

Hermeneutics

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Hermeneutics is the study of interpreting Scripture. In II Timothy 2:15 we are instructed to be diligent to show ourselves "approved" not needing to be "ashamed". This is begun and kept "on track" by "rightly dividing the word of truth." There are two general "camps" of Hermeneutics. One seeks the interpretation of "what it means to me" and sees the interpretation as flexible. The other general group sees Hermeneutics as seeking the intent of the Author (God) and the writer. The first group will often say that they rely solely on the Holy Spirit for the meaning. The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth, but how will He do it? Will it come when we are not pursuing it? He is the Illuminator and will illuminate the truth as we diligently seek it and **labor** for it. "The concept of illumination need not extend beyond the Holy Spirit's work of explicating the full meaning of the text; indeed if we once extend our definition of illumination beyond this point, we have no logically coherent rationale for discriminating the divinely intended meaning from the intuitions and additions of a thousand different interpreters." Virkler

I. The Motivation and the Problem

A. The correct motivation is to be to seek first the "original" intent"

1. Any person would want the intent of their writing to be sought
 - a. One might "read between the lines" if they sensed...
 - (1). The writer is being dishonest (hiding the truth)
 - (2). The writer cannot state the fact of a matter directly (beats around the "bush")
 - b. One might read into a statement if...
 - (1). They were hoping or anticipating something to be true
 - (2). They already know they disagree with the author (source)
 - (3). They have an agenda and are desperately seeking support for it
 - c. Any document where original intent is not sought will ultimately become useless to the users as its message becomes too flexible and unreliable
2. "Good intentions" are difficult to oppose (but, at times they must!)
 - a. Many poor or inaccurate interpretations of Scripture have gone unopposed because the interpreters are well intentioned and their cause good
 - b. This has been the origin of many errors
 - (1). If we defend any poor handling of Scripture for our cause how can we rightfully oppose another mishandling?
 - (2). Pro. 29:18 - "Where there is no vision..." (sight or insight)
 - (3). Where there are people with no insight into a standard (law) the people cast off restraints (or "are made naked")
 - (4). Without guides we will all naturally wonder off track
 - c. This is one of the purposes for the "rules" of hermeneutics
 - (1). Just as in Judges, when the people became unaccountable, they did what was right in their own eyes and ungodly chaos ensued!
 - (2). This is what has become of the study of the Bible - it has become the new "montra" of popular religion to endorse individual authority in the interpretation of Scripture
3. Spiritual condition affects one's ability to see the truth of Scripture
 - a. Rom. 1:18-22 ends with a pseudo mind because of ungodliness
 - b. The "natural man" will see true spiritual concepts as "foolishness" - I Cor. 2:14

- B. Presuppositions - what I presuppose or have been taught about Scripture
1. Many have the benefit to have had good teachers who "bias" them right
 - a. Timothy was a good example - II Tim. 1:5
 - b. Paul had originally been taught, zealously, but **wrongly** - Php. 3
 2. Presuppositions are not just in erroneous information, but can be found in incorrect emphasis or de-emphasis
 3. Again, damaging errors can stem from well-intentioned people who overlook the original meaning and run with a "good" concept but overstressing its importance
 4. It will be key for us to identify our presuppositions when we approach a passage
- C. One's "**drive**" will affect their study of the Bible (what they are really after)
1. We must determine our initial intent when we seek out what the Lord really says
 2. If taught, we must make sure **bias** is not the "illuminator" - the Spirit will be the One to "guide us into all **truth**" - John 16:13
- D. How we are taught will affect how we learn - I Tim. 4:1-8
1. "Some will depart from the faith..." - revolt or be led from it
 2. They are led off by "seducing spirits" - literally because they "pay attention" or set their focus upon "misleading" or "imposter" spirits
 - Spirits, as in I John 4:1, is the "spirit of their teaching" and can allude to the source (origin) of their information
 3. They are led off or follow "demonic teaching" - not necessarily to human sacrifice, but as Satan demonstrated the distortion of the actual truth to meet a **selfish** end or to "spin" God's ideas
 4. These communicate lies by hypocrisy (they are not genuine)
 - They are described as having a "seared conscience" - insensitive; which can lead to actions and intentions which we may not imagine
 5. They are characterized by emphasizing the **externals** - vs. 3
 - a. They discourage marriage - making celibacy holiness in itself
 - b. They discourage "meats" (certain kinds of food) - ignoring God's intent
 6. Timothy was to "put others in remembrance" of these things - beware of this motivational response to the handling of the truth
 - a. A "good" servant of Christ will communicate this
 - b. This ensures their being "nourished" by the faith and good teaching
 7. As to speculations, distortions and fictitious handlings - leave them alone!
 - a. "profane" has the idea of a threshold to something "heathenish"
 - b. "old wives tales" refers to the picture of illiterate older women passing on fictitious stories to children (This can picture those given to the "obscure things of Scripture" missing the clearer things)
 8. The goal is to keep oneself "**trained**" for the pursuit of godliness - vs. 7
 9. For physical training has some profit, but not in comparison to godliness
- E. As carnality becomes the "driving force" people will surround themselves with teacher "catering to their wishes" - telling them what they want to hear - II Tim. 4:1-4
1. They will literally not be able to "put up with" sound doctrine
 2. They will turn their ears away and "lend them over to" fables
 3. It is not perfection that will ensure accuracy, but an honest assessment of personal intention goes a long way to predicting where we will end up
 4. "whereunto thou hast attained" - I Tim. 4:6 - the idea of "attained" is the directing of one's life; what we seek to stay near and follow - Paul described Timothy as having this quality of staying near healthy teaching and the truth
 5. A harbored "wrong thought", even though short and small can have big effects

The false prophets ARE gone out into the world - it is a certainty and should affect our caution in our pursuit of "teachers"

"They seem so confident, they must be telling the truth"

"Appetites" will affect our interpretation and application

F. The misunderstanding of "one interpretation and many applications"

1. Many will confidently state they believe in one interpretation
 - a. Yet they will see "interpretation" as a **subjective** term
 - b. So, in reality, there will be many interpretations but that does not mean they are right - there is to be one objective interpretation
2. Also, some will take application beyond the **scope** of the interpretation
 - a. It (application) has become the "catch-all" for any use of the Scripture
 - b. Timothy was told to "preach the word" - II Tim. 4:2
 - c. It was to be the Word, not opinion or moralistic, well-intended stories
 - d. When told to "rightly divide the word of truth" the precise idea of this was to "guide the word of truth along a straight path" - Arndt & Gingrich
3. This is also further misused by titling a handling of a passage as a "principle"
 - a. A principle, at its most basic idea, is a fundamental, foundational thought
 - b. A principle of Scripture is to be a fundamental thought grounded securely in more than **one** passage of the Bible

G. What are the sources of these underlying problems?

Resolve — 1. Mental/physical laziness - study and prayer is hard work!

- a. In a society driven by instant gratification there is not the patience for it
 - Paul ascribed great value to laborious study in I Tim. 5:17
- b. Ignorance has a way of stifling ambition - when what we see looks dry and boring, why would any be willing to "dig" into it more?
- c. It is human nature to value more what is worked for and to belittle or even come to **despise** what is easily obtained
- d. Jer. 23:36 - Israel mockingly called the words from God "burdens" so God informed them that their self-proclaimed prophecy would come true.

Faith — 2. Many have come to believe that the Bible is not inerrant

- a. If we believe we are working with a flawed source we are apt to neglect it
- b. This is often an initial argument to the Bible as a whole
 - Though good hermeneutics demonstrates inerrancy

Respect — 3. A lack a reverence for the source - it is truly "God's word"

- a. If we truly believe it is from God, our lives would be consumed with it
- b. A life given to its **treasures** is not a wasted life

Focus — 4. Faith has been more directed in people than in God

- a. The philosophies and musings of bright and charismatic people have come to mean more than the absolute and profound words of God
- b. I Cor. 1:10-17 - not with wisdom of words - "made of none effect"

Integrity — 5. The credibility of the Scriptures has been harmed by its proclaimers

- a. Many will prejudge the Bible by what they see in its "followers"
- b. The transformation of Rom. 12:2 will be its best testimony!

H. What is needed (required) are guides to keep our "prone to wander" minds on track

- This is Hermeneutics!*
1. Guides to keep us on track with "original intent"
 2. Guides which steer us safely through **application** (proper use)
 3. Guides to keep us conscious of the awesome responsibility of listening to and speaking for God (becoming truly professionals with absolute truth)
 4. Guides which enable us to get past personal agendas and ideas of how we would **like** to see a passage interpreted
 5. Guides to keep us on the same balance (level plane) as the whole of Scripture
 - Over emphasis and under emphasis can lead to misdirection
 6. Guides to draw out all the "nutrients" from any passage we read and study

II. Keep It In Context - understand what is being discussed

A. Good "**listening**" is a must to "get" the subject

1. It is not good social manners to offer opinions on discussions you have joined part way through and do not know (really) what is being discussed
2. We are often guilty of hearing key words and jumping to conclusions
3. This is a bad "habit" when it comes to the Bible
 - a. We fail to consider the **topic** of the surrounding verses
 - b. We fail to consider historical, social, and spiritual context
4. For instance, Psalm 2:8, "...I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance..."
 - a. This has been used in missions conferences to encourage evangelism
 - b. The following verse mentions they will then "break them in pieces"
 - c. This is not the heart idea of evangelism
5. I Cor. 2:9 is another example of missing the context

The truths previously hidden are revealed to us by His Spirit - to handle this differently is to miss the privileged position we are in

- a. Many take this to refer to the great wonders awaiting us later
- b. There is no doubt that we cannot fathom what awaits, but this is not the message, nor the context of this verse
- c. Verse 10 tells us that God has revealed these unseen, unheard and unknown things to us (as it referred to the truth of the Gospel)

B. Start basic (general/overview) and work in to the **specifics** - Pro. 18:13

1. Let this verse be a guide - do not seek to "answer a matter" till you hear it
 - a. If one does answer it hastily it is lit. "silliness" and "dishonor"
 - b. This can explain how many "misconceived" ideas can spring from a verse
2. The old idea to start with "who, what, when, where, why and how" is a fine place to start
 - a. This has often been written off as too simplistic
 - b. It enables the reader/student to start with questions rather than assumptions and presuppositions (to discover rather than "injecting")
 - c. So, who is being discussed, addressed, challenged and promised?
 - d. What, generally is being said (a general summation)
 - e. When was it said/written (how does the time and timing affect it?)
 - Not just when was it written, but when as a verse or passage stated in conjunction with the surrounding verses and chapters?
 - f. Where was it written, or where did it take place?
 - g. Can you determine and see why (at the most basic idea) it was written?
 - h. How was instruction or obedience to be done or how did someone act or not act or how did **God** act? (or even, how did things happen?)
3. Preparing to study Scripture is much like preparing to eat a meal. We sit down, put our utensils in proper order, and begin to either cut, fork, or spoon our food into palatable portions. To try to eat it all at once, in one swallow, will only cause a mess, choking, and even a temporary nausea towards any more food. With Scripture, it is crucial to divide our study into palatable bites which can be digested slowly, and to bring all of the flavors out to taste.
4. Lessons learned in basic English class can be a good way to start
 - a. Start by identifying the **nouns** (subjects, topics, people)
 - b. Identify the verbs (the actions taking place or encouraged)
 - c. These may become basic habits as we become accustomed to reading and then studying passages a different way
 - d. Follow the basic example to see how to get the general ideas being covered. These could lead to more in-depth studies

General Examples

C. A Practice Passage - Hebrews 12:1-15

- 1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
- 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
- 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.
- 5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:
- 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.
- 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
- 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.
- 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?
- 10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.
- 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.
- 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;
- 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.
- 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:
- 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled

1. Who / what are being discussed in this passage?
 - a. We (and the understood "you")
 - b. Cloud of witnesses
 - c. Weight and sin which easily besets
 - d. The race set before us
 - e. Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith
 - f. Joy, cross, shame, right hand of God
 - g. Him Who endured such contradiction
 - h. We and our minds
 - i. We, blood and sin
 - j. We and the exhortation as to children
 - k. Son and the chastening of the Lord
 - l. We and chastening, God with sons

- m. We without chastisement, bastards and sons
 - n. Fathers, reverence, and subjection
 - o. Fathers pleasure, our profit, partakers of holiness
 - p. Present chastening, peaceable fruit of righteousness
 - q. Hands, feeble knees, straight paths for feet
 - r. Peace, holiness, men and the Lord
 - s. Man, grace of God, root of bitterness
2. What actions are taken or to be taken in this passage?
- a. We being compassed about so lay aside every weight and sin
 - b. Looking to Jesus, endured cross, despised shame, set down at God's right hand.
 - c. Consider him lest we be wearied and faint
 - d. We haven't resisted or striven to this degree
 - e. We have forgotten what speaks to us
 - f. Don't despise or faint at chastening
 - g. The Lord loveth, chasteneth, scourgeth, and receiveth
 - h. Endure chastening
 - i. Fathers chasten sons
 - j. Fathers corrected, we gave reverence
 - k. Be in subjections
 - l. We are chastened for our profit
 - m. Chastening does not seem to be joyous
 - n. Chastening yieldeth fruit to those exercised by it
 - o. Lift hands, make straight paths for feet lest lame turned out of the way
 - p. Lame needs to be healed
 - q. Follow peace, holiness, without no one sees the Lord
 - r. Look diligently, lest root spring up, lest men fail God's grace, lest many be defiled

D. Think "normal" to begin - II Tim. 1:5-7

1. "It is the greatest vanity when divine things are not truthfully discussed"(Bengel)
2. Consider first how we read and interpret letters written by those we know
 - a. We are familiar with who wrote us (the writer and style)
 - b. We are familiar with their background and surroundings (culture)
 - c. We seek first the **subject** (topic(s)) being discussed
 - We would not want to jump to the middle first without knowing what the intent of the letter is
 - d. We would re-read parts we were unsure of the intent
3. When there are misunderstandings in correspondence or communications in general we will often be told that we did not "get their drift"
4. Much of the misinterpretations of Scripture stem from missing the general point of the passage and focusing first on **minute** data
5. Take, for instance, Mt. 7:1, "Judge not lest ye be judged"
 - a. Most of today's society knows and quotes this verse taking it to mean that one cannot draw a negative conclusion about another (ever)
 - b. A basic look at the context (not the lexicon) will give us the answer
 - c. The Lord, a few verses later, instructs not to take holy things and give them over to "dogs" and "swine"; surely this involves a form of judgment. And He instructs later to "judge righteous judgment"
 - d. So **context** alone tells us this cannot be the meaning

Get the "gist" of the passage first

E. Cautiously principlize passages in context

1. When seeking applicable points in a passage, strive to ensure the passage teaches it as such and not a "stretch of the imagination"
 - The principle of the life of Samson was not in the growing of long hair but of obedience to God and the consequences of disobeying
2. Is it a "**fair**" point to draw from what is being stated - better to err on the side of caution than to support an ultimately unbiblical stance
3. Strive to distinguish between **incidentals** (details) and the intended point(s) of a passage
4. Beware coming to a passage and "topicalizing" it inappropriately - we are sure to miss a point when we simply seek prooftexts for our present topic

III. We Are Not To Be Cowards, Cheaters And Deceivers With The Word And Ministry - II Cor. 4:1-2

A. First, the context of this passage

1. In chapter 3 the clarity of the Gospel as emphasized in contrast to the Law
2. Paul, having received this "glorious ministry" will not faint
 - a. To faint is to be weak, to turn and run - either from fear of the truth or fear of those who will **hear** us
 - b. Many "religions," churches and families run their own self-serving religions
 - They "package" the Truth in their won customized parcels and market them to all they desire to impress (including themselves)
 - c. It is to be accepted that the Truth is rarely popular and easy to share

Literally, not to lose courage

B. Things to "renounce" - to speak off or against / to disown (or forbid)

1. "...the hidden things of dishonesty..." - or of "things of **shame**"
 - a. Where what is literally what is preached is not practiced
 - b. These where shameful, hidden things - evil intentions with the "truth"
 - c. They are hypocritical; having a personal agenda using the banner of God's Truth and His agenda
2. "...not walking in craftiness..." - using a giftedness for trickery
 - a. At its basic sense, it is not being "up front"
 - b. It is withholding "evidence" and spinning it differently and cleverly
 - c. It also has the idea of true giftedness, only used deceitfully - they have a charisma, talents, connections, and a domineering personality, all of which are used to deceive hearers, and not to fully enlighten them
 - d. So, if the Gospel is hid, it will not be because of our cunning presentation
 - This is what he clarified starting in verse 3
 - e. Sadly, this is even evidenced in the "pressure" to come up with new teachings (to **need** to use a clever perspective or approach to communicate the message)
3. "...nor handling the Word of God deceitfully..." - disguising the Truth
 - a. It is the "adulterating" the Word - adding something, unrightly to it
 - b. "No, we have renounced the secrecy prompted by shame, refusing to adopt crafty ways, or **to tamper with God's Message**, and commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God, by our **exhibition of the Truth.**" TCNT
 - c. Most who adulterate or are tempted to adulterate the truth do it for the sake of their audience; even some with **good** intentions
4. We are to "commend ourselves to every man's conscience"
 - a. Not needing "letters of recommendation" - as in II Cor. 3:1
 - b. The evidence is in the integrity of our lives, purposes, and results

Paul denounced a "hidden" presentation of the Truth - he told it like it was!

Many will commend themselves on their ability to avoid or even spin hard passages so as not to offend - this is "fainting"

We are to hold close to it (the Scripture) fearing personal agenda and bias corrupting its message, thereby weakening or even hiding it

5. Ah, but many will say, "what if they do not understand" - there will always be public "pushes" to encourage crafty uses of the Scripture under the "highly spiritualized" guise of **enlightened** motives
6. This was not Paul's drive - if the Gospel is hid it is hidden to those lost - clever and compromising approaches only weaken the truth and do not make the lost any more saved!

- a. Clever approaches often lead to huge distortions - Mt. 23:15 (example)
- b. Observe the whole passage - these are they who started with sincerity

C. Take the context and message of Nehemiah 8 - the truth taught

1. Many cannot see past the incidentals to the true subject matter
 - a. One seeking out "service style" may latch onto the incidentals of a pulpit and Ezra being above the people
 - b. This was not the purpose of the passage, and the rest of Scripture proves this by not emphasizing this **method**
2. The point of the passage is the presentation of the truth to those unexposed to it
 - a. All those who could understand (mentally distinguish) gathered
 - b. Here they had the Law "read distinctly" - clearly, precisely - many, if not most, spoke Aramaic and did not understand the Hebrew
 - Nonetheless, it was given precisely with 13 assistants
 - c. Here, they gave "the sense" of it - the explanation (meaning)
 - d. They also caused the people to "understand the reading" - what it meant to them (after knowing what it meant originally!)
 - e. The people were grieved at the meaning - they had to be "consoled" and "distracted" so as not to just grieve but to rejoice in the fact that they had heard and understood the truth plainly and clearly - vs. 12

The truth is not dull and drab when given to the truly hungry... boredom can be caused with a mental and spiritual diet of artificial sweeteners and fillers

- D. It has been stated that, "A verse out of context is **pretext**" (a disguise)
1. Many will need a "disguise" to make a passage say what it was not meant to
 2. Many will need to literally disguise the surrounding context so as not to deflate the point that is being "blown" out of proportion
 3. This can be done in the attempt to maintain one's "topical religion"
 - a. One seizes on a topic and sees all of Scripture in light of it
 - b. Again, overemphasis can be as dangerous and underemphasis
 4. These can be avoided (at a starting point) by seeking context
 - a. This will involve an **openness** (teachability)
 - b. Acts 7:51 - Stephen pointed out a key area of the spiritual leaders problems - they resisted the Holy Spirit - He guides into TRUTH, not to the pursuits of our comforts, ideas (and ideals) and our rightness in matters

IV. Never Base a Belief System on One Passage of Scripture

A. Many erring or **distracted** beliefs stem from this practice

1. Take for instance I Cor. 15:29 - baptisms for the dead
 - a. Should we begin a new practice of baptisms for the dead
 - b. It appears to state it as having happened - Paul does not directly disagree
 - c. There are no other passage (or contexts) which support such an idea - so , even with disagreements concerning the meaning, we should not start the practice
2. I Cor. 11 - Women with their heads covered and men with theirs not
 - a. The picture of a woman under a man's authority is a consistent theme in the Scriptures, but this methodology (as stressed) is not

Beware fighting conscience though; we must not push our conscience on another

Nowhere else does the Scripture push this method but the message

Verse 16

- b. One of the key intents of the passage was to emphasize the need for women to show submission (under authority)
 - c. Paul's answer to those disagreeing is not other Scripture or revelation from God, but he references the practices of the other churches at the time
 - d. So the message is submission and deference using the cultural example
 - e. Should those practicing be declared wrong? No! - such a form was practiced in the churches at the time, but a consistent case for others to do so is not substantiated by other Scriptural commands
3. I Cor. 14:2 - Speaking in tongues to God (as if in worship)
 - a. It mentions that one speaking in a "tongue" is speaking to God
 - b. Many use this to legitimize one speaking in tongues privately or in a group without an interpreter
 - c. The emphasis, though, is the futility of such a practice in the church
 - d. No other verse portrays tongues as such in such a way
 4. I Sam. 28:3-25 - the "medium at Endor"
 - a. This could seemingly be used to legitimize "mediums" and seances
 - b. The passage does not endorse the practice and there are other passages which condemn it - Lev. 9:31; Deut. 18:11; II Ki. 23:24
- B. It is responsible learning to compare Scripture with Scripture
1. If the concept is refuted then the initial handling (understanding) of it must be wrong (personal rightness/pride must not support error!)
 2. If more support cannot be found it should not be deemed priority - emphasize what it emphasizes! - which involves context and cross-referencing
- C. One verse "doctrines" or misinterpretations are often the cause of unsubstantiated and indefensible traditions (which become a "doctrine" in themselves)
1. Traditions must not be allowed to supersede or become equal with the authority of the Word of God
 2. This was a practice condemned in Scripture
 - a. Mark 7:9-13 - the practice of "Corban" over Scripture
 - (1). Here they used this practice of declaring their resources as dedicated to God as a way out of supporting their parents
 - (2). The Lord put it plainly, "...making the word of God of none effect through your tradition."
 - b. Mark 7:6-9 - Taking the "commandments of men" higher
 - (1). Lip-service is often given without heart involvement
 - (2). Here the "guidelines" of men are taught as "doctrine"
 - (3). This is dictated by the popularity of the thought at the time
 - (4). They forsake and neglect God's commands for man's
 - (5). God's words are "nullified" by such traditions handed down
- D. One verse doctrines are often inspired by personal experience
1. Much damage has arisen by the entrance of existentialism into the church
 - a. Existentialism is the prioritizing of subjectivity vs. objectivity
 - b. Truth is deemed dependent on the recipient - if he/she believes it it must not be condemned or even criticized
 - c. Many will argue from personal experience and since they have experienced it who are we to argue against it!?
 - d. This leads to feelings as being the determining factor of truth and error
 - (1). "A God of love would not do or allow such a thing" they say
 - (2). This leads to people discerning by how they feel about it

Family, denominational and church traditions must all be kept in-check by the real authority of God's Word. If they cannot be supported clearly they should not become as "law"

2. Experience does not define truth, experience should simply prove truth
 - a. Much of deception finds its strength in perceived experience
 - b. Something may truly occur, but it does not mean the person experiencing it knows what has or is really causing it
 - Heb. 11:1 — c. This is also why true faith is not dependent on observable evidence
 - d. Most of the plagues in Egypt were duplicated - does this disprove the working of God, or prove the rightness of Pharaoh?
3. One element to aid in the distinguishing of "true truth" is time
 - a. Acts 5:34-39 - Gamaliel advised the council to leave the apostles alone as time would reveal the true working of God
 - b. If God was not in it, it would fail, but if He was, they would be powerless to stop it and to try would be to fight against God
 - c. This presents one of the dangers of faddish doctrines - they are motivated by popularity and find their living in it as well
 - d. Hannaniah was appeared to be motivated by popularity - Jer. 28
 - (1). Jeremiah was preaching coming bondage with a yoke of wood
 - (2). Hannaniah broke it and said God would not bring them into such bondage, and the people believed the lie - vs. 15-16
 - (3). His teaching would participate in bringing a yoke of iron - vs. 13
 - e. So, beware the "itching ears syndrome" of II Tim. 4 - hermeneutics swayed by the "finger in the wind" (the ever changing waves of popularity)
4. It should be generally concluded, that if a topic is dealt with only once (maybe twice) in the Scriptures, it must be for support of clearer truths authorized throughout many passages

Many erring agendas are based in some type of greed and are short-lived seeing as they live for self-gratification

V. Can't See The Trees For The Forest - The Importance of Words

- A. History proves out that misinterpretations have devastating and lasting effects
 1. Treaties, contracts and legal disputes have pivoted on words (even small ones)
 2. The listening or reading party must clarify the meanings and usage of the words
 - a. This is a "given" in serious matters but often neglected when as situation is considered casual
 - b. It has even come down to what is intended by the meaning of "is" is
 3. Several things must be taken into account when concluding on a meaning
 - a. The dictionary (lexical) definition - meanings and variations
 - b. Tenses of the words can make a significance
 - c. Historical usage - does its culture (when written) make a difference?
 - This is often used in defining a word - "use it in a sentence"
 - d. Contextual usage will also have an effect - the lexical meaning can seem almost contradictory as it encompasses uses of a word
 - (1). Pr. 22:9 - He that is literally "good of eye" is blessed because he gives to the poor (not that he has good vision, but the Hebrew picture pictures his eyes looking for opportunities of generosity (clearly, it does not speak well of the well-sighted)
 - (2). In the Hebrew, one of the words for anger is pictured a "making a nose at or to nostril" - not to literally mean one whose nostrils move is bad - Pr. 14:17; 29:22
 - e. When curious or in doubt, check the translation - in a lexicon, Bible dictionary and in variant translations

When finding words with variant meanings do not seek out the one you want the most but the one that best suits the context of the passage, intent of the writer and the uses of the day

- B. Many times, we focus so strongly on the concept or topic of our study (the forest) we miss the real make-up of the passage (the trees - a.k.a. the words)
1. Words are often ignored, stretched or wrongly interpreted to keep the desired point (personal **agendas**) in the passage
 2. If God holds us accountable for every idle word we utter, can we not safely assume He will not "utter" idle (useless) words in His Word?
 3. It is reasonable to find ourselves asking, "Why did he use that word?"
- C. The "flavor" and complete understanding of the passage will be found in the words
1. We may understand the basic meanings and concepts being discussed, but will miss the **precise** ideas communicated in the specific words chosen
 2. The meaning, usage, tense and placement can all have bearing - all of these must be taken into consideration especially when dealing with a controversial passage
 3. Many, throughout history have been much too swift to yield a belief or doctrinal stance based on a wrongly understood term or phrase
 - a. John 1:1 has been used by cults to attack the deity of Christ pointing out the absence of the Greek article "the" before God, saying that it really should read, "...and the word was a god..."
 - b. When taken as literally from the Greek as possible it would read, "In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and God was the Word" - they emphasize the lack of the Greek article before "God was the word" - but the phrasing in Greek and in English would not require such! Not to mention the rest of the NT to prove otherwise)
 4. "Digging" into a passage is more apt to produce treasure than **excess**
 - a. If a person studies the word for servant used in a passage such as Romans 6, they end up at a better idea of depravity
 - b. A common definition of "servant" in English has the idea of a voluntary servant, paid, and is able to terminate employment of his own volition
 - c. The underlying Greek word δουλος was a person born into slavery with no option of changing his condition of himself without the direct intervention of a higher authority of his current master
 - d. Thus, the doctrine of total depravity is supported throughout the New Testament by this term used this way
 5. Beware temptation to instill a meaning in a word that is not there
 - a. A recent example of this is found the word rhema (ρημα)
 - (1). This term has come to mean "what it (a passage) says to you"
 - (2). The difference between rhema and logos - utterance/written
 - b. The key to this is its emphasis on the origin of the "words" - logos is most often used in referring to the written Scriptures while rhema is used to stress the **origin** as coming from the mouth of God
 - (1). Eph. 6:17 - "...the sword of the Spirit which is the word (rhema) of God (its power is its source - God's utterances)
 - (2). Luke 1:37 - with God nothing (not a word (rhema)) shall be impossible (no utterance as coming from can be impossible)
 - c. Today, this term is often in reference to personal studies as gleaning your own "rhemas" from it - what spoke to you
 - This concept has come to do harm to the handling of Scripture in making personal freedom to study the Scripture on equal plane with authority in handling it accurately (if not this, maybe even above it!)
 - d. With words with multiple meanings, **context** will be essential!

Many fear such linguistic approaches to the Bible will lead to a form of gnosticism or intellectualism. History demonstrates the availability of the truth, yet when it appears to be scarce were times when people were either lazy, untaught, or distracted by living for this life

Many realize the trend society has for coining phrases and redefining old terms. Sadly, this occurs with words in the flippant approaches to the Scripture - take for instance the term "sanctuary" as referring to the church auditorium - is this appropriate?

- VI. Consider Soberly the Last Word of Paul to Timothy - II Tim. 4 (goes to motive)
- A. A charge before God and Jesus Christ, the Judge of all
1. He will do the judging (discerning between true and false / right and wrong)
 2. The accountability is far above mankind
 - a. He is the judge of the living (alive now and those alive at His return)
 - b. He is judge of the dead (they give account of their lives)
 - c. We answer to the Lord of all, King of Kings
 - Beware of "people **pleasing**"
 3. We are workers for **His** kingdom (and its advancement) - not for any other
- B. There is a charge to...
1. "Preach the word..." - herald the Truth (as a public crier)
 - Forthtell the truth (which is all-profitable) openly, without shameful hesitation
 2. "... be instant in season, out of season..."
 - a. Give out the Truth when it is convenient (opportunities)
 - b. Give out the Truth when it is inconvenient (day or night, sick or well)
 - Do not be driven by **comfort** in representing the Lord
 3. "... reprove..." - confront and confute
 - Literally, bring to proof (show the rightness or wrongness)
 4. "... rebuke..." - Be direct and bold for the good of another (as Scripture is with us)
 5. "... exhort..." - Call (welcome) others near (comfort and encourage)
 - a. Do not grow weary **bearing** with others (longsuffering)
 - b. Encourage others by instruction (do not just feel for others, assist with ample time to help stabilize them)
- C. This is done, for the time comes when...
1. Many will not be able to bear (will not tolerate) healthy teaching
 - a. It will be too heavy to bear (it will be too much work) - cannot "lift" it
 - b. They will be sickened by it (conviction will often deprive one of strength at first, but later yields spiritual muscle)
 2. Many will search out a "heap of teachers" (one after the other)
 - a. They will be driven by variety rather than essential needs
 - b. They will go from teacher to teacher and teaching to teaching
 3. Many will be driven by "itching ears"
 - a. The picture is of one who has an itch needing to be scratched
 - b. Their ears crave strictly comforting and self-supportive teaching
 - What they want drives what they learn (they control instruction)
 - In God's school, we have no control over the classes we are enrolled
 4. They will turn their ears from the Truth
 - They will reject or neglect hearing Truth (with many teachers in support)
 5. As they turn from hearing the Truth (active) they are turned to believe "fables" (passive)
 - a. They are free to choose teachers but not free to choose the **results**
 - b. They are given over (as in Rom. 1) to believe lies (while they feel in control)
 - "Believe any kind of stuff and nonsense; for, as one has justly observed, "Those who reject the truth are abandoned by the just judgment of God to credit the most degrading nonsense." Clarke
 - c. They believe "fables" - as in I Tim. 1:4 - that which generates more questions than it does answers

D. The calling of ministry - vs. 5

1. Be watchful - alert and sober (free from physical, mental and spiritual intoxications)
 - Beware and avoid that which hinders the ability to spiritually perceive danger
2. Endure afflictions - expect hardships and let them not deter you (don't fear or dread)
3. Do the work of an evangelist
 - a. One whose purpose is to share generously, the "Good News"
 - b. One not bearing self's message, but God's (simply a spokesman)
 - c. One who maintains those growing in the faith (as Paul did)
4. Make full proof of your ministry
 - a. Prove for Whom you are working and called
 - b. Use all available resources to accomplish your calling (hold nothing back)
 - c. Finish it thoroughly (diligently pursue it till death)

E. The edification of the Church (believers) is designed to mature them in the faith using what He (God) has given leading to genuine unity - Eph. 4:13-14

Left without rules of Hermeneutics this unity and maturity could never happen

1. The goal of the truth is a unified and mature belief system
 - a. A peaceful unity is first found in purity - see James 3:17
 - (1). "Errorless beliefs" - at least the conscious pursuit of them
 - (2). Proper interpreting methods of Scripture
 - b. Maturity is identified with convictions founded in faith/knowledge
 - (1). Know what you believe and why you believe it (defend it!)
 - (2). Not being led to change with the "tides" (wind of doctrine)
 - (3). Not being unstable as a novice seaman at the ocean's mercy
 - c. Immaturity is evidenced by... (as with Laodicia - Rev. 3)
 - (1). Demanding rights/privileges versus meekness
 - (2). Failure to recognize and seize personal responsibility
 - (3). Apathy (complacency) over God's Word - vs. 18-19
 - As a bored child would be with a technical tool
 - (4). Ignorance as to what is truly important in life
2. The goal is an unshakable belief system firmly founded on absolute Scripture
 - a. Avoiding the "sleight of men" (holding one's own)
 - (1). The picture is of a con-man in a gambling match
 - (2). The whole setting is rigged to deceive the victim/target
 - b. What are some of the "lures" of gambling like this to be avoided?
See I John —
 - (1). Avoid confidence in the nature of man (they lie in wait)
 - (2). Avoid the thought of getting something for nothing (no work)
 - (3). The "get rich quick" trick - shortcuts around diligence
 - (4). The belief that life is based on luck versus God's sovereignty
3. These have always been the tactics of the enemy (the deceiver/devil)
 - a. The "wiles" are literally "slipper tactics" - Eph. 6:11
 - b. The enemy will purposely mishandle Truth to deceive
 - (1). Eve in the Garden - "...yea hath God said..." - he overemphasized God's restrictions, seeking a way to reason around what God really meant and providing motivation inwardly to want God's intent to be incorrect
 - (2). The enemy will emphasize science over God's Word (I Tim. 6:20), opinion over study and research (II Tim. 2:15), freedom over responsibility (I Cor. 8:9), man's views/philosophies over God's (I Cor. 1:25), and he will devour the weak (I Pet. 5:8-9)

"He who merely studies the commandments of God is not greatly moved. But he who listens to God commanding, how can he fail to be terrified by majesty so great?"

Martin Luther

VII. The Urgency of Study - Pro. 18:13

A. Answering **before** one hears the matter

1. So much of the handling of Scripture can be characterized with the point of this verse - the wrongness of hasty speech
 - a. It is "folly" to answer without the facts of the subject discussed
 - (1). It is literally silly (or perverse - to be considered odd)
 - (2). It is "shame" - disgraceful and confusing to all
 - b. A person giving their answer not knowing the facts of the matter
 - It has been jokingly stated as ones "expounding on their ignorance"
 - c. Sadly, the Holy Spirit is credited (falsely) with many shames as these
2. It was said of Donald Grey Barnhouse, "If I had only three years to serve the Lord, I would spend **two** of them studying and preparing."
3. It was Billy Graham in a statement made in London in November of 1979 that if he could go back he would do 2 things differently; study and pray more. He stated that he spoke too much and prepared in study too little
4. It is sad that the studying of the Bible truths is looked upon differently. With any other resource in life one must fill up then spend - food, money, rest, and in most cases, study

See also Acts 6:4

B. Before one studies, they must consider properly the source/origin to handle correctly

1. Do we truly believe it to be the Word of God?
 - Would my conclusions be stated the same were He present? (seen)
2. We claim it is infallible. If this is the case, knowing we are fallible, will we take great care so as not to **infect** it with our fallacies?
3. We claim it is inspired by the Spirit of God. If we truly believe this, would we then not conclude that we must seek out its precise meanings/interpretations so as not to miss the inspiration and fullest accurate interpretation?
 - Unless, of course, one mixes up inspiration and illumination - we are to seek illumination of the truth, not the inspiration (**invention**) of it!
4. What is the purpose of the Bible? Is it a resource to back up our opinions and observations, or is it the dictator of our opinions and governor of our observations?
 - a. We are to go to it to form our opinions - if somehow we doubt our natural inclinations (rightfully so) we will search the Scriptures thoroughly, expositively, and systematically so as not to miss something (avoiding oversight and "blind spots" in study)
 - b. If what I see seems to contradict the Scriptures I should assume something is wrong with my observation before I conclude something is wrong with the Scriptures - the Scriptures can be defended but they do not **need** it to still be truth (truth is not relative)
5. This all requires a teachable spirit and approach to the Bible (open-minded)
 - a. One must be honest if they are seeking to hear what they want to hear
 - b. The person of integrity will listen for especially what they do not want to hear
 - c. Each of us, as prone to error, are in constant need of contradiction from a reliable source; we are fallible, but our **guide** is not
 - d. As a blind man being led through a cave, they being honest of their limitations would always defer to the sighted, experienced guide. It would be foolhardy to rely on personal perception without cautious consultation on each step and turn with the guide!
6. One must believe that God is omniscient to properly reverence His Word
 - A flippant approach communicates otherwise

"The higher our view of the Bible, the more painstaking and conscientious our study of it should be."

John Stott

See also Rom. 15:4

- C. Study demands comparison - compare Scripture with Scripture
1. Our Lord constantly quoted the Old Testament as authority on His teaching
 - Mt. 21:24, Mr. 12:24, Lu. 24:27-32, John 5:39, * Luke 4:16 *
 2. This was characteristic of the teachings of Paul
 - a. Paul's teaching in Thessalonica - Acts 17:1-9 - as was his "manner" he taught three weeks (3 Sabbaths) out of the Scriptures
 - b. He did the same in Berea who were noted as receiving the teaching with ready minds and searched (scrutinized) the Scriptures themselves
 3. Beware the "supporting reference" which does not legitimately support!
 - a. Many false teachings or general errors find their source in someone starting with a thought, finding a Scripture that sounds right, and others become prejudice before they read it, thus failing to get message
 - b. Again, intent is not the "authority"; if the point is true there will be "non-altered", "non-stretched" passages and context to support
 4. We must begin with the premise that Scripture will always agree with itself
 - a. Scripture will not and cannot contradict itself! - to succumb to the idea that it can opens the floodgates of speculations and accusation as to where and why it does throughout - each part, as a structure, depends on the other; topple one part and you will ultimately topple the rest!
 - b. Therefore, it is good practice in study, especially with difficult passages, to determine what the passage is not and cannot be saying in light of other passages and teachings of Scripture
 - c. Take, for instance, Hebrews 6 which is often used to support the idea that a true believer can lose their salvation
 - (1). If one begins with the idea that this passage supports such an idea they will skew its purpose
 - (2). Notice the necessary conclusion if it is taken in light of this prejudice - if one "loses" it one cannot get it back!
 - (3). This, then cannot be what it is saying in light of other verses
 - (4). The main point, contextually, deals with the issue of security - if it were possible for a true believer to "fall away" then it would be impossible to be "re-saved" - this would be contradictory to the work of Christ... once for all!
 5. Insecurity on the Scriptures and what they teach communicates volumes
 - a. The best type of security is proven security - many fail to study out the beliefs they are to have and when one or some are contradicted, they will either study with a new fervor or will give-up altogether
 - b. A belief system that cannot stand scrutiny is not worth having!
 - c. Let security be a motive for study - this helps alleviate casual or sloppy (lazy) study which leads to a life of insecurity
 - d. Also note: be careful the Biblical answers given to our children - we do not want to be exposed as those "fiddling" with Scripture wrongly
 6. Let your authority be in the Scriptures not in your opinions, musings or reasonings
 7. Let our teaching of our children be as so instructed in Deut. 6
 - a. It is God's words we have in "our heart" - vs. 6
 - b. They are to be taught "diligently" - inculcate them - vs. 7
 - c. They are to be taught consistently - throughout each day, nomally
 - d. They are to be taught obviously - throughout the "house"
 8. This does not communicate a "casual" approach, but a "diligent" one!

The end of chapter 5 should be a clue as to what group is being addressed; they are believers who still need to be taught the basics, even after much time in "the faith"

VIII. Settle Your "Approach", Measurements and Definitions (dealing with prejudice)

A. What we **presuppose** about any subject will skew our further learning on it

1. This is key to understand in light of the various views of communication
 - a. Many are inclined to sense the need to "read in between the lines"
 - b. Some sense the need to take words strictly at face value (literalists)
 - c. Our goal is to be "normalists" - treat the Scripture as we would normal forms of communication - intent, context, definitions
2. What we presuppose the purpose of **communication** to be, is key
 - a. What do we presuppose the purpose of the Scripture to be?
 - b. If it is believed to be a conceptual book loosely based on facts it will be treated as such (meant to be figurative overall and flexibly applied)
 - c. If it is believed to be God's use of the language He designed to communicate His revelation, then it must be treated as normal language is to be normally taken
 - d. The written Word of God is to be in contrast to His special revelation in times past where He used miraculous forms of communication. Even these, that we are informed of, are plainly explained for what they are and their purpose in the written Scripture

"Based on the philosophy that God originated language for the purpose of communicating His message to man and that He intended man to understand that message, literal interpretation seeks to interpret that message plainly." Ryrie

B. The overall "argument" concerning "Dispensationalism" and "Covenant Theology"

1. The difference can be basically summed up in the fine points of interpretation
 - a. The dispensational person would consider themselves more literalists
 - b. A dispensational person sees differing "economies" of God throughout history where revelation has been **progressing** to man
 - c. They also see a clear distinction between the Church and Israel - this is most evident in their eschatology (future events)
2. These "starting points" clearly affect how one will handle the Bible - especially the Old Testament (Israel, promises)
 - a. One of the strongest points of a dispensationalist is the literal fulfillments of the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament
 - b. Why would we expect this to change with the rest of Scripture?
 - c. Trying to see God's overall plan will help us gear our thinking accordingly
 - d. The Covenant Theologian is often guilty of see things such as the church in the Old Testament and applying promises for Israel to the Church
3. To understand that God was working towards His plan(s) we must take each part, in its part and time, and seek its intended meaning in this whole context
4. We may understand more the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, but when handling the Old Testament, handle it in light of its **original** context and purpose
5. Our purpose here is not the defense of a position, but the understanding and **obeying** of the Scripture
 - a. In the pursuit of this we accept the truth that the written revelation reveals God's plan progressively and is to be handled as such
 - b. Some of the Bible will not be applicable to me directly though all of it is good for teaching, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness - II Tim. 3:16 - to say all must be directed at me is to miss the point of this verse - to see God's promises to Israel, even the ones yet to be fulfilled will always teach that God keeps His promises and can be counted upon to do so still

God "dealing out" His work and revelation in His timing all apart of a definitive plan

We are here for the glory of God... man is not the focus of history, God is!

C. Will we be "normalists" literalists? (handle it as God's use of normal communication)

1. Consider the following Scripture and interpret it.

"1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." (KJV)

2. Start with something clear and obvious and observe how we know what it means and how we arrived at it

*** Let's look at it two different ways; literal/normal and "flexible" ***

1. The LORD is my shepherd - what is this, at **most basic**, describing? We know He is not really an earthly shepherd and we truly sheep We know this because we can recognize and **obvious** (normal) metaphor being used. It is a picture designed to enable us to grasp and understand the concepts being spoken for the **purpose** of praise. How would we refute those saying that we all should aspire to the occupation of a shepherd because it is God's?

- We would see this as ridiculous seeing it full well as a metaphor!
- We would need to explain the concept of anthropomorphisms - God described in human terms with human pictures or attributes to communicate a concept

2. Whose shepherd is He? - the Psalmist says He is his shepherd. Can this passage be used to declare the LORD as the shepherd of all and all are His sheep? - why?/why not?

- What is the **purpose** of the Psalm? - Is it to declare such a point? Is it to make us want Him to be our shepherd? It is mainly there to point out the benefits of knowing and serving he Lord?

3. "...I shall not want." - In modern English this may come across poorly! We know the word in English can mean to lack, thus, one having the LORD as shepherd will not lack. So, if someone used this verse to say that David did not "want" (desire) the Lord how would we refute them?

- We would explain the normal meaning and usage of the word and point out its consistent English usage of **meaning** "need" or "lack" in the KJV
- We could refer to the original word **meaning** behind it in the Hebrew
- We would point out the oddity of such an idea in light of the praising **context**. To view it as suggested would contradict the following verses

4. "...green pastures..."; a prepared table, a head anointed with oil, and a cup running over sure sound like material blessings (wealth/prosperity) are part of the "package" when the LORD is your shepherd. Is this a good lesson to draw from this passage?

- How does this conclusion compare with other Scripture?

5. If someone used verse 2 to conclude that God will never lead us or allow us to face trouble how would you refute this using just this Psalm?

3. What were the "methods" or tools we used to conclude true meaning?
 - a. Normalists/literalists are "grammarists" - recognizing the need to take into full account the grammar being used and interpreting in light of it
 - (1). Metaphors and similes and figures of speech

"Jehovah has been pleased to give us the revelation of His mind and will in words. It is therefore absolutely necessary that we should understand not merely the meanings of the words themselves, but also the laws that govern their usage and combinations. All language is governed by law; but in order to increase the power of a word, or the force of an expression, these laws are designedly departed from, and words and sentences are thrown into, and used in, new forms, or figures." E.W. Bullinger - from Figures of Speech Used in the Bible

- (2). We would also expect the "pictures" used to be current to the *Historical* _____ **time** the passage was written
 - b. Normal/literalists seek the intent of the passage - this demands a working knowledge and inclusion of the context
 - c. Psalms and Proverbs are often conceptual in content but we strive to not stray beyond the writer's intended concepts - would it be wise to flex the shepherd illustration and modernize it to a picture such as a "coach" or "medical doctor?" - the pictures would not line up
 - d. As with assembly instructions, if I do not grasp the illustrations or if I work off the wrong one the _____ **conclusion** will be wrong!
 - e. The normalist/literalist sees themselves as "cornered" by the meanings of the words used - we must not go beyond the scope of the meanings of the words used and realize usage can vary meaning
 - f. Normalists/literalists understand the progressive changes in the meanings of words over time (i.e. "want" being understood as lack)
 - g. Normalists/literalists may see an apparent conclusion from a single passage but cannot conclude its interpretation without finalizing its "harmony" with the rest of Scripture
 - h. Be patient in study. If the Scripture will clarify a "hard part" give it time to do so as we realize the "revelation" is progressive
 - i. Beware of _____ **first** impressions as they are often mistaken

"The Word of God may, in one respect, be compared to the earth. All things necessary to life and sustenance may be obtained by scratching the surface of the earth: but there are treasures of beauty and wealth to be obtained by digging deeper into it. So it is with the Bible. 'All things necessary to life and godliness' lie upon its surface for the humblest saint; but, beneath that surface are 'great spoils' which are found only by those who seek after them as for 'hid treasure.'" E.W. Bullinger - from Figures of Speech Used in the Bible

4. Start with the _____ **clear** _____, with what is understood in a passage
- D. Consider Mt. 6:25-33 as a normalist/literalist
1. Could this passage be used to say that one need not think of food clothing and the like in their daily lives? - "take no thought" - KJV
 2. How would we use this passage to dictate, if at all, plans and goals for the future? - retirement plans/bank accounts... are they wrong?
 3. What is the point of the passage and how far should we apply it based upon a literal/normal interpretation?

4. "Take no thought" is best translated "do not worry" - μεριμνάω
 - a. Do not be "**time**" - driven by doubt leading to fear
 - b. This type of "obsession" is opposed to faith (confidence in God)
 - c. Pre planning is by no means banned by this passage but one is cautioned where they place their confidence for if misdirected, we will "worry"
- E. Ecc. 9:1, 5 - two verses used by two groups as supporting texts for their positions
 1. Verse 1 is used by Catholics to support the idea that no one can know if they will "end up" in Heaven or Hell
 - a. "For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this: that the righteous, **Translate!** — and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; whether it be love or hatred, man knoweth it not; all is before them. (ASV)"
 - b. It is dealing with (**contextually**) with discerning the "good" and the "bad" as being discernible by man as from God as blessing or curse
 - c. It is beyond our ability (insight) to absolutely determine this - it is God's
 2. Verse 5 is used by 7th Day Adventists to support "soul-sleep"
 - a. "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not **Translate!** — anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." (ASV)
 - b. In this translation and most others, it still looks as though this is true
 - An exposition of the definitions would not stop this either
 - c. Read the **next verse** (6) and see if this does not clarify the "**setting**"
 - a. "...a share in all that is done **under the sun**"
 - b. This is in direct application to the earth - this, then, is true that the "dead" have no more "memory", "knowledge" and "reward" under the sun - the "earth" has lost this!
- F. Interpret experience in light of Scripture, not Scripture in light of experience
 1. It is human nature to handle Scripture with the authority of experience
 - a. Many will dictate the meaning of passages on personal experience
 - b. Some will handle passages based upon another's experience
 - c. If a programmer writes a program with "loopholes" and an individual writes a user manual based upon the loopholes, does that make the user manual authoritative? - No! It misses the programmer's **design**
 - d. One may experience something and read a passage that now seems related - it may or may not be... but **clarify** the **meaning** first!
 2. In Mt. 5:21-48 we see examples of experience, not intent, being the guide
 - a. "You shall not commit murder..." - do not kill the "innocent"
 - (1). Experience said that if they did not kill they were guilty
 - anger* (2). Christ clarified its intent - do not enter the "path" to murder
 - b. "You shall not commit adultery..." - do not have physical "affairs"
 - (1). Experience dictated monogamy was enough
 - thoughts* (2). Christ clarified its intent - do not enter the "path" to adultery
 - c. "...giver her a certificate of divorcement..." - divorce was **regulated**
 - (1). Popular experience made divorce widely acceptable
 - (2). Mt. 19 - divorce was never God's intent
 - d. "You shall not make false vows..." - do not break vows
 - (1). Experience said lies were "OK" if not breaking a "vow"
 - (2). Christ clarified intent as letting speech be always honest with or without having to make it a solemn vow

- A selfless spirit still focused on the need of the offender
- e. "...an eye for an eye..." - "revenge" was regulated/limited
 - (1). Experience allowed for determined "exact retribution"
 - (2). Christ mentioned the God's intent as being a forgiving spirit
 - f. "... hate your enemies..." - treat others as they treat you
 - (1). Experience endorsed hatred of those opposed to you
 - (2). Christ identified the Godliness of loving an enemy
3. These examples illustrate and counteract the handling of Scripture with personal experience (or feeling) as the predominate factor
 4. Experience fosters (an in most cases, rightfully so) a mentality of leaning on what I can handle (as with my hands), and see first-hand
 - a. But experience is **limited** thus also is our frame of reference
 - b. For life's truths and those of God we must be taught (in the majority) by what is outside ourselves
 - c. To have this, we use the Bible as our authoritative source, but if "tampered" with, its "tampered" conclusions will prove to be unreliable and will soon become neglected as any other false hope would produce
 - d. Thus the "lumping" of the Scripture with other well-intended books with inconsistencies and errors
 - e. Those placing experience and its gleanings ahead of objective truth are never found to be truly **wise** in their end
 - The key is in having and knowing the true objective truths!
- G. So, settle your approach and measurements in handling the Bible!
1. Read what's there - what was intended to be understood and seen
 - Narrow down what it is saying at its most basic idea (think "normal")
 2. Read what's **around** there - keep it in context
 3. Know what the words really mean (especially when seemingly unclear)
 4. Seek the emphasis and interpret the rest in light of it - beware personal agenda
 5. Do not use "pictures" beyond their intended scope - better to be too narrow than too liberal with its concepts
 6. Do not design application **beyond** the scope of the passage
 7. Stay "on top" of your grammar and stay within its "rules"
 8. Be a studier of Bible history and read Scripture in light of its setting
 9. Always be aware of Whose writings we are dealing
 - Handle them in light of His ever-present eyes
 10. Remember, **intent** does not outweigh accuracy (rightness) in the end
 11. Always seek to agree with Scripture, not seeking Scripture to agree with you
 12. The best commentary on Scripture, is Scripture
 13. Beware temptation to instill a meaning in a word that is not there
 14. Bible truth is not to be compromised in the pursuit of unity or pride
 15. Let your authority be in the Scriptures not in your opinions
 16. A belief system that cannot stand up to challenge and scrutiny is not worth having (not would any be able to fully rely on it)
 17. Better to be bored (or considered boring) than to be **wrong**!
 18. Beware the "supporting reference" which does not legitimately support
 19. We must begin with the premise that Scripture will always agree with itself
 20. The goal is an unshakable belief system firmly founded on absolute Scripture