

# He Gave Us Scripture: Foundations of Interpretation

Lesson 1

Introduction to  
Biblical Hermeneutics

Lesson Guide



**thirdmill**

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#### ABOUT THIRDMILL

Founded in 1997, Thirdmill is a non-profit Evangelical Christian ministry dedicated to providing:

#### **Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.**

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

In order to accomplish our distribution goals, Thirdmill has forged strategic partnerships with churches, seminaries, Bible schools, missionaries, Christian broadcasters and satellite television providers, and other organizations. These relationships have already resulted in the distribution of countless video lessons to indigenous leaders, pastors, and seminary students. Our websites also serve as avenues of distribution and provide additional materials to supplement our lessons, including materials on how to start your own learning community.

Thirdmill is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation. We depend on the generous, tax-deductible contributions of churches, foundations, businesses, and individuals. For more information about our ministry, and to learn how you can get involved, please visit [www.thirdmill.org](http://www.thirdmill.org).

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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

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

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments 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 lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment 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 (0:19)**

### **II. Terminology (2:25)**

#### **A. Biblical Hermeneutics (2:36)**

Hermeneutics refers to the interpretation or explanation of some kind of message or communication.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834) is the father of modern hermeneutics.

Biblical hermeneutics is the study of interpreting the meaning and significance of Scripture.

**B. Hermeneutical Processes (6:14)**

Hermeneutical processes are the main procedures we follow as we interpret the Bible.

**1. Preparation (6:45)**

The process of preparation takes place before we begin our interpretation because we always approach Scripture influenced by various concepts, behaviors and emotions.

**2. Investigation (8:28)**

Investigation is the process of concentrating on the original meaning of a biblical passage.

### **3. Application (9:50)**

Application is the process of appropriately connecting Scripture's original meaning to contemporary audiences.

## **III. Scientific Hermeneutics (11:25)**

Scientific hermeneutics refers to how biblical scholars have approached the interpretation of Scripture like a scientific exercise.

### **A. Biblical Roots (12:45)**

The biblical roots of scientific hermeneutics make it a legitimate exercise.

Biblical authors interpreted other Scriptures with an orientation toward factual and logical analysis (Romans 4:3-5).

**B. Examples (15:46)**

- Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185 – 254)
- Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430)
- Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274)

Renaissance (13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries): Meticulously analyzed the grammar and ancient historical contexts of classical and biblical manuscripts.

The Protestant Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century): Determined the meaning of Scripture through analysis of the Bible's grammar and historical contexts.

*sola Scriptura*: "Scripture alone." Protestants believed that the only infallible interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself.



Enlightenment (17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries): Emphasized modern, factual and rational scientific standards for judging all truth claims, including those of Scripture.

Modern biblical scholars have followed two main paths:

- Critical biblical studies reject *sola Scriptura* and consider only reason and scientific analysis as the supreme standard for discerning truth.
  
- Evangelical biblical studies affirm *sola Scriptura* and endorse the scientific analysis of the Bible as long as it does not contradict the teachings of the Bible.

## C. **Priorities (26:15)**

### 1. **Preparation (26:48)**

Biblical interpreters have developed priorities for preparation similar to the priorities required for other academic disciplines.

## 2. **Investigation (28:41)**

The two methods of biblical investigation:

- Exegesis: to pull out or derive meaning from a text
- Eisegesis: to read meaning into a passage

## 3. **Application (30:15)**

Application is establishing the kinds of facts that the Bible teaches modern followers of Christ to believe.

## IV. **Devotional Hermeneutics (33:23)**

Devotional hermeneutics is the Christian tradition of emphasizing our need to draw near to God as we interpret the Scriptures.

**A. Biblical Roots (35:22)**

The biblical authors approached the Scriptures devotionally.

**B. Examples (38:38)**

*Letter of Origen to Gregory*: Origen told Gregory to devote himself to divine reading or *Lectio Divina*.

Through the medieval period *Lectio Divina* was practiced in four steps:

- *lectio*: reading of Scripture
- *meditatio*: silent pondering of the content of what is read
- *oratio*: earnest prayer for God to grant enlightenment
- *contemplatio*: waiting for the Spirit of God to grant intuitive, deeply emotional and transforming convictions of a passage's significance.

John Calvin: rational and logical biblical interpreter of the early Reformation who pursued scientific and devotional hermeneutics.

Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758): meticulously rational and logical, but believed Scripture must be read with a deep sense of the presence of God.

## **C. Priorities (46:33)**

### **1. Preparation (47:45)**

We must draw near to God if we want to experience his special presence (James 4:8).

Preparation for devotional hermeneutics involves sanctification or holy consecration to God.

Three dimensions of preparation:

- Conceptual: We must conform our beliefs to God's true word.
- Behavioral: We must repent of our failures and have a sincere desire to behave in ways that please God.
- Emotional: We must address the full range of our emotions.

## 2. **Investigation (52:35)**

Devotional hermeneutics entails investigating Scripture's original meaning in ways that bring us near to God.

Three dimensions of investigation:

- **Conceptual:** Paying attention to the concepts that God intended for the original audiences.
- **Behavioral:** How biblical authors and audiences' actions affected their experience of God's nearness.
- **Emotional:** Drawing out the emotional dimensions of original meaning.

## 3. **Application (55:17)**

Reading the Word of God in his presence so that we can apply the Word of God as God intended.

Three dimensions of application:

- **Conceptual:** How God impacts our concepts of himself, humanity and the rest of creation through the Scriptures.

- Behavioral: How the presence of God affects our behaviors as we contemplate the Scriptures.
- Emotional: How our attitudes and feelings are affected by reading the Scriptures in the special presence of God.

**V. Conclusion (58:56)**



3. What are the biblical roots of scientific hermeneutics?

4. What are some historical examples that illustrate developments in scientific hermeneutics?



5. Describe the priorities of approaching the Scriptures using scientific hermeneutics?

6. What are the biblical roots of devotional hermeneutics?



## Application Questions

1. How does applying biblical hermeneutics change the way you understand the Bible?
2. How do you prepare yourself for the study of Scripture personally or in a group setting?
3. How does interpreting the Scriptures more like a scientific exercise influence your interpretation of it?
4. What comfort and encouragement do you draw from the fact that biblical authors often interpreted the Scriptures with an orientation toward factual and logical analysis?
5. How should *sola Scriptura* aid and guide your reading and interpretation of the Bible?
6. What confidence do you gain from the historical examples of scientific hermeneutics?
7. How are you drawing near to God as you read and interpret the Scriptures in your current circumstances?
8. How important is it for you to approach Scripture by prayerfully being dependent upon the Holy Spirit?
9. What benefits have you gained from a devotional approach to Scripture?
10. How has a faithful practice of confessing your sins affected your ability to understand the Bible?
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?