

## How To Interpret The Bible Handout

(Source: Rev. John S. Mahon, Grace Community International, Houston, TX, [www.gciweb.org](http://www.gciweb.org))

Youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

### I. The Bible is God's Word; it is the literal Word of God

- A. **Inspired** - God Breathed
- B. **Inerrant** - without error
- C. **Eternal** - God has watched over and shepherded it throughout the ages
- D. **Without Contradiction** - it is pure and tried by God before delivery to man
- E. **Authoritative** - God's Word judges man, man does not judge God's Word
- F. **Spiritual Food** - man needs continual nourishment from the whole Word of God.

### II. There are basic questions we must ask when reading or studying the Bible.

- A. **Doctrine vs. Historical Revelation** (God preaching a sermon vs something happened to someone)
- B. **New Covenant vs. Old Covenant** (some things came through to new covenant, some didn't)
- C. **Parables & Symbols** (does the Bible explain them or not, if not don't guess)
- D. **Prophetic & Hidden Things** (does the Bible explain them or not, if not don't guess)
- E. **Universal Truth or Devotional Thought** (universal application for everyone or just you?)
- F. **Chapter & Verse Please** (where does the Bible actually say that?)

### III. Basic Rules of Interpreting the Bible

- A. **Rule of Language** - The meanings of words in the Bible cannot be changed to fit our biases; we must come to terms with the definition of the words used by the Holy Spirit. The meanings of words in the Bible are important. We need to look up the dictionary definition of key words that the Bible uses. When you do you will find that the words don't always mean what you thought they meant. Sometimes you will find that the meaning is more precise and specific than you thought. A good indicator that a pastor is working hard to teach you sound doctrine is that he will tell you what the key words are in the Greek and Hebrew and he will tell you what the definition of the word is and its nuances. You don't have to be a Greek and Hebrew scholar but you need to use a dictionary to define the key words in your Bible study.
- B. **Rule of First Meaning** - The obvious meaning is always embraced unless the passage is presented as symbol, parable or prophecy.
- C. **Rule of Clear vs. Obscure** - We do not abandon the clear passages for the obscure. If there are 50 clear passages on a topic and one obscure passage we don't ignore the clear passages to create a meaning for the obscure one – we seek the whole mind of God on the issue.
- D. **Rule of Subjugation - All experiences, events and authorities are subject to Scripture.**
  - 1. Experiences: If we experience it as true, but the Bible says it is false, then we deem it to be false. If we experience it as false, but the Bible says it is true, then we deem it to be true. Our decisions in life are not based on majority rule or personal experience, but on the authority of God's Word.
  - 2. Culture isn't neutral, it is fallen and sinful. When they conflict, culture is wrong & scripture is seen to be right.
  - 3. Feelings are subject to the Bible. When they conflict, feelings are seen to be wrong and the Bible is right.
  - 4. Neither Ministry Success, Miracles, Praise, Gifts, nor Visions substantiate the Word of God.
  - 5. As a result, all aspects of life and ministry are subject to Scripture:

Experience is subject to Scripture	Culture is subject to Scripture
Feelings are subject to Scripture	Ministry success is subject to Scripture
Miracles are subject to Scripture	Praise is subject to Scripture
Gifts are subject to Scripture	Visions are subject to Scripture
- E. **Rule of the Total Mind of God** - To understand a biblical principal we must seek what God says on it from the entire Bible, not simply a group of Scripture or single passage.
- F. **Rule of Stated Authority** - don't imply things not stated in Bible. For example, some people might think that if God wants wives to submit to husbands (Ephesians 5:22) then it must also be true that women are to submit to men. But the Bible doesn't say that, so we can't imply it.
- G. **Rules of Limitations**
  - 1. Secret Things - that which God has chosen not to reveal
  - 2. Higher Things - revelation that is unexplained
  - 3. Things We're Too Sinful To Understand - clear revelation, but we can't understand God's motives or thinking.
  - 4. Extra-Biblical Revelation - spiritual experiences that yield knowledge not presented in the Bible are rejected.