

I. **What is “Hermeneutics”?** The art and science of interpretation.

II. **Definitions:**

- A. Interpretation: One’s understanding of a literary text (whether right or wrong).
- B. Exegesis: To draw interpretation out of a literary text.
- C. Eisogesis: To read interpretation into a literary text.
- D. Exposition: To “expose” the meaning of a literary text.

III. **Why Study Hermeneutics?**

- A. God expects us to use His book to do His will. (II Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 7:21)
- B. Good Hermeneutics heals divisions. (We could then interpret scripture alike)
- C. Poor Hermeneutics destroys faith. (Scripture can be made to look foolish)
- D. Strong exegesis directs the path to heaven. (Allow the Bible to speak for itself)

IV. **Qualities Which HELP Us Understand God’s Word**

- A. Good common sense
- B. Strong Faith that “The Scriptures” are:
  - 1. Inspired (II Tim 3:16-17; II Cor 12:11-12; Col 1:24)
  - 2. The Will of God (I Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:11-12)
  - 3. Accurately preserved (The Dead Sea Scrolls; The Nestles “critical” text)
  - 4. Accurately translated (many Greek helps; many translations to compare)
  - 5. Complete and Final (Jude 3; Gal 1:6-9; II Thes 2:15; Rev 22:18-19)
  - 6. Understandable (Ephesians 3:4)
  - 7. Authoritative (John 12:48)

V. **Situations Which HINDER Our Understanding of God’s Word**

- A. When teachers of the Bible desire to tickle the ears of their audience
- B. When preachers have a thirst for distinction (putting a new twist on familiar verses)
- C. When readers of the Bible have little expectation that benefit will be derived
- D. When the Bible becomes the property of the priesthood
- E. When the Bible becomes a proof text for preconceived doctrines
- F. When the Bible is believed to be a supernatural book (Mysticism)
- G. When the Bible is made to be a book of wonders (Trivial Pursuit)
- H. When the scriptures are twisted to justify unrighteous actions (sinister motives)
- I. When undue effort is made to harmonize Bible & Science

VI. **Methods of Interpretation**

- A. Mystical – only special people with mysterious rapport with God can interpret the Bible
- B. Spiritual – anyone can interpret the Bible, after they become “spiritual” enough
- C. Allegorical – the Bible is totally figurative; interpretation must be deeper than surface
- D. Rational – science and nature are the standard for truth; miracles couldn’t have happened
- E. Dogmatic – begins with a pet doctrine; finds verses to make it sound believable
- F. Literal – opposite of allegorical; everything in the Bible is deemed to be literal
- G. Inductive – strives to draw meaning out of the text; reasons from specific to the general; consults every specific passage on any issue before drawing a general conclusion about that issue

## VII. Principles of Inductive and Deductive Reasoning

- A. All facts MUST be exposed (Mk 16:16, Rom 10:9-10, & I Pet 3:21 all deal with salvation)
- B. All facts MUST harmonize (Romans 3:28 cannot contradict James 2:24)
- C. Necessary inference is OK (Acts 8:35-36 “preaching Jesus” included “baptism”)
- D. Obvious assumptions are OK (the existence of God is assumed throughout the Bible)
- E. The author’s intention must be considered (what did it mean to him when he wrote it?)
- F. Negative factors may be used to establish truth (In Jn 3:3 “cannot” means you “must”)

## VIII. Establishing Biblical Authority

- A. Principle of the Speaker – Is he inspired? Is he authoritative?
- B. Principle of the Audience – Does this apply to one person? Some people? All people?
- C. Principle of the Covenant – Under which covenant was this audience living?
- D. Principle of Command – Is this an explicit, direct statement intended to be obeyed?
- E. Principle of Example – Incidentals should be suspect unless backed by a higher principle
- F. Principle of Expediency – Does this practice assist to carry out a specific command?
- G. Principle of Exclusion – Don’t abuse the principle of Expediency.  
Be cautious. If scripture is silent, don’t automatically assume liberty.

## IX. Language Is Figurative If:

- A. The context demands it – Gal 3:29 – “Abraham’s offspring” can’t be literal “Israelites”
- B. The literal is unreasonable – Jer 1:18 – a man can’t literally be a “fortified city”
- C. The literal would contradict other plain scripture – Jn 11:26 “never die” – Heb 9:27
- D. The literal is wrong – Lk 14:26 – “hate your parents”
- E. The statement is declared to be figurative – Gal 4:24 – Paul says it is an allegory
- F. The definite is put for the indefinite – Dan 1:20 – “10 times better” means “much better”
- G. The statement is made in mockery – I Kings 18:27 – “he’s a God” – Elijah didn’t think so
- H. Common sense demands it – Rev 12:1-4 – these are obvious symbols representing something else