



Ten Rules for Bible Interpretation

- 1. The Bible must be interpreted with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**
- 2. The larger context of the passage should always be allowed to influence and limit the interpretation of the passage.**
- 3. The definition of words is best determined by how those words are used in other parts of Scripture.**
- 4. Bible interpretation should involve some elbow grease.**
- 5. Interpretation must come before application.**
- 6. The verse cannot mean what it did not mean.**
- 7. Allow the whole counsel of Scripture to explain and expand on individual passages.**
- 8. Interpretation must be sensitive to the genre of literature being studied.**

How to Interpret the Old Testament Law

— Some of the OT Law seems odd and are not generally embraced.

— **Exodus 34:26b** | *You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.* (CSB)

— **Leviticus 19:19** | *You are to keep my statutes. Do not crossbreed two different kinds of your livestock, sow your fields with two kinds of seed, or put on a garment made of two kinds of material.* (CSB)

— **Deuteronomy 22:12** | *Make tassels on the four corners of the outer garment you wear.* (CSB)

— **Deuteronomy 14:8** | *And pigs, though they have hooves, they do not chew the cud— they are unclean for you. Do not eat their meat or touch their carcasses.* (CSB)

— Yet some OT Laws seem to form the moral underpinnings of the Christian life.

— **Leviticus 19:18** | *Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.* (CSB)

— **Exodus 20:13** | *Do not murder.* (CSB)

— **Deuteronomy 5:18** | *Do not commit adultery.* (CSB)

— So how do we decide which ones are applicable?

— Most Christians today make this decision based merely on whether they like the law.

— This leaves us open to confusion especially about the issue of homosexuality.

— What is the OT Law?

— Given by God to people of Israel

— **Leviticus 26:46** | *These are the statutes, ordinances, and laws the LORD established between himself and the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai. (CSB)*

— Not a condition of the relationship, but a confirmation of the relationship.

— **Exodus 20:2** | *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. (CSB)*

— The role of the Law is different for believers today.

— We are no longer under the law.

— **Galatians 3:24–25** | *The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (CSB)*

— **Romans 10:4–13** | *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, since Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law: The one who does these things will live by them. But the righteousness that comes from faith speaks like this: Do not say in your heart, “Who will go up to heaven?” that is, to bring Christ down or, “Who will go down into the abyss?” that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. On the contrary, what does it say? The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. This is the message of faith that we proclaim: If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame, since there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord of all richly blesses all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. (CSB)*

— It teaches us what sin is (and thereby teaches us about the expectations of God).

— **Romans 7:7** | *What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet. (CSB)*

— The law has much value to us today because we see in it the heart and expectations of the Father.

— **Matthew 5:17–19** | *“Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (CSB)*

— How do we interpret the Law?

— Ceremonial, Civil, Moral distinctions are arbitrary.

— Five Principles

1. Identify what the particular law meant to the initial audience.

2. Determine the differences between the initial audience and believers today.

3. Develop universal principles from the text.

4. Correlate the principle with New Testament teaching.

5. Apply the modified universal principle to life today.

Sandbox

— **Exodus 22:25–27** | *“If you lend silver to my people, to the poor person among you, you must not be like a creditor to him; you must not charge him interest. “If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as collateral, return it to him before sunset. For it is his only covering; it is the clothing for his body. What will he sleep in? And if he cries out to me, I will listen because I am gracious. (CSB)*

Principle #1 - Identify what the particular law meant to the initial audience.

— There were many poor people in Israel, and as is usually the case, those poor people were vulnerable due to their needs. A person with great amounts money could have easily taken advantage of a poor person by charging unfair interest or by taking away something essential for basic living such as a coat or blanket. If someone had an emergency and needed money, they might have no choice but to enter into an unfair arrangement with an unscrupulous lender. This passage warns these people to be wise and loving in their business practices.

Principle #2 - Determine the differences between the initial audience and believers today.

— Today there are laws that provide some safeguard against usury and confiscation of vitally needed property. There are also safety nets for the very poor such that it is unlikely in America that a person would die of hunger or exposure if they were seeking help.

Principle #3 - Develop universal principles from the text.

— The universal principle is that of love and mercy. We should treat others in a way that looks out for their welfare and not just our own.

Principle #4 - Correlate the principle with New Testament teaching.

— Jesus communicates the universal principle when He says, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:19).

Principle #5 - Apply the modified universal principle to life today.

— Every believer should look for those less fortunate and find ways to be a blessing to them to demonstrate the love of God instead of looking for a way to exploit their weakness for one’s own benefit.

— **Leviticus 19:27–28** | *You are not to cut off the hair at the sides of your head or mar the edge of your beard. You are not to make gashes on your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves; I am the LORD.* (CSB)

Principle #1 - Identify what the particular law meant to the initial audience.

— The styling of a man’s hair by cutting the sides shorter was a localized pagan ritual.

— **Jeremiah 9:26** | *Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all the inhabitants of the desert who clip the hair on their temples. All these nations are uncircumcised, and the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart.’*” (CSB)

— **Jeremiah 25:23** | *Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all those who clip the hair on their temples;* (CSB)

— The same was true of cutting oneself and tattoos.

— God is commanding the Israelites to be holy, to be separate.

Principle #2 - Determine the differences between the initial audience and believers today.

— None of those practices are necessarily signs of pagan worship today.

Principle #3 - Develop universal principles from the text.

— God's people should live distinct lives. They should not engage in things that might reasonably lead other people to think they were involved in any kind of pagan ritual.

Principle #4 - Correlate the principle with New Testament teaching.

— **1 Corinthians 8:4-13** | *About eating food sacrificed to idols, then, we know that "an idol is nothing in the world," and that "there is no God but one." For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father. All things are from him, and we exist for him. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. All things are through him, and we exist through him. However, not everyone has this knowledge. Some have been so used to idolatry up until now that when they eat food sacrificed to an idol, their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not bring us close to God. We are not worse off if we don't eat, and we are not better if we do eat. But be careful that this right of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak. For if someone sees you, the one who has knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, won't his weak conscience be encouraged to eat food offered to idols? So the weak person, the brother or sister for whom Christ died, is ruined by your knowledge. Now when you sin like this against brothers and sisters and wound their weak conscience, you are sinning against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother or sister to fall, I will never again eat meat, so that I won't cause my brother or sister to fall. (CSB)*

— **1 Peter 2:11** | *Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. (CSB)*

— **2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1** | *Don't become partners with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God said: I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (CSB)*

Principle #5 - Apply the modified universal principle to life today.

- We must not do anything that would reasonably identify us with pagan worship.
 - Women shouldn't cover their heads like Muslim women.
 - We shouldn't have a dot on the forehead.
 - You shouldn't wear...
 - You shouldn't listen to...
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— **Leviticus 18:22–23** | *You are not to sleep with a man as with a woman; it is detestable. You are not to have sexual intercourse with any animal, defiling yourself with it; a woman is not to present herself to an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.* (CSB)

— **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)

Principle #1 - Identify what the particular law meant to the initial audience.

- Sex is a sacred gift that comes from the Lord.
- God created man and woman for each other.
- It is an abomination for people to pervert God's design.

Principle #2 - Determine the differences between the initial audience and believers today.

- The prohibition was not based on culture, health, keeping the peace or confusion with the ritual practices of pagan nations.
- The prohibition is based on God's creation of man for woman and woman for man.
- Male and female haven't changed.
- So, there are no cultural differences.

Principle #3 - Develop universal principles from the text.

- Sex (gender) and sexuality are a part of God's design and shouldn't be altered.

Principle #4 - Correlate the principle with New Testament teaching.

- **Romans 1:26** | *For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.* (CSB)
- **1 Corinthians 6:9** | *Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males,* (CSB)
- **1 Timothy 1:9-11** | *We know that the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinful, for the unholy and irreverent, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral and homosexuals, for slave traders, liars, perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which was entrusted to me.* (CSB)
- **1 Corinthians 7:2** | *But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband.* (CSB)
- **Hebrews 13:4** | *Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.* (CSB)
- **Matthew 19:4-6** | *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that he who created them in the beginning made them male and female," and he also said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."* (CSB)
- God values heterosexual marriage as a sacred institution and the only proper place for sexual expression.

Principle #5 - Apply the modified universal principle to life today.

- Homosexuality is a perversion of God's created design and an abomination.