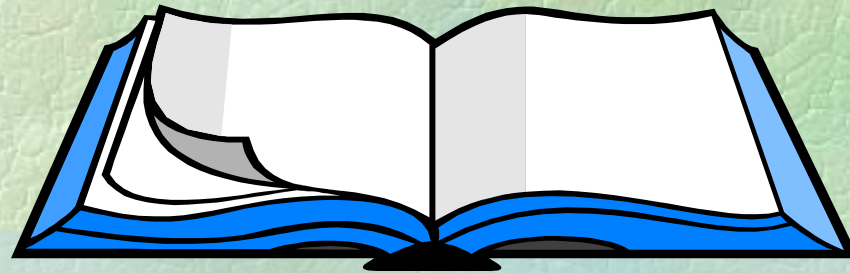


How To Read The Bible



For All Its Worth!

Goals For This Class

- To give a basic approach to understanding the biblical text
- To examine historical methods of interpretation
- To consider other methods of interpretation
- To promote unity of shared understanding
- To relate elders' views on interpretation

Not Goals For This Class

- To ensure everybody believes what I do
- To ensure everybody believes the same thing
- To debate controversial passages of scripture
- To negate or endorse any particular interpretative approach
- To confuse, frustrate, or agitate truthseekers

The Epistles:



Applying Hermeneutics

Interpretive Corollary Number 1

The text cannot mean something to us today, that it did not mean to the people who first read it.

Interpretive Corollary Number 2

Everyone uses a hermeneutic of some type. There is no right or wrong hermeneutic.

Hermeneutics are from man, not God.

Interpretive Corollary Number 3

Whenever we share comparable particulars with the first-century setting, God's word to us is the same as God's word to them.

Four Problems with Hermeneutics

- The problem of extended application
- The problem of incomparable particulars
- The problem of cultural relativity
- The problem of task theology

The Problem of Extended Application

- Can we extend the application of one text to other contexts?
- “If anyone will destroy God’s temple, God will destroy him.” I Cor 3:17
- Is the “temple” our body or the church?
- I Cor 6:19 Body = temple of Holy Spirit

The Problem of Incomparable Particulars

- 1st century texts with no 21st century equivalent
- Eating with pagans in idol temples
- Texts that speak to problems that could happen, but are highly unlikely
- Incestuous relationships in the church

Interpretation of Incomparable Particulars

- Careful exegesis to discover if a clear principle has been articulated
- Principle should be applied only to genuinely comparable situations
- Example: “Stumbling block” principle

Determining Matters of Indifference

- What the Epistles specifically indicate:
food, drink, observance of special days
- Cultural rather than moral matters
- Things not included in Paul's "sin" lists

The Problem of Cultural Relativity

- “A little wine for thy stomach’s sake”
- Women speaking or teaching men
- “Salute one another with a holy kiss”
- Homosexual relationships
- Head coverings for women

Determining Cultural Relativity

- Distinguish core message and peripherals
- Distinguish New Testament morality
- Look for uniformity and consistency
- Distinguish a principle from an application
- Determine available cultural options
- Look for non-obvious cultural differences
- Exercise Christian charity

Examples of Cultural Relativity

- Role of women in the church
- Homosexuality

Role of Women in the Church

“Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.” I Cor 14:34-35 (NASV)

Role of Women in the Church

“Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness, but I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”

I Tim 2:11-12

Cultural Considerations in Corinth

- Women prayed and prophesied (I Cor 11:5)
- Fulfilled Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17)
- Paul's concern was over wearing veils
- Worship in church was disruptive and women addressed in 14 were likely participants

Cultural Considerations in Ephesus

- Troublesome women in the church (I Tim 5:13)
- Appear to have been involved in false teaching
- What about I Tim 2:8?

Is Homosexuality Culturally Relative?

- Consistent statements all through Bible
- Homosexuality discussed in moral context
- Homosexual practices did not differ in the 1st century from today

The Problem of Task Theology

- May need to limit theological understanding
- We ask “our” questions of the text, but the text only answers “their” questions

Questions or Comments?



Next Week:

The Acts of the Apostles