

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE LIKE IT MEANS WHAT IT SAYS

Principles for Honest Bible Study

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A Foundation for Faithful Study

The Bible is the most examined, debated, loved, and misunderstood book in human history. Entire denominations have been built on passages taken out of context. Sincere people have reached contradictory conclusions from the same text. And somewhere in the noise, the voice of God still speaks clearly — if we are willing to listen carefully.

These principles are not a denomination's position paper. They are not a creed. They are a commitment to reading the Bible the way it asks to be read — honestly, contextually, and with the humility to let the text say what it says, even when it challenges what we have always believed.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”
— 2 Timothy 2:15, NASB

What follows are the principles that guide every study published at NobleMind.Study. They are offered freely to anyone who wants to read the Bible well.

The Core Principle

Scripture Interprets Scripture

This is the foundation beneath every other principle. The Bible is its own best commentary. When a passage is unclear, the first place to look for clarity is not a commentary, a podcast, or a theological system — it is another passage of Scripture.

The method is simple: when interpreting any passage, first examine the immediate context — the surrounding verses and chapters. Then examine the broader context — the book, the author's other writings, the testament. Then examine what other Scriptures say about the same topic. Let clear passages illuminate difficult ones.

Never interpret a single verse in a way that contradicts other clear Scripture. If your interpretation of one passage creates a conflict with five others, the problem is not with the five — it is with the interpretation.

The Authority Question

God's Word Over Man's Opinion

The Bible is the inspired Word of God and the sole authority in matters of faith and practice. When human tradition, commentary, or denominational teaching contradicts Scripture, Scripture takes precedence. Always.

Man is fallible. God and His Word are not.

This does not mean commentaries and teachers are useless. It means they are not the standard. If you find that man says something that contradicts what God has said, believe God 100% of the time. No scholar, no matter how respected, outranks the text.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." — 2 Timothy 3:16-17, NASB

The First Question

What Does It Actually Say?

Before asking "What does this passage mean?" — ask "What does it actually say?"

This sounds obvious. It is not. The majority of Bible misapplication begins when someone skips what the text says and jumps directly to what they think it means, or worse, what they want it to mean. Read the words on the page first. Let them settle. Then interpret.

If you cannot restate what the passage says in plain language before offering an interpretation, you are not ready to interpret it.

The Three Questions That Change Everything

Context Before Conclusion

Every time you read a passage of Scripture, ask three questions before drawing any conclusion:

1. Who is speaking?

God, a prophet, an apostle, a Pharisee, Satan, a friend of Job? Not every voice in the Bible speaks with divine authority. Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:6). Job's friends spoke eloquently — and God said they were wrong (Job 42:7).

2. To whom are they speaking?

The twelve apostles on a specific mission? The nation of Israel under the Law of Moses? A first-century church? A single individual? The audience determines the application.

3. Under what circumstances?

What is the historical setting? What problem is being addressed? What has just happened in the narrative? Circumstances shape meaning.

Get these three questions right and half of the confusion in Bible study disappears.

Written For You vs. Written To You

The Difference That Matters

Not everything in the Bible is written *to* you — but everything in the Bible is written *for* you.

When God told Noah to build an ark, He was not speaking to you. You do not need to build an ark. But the account of Noah's obedience, God's judgment, and God's faithfulness — that was preserved *for* you.

Jesus gave the twelve apostles specific instructions for a specific mission (Mark 6:7-13). Some of those principles are timeless. Some were unique to that moment. The only way to tell the difference is context.

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” — Romans 15:4, NASB

Old Testament and New Testament

Rightly Dividing the Covenants

The Bible contains two major covenants. The Old Testament records the Law of Moses — God’s covenant with Israel, given at Sinai. The New Testament records the Law of Christ — established through His death on the cross and binding upon all people today.

Christians today live under the New Covenant. The Old Testament is essential for understanding God’s character, His plan of redemption, and the promises fulfilled in Christ — but the Law of Moses is not our governing authority.

“When He said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete.” —
Hebrews 8:13, NASB

This does not diminish the Old Testament. It honors the purpose for which God gave it — to point forward to Christ (Galatians 3:24). When applying Scripture, always ask: *Is this passage under the old covenant or the new? And what does the New Testament say about this subject?*

How the Bible Communicates

Four Modes of Biblical Authority

The Bible uses normal human communication to convey God’s will. This communication falls into four categories:

1. Direct Statements of Fact

Declarations of truth. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). This requires no interpretation — it is a statement to be accepted.

2. Direct Commands

“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). A command tells us what to do.

3. Approved Examples

When the early church practiced something with apostolic approval, the example carries authority. “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread” (Acts 20:7) establishes the pattern by approved example.

4. Necessary Inferences

When the evidence leads to only one reasonable conclusion, even if the text does not state it explicitly, the inference is necessary. These must be handled carefully — the inference must be the *only* logical conclusion, not merely a possible one.

Together, these are sometimes called the CENI framework: Commands, Examples, and Necessary Inferences. This is not an artificial system imposed on the Bible. It is simply how language works.

Honest Handling of Difficult Passages

The Courage to Say “I Don’t Know”

Not every passage is easy. Some texts are genuinely difficult, and faithful students have reached different conclusions on secondary matters throughout the history of the church.

Honest study requires the courage to:

- **Acknowledge when a passage is genuinely difficult**
- **Never twist Scripture to fit a predetermined conclusion**
- **Say “I don’t know” when the text does not provide a clear answer**
- **Present what the text says, even when it challenges popular assumptions**
- **Distinguish between what the Bible explicitly states and what we infer**

A qualified inference is not a weakness. It is intellectual honesty. When we say “the text necessarily implies” versus “the text explicitly states,” we are handling God’s Word with the precision it deserves.

Let Scripture Speak for Itself

The Safeguard Against Error

Let clear passages interpret difficult ones. Never build a doctrine on one verse when ten other verses speak to the same subject.

If a single verse seems to teach something that contradicts the weight of Scripture on that topic, the problem is almost certainly with the interpretation of the one, not the ten. This does not mean ignoring difficult verses. It means interpreting them in light of the full counsel of God.

"I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." —
Acts 20:27, NASB

Reading the Bible well means loving it enough to read it carefully.

A Note on Translation

The studies at NobleMind.Study use the New American Standard Bible (NASB) as the primary text. The NASB follows a word-for-word translation philosophy that prioritizes accuracy to the original Greek and Hebrew, making it especially suited for careful study.

Other translations are referenced when helpful for comparison or clarity. When translation choices significantly affect meaning, the underlying Greek or Hebrew is examined directly.

No English translation is inspired. The original manuscripts were. The goal of any good translation is to bring the reader as close to the original as possible — and the NASB does this with exceptional care.

An Invitation

These principles are not the property of any denomination, institution, or individual. They belong to anyone willing to open the Bible and read it honestly. They are offered in the spirit of the Bereans, who "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

If something taught by any person — including the author of this document — contradicts what you find in Scripture, believe Scripture. That is not a polite disclaimer. It is the most important principle on this page.

Let's see what the Bible says about it.

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