

# Basic Doctrinal Studies

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## Introduction

This Basics series will encompass 10 primary and foundational areas of Bible study. Every believer needs to learn these areas of Doctrine.

- Babies in Christ need to be grounded in them as soon as possible following salvation.
- Adolescent believers need to review these categories and maintain humility in their growth.
- Mature believers need to review these categories and be prepared to teach them to others.

### *Areas of Study*

Bibliology:	The Doctrine of the Bible. A study on inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, canonicity, and basic hermeneutical principles.
Theology:	The Doctrine of God. A study of His revelation, His essence, and His being in Trinity.
Anthropology:	The Doctrine of Man. A study of his essence, lost estate, and eternal purpose.
Soteriology:	The Doctrine of Salvation. A study of the barrier between the holy God and fallen man, and the work of God to remove that barrier. Includes Evangelism and Ambassadorship.
Peripatology:	The Doctrine of the Christian Walk. A study of the cross and three circles for the believer's daily life. Includes Positional Truth, Filling of the Holy Spirit, Priesthood function of Prayer.
Thelematology:	The Doctrine of the Will of God. A study on how believers may know and obey the will of God for their life.
Agonology:	The Doctrine of Struggle. A study of the believer's daily struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.
Boulology:	The Doctrine of the Plan of God. A study on God the Father's grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ. Includes the nature and description of Dispensations.
Ecclesiology:	The Doctrine of the Church. A study on the Universal Church and the purpose and function for the local church.
Charismatology:	The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts. A study on the grace provision for the spiritual gifts of believers in the Dispensation of the Church.

## *Bibliology*

The Doctrine of the Bible. A study on inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, canonicity, and basic hermeneutical principles.

Prior to salvation, the unbeliever had any number of influences molding and fashioning them to the image of the world (Eph. 2:1-3). After salvation, though, the new believer is in need of being grounded in the Word of God, beginning the edification process of being transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom. 12:2). The newborn babe must take in the pure milk of the Word (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:2).

The believer is a new creation, “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). That believer now needs to be equipped for these works. That equipping comes through the Scriptures (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16-17), as they are communicated in a local church (Eph. 4:11-13).

The new believer must come to understand that God’s Word is 100% trustworthy and accurate (Ps. 12:6; Prov. 30:5). It is His Word, not the works of men (Lk. 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18,21; 4:25; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 1:20-21 cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16). God Himself has magnified it according to His own name (Ps. 138:2). It is therefore worthy of our devotion, and the means by which we can worship Him. Believers should strive to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15), embracing the Whole Purpose of God (Acts 20:27), and build their understanding of Him order on order, line on line, a little here and a little there (Isa. 28:13).

## *Theology*

The Doctrine of God. A study of His revelation, His essence, and His being in Trinity.

If God had wanted to remain unknown, then mankind would certainly never have come to know Him. He easily could have included Himself among the things which “eye has not seen and hear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9). However, God is both nearby and knowable (Acts 17:23,27). God has provided an undeniable witness to Himself in natural revelation (Rom. 1:18-20). Creation testifies to His glory (Ps. 19:1-6), and the element of creation made in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26,27) is left without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

The new believer already knows that there is a God, and that His Son Jesus Christ died on the cross for his salvation. What the new believer does not know is how much more about God there is to know. God wants us to grow into adult sons and daughters with capacity for mature fellowship (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:3). Beyond the witness of natural revelation comes the particular testimony of special revelation. In God’s Word we are provided with the depths of God Himself (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9-16).

It is through Biblical revelation that we can come to find out the glories of God’s Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Veracity. It is through His revelation of Himself that we come to know Him, and yet we realize that our finite beings will always struggle to comprehend the infinite (Job 11:7; Rom. 11:33).

***Anthropology***

The Doctrine of Man. A study of his essence, lost estate, and eternal purpose.

Has there ever been a more misunderstood creature? False religions promote false gods to be sure, but they also promote a false view of man. It is this aspect of their lies that can be just as deceptive and evil. The Word of God portrays an accurate view of mankind that must be understood by the new believer.

The new believer has a frame of reference to understand that he once was lost, but is found, twas blind, but now he sees. He does not totally understand how lost he truly was or how blind. A Biblical study on anthropology will help him to understand his body, soul, and spirit.

Basic Doctrinal Studies will outline the tripart nature of redeemed man, as body, soul, and (human) spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:23). Basics will also teach the bipart nature of undredeemed man, being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5). Basics will also cover the current condition of our mortal bodies as dead and dying, even while the human spirit has been made alive (Rom. 8:10-11).

***Soteriology***

The Doctrine of Salvation. A study of the barrier between the holy God and fallen man, and the work of God to remove that barrier. Includes Evangelism and Ambassadorship.

The Barrier Removed		
The Problem	The Solution	Comments
The Penalty of Sin	Expiation (Col. 2:14)	Reconciliation (Will of God plus Act of God-Man)
Sin	Redemption (1 Cor. 1:29,30) Unlimited Atonement (1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:1)	
The Character of God	Propitiation (1 Jn. 2:2; Rom. 3:25)	
The Character of Man	Justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:1) Imputation (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:2)	Salvation (Act of God plus Will of Man)
Spiritual Death	Regeneration (Jn. 1:11,12; 3:3; Gal. 3:26)	
Physical Death	Positional Truth (1 Jn. 5:11,12) Eternal Life (Jn. 3:15)	

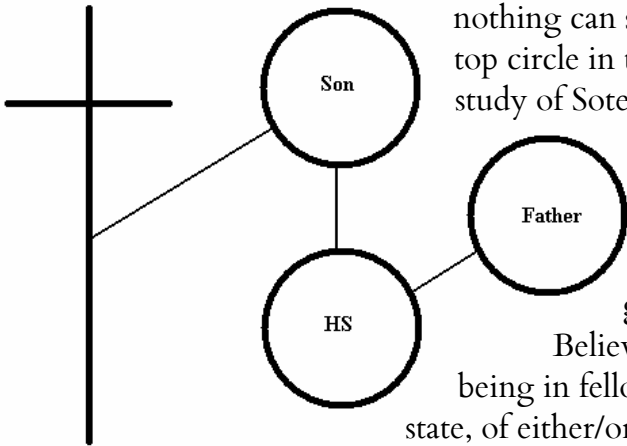
The brand new believer knows that he is saved, but does not have any doctrinal framework to understand all that God did on his behalf in order to save him. He has an experience of salvation, which was easy enough for him to receive, but he now needs doctrinal information to understand the glories of what he has experienced.

The new believer needs to know fully what is meant by “it is finished.” The new believer needs to know fully the duration of eternal life. The new believer needs to know fully the security of his salvation, and that there is nothing he can do, or indeed even that God could do to reverse the Justification he has been given.

***Peripatology***

The Doctrine of the Christian Walk. A study of the cross and three circles for the believer’s daily life. Includes Positional Truth, Filling of the Holy Spirit, Priesthood function of Prayer.

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The born-again believer is placed “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3), and nothing can separate him from this (Rom. 8:38,39). This is the top circle in the cross and three circles diagram. In the Basic study of Soteriology this has been made clear, but now the

believer needs to be grounded in the principles of the Christian Walk. Salvation is not the end of God’s plan for us, but rather the beginning of our walk for His good pleasure and the eternal glory of Jesus Christ.

Believers have the operational volitional choice of being in fellowship or out of fellowship. This is an absolute state, of either/or and not both. The Apostle Paul referred to this

as the operational volitional choice of walking by and being led by the Holy Spirit or carrying out the desire of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The Apostle John referred to this as the operational volitional choice of walking in the light versus walking in darkness (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:6,7). This is the bottom circle in the cross and three circles diagram.

A believer in Christ, functioning in the power of the Holy Spirit, can then engage in his Priesthood function before God the Father in the Holy of Holies. This is the third (right) circle in the cross and three circles diagram. When a Church Age Believer steps into his priesthood and actively functions before the Father, the Father’s fulness becomes his own (Jn. 16:23-28; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-25).

### *Thelematology*

The Doctrine of the Will of God. A study on how believers may know and obey the will of God for their life.

Just as God in His Being is nearby and knowable, so too is His will for the believer. The new believer needs to understand the Will of God for his life. Not understanding the will of the Lord is foolish (Eph. 5:17).

The third circle priesthood function of Prayer must be offered according to His will (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:14). Our walk of sanctification (bottom circle) must be according to His will (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 4:3). Our rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving (in Christ, top circle) must be according to His will (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:16-18).

### *Agonology*

The Doctrine of Struggle. A study of the believer’s daily struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

Basic Doctrinal Studies must include teaching on spiritual conflict. The very sound of ἀγωνίζομαι agonizomai <sup>Strong’s #75</sup> says “agonize, oh my!” Believers in Christ will encounter tribulation, and various multiplied trials, but ours is a struggle with a guaranteed victory (Jn. 16:33).

It is a good fight that we must fight (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:7). This is the race (ἀγών <sup>Strong’s #73</sup>) set before us at the moment of our salvation (Heb. 12:1).

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The struggle will be manifest on three simultaneous fronts: the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are in the world, but no longer of the world (Jn. 17:6,11,14,16). We are not to submit to the flesh (Rom. 6:19). We must resist the devil (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:9), put on our armor and stand firm (Eph. 6:12-17).

### ***Boulology***

The Doctrine of the Plan of God. A study on God the Father's grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ. Includes the nature and description of Dispensations.

God the Father is the author of the Plan. God works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). Everything He has planned, and everything He does is perfect in His eternal wisdom. God's eternal purpose is the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:23; Phil. 2:10,11; Col. 1:18,19).

Pastor Bob's expanded title for the Plan of God: God the Father's grace eternal dispensational plan of the ages for the maximum glorification, pleasure, and blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Plan of God is presently underway and fulfilling the Father's purpose. Believers in the Church are God's fellow workers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:9), and must therefore be adjusted to the Father's plan. God's purpose is for all things to work together for Good (Rom. 8:28).

God has unfolded His plan to and through a variety of vested stewards. This progressive unfolding began with the angels, then progressed to the creation of man in Adam, then the race and nation of Israel, and presently the unfolding of the Plan of God is revealed through the Church. Understanding the basic outline of this dispensational progression is an important part of Boulology.

### ***Ecclesiology***

The Doctrine of the Church. A study on the Universal Church and the purpose and function for the local church.

In the study of God's plan, several distinct stewardships were detailed. The present stewardship of the Church needs to be accurately taught in order for believers today to function appropriately. The Basic Doctrinal Study of Ecclesiology teaches the new believer the difference between a local church and The Church. The Church is the Body (Col. 1:18,24; Eph. 1:22-23) and Bride (Jn. 3:29; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7-8) of Jesus Christ. Every born-again believer from Pentecost to Rapture is a Member of that Body (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30).

A local church is a small portion of The Church. Specifically, a local church is a particular flock entrusted to a gifted shepherd. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd, and He oversees the flock of the entire Church, but He has designated and delegated under shepherds (pastors) to shepherd the flock of God "among them" (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:1-4). A local church is a family/body in a given geographical location assembled together for the corporate functions of the body and bride (Rev. 2&3). A local church is not a building, but a living body of believers in Jesus Christ. Any assembly of believers under the shepherding oversight of a Pastor-Teacher is a local church.

A local church may be without a Pastor for brief periods of time, but they cannot stay that way for very long! Sheep without a shepherd become scattered and devoured. A true local

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church must have at least one man with the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher. That one man exercising that one gift cannot fully edify the body of Christ. All believers exercising every gift supplies the maximum edification for each Member and provides the maximum glory for the Head of the Body—Jesus Christ.

### *Charismatology*

The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts. A study on the grace provision for the spiritual gifts of believers in the Dispensation of the Church.

Technically, Charismatology is a subdivision of both Ecclesiology and Pneumatology (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, a primary division of Theology). Spiritual gifts (pneumatika) were given here and there prior to the Dispensation of the Church. Various prophets were gifted and sent to Israel and even an occasional gentile nation. Craftsmen were gifted for the construction of the Tabernacle and the Temple. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit will be a feature of the coming Millennium, and that coming aspect of pneumatika is rightly considered under Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things). Our present stewardship of the Church features grace/spiritual gifts (χάρισματα *charismata*<sup>Strong's #5486</sup> & πνευματικά *pneumatika*<sup>Strong's #4152</sup>) given on a universal basis. Every believer today has at least one spiritual gift (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10).

The new believer needs to understand that the impartation of Divine power is not given for the pursuit of miraculous events or the participation in ecstatic experience. Spiritual gifts are provided for grace service to Members of the Body of Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10).

A believer who has grasped these 10 categories of Basics, culminating with teaching on Spiritual Gifts, is equipped to step into active service in and for the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Father's purpose for saving him in the first place (Eph. 2:10).



## Bibliology

The Doctrine of the Bible. A study on inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, canonicity, and basic hermeneutical principles.

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### *Inspiration and Revelation*

Keep things simple—don’t begin by having a theology book or a denomination tell believers what the Bible is. The Bible tells believers what the Bible is! It is God’s message to man, revealing Himself to mankind in a way that general revelation of creation could never do. A terrific description and definition of “revelation” comes in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:9 (citing Isaiah). “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” The role of the Holy Spirit is to search out all things, even the depths of God, and reveal such things to believers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:10-13). God reveals what cannot be learned in any other non-revelatory manner.

The Bible declares itself to be the God-breathed and profitable training manual for all believers (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16-17). Θεόπνευστος <sup>Strong’s #2315</sup> tells us that human instruments were involved in the recording of the written word, but the source of that written record was the very breath (Spirit) of God. 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:10-21 corroborates this as do over 3800 Scripture passages declaring “thus says the Lord.” These passages are the simplest way to define “inspiration.” God the Holy Spirit inspired the men He chose to write Scripture.

Strictly speaking, revelation and inspiration no longer occur today. The business of writing Scripture ended in 96AD with the completion of the Book of Revelation by the Apostle John. Believers who study the Bible today will have things from the Scripture revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, but no special revelation will be given beyond what the written Scripture contains.

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The new believer needs to understand that the Bible is the work of God, and not man. Only God Himself can possibly be the Author of the Bible. Given that the 66 Books which comprise the Bible were composed over a span of 1600 years, no single human being could have lived long enough to produce it. Just as certain—no multiple human beings over such time could have coordinated such a singular message woven throughout the entire Bible. In the case of the Bible, over 40 human authors contributed to the Bible in three different languages. These authors in many ways couldn't have been more different. Shepherds, herdsmen, priests, kings, doctors, lawyers, fishermen, soldiers, carpenters, & musicians were among the human authors that God worked through to produce His written testimony.

Only God Himself with Omniscience & Foreknowledge could have written such a prophetic work. At least one-fifth of the Bible was, at the time it was written, an anticipation of the future (prophetic). Believers today may overlook this important matter, because to a 21<sup>st</sup> century believer, much of the prophetic content of the Bible has already been fulfilled. There is still a great deal left unfulfilled (yet future), but the total amount of the Bible that was prophetic when it was given is largely overlooked.

One example here, out of literally thousands, will suffice to illustrate the prophetic nature of the Bible. In 539BC the prophet Daniel delivered a prophecy pertaining to a decree that a coming king would make for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Daniel declared that after the completion of 483 years after that king's decree Messiah the Prince would be cut off and have nothing (Dan. 9:24-27). 95 years later, on March 5, 444BC Nehemiah recorded the Persian King Artaxerxes' decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8).

Now, don't get side-tracked by using a 365.24219879 day per year calendar (365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.975 seconds per year). Daniel used a 360 day calendar in his prophecies (Dan. 7:24-25; 12:7), and when correlated with the Apostle John's Book of Revelation (Rev. 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5) the 360 day year is sometimes referred to as a "prophetic year." The 483 prophetic years amount to a little over 476 solar (calendar) years, from 444BC to 33AD.

Now, 69 7-year periods of 360 days equals 173,880 days. Beginning on March 5, 444BC and counting 173,880 days brings us to March 30 (Nisan 10), 33AD. This was the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Four days later, on April 3, 33AD (Nisan 14, Passover) Jesus Christ was crucified. Messiah the Prince was indeed "cut off."

This is simply one out of thousands of places where Divine prophecy has been given in Scripture, and recorded by both later Scripture and secular history. Only God could compose such a prophetic work. "I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'" (Isa. 46:9-10).

Some have pointed to the Bible for its unique description of humanity. Of all the world's religions, only Christianity as taught in the Bible accurately depicts mankind's lost estate and total need for Divine substitutionary atonement and redemption. Only the Bible communicates a significant meaning of life, or purpose for human existence. Every other present or past religious text in the world has reflected Satanic kosmos wisdom in one way or another. Only the Bible accurately presents Divine viewpoint, even as it exposes Satanic kosmos wisdom for what it is!

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Yet another testimony to the unique nature of the Bible is the track record that the Bible has over the millennia to transform the lives of those who study it. This evidence may be anecdotal, but it is so universal as to be undeniable.

### *Canonicity*

The new believer may come under angelic attack and be exposed to other so-called books of the Bible. Maybe they'll get ahold of a Catholic Bible and find some extra books in there. Do Tobit and Judith really belong in between Nehemiah and Esther? What about 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees? Why doesn't the Pastor's Bible have the Book of Wisdom or Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), or Baruch?

A full study on Canonicity, manuscript transmission, and textual criticism is rightly reserved for advanced Bible studies. Pastors, scholars, and other serious students of God's Word will at some point examine the complete spectrum of history, archaeology, and language research. A basic overview, though, is essential for the new believer in order for them to confidently take hold of their modern Bibles as the faithful provision of God's Word.

Canonicity can be examined subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, Canonicity refers to the "rule" or "standard" utilized by man in recognizing God's legitimate Books of the Bible and rejecting illegitimate books claiming to be Scripture. κανών <sup>Strong's #2583</sup>: a means to determine the quality of something; *rule, standard*. (Latin *cānon*). Objectively, a Book's legitimacy is determined by God Himself. If He wrote it, it is God-breathed and therefore Scripture.

"A book is not the Word of God because it is accepted by the people of God. Rather, it was accepted by the people of God because it is the Word of God" (Norman Geisler). Jesus Christ's use of the phrase "It is written" declares the authoritative nature of the Canon of Scripture (Matt. 4:4,7,10). "It is written" denotes Divine Authority as Scripture certainly is.

The human Authors selected to record the God-breathed written Word of God were provided Divine offices and gifts in order to affirm their authenticity. Miracles were evidence of their Divine authority. Old Testament Prophets were held to a perfect 100% standard. One false prophecy marked a false prophet. From Moses to Malachi, the human authorship of Old Testament Books was entrusted to Prophets, or those scribes associated with Prophets in their ministry (Jos. *Contra Apion* 1.8). Inspired writings were considered sacred and kept by the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31:24-26), and eventually kept preserved in the Temple (2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 22:8).

The Church had no such central "archive" or holy place to keep every Gospel and Epistle. The New Testament Books were written by Apostles, or those scribes associated with Apostles in their ministry (Mark, taught by Peter; Luke, taught by Paul). Like the Old Testament Prophets, the Apostles were granted signs and wonders and miracles to establish their Scripture writing credentials (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12:12). Each Book was received by its respective audience, copied and distributed to other local churches, and spread throughout the world in that manner (Col. 4:16).

### *Inerrancy*

Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. Being the work of the perfect God, they are perfect in every way (Matt. 5:48; Jms. 1:17). The original documents penned by the human authors of Scripture are called Autographs. They were perfect in every way from the day in which they were written under Divine Inspiration. Copies of those manuscripts, being the product of human activity are subject to human error. Copies of copies of original manuscripts are vulnerable to repeating previous errors as well as making entirely new errors. Copies of copies of copies . . . well, you get the idea.

The art and science of Textual Criticism is the process by which manuscripts are assembled, collated, and compared. Differences between manuscripts are identified, recorded, analyzed, and classified. These differences are called text variants. Scribal errors crept in through the centuries, and yet the types of errors that were made are most often easy to observe. Haplography, dittography, metathesis, fusion, fission, homophony, & homoeoteleuton are among the classifications of unintentional scribal errors.

One remarkable advantage to having thousands of manuscripts with hundreds of thousands of text variants is that human error can be recognized, identified, and remedied. In other words, all of the variant readings provide all of the evidence necessary to overcome the shortcomings of human error and confidently refer to “the original text” of the Bible. Believers separated from Moses by nearly 3500 years can be assured that their copies of Genesis are accurate copies and translations of the very words that God breathed through His instrument Moses.

### *Hermeneutics*

The study of interpretation is known as Hermeneutics. This term comes from the Greek verb ἐρμηνεύω <sup>Strong's #2059</sup> meaning *to translate, to interpret*. This verb is found in John 1:42; 9:7; and Hebrews 7:2. The nouns ἐρμηνεία <sup>Strong's #2058</sup> *translation, interpretation* and ἐρμηνευτής *interpreter* also appear in the New Testament.

Intermediate and advanced principles of interpretation are properly taught in more intermediate and advanced Bible studies. Nevertheless, as with Canonicity, certain basic principles should be given to the brand new believer. These foundational principles will keep the new believer from making some very serious mistakes as the foundations of their understanding are being established.

The basic principles of interpretation are easy enough to learn, and also simple to observe. When a Pastor or other Bible teacher departs from sound hermeneutics, the student can identify that departure quite easily. Such training and practice will make even the baby believer “noble-minded” and able to search the Scriptures and see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). Examining the Scriptures is the absolute and objective standard for validating a spoken Bible message. There must therefore be an absolute and objective method for interpreting and understanding the written Bible message.

Dr. Clinton Lockhart presented fifteen hermeneutical axioms in his work *Principles of Interpretation*. One such axiom serves to summarize the entire concept of Biblical interpretation. “The true object of interpretation is to apprehend the exact thought of the author.” Simply put,

## Bibliology

any particular passage may potentially be taken any number of different ways, but it was actually given by One specific Author with His precise intent.

Perhaps the easiest way to present Hermeneutics on a basic level is to begin with the obvious. The form of communication determines the means of interpretation. God chose to reveal Himself to human beings in the form of written communication. In this written communication He employed human languages. Appropriate interpretation of God's Word involves linguistic study. Universally recognized laws of language must apply to the Bible as they would apply to any other written communication in order for the thoughts of the One speaking to be properly conveyed.

Now, don't get the wrong impression here. The Bible is not like any other book in the history of the universe. It is Divine Revelation and unique in its origin, transmission, preservation, and application. Keeping all that in mind, the Bible is nevertheless a written communication composed through the medium of human languages. The form God chose to employ in transmitting His thoughts determined the method and means by which the recipients of His communication must employ in receiving and understanding His thoughts.

So, to state the obvious here: the Bible means what it says and says what it means. The nature of language itself demands that we approach the Bible on this basis. Obviousness must also address the thoughts behind the words. Dr. Clinton Lockhart also stated quite well: "The true object of speech is the impartation of thought." Keeping things obvious the baby believer can recognize that the words of the Bible impart the thoughts of God. "We have the mind of Christ" (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:16). "Thinking" is also a sphere which demands a particular science for interpretation. The science of the formal principles of reasoning is called "logic." Since the Bible communicates via human languages it must be interpreted linguistically. Since the Bible communicates God's thinking it must be interpreted logically.

This doesn't mean that every Bible class is a dissertation on logic, but it helps the student of God's Word to keep logical principles in his mind as he approaches the text. Oh what a favor the believer does for himself when he approaches God's Word logically rather than emotionally! Logically, we can appreciate that the Bible can serve to interpret itself. The laws of affirmation and non-contradiction help us to understand that Truth is absolutely true. God designed us to think, and communicated His thoughts to us. Therefore all of our approaches to Bible study should follow appropriate methods of inductive and deductive logical study.

Two obvious axioms: handle language linguistically, and handle thoughts logically. Now, with these two obvious matters out of the way, we can proceed with four general rules for hermeneutics. These come from Rollin Thomas Chafer, *The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics*.

1. Interpret grammatically; with due regard to the meaning of words, the form of sentences, and the peculiarities of idiom in the language employed.
2. Interpret according to context. The meaning of a word will often be modified by the connexion in which it is used.
3. Regard the scope or design of the book itself, or some large section in which the words and expressions occur.
4. Compare Scripture with Scripture.

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Intermediate and advanced studies in Hermeneutics will take the believer into a more detailed understanding of these two obvious axioms and four general rules. Some final thoughts here will serve to give the baby believer things to chew on and consider as they embark on their life-long study of God's Word. Interpreting grammatically sometimes runs into some snags. The snags come when Bible interpreters encounter figurative language, and don't handle it appropriately.

"The literature of all lands and tongues abounds in figurative language. The Scriptures are no exception to this universal fact" (R.T. Chafer, *ibid*). Figurative language can include allegories, parables, types, and symbols. Additionally, some literal terms can be employed metaphorically, metonymically, or synecdochially. Do you see why these matters are withheld to more advanced studies? E.W. Bullinger wrote a tremendous work entitled *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. In this work, Bullinger designated over 200 distinct figures of speech found in the Bible. Several of these have from 30 to 40 varieties. Many figures of speech have duplicate names, so the total number of terms employed in describing figures of speech exceeds 500 different names.

Figurative language is effective in the way it is designed to be taken, but it is also subject to misunderstanding (misinterpretation) if it is not taken in the manner in which it is designed. Tremendous damage can be done if a Bible student takes a figurative passage literally. Likewise, damage is done if a literal passage of Scripture is taken figuratively. The simple way for a baby believer to handle the Bible is this. Handle a parable like a parable. Handle an allegory as an allegory. Handle symbolism (such as an apocalyptic passage) as symbolism. Don't force an allegory into a non-allegorical text. Don't force symbolism into a non-symbolic text.

This is a red flag warning for believers against false teaching through inaccurate Bible interpretation. When a teacher starts to proclaim a figurative meaning for a text that gives no indication of being figurative, then sound hermeneutics have been abandoned. When the plain sense makes sense don't look for any other sense.

## Charismatology

extraordinary grace enablement that extends mercy to others with a power that keeps them from losing heart (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:1). Tabitha is a superb NT illustration of this gift which was manifest through a clothing ministry (Acts 9:36,39). Another common ministry for the gift of Mercy Shower is the ministry of hospitality. The Shunammite woman demonstrated this grace orientation to support Elisha (2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 4:10). Lydia demonstrated this aspect of hospitality in the NT (Acts 16:14-15). Other ministries which show mercy could include spheres of nursing, prison visitation, etc. (Heb. 13:1-3; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:16-18). This gift may be a large factor in a fervent effectual prayer ministry (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:16).

**Evangelist** (Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:5). All believers are expected to proclaim the Gospel to this lost and dying world (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:15). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that drives them into such Gospel ministries (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:14,16). Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers are specifically given by Jesus Christ to local churches for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. As the two primary equipping-gifts, Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers are Divinely suited to the Office of Overseer within a local church ministry.

**Pastor-Teacher** (Eph. 4:11). The final gift in our study is the one that is often over-emphasized to a point of undue prominence. Given that a flock without a shepherd is in serious trouble, it is often recognized that every local church (flock) must have a pastor (shepherd). All Overseers and Elders, regardless of their spiritual gift are commanded to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:2). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that fulfills the spiritual expectations of shepherding better than any other spiritual gift. Like the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher is Divinely suited to the Office of Overseer, once his preparation and training for that ministry is complete. This gift has perhaps more Scripture to define and describe it than any other individual gift. Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd (John 10), and Ezekiel 34 provide extensive doctrinal information for the role of a shepherd in a local church.

### *Recognizing Spiritual Gifts*

How does a believer recognize his gift? Should we make use of the great American answer-anything device? Tyco's Magic 8 Ball can supply 20 different answers, but if you purchase it for \$7.99 at amazon.com you will also want to order Inside the Magic 8 Ball: The Complete User's Guide for \$23.59. This amazing American answering accessory has been available since 1946, but what did generations of believers do prior to that when faced with a crisis in decision making?



Seriously, then, identification of one's spiritual gift is not child's play and should not utilize a child's toy. The bottom-line reality is that each believer's spiritual gift is a matter for personal application of the will of God for your life. It is no different than any other particular application of God's will, and the principles learned in Thelematology all apply.

1. Study to show yourself approved (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15).
2. Consult the wisdom of elders (Ex. 18:19; Prov. 1:5; Acts 8:34-35; 18:24-26).
3. Ask the Father in prayer (Jms. 1:5; 3:17; Prov. 2:3-7).
4. Consider carefully providential circumstances, and evaluate them according to Biblical understanding of God's will (Acts 8:36; 11:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 7:8-9; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 24:4).
5. Examine your heart motivation (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 7:3).

### *Better than Spiritual Gifts*

Inserted into the Spiritual Gift "cradle" of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12-14 is the precious "baby" Love (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:1-8a). The great Love poem is a matter for the deepest of all Biblical studies. God is Love, and plunging into the depths of Love is to plunge into the deep things of God.

The sphere of love is the primary realm in which believers need to operate. Spiritual gifts are important, but when used apart from the agape love mindset, their use is worse than not knowing your gift in the first place!

### **Conclusion to Basic Doctrinal Studies**

A believer who has grasped these 10 categories of Basics, culminating with teaching on Spiritual Gifts, is equipped to step into active service in and for the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Father's purpose for saving him in the first place (Eph. 2:10).