

The Bible

A Breakdown

The Bible is the Word of God:

2 Timothy 3:16a - All Scripture is breathed out by God...

2 Peter 1:20-21 - knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is structured with clearly marked units:

Old Testament - 39 Books

Law

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Major Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

Historical

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 and 2 Samuel
1 and 2 Kings
1 and 2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther

Minor Prophets

Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Poetry/Wisdom Lit.

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon

New Testament - 27 Books

Gospels

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

General Letters

Hebrews
James
1 and 2 Peter
1-3 John
Jude

Church History

Acts

Prophecy

Revelation

Paul's Letters

Romans
1 and 2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 and 2 Thessalonians
1 and 2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

Biblical Hermeneutics from GotQuestions.org

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of the principles and methods of interpreting the text of the Bible. Second Timothy 2:15 commands believers to be involved in hermeneutics: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who . . . correctly handles the word of truth.” The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to help us to know how to properly interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.

The most important law of biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. We are to understand the Bible in its normal or plain meaning, unless the passage is obviously intended to be symbolic or if figures of speech are employed. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. For example, when Jesus speaks of having fed “the five thousand” in Mark 8:19, the law of hermeneutics says we should understand five thousand literally—there was a crowd of hungry people that numbered five thousand who were fed with real bread and fish by a miracle-working Savior. Any attempt to “spiritualize” the number or to deny a literal miracle is to do injustice to the text and ignore the purpose of language, which is to communicate. Some interpreters make the mistake of trying to read between the lines of Scripture to come up with esoteric meanings that are not truly in the text, as if every passage has a hidden spiritual truth that we should seek to decrypt. Biblical hermeneutics keeps us faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and away from allegorizing Bible verses that should be understood literally.

A second crucial law of biblical hermeneutics is that passages must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually. Interpreting a passage historically means we must seek to understand the culture, background, and situation that prompted the text. For example, in order to fully understand Jonah’s flight in Jonah 1:1–3, we should research the history of the Assyrians as related to Israel. Interpreting a passage grammatically requires one to follow the rules of grammar and recognize the nuances of Hebrew and Greek. For example, when Paul writes of “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” in Titus 2:13, the rules of grammar state that God and Savior are parallel terms and they are both in apposition to Jesus Christ—in other words, Paul clearly calls Jesus “our great God.” Interpreting a passage contextually involves considering the context of a verse or passage when trying to determine the meaning. The context includes the verses immediately preceding and following, the chapter, the book, and, most broadly, the entire Bible. For example, many puzzling statements in Ecclesiastes become clearer when kept in context—the book of Ecclesiastes is written from the earthly perspective “under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3). In fact, the phrase under the sun is repeated about thirty times in the book, establishing the context for all that is “vanity” in this world.

A third law of biblical hermeneutics is that Scripture is always the best interpreter of Scripture. For this reason, we always compare Scripture with Scripture when trying to determine the meaning of a passage. For example, Isaiah’s condemnation of Judah’s desire to seek Egypt’s help and their reliance on a strong cavalry (Isaiah 31:1) was motivated, in part, by God’s explicit command that His people not go to Egypt to seek horses (Deuteronomy 17:16).