
Hermeneutic Study – 4th Session

Agenda: for tonight – May 24th, 2009

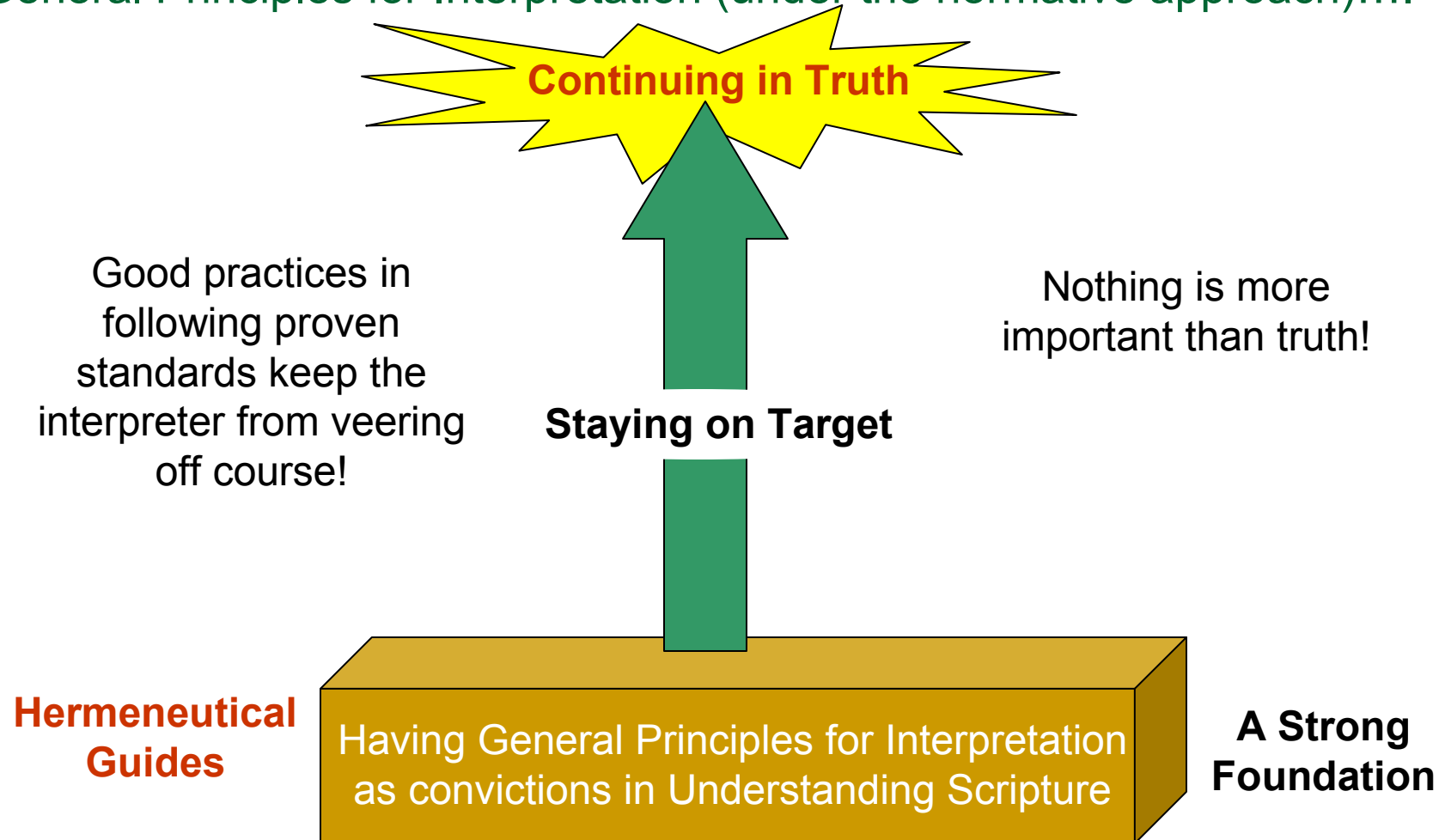
- Quick Review
 - Definition of Hermeneutics
 - Initial Issues for Interpretation
 - The Three main approaches to Interpretation
- General Principles for Interpretation - summary
- Grammatical Principles for Interpretation

Definition of Hermeneutics:

“Hermeneutics is the science and art of Biblical interpretation. It is a science because it is guided by rules within a system; and it is an art because the application of the rules is by skill, and not by mechanical imitation.” Bernard Ramm

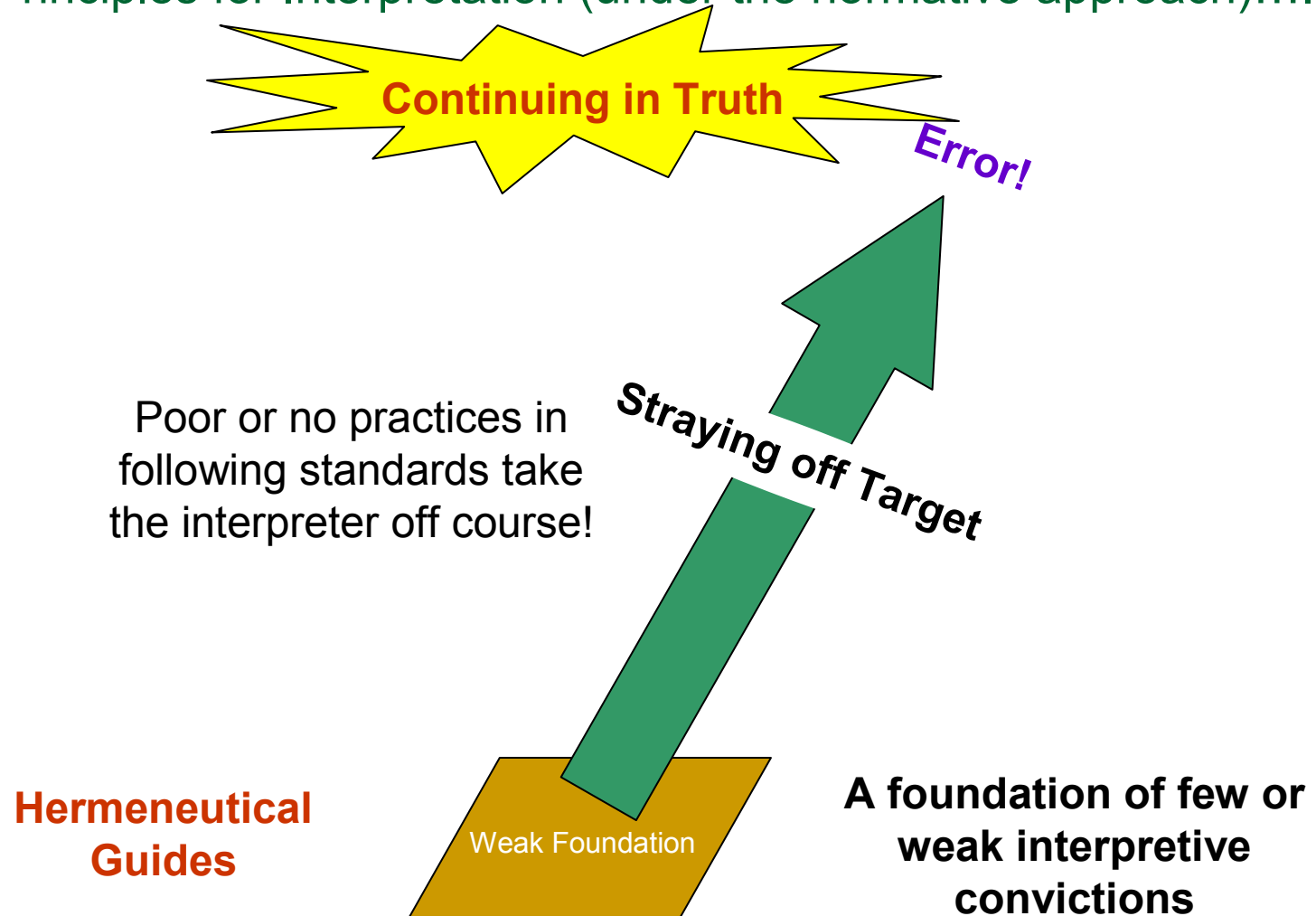
Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the normative approach)....



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The Bible is the Foundation....

■ ***Understanding the:***

- Inspiration of the Bible - The superintending of God over human authors to write the very Word of God in the original manuscripts.
- The illumination of the Bible - The process by which the Holy Spirit enables a person to understand the things of God.
- The Integration of the Bible - The Canon of Scripture – Canon means “a rule or measuring rod” – idea that the Bible is the organized & completed standard for all faith and practice.
- The Integrity of the Bible -
 - The Bible is Infallible – which means it is unfailingly accurate (without error) in the original manuscripts.
 - The Bible is inerrant – which means it does not contain any error in a statement of fact – it is incapable of teaching deception.
- The Bible is to be trusted absolutely, completely, unquestionably, and unreservedly.

The Three Main Approaches to interpretation....

- Allegorical Interpretation - is simply looking for a higher sense of meaning from a passage than the literal brings (beneath the obvious meaning is the real meaning).
- Spiritualizing Interpretation - The NT is the fulfillment of the OT. The NT is taken back into the interpretation of the OT instead of allowing the OT meaning in the context of its own setting.
- Normative Interpretation - The Scriptures are to be understood in the normative meaning of words. The words of Scripture are to be understood in the historical and grammatical situation in which they are found (their immediate context).

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Illustration: Three blind men and the elephant

Three blind men came upon an elephant and set about to describe it. The first, feeling the elephant's trunk said that the elephant is like a snake. The second feeling the tall side of the animal said that the elephant was tall, like a wall. The third, felt the tail and that the elephant is like a tree with flexible branches. Each one described accurately his experience of the elephant, yet the experiences were so vastly different that someone who had never hear of an elephant would not be able to imagine that these three descriptions fit the same beast. Each account true, but partial.

The point – *we must look at the elephant (Bible passage) from every conceivable side, position, and possibility (do all systematic research) before we make a determination of what the passage truly means.*

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General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10

Pondered – pay close attention to words

Searched out – penetrate & exegete the text

Arranged – went about it orderly (fit, made sense, consistent)

Analytical – moves from the specific to the general – microscopic method

Synthesis – various parts are viewed together, are seen in their relation to one another, and are regarded as a whole – telescopic method

Analysis concentrates on the infinitesimal, synthesis concentrates on the infinite. The synthetic method requires that we get a mental grasp of the Bible as a whole – using both methods in harmony provide the correct understanding of any passage.

Martin Luther:

Said “he studied the Bible as he gathered apples. First of all he shook the tree, then the limbs, then the branches, then after that he searched under the leaves for any remaining fruit.”

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Taking the Bible at face value – common sense

Phenomenological

The Bible describes things phenomenologically, i.e. as they appear to the human observer. For example the Scripture speaks of the sun rising in the east. This is a phenomenological statement. Scientifically, the sun doesn't rise at all. The Scriptures describe things the way they appear.

Jam 1:11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

Eze 1:5 Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. Each of them had four faces and four wings.

Rev 9:2 -3 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Looking at the Analytical side, with synthesis always in view:

Determining the General Meaning of a passage:

- o What did the passage convey to those whom it was addressed at the time they were addressed?
- o Who is speaking and why?
- o Who is being spoken to, and what general theme or issue is being addressed?
- o Is it figurative language, command, instruction, or argument?
- o Does the passage carry any special significance given the historical and social context?

Pay attention to those elements that are repeated in the immediate context. What does the verse studied contribute to the overall meaning of the immediate context? How would the meaning of the immediate context be effected if it were left out?

*Portions taken from "Interpretation" Roy B. Zuck

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

- o Keep in mind the passages before and after – what is being discussed?
- o Normally there is a new thought beginning with a new paragraph.
- o Does it seem to conflict with other passages or biblical doctrines?
- o Is there a progression in the story, account or argument? Is there a climax?
- o Are there contrasts? Are there parallels or illustrations?
- o What is implied by the use of particular terms, phrases, or sentences? Any implications must be clear and reasonable – be careful not to exaggerate or over extend what the text says in order to support a preconceived idea.
- o Is there a command to obey? Is there an error to avoid? Does the passage point out sinful behavior or attitudes? Is there an example to follow? Is there a promise to claim? Does the passage highlight an aspect of God's nature and character? How does it relate to glorifying Christ?
- o Ultimately, the test of a good interpretation is whether it makes good sense of the text and its immediate context.

Don't be too quick to run to a commentary – study the passage to come to your own conclusions, then pick good commentaries to review.

*Portions taken from "Interpretation" Roy B. Zuck

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Figures of Speech

How do you know if an expression is figurative or literal?

- o Always take a passage in its literal sense unless there is good reason to do otherwise Rev (7:4-9).
- o The figurative sense is intended if the literal would involve an impossibility (Jer 1:18)
- o The figurative is intended if the literal is absurd (Isa 55:12)
- o Take the figurative sense if the literal would demand immoral action (John 6:53-58)
- o Sometimes a figure is marked by a qualifying adjective (John 6:32; Eph 6:14)

A figure of speech is a picturesque, out-of-the-ordinary way of presenting literal facts that might otherwise be stated in a normal, plain, ordinary way. It is not the opposite of literal interpretation, it is literal interpretation placed in picturesque language.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Recognizing Figures of Speech

When the Lord told the church *“I will come like a thief”* (Rev 3:3), He did not mean He would come to rob. Instead the point of comparison is that He would come suddenly & unexpectedly. When Job referred to the *“pillars”* of the earth trembling (Job 9:6), he was referring to the mountains of the earth.

Paradox: a statement that is seemingly absurd or contradictory to normal opinion but is not (Mark 8:35)

Euphemism: substitution of an agreeable or at least non-offensive expression for one whose plainer meaning might be harsh or unpleasant (Acts 7:60)

Hyperbole: exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect (Deut 1:28)

Metaphor: implied comparison achieved through a figurative use of words; the word is used not in its literal sense, but in one analogous to it (Is 40:6)

Simile: an explicit comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as' (1 Pet 1:24)

Parable: extended simile, comparing unlike things that are easily understood to reveal truth that is difficult to comprehend.

Personification: making inanimate objects animated (Is 35:1)

Anthropomorphism: attributing physical characteristics to God (Ps 8:3)

*Portions taken from “Interpretation” Roy B. Zuck

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

***Determine the relationships between the key words and phrases.
Especially be cognizant of connecting words:***

Contrast	but, however, even though, much more, nevertheless, yet, although, then, otherwise
Condition	if, whoever, whatever
Comparison	too, also, as, just as, so also, likewise, like, in the same way
Correlatives	as...so also, for...as, so...as
Reason	because, for this reason, for this purpose, for, since
Result	so then, therefore, as a result, thus, then
Purpose	that, so that, in order that
Temporal/Time	now, immediately, just then, until, when, before, after, while, during, since, then I saw
Geographical	where, from

Eph 2:1-5 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ

*Portions taken from "Interpretation" Roy B. Zuck

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General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

These connecting words help us clarify what is being communicated – Paul is addressing why the lost in the tribulation follow falsehood – it is God's purpose.

Contrast	but, however, even though, much more, nevertheless, yet, although, then, otherwise
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Temporal/Time	now, immediately, just then, until, when, before, after, while, during, since, then I saw
Geographical	where, from

Reason

2Th 2:11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Purpose

*Portions taken from "Interpretation" Roy B. Zuck

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

These repeated connecting phrases establish the chronological sequence of events taking place throughout the book of Revelation.

Contrast	but, however, even though, much more, nevertheless, yet, although, then, otherwise
Condition	if, whoever, whatever

Example of not following this rule: “The introductory phrase ‘Then I saw’ does not indicate that John is having a vision of events temporally subsequent to the events of the previous nineteen chapters... Thus Satan is currently in the pit, he is currently bound. This does not mean that Satan is not active in many other ways. We wholeheartedly believe that Satan tempts people and that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). But with respect to his deceiving the nations as he once did, he is bound. Put positively, the binding of Satan coincides with the progress and triumph of the Gospel among the nations. Consequently, this is a great missions text, giving the Church encouragement and confidence that the proclamation of the Gospel will bear fruit. The period of time during which Satan is bound and in the pit (and during which the martyrs reign with Christ) is a thousand years (a millennium). Numbers in the Bible are frequently symbolic. It would be natural to expect that in this, arguably the most symbolic book of the Bible, that we would find many symbolic numbers. Ten is a number of completeness. One thousand is ten cubed. Thus we would suggest that the thousand years is a long period of time of indeterminate length representing the present age in its fullness.” David Sherwood

the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

*Portions taken from “Interpretation” Roy B. Zuck

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

These key words and phrases help us know the exact intention of the writer under a normative approach to interpretation – normative language.

Contrast	but, however, even though, much more, nevertheless, yet, although, then, otherwise
Condition	if, whoever, whatever
Comparison	too, also, as, just as, so also, likewise, like, in the same way
Correlatives	as...so also, for...as, so...as
Reason	because, for this reason, for this purpose, for, since
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Temporal/Time	now, immediately, just then, until, when, before, after, while, during, since, then I saw
Geographical	where, from

Comparison

Jam 2:24-25 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. **In the same way**, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

*Portions taken from "Interpretation" Roy B. Zuck

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Symbols

Symbols make up a portion of the Bible. A symbol is some object or action which is assigned a meaning for the purpose of depicting rather than stating the qualities of something else. Symbols are sometimes called types – both represent something else.

- o A symbol does not have its symbolic meaning because of what it is in itself. It belongs only to its use as a symbol.
- o Each symbol has a referent (what the symbol refers to). [John 1:29](#) a lamb (object) pictures Christ (referent) with the meaning that Christ is a sacrifice just as the lambs of the OT law.
- o Symbols have their base in something we can picture. They are based on literal objects or actions. The referent is not literally a lamb as in [John 1:29](#), but there are literal lambs. A beast with 7 heads and 10 horns is not an actuality, but these symbols contain enough reality to stir the imagination and understanding of the communication.
- o Most contexts define the symbols. In [Ezekiel 37:4](#) the “dry bones” are defined in [Ezekiel 37:11](#) as “the whole house of Israel.”

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Symbols continued...

- o If the verse's context does not give the meaning of the symbol, then check other passages (normally there will be a reference to something the writer is considering from a similar context elsewhere).
- o Look for one major point of resemblance and be careful not to make the wrong characteristic of the symbol. There is one meaning, and that meaning must be found in a careful study of the context, and other similar passages.
- o Some parts of prophecy are symbolic, and other parts are not. Beasts in prophecy are symbolic, but kings are not.
- o Do not symbolize that which can be understood as plausible or possible.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

In the Grammatical interpretation process the text of Scripture is carefully studied (exegesis, the critical analysis of the text) to determine four important things:

1. The meaning of the words (lexicology)
 - a. Etymology – how words are derived and developed
 - b. By usage – how words are used by the same and other authors
 - c. Synonyms and antonyms – how similar and opposite words are used
 - d. Context – how words are used in various contexts
2. The form of words (morphology) – how words are structured and how that effects their meaning
3. The function of words (parts of speech) – considers what the various forms do – attention to subjects, verbs, objects, nouns, and others.
4. The relationship of words (syntax) – the way words are related or put together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences.

This means it is necessary to study the tenses of verbs, nouns and pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and the ways these words are structured.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

We must look at the original language at the time of the writing

Etymology refers to the root derivation and development of words:

The aims are:

- o Get to the root meaning of the word
- o To see how a word has developed

Component parts of a compound word reveal its meaning:

The English word “hippopotamus”

From the Greek word *hippos* for horse, and *potamos* for river – “river horse”

The Greek word “*ekklesia*” is usually translated “church”

From the Greek “*ek*” meaning “out of” and “*kalein*” to “call or summon” – thus it was originally meant as those who were “called out of the unsaved to form a group.” It’s origin before being used for the church was a town crier summoning citizens for a meeting to discuss business.

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Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology

Sometimes the etymology of a word does not help determine the meaning of a word – there are a number of reasons for this, meanings change over time, and many words are used in a number of ways.

The Greek word “pneuma” – often translated “spirit” is derived from pneo “to breath”, but in the Bible the word pneuma only occasionally means breath. It also means wind, attitude, emotions, spiritual nature, and inner being in contrast to the physical being, angels and the Holy Spirit.

With such words **the immediate context often, though not always, helps determine the meaning of the word.** Means of determining:

- o Note the usage of a word by the same writer in the same book.
- o Note the usage by the same writer in his other books.
- o Note the usage by other writers in the Bible – this can be helpful especially if it is in a context either similar or beneficial (according to the situation) to disclose the authors intent.

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued...

A word can have different shades of meaning and you cannot assume that Peter, John and Paul meant the same thing every time they would use a particular word. However, in general there is a great deal to understand about the meaning of a word in a context.

- o You must first look at the **immediate context**, that is, the sentences surrounding the word. Then look throughout the same writing for the same word (software is particularly useful). This is your best source of understanding why the writer used that word and what it means.
- o Secondly, if needed, you can refer to **another writing by the same author**. This may be helpful, but the context must be considered.
- o Lastly, you can **refer to other books in the Bible**. This last step should be done with much care because this can result in misunderstanding what the author originally meant with a particular word. The farther you get away from the immediate context, the meaning that you get for a word becomes less reliable.

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

- o Read a good word study book on the definition of the word, and how the word is used. A good word study will sometimes give the meaning from extra-biblical writings as there are many words in both Hebrew and Greek that are used only one time in Scripture.
- o See how a word differs from its synonyms – this can help clarify the meaning – often the meaning is only in varying shades:

In [Colossians 2:22](#) “*commandments*” suggest laws to be obeyed, and “*teachings*” (i.e. doctrines) imply truths to be believed.

- o See how a word differs from its opposite (antonym):

In [Romans 8:4-9](#) “*flesh*” could mean the physical body (in contrast to the human spirit). However, by noting how “*flesh*” contrasts with the word “*spirit*” in [verses 6, 9, and 11](#) we see that “*spirit*” means the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit. Therefore “*flesh*” in [verses 4-9](#) means the sinful nature.

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

Consider the context for these reasons:

- o Because words, phrases, and clauses may have multiple meanings - examining how they are used in a given context can help determine which is the correct meaning – simply put, it must fit.
- o Thoughts are usually expressed by a series of words or sentences, that is in association, not isolation. What precedes, and what follows. It must be in logical agreement.

False interpretations often arise from ignoring the context – **Psalm 2:8** “Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your inheritance, the ends of the earth Your possession” is often used by missionaries to speak of anticipated conversion promises. However, the context before and after make it clear it is referring to God’s promise to His Son. The Hebrew word for “inheritance” has to do with possession and occupancy – a physical inheritance.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

We must make sure we have the right basic meaning of a word in mind – this requires understanding it from the culture and the context:

Grammatical Usage

“Bear one another’s burdens....”

The letter bears his signature

“Behold, you will bear a son”

John must bear the difficulty of his journey

“My punishment is too great to bear”

This situation will bear investigation

Mark bears himself well

“They will bear you up in their hands”

Grief bears heavily upon her

“Your servant has killed the lion and bear”

Grammatical Meaning

(Galatians 6.2) Carry, transport.

To carry with or on something.

To bring forth or to give birth.

To hold up, sustain.

(Gen 4:13) To undergo, to endure.

To be capable of withstanding.

To conduct oneself, behave oneself.

To carry over, to hold onto.

To be oppressive, to weigh down.

A large animal with shaggy fur.

*Portions taken from “Interpretation” Roy B. Zuck

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

Some of the most familiar Bible words can have multiple meanings and those meanings must largely be determined by the context. If we presume the meaning or miss the meaning it can radically affect our interpretation and understanding – examples:

- o “World” (John 3:16 not just Jews; 1 John 2:15-16 world system of evil; 1 Pet 3:3 adornment; John 17:5 the whole created universe; 1 Tim 6:7 life in the physical world)

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The screenshot displays the e-Sword software interface. The main window shows the Bible text for John 3:13-19. A dictionary window for G2889 (kosmos) is open, providing a definition: "kosmos; a prim. word; order, the world: - adornment (1), world (184), world's (1)." The interface also shows a list of study notes on the right, including notes by Barnes, Clarke, JFB, K&D, MHCC, NET, TSK, VWS, PNT, RWP, and Scofield. The bottom of the window shows the Windows taskbar with the Start button and open applications like Microsoft PowerPoint and e-Sword.

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General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

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- o “Faith” (Jude 3; Gal 1:23; Rom 3:3; 1:17; Eph 2:8; James 2:19)

- o “Salvation” (Exodus 14:13 safety; Luke 1:71 Israel’s release from enemies; Luke 18:42 physical health; 1 Tim 2:15 from insignificance; Acts 27:20 safety; Rom 5:9 from penalty of sin)

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The screenshot displays the e-Sword software interface. The main window shows a parallel view of Luke 18:42 in three versions: NASB+, KJV+, and LITV. The NASB+ text reads: "42 And Jesus²⁴²⁴ said³⁰⁰⁴ to him, "Receive³⁰⁸ your sight³⁰⁸; your faith⁴¹⁰² has made⁴⁹⁸² you well⁴⁹⁸²." The KJV+ text reads: "42 And²⁵³² Jesus²⁴²⁴ said²⁰³⁶ unto him,⁸⁴⁶ Receive thy sight:³⁰⁸ thy⁴⁶⁷⁵ faith⁴¹⁰² hath saved⁴⁹⁸² thee.⁴⁵⁷¹ The LITV text reads: "42 And Jesus said to him, See again! Your faith has healed you. A pop-up window for Strong's G4982 (σώζω) is visible, showing its definition: "From a primary word σῶς sōs (contraction for the obsolete σαος saos, "safe"); to save, that is, deliver or protect (literally or figuratively): - heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole." Below this, a list of G18 (ἀγαθος) words is shown, including agathos; of unc. or.; good: - generous (1), good (81), good man (2), good thing (6), good things (6), goodness (1), goods (2), kind (1), kindly (1), kindness (1). The interface also shows a sidebar with a list of books (Hos, Joe, Amo, Oba, Jon, Mic, Nah, Hab, Zep, Hag, Zec, Mal, Mat, Mar, Luk) and a right-hand pane with study notes and topic notes.

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Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The screenshot displays the e-Sword software interface. The main window shows the Bible text for 1Ti 2:15: "But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love". A dictionary window is open for the Greek word G4982 (σῶζω), providing its definition: "From a primary word σῶς, sōs (contraction for the obsolete σαος, saos, 'safe'); to save, that is, deliver or protect (literally or figuratively): - heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole." A study notes window on the right provides a detailed explanation of the word "child-bearing" (dia tēs teknogonias), noting its late and rare usage in the New Testament and its derivation from the Greek root genō. The interface also shows a list of study notes on the right and a list of Greek words at the bottom.

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

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- o “Faith” (Jude 3; Gal 1:23; Rom 3:3; 1:17; Eph 2:8; James 2:19)
- o “Salvation” (Exodus 14:13 safety; Luke 1:71 Israel’s release from enemies; Luke 18:42 physical health; 1 Tim 2:15 from insignificance; Acts 27:20 safety; Rom 5:9 from penalty of sin)
- o “Law” (Rom 2:14; 8:2 a principle; John 1:17; 45 the first 5 books of Moses; Mat 22:40 all the OT)

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Etymology continued....

The context of the paragraph and the entire book should be considered when understanding the meaning of a word.

- o Immediate – John 2:19 Christ speaks of “destroy this temple” in verse 21 it is clarified as referring to His body.

John 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

John 2:21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

- o Writing – 1 John 3:6 cannot mean that Christians do not practice sin 1 John 3:9

1John 3:6 No one who abides in Him or knows Him.

1John 3:8 the one who practices sin is born from the beginning. The Son of God abides in Him and the works of the devil.

1John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, our truth is not in us.

G3485
ναός
naos
nah-os'
From a primary word *ναομαι* *naio* (to dwell); a fane, shrine, temple: - shrine, temple. Compare G2411.
Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

G4160
ποιέω
poieō
poy-eh'-o
Apparently a prolonged form of an obsolete primary; to make or do (in a very wide application, more or less direct): - abide, + agree, appoint, X avenge, + band together, be, bear, + bewray, bring (forth), cast out, cause, commit, + content, continue, deal, + without any delay, (would) do (-ing), execute, exercise, fulfil, gain, give, have, hold, X journeying, keep, + lay wait, + lighten the ship, make, X mean, + none of these things move me, observe, ordain, perform, provide, + have purged, purpose, put, + raising up, X secure, shew, X shoot out, spend, take, tarry, + transgress the law, work, yield. Compare G4238.
Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

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Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The screenshot shows the e-Sword application with the Bible text of 2 Peter 1:1-8. An 'Analyze Verses' window is open, displaying a list of words and their counts. A yellow callout box points to the word 'KNOWLEDGE' in the list, which is highlighted in the original image. The callout box contains the text: 'Key words give clues to the meaning and purpose of a passage'.

Word	Count
KNOWLEDGE	3
BROTHERLY	2
DILIGENT	2
DWELLING	2
EARTHLY	2
EXCELLENCE	2
GLORY	2
GOD	2
GODLINESS	2
HOLY	2
KINDNESS	2
KNOW	2
LONG	2
MORAL	2
PERSEVERANCE	2

2Pe 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Morphology refers to the way words are inflected, that is formed or put together.

In both Greek and Hebrew the meanings of words are changed by inflections at the beginning, middle, or ending – these small changes make major differences in tense (past, present, future), voice (active or passive), mood suggesting the kind of action (indicative – is in effect, interrogative – is a question, imperative – is a command, optative – is a request).

Syntax is the way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, or sentences. Single words by themselves seldom convey a complete thought. How they are organized creates the meaning:

- o The man hit the ball hard
- o The ball hit the man hard
- o The man hit the hard ball
- o The hard man hit the ball
- o The hard ball hit the man

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

LANGUAGE – we have studied the root meaning of key words, but language is about fitting those words together, understanding how the various clauses and phrases are connected in a given passage, while using the correct grammatical form of the words. Written language consists of paragraphs, sentences, clauses, and words.

Clauses – a clause is a grammatical unit of words comprised of a subject (the person, place, thing, concept or idea, or action) being discussed and a predicate (the verb indicating action, state, or condition). Clauses are both independent and dependent.

“Christ died” – a single unit with a subject and predicate (independent)

“He chose us” (Eph 1:4) – subject, predicate, & object (independent)

“We always thank God” (Col 1:3) – “We” subject, “always thank” predicate with adverb, “God” the object of the thanks (independent) – “when we pray for you” (is a dependent clause) – this second clause requires the first clause for its meaning.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Dependent Clauses are of several types – understanding each type helps to clarify the communication of the writer – the mood of the statement.

- o Causal “We always thank God...because we have heard” Col 1:3-4
- o Concessive “Though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit” Col 2:5
- o Conditional “Since you died with Christ..why...do you submit to rules?” Col 1:20
- o Purpose “We pray this...in order that” Col 1:10
- o Result “Pray...so that” Col 4:3
- o Temporal “When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ” Col 2:13

The point is by identifying the kind of clause in a passage, and understanding the relationship of dependent clauses leads to the ultimate meaning of a passage. When I look at a passage, I should use these relationships to direct my understanding of the intention of the writer.

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The order of words:

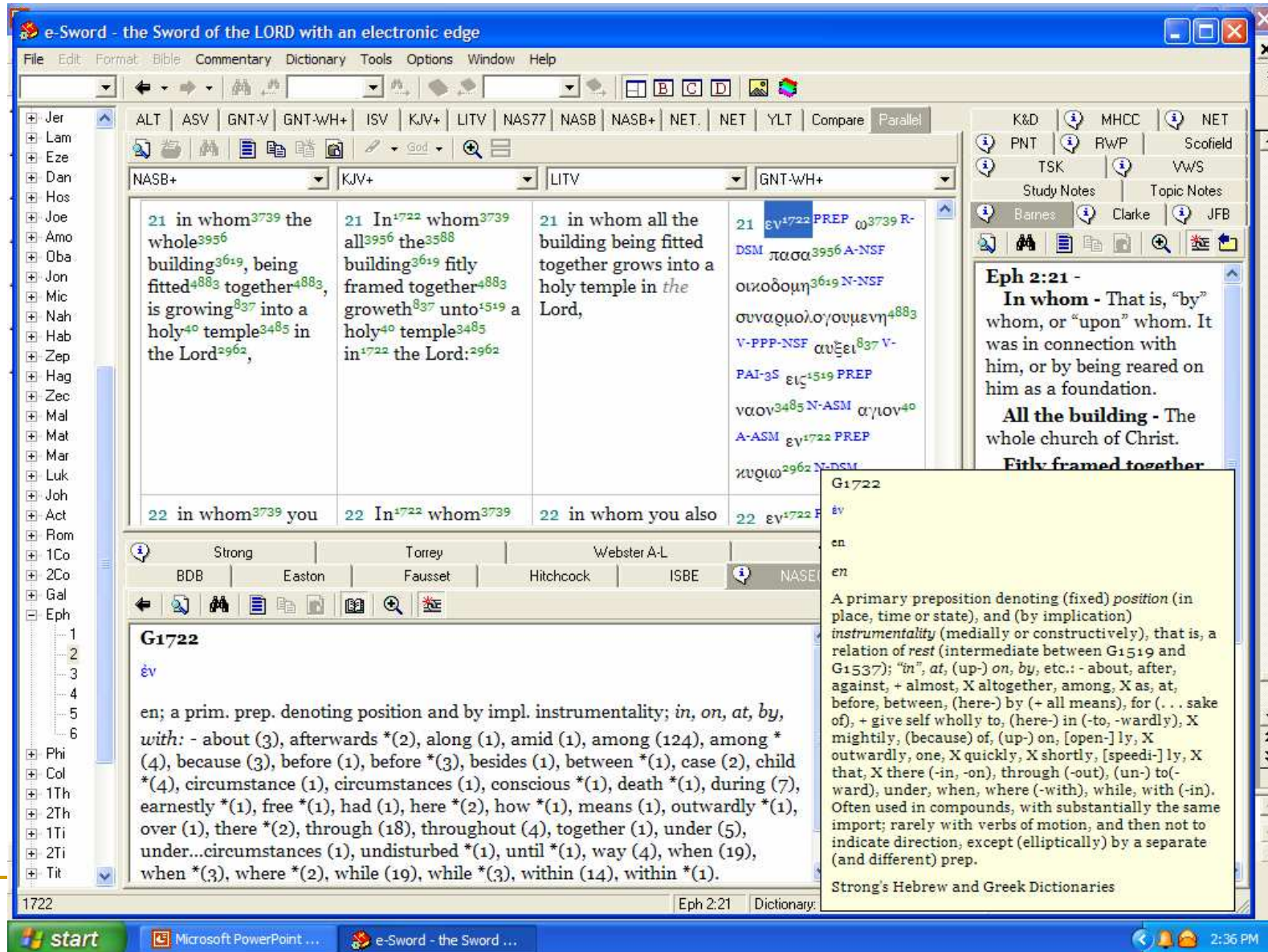
“God is love” or “Love is God” – the same words, but the order changes the meaning.

In Greek special emphasis is given to words, phrases, or clauses by placing them at the beginning of a sentence (or in some instances at the end) instead of what we think of as the normal word order of subject, verb, and object. This is very telling for interpretation:

“In whom” (Eph 2:21) is placed in the Greek at the beginning of the sentence. The weight of focus is on Christ and what He is doing.

Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)



The screenshot displays the e-Sword software interface. The main window shows a comparison of Ephesians 2:21 across several Bible versions: NASB+, KJV+, LITV, and GNT-WH+. The text in the GNT-WH+ column is highlighted in blue. Below the main text, there are tabs for Strong's, Torrey, and Webster A-L dictionaries. The Strong's dictionary entry for G1722 (εἰς) is open, showing its definition and usage. A tooltip window is also visible, providing a detailed definition of the preposition εἰς.

Strong's G1722
εἰς

en; a prim. prep. denoting position and by impl. instrumentality; *in, on, at, by, with*: - about (3), afterwards *(2), along (1), amid (1), among (124), among *(4), because (3), before (1), before *(3), besides (1), between *(1), case (2), child *(4), circumstances (1), circumstances (1), conscious *(1), death *(1), during (7), earnestly *(1), free *(1), had (1), here *(2), how *(1), means (1), outwardly *(1), over (1), there *(2), through (18), throughout (4), together (1), under (5), under...circumstances (1), undisturbed *(1), until *(1), way (4), when (19), when *(3), where *(2), while (19), while *(3), within (14), within *(1).

Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The order of words:

“God is love” or “Love is God” – the same words, but the order changes the meaning.

In Greek special emphasis is given to words, phrases, or clauses by placing them at the beginning of a sentence (or in some instances at the end) instead of what we think of as the normal word order of subject, verb, and object. This is very telling for interpretation:

“In Him” (Eph 2:21) is placed in the Greek at the beginning of the sentence. The weight of focus is on what He is doing.

“not” (1 Cor 1:17) is placed at the beginning of the sentence in Greek, in order to emphasize the negative idea.

You can look at the words in the original Greek using a reliable software tool, or follow a well written commentary.

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The order of words:

“God is love” or “Love is God” – the same words, but the order changes the meaning.

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Basics on Approaching the Bible

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

The screenshot displays the e-Sword software interface. The main window shows a parallel comparison of 1 Corinthians 1:17 across four versions: NASB+, KJV+, LITV, and GNT-WH+. The text is presented in columns, with the Greek text and its morphological analysis shown on the right. Below the text, there are tabs for Strong's, Torrey, Webster A-L, and Webster M-Z. A search box at the bottom left contains the Greek word 'οὐχ', and a list of Strong's numbers (G3743-G3756) is shown on the right. The right-hand pane contains study notes for 1Co 1:17, including a commentary on the verse and a list of reasons for Paul's actions.

17 For Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ did not send⁶⁴⁹ me to baptize⁹⁰⁷, but to preach²⁰⁹⁷ the gospel²⁰⁹⁷, not in cleverness⁴⁶⁷⁸ of speech³⁰⁵⁶, so²⁴⁴³ that the cross⁴⁷¹⁶ of Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ would not be made²⁷⁵⁸ void²⁷⁵⁸.

17 For¹⁰⁶³ Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ sent⁶⁴⁹ me³¹⁶⁵ not³⁷⁵⁶ to baptize,⁹⁰⁷ but²³⁵ to preach the gospel:²⁰⁹⁷ not³⁷⁵⁶ with¹⁷²² wisdom⁴⁶⁷⁸ of words,³⁰⁵⁶ lest³³⁶³ the³⁵⁸⁸ cross⁴⁷¹⁶ of Christ⁵⁵⁴⁷ should be made of none effect.²⁷⁵⁸

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to announce the gospel, not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect.

17 ου³⁷⁵⁶ PRT-N γαρ¹⁰⁶³ CONJ απεστειλεν⁶⁴⁹ V-AAI-3S με³¹⁶⁵ P-1AS χριστου⁵⁵⁴⁷ N-NSM βαπτισειν⁹⁰⁷ V-PAN αλλα²³⁵ CONJ ευαγγελιζεισθαι²⁰⁹⁷ V-PMN ουκ³⁷⁵⁶ PRT-N εν¹⁷²² PREP σοφια⁴⁶⁷⁸ N-DSF λογου³⁰⁵⁶ N-GSM

οὐχ

ouch; a prim. word; not, no: - all *(1), any the less (2), before *(1), cannot (1), cannot *(49), certainly *(1), ever *(3), except (1), failed (1), few *(1), great *(1), greatly *(1), impossible *(1), incessantly *(1), kept...a virgin *(1), kept right *(1), long *(1), neither (2), neither *(3), never (6), never *(17), no (148), no *(22), none (4), none *(3), nor (3), nothing (8), nothing *(13), nowhere *(2), number (1), number *(2), only *(5), rather (2), rather than (1), refrain (1), refused *(1), than *(2), unable *(6), unaware *(3), unwilling *(12), unworthy *(1), virgin *(1), without (2), without *(6).

1Co 1:17 - For Christ sent me not to baptize - That is, not to baptize as my main business. Baptism was not his principal employment, though he had a commission in common with others to administer the ordinance, and occasionally did it. The same thing was true of the Saviour, that he did not personally baptize, [John 4:2](#). It is probable that the business of baptism was entrusted to the ministers of the church of inferior talents, or to those who were connected with the churches permanently, and not to those who were engaged chiefly in traveling from place to place. The reasons of this may have been:

(1) That which Paul here

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Summary:

Grammatical interpretation means giving attention to the words of Scripture and how they are used. While it seems a bit technical, it is essential if we are to understand the Bible properly.

The following is a summary outline of the procedures suggested for proper grammatical interpretation.

- o Discover the meaning of a word
 - ❑ Examine the etymology of the word, including its original meaning and any different meanings that develop from it
 - ❑ Discover the usage of the word
 - By the writer in the near context or same book
 - By the same writer in other writings
 - By other writers in the Bible
 - By other writers outside the Bible (use good word study)

General Principles for Interpretation (under the Normative Approach)

Summary continued...

- ❑ Discover how synonyms and antonyms are used
- ❑ Consider the contexts
 - The immediate context (chapter, paragraph, surrounding verses)
 - The context of the book
 - The context of parallel passages
 - The context of the entire Bible
- ❑ Decide which meaning best fits the context and thought of the passage
- o Procedures for discovering the meaning of a passage
 - ❑ Analyze the passage, its elements, noting its parts of speech, the kind of sentence it is, the kind of clauses it has, and the word order
 - ❑ Pay special attention to the meaning of key words
 - ❑ Consider the influence of each part of the sentence on the thought of the whole

Closing thoughts:

There is nothing more important than truth!

- Associated with God – He is the truth!
- Used to set us free – it is liberating!
- It sanctifies – it is enabling!

But, we must mine it! It doesn't come through leisure!

