

Keys to Studying and Teaching the Bible

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

1. The Role Of The Bible Interpreter
 - a. The Bible interpreter must be aware of his own presuppositions, prejudices, and biases in order to accurately determine truth and meaning. Presuppositions are “blind spots.” Everyone has them and there is no way to avoid having them. The important thing is to realize and beware of them and then to determine to operate on sound presuppositions. Our minds must be transformed in order to operate in this way. It is God, who through His Word and Spirit, created in us the necessary and sound presuppositions needed in order to begin interpreting Scripture:
 - 1) We assume the reality of God
 - 2) We assume the writers of Scripture were real people
 - 3) We assume the people in the Bible had real experiences and history that has to be observed and respected in interpreting their writings
 - 4) We assume the inspiration of Scripture
 - 5) We assume the reality of our own experiences
 - b. Other things that affect interpretation
 - 1) Philosophies (existentialism, rationalism, idealism, ideologies, etc.)
 - 2) Theology: Theology is a person’s belief about God. Everyone has a theology whether he realizes it or not. The only way to keep from having a bad theology is to have a good one. A sound theology comes through unbiased and responsible interpretation of the Bible
 - 3) Experience: A person’s experience can influence the way a person interprets Scripture. However, the proper approach is to allow Scripture to interpret experience rather than for experience to interpret Scripture.
 - c. The Bible interpreter must see himself as a servant of God and a steward of Truth rather than a spiritual “know-it-all.” 2 Corinthians 2:17 states that the interpreter must:
 - 1) Have pure motives
 - 2) Speak as one sent from God
 - 3) Present his conclusion before God
 - 4) Do all of the above with an awareness that he is bound to Christ
 - d. The Bible interpreter must rely upon the illumination of the Holy Spirit while using correct procedures and approaches to Scripture
 - e. The Bible interpreter must guard against two extremes:
 - 1) Approaching the Bible from a purely rationalistic, intellectual, or literary way that rejects Holy Spirit illumination of the text
 - 2) Approaching the Bible from a purely mystical fashion that ignores basic principles of interpretation
 - f. Remember: Good interpretation will not make you a good teacher or preacher, but it can help to keep you from being a bad one! Be suspicious of any interpretation that departs from the clear and/or historical interpretation of the Scriptures.
2. The Goal of Bible Interpretation
 - a. To determine the meaning of the text for the original audience to whom the book was written
 - 1) Language Studies: To determine the original meanings of words, phrases, sentences, etc.
 - 2) History Studies: To determine the context of events and circumstances that surround the text and its readers
 1. “Historical-Grammatical Interpretation”: The interpretation that is required by the laws of grammar and history. The writer meant what he said and used his language to say it.
 2. Culture Studies: To determine customs and ways of life that gave passages of Scripture meaning and application that otherwise would be lost.
 3. World Views Studies: To determine the outlook and philosophies of the people to whom Scripture was addressed.
 4. Scripture Studies: To determine if the Holy Spirit has interpreted Scripture with Scripture in other places.
 - b. Translate the original meaning of Scripture into an application for today (2 Timothy 3:16)
 - 1) Doctrine: Establishes Truth
 - 2) Reproof: Enlightens and convicts of error
 - 3) Correction: Establishes steps toward reconciliation and restoration

- 4) Instruction: Teaching for daily application and opportunity
3. Methods of Bible Study
 - a. Book Study: Focuses study on one entire book of the Bible
 - b. Passage Study: Focused study on one passage of Scripture
 - c. Character Study: Study on the life of a Bible character
 - d. Background Study: Study on the background of an event, a book, time period, culture, etc. for the purpose of understanding the setting in which Scripture was written
 - e. Word Study: Study on the meaning of words in the Bible
 - f. Theme Study: Study on a Bible theme such as salvation, angels, sin, etc.
 - g. Root Study: Study on the root or original understanding of a biblical term in Scripture
 - h. Typology Study: Study of types and shadows in Scripture such as understanding the Old Testament Passover lamb as foreshadowing the coming of Jesus as our Passover Lamb in the New Testament
 - i. Bible Reading: Cultivates familiarity with the entire Bible
 4. Tools For Bible Study
 - a. A good translation of the Bible (as opposed to paraphrase)
 - b. Bible Handbooks
 - c. Bible Dictionaries or Bible Encyclopedias
 - d. Concordances
 - e. Language Aids
 - 1) Lexicons (analyzes original meanings of words)
 - 2) Grammars
 - 3) Theological Dictionaries of Old and New Testament words
 - 4) Commentaries
 - f. Commentaries (Use only after seeking interpretation of the passage on a persona basis)
 - g. History Books
 - h. Geography Books
 - i. Cultural Books
 - j. Topical Study Books
 5. General Facts About The Bible
 - a. The Bible is composed of 66 different books: 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Jerome called the Bible "The Divine Library"
 - b. The Bible was written in three languages
 - 1) Hebrew (Old Testament)
 - 2) Syriac-Chaldee (Parts of Ezra and Daniel)
 - 3) Koine Greek (New Testament)
 - c. The Bible was written by over 40 different authors on three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa)
 - d. The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1500 years from 1400 B.C. to 100 A.D.
 - e. The Bible contains every known form of literature and figure of speech
 - f. The Bible is the only sacred book that has UNITY of plan, purpose, and fulfillment coherently revealed from beginning to end.
 - 1) Other religions have accumulations of material in their collection with no order, progress, or plan.
 - 2) The Bible presents
 1. God as its author
 2. Jesus as its theme
 3. Salvation of sinful men as its purpose
 6. Categorization of Old Testament Books:
 - a. Law (The Beginning to 1406 B.C.)
 - 1) Genesis
 - 2) Exodus
 - 3) Leviticus
 - 4) Numbers
 - 5) Deuteronomy
 - b. History

1) Joshua	1406-1380 B.C.
2) Judges	1380-1050 B.C.

- 3) Ruth 1200-1150 B.C.
- 4) I Samuel 1100-1010 B.C.
- 5) II Samuel 1010-971 B.C.
- 6) I Kings 971-853 B.C.
- 7) II Kings 853-560 B.C.
- 8) I Chronicles 1010-971 B.C.
- 9) II Chronicles 971-539 B.C.
- 10) Ezra 539-450 B.C.
- 11) Nehemiah 445-410 B.C.
- 12) Esther 483-474 B.C.
- c. Poetry and Wisdom (No specific historical period covered)
 - 1) Job
 - 2) Psalms
 - 3) Proverbs
 - 4) Ecclesiastes
 - 5) Song of Solomon
- d. Major Prophets
 - 1) Isaiah 739-685 B.C.
 - 2) Jeremiah 627-580 B.C.
 - 3) Lamentations 586 B.C.
 - 4) Ezekiel 593-570 B.C.
 - 5) Daniel 605-530 B.C.
- e. Minor Prophets
 - 1) Hosea 760-720 B.C.
 - 2) Joel 835 B.C.
 - 3) Amos 760 B.C.
 - 4) Obadiah 845 B.C.
 - 5) Jonah 782 B.C.
 - 6) Micah 737-690 B.C.
 - 7) Habakkuk 609 B.C.
 - 8) Zephaniah 640 B.C.
 - 9) Haggai 520 B.C.
 - 10) Zechariah 520 B.C.
 - 11) Malachi 433 B.C.

7. Categorization of New Testament Books:

- a. Gospels
 - 1) Matthew 50-75 A.D.
 - 2) Mark 65-70 A.D.
 - 3) Luke 59-75 A.D.
 - 4) John 85 A.D.
- b. History
 - 1) Acts 62 A.D.
- c. Pauline Epistles
 - 1) Romans 56 A.D.
 - 2) I Corinthians 56 A.D.
 - 3) II Corinthians 56 A.D.
 - 4) Galatians 55-56 A.D.
 - 5) Ephesians 60-61 A.D.
 - 6) Philippians 61 A.D.
 - 7) Colossians 61 A.D.
 - 8) I Thessalonians 50 A.D.
 - 9) II Thessalonians 50 A.D.
 - 10) I Timothy 64 A.D.
 - 11) II Timothy 66-67 A.D.
 - 12) Titus 64 A.D.
 - 13) Philemon 60-61 A.D.
- d. General Epistles
 - 1) Hebrews 70 A.D.

- 2) James 48-62 A.D.
- 3) I Peter Early 60's A.D.
- 4) II Peter 65-68 A.D.
- 5) I John 90 A.D.
- 6) II John 90 A.D.
- 7) III John 90 A.D.
- 8) Jude 65-80 A.D.
- e. Prophecy-Apocalypse
 - 1) Revelation 70-95 A.D.

8. Interesting Facts about the Bible (King James Version)

- a. The Entire Bible
 - 1) Number of chapters 1,189
 - 2) Number of verses 31,173
 - 3) Number of words 773,746
 - 4) Number of letters 3,566,490
 - 5) Longest chapter Psalm 119
 - 6) Shortest chapter Psalm 117
 - 7) Longest verse Esther 8:9
 - 8) Shortest verse John 11:35
- b. Old Testament
 - 1) Longest book Psalms
 - 2) Shortest book Obadiah
 - 3) Number of chapters 927
 - 4) Number of verses 23,214
 - 5) Number of words 592,493
 - 6) Number of letters 2,728,110
- c. New Testament
 - 1) Longest book Luke
 - 2) Shortest book 2 John
 - 3) Number of chapters 260
 - 4) Number of verses 7,954
 - 5) Number of words 181,253
 - 6) Number of letters 838,380
- d. Center book in the Bible Psalms
- e. Center chapter in the Bible Psalm 118
- f. Center verse in the Bible Psalm 118:8 *"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."*
- g. Center two words in the Bible Psalm 118:8 *"the LORD"*