

He Gave Us Scripture: Foundations of Interpretation

Study Guide

LESSON
ONE

INTRODUCTION TO
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS



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STUDY GUIDE

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How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Outline

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Notes

I. Introduction

II. Terminology

A. Biblical Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics refers to the interpretation or explanation of some kind of message or communication.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834) is the father of modern hermeneutics.

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of interpreting the meaning and significance of Scripture.

B. Hermeneutical Processes

Hermeneutical processes are the main procedures we follow as we interpret the Bible.

1. Preparation

The process of preparation takes place before we begin our interpretation because we always approach Scripture influenced by various concepts, behaviors and emotions.

2. Investigation

Investigation is the process of concentrating on the original meaning of a biblical passage.

3. Application

Application is the process of appropriately connecting Scripture's original meaning to contemporary audiences.

III. Scientific Hermeneutics

Scientific hermeneutics refers to how biblical scholars have approached the interpretation of Scripture like a scientific exercise.

A. Biblical Roots

The biblical roots of scientific hermeneutics make it a legitimate exercise.

Biblical authors interpreted other Scriptures with an orientation toward factual and logical analysis (Romans 4:3-5).

B. Examples

- Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185 – 254)
- Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430)
- Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274)

Renaissance (13th - 16th centuries): Meticulously analyzed the grammar and ancient historical contexts of classical and biblical manuscripts.

The Protestant Reformation (16th century): Determined the meaning of Scripture through analysis of the Bible's grammar and historical contexts.

Sola Scriptura: "Scripture alone." Protestants believed that the only infallible interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself.

Enlightenment (17th & 18th centuries): Emphasized modern, factual and rational scientific standards for judging all truth claims, including those of Scripture.

Modern biblical scholars have followed two main paths:

- Critical biblical studies reject *Sola Scriptura* and consider only reason and scientific analysis as the supreme standard for discerning truth.

- Evangelical biblical studies affirm *Sola Scriptura* and endorse the scientific analysis of Bible as long as it does not contradict the teachings of Bible.

C. Priorities

1. Preparation

Biblical interpreters have developed priorities for preparation similar to the priorities required for other academic disciplines.

2. Investigation

The two methods of biblical investigation:

- Exegesis: to pull out or derive meaning from a text
- Eisegesis: to read meaning into a passage

3. Application

Application is establishing the kinds of facts that the Bible teaches modern followers of Christ to believe.

IV. Devotional Hermeneutics

Devotional hermeneutics is the Christian tradition of emphasizing our need to draw near to God as we interpret the Scriptures.

A. Biblical Roots

The biblical authors approached the Scriptures devotionally.

B. Examples

Letter of Origen to Gregory: Origen told Gregory to devote himself to divine reading or *Lectio Divina*.

Through the medieval period *Lectio Divina* was practiced in four steps:

1. *lectio*: reading of Scripture
2. *meditatio*: silent pondering of the content of what is read
3. *oratio*: earnest prayer for God to grant enlightenment
4. *contemplatio*: waiting for the Spirit of God to grant intuitive, deeply emotional and transforming convictions of a passage's significance.

John Calvin: rational and logical biblical interpreter of the early Reformation who pursued scientific and devotional hermeneutics.

Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758): meticulously rational and logical, but believed Scripture must be read with a deep sense of the presence of God.

C. Priorities

1. Preparation

We must draw near to God if we want to experience his special presence (James 4:8).

Preparation for devotional hermeneutics involves sanctification or holy consecration to God.

Three dimensions of preparation:

- **Conceptual:** We must conform our beliefs to God's true word.
- **Behavioral:** We must repent of our failures and have a sincere desire to behave in ways that please God.
- **Emotional:** We must address the full range of our emotions.

2. Investigation

Devotional hermeneutics entails investigating Scripture's original meaning in ways that bring us near to God.

Three dimensions of investigation:

- Conceptual: Paying attention to the concepts that God intended for the original audiences.
- Behavioral: How biblical authors and audiences' actions affected their experience of God's nearness.
- Emotional: Drawing out the emotional dimensions of original meaning.

3. Application

Reading the Word of God in his presence so that we can apply the Word of God as God intended.

Three dimensions of application:

- Conceptual: How God impacts our concepts of himself, humanity and the rest of creation through the Scriptures.
- Behavioral: How the presence of God affects our behaviors as we contemplate the Scriptures.
- Emotional: How our attitudes and feelings are affected by reading the Scriptures in the special presence of God.

V. Conclusion

5. Describe the priorities of approaching the Scriptures using scientific hermeneutics?

6. What are the biblical roots of devotional hermeneutics?

7. What are some historical examples of biblical scholars who practiced devotional hermeneutics?

8. Describe how devotional hermeneutics shapes our priorities for the process of interpretation?

Application Questions

1. How does applying biblical hermeneutics change the way you understand the Bible?
2. How do you prepare yourself for the study of Scripture personally or in a group setting?
3. How does interpreting the Scriptures more like a scientific exercise influence your interpretation of it?
4. What comfort and encouragement do you draw from the fact that biblical authors often interpreted the Scriptures with an orientation toward factual and logical analysis?
5. How should *Sola Scriptura* aid and guide your reading and interpretation of the Bible?
6. What confidence do you gain from the historical examples of scientific hermeneutics?
7. How are you drawing near to God as you read and interpret the Scriptures in your current circumstances?
8. How important is it for you to approach Scripture by prayerfully being dependent upon the Holy Spirit?
9. What benefits have you gained from a devotional approach to Scripture?
10. How has a faithful practice of confessing your sins affected your ability to understand the Bible?
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?