

Basics for Bible Study

1. Read the Bible regularly for your own edification.
2. Define words, always, by definition and in context.
3. Use a well recognized [International Standard Bible Dictionary](#) when defining Biblical terminology.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (ISBE), edited by James Orr, is an authoritative reference encyclopedia that addresses every word in the Bible and Apocrypha having a distinct Scriptural meaning. This can be found on line at www.blueletterbible.org/isbe or any Bible bookstore.

4. Use a [basic standard Dictionary](#) regularly in order to define words, terms, and phrases properly. (A full sized unabridged dictionary is preferable in order to get a complete overview of all recognized definitions.). Webster's unabridged is the best as he was a Christian who defined words based on the Bible. Try to find an older version as the new collegiate is not based that way much more liberal.

5. Know personally [The Five Basic Doctrines](#) of the historic Christian faith. Do not fear the word doctrine it means a line of teaching or of knowledge. Many today try to make people believe that doctrine is to be avoided but that in itself turns into a doctrine of its own. Paul told Timothy that doctrine was to be learned as it was important for being able to rightly divide the Word of God.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." - A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, 7.

If what you believe differs from what the Word of God says, you are in error in your doctrine. There is no person alive today who does not hold to doctrines. They may pretend to be free of doctrine and just "feeling" their way around the world, but they hold to doctrines just as tightly as you and I do. They just don't realize how much they have been deceived by the enemy, by others, and by allowing themselves to be deceived.

THE FIVE BASIC DOCTRINES

1. The Trinity: God is one "What" and three "Who's" with each "Who" possessing all the attributes of Deity and personality.
2. The Person of Jesus Christ: Jesus is 100% God and 100% man for all eternity.

3. The Second Coming: Jesus Christ is coming bodily to earth to rule and judge.
4. Salvation: It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
5. The Scripture: It is entirely inerrant and sufficient for all Christian life.
6. Know the [Basics of Bible Discernment](#) and stand firm in your faith.

Are you aware that false teachers and spiritual deception is at an all time high?

The Bible is clear that [Christians](#) are to discern between good and evil. The Bible is also clear that to not heed Scriptural admonitions to discern properly will lead to compromise, confusion, and spiritual delusion.

Christians must obey the Word of God. The biblical mandate is nothing less than:

Prove [test] all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thes.5:21-22).

We note closely the words of Paul the Apostle to the young pastor Timothy:

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all thin (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

It has often been stated: The shepherd [pastor] who only feeds the flock and never warns them [of false teachings and heretics] is only fattening them up for the slaughter.

How true this is today! Many modernist ministers, liberal theologians, and neo-evangelicals profess to be Christian but at the same time reject the fundamental truths of the Christian faith. As a result, many 'church-goers' and new Christians are never taught the basics of Scripture or warned about spiritual deception! This is one of the main reasons why the proliferation of cults and false teachers is at an all time high. When Christian ministers compromise the basics of the Christians faith and individual believers fail to discern properly, the church becomes anemic,

worldly, and ineffective. This is exactly what is happening in many places around the globe.

It is up to each individual Christian to read their Bible and be a discerning Christian. The Christian believer must seek the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. If we fail to heed the commands of Scripture, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Let us not forget the words of our Lord Jesus who said, "Take heed lest any man deceive you: For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am Christ,' and shall deceive many" (Mark 13:5-6).

In light of these things, let us get to work! Let us read our Bibles daily! Let us remember that

... For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13-14).

Let us press on to know Christ and Him crucified! Let us partake of the meat of the Word and mature in the faith! And let us by all means "contend earnestly for the faith which was once [for all] delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). These things please the LORD and these things are part of the normal Christian life.

7. Understand [Eight Basic Rules of Interpretation](#) (used for 2500 years

The Bible itself is very clear that one must use precision when interpreting the Word of God.

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. (Solomon, Proverbs 1:5-6.)

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (Paul, 2 Timothy .2:15)

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

(Peter, 2 Peter 1:19-20)

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. Isaiah 28: 9-13

As a general rule, Scripture is always its best interpreter - Scripture interpreting Scripture. Along with this recommendation, we list "...the *Eight Rules of Interpretation* used by legal experts for more than 2500 years."

8. EIGHT BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION

1. Rule of Definition.
Define the term or words being considered and then adhere to the defined meanings.
2. Rule of Usage.
Don't add meaning to established words and terms. What was the common usage in the cultural and time period when the passage was written?
3. Rule of Context.
Avoid using words out of context. Context must define terms and how words are used.
4. Rule of Historical background.
Don't separate interpretation and historical investigation.
5. Rule of Logic.
Be certain that words as interpreted agree with the overall premise.
6. Rule of Precedent.
Use the known and commonly accepted meanings of words, not obscure meanings for which there is no precedent.
7. Rule of Unity.
Even though many documents may be used there must be a general unity among them.
8. Rule of Inference.
Base conclusions on what is already known and proven or can be reasonably implied from all known facts.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE EIGHT BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION

1. Rule of Definition
2. Rule of Usage
3. Rule of Context
4. Historical Background
5. Rule of Logic
6. Rule of Precedent
7. Rule of Unity
8. Rule of Inference

1) The rule of DEFINITION:

What does the word mean? Any study of Scripture must begin with a study of words. Define your terms and then keep to the terms defined. The interpreter should conscientiously abide by the plain meaning of the words. This quite often may require using a Hebrew/English or Greek/English lexicon in order to make sure that the sense of the English translation is understood. A couple of good examples of this are the Greek words "allos" and "heteros". Both are usually translated as "another" in English - yet "allos" literally means "another of the same type" and "heteros" means "another of a different type."

2) The rule of USAGE:

It must be remembered that the Old Testament was written originally by, to and for Jews. The words and idioms must have been intelligible to them - just as the words of Christ when talking to them must have been. The majority of the New Testament likewise was written in a milieu of Greco-Roman (and to a lesser extent Jewish) culture and it is important to not impose our modern usage into our interpretation. It is not worth much to interpret a great many phrases and histories if one's interpretations are shaded by pre-conceived notions and cultural biases, thereby rendering an inaccurate and ineffectual lesson.

3) The rule of CONTEXT:

The meaning must be gathered from the context. Every word you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it. Many passages will not be understood at all, or understood incorrectly, without the help afforded by the context. A good example of this is the Mormon practice of using 1 Cor. 8:5b: "...for there be gods many and lords many..." as a "proof text" of their doctrine of polytheism. However, a simple reading of the whole verse in the context of the whole chapter (e.g. where Paul calls these gods "so-called"), plainly demonstrates that Paul is not teaching polytheism.

4) The rule of HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The interpreter must have some awareness of the life and society of the times in which the Scripture was written. The spiritual principle will be timeless but often can't be properly appreciated without some knowledge

of the background. If the interpreter can have in his mind what the writer had in his mind when he wrote - without adding any excess baggage from the interpreter's own culture or society - then the true thought of the Scripture can be captured resulting in an accurate interpretation. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Our only interest in the past is for the light it throws upon the present."

5) The rule of LOGIC:

Interpretation is merely logical reasoning. When interpreting Scripture, the use of reason is everywhere to be assumed. Does the interpretation make sense? The Bible was given to us in the form of human language and therefore appeals to human reason - it invites investigation. It is to be interpreted as we would any other volume: applying the laws of language and grammatical analysis. As Bernard Ramm said:

"What is the control we use to weed out false theological speculation? Certainly the control is logic and evidence... interpreters who have not had the sharpening experience of logic... may have improper notions of implication and evidence. Too frequently such a person uses a basis of appeal that is a notorious violation of the laws of logic and evidence."
(*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1956)

6) The rule of PRECEDENT:

We must not violate the known usage of a word and invent another for which there is no precedent. Just as a judge's chief occupation is the study of previous cases, so must the interpreter use precedents in order to determine whether they really support an alleged doctrine. Consider the Bereans in Acts 17:10-12 who were called "noble" because they searched the Scriptures to determine if what Paul taught them was true.

7) The rule of UNITY:

The parts of Scripture being interpreted must be construed with reference to the significance of the whole. An interpretation must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. An excellent example of this is the doctrine of the Trinity. No single passage teaches it, but it is consistent with the teaching of the whole of Scripture (e.g. the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are referred to individually as God; yet the Scriptures elsewhere teach there is only one God).

8) The rule of INFERENCE:

An inference is a fact reasonably implied from another fact. It is a logical consequence. It derives a conclusion from a given fact or premise. It is the deduction of one proposition from another proposition. Such

inferential facts or propositions are sufficiently binding when their truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence. Competent evidence means such evidence as the nature of the thing to be proved admits. Satisfactory evidence means that amount of proof which would ordinarily satisfy an unprejudiced mind beyond a reasonable doubt. Jesus used this rule when he proved the resurrection of the dead to the unbelieving Sadducees in Matt. 22:23-33.

Learning these eight rules and properly applying them will help keep any interpreter from making errors and will hopefully alleviate many of the disagreements unfortunately present in Christianity today. However, these eight principles are no substitute for the Holy Spirit which will, if you let Him, guide you in the truth [John 14:26]. If you receive Christ into your heart, God will give you the Holy Spirit freely as a gift [Acts 2:38]. I urge you, if you have not already done so, to examine the claims and the work of Jesus Christ and to receive Him as your Savior.

This paper will close with some words from King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, excepting our Lord Jesus Christ:

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: to understand a proverb, and the interpretation." (Prov. 1:5, 6)

9. Learn what [Biblical Hermeneutics](#) is and how to properly interpret the Bible.

[exegetic](#), [explanative](#), [explanatory](#), [explicative](#), [expositive](#), [expository](#), [hermeneutical](#), [illustrative](#), [interpretative](#), [interpretive](#). To read out of God's word what it says by comparing scripture with scripture as opposed to the new method espoused by so many esiogetical which is reading into the Bible what you want a verse to say by taking a verse out of context and twisting it to suit your view or idea. This is how so many heresies have slipped into the church today. Esigesis is dangerous and not biblical.

10. Examine closely what is being said to you when people approach you and want to discuss with you their brand of religion, miracles, experiences, revelations, etc.

11. Test all things by the Word of God ([1 Thessalonians 5:21-22](#)). Prove all things; hold fast that which is good Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Read the Bible regularly, slowly, and carefully.