

He Gave Us Scripture: Foundations of Interpretation

Study Guide

LESSON
FIVE

THE COMPLEXITY OF
MEANING



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CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE	3
NOTES	4
I. INTRODUCTION (0:20)	4
II. LITERAL SENSE (1:52)	4
A. Multiple Meanings (4:56)	4
B. Singular Meaning (17:41)	5
III. FULL VALUE (26:15)	6
A. Original Meaning (28:15)	6
B. Biblical Elaborations (33:30)	6
C. Legitimate Applications (43:55)	7
IV. CONCLUSION (52:47)	7
REVIEW QUESTIONS	8
APPLICATION QUESTIONS	12

HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

II. Literal Sense (1:52)

The literal sense examines Scripture according to the intentions of the authors and the historical contexts of their original audiences.

A. Multiple Meanings (4:56)

Some interpreters have said that the literal sense is only one of Scripture's multiple meanings.

Allegorical approach: interprets people, places, things and events in Scripture as if they were symbols or metaphors for spiritual truths.

The *Quadriga* is an interpretive tool used to indicate that the Scriptures are harnessed to four distinct meanings.

B. Singular Meaning (17:41)

Other interpreters have argued that the literal sense is the singular meaning of Scripture.

III. Full Value (26:15)

Scripture's full value refers to the total significance of a text, consisting of its original meaning, all its biblical elaborations, and all its legitimate applications.

A. Original Meaning (28:15)

The concepts, behaviors, and emotions that the divine and human writers jointly intended the document to communicate to its first audience.

B. Biblical Elaborations (33:30)

Places where one part of Scripture directly or indirectly comments on an aspect of the meaning of another passage in Scripture.

C. Legitimate Applications (43:55)

The conceptual, behavioral and emotional impacts that the original meaning and biblical elaborations of a passage should have on the audience.

IV. Conclusion (52:47)

3. Explain how Thomas Aquinas and other interpreters argued for a singular meaning of Scripture.

4. What characteristics help us discover the “full value” of a passage?

5. What do we mean by the “original meaning” of a text?

6. List and describe the three types of biblical elaborations often used in Scripture.

7. How can our legitimate applications assist us in finding the full sense of Scripture?

Application Questions

1. How does knowing the literal sense of Scripture personally help you as you interpret the Bible?
2. How can viewing the Scriptures as having multiple meanings affect the way you read and interpret the Bible?
3. Do you think there is any value to the allegorical style of biblical interpretation? Why?
4. Are you more likely to interpret the Bible literally or allegorically? Explain your answer.
5. How do you interpret the Scriptures and make them relevant for those in your sphere of influence without misapplying them?
6. How would you respond to critics that argue that the Bible's multiple meanings result from the inherent ambiguities of the language itself?
7. How has using a literal sense approach affected the way you have applied the Scriptures in your present circumstances?
8. What affect has reading the Scriptures with a multifaceted perspective to original meaning had on your biblical interpretation?
9. How can you emphasize the importance of seeking the full value of Scripture in your current ministry?
10. What parameters help you to remain faithful in your interpretation and applications of the Bible?
11. How do biblical elaborations aid your understanding and interpretation of the Bible?
12. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?