

Christian Ambassador Training

How We Know God II - Scripture

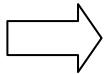
Review/Preview

➤ General Revelation

- Creation **Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:19-20**
- Providence (protective care and creative order) **Acts 14:14-18; 17:26-29**
- Moral Conscience (God’s moral law, written on our hearts) **Rom 1:29-32; 2:12-16**

➤ Special Revelation

- Historical
- In Christ: The Word (essence, attributes, divine self expression) of God in bodily form. **Hebrews 1:2; John 1:1-5; John 1:14-18**



- Scripture: The Word (essence, attributes, divine self expression) of God in Written form **1 Tim 3:16**

Group Discussion



Culturally speaking, where do we get what we know (or think we know) about God?

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Thesis One: Sola Scriptura

We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.¹

¹ The Cambridge Declaration (<http://www.reformed.org/documents/cambridge.html>)

So, are we saying there are No personal or (subjective) experiences?!

Again, we are not saying that there are no personal or subjective experiences involved here. We believe God's Spirit often enlightens us to the truths in Scripture or to new applications of those truths in our lives (the light goes on, exciting, ...).

This is different from determining meaning of the text. To claim that a verse has one meaning for you and another for someone else is **relativism**, a product of the postmodern culture. A passage may certainly apply differently (admonitions to husbands are applied differently by men and women, etc.), but it cannot have a different correct meaning.

The key to remember here is that meaning is one and application can be many. So be careful not to mistake meaning for application.

Our source for God's Special Revelation: **The Bible** + _____

Pursuing 'new' or 'unique' communication from God? Elevating it to the level of Scripture? Somber warning: **2 Peter 1:16-21**

Discussion 1 -- *Sola Scriptura*

1. What are some popular other sources² within the professing Church? [what about those on the board? -- The world or the church or both? -- *Examples: Where do we get our views on the supremacy of free will? Our views on end times? Our views on how a person gets "saved"? Or even what they need to be saved from? Our views on hell? Our views on God's nature?*]
2. Do you ever find yourself looking for a special, authoritative word from God outside of Scripture? [*a sign, a special feeling, a "peace about it" ...*]
3. Discuss the dangers of allowing preference or intuition determine your theology. [Isaiah 55:9; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 9:13-21]
4. Is "tradition" always wrong? If not, by what standard is it to be measured? --*Scripture*. How willing are you to have your traditions shaken or crushed by God's Word? Does this contradict the authority of Church leadership (elders, etc.)? [*Just me and my Bible...*]

² We have a 3 week short course on "Decision Making and the Will of God" that covers this in greater detail. Find all the notes here: <http://www.objectivegospel.org/equip/decisionmaking>

The Bible is God's Authoritative Word -- Now what?

How does God intend for us to use His Word?

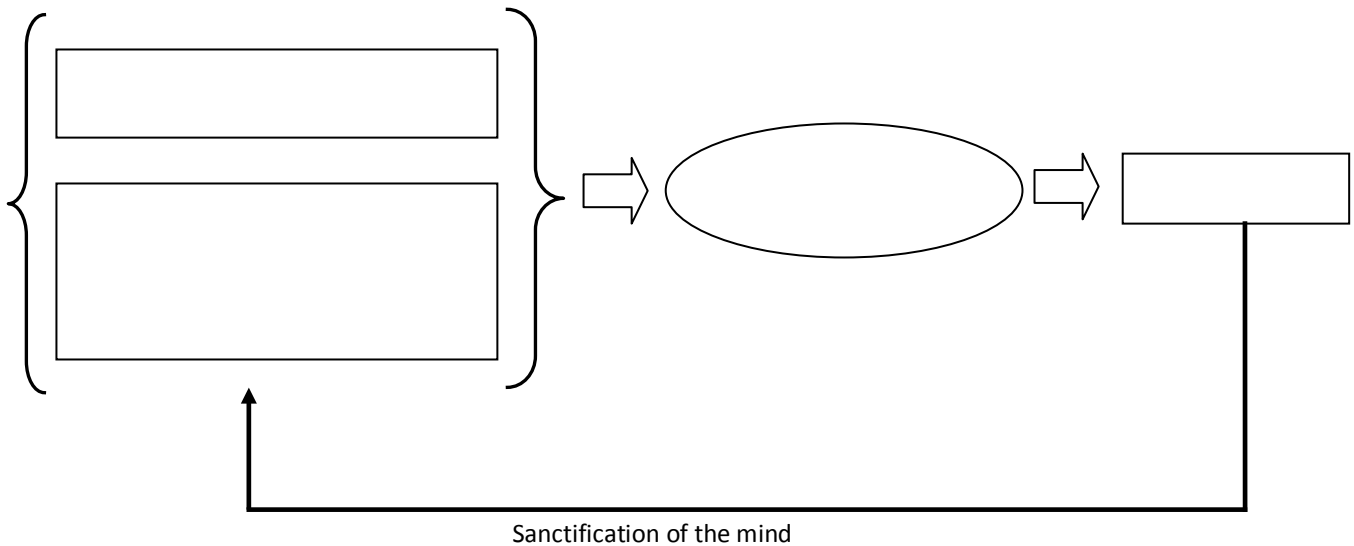
People can point to the same Bible as their authority yet have vastly different beliefs--***How can this be?***

Differing _____ and differing _____

Your ***theological grid*** is your current doctrinal understanding--the filter through which you process everything you read or hear about all things theological.

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Question: How is yours ***forming?***



- Do you believe *exactly* the same as you did a year ago? *Ten years ago? Is that a good thing?*
- Are you teachable?
- Are you pursuing truth?
- Is change always positive?

Your *method of interpretation* (hermeneutics) is critical to the health of your mental sanctification. Here is a fascinating history lesson:

The Reformers' Hermeneutic³: Grammatical, Historical, and Christ-Centered

It is widely recognized that the formal principle underlying the Reformation was nothing other than *sola scriptura*: the reformers' diehard commitment to the other great *solas* was an effect arising from their desire to be guided by scriptures alone. The exegesis and interpretation of the bible was the one great means by which the war against Roman corruption was waged; which is almost the same thing as saying that ***the battle was basically a hermeneutical struggle***. In light of these observations, one could say that the key event marking the beginning of the Reformation occurred, not in 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his theses to the church door in Wittenberg; but two years prior to that, when ***he rejected Origin's four-layered hermeneutic in favor of what he called the grammatical-historical sense***.⁴

Does your interpretative method:

- *Take into account the historical/cultural context?*
- *Take into account the genre of the text (historical narrative, poetic, apocalyptic)?*
- *All interpreters take some biblical language to be metaphoric/figurative. How do you know when that is appropriate?*

Exegesis vs. Eisegesis

exegesis - "to lead out of" --***the interpreter is led to his conclusions by following the text.***

eisegesis - "to lead into" --***the interpreter injects his own ideas into the text***⁵

Discussion 2 -- Interpretation/Exegesis

1. **The Cults** -- Jehovah's Witnesses claim that their ultimate authority is the Bible. Yet they deny the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, his bodily resurrection, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, ... How can this be? *Speak in terms of theological grid and authority.*

³ Hermeneutics is the study of the correct methods of interpretation. Grudem's Systematic Theology p. 108.

⁴ Nathan Pitchford on the Reformation Theology web site: (*emphasis added*)

http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/03/the_reformers_hermeneutic_gram.php

⁵ From the gotquestions.org web site--I cannot vouch for other material on this site (it may be excellent), but this is a helpful description of this distinction. <http://www.gotquestions.org/exegesis-eisegesis.html>

2. **Conforming to the World** (*Cultural Surrender*) --The Church has a “rich” history of people attempting to rescue it from irrelevance by reshaping it in the image of the prevailing culture. We’ll have a “history of worldliness” lesson later in this class. **Theological Liberalism** (*early 20th century movement*) --With the enlightenment came modernism’s promise that science would answer all of our questions. There was a strong movement towards *naturalism* as the reigning philosophy of science. Belief in miracles was no longer culturally acceptable. *How has this affected the Church?*⁶

Pop-Agnosticism (*late 20th early 21st century movement*) --With the realization that science wouldn’t answer every question (though we make impressive strides, we only run into more and greater questions!) modernism gave way to post-modernism and its grotesque “*if we can’t know everything, we can’t know anything for sure*” over-reaction to the failures of modernism. *How has this affected the Church?*

3. **Compare these Cases** -- *After you groan, see if you can discern what’s going on here.*

Case 1: A woman in the Church is unhappy in her marriage and is (mutually) attracted to another man. Seeking a word from God she opens her Bible and comes across “put on the new man” (Colossians 3:10)... so she does.

Case 2: There was a single guy in the Church who was attracted to a single young lady in the Church. He opened his Bible looking for a word from God and came across “Grace be with you” (2 Tim 4:22) ... and since her name is Grace, this is his confirmation.

- What are the difference between these? The similarities?
- Are you offended by the application or are you offended by the method?
- As Christ’s ambassador, can you discern the problem? How might you counsel them?

_____ Bible hermeneutic- scanning through it looking for personal private messages in the text. (treat their Bibles like a Ouija Board or Magic Eight Ball)

For some, the Bible is primarily a book that magically supplies guidance for personal problems, or a sourcebook for ethics or politics, or a mysterious or poetic guide to meaningful personal experience.⁷ --Dan McCartney, *Let the Reader Understand* p. 44

⁶ See *Christianity and Liberalism* by J. Gresham Machen. I can’t recommend this book highly enough.

⁷ McCartney, Dan, *Let the Reader Understand*, P & R Publishing; 2 edition (August 1, 2002) , p. 44.

A Common Cop out to seeking meaning from Scripture, in context is = “The Holy Spirit is my teacher”

The most often heard justification for Ouija Bible interpretation is that they just pray and ask God to teach them the meaning of the text—and cite John 14:26.

^{ESV} **John 14:26** But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

This is unbiblical and slothful. In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are commanded to be diligent (“study” KJV) to be able to rightly handle the Word of God. Yes, the Holy Spirit teaches us the meaning of the text, but that meaning is the meaning intended by the original author in the original context as he was “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21), and the means by which God intended for us to learn his message is by diligent preparation, not “drive by” interpretation or pagan divination.

If you took Ron’s leadership seminar, you know the answer to this: When it comes to discovering meaning of the Bible, Context is _____.

Disciplines through which you can Know God better, as He has revealed himself in the Scriptures:

1. Personal Bible reading
 - a. Remember, Context is _____.
 - b. Find out the author, occasion, and purpose of each book (ESV Study Bible is a great place to start)
2. Meditation (not mystical mindlessness, but focused concentration on God and His Word and quietness--Pray the Scriptures)
3. Studying
4. Memorization
5. Listening to it (in your car, while you work, while you fold laundry, work out, do dishes..)
6. Weekly preaching of God’s word in a local church
 - a. Pay close attention, pray as you listen, and take good notes.

Verses to pray when you approach God’s Word:

^{ESV} **Psalm 119:36** Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

^{ESV} **Psalm 119:18** Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

^{ESV} **Psalm 90:14** Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

^{ESV} **Psalm 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore