

## An Overview of the Classes

Introduction: Class suggestions.

1. Help us become excited about studying the Bible, and enjoy it.
2. Increase the attendance at Bible classes, and set goals for our class.
3. Emphasize evangelism and soul-winning. Work on community outreach.
4. Edification of each other. Create a harmonious church family.
5. Emphasize Scripture memorization.
6. Emphasize the quality of teaching and a desire to study.
7. Encourage us to take the Bible classes seriously, and become true disciples.
8. Learn to apply God's word to the problems of everyday life (Biblical solutions)
9. Help newcomers and new converts to learn the Bible.
10. Give us the tools for serious Bible study. Help us become true disciples.
11. Have a women's class.
12. Emphasize mission interests.
13. Teach us how to use our gifts.
14. Study the Bible text and Biblical topics.
15. Learn the milk and meat of the word.

### I. Our Goals Illustrated

#### A. Warnings against apostasy.

1. **Heb. 2:1-4.** The possibilities of apostasy and exhortations. "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."
2. **Heb. 4:7.** "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

#### B. The writer's disappointment that they were still babes, and not able to take strong food.

1. **Heb. 5:11-14.** An illustration of our approach to investigative Bible study. "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is

not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

2. The warning of the dangers the recipients were facing.

C. Exhortation to move on to maturity.

1. **Heb. 6:1-3.** The exhortation for them to move on to maturity in Christ.
  - a. Perhaps they were comfortable with their present knowledge, but the writer says they are still babies in Christ.
  - b. “Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”
2. The interesting thing is that the writer goes right ahead and gives them the strong meat. The following ideas in Hebrews are among the most challenging in the entire New Testament.
  - a. He didn’t allow their lack of understanding of the “meaty issues” to keep him from challenging them with the deep things of the atonement.
  - b. This is part of our goal, to better understand God’s word. Not until then can we find the broader and more practical applications, and come to appreciate the great sacrifice of Christ.

D. Peter’s exhortation.

1. **II Pet. 3:18.** “Therefore dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”
2. **Why grow in knowledge? Eph. 4:14-15. Paul tells us in Ephesians.**
3. “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”
4. Let’s never be satisfied with what you know. Always be willing and anxious to investigate and learn more.
5. **II Cor. 13:5.** “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”

## II. A Forward Look.

- A. We can't know how to apply Scripture to the problems of life unless we understand what Scripture is teaching.
  1. We have three levels.
    - a. **Reading Scripture.**
    - b. **Studying Scripture.**
    - c. **Applying Scripture.**
  2. **Step #1. Reading Scripture.** This is needed as the "let's get better acquainted with Scripture" step.
    - a. This is what we do as a daily Bible reader or the reading we do before going to bed.
    - b. This is an important step because it keeps Scripture as a whole in our minds.
  3. **Step #2. Studying Scripture.** This is the "digging step" where we wrestle with the problems, conflicts, or difficulties in Scripture.
    - a. This step moves rather slowly because we make ourselves face some of the complexities of Scripture we generally pass by in step #1.
    - b. This is where we really come to an understanding of the meaning of Scripture.
  4. **Step #3. Applying Scripture.**
    - a. This is where we apply our understanding of Scripture to the problems and conflicts of our everyday life.
    - b. Some view this as the time when we combine our head knowledge with our heart knowledge = when we allow our understanding of Scripture to invade our behavior.
    - c. The Prodigal Son practiced this when he said, "I will set out and go back to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men. So he got up and went to his father."
  5. Unfortunately many times we tend to go from Step #1 to Step #3, leaving out Step #2.
    - a. We like to go to step #3 without taking step #2 because we are anxious to make applications.
    - b. We can't make strong applications of something we don't understand.

- c. Murder, theft, lying, and adultery are easily understood as wrong, but these are usually not the problems we face in life.
    - d. What are the demands of love and compassion, controlling our emotions, learning to forgive each other, etc. are much closer to home.
  - 6. One of the main reasons for religious divisions today is that people skip directly from Step #1 to Step #3, leaving out the difficulties of Step #2.
- B. How do we approach Step #2?
- 1. Look at the historical context.
    - a. Ask, “What was the situation of the original recipients of the book?”
    - b. Look at this in the Corinthian correspondence from Acts and history.
  - 2. Look at the literary genre of the book being studied. All types of literature aren’t treated the same as we read them.
    - a. The Bible has various types of literature.
    - b. Do we read history and poetry in the same way?
  - 3. Look at the important words in a passage.
    - a. Is the original meaning different from the current popular meaning?
    - b. Look up “baptize” in a dictionary. “To dip or immerse in water, or to pour or sprinkle water upon, as a religious rite.” (Webster’s Collegiate 5<sup>th</sup> edition). Few of us would accept this definition.
    - c. Are the important words we find ever used in different ways in Scripture?
  - 4. Life applications.
    - a. How does this information deepen my appreciation and gratitude for Christ?
    - b. How can I apply this to my life each day?

Conclusion:

- 1. There is a great need to grow spiritually.
- 2. To do this we need to seriously investigate Scripture.
- 3. Based on our study, we need to learn to apply Scripture to our lives.

# What It Meant And What It Means

## Introduction:

1. The Bible is to be our guide in all matters of ethics, morals, and religious beliefs.
  2. One of our problems in this is that our theology sometimes gets in the way of our exegesis.
  3. What is exegesis?
    - a. **εκ** means out of. From which we get the English word “exit.”
    - b. **γνωσις** means knowledge.
    - c. These two words combine to mean to extract the knowledge from its source. So exegesis means to extract the message from a text as it was originally intended.
    - d. Exegesis then must always precede and determine theology, and application of the text.
  4. What is eisegesis?
    - a. **εις** means into.
    - b. **εισεγεις** then means to put knowledge into a text.
    - c. This is where my theology gets in the way of my exegesis.
- I. Some important principles.
- A. Our basic task.
1. First and foremost, our task is a historical one. We are trying to take a literary work composed many centuries earlier than our time, and understand it in its own environment, not ours.
    - a. Application attempts to understand the historical information, and ascertain how it applies to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
    - b. This demands that we lay aside, as much as possible, our preconceived ideas, our own theologies, and our own beliefs.
    - c. Jms. 1:21. Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
  2. There is a basic difference between the New Testament and other literature.
    - a. Secular literature of the 1<sup>st</sup> century was written to the people of that day.

- b. The New Testament was written to the people of its own day, but also to the people of today.

B. What's in the toolbox?

1. The first requirement in exegesis is to understand the language.
  - a. A good book for word study is important because sometimes dictionary definitions are inadequate. In a later lesson Ron will discuss a group of valuable books which can help greatly in studying the Bible text.
  - b. You do not need to know the original language to enjoy word studies.
2. A concordance is necessary.
  - a. This is a book which lists words in the Bible, the phrase in which they occur, and the reference.
  - b. There are many very inexpensive CD's which have a variety of versions, commentaries, dictionaries, etc. Very cheap, and very good.
3. Where else did this same author discuss the same subject?
  - a. The writers of the New Testament usually did not give complete information on any one subject all in one place.
  - b. Look at the historical backgrounds of each of the places where the same subject is being discussed, and see what additional information you can find.
4. Does another author discuss the same subject in another book?
  - a. Be sure it is the same subject, not just a traditional or generally accepted position.
  - b. Evaluate that author's statements in light of the situation which he is addressing.
  - c. Use this with caution. This is the source of people saying, "You can prove anything with the Bible."
  - d. Look at Matthew 24 as an example. "Wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, etc. End of the world? No, the destruction of Jerusalem.
5. Make note of the larger context.
  - a. What is the book about as a whole?
  - b. To whom was it written?
  - c. When was it written?
  - d. What particular problems are being addressed?
  - e. Has the writer written to them before?
  - f. Study Bibles have good information on these topics.

6. Make note of the immediate context.
  - a. If I cut out a small portion of a very large painting, and showed it to you, and asked you to tell me how you liked that painting, you would have no basis for evaluation because you saw only a very small piece.
  - b. Ask, "How does this block of text fit into the overall argument or theme of the book as a whole?"
  - c. Ask, "How does a particular statement fit into the block of text being considered?"
  
7. When studying the Synoptic Gospels there are other considerations.
  - a. What do the other Gospel writers say in parallel accounts?
  - b. Do the others give additional information?

### C. Hermeneutics.

1. This is a fancy word for the basic ideas of interpretation.
2. We all bring our own baggage to the text, and it is difficult to get rid of that.
  - a. Hermeneutics is the effort to allow the exegesis of the text to come forward into our own situation, and see how it becomes relevant to us.
  - b. Presuppositions are not always bad. Some of my presuppositions are: I believe in God, I believe in Jesus and his atonement, I believe that the Bible is God's revelation to us.
  - c. But it is important that we evaluate our presuppositions in light of Scripture. This is difficult.
  - d. It is not the existence of presuppositions that is the problem, but the validity of those presuppositions can become a problem.

## III. Alexander Campbell and the Restoration Movement.

### A. Wrestling with the text.

1. Lord's Supper and baptism.
2. Thomas Campbell came to America first.
3. Alexander joined him later. They had, independently come to similar conclusions.

### B. They wrestled with difficult texts, and tested their own beliefs.

1. Through agonizing over the Biblical text they concluded that the only right way to serve God was to allow the Bible, rather than creeds and preconceived ideas, to be their guide.

2. The movement thus begun was joined by other great leaders who were striving to do the same things. Thus we have what came to be called the Stone-Campbell movement.
3. We are the heirs of their work.

IV. Campbell called the following seven principles the “naked rules” for interpretation. (I guess you could say that these are the bare essentials.)

A. Rule #1. Study first the historical circumstances of the book.

1. This means the author, the date of writing, the place, and the occasion of writing.
2. Look at the circumstances in which the recipients were living.

B. Rule #2. Who is speaking, and to whom is he speaking?

1. What problems or prejudices did the addressees have?
2. How might these things have determined what the writer was writing?
3. Look at II Corinthians as Paul defends himself against the abuses of some of his adversaries.
4. See II Cor. 7:2-5, 8-9 where Paul speaks very personally about his own troubles in his relationship to the Corinthians.

C. Rule #3. Interpret the Bible according to the same principles of interpretation you would use with any other book.

1. Don't force it to say something because “it is the Bible, not a secular book.”
2. But we must remember it was written for “**Them**” and for “**Us**.”

D. Rule #4. Common usage of words (definitions) must be used unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.

1. (Faith vs. belief in minds of some is the difference between saved believers, and those who only profess a propositional belief.)
2. Sometimes the use of parallel passages can clarify a passage.

E. Rule #5. Concerning the use of figures of speech, or figurative language, look for the point(s) of resemblance before drawing conclusions.

1. Try to ascertain the kind of resemblance being used by the author.
2. It should be taken as literal unless it is obviously not literal.

F. Rule #6. In the use of symbols, types, parables, and allegories we must ascertain the point the author is attempting to illustrate, and never go beyond that point.

1. Parables usually have a single main point, but not always.

2. Don't allegorize Scripture.
- G. Rule #7. We must come within the understanding distance.
1. This is, we must come close enough to God to hear his true voice in Scripture.
  2. This is the reason we hear such outlandish statements about Christianity from non-believers. They are removed from God, and cannot hear him speak through Scripture.
  3. There is a moral imperative in this as well as an imperative of integrity. Attitudes of mind – humility, openness, and the desire to listen to God – are all important.
  4. Pride and arrogance always stand as a barrier between the hearer and God.

Conclusion:

1. The joy of discovery comes from the hard work of studying, not just reading.
2. It's a little like falling in love. When you begin to discover the thrill of a committed relationship, the work itself to maintain the relationship becomes a part of its joy.

# The Concept of Faith In Paul and John

## Introduction:

1. Favorite words in the New Testament sometime have different emphasis from one writer to another.
    - a. The words “faith” or “believe” can mean:
      - 1) belief in testimony.
      - 2) belief in the truth of a propositional statement.
      - 3) trust.
      - 4) confidence.
      - 5) acceptance of a person.
      - 6) a body of doctrine.
      - 7) The gospel.
    - b. Greek has just one verb **πιστευω** word to express this, and one noun **πιστις** to express these ideas.
  2. In order to understand the author’s emphasis, we need to study the word in its contexts.
  3. In both John and Paul, the word has a central focus, and is used very frequently.
- I. John’s use of the word. **πιστευω** is very distinctive.
- A. In the Gospel, John uses the word about 100 times, always in its verb form
    1. John emphasizes content, or what is believed.
    2. The emphasis is whether or not you believe Jesus is who he claims to be.
  - B. Examples.
    1. **Jn. 1:49-50.** Nathaniel said, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel. Jesus said, ‘You believe because I told you . . .’” Notice that this is an affirmation of who Jesus is.
    2. **3:12.** To Nicodemus, Jesus said, “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?”
    3. **5:24.** I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.”
    4. **8:24.** “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins.” (The Greek does not have the bracketed words, only “I am.”)

5. **11:27.** Martha said, “Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ.”
- C. John is more propositional in what he says about belief or faith.
1. His whole emphasis is on, “Is Jesus really the person he claimed to be, and who his disciples claimed he was?”
  2. Do you believe in his Messiahship as he claimed it?
  3. Do you believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?
- D. John uses “believe” and “know” in somewhat the same ways.
1. **Jn. 3:2.** Nicodemus said to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God.”
  2. **Jn. 4:42.** The Samaritan people replying to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”
  3. **Jn. 10:38.** “But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

## II. Paul’s use of the word “faith.”

- A. In Paul, we have a wider variety of uses of the word than we find in John.
1. Paul uses it to speak of belief in a propositional statement – belief in testimony. Look at examples.
    - a. **I Cor. 3:5.** “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe.” That is, you came to a belief in the truth of the gospel. The book of Acts tells of how Paul tried to convince the Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus.
    - b. **I Thess. 4:14.** “We believe that Jesus died and rose again.” This is their belief in the propositional truth of the facts of Jesus death and resurrection.
    - c. **II Thess. 1:10.** “Because you believed our testimony to you.”
    - d. **1 Cor. 15:3-4** “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” This always formed the basis for Paul’s preaching.
    - e. **I Cor. 2:4-5.** “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.” Here Paul shows that his preaching had, as its goal, the creation of faith – belief that his testimony was true, but that also has a hint of trust as well.

2. When he writes to these people he doesn't try to prove the proposition of the divinity and Messiahship of Jesus, yet he builds on these. In a sense, he takes these things for granted, although he mentions their importance at times.
- B. But does this belief lead to anything more than just an acknowledgement that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God"?
1. Paul goes beyond this to emphasize what belief in testimony must lead to, *i.e.*, a strong sense of trust. This is best seen in Romans and Galatians.
  2. **Rom. 4:3.** Paul's teaching about faith is based in the faith of Abraham which goes back to Genesis.
    - a. **Gen. 12:1-3.** God promised Abraham that a great nation would come from him, yet Sarah was barren.
    - b. **Gen. 15:6.** After Abraham expressed his confusion about the promise, since Sarah still had no child, God assured him that it would come to pass. The passage then says, "Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness."
    - c. Notice that this is moving toward trust, since Abraham could see no human way this could come about.
    - d. **Gen. 17:19.** When Abraham thought that Ishmael might be the means of fulfilling the promise, God said that Sarah would have a child.
    - e. **Rom. 4:18-21.** Paul uses this to show that Abraham trusted in God to fulfill his promise.
    - f. Notice that Paul says Abraham's faith was, "against all hope," that it all transpired "without weakening in his faith," and that "he did not waver through unbelief," but was "fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." Notice the strong sense of trust in this.
    - g. Paul finally says that the fact that this was credited to Abraham as righteousness was not written for "him alone, but also for us to whom God will credit righteousness."
  3. Paul basically says, "You will trust in something for your salvation. What will it be? Will you trust in your own goodness, ceremonies – such as going to church – (the popular idea today), or will it be your trust in the atonement of Christ?" He will show that trust in the atonement of Christ brings many very strong demands for commitment to Christ, not just going to church.
- C. He goes on to a much broader use of the word "faith."
- a. Notice how this differs from John whose main thrust is one's acceptance of the claims of Jesus.
  - b. In John, the miracles of Jesus are designed to be signs, pointing to the validity of the claims of Jesus concerning his Messiahship and his relationship to the Father. This is John's thrust. You must believe this.

D. A few times Paul uses the word to stand for a body of teaching or doctrine. “The faith,” meaning the gospel.

1. **I Cor. 16:13.** “Stand firm in the faith.”
2. **II Cor. 13:5.** “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.”
3. **Gal. 1:23.** “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”
4. **Eph. 4:5.** “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”
5. **Eph. 4:13.** “Until we all reach unity in the faith.”

Conclusion:

1. The different ways the writers of the Bible use this word gives us a much fuller concept of the mind of God than if we fail to stop and study the word as used by each author.
2. Studying words adds to the excitement and joy of Bible study because in it we come to understand God’s message more clearly, and understand ourselves in the context of His word.

# Word Study

## Reconciliation

Introduction:

Text: II Cor. 5:11-21

1. This is the longest block of Scripture in the Bible dealing with reconciliation. We want to study this key word very briefly in its context.
2. What does the word mean? Some will say, salvation, forgiveness, peace, etc.
3. We seldom look up words the Bible uses, because we don't really study. We read, and let the words mean what we want them to mean.
4. Reconciling our bank statement means we work out agreement between what the bank says we have and what our checkbook says we have.

I. Brief background of the passage.

A. Paul's problems with Corinth.

1. Opposition to him personally.
2. Opposition concerning his apostolic authority.
3. His visits to Corinth and their rejection of him.
4. The church's repentance and Paul's love for them.

B. This book is strongly personal, reminiscent, and very sentimental. (But not mushy.)

1. He relates some of his past experience with them, their problems with him, and their change in attitude.
2. In reading it, we need to get into the mood of Paul to experience his feelings as he wrote, and grasp the depth of his statements about reconciliation.

II. Reconciliation, reconcile.

A. The meaning of the word.

1. The root of the word means to exchange, as money changers make exchanges of equivalent sums, to make adjustments so things are fair, restore to favor, the act of harmonizing.
2. Bringing together in a harmonious relationship, those who were estranged or hostile.

B. The text.

1. **5:14.** Paul prefaces the statements about reconciliation by stating, “For Christ’s love compels us.”
2. **5:17.** “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
3. **5:18.** “All this is from God who *reconciled* us to himself through Christ and gave to us the ministry of *reconciliation*.”
4. **5:20.** “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”
5. I must notice that Paul emphasizes the fact that all of this comes from God, and we are reconciled to God through Christ. God is not reconciled to us.

C. The text applied.

1. Now that we have looked seriously at the meaning of the word, and have tried to recreate the mood of the text, what does it mean to us?
2. The sacrifice of Christ was not just to save me or to forgive my sins, but to bring about harmony between God and me.
3. I am totally indebted to God for this, for he paid the price.
4. Paul uses this principle to reestablish harmony between himself and the Corinthians. Let me remember that Christ paid the price of my reconciliation.
5. He who had no sin became sin for me, in order to bring about harmony between God and me. In gratitude, I can use this principle to bring about harmony between myself and one from whom I have been estranged.

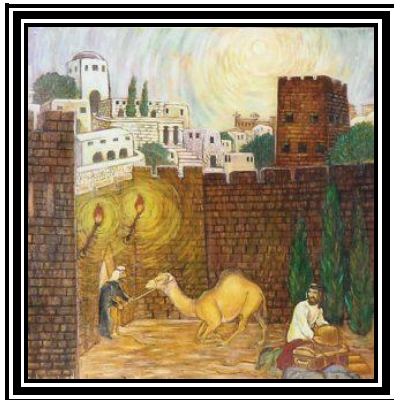
Conclusion:

1. Word studies help us see what the text meant to the original recipients.
2. By seeing this more clearly, I can better understand how to apply it to myself.

## Historical and Cultural Background In Biblical Interpretation

### Introduction:

1. Understanding and using the historical and cultural background of particular books of the Bible is one of the most important, but probably one of the most neglected areas of Bible study.
2. We usually have to depend on the work of competent scholarship in order to use this properly, but sometime information or misinformation is passed on because we have not taken time to investigate the background material.
  - a. **Mark 10:25.** “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”
  - b. This is thought to have come from at least the 15th century, and possibly as early as the 9th but not earlier. However, there is no historical evidence for a gate in Jerusalem called the “Needle’s eye.”



3. We want to look at some principles which will help us understand the Bible, and properly apply it today.
  4. The book, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart is an excellent book on how to study the Bible.
  5. In this lesson we will deal with using the historical and cultural background as we read the Epistles.
- I. Using cultural and historical backgrounds.
- A. Some things to remember when studying the epistles.
1. Each letter was written with particular local situations in mind.
  2. Many of the things discussed in the Epistles may have been influenced by the culture and history of the recipients.

- a. Some of the instructions in the epistles had to do with personal needs of the writer and/or the recipients. Paul's instruction to Timothy requesting that on his way to Rome that he go by Troas and get Paul's cloak from Carpus in Troas, along with his books and parchments. II Tim. 4:13.

B. Two guidelines.

1. As we read a passage, we need to ask, "What is central New Testament teaching, and what is peripheral?" All statements in the Bible are not of equal importance.
  - a. We always do this, whether consciously or unconsciously.
  - b. Women wearing veils, foot washing, the holy kiss. These are not on the same plane as the atonement, love for each other, or sins of murder, adultery, or idolatry. The first group is obviously cultural while the other group is moral and applicable in all cultures.
2. Contrast these with Paul's list of sins at various places.
  - a. **Gal. 5:19.** "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."
  - b. **I Cor 6:9-11.** "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."
  - c. We should be aware that the sexual sins mentioned by Paul here were acceptable to the pagan culture of his day, and some of them were practiced as parts of their religious activities. Paul, however, shows that they are completely unacceptable to the Christian.
3. At times, the writers give their own opinions, not claiming inspiration.
  - a. **I Cor. 7:6-10.** Paul is speaking about certain aspects of marriage. Concerning some of his statements he says, "I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she

must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.”

- b. When studying a topic, we must look at other places in the New Testament where the subject is addressed, and see the importance it is given elsewhere.

## II. Understanding and application.

### A. Understanding the meaning of a passage to its original recipients before we can understand its application in our own time.

1. The writers, *e.g.* Paul writing to Corinth, could not have meant something that would have been impossible for his recipients to understand or do. Therefore I cannot just apply it to our culture without considering its original application.
2. First we must remember that the epistles were written to people in the first century, addressing their immediate needs, as well as for us.
  - a. Some don't like to use the expression, "interpret the Bible" because they believe that is making the Bible say something it doesn't say.
  - b. This is the opposite of what the word means: "to explain or tell the meaning of: present in understandable terms." (Webster's Dictionary).
  - c. Every time we read something, or hear something and try to understand, we are engaging in interpretation.

### B. The importance of the original historical and cultural background.

1. We must ask:
  - a. "What was the situation or problem(s) being addressed in the passage?"
  - b. "What cultural or historical elements might have determined the instructions given?"
  - c. "Are the Biblical directives limited to a cultural circumstance being addressed by the writer?"
  - d. "What applicable principles may be rightfully inferred from the text?" (Are the statements relating to women wearing veils on the same level as statements relating to honesty, sexual purity, murder, and stealing?)
  - e. "Does this statement apply to a certain person, and to no other?" (II Tim 4:13. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.") Of course this isn't applicable to us, because it is a personal request.
  - f. "Do we share an exact or strongly similar situation with those to whom the epistles was originally addressed?" If we do, then application today becomes easier.

2. Much of the religious division of our day is based on these types of problem.
3. We can't answer the question, "How do we apply a passage?" until we consider whether or not it is historically and culturally limited.
  - a. One pitfall is that we read into some passages our own church traditions or practices. This is part of the baggage we bring to the Bible text.
  - b. We unconsciously do this with some frequency.

C. **I Cor. 10:23-33.** A brief illustration. Eating meat sacrificed to idols.

1. This was a 1<sup>st</sup> century problem because they were constantly faced with paganism, and meat, which had been offered in sacrifice to idols, was for sale in the marketplace. Paul shows that eating this meat was really a matter of indifference, not sinful, but it was difficult for some to accept this, and it may have been destructive to their faith. This may have limited their freedom.
2. We do not have a situation like that today, but we need to see if there is a principle involved which is applicable in our 21<sup>st</sup> century society.
3. Notice that some have applied this to women wearing jewelry, types of clothing, types of entertainment, T.V., movies, etc.
4. **10:32.** "Do not cause anyone to stumble." **απροσκοπος** meaning to give no offense, not to damage that person's faith or salvation. See also Rom. 14 where even stronger language is used.
5. Notice that Paul did not speak simply about those who object or don't like what I am doing, but speaks of causing damage to another's faith or salvation.

Conclusion:

1. A close look at the cultural and historical background is not always easy, but it adds immeasurably to our understanding of the Bible.
2. This kind of study compels us to restudy our view of Biblical directives, and helps us apply these principles more nearly correctly.