

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE? Part 2 – Literal Principle

Introduction: We have been *studying how to study the Bible*, looking at some basic principles about proper Biblical interpretation! This is *very important*. First, we saw God does use His word when we are in pain or suffering, but that is the exception. Second, the *Bible is not a buffet!* I cannot choose what I like and discard what I don't like. It was *not written TO us*, but it was *written FOR us*. Third, there are *4 foundational truths*, like four legs of a table that everything else is built on.

Foundation: A) *We do not worship the Bible* but the One who wrote the Bible. B) *3 important words:* a) *Observation (what the text says)* – looking at a text and reading it. b) *Interpretation (our focus)* – *what the text meant when it was written to whom it was written.* c) *Application* – *(what I can learn from the text)*. Application always comes last. Another part is ask questions of the text. C) We must be a Christian seeking the Lord or the Holy Spirit must be working in us. D) We must want to grow.

If we don't know how to interpret the Bible, we will experience a *GLITCH* in our *Bible study, thinking, living, emotions and understanding of who God is and who we are*; thus the acronym – G.L.I.T.C.H. G – Grammar; L – Literal; I – Inspired, Inerrant and Infallible; T – Time and Prayer; C – Context; and H – History and Culture. Everything is about *context*.

G – rammar – 1) *Words and Sentence Structure*. Context determines meaning of words.

2) *Written Languages* – A) *Hebrew (OT)*, B) *Aramaic (OT)*, C) *Greek (NT)*. All were written within the Jewish culture.

3) *Styles of Languages* – Genre. A) *Historic Narrative* – events in history - *Genesis-Esther, Gospels, Acts*. B) *Poetry* – words used to paint a picture, using figures of speech to convey a truth, thought or emotion - *Job-Song of Solomon*. C) *Prophetic (Prophecy)* – tells Gods truth and foretells the future from when the writer wrote - *Isaiah-Malachi, Revelation (Apocalyptic)*. D) *General Letters* – the *Epistles*, misc. doctrine, commands, exhortation, application, prophecy, etc. - *Romans-Jude*.

L – iteral – This does not mean we take the text in a “*wooden literal way*.” That is to say that God has an arm, eyes, physical body or that there are many gods in the world, or anything like that. The Bible *does use language* about God's eye or ear or arm, called anthropomorphisms. That means God communicates in language we can understand that represents a characteristic about Him we can relate to.

God never contradicts Himself! When I say “*literal*” I include the principles we have *already looked at*, with *grammar*. Studying the Bible literally means 2 things:

1) Interpret a text in its *Normal, Natural Sense* – face value. Take the regular meaning of words, knowing there may be symbols, history, figures of speech, etc. and put it in the context in which it was written.

Question: What would you *expect reading a news article online*?

Question: What would you *expect listening to the weather*?

Question: What would you *expect listening to a song*?

Question: What would you *expect when reading Scripture*?

We *recognize* that there is a genre or style of writing or speaking in *news articles, news reports, songs, weather and more*. *Why don't we think about that when it comes to the Bible?*

2) The Bible *often* explains and interprets itself. Ask questions. What does this word mean? What is the main idea? What is the writer saying? Is this historical narrative or figurative language?

Examples: 1. *Ezekiel 18:1-3*. This is not the only place this “*proverb*” or saying was said. *Jeremiah 31:29-30* is another place this was quoted. *Deuteronomy 24:16* is the principle, though the people may have forgotten it in the Babylonian captivity.

2. *Proverbs 22:6*. *Train up* – means to “*train up*,” or “*dedicate*” to the Lord. NET Bible notes: “This proverb pictures a child who is dedicated by parents to the LORD and morally trained to follow Him.” *Ephesians 6:4* challenges fathers *not to provoke their children*, but to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” This could also refer to *preparing this child for future responsibilities*.

Child – infant, a lad, young boy or girl. The *Jewish Talmud* says this goes up to 24.

The way – This can also be translated, “*according to his way*” or “*the way he should go*.” It is referring to a *standard of life*. Wisdom literature talks about 2 ways – the *righteous* or the *unrighteous* way.

Old – This word *means older*, related to a word that means, “*beard*.” So, it means someone who is old enough to grow a beard. There is *no specific age designation* here.