

1. Observation leads to an accurate understanding of what the Word of God says – *"Interpretation"* goes a step further and helps you understand what it means.

(Webster defines "interpretation" as explaining or telling the meaning of something and presenting it in understandable terms)

"Hermeneutics" is the science (and art) of interpretation, in this case the interpretation of the Bible. (Interpretation is the bridge between observation and application)

2. God makes His knowledge and will known to those who seek Him.
3. The Bible does not come to us in a nice neat theological package written in the safety of an office with nice parallel outlines and an unemotional vocabulary.
4. The Bible, with its numerous authors, comes from different personalities, emotions, and literary styles.
5. As you seek to interpret the Bible accurately – the following guidelines will be helpful and can provide a structured path to keep you on track.
6. Step 1 – Remember that *"Context"* is always the first priority.
7. Step 2 – Always seek the *"Full"* counsel of the Word of God.
8. Step 3 – Remember that Scripture will *"never contradict"* Scripture.
9. Step 4 – Don't base your *"convictions"* on an obscure passage of Scripture.
10. Step 5 – Interpret Scripture *"literally"*.

Some of the common literary styles of the Bible include:

- **Narrative/Historical.** The historical accounts of Scripture are not exhaustive history books or biographies, but use experiences and events to fulfill the author's purpose. (Exodus, 1 and 2 Kings, Acts)
- **Hebrew Poetry.** The distinguishing mark of this style is the use of "parallelism" (using different words to communicate the same truth). (Psalms)
- **Proverbs.** General truths based on experience. They are intended to be guidelines not guarantees – precepts not promises.
- **Parables.** Jesus employed a common practice of storytelling to teach. A parable teaches one or two main truths. (The Gospels).
- **Letters.** Much of the New Testament contains epistles or letters following the traditional letter writing style of the day.
- **Prophecy.** Predictive prophecy that occupies much of Scripture – should be interpreted according to historical, grammatical principle. If there is language present that would be absurd if taken literally – then figurative speech guidelines should be taken into account.

Figures of speech – simile (comparison using "like" or "as"), metaphor (comparison not using "like" or "as"), hyperbole (exaggerating deliberately for effect), personification (ascribing human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, or animals), etc.

Remember though – behind every figure of speech is a literal meaning. Look for the meaning that would have been understood at the time of writing and don't read back in modern connotations. (Matthew 5:13 and Philippians 3:2)

11. Step 6 – Look for the "*single meaning*" of the passage.