

**10 Principles:
Toward Understanding what God has Preserved For Us in
His Word!¹**

“The Bible is the Word of God in such a way that when the Bible speaks, God speaks.” (B.B. Warfield)

1. Understanding the Bible is not “automatic”:

- There are issues of time, custom, language, geography, culture and genre.
- There is the risk of distortion--intentional and otherwise 2Cr 4:2, 2 Pt 3:16

2. Nevertheless, the implicit message throughout the Bible is that God’s Word is meant to be understood!

- Neh 8:1-12
- Jn 17:17 “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

3. From the “big picture” standpoint, understanding occurs through two processes, meant to work in harmony with each other.

- 2Tm 2:15
- Jn 14:26

4. The goal of Biblical interpretation is to understand the mind of God as he intended to reveal it to man at the time the text was written. (Ps 119:26-27)

- This requires us to recognize that all Scripture “is for us,” although not all “is to us”! 1Cr 10:11-f cp. Dt 13:12-f, 17:2-f
- It also forces us to rethink the statement, “To me, this means. . . .”

5. Theology (or at least theological systems) can be the foe of good hermeneutics!

> Beware eisegesis (reading into) rather than exegesis (leading out) the meaning of Scripture.

- Our normal approach should be:
 - Observation
 - Interpretation
 - Application

(Generally, we hold to just one correct interpretation with many potential applications!)

6. We interpret the Bible in a: literal (“normal-grammatical-historical-rhetorical”) manner!

a. This means we do not consider Scripture to be primarily allegorical or replete with hidden meaning.

b. This does mean:

¹ (An excerpt from the series: **The Essentials of the Faith**)

We take the meaning of Scripture as one would “normally” or customarily use language.

We have no difficulty taking figurative language in stride, as it is one of the most powerful tools available to the communicator--and we have no trouble doing so daily!

(Figurate language is not antithetical to “literal” language (allegorical is)--in fact it depends upon it!!!)

When the plane sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in light of related passages, and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate otherwise.

DL Cooper—Golden rule of Interpretation

7. Context is an essential component of observation!

Remember, “a text without a context is a pretext.”

8. Make use of the power of comparison.

- The Bible is the best interpreter of itself (one of the values of a concordance)

- Never “rest your case” on an obscure (complex) passage; but rather interpret the obscure in light of what’s clear.

- The Bible rightly understood never contradicts itself

9. You are responsible for what you know (and don’t know)!

- Not your church, pastor or Sunday School teacher.

- Learn how to “spit seed”, and use the “back burner”

10. The process of rightly understanding the Bible does not lead to a textual accomplishment, but a relational accomplishment.

- Stated another way--our motivation to understand the written Word, is that we might better know the “Living Word!” Jn 1:1,14

- If we remain true to this principle, it will go a long ways toward keeping us from making the kind of “right turn” that has happened so often in Church history!