



*INSTITUTE OF
SPIRITUAL FORMATION*

Fall Semester - 2009

**HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE
HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES**



INTRODUCTION

Course Outline and Instructions

1. General Introduction and Basic Overview.
2. Nine General Principles for Interpreting the Bible.
3. Eight Grammatical Principles for Interpreting the Bible.
4. **Three Historical Principles for Interpreting the Bible.**
5. Four Theological Principles for Interpreting the Bible.
6. Practical Bible Study Tools.

Reading Assignments: Please feel free to read the book Knowing Scripture by R. C. Sproul at your own pace. We will eventually touch on the various topics found in the book but not necessarily in the order Sproul discusses them. My goal is to supplement your reading with additional material during the class time and in this way give you a broader exposure to the information.

Do not get “hung up” or confused about something in the book. If you find something Sproul says is confusing or difficult to understand, go ahead and read it but push it aside and go on to the rest of the book. Some parts of the book are more technical and others are more practical. **DON'T MISS THE PRACTICAL SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU STOPPED READING DUE TO THE TECHNICAL!** Plus I will try my best to explain the technical.



Questions About Your Reading or Class Teaching: Questions from your reading or from the class itself can be given to me via email. Go to our church's Web page: (www.cpcgoodyear.org) - at the bottom of the home page you will find a button "Sermons and More." Click that button and on the extreme right hand of the page you will find a section reserved for the Institute of Spiritual Formation. Each week we will put the lecture audio there plus the study sheets. If you miss a night you can go to the Web site and listen to the week you missed and the study notes with fill-in the blanks will be there!

Click on the "Have an ISF Question" button and fill out the form. Be sure to follow the directions at the bottom of the page and hit the "send message" button. Your question will go into a special folder that I will check regularly and reply to you either by email or at the beginning of the next class. Using this method for your questions will ensure that your questions to me do not get pushed into my "junk mail" or get lost in the many emails I already receive. This method will only provide me with ISF questions. I will let you know that I received your question.



**HISTORICAL PRINCIPLES FOR
INTREPRETING THE BIBLE¹**

**Institute of Spiritual Formation
Fall Semester – 2009**

PRINCIPLE # 1 – SINCE SCRIPTURE ORIGINATED IN A CERTAIN HISTORICAL CONTEXT, IT CAN BE _____ ONLY AS WE SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THAT _____.

1. To _____ and by whom was the book written?
2. Do we know _____ the book was written? What was the experience or occasion that _____ the book to be written [i.e. what was _____ that prompted the writer to write?]
3. Who are the main _____ in the book?
4. What is _____ message through the writer to these people?
 - Your goal or desire is to try to _____ yourself into the _____ at the time the book was written and strive to _____ - or experience - what the people were feeling and/or experiencing.
 - To help you understand the historical and cultural background of the books of the Bible you will need assistance from a Bible handbook, like *Halley's* or *Ryken's*. [If you buy one please use it and you will be amazed how quickly you can better understand the Bible].



PRINCIPLE #2 – THOUGH GOD’S REVELATION IN SCRIPTURE IS _____,
BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS ARE _____ PARTS OF THIS
REVELATION AND FORM A UNIT.

- **Red flag warning:** Although it is fairly common to hear someone say, “There is a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament”, this is not based on fact and if believed will lead you astray in your interpretation of the Bible. FACT: _____ spoke more about _____ and _____ than anyone else in the Bible!]
- The Old Testament is _____ to correctly interpret the New Testament. [Example: The Wycliffe Bible Translators have discovered that people need the basic message of the Old Testament before they can fully understand and appreciate the message of the New Testament].
- You will never appreciate what Jesus said in John 3:14 if you don’t know the story of Numbers 21.
- Unless you know something about the Old Testament tabernacle, priesthood and sacrificial systems, you will have difficulty understanding and appreciating the Book of _____ in the New Testament.
- People in the Old Testament were _____ in the same way people are saved today: by _____! [In the Old Testament the people were saved by believing in the Messiah who was _____ and in the New Testament, people are saved by believing in the Messiah who _____].]



- God's revelation in Scripture is _____ in this way: Isaiah understood _____ than Adam and we _____ more than Isaiah. This progressive revelation does not mean that God's standards and character are progressing and changing; rather it is our understanding of God's revelation that is progressive!
- Certain practices found in the Old Testament have been cancelled in the New Testament, but this is because they have found their _____ in _____. [Example: Animal sacrifices have ceased because Christ is the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin for all time and all people].
- God's revelation of Himself is _____ but His character is _____!
- As you read and study the Bible, remember that the Old and New Testaments are _____ of the same _____ and not two _____ books.



PRINCIPLE # 3 – HISTORICAL FACTS OR EVENTS BECOME _____ OF SPIRITUAL TRUTHS ONLY IF THE SCRIPTURES _____ THEY ARE.

- Let's notice a couple of examples where we are told that a historical event is a symbol for a spiritual truth: [Exodus 14:22 / Numbers 20:11 compared with 1 Corinthians 10:1-4]
- **Red flag warning:** If you make a habit of allegorizing _____ facts you will misinterpret the intended meaning. The object of Biblical interpretation is to seek to understand the intended meaning of the _____ and not to give his words your own meanings. [Let's consider a negative example of how one might attempt to allegorize a passage but would do so incorrectly, however innocently: Philemon].
- Allegorizing is different from _____. [We can definitely say that what Paul was asking of Philemon on behalf of Onesimus is what Christ did for us. We should in the same way forgive those who have wronged us. This application is taken from the historical facts without changing the intended meaning of the event.]

¹Information in this study is adapted from *A Layman's Guide to Interpreting the Bible* by Walter Henryksen, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

