



2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

## 1 - THE NEED TO INTERPRET

**Suggested reading** — How to Read the Bible For All It's Worth by Gordon Fee and Douglass Stuart

### 1. Every reader is an interpreter

Most of us assume as we read that we also understand what we read. We tend to think that our understanding is the same as the Holy Spirit's intent. We bring to the text all that we are, our experiences, culture, and understanding of words and ideas.

### 2. God's Word to us was first His Word to the original hearers

In speaking through real persons, in a variety of circumstances, over a period of 1,500 years, God's Word was expressed in the vocabulary and thought patterns of those people and conditioned by the culture of those times and circumstances. If they were going to hear it, it could only have come through events and in language they could have understood. Our problem is that we are so far removed from them in time, and sometimes in thought. This is the major reason one needs to learn to interpret the Bible.



*Exegesis must always come first since a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or readers.*

### 3. The first task of the interpreter is exegesis

This involves the careful, systematic study of the Scripture to discover the original, intended meaning. It is the attempt to hear the Word as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible.

The problem with "selective" exegesis is that we will often read our own, completely foreign, ideas into a text and making God's word mean something other than what God really said.

#### 4. The second task is hermeneutics

Although the word “hermeneutics” ordinarily covers the whole field of interpretation, including exegesis, it is also used in the narrower sense of understanding the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. Its meaning for today. Whenever we share comparable particulars (similar specific life situations) with the original hearers, God’s word to us is the same as his word to them.

**Extended application** — Is it correct to extend the application of the text to other contexts (life situations), or to apply it in a way that would be totally foreign to its original setting?

**Cultural Relativity** — This is the area where many difficulties and differences are. It is the place where God’s eternal Word given in specific historical settings may not be relevant in today’s circumstances. Epistles are documents addressing situations and problems in the first century and are conditioned by the language and culture of the first century.

**Task Theology** — The Epistles are focused on delivering theology through practical situations and sometimes do not speak directly to the questions that we have today. Posing a question about the morality of abortion is expecting the Epistles to address something that was not an issue in the first-century church. This does not mean that Scripture has nothing to say about abortion, but we need to take great care when applying theology from the Epistles to particular situations that were not present when the Epistle was written. Remember that our immediate aim is calling us to greater obedience to what we *do* hear and understand.



#### SAM’S VERSION OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

A man from the Ozarks wanted to enter the ministry. He went to a Bible College to enroll and the following conversation took place:

“Hi Sam, Can you read Sam?”

“No sir, I can’t read.”

“Can you write?”

“Well, no sir, I can’t write either.”

“How well do you know your Bible, Sam?”

“I’m pretty smart in the Bible.”

“Tell me, what part of the Bible do you prefer?”

“I prefer the New Testament. And ‘specially the book of Mark.”

“What do like about Mark?”

“I like the parables the best.”

“Which of the parables is the one of your choice?”

“I like the parable of the Good Samaritan the best, it’s my favorite!”

“Sam, will you tell me the story of the Good Samaritan?”

“Yes sir!” ...

“Once upon a time a man was goin’ from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among the thorns. The thorns grew up an chocked him, an he went on, an didn’t have any money. He went to the Queen of

Sheba, an she gave him one thousand talents of money and a hundred changes of raiment. An then he got into a chariot an drove furiously. An when he was drivin' under a big ole juniper tree, his hair done got caught on the limb of the tree, an he hung there many days and the ravens brought him food to eat and water to drink. Afterward he was hungered and he ate five thousand loaves and two small fishes. One night while he was hangin' there asleep, his wife Delilah came along and cut off his hair and he dropped and he fell on stony ground. But he got up an went on, an it began to rain and it rained forty days and forty nights and he hid himself in a cave. He lived on locusts and wild honey. Then he went on till he met a servant who said, 'Come take supper at my house. But he began to make excuses an said, 'No, I won't, I married me a wife an I can't go!' And the servant went out into the highway and hedges and compelled them to come in. After supper he went on and came to Jericho. An when he got there he looked up and saw Queen Jezebel sittin' way up in a high window, and she laughed at him. He said, 'throw her down!' And they threwed her down. He said, 'Throw her down some more!' An they throwed her down seventy times seven. An of the fragments they picked up twelve baskets full. Then they say, 'Now in the resurrection whose wife she gonna be?'"



### IMPORTANT CLASS INFORMATION

1. **Questions** — For any questions or information on this course contact the church office at 951-689-6785 or go to our website at [www.DiscipleshipDevelopment.org](http://www.DiscipleshipDevelopment.org). Use the QR code above.
2. **Arrival** — Please come a few minutes before 7:00 to sign in, pick up the notes and to write the memory verse on the Weekly Time Sheet.
3. **Mentoring groups** — The class works best when participants connect with 1 or 2 others in an accountability group and meet or call each other at least once during the week about class related issues.
4. **Class assignments** — Please use the Weekly Time Sheet on a daily basis. Homework may also be given.
5. **Remember**, our enemy (the devil) will fight you in many different ways. Because you have decided to be a deeper student of God's Word you are a threat to his plan for your life. Be an overcomer and let nothing stop you or get in your way!

