



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

How to Understand and Interpret the Bible (Hermeneutics)

Lesson #5

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

Rule Seven: We must not be led astray by persons who claim that the Holy Spirit speaks to them directly and tells them what they should do and what they should teach. God's way of teaching us and working in our hearts is through His Word.

- **"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"** (Romans 10:17).
- **"It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe"** (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Rule Eight: It is important to remember that, because of our sinful flesh, we may easily be led away from the ways of the Lord, both in our faith and in our actions. If we try to avoid an error on the left side of the road, we can easily go too far to the opposite side. For example, in an attempt to avoid sexual sin, which we ought to avoid, some have taught that sex within marriage is sinful. This is going too far on the other side.

- God's chosen prophet Moses told the Israelites: **"You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left"** (Deuteronomy 5:32).
- Moses' chosen successor Joshua repeated these same instructions: **"Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left"** (Joshua 1:7).

Rule Nine: Most Jews were unable to understand their own Bible because they did not find Christ in it. Those who cannot find Christ as their Savior in the Bible do not understand the Bible.

- Jesus said to them: **"You do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life"** (John 5:38-40).
- The apostle Paul said about the Jews of his time: **"Even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away"** (2 Corinthians 3:15-16).

Rule Ten: It is particularly in times of distress and difficulty that the words of the Bible become more meaningful to us and we meditate on them more intensely. This is what Martin Luther meant by *temptation or struggle*.

- **"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes"** (Psalm 119:71).

Rule Eleven: God Himself tells us the main purpose of the Bible and how we should use it. It is not intended as a textbook on science or mathematics. The apostle Paul wrote to his younger assistant Timothy:

- **"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (literally, breathed out by God), and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"** (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Rule Twelve: A good understanding of the Bible does not come quickly or easily. It requires diligence and persistence.

- **“His delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night”** (Psalm 1:2). The congregation at Berea, which Paul visited on his second mission journey, has given us a good example.
- **“They received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”** (Acts 17:11).

Questions

1. What means does the Holy Spirit invariably use in doing His work?
2. Give some examples of how a teacher may go too far on one side in order to avoid a danger on the other side.
3. Name some groups that do not understand the Bible because they do not find Christ in it.
4. In what way does God use affliction to give us a better understanding of His Word?
5. What is God’s purpose in giving us the Bible?
6. How much time are you able and willing to give to the study of the Bible?