

He Gave Us Scripture: Foundations of Interpretation

Lesson 2

Preparation for
Interpretation

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.

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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.

- **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. Dependence on Holy Spirit (1:19)

Biblical interpretation is commonly treated as an impersonal event.

Hermeneutics involves interaction between human interpreters and the Holy Spirit.

A. Inspiration (3:22)

Definition: The Holy Spirit moved human beings to write God's revelation as Scripture and superintended their work in a way that made their writings infallible.

Three views of inspiration:

- Romantic: Scripture isn't God's infallible truth, but only the personal reflections and opinions of the human authors.
- Mechanical: The Holy Spirit essentially dictated the Bible and human writers passively recorded what he said.
- Organic: The Holy Spirit used the personalities, experiences, outlooks, and intentions of human authors as he supervised and directed their writing.

1. Divine Source (11:47)

The Holy Spirit has intimate knowledge of the Bible's meaning and of the way it communicates that meaning.

One of the most important implications of the divine origin of Scripture is the Bible's unquestionable veracity.

Ways interpreters handle apparent contradictions in Scripture:

- **Critical Interpreter:** Reject the divine inspiration of Scripture and elevate their understanding over the Spirit's authority.

- **Submissive Interpreter:** Affirm the divine inspiration of Scripture, expecting and assuming it to be true and harmonious, even when they can't demonstrate or prove its truthfulness.

2. Human Means (20:24)

God had the Scriptures composed by means of human authors.

The Scriptures were written by different people, and they reflect the diversity of that human authorship.

B. Illumination (23:17)

The Holy Spirit's work of conveying a proper understanding of Scripture to a human being.

Through his illumination, the Holy Spirit grants us knowledge of his Word.

III. Need for Human Effort (28:20)**A. Importance (28:32)**

Well-meaning Christians often minimize anything that looks like human effort when they prepare to read the Bible.

The Holy Spirit ordinarily illumines us by means of the efforts we put into preparation.

B. Influences (33:58)**1. Exegesis (35:03)**

Definition: Drawing meaning out of biblical texts.

The exegesis of Scripture prepares us for further interpretation of the Bible and further study.

2. Interaction (36:39)

Other people have received great gifts and insights from the Holy Spirit that can help us as we interpret Scripture.

Our interpretations of Scripture are and should be deeply influenced by other people.

3. Experience (38:28)

Personal aspects of Christian living contribute to our interpretations of Scripture in a variety of ways.

Each individual has different personal things that influence how they interpret and apply Scripture.

IV. Conclusion (42:23)

Review Questions

1. What is the doctrine of inspiration?
2. Describe the two important aspects of organic inspiration.

3. What is the doctrine of illumination?

4. Why is human effort important when preparing to interpret Scripture?

5. Describe the three major influences on our efforts when we prepare to interpret Scripture.

Application Questions

1. How do you practice dependence on the Holy Spirit as you interpret Scripture?
2. How does the doctrine of inspiration affect the way you read and interpret the Bible?
3. How are you staying in touch with the Holy Spirit in the midst of your current circumstances?
4. What comfort and encouragement do you draw from the fact that God had the Scriptures composed by human authors?
5. What blessings have you received from the Holy Spirit's standing with you and opening your mind to understand the Bible?
6. What type of work do you do in preparation to interpret Scripture?
7. How are you exhibiting the importance of depending on the Holy Spirit in your current spheres of influence?
8. What benefits have you gained from being an exegete of Scripture?
9. How has interacting with other people influenced your understanding of the Bible?
10. How have past experiences affected your ability to interpret the Scriptures?
11. How are your present circumstances influencing your efforts to interpret Scripture?
12. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Augustine – (A.D. 354-430) Bishop of Hippo who believed in the Scriptures as our final authority in doctrine and considered the creeds of the church to be helpful summaries of scriptural teaching; wrote numerous works that continue to influence the church today

ergates – Greek term (transliteration) meaning “a worker” or “a laborer”

exegesis – From a Greek term meaning "led out of" or "derived from"; the process of drawing out the proper interpretation of a passage of Scripture

illumination – Divine gift of knowledge or understanding, primarily cognitive, attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit

inspiration – Theological term that refers to the way the Holy Spirit moved human beings to write God’s revelation as Scripture and superintended their work in a way that made their writings infallible

mechanical inspiration – View of inspiration that proposes the Holy Spirit essentially dictated the Bible, and human writers passively recorded what he said

organic inspiration – View of inspiration that asserts the Holy Spirit used the personalities, experiences, outlooks, and intentions of human authors as he authoritatively and infallibly guided their writing

Owen, John – (1616-1683) English theologian, pastor, and author of numerous important theological works

romantic inspiration – View of inspiration that proposes the Holy Spirit inspired biblical authors to write but did not superintend their writings

theopneustos – Greek term (transliteration) meaning “inspired” or “breathed out” by God