*Session 2*

*A Theology of Interpretation*

1. **What is Hermeneutics?**
   1. **Interpretation** – Using methods and tools to find the message and application
   2. **Hermeneutics** - The art and science of interpretation
2. The English word, “hermeneutics,” derives from the Greek *hermeneuō* which means to explain or interpret or translate.
3. Hermeneutics is a science, an art, and a spiritual act.
4. It can mean the principles or theories used in interpretation. If the same methods are followed, people should arrive at a similar interpretation of a passage although the application of the message may be different.
5. It necessitates two primary actions:
   1. Determining the meaning intended by the author
   2. Applying this meaning to a different situation.
6. It involves bridging the distance from “then” to “now.” There are many things that separate us from the world of the Bible, including:
   1. Time
   2. Language
   3. Culture
   4. Geography
7. It requires cultivating a disciplined sensitivity to the text, studying a passage until insight breaks through and we hear the Holy Spirit speaking to us.
8. It requires skill. Some people may be gifted with interpretation, but all people can learn skills and methods.
9. It necessitates pure motives, lest one distort Scripture. Second Corinthians 2:17 states: “Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.”
10. The help of the Holy Spirit is vital to the task of hermeneutics.
    1. **Exegesis** - The science of determining the original meaning

**Avoid “eisegesis”:** putting meaning back into a text.

**A** Plymouth Brethren elder in Ireland: “Wonderful things in the Bible I see, most of them put there by you and me.”

* 1. **Application** - The development of a contemporary meaning of a biblical text.
  2. **Exposition** – Communicating the meaning through preaching
  3. Our goal: to determine the meaning of a text and apply it today
  4. Three Basic Steps for Studying the Bible:
* Observation – looking at the facts contained in the passage and what is happening.
* Interpretation – studying the text to determine the author’s meaning and purpose.
* Application – discovering the relevance of this passage for contemporary faith and life.

1. **The Incarnational Approach to Interpreting the Bible (John 1:14)**

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

1. Jesus is the final and complete revelation of God:

God’s nature see in Jesus

Romans 5:8

God communicates through the Word, the Son

1. Jesus Christ is our interpretive lens

Hebrews 1:1-3a

1. The Bible records this ultimate Word to us from God.
2. The primary purpose of the Bible is to speak about Jesus.

John 5:39: “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

1. The Bible points the way to salvation through Christ.

The Old Testament *looks* *forward* the New Testament *reflects* *back*.

1. The Bible shows how to become Christ-like and be restored to the image of God.
2. The Bible gives *the way to live* as new creations in Christ.
3. **Reading the Bible as Story**
4. God chose to reveal himself through history
5. The Bible is the only complete story of God’s redeeming love.
6. Christ stands at the middle of this story.
7. Know the basic story:
8. The God creates (Genesis 1-2)
9. Human sinfulness and its consequences (Genesis 3-11)
10. The God chooses relationship in covenant (Genesis 12-Exodus 32)
11. Human unfaithfulness to covenant (Exodus 33-Malichi)
12. God’s final remedy in Christ (Matthew- John)
13. The new covenant community of the Church (Acts-Jude)
14. The completion of the story with triumph (Revelation)
15. The Authority of the Bible Today
16. The Bible was inspired by God when it was written.
17. The Holy Spirit still speaks today through the Bible.

Hebrews 4:12

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1. The Hermeneutical Process can be described in three movements:
2. **We must stand under the Bible, with it being authoritative over us:**

**Bible**

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**Interpreter**

Reverence, respect, submission

1. **We stand above the Bible, with the need to interpret it:**

**Interpreter**

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**Bible**

Use tools and best thinking 

1. **We stand alongside the Bible, in communication with the Living Word:**

**Interpreter ----------- Bible**

Dialog with the Bible and listen to the Holy Spirit

1. **Being Confronted with the Text**

God uses the Bible to move us from our “comfort zone” and change us.

1. **The Hermeneutical “Spiral”**  
   1. We come to the Bible with our experiences, needs, and presuppositions.  
   2. We study the text with our questions in mind.  
   3. We apply what we have studied.  
   4. We are changed, and we begin the process again.
2. **The Role of the Holy Spirit**
3. The Spirit inspired all stages of the development of the Bible
4. The Spirit works with our conscience:

“hide God’s law in our hearts” (Psalm 119:11)

1. The Holy Spirit points to the Living Word (John 16:13-14)
2. Sanctification affects our interpretation and helps us develop the “mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16) and experience transformation into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

**Big Ideas**

It is helpful to know the basic terms used in interpretation.

Jesus is the primary Word from God and the Bible helps us understand this Word.

The primary purpose of the Bible is to show us salvation in Jesus Christ.

As we come to the Bible, we must use good method while also listening to the Holy Spirit.

Studying the Bible can be described as a moving spiral as we listen, study, and obey.