

My 10 Presuppositions for Interpretation

a brief position paper by Phil Myers, PhD

1. We believe that there is **only one "right" interpretation[s]** of any given Biblical passage - **the meaning(s) God intended** when He "breathed" His Word into the ear of the human writer, and this interpretation applies to all cultures in all ages.

- a. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." II Peter 1:20
- b. It is invalid to ask the question, "What does this passage mean to you?" *[or to me]*. It is, however, legitimate to ask, "How can I use or apply this passage personally?"
- c. Although it has only one *correct understanding*, a particular passage may have many *applications*.

2. We believe **proper interpretation comes through effort**, i.e. rightly dividing *[correctly discerning]* the Word of Truth. II Tim 2.15 Not all parts of Scripture are easily understood.

"...even as our brother Paul... hath written unto you... some things which are hard to be understood which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures." 2 Peter 3:15-16

We must follow the pattern of the noble-minded Bereans in Acts 17.11 who diligently "searched the Scriptures," seeking to learn if the Gospel Paul was preaching to them was true.

"We do not believe that God is pleased with sloppy theology." *John Walvoord, Dallas Theological Seminary*

3. The role of the **Holy Spirit is critical in illuminating** the Scriptures to us. The unsaved man cannot understand some biblical material.

"The Natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." I Cor 2.14

- a. "The key role of the Spirit in our understanding of Scripture, is not to add information, or to give special translating abilities, but to soften our hearts." *Don Clossom*
- b. "Ye shall seek Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me **with all your heart**." Jer 29.13
- c. The unsaved man who seeks truth is enabled by the Spirit, but he must "believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Heb 11.6
- d. His work with the unsaved is to open the eyes of the spiritually blind. II Cor 4.4,5

4. We believe God didn't write in code. He wrote to reveal His heart and mind. His thoughts are **recorded in human grammar and accommodated to human language**. God the Infinite communicates with man the finite. *Robert Hommel*

5. We believe in the precept of **non-contradiction**. No part of the Bible may be interpreted so as to contradict another part.

6. We believe the entire Word reveals and **speaks of Christ**.

(on the road to Emmaus) "beginning at Moses and all the prophets He (Jesus) expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24.27

However, I have been unable to find specific verses which distinctly allude to Jesus in 100% of the Bible books. Many have made "contrived" lists, but none are convincing.

7. We believe the Bible was written in a specific culture - the ancient Jewish or "Semitic" culture of the near East. Our culture is **sometimes similar and other times vastly different** from that of the writers of Scripture.

8. We believe **progressive illumination** *[sometimes called Progressive Revelation]* is the process by which God reveals information at critical moments in history in which He had intentionally not revealed in the Garden: i.e. *[at least these 10]* Abrahamic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, the Law, NT "Mysteries," the Church universal, the setting aside of Israel, the Messiah, the Millennium, the fulfillment of the Law by Jesus, and finally the Rapture. He opens some windows more gradually than others to let in more light.

9. We believe **meditation and contemplation**, not just scholarship, **is necessary**. Scripture is mostly designed to help us as we encourage believers to grow in **grace** *[not just knowledge]*.

Ps 119.97 "O, how I love Thy Law. It is my mediation all the day."

commands to obey	errors to avoid	examples to follow	
sins to shun	promises to remember	attitudes to correct	attributes of God to embrace

10. We believe there is **no accurate** “**feminist** *[or gender neutral]* **hermeneutic**,” or “ecological hermeneutic,” or “twenty-first century hermeneutic,” or “western culture hermeneutic,” et al. The outcome of diligent examination must depend on objective use of principles, not biases or predetermined conclusions.

I am cautious about recommending study Bibles such as—

the Woodsman’s Bible

the Teenager’s Bible

the Athlete’s Bible

the Businesswoman’s Bible

Sensitive applications for groups are wonderful. We all must apply Scripture to our daily lives, but I fear that a fixation on application may be sought at the expense of cautious observation and careful interpretation. I’ve heard preachers speak of Mary’s pregnancy insisting that she must have been a teenager. T.B.D.S. The Bible simply does not demand that she was even under 30 years old. Now, if you ask for my OPINION, I guess she was close to age 20. But that guess is based on culture, not Scripture.

— All of the above have been applicable since the first century. —

— “Don’t you never preach nothin’ that ain’t been preached befo’ !” —