

Hermeneutics - Part 5

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Introduction:

A. We have covered the law of the heart.

B. We have covered the laws of language.

1. Study the historical cultural background.

2. Study the book itself, its theme.

3. Study the development of thought within the theme.

a. *How to Read a Book* is a good book to read about reading.

b. A book in the Bible is the largest basic unit of study.

c. Spend more time in each book to master the content.

I. The next principle of hermeneutics we want to discuss today is context.

A. We can't take the Bible out of context.

1. But what is context?

2. We have been raised on textual preaching, often unrelated to each other.

3. To ignore context in any attempt at interpretation is at best a stupid practice and at worst a vicious practice.

B. What does context do to a verse?

1. A benediction says, "The Lord watch between me and thee while we're absent from each other." (Genesis 31:43)

2. The context of this benediction, however, is an agreement between Laban and Jacob.

a. Jacob had just fled from Laban with his daughters and flocks.

b. Jacob argued that the women and the flocks were his by right of his work.

c. Laban reluctantly acquiesced but built a pile of stones to be a separation between them so that they would not kill each other.

d. The benediction was actually a request of God to watch between them so that they would not turn to violence.

3. By grace we are saved through faith and not of works lest anyone should boast.
4. The soul that sinneth it shall die. (Ezekiel 18)
 - a. This verse is often used to try to convince people that they are sinners and in need of God's forgiveness.
 - b. The context refers to the saying that current suffering is due to the sin of previous generations.
 - c. Ezekiel is saying that current suffering is due to the sin of current generations, especially the captivity of Babylon.
5. Let thy servant depart in peace is a desire of an old man to die now that he had seen the Messiah so when we use this expression as a benediction we are wishing our people to die. (Luke 2)
6. Some women in trying to keep young people from alcohol use the verse about handle not nor taste from Colossians 2.
 - a. The context of this verse, however, deals with not subjecting yourself to legalistic teaching.
 - b. Thus it could be used to communicate the opposite of what the women wanted.
7. The blessing of the Lord makes rich and he adds no sorrow to it. (Proverbs 10:20)
 - a. The context here does not change because Proverbs often have no prevailing context.
 - b. We need to look for legitimate context.
8. Context means to weave together.
 - a. A central thought weaves verses together.
 - b. Verses and chapters are artificial dividers.
 - c. Paragraphs present one central idea and should not be ignored.
 - d. Proverbs is a list of individual proverbs without a united theme.
 - e. Most of the Scripture does, however, have a unifying thought.

C. Scripture must be interpreted in light of the context, the unifying thought of the individual paragraphs.

1. A paragraph is the smallest unit of a writer's thought.
2. Chapters are composed of many paragraphs.

3. The New American Standard has better paragraph divisions than the King James.
4. Not all translations are the same.
5. The original Greek and Hebrew are the best languages in which to study the word.
6. Pay attention to context while you study.

II. The next two principles of hermeneutics go hand in hand and are quite demanding because they demand that you use the original languages.

A. Every language is made up of words that need to be studied for depth of meaning.

1. We must understand the author's use of words in his sentences.
2. Going back to the original languages is helpful here because translations sometimes can be misleading.
3. Words have meaning only in context.
4. A church is not defined by the building.
5. One word can be used in different ways.
 - a. Believers are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers for what fellowship does light have with darkness. (2 Corinthians 6:14)
 1. Fellowship means sounding together as a symphony.
 2. When sounds fit together we have harmony.
 - b. Believers and unbelievers do not make harmony.
6. One tool to use in getting to the original language is an exhaustive concordance like Strong's that has a Greek and Hebrew dictionary.
7. Vines is also a good book for word studies.
8. Study this verse. (2 Corinthians 12:9)