



# HERMENEUTICS

A GFC DISTINCTIVE



**HERMENEUTICS IS THE SCIENCE OF  
INTERPRETING THE BIBLE CORRECTLY.  
SINCE WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE TO BE THE  
WORD OF GOD, IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
FAITHFULLY REPRESENT WHAT IT SAYS. IN  
ORDER TO DO THAT, WE EMPLOY THE  
FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES.**

## **1. THE INTENTION PRINCIPLE**

The intention principle says that, in order to find the meaning of the Bible, it is important to discover the intention of the author. The reader does not look for his own intention or meaning when he studies a passage. Instead, he looks for what the author says in his own original words.

For example, when the Apostle John says that Jesus is a "door" in John 1:17, it is understood that he did not mean that literally. Obviously, he was not saying that Jesus is made out of wood and nails. John meant that Jesus is our pathway to Heaven and He brings us into the presence of God because we could not enter the "door" of paradise if it were not for Him..

Another example of this is found in James 3:5-6 where it says, *"See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity."*

Just a simple reading of this text shows that James is not saying that the tongue is made up of actual fire. He does not mean that it is composed of combustible material that produces smoke and flames. He meant that the tongue produces sin and causes all sorts of trouble in our lives which we know by searching for the intention of the author. We learn that by searching for James' meaning and not our own.

## 2. THE GRAMMAR PRINCIPLE

A second principle to employ when interpreting the Bible is the grammar principle which says that the Bible should be interpreted according to the rules of grammar and the way that an author expresses himself. Every writer has his own unique form of expression and, in order to understand a passage, we need to take that into consideration.

One place where this is demonstrated is in Romans 7 where the Apostle Paul describes his great battle with sin. As he does so, he says in verse 15: *"For what I am doing, I do not understand, for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate."* The word "do" is repeated four times here to emphasize the fact that Paul cannot keep the law. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot "do" it.

However, he does not despair because, later on, he writes in verse 24: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Here Paul repeats something else and gives us two exclamation points to express his astonishment that, even though he cannot keep the Law, there is still hope for him. Even though he cannot do what it says, he still has victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All of that can be learned by studying Paul's grammar and letting it speak for itself.

## 3. THE HISTORY PRINCIPLE

The History Principle states that the Bible should be interpreted with history in mind. Since the authors wrote at a particular time and place, that must be taken into account in order to find a passage's meaning. A good illustration of this is found in Second Chronicles 7:14 which says: *"If My people who are called by My name [will] humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, will forgive their sin and heal their land."*

This verse is often taken as a call to national repentance. As the argument goes, if we would just call on the Lord's name, then He will forgive our sin and heal our land as a nation. However, while the Bible encourages that behaviour, it is important to understand the historical setting for this passage because it was said exclusively to the Jews.

In other words, this is not a promise for countries today. It does not mean that God will bless one nation over another because they turn from their wicked ways. Many believers have called on the name of the Lord only to watch their government fall apart in dismay because, in this passage, the Lord is simply saying that He will keep this promise to Israel. We learn that by studying the historical setting of the passage and considering the background and context in which it was written.

## 4. THE SYNTHESIS PRINCIPLE

One final principle of interpretation is the synthesis principle which says that, when we interpret the Bible, we synthesize it and put it all together by looking at other passages on the same subject. In other words, we let Scripture interpret Scripture.

For example, Galatians 5:19-20 says, *"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, [and] factions."* As you read that, you can tell that the word "flesh" does not mean "skin." If it did, it would mean that every individual on the planet is guilty of these things which is not true. Many people refrain from committing these terrible sins even though they have physical skin on them. So what does the word mean?

The best way to understand the meaning of "flesh" is to look up other passages where it occurs such as Matthew 26:41 which says: *"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

Or Romans 8:6-7 which says: *"For the mind set on the flesh is death ... because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God."*

Or First John 2:16: *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."*

When all of these passages are taken into account, it is clear that word "the flesh" refers to the sinful part of man. "The deeds of the flesh" is just another way of saying "the deeds of sin." It refers to the part of us that is still affected by the fall but we learn this by putting the Bible together and synthesizing it in order to let the Scripture speak for itself.

# CONCLUSION

The Bible has been called the most abused book in the world because it has been so misunderstood. It has been taken out of context more than any other document in history which is why we need to treat it with more care and consideration. In order to do this, we practice good hermeneutics which is why this is a distinctive for our church.

If you have any questions about hermeneutics or anything in this pamphlet, we would love to hear from you!



## CONTACT US

Join us Sundays @ 9:30 AM

46024 Riverside Dr.  
Chilliwack, BC, V2P 3K8

**604-426-1044**

[info@gracefellowshipchilliwack.com](mailto:info@gracefellowshipchilliwack.com)

