

Nehemiah 7:73–8:8 (CSB)

73 The priests, Levites, gatekeepers, temple singers, some of the people, temple servants, and all Israel settled in their towns. When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns,

1 all the people gathered together at the square in front of the Water Gate. They asked the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses that the LORD had given Israel.

2 On the first day of the seventh month, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could listen with understanding.

3 While he was facing the square in front of the Water Gate, he read out of it from daybreak until noon before the men, the women, and those who could understand. All the people listened attentively to the book of the law.

4 The scribe Ezra stood on a high wooden platform made for this purpose. Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah stood beside him on his right; to his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hash-baddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

5 Ezra opened the book in full view of all the people, since he was elevated above everyone. As he opened it, all the people stood up.

6 Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and with their hands uplifted all the people said, "Amen, Amen!" Then they knelt low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

7 Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, and Pelaiah, who were Levites, explained the law to the people as they stood in their places.

8 They read out of the book of the law of God, translating and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was read.

How Not to Interpret Scripture

Historical Misinterpretation

- _____

Examples of Errors in Bible Interpretation

Genesis 16:3 | *So Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife for him. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan ten years.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: Since Abram had two wives, I can have two wives.
- Problem:

Genesis 3:16 | *He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: Since pain in childbirth is a part of the curse, then no anesthetic should ever be used for mothers in labor.
- Problem:

Philippians 4:13 | *I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: I can do anything I set my mind to.
- Problem:

Matthew 28:2 | *There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: God rolls away the stone of doubt, fear, and anger.
- Problem:

John 8:44 | *You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: The Devil is the father of the human race as a result of a sexual union with Eve.
- Problem:

Matthew 5:30 | *If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: You can fight sin by cutting off body parts.
- Problem:

Mark 11:23 | *Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: If you can convince yourself that it will be so, you can cause anything to happen by simply saying it aloud.
- Problem:

Acts 1:26 | *Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias and he was added to the eleven apostles.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: We should choose leaders by casting lots.
- Problem:

John 3:16 | *For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: As long as you believe Jesus is the Son of God, you will be saved.
- Problem:

2 Corinthians 3:6 | *He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: Bible study and doctrine are unnecessary. We should just be led to new truth by the Spirit.
- Problem:

Matthew 7:1 | *“Do not judge, so that you won’t be judged.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: It is a sin to judge others.
- Problem:

Mark 4:8 | *Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times.”* (CSB)

Galatians 6:7 | *Don’t be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap,* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: If you sow a thousand dollars, God will bless you with \$30,000, \$60,000 or \$100,000.
- Problem:

Jeremiah 29:11 | *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* (ESV)

- Misinterpretation: God's children will always have an easy and luxurious life.
- Problem:

Romans 1:26–27 | *For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: This is describing homosexuality as the result of excessive lust, so only that kind of homosexuality is condemned.
- Problem:

Matthew 5:39 | *But I tell you, don't resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: Capital punishment is forbidden.
- Problem:

Leviticus 20:13 | *If a man sleeps with a man as with a woman, they have both committed a detestable act. They must be put to death; their death is their own fault.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: Violence against people engaged in the sin of homosexuality is condoned.
- Problem:

Leviticus 14:44–45 | *The priest must come and examine it. If the contamination has spread in the house, it is harmful mildew; the house is unclean. It must be torn down with its stones, its beams, and all its plaster, and taken outside the city to an unclean place.* (HCSB)

- Misinterpretation: If the pastor comes over and finds mildew in your house, then your house should be torn down.
- Problem:

Deuteronomy 22:11 | *Do not wear clothes made of both wool and linen.* (CSB)

- Misinterpretation: You can't wear cotton underwear with wool pants.
- Problem:

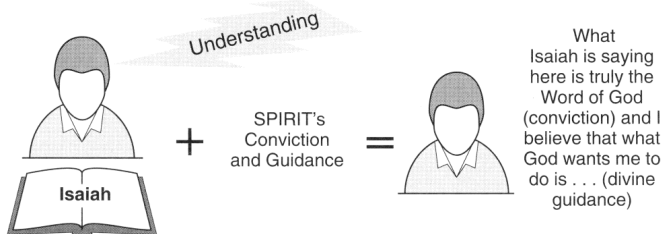
Ten Rules for Bible Interpretation

1. The Bible must be interpreted with the _____ of the _____.

— **1 Corinthians 2:14** | *But the person without the Spirit does not receive what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually.* (CSB)

— **Psalms 119:18** | *Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction.* (CSB)

— **John 16:13** | *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come.* (CSB)



Sandbox

— **1 Peter 5:6-7** | *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.* (CSB)

What is the technical meaning of this passage that even an unbeliever can understand?

What is the real meaning of this passage that only a Spirit-led believer can understand?

2. The larger _____ of the passage should always be allowed to _____ and _____ the interpretation of the passage.

- The context of a passage includes the verses that precede and follow the passage in focus.
- The meaning of a passage is LARGELY determined by the context of that passage.

Sandbox

- What is the definition of the word “ball?”
- What do these verses seem to mean in isolation? How does looking at them in context change what seemed like an obvious interpretation?

— **Revelation 3:20** | *See! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.* (CSB)

— **Philippians 4:13** | *I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.* (CSB)

3. The definition of words is best determined by how those words are used in _____ of _____.

- Using a concordance, cross-reference, topical Bible, or even just your familiarity with the Bible can help you learn the best definition of a biblical word.
- This type of vocabulary work is most effective when you find cross references in literature of the same genre and even more when it is the same human author.
- This can be done much more effectively with the original languages aided by a tool such as Logos Bible Software.

Sandbox

- www.TheBibleProject.com video about “Shema”

— **1 Peter 5:6–7** | *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.* (ESV)

- What does “anxieties” mean?

— **2 Corinthians 11:25–28** | *Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.* (ESV)

4. Bible interpretation should involve some _____.

— **Acts 17:11** | *The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.* (CSB)

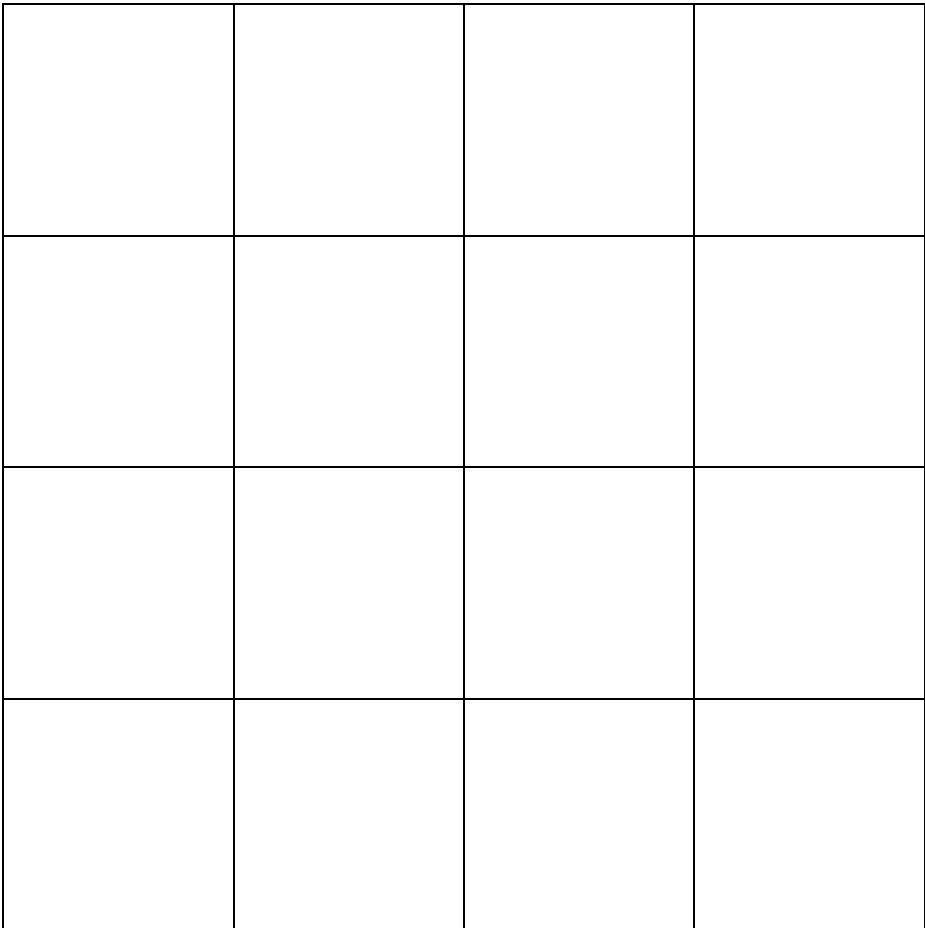
— **2 Peter 3:15–16** | *Also, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.* (CSB)

Strategies to interpret by elbow grease...

- Repeatedly read stressing one word at a time.
- Look up all the cross-references.
- Memorize the text.

Sandbox

How many squares can you find?



- Passage that needs elbow grease...

— **Galatians 3:1-4** | *You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now finishing by the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing—if in fact it was for nothing? (CSB)*

