

“Well, that is just your interpretation!”

The early 1990s was an exciting time for me. I had moved to Spokane, Washington, to attend photography school and for the first time I occupied my own apartment. Being a relatively new Christian I sometimes spent more time studying the Bible than doing my homework for college. I was beginning to fall in love with the God who redeemed me and I wanted to read His love letter as often as time would permit. My non-Christian roommates thought I was a little strange as a result.

Not only did my roommates think it strange to study the Bible, they thought I was crazy because I would regularly invite LDS missionaries over to talk about it. One session with the missionaries is of note for this chapter on interpretation. The two missionaries had brought with them their mission president to partake in our conversations. He was a nice man in his mid-50s and was enjoyable to talk with. After lengthy discussion about various issues concerning the Bible, the mission president said to me, “*Well, that is just your interpretation.*” At the time I really did not know how to respond, thus our discussions came to a standstill and an end.

Many Christians I know love to discuss Biblical truths with the Latter-day Saints. Unfortunately, the phrase, “*Well, that is just your interpretation,*” is common. You may have heard this or even said it yourself.

Recently I was speaking with a returned Mormon missionary friend of mine about this subject. I asked him what some of his experiences were with speaking with Christians (Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Presbyterian etc.) on his mission. He reported to me that his experiences were good but that there were *many and various interpretations about Bible verses*. Young Joseph Smith claimed to have similar experiences and conclusions:

...for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.¹

I pressed further and asked for some examples. He shared with me that they all explained salvation a little differently. The conclusion he reached was that the different Christian denominations taught differently about the important issue of salvation.

After thinking about this problem for a short time, the solution became obvious. It is crucial to understand that the *Christian* denominations do not believe or teach different things concerning the basic doctrines of the Bible (such as salvation by grace, the Trinity etc.). This becomes clear when reading the *official* “statements of faith” by each denomination. The Baptists believe the same thing as the Presbyterians, and so forth, and this is why we refer to each other as genuine Christians. Granted, there are some differences between the denominations, but they reside in the minor details and not the major. The squabbles we do have with each other are akin to sibling rivalry, not warring religions as many say. The fact that Christians of different traditions agree on so much is a testimony to the clarity of the Bible.

There is both diversity and unity among true Bible believing Christians. Doctrinally speaking, my wife and I are Baptists, but we attended, and I taught at, a Pentecostal church for a few years. This can happen because Baptists and Pentecostals agree on the important issues. Different evangelical Christian fellowships do not disagree on the major issues: those issues that would qualify or disqualify something from being Christian.

My experience has taught me that the same things can be said about Latter-day Saints. Not every individual Latter-day Saint I talk with believes the same set of doctrines. There are many and various

¹ Joseph Smith History, 1:12

interpretations among individual Latter-day Saints. To be fair, if someone wants to know precisely what a church teaches it is best to consult official sources, not just people we meet on the streets or knocking on doors.

So why does it *seem* that they all have different interpretations among the Christian fellowships? Unfortunately, not all Christians are equipped to handle or answer the questions and issues raised by their LDS friends. The sad result is that they give responses that often *do not reflect accurately what their Christian faith teaches*. Again, this can also be said of the average person who attends the LDS church. It only *seems* like there are many and various interpretations among the Christian fellowships (on the central teachings). In the same way, it only *seems* like there are many interpretations among the Latter-day Saints. To be fair we must consult the official sources to discover what a church really teaches.

The Apostle Paul wrote to encourage and teach young Timothy how to proceed with overseeing the Church. In the face of false teachers, he urged Timothy,

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

The above verse reveals our responsibility to “rightly divide the word of truth.” This means we can *wrongly* divide the word of truth if we are not responsible with the text. The verse also refers to the interpreter as a “worker” which implies there must be effort. Let’s go to work!

SIMPLE RULES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNICATION TOOL GOD USED: LANGUAGE

I firmly believe God inspired the authors of the 66 books of the Bible with the intention that it be understood, not misunderstood.² We are told in 2nd Timothy 3:16-17 that the Bible was inspired with

² In 1895 a German pastor by the name of Adolf Deissmann published a rather innocent-sounding volume: *Bible Studies*. Yet, this single volume started a revolution in NT scholarship--a revolution in which the *common* man was the winner.

In the 1800s Deissmann began reading ancient Greek Manuscripts. But *not* the great classical authors. He was reading private letters, business transactions, receipts, marriage contracts. What were these documents? Merely scraps of papyrus (the ancient forerunner to paper) found in 2,000-year-old Egyptian garbage dumps. In these seemingly insignificant papyri, Deissmann discovered a *key* to uncover the NT! For these papyri contained the common Greek language of the first century A.D. They were written in the *vocabulary* of the NT.

What's so *revolutionary* about that? you ask. It is revolutionary because up until 1895, biblical scholars had no real parallels to the language of the NT. They often viewed its Greek as *invented* by the Holy Spirit. They called it "Holy Ghost Greek." Now it is true that the ideas--even the words--were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But it's another thing to say that the *language* of the NT was unusual--that its grammar and vocabulary were, in a word, unique. If this were true, only the spiritual *elite* could even hope to understand the NT. (Dr. William W. Klien, Dr. Craig L. Blomberg, Dr. Robert L. Hubbard Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas London Vancouver Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1993. Ph.D., Daniel B Wallace. *bible.org*. <https://bible.org/article/why-so-many-versions> (accessed August 18, 2021).

purpose, that the words would be “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” None of the stated purposes of the Bible would be possible if it were unintelligible gibberish: it was written to be understood! Are there simple rules we can follow to understand the Bible? Yes! We will briefly explore *three* key study principles... and a way we can cheat to make it easier.

Key Study Principle #1—Pay close attention to Context! Context! Context!

This should go without saying, but, unfortunately, it must be said, often and loudly! Every word is part of a sentence; every sentence is a part of a paragraph; every paragraph is part of a chapter; every chapter is part of a book; every book is part of a Testament, and each of these parts is part of the whole Bible. No one is a fan of his or her words being taken out of context and neither is God. I frequently use two illustrations with my LDS friends on how to, for themselves, determine if the verse they have quoted is taken out of context.

Illustration #1—Reopen the Bible

When my LDS friend quotes a verse to support the subject he is talking about, like 1st Cor. 15:29 for Baptism for the Dead, or John 10:34 for men becoming gods, etc., a vivid visual often takes place. The Bible is opened, the verse is quoted, the Bible is closed, set aside, and his explanation begins. What I do is also very vivid and visual. I reach out, grab the Bible, open it back up, and say, “Let’s examine the various contexts and see if that is what the author was actually communicating.”

A crude example of how context works can be shown in Ps. 14:1. An atheist could open the Bible, quote part of the verse which says, “There is no God,” close the Bible, set it aside, and say, “the Bible teaches there is not a God.” I would then grab the closed Bible that had been set aside, reopen it, and read the immediate context to show his conclusion was incorrect: “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.” Yes, that was an overly simplistic example, but the principle is true.

Illustration #2—Fill the Chalk Board

Proper interpretation is an exercise in patience. We should be careful not to come to conclusions too quickly. Consider this scenario. You are at the park with your dog and you overhear two liberal college students wearing Harvard and Yale sweatshirts. They are having a discussion about Jesus and you hear them say, “The Bible does not teach that Jesus is God... it says he is the Son of Man (Matt. 8:20), thus he was just a man, not God.” Coincidentally, there is a large chalkboard tipped over in the grass next to the students and you say, “I’m a Christian, may I interject?” They smugly reply, “Go ahead.” Leaning over, you prop up the chalkboard and write Matt. 8:20 in the middle and say, “I understand, based on this verse alone, how you could conclude Jesus was just a man and not God. However, there is more to the story.” Now you begin to surround that verse with one verse after another that say clearly that Jesus is God and more verses that say Jesus is man. After patiently filling the chalk board with all the pertinent verses revealing the whole Biblical context, it becomes obvious the Bible teaches Jesus is both fully man and fully God. The liberal students say, “Hmmm... we never saw the context before, thanks.” Now, you hand them sweatshirts that say Dallas Theological Seminary so they can ditch the liberal Harvard and Yale sweatshirts.

Proverbs 18:17 says “The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.” We can apply that Proverb to the need for patience in interpretation. Verses like 1st Cor. 15:29 and John 10:34 are frequently used to support LDS teachings on Baptism for the dead and that men can become gods. However, when we place those verses on the chalkboard and fill it with all the other related verses it becomes apparent the LDS interpretations are hasty. Be patient! Fill the chalkboard!

The first basic key study principle discussed was about context, now let’s move on to the second key study principle that places us in the historical world of the original readers. After all we get the Bible second hand as we are not the original recipients.

Key Study Principle #2—Consider carefully historical setting and Genre

Acts 8:26-35 records the story of the confused Ethiopian eunuch traveling and reading from the book of Isaiah. Philip the Evangelist is sent by the Holy Spirit to talk to the Ethiopian and Philip asks “Do you understand what you are reading?” (8:30). The Ethiopian responds “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (8:31). On many occasions my well-meaning LDS friends have cited this passage as evidence of the need for modern-day Apostles and Prophets to help us understand the Bible as we can’t possibly understand it on our own.

Was it modern-day Apostles and Prophets the Ethiopian eunuch lacked and needed to understand the Bible, or was it something a bit less dramatic? Would an Incan warrior from hundreds of years ago understand a Sports Illustrated magazine with Michael Jordan on the cover? No... but why? The ancient warrior would be historically and culturally far removed from a modern-American magazine. He would not need a Prophet to explain the magazine; he would simply need someone who knew who Michael Jordan is, what a basketball is, and what a photograph is. Likewise, the Ethiopian eunuch was culturally and historically removed from the book of Isaiah, which was written to Jews, 700 years before the Ethiopian was reading the text. Did Philip have to use some divine inspiration to untangle the gibberish of Isaiah or did he simply guide the Ethiopian by explaining the context and historical settings? The less dramatic action is more likely. Thus, from the text of Isaiah, “Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him.” (Acts 8:35).

Even unbelievers can understand and grasp the correct *meaning* of the Bible if they follow normal guidelines for interpreting language. Of course, they will not apply it to their lives properly because they don’t believe what they are reading, but this does not mean they can’t understand what is being communicated. We do not have to have any special “Holy Ghost glasses” to understand what God said. He inspired His message to be clear.

We do not arrogantly assert that one who does not believe cannot understand the Bible. Unbelievers can grasp much of its meaning. They may discover what it asserts or claims even when their own beliefs or value systems lead them to deny those claims. Thus, a competent, unbelieving scholar may produce a superior technical commentary on a biblical book—perhaps even better written than many believing Christian scholars could write—but that unbelieving scholar cannot understand and portray the true *significance* of the Bible’s message, for his or her ultimate commitments are not to the Bible as divine revelation. The unbelieving scholar will not accept the Bible as God’s revealed truth, will feel justified in arriving at conclusions that conflict with such a “high” view of Scripture, will reject depictions of miracles as fables or myth, and will account for “God language” as a prescientific way of the unexplainable. But if through a study of the Scripture this unbelieving scholar become convinced of its truthfulness, he or she would need to become a believer: one who confesses Christ as Lord and submits to the truth of

God's Word. Only when a person comes to that position can he or she understand the Bible's message as "God's personal word to me."³

I'm a 21st Century American, far removed historically and culturally from the Bible. Do I need a modern-day Prophet to explain it? No, but I do need to be responsible, do my homework and learn as much as I can about the historical setting and genre of the text. Once I'm immersed in the world of the Bible it becomes much easier to understand, as it did for the Ethiopian eunuch.

Now that we know how important it is to examine context and historical setting, we can move on to Key Study Principle number three.

Key Study Principle #3—Consult other studious Christians from the Past and Present.

I've occasionally heard well-meaning, yet naive Christians say, "All I need is my Bible and the Holy Spirit, that's all I need." That sounds good on the surface but that is how most heresies are created. It must be remembered that the same Holy Spirit who dwells in me, dwells in other Christians from the present and the past, and the wisdom of Proverbs 11:14 is applicable: "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the **multitude of counselors there is safety.**"

Imagine you lived in the 1820s, enjoying a sunny day at the park, reading your Bible in the grass with birds calmly chirping. You are reading John 10 and come across 10:16 where Jesus said, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them I also must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." By yourself you may come up with some imaginative ideas of who these "other sheep" might be. Could they be unknown Jews that migrated to China, or perhaps from another world? If you were wise, you would follow the counsel of Proverbs 11:14 and seek a multitude of believers knowledgeable in the Bible and share your creative ideas. The multitude of counselors would say, "Your ideas are creative, but there are literally hundreds of verses that demonstrate the other sheep are the Gentiles the Messiah would include in the Church; it won't just be a Jewish Church."

Our goal when approaching the Bible should be to determine what God meant, not what we want it to mean, which can be difficult as we all have our preconceived ideas and opinions. When we get in the habit of applying the three study principles discussed in this chapter: 1) Contexts, 2) Historical setting, and 3) Consult other studious Christians; it is beneficial to constantly to ask ourselves, "am I practicing *exegesis* or *eisegesis*?" That is, am I drawing the meaning out of the text itself or am I importing a foreign meaning into the text? Speaking of Paul's writings on end-time events, Peter admitted that there are some things "hard to understand" and "untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2nd Pet. 3:16). When we follow these three basic rules, we will not look at passages like 1st Cor. 15:29, John 10:16 or Romans 8:17 and legitimately conclude we must have an elaborate temple program to perform proxy baptisms for the dead, or that Jesus had other sheep on the American continent, or that men can become gods just like Jesus did. Why? Because context, historical setting, and the studious testimonies of Spirit-filled interpreters from many generations have not reached those conclusions simply because they are foreign to the Biblical texts.

The important role of the Holy Spirit and Prayer in the process of Interpretation

³ Dr. William W. Klien, Dr. Craig L. Blomberg, Dr. Robert L. Hubbard Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas London Vancouver Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1993.p. 82-83

From the time I first committed myself to Jesus, spending time studying the Bible has been a passion and a hobby for me. I love to spend hours and hours studying God's Word to me. After all, He put forth the effort to have it written, why should I not spend time to hear what He has to say?

Before jumping into a study, it is important to invite the Holy Spirit into the session through prayer. *We must ask Him to guide us to make responsible interpretations and applications of the text.* As we do this His Word becomes alive and personal to us and has the power to change and shape our lives. It may even be wise to ask for forgiveness in advance for the bad interpretations you will inevitably make. It is a lifelong process, and, on many occasions, these three key study principles have corrected many incorrect conclusions I've arrived at. An easy way to know if an interpretation is truly of the Holy Spirit is if that interpretation is in line with the context.

We must remember that we do not need any special "Holy Ghost" goggles to understand God's encoded secret message. The reason is that God did not write the Bible in secret encoded language only the enlightened ones could understand. He inspired His message to be understood just like we write letters to friends that they can understand (although our letters are not inspired). It is also important to remember that even an unbeliever can correctly interpret God's message in the same way a letter I wrote can be understood.

If we are in the habit of reading a text and waiting for the Holy Spirit supernaturally to give us the meaning, we are not using the Holy Spirit correctly. We are humbly to recognize that the Holy Spirit inspired the text already and be diligent and responsible with His writings. I don't believe we are to use the Holy Spirit like a child uses his "Captain Crunch decoder ring" to discover the hidden treasures on the back of the cereal box! *God meant what He said, and He said what He meant.*

We must be careful not to misuse or substitute prayer for diligent exegetical work.

We pray that we will do our work well, that we will be sensitive to the Spirit's direction, and that we will be obedient to the truth of what we discover. We openly admit our bent to sin and error and our finitude; we ask for openness to receive what God has revealed and a willingness to learn from others throughout the history of interpretation.⁴

Issues that concern factual matters in interpretation cannot be settled by an appeal to prayer or the illumination of the Holy Spirit. One cannot know through prayer that Baal was a fertility god worshipped by the Canaanites or that the Jews of Jesus' day regarded Samaritans as hated half-breeds... One must study history and culture to discover the nature of the "head coverings" in first-century Corinth (1 Cor 11:2-16). Today the Bible interpreter is privileged to have numerous, excellent tools that provide facts and information about the ancient world and the biblical texts. Capable interpreters become acquainted with such research tools and use them to the best of their ability.⁵

The role of the Holy Spirit is more directly linked to *application* than to *interpretation*. He already inspired the message to be clear. Now we must ask Him, "How does this text apply to my life today?"

When we have done our jobs to interpret the Bible faithfully and responsibly, we must again appeal to the Holy Spirit for proper application for our lives. After all, God did not just write the Bible so we

⁴ Dr. William W. Klien, Dr. Craig L. Blomberg, Dr. Robert L. Hubbard Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas London Vancouver Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1993p. 85

⁵ Dr. William W. Klien, Dr. Craig L. Blomberg, Dr. Robert L. Hubbard Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas London Vancouver Melbourne: Word Publishing, 1993 p. 86

could have a technical understanding of Him. He desires to have a very personal relationship with us. The Bible is a love letter to His supreme creation. A husband who rightly understands intellectually that the Bible teaches that he is to “love his wife just as Christ loved the Church” (Eph. 5:25) must pray for the ability and power to apply this principle effectively. A Christian who rightly understands in his mind that God is all-powerful must pray that he would be humbled by this fact. A defender of the faith who knows that the Bible teaches he is to correct false teachers in meekness and fear (2 Tim. 2:24-25; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3) must pray how to share the truth effectively in love.

The meaning of the text is not determined by good feelings we attribute to the Holy Spirit. If feelings are our guide, we can be easily led astray. We must first recognize that the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible in understandable language. As we diligently study the written word discovering the intended meaning, we must pray that the Holy Spirit would implant what we learn in our hearts and minds. When the Holy Spirit does this work, visible fruit can be noticed by the world.

How do we put all this into practice?

Step #1—Read the Bible!

While in Bible College I had a good friend from India. He opened my eyes to the fact that we really have it easy here in the United States. In India, and much of the world, Christians must live in secret. In recent years many Christians have been killed for their faith in countries like India. In one such case, terrorists in India set off a bomb at a Baptist hospital, killing many. Real persecution like this is something we do not experience much of in the United States; we really have it easy.

One of the blessings we have as Americans is the seemingly endless access to Christian books and resources. Almost every house has at least one Bible. Sadly, these Bibles gather more dust than fingerprints from use. We are truly spoiled. While we have this grace and freedom, we should take advantage and read, read, read!

Sam (my friend from India) gave me a teaching tape by Pastor John MacArthur. The message presented a simple way to study the Bible in a practical way. Often people will, over a period, read the Bible straight through from cover-to-cover. Unfortunately, unless you have been blessed with a photographic memory, most of the details will be skimmed over or simply forgotten when reading the Bible straight through from cover-to-cover. Pastor John wisely suggested reading the same book of the Bible over and over every day for a month. The benefits of practicing this are indispensable.

Shorter books like Ephesians (only six chapters) can be read easily all the way through every day for a month. Larger books (like Matthew or Genesis) can be broken down into smaller chunks of five to ten chapters. The point is to read and re-read the same material repeatedly. Some of the benefits of practicing this are as follows:

1. Key words and repeated phases of the book will become evident as you see them repeatedly.
2. The structure and outline of the book will become visible to your mind.
3. Large chunks of scripture will be committed to memory *in context*.
4. The Author's intended themes and flow of thought will become visible.
5. The context will be known for individual verses ensuring correct interpretation or application.

Before, during and after reading the Bible, we must invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures for our hearts and minds. Read and re-read a single book of the Bible during a month. Do this with a

pencil and note pad handy to write down key words, phrases, ideas, themes, structure, etc. Also write down some of your initial thoughts, impressions, questions and/or interpretations.

Step #2—Cheat!!! We have resources!!!

If you are like me, you live in the United States of America and have been blessed with an embarrassment of riches when it comes to great resources that help us see the context (if we've missed something), grasp the historical setting and genre and test our opinions/conclusions against what other believers have seen, as we might be crazy and unintentionally create a heresy.

I love books and have the blessing of a large library of Bible study tools and resources. I often wonder to myself if I were stuck on an Island and could only have a handful of resources for study, what would I choose? This short list may serve as a starting point to grow your own library. Here is what I would choose to have on the Island:

1. A good Study Bible—
There are many great Study Bibles, but if I had to choose one it would be the *MacArthur Study Bible*. It has fantastic introductions to each book of the Bible and explanatory notes for almost every passage. This is a nice leather edition and is rather expensive, but you probably own a pair of shoes worth this much, or you can get a less expensive edition. You can order one here:
<https://www.christianbook.com/nkjv-macarthur-2nd-edition-goatskin-collection/9780785230885/pd/230885?event=ESRCG>
2. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Staff*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. This two-volume commentary set will cover much of the same information as the MacArthur Study Bible but with more detail and additional information. You can order it here:
<https://www.christianbook.com/bible-knowledge-commentary-new-testament-volumes/9780896938007/pd/693800X?event=ESRCG>
3. The “*Got Questions*” App on my phone—This is a valuable *free* resource that functions much like a growing encyclopedia of questions and answers. You simply type in your Bible question like “What does the Bible say about the Anti-Christ? Or “How can I learn to stop blaming others for my problems?” A list of answers shows up for you to read. You can download it from the App store on your phone or go to gotquestions.org
4. *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem—If you want to do a detailed study on the Trinity, the inerrancy of Scripture, the resurrection, sin, and a long list of other doctrinal issues of the Christian faith, a good Systematic Theology book is a must. The Bible has 66 books, 1189 chapters, 31,102 verses, and 789,650 words and you only have one set of eyeballs and about 80 years on Earth. Systematic Theology books help you cheat a little and benefit from the homework of many educated eyeballs from the past and present. You can order it here:
<https://www.christianbook.com/systematic-introduction-biblical-doctrine-second-edition/wayne-grudem/9780310517979/pd/517979?event=ESRCG>
5. *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties: Clear and Concise Answers from Genesis to Revelation* by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe—Atheists, skeptics, Mormons, Jehovah's

Witnesses and many other Bible critics, cite Bible verses to support their alleged Bible contradictions, odd doctrines and other reasons ~~to not~~ not to accept the Bible by itself as a sufficient guide. *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* contains over 500 pages of challenges and answers to tough questions from Genesis to Revelation. For example: Why did God tell Abraham to sacrifice his son when God condemned human sacrifice in Leviticus 18 and 20? The answer to that question is in this book. You ~~and~~ can order it here: <https://www.christianbook.com/difficulties-clear-concise-answers-genesis-revelation/norman-geisler/9780801071584/pd/071584?event=ESRCG>

6. Access to Pastor Skip Heitzig's audio teaching through the Bible—While you are climbing the tree on your Island to grab that life-sustaining coconut, you may want to listen to a verse-by-verse Bible study rather than read because reading and climbing trees is very dangerous. Pastor Skip Heitzig is one of my favorite teachers and has taught all the way through the Bible and posted it online for our personal study. You can access it here: <http://skipheitzig.com/teachings.asp>

At the beginning of this chapter, I shared a story of two LDS missionaries and their mission President. The mission President said “James, that’s just your interpretation.” The reality is that it is not just my interpretation at all, but the collective interpretation of heaven-bound, Spirit-filled, Bible believers from many generations and denominations that heed the commandment to “study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2nd Tim. 2:15 KJV). When we follow basic guidelines for understanding language, the tool God used to communicate with us, we can fulfill the order to be “workman” that “rightly divide the word of truth.”

The principles laid down in this chapter are the guiding principles of interpretation used throughout the rest of this book.

CHAPTER SUMMARY:

1. God inspired the Bible to be clear so that we could understand it.
2. It is very important to follow basic rules for communication when interpreting the Bible.
3. There are some real hurdles like time and culture that we must overcome to interpret the Bible correctly, but these are easily overcome by using the many fine tools available today.
4. Study the Bible in Context. If our interpretations are correct the context will not have to be violated.
5. We must invite the Holy Spirit in so that we make responsible interpretations of His clear message and applications for our lives.
6. We can put all this into practice by first reading a text repeatedly in context and by using the fine tools we have today.

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