



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

How to Understand and Interpret the Bible (Hermeneutics)

Lesson #4

Matthias Flacius (1520-1575) was a student of Martin Luther. We will first look at twelve rules given by Matthias Flacius in his book *The Key to Sacred Scripture*. These rules summarize some of the main points to remember as we try to learn how to understand and interpret the Bible.

Some Rules the Bible Itself Teaches to Help Us Understand the Bible

Rule One: We must ask God to give us understanding:

- **“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”** (Psalm 119:18).
- **“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God”** (James 1:5).

Rule Two: Jesus Christ opened up the Scriptures for His disciples. The better we know Christ and the more we trust in Him, the better we will be able to understand His teachings.

- **“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”** (Luke 24:27).
- **“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures”** (Luke 24:45).

Rule Three: We must at all times remember that the true author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, and that in this way the Bible differs from every other book in the world, because it is in all its parts the Word of God.

- **“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”** (2 Peter 1:21).
- Jesus said to His apostles: **“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth”** (John 16:13).

Rule Four: Christ Himself is God’s last and final word to man. We should not seek any new revelation that goes beyond Him or supersedes Him, such as the supposed revelations given to Muhammad (the *Quran*) and to Joseph Smith (*The Book of Mormon*), or additional teachings revealed to the pope (for example: the assumption and the immaculate conception of Mary).

- **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”** (Hebrews 1: 1-2).
- **“In whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** (Colossians 2:3).

Rule Five: It is important that those who study the Bible and teach others are themselves walking in the ways of the Lord. Those who are disobedient to what the Lord says will be led by the devil to interpret the Bible in a way that excuses or minimizes their sin. For example, those who are committing adultery will be tempted to misinterpret what the Bible says about adultery in an attempt to make their sin less sinful.

- **“For the ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them”** (Hosea 14:9).

Rule Six: It is important to remember that every word and every part of every word in the Bible is the Word of God.

- When He argued with some Jewish leaders, Jesus pointed to just one word from Psalm 82 to prove His point and then said: **“The Scripture cannot be broken”** (John 10:35).
- In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: **“One jot or one tittle¹ will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:18-19).

Questions

1. What book are we going to use to help us learn how to understand the Bible?
2. What is the very first thing we should do as we begin to read the Bible?
3. How did Jesus open the understanding of His disciples after His resurrection?
4. How can we know that the Holy Spirit is the Author of Old and New Testaments?
5. Why must we reject the *Quran*, *The Book of Mormon*, and Mary’s sinlessness?
6. Why is it important that we not only study the Bible but follow the Bible?
7. Why is every single word in the Bible important?

¹ Jots and tittles are little parts of the letters in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament.