

## **A Short Guide to Hermeneutics and Scripture Twisting**

Most Christians disagree on Bible interpretations; Why? It is due to the fact that they do not understand that there are specific tools for the process of interpretation of any written text. In the world of theology this is called hermeneutics. That is not to say that there are not Bible difficulties or areas that people hold differences of opinion. The intent of this statement is to point out that many groups of Christians differ greatly on points of the Bible due to inconsistent interpretation techniques. This is why commentaries are created by very capable scholars and interpreters. The problem is that few will use them.

The Bible is infallible as correctly interpreted. If you twist things then the interpretation is fallible. The Mormons use this same statement but pour a totally different meaning into it. Mormons use this statement to reject anything that contradicts the Mormon Bible. Joseph Smith's thoughts are above the Word of God. This should tell most that Mormonism is in serious error. Because Christians are not that concerned about what they believe, they fall into an error that is common from the beginning:

2 Corinthians 11:4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

1 Timothy 6:3-4 If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; ...

### **Principles of Hermeneutics:**

**Rule 1: Scripture must be interpreted literally** Not wooden in fashion but rather in the natural, straight forward sense of a text or passage. What did this mean in its own time and context?

For example:

Mark 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

Some teachers claim this verse to say that if we give we will receive back a hundred-fold return in like kind.

**Wooden interpretation:** If we give, we will get back a hundred times as much and it will be in the same form. I give \$10 and get back from God, \$1000.

Natural interpretation: We give up this life and gain in spiritual life a hundred times the reward.

**-According to the original meaning:** houses brothers etc. were a form of showing worth. Jesus meant them as great reward. They earned these rewards in this present age to be received in heaven. No where in the context of this chapter is wealth sought after. In fact the next verse shows how far from this Jesus taught before.

Matthew 5:12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**-According to the original setting:** The disciples were being told this in the context of the difficulty of the rich entering heaven. They responded to the teaching by pointing out they had left the treasures of the world behind to follow Jesus. How could Jesus be now telling them he is going to make them rich? A better example might be:

Mark 10:25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

These guys are fishermen and Jesus is using terms they understand. I have heard many interesting interpretations of this verse. Camelos means a large rope used to moor a boat. The needle is a tailor's needle to sew with. You can't get a rope through needle's eye. You can't get a rich man into heaven unless he is saved by God through the Gospel. Jesus made it clear by parable that you cannot get into the kingdom of God based on your own good works or your money.

**-According to the literary form:** Jesus meant this in metaphoric terms. Make note that while some groups are very wooden in their interpretation, not allowing a metaphorical interpretation; an equally bad position is to take everything as metaphorical as the Christian Science people do.

An example of a word used in metaphor and literal interpretation is "water". Water is used as literal water, as a metaphor of Jesus, baptism, moral purity, eternal life, human birth, and the Holy Spirit.

**-According to the context:** Some teachers conveniently ignore the part about persecutions and the warning about wealth in Mark 10:23. They also apply a part of the verse and not all of it. It may make sense for Jesus to give us 100 times the

houses or even farms but it is rather absurd to get 100 times the brothers, sisters, MOTHERS, and children.

**Rule 2: Scripture must be interpreted by scripture.** Any vague scripture must be supported more clearly by other scripture before the fullness of sense and meaning can be determined. We must ask; what does this mean in light of the entire balance of the scripture? Doctrine based on a single verse is very dangerous.

Matthew 21:22 "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive."

Some teachers use this verse to indicate that anything you ask for you will get. Cars, houses, money, anything! They even go so far as to teach that you create your own reality. Nothing could be more unscriptural and self serving!

This teaching is somewhat vague as it does not give any limits to what can be asked for or what can be received. Therefore additional scripture must be used.

**-Interpret according to the purpose** John 20:31, 2 Tim 3:15

Why did Jesus make such a rash statement? He was not intent on the disciples getting rich but rather to build their trust in God and himself. He wanted them to have faith in God. See Mark 11:22.

**-Interpret in the light of other passages on the same subject.**

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

This one stands in the face of teachings on wealth and prosperity, as clearly to give to get, is a wrong motive. It is clear now that asking with the correct motive is very important. He does not give us any wish. He gives us things that are good for us. Money may not be good for us. For some it may in fact be.

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.

Further more you can see from other verses that there really are conditions attached to the promise. If we are fully abiding in Jesus we will be intimate with his will and will ask things that are according to his will.

**-Interpret the O.T. in light of the N.T. and never the reverse.**

Consider a misuse of the following two verses:

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"

Deuteronomy 28:15 "But it shall come about, if you will not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

Some teachers like to use the correlation of these two verses to say that we do not ever get sick if we are a Christian. Jesus died so that we do not have to suffer from sickness. What they are doing is using an O.T. reference to a curse to interpret the use of the same word in the N.T. This is clearly false hermeneutics if especially if context is considered.

If we look at Gal 3:10 we see that Paul is speaking of the curse of the moral law and not a physical curse. Rom 8:21, 23, and 25 give us the picture of Christians with imperfect bodies waiting to receive perfect ones. This body is still under the curse of sin, sickness, and disease.

If Christians are to be perfect in health, then explain the following:

Job, a man of God, was covered with sores. Job 2:7.

Paul confessed having a bodily illness. Gal 4:13.

Timothy had severe stomach problems. 1 Tim 5:23.

Elisha with his "double portion" died a sick man. 2 Kings 13:14; 2:9.

Why did Paul leave Trophimus sick? 2 Tim 4:20.

Why was Epaphroditus sick to the point of death? Phil 2:25-30.

The bottom line is that this is a teaching that does not stand up to the context of scripture and creates a scenario where many that follow these teachings and do not receive their healings, believe that God hates them or they are not somehow pleasing God.

### **Rule 3: Scripture can be interpreted only by the Holy Spirit.**

God's gift is for us to understand. Not done totally by natural senses. Matt 11:25, 16:17, John 16:13. This requires work and we also depend on each other to develop our understanding (scholars and sound teachers). What we understand is less related to our brain capacity than it is to obedience. Matt 5:8. We should always ask the question, what is the Holy Spirit trying to teach me here?

1 Corinthians 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

In my personal experiences with this, the Holy Spirit showed me that you can't share scriptural principles to those who hold empty philosophies. Matt 7:6. The Holy Spirit showed me why my mother rejected me. Luke 12:51-53.

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Luke 12:51-53 51 "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two, and two against three. "They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

**Rule 4: Scripture must be interpreted dynamically.** The Word, which is truth, must be brought to the surface of our understanding where we can put it to work for us in the present. God applies the understanding to the situation and need for the moment. How does this apply to me now? How do I use this in my relationship to the Body of Christ?

Matthew 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

This verse today, for many, doesn't mean much as father and mother are not important and most cannot wait until the kids grow up and get out on their own. However, in the day this was written they were the most important thing a man could have. Therefore to interpret this in today's terms we would see that whatever possession we have that is above Jesus, makes us unworthy of Jesus. We cannot have anything above our relationship to God and the Body of Christ. First we understand the context of the words in that day and then apply it to terms we understand today.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Timothy 4:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Mark 13:11 "And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.

I recently found a nice acrostic to help us remember these principles: L-I-G-H-T-S

L Literal interpretations Normal and natural sense noting metaphors.

I Illumination by the Holy Spirit Both to head and heart.

G Grammatical Principle Rules of grammar to give insight; use tools.

H Historical Context context of setting and times to get meaning.

T Teaching Ministry Test all the teachers you are under.

S Scriptural Harmony No stand alone verses to support a doctrine.