

# He Gave Us Scripture: Foundations of Interpretation

Lesson 11

Modern Application  
for Individuals

Lesson Guide



**thirdmill**

Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

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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 (0:20)

Anytime we apply the Bible we must take into account three types of distance between the original audiences of Scripture and modern audiences:

- Epochal
- Cultural
- Personal

### II. Variety (3:20)

The Bible was designed to be used by many different people in many different circumstances.

#### A. Biblical Instructions (5:17)

The Scriptures provide:

- Universal principles for everyone to follow at all times.
- General guidelines for many people in many circumstances.
- Specific instructions for particular people and situations.
- Examples of people's success or failure in observing Scriptures' instruction.

## 1. Old Testament (6:48)

In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus identified two commandments that had priority over every other biblical instruction:

- "Love the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

From Jesus' point of view, love for God and love for neighbor are universal principles that every person is to observe.

Jesus commands that we are to observe all of the commandments, from the least to the greatest (Matthew 5:19; 23:23).

Jesus' outlook on the Old Testament is like the form of a mobile:

- Universal principles (the two greatest commandments)
- General guidelines (the Ten Commandments, justice, mercy, faithfulness)
- Specific instructions (how people are to observe the higher commands)

- Historical examples (ways people obeyed or disobeyed God's commands).

This arrangement clarifies how Jesus wanted his disciples to deal with the full range of instructions that appear in the Old Testament.

## 2. **New Testament (14:45)**

New Testament authors taught the early church how to apply the Old Testament in the new covenant age.

New Testament authors emphasized that followers of Christ must maintain the priorities that Jesus established.

- Universal principles
- General guidelines
- Specific instructions
- Historical examples

In one way or another, every biblical instruction is relevant for every follower of Christ.

**B. People and Circumstances (23:06)**

God reveals his will through the many diverse instructions in Scripture.

To apply these instructions, we must take into account God's general revelation.

**1. Higher Instructions (24:10)**

Higher instructions include both universal principles and general guidelines.

To apply the higher biblical principles we must:

- Assess the characteristics of the person involved.
  
- Apply biblical principles in a variety of ways to different circumstances.

**2. Lower Instructions (27:46)**

Lower instructions include the Bible's specific instructions and historical examples.



Lower instructions are applied differently depending on the variety of people and circumstances involved.

### **III. Wisdom (33:50)**

We are to gain wisdom in application by interacting with others.

#### **A. Leaders (35:56)**

Scripture's authors wrote first to the leaders of God's people who were ordained to explain and disseminate the teachings of Scripture.

##### **1. Old Testament (36:50)**

Old Testament authors primarily addressed Israel's leaders.

### Three Evidences:

- References:
  - The Law of Moses was kept under the care of Levitical priests (Deuteronomy 31:9; 2 Kings 22:8-10);
  - The *Book of the Covenant* was written to judges (Exodus 21:1-23:9);
  - Proverbs were collected by high-ranking wise men and royal figures (Proverbs 1:1, 25:1).
  
- Contents:
  - Many Old Testament books spend time on subjects with little direct relevance for the daily lives of most Israelites (1 Kings 6);
  - Reflections in Ecclesiastes were far from the challenges facing the majority of Israelites.
  
- Complexities:
  - Many biblical books are so intricately constructed that an average Israelite would have found them bewildering.

## 2. New Testament (40:27)

New Testament authors designed their books for leaders in the early church.

- References: 1 and 2 Timothy were addressed to Timothy; the book of Titus was addressed to Titus.
- Contents: Authors concentrated on matters that were unfamiliar to most first-century believers.
- Complexities: New Testament authors wrote theologically sophisticated letters (2 Peter 3:16).

Modern Christians need experienced leaders to help them deal with unfamiliar content and complexities of the Scriptures.

Private study of Scripture is valuable, but it is essential to identify leaders who can aid us in applying the Scriptures (Hebrews 13:17).

## **B. Community (46:06)**

Biblical authors wrote with the expectation that leaders would disseminate the Scriptures to God's people in the community.

## 1. Old Testament (46:46)

The contents of the Old Testament books were distributed within the larger community of Israel.

- Levitical priests read the Law to the community (Deuteronomy 31:9-29).
- Moses put the blessings and curses of the Law into a song for the people to sing.
- Levites and judges instructed the general population about the Law's implications (Deuteronomy 17:8-13; 1 Kings 3:16-28).
- The king read Scripture to the people in times of covenant renewal (2 Kings 23:1-3).
- Tribal elders applied God's Word to the lives of those they served (Ezra 10:16).
- Parents taught their children the regulations of Passover and the Law (Exodus 12:27; Deuteronomy 6:6-9).
- Members of the community encouraged each other to follow the teachings of Scripture.
- Many portions of the Old Testament appear to be designed for memorization (Psalm 119:11-16).

## 2. New Testament (51:13)

The early church patterned the way it received the Scriptures after the practices of first-century synagogues:

- Church leaders read and explained the Scriptures (Luke 4:14-29; Colossians 4:16).
  
- Early Christians learned and applied Scripture primarily in community.
  
- Early Christians memorized New Testament teachings and meditated on their significance.

Three implications for applying Scripture to our individual lives:

- We need leaders gifted by the Spirit to help us apply Scripture to our lives.

- Interaction with other faithful Christians helps us accurately apply the Scriptures.
  
- Through prayerful meditation, the Spirit of God grants us insight and conviction to apply the Scriptures in ways that please him.

#### **IV. Conclusion (59:42)**









## Application Questions

1. God's Word is intended to influence every area of our lives. What are some specific areas in your life where you have been successful in applying the Scriptures? What are some areas of your life where you struggle to apply God's Word?
2. The Bible provides universal principles, general guidelines, specific instructions, and examples of success and failure to guide our lives. How should understanding this instructional variety affect our application of Scripture?
3. Provide some specific examples of how you are following Christ's command to love your neighbor in your present circumstances.
4. When you are faced with choices in life, do you usually maintain the priorities that Jesus taught his disciples, or do you sometimes become lost in the details of Scripture and forget the higher instructions? Explain your answer.
5. How do you currently apply the higher and lower instructions of Scripture to your own ministry context and personal circumstances?
6. How have Christian leaders and/or other Christians helped you deal with unfamiliar and complex teachings in Scripture? Give specific examples.
7. What encouragement and comfort do you find in knowing that God has designed the process of biblical application to take place both under the care of appointed leaders and in community with faithful Christians?
8. Should we *always* study the Bible in community with others? Why or why not? Cite some examples to support your position.
9. How do we find a balance between the extremes of being overly dependent on church leaders and remaining in isolation and individualism when we study the Scriptures?
10. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?