

Principles for Interpreting and Teaching Scripture

A. God inspired each portion of scripture for a purpose. If we teach it to mean something else, then we are not teaching God's Word anymore, we are using scripture to teach our word.

1. If we are preaching the meaning of a passage, we must preach what we believe God meant to say with that passage, not use it to support our own ideas and purposes.
2. If we are preaching a topical sermon, we must find supporting scriptures that mean in their original context what we say they do in our sermon.
3. We must be careful about turning into commands what are only examples. These examples might be worth emulating, but if so we need to justify that conclusion.
4. Our illustrations or examples from scriptures should be closely tied to the situation today, we should not ignore contextual differences and focus only on a few similarities.
5. Our teachings should include the necessary background, theology, literary context, and Old Testament [or intra-testament] connections, to clarify meaning.

B. The structure of the Bible is important.

1. We should teach the message of the Bible as a whole, not just the parts we find palatable in today's society or convenient for what we want to influence. This includes illuminating how scripture ties together consistently and how the themes are developed.
2. We should teach the theology portions of the Bible, not just the application portions; it is the theology that drives the application.
3. We should teach book studies verse by verse, not just topical studies.
4. Even topical sermons can be based on interpreting a single passage, augmented by others.
5. The Bible is literal but with many types of literature and language, and it has progressive revelation and obvious dispensational changes, so our teaching must reflect that information.

C. We teach to change lives.

1. Our teachings must be presented well, so as to be interesting and inspiring.
2. Our teachings should edify believers at all stages of spiritual maturity, raising them up to become mature in faith, intimate with God, experiencing the fruit of the Spirit, and experiencing transformation toward Christ-likeness.
3. Our teachings should reflect the dependence and devotion to God and Scripture by which we ourselves live, and generate a growing conviction in others that they too should approach life with that attitude.