY. PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

There are two major levels of intercession and mediation that is needed in the Christian community. One, God's people need intercession before God. Second, God's people need to be reconciled amongst themselves and that requires mediation. Both the Old and New Testament spend a considerable amount of time instructing these functions for the "priesthood of all believers."

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The Scriptures instruct believers to exercise the priestly function of prayer and mediation.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will study Scripture in order to strengthen their role in the priesthood of all believers.

MEMORIZE ONE OF THE BIBLE VERSES

Genesis 14: 18. "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High."

Ps. 110: 4b "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"

Hebrews 4:14. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God."

I Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

READ THE REFLECTION. The Scriptures instruct the believer how to enter into the presence of God and how to receive the grace that God offers in order to stay in His presence. The book of Leviticus is a prime example of that. The chapters 1-16 explain how the Israelites could enter God's tabernacle and chapters 17-27 explain how they could live in holiness before Him. The priests served in a double function: they would sacrifice for the people, pray for them and they would also instruct the people how to live in God's presence. The ceremonial religious life of the Jews in the Old Testament fulfilled in the perfect life, death, resurrection and reign of Christ. Jesus perfectly entered into the Holy of Holies for His people and now, having made the perfect sacrifice, He intercedes before the Father for His people. The letter to the Hebrews is a detailed explanation how Jesus fulfills the role of both the temple and priesthood for God's people.

To read the Bible and miss this crucial priestly reality would be a shortsighted exegesis.

The New Testament church does not re-establish the Old Testament temple, sacrificial system or priestly class. All this has been fulfilled in Christ. However, the spiritual functions of the Old Testament priests are exercised amongst the leadership and membership of the Church. This is what the Protestants call the priesthood of all believers. The Church leaders are instructed to prepare the whole Body to pray, intercede, counsel and serve the Lord. Every Christian is to live in the fulfillment of Christ's work and be a prophet, priest and servant-king.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. Only those who are ordained by the leaders of the Church are priests.

Response #2. The New Testament Church did not re-institute the office of priest but the apostles declared that all believers were a “royal priesthood.” The Old Testament office of priest was not necessary anymore since Jesus has made the ultimate sacrifice, has entered into

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. If you are a believer then you are part of the priesthood of all believers. In the following chart, identify your priestly functions.

BIBLE TEXT**THE BELIEVER’S PRIESTLY FUNCTION**

Romans 12:1

Colossians 3:1-17

I Timothy 2:1-8

Hebrews 10:19-25

Hebrews 12:22-24

Hebrews 13:10-16

I Peter 2:5

I Peter 2:9

Revelation 1:6

Revelation 5:8,10

THIRD PRINCIPLE FOR MINISTERIAL STUDY: DIDACTICAL

The Scriptures were written so that they can be taught from one generation to the next.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. Scriptures are written in a didactical⁵⁰ (teaching) form. The Bible teaches authoritatively for all areas of life. The Bible teaches us so we can teach others.

GET TO THE GOAL. Students will be trained in how to recognize the teachings of the Bible and will be encouraged to teach others.

MEMORIZE ONE OF THE BIBLE VERSES

Matthew 28:20, “teaching to observe all that I have commanded you.”

II Tim. 2:2. “And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

II Tim. 3:15. “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

READ THE REFLECTION. The Scriptures were written so that they would be taught to others. Believing parents were to instruct their children (Dt. 6:7-9); the families and individuals were instructed by their religious leaders. For those in Jerusalem, the temple was a center for instruction. The synagogue became the center for religious instruction, both in Israel and for the Jews in dispersion.

Jesus did not limit his instruction to his infrequent visits to the temple. He chose His 12 disciples and instructed them every day of the week! His method, commonly known as discipleship, remains the model for the Christian church today.

The apostle Paul shows how far reaching discipleship should be: Paul came to Christ through a direct revelation of Christ. After several years of training he trained Timothy. Timothy was instructed to teach faithful men who are able to teach others likewise. So the generations of disciples are: Paul, Timothy, Timothy’s disciples and the disciples of Timothy’s disciples.

Additionally, notice how Paul makes mention of the role that Timothy’s grandmother and mother had in bringing Timothy to faith (II Tim. 1:5). The teaching of Scripture played a central role in Timothy’s coming to faith (II Tim. 3:15). Discipleship is not simply an individual effort but the responsibility of the whole Body of Christ.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTIONS

Objection #1. The Bible was written by human authors, such as Paul, who were influenced by their culture. For example, what Paul writes about women in I Tim. 2:12-15 is chauvinistic and chauvinism is sin. Therefore, what Paul teaches about women is not authoritative.

Response #1. If Paul’s writings are chauvinistic, then they would be tainted with sin and would not be authoritative. Even though Paul’s culture is known for its male chauvinism, Paul’s arguments and writings are not such. For example, when Paul presents his view about the role of women in the leadership of the church, he appeals not to his culture but to trans-cultural principles which had been established at the beginning of human history. In verse 12 he states that “Adam was formed first, then Eve.” This is an historical and doctrinal statement, not from

⁵⁰ Didactical refers to the design and intention to teach. The root comes from the Greek *didaktikos* and *didaskein* to teach.” (“didactical,” MWO).

Paul's first century culture but from Genesis 2. When Jesus spoke about marriage he also made reference to the creation (Mt. 19). Paul uses the same argument to speak about the fall (Eve fell first). He is not being chauvinistic to make that observation. He is simply narrating history. In speaking about Christian life style, he affirms the original order of creation and seeks to avoid the pattern of the fall. He reasons for male leadership in the church and affirms the calling of the godly mother. It can be argued that the false accusation that Paul is chauvinist is more representative of a feminist hermeneutic than a Biblical hermeneutic.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Who are your disciples and who are they discipling?

1. Who discipled you?
2. Who disciple the one who discipled you?
3. Who are you discipling?
4. Who are your disciples discipling?

FOURTH PRINCIPLE FOR MINISTERIAL STUDY: WORSHIP OF THE TRUE GOD

The worship of true God is the end result of the hermeneutical circle. Unless the student worships the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by believing and obeying Him, the interpretative task is not complete. The Word that began in the eternal counsel of heaven and worked out in history will do its work on earth and bear fruit for heaven.

REVIEW THE PRINCIPLE. The true interpretation of the Bible will cause the believer to worship the true God.

GET TO THE GOAL. The student will interpret the Word of God in such a way that it leads to the worship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

MEMORIZE THE BIBLE TEXT

Matthew 4:10. “Jesus rebuked Satan and said; “You shall worship the LORD your God and Him only you shall serve.”

READ THE REFLECTION. Let’s face it. At the end of the day all of us have to face God. The question is what our relationship and position will be? Our life on earth is a continual preparation for spending eternity with God in heaven. So, if we want to be with Him in heaven, we need to reconcile with Him on earth.

With our heavenly God and goal in mind, we are to interpret the Bible here on earth. In each step of the hermeneutical circle we must take God’s presence into consideration. After all, it’s His Word!

The interpreter will be known by his interpretation. Satan very piously used the Word of God with both Adam and Eve as well as with Jesus. Jesus answered Satan’s wrong interpretation of the Word with the right one: “You shall worship the LORD your God and Him only you shall serve.”

There are only two interpretations of God’s Word: that which glorified Him and that which does not glorify Him. Every dimension of the hermeneutical circle is measured by that glorious standard.

OBSERVE THE OBJECTION

Objection #1. The Bible can be properly studied by students with a variety of religious backgrounds and so the worship of the triune God should not be part of the hermeneutical circle.

Response #1. The study of the Bible by all people, regardless of religion, needs to be greatly encouraged. True faith comes by hearing the Word. However, unless the student comes to faith he will not be able to obey the mandates of Scripture and worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

ENJOY THE EXERCISE. Read Matthew 4:10 and I Timothy 4:1-3,16. The student will distinguish between the worship of men or angels and the worship of God.

APPENDIX

EXEGETICAL WORK SHEET

Text:	TITLE:
INDUCTIVE METHOD: [Draw Information from the Biblical text]	
Reference texts. How do other texts influence our reading of our text? 1.1. (etc.)	
<p>Explanation of important information in the text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -key words and definitions: -grammatical observations: (sentence structure, variant readings) -figures of speech: (comparisons, associations, representations) -literary genre: (gospel, history, legal, parable, poetry, prophecy, proverb, etc). -how is the text related to its surrounding texts: -how does the text related to the theme of the chapter and book it's in? -does the text explicitly or implicitly say anything about God, about salvation? -translation method used: - are their differences between Bible versions. What are they? -human author. How do we know? -what occasion prompted human author to write? -original audience for reading. Why would they read the text? -geographical context: -cultural, social context: -historical context: -religious context: -in your own words, what does the text say and mean? 	
Commentary notes	
<p>Identify the main teachings of the text under study</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>(other)</p>	

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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