Unlocking the Scriptures:
From Study to Preaching

***"It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out."* — Proverbs 25:2 (ESV)**

By Dr. Fernando Jiménez

Introduction

Every page of Scripture carries the heartbeat of God, yet His wisdom is often hidden beneath the surface. As Proverbs 25:2 declares, *"It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out."* The Bible is not a casual book; it is a treasure chest of divine mysteries, waiting for those who dare to dig deep.

God conceals truth not to keep His people in darkness, but to invite them into discovery. The hidden here is not secrecy for secrecy's sake, but the **principle of revelation knowledge**—truth that is unveiled only to those who seek, search, and hunger for understanding. Revelation is given, not to the careless, but to the diligent.

For teachers and preachers, this pursuit is more than intellectual. It is a spiritual journey into the very mind and heart of God. To uncover what He has concealed is to participate in the prophetic and apostolic nature of His Word. The prophetic, because revelation always points to Christ and speaks into the present moment; the apostolic, because it builds, establishes, and sets order in the lives of God's people.

This course, therefore, is not only a **basic introduction to studying the Bible** but also a **practical entry point into hermeneutics**—the professional and Spirit-led interpretation of Scripture. To handle the Word of truth rightly (2 Timothy 2:15) is both a calling and a discipline. The aim is to equip believers to **search the Scriptures with accuracy**, receive revelation knowledge, and

communicate it with clarity—so that study naturally flows into preaching and teaching.

Recommended Tool for Study

To aid in this journey, students are strongly encouraged to use the **Hebrew–Greek Key Study Bible**, developed by **Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D.** This unique resource offers:

- An original system of Bible study built around the Hebrew and Greek texts.
- A complete numerical system using **Strong's Concordance numbers** to identify and transliterate all key words of the Bible.
- Hebrew and Greek references with **grammatical notations**.
- Lexical aids for deeper study in both the Old and New Testaments.

This Bible, edited with the heart of a scholar and teacher, provides a bridge between the original languages and the modern reader, giving students clarity and direction as they search the treasures of God's Word.

Five Foundational Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics

By Dr. Fernando Jiménez

1. Context is King

Every verse must be understood within its **literary, historical, and biblical context**. A passage never stands alone; it always belongs to the flow of thought.

- Always search for the **key word, verb, or adjective** in the passage. Without it, the meaning is blurred.
- Observe what comes **before and after**; many errors come from lifting a verse out of context.
- Ask: *What did the author mean? What did the audience hear?*

If context is ignored, Scripture can be twisted. But when respected, the Word opens with clarity and authority.

2. Scripture Interprets Scripture

The Bible never contradicts itself; the obscure is explained by the clear. The New Testament is built on the foundation of the Old Testament, because the NT writers constantly had the OT in mind.

- The Old Testament provides the **language, imagery, and categories** through which the New Testament unfolds.
- Doctrines cannot be built from a single isolated verse but must be confirmed by the **whole counsel of God**.
- Always compare: How does this verse echo, fulfill, or clarify earlier revelation?

Hermeneutics requires letting the Bible speak for itself, with each part shedding light on the other.

3. Historical & Cultural Background

The Bible was written in a real time, culture, and worldview. To interpret it faithfully, we must enter that world.

- Customs, geography, languages, and audience shape meaning.

- The biblical worldview includes a **cosmological and supernatural dimension** — angels, demons, the divine council, heavenly beings. These were not allegories to the writers but **realities**.
- Even if certain things feel strange to us, they made sense to the original writer and hearers. We cannot force the text to say what it never said.

Respect the worldview of the author, for the Spirit inspired the Word in their world, not ours.

4. Grammatical Study

God revealed His Word through **words, grammar, and structure** — details matter.

- Verb tenses indicate the type of action (past, continuous, future, completed).
- Adjectives and adverbs highlight emphasis and nuance.
- Repetition signals importance.
- The literary form (poetry, prophecy, narrative, wisdom, letters, apocalyptic) provides rules for proper interpretation.

Example: The Greek *agapē* (love) in John 21 is not the same as *phileō* (brotherly love). A grammatical detail changes the entire force of the conversation.

5. Christ-Centered Lens

All Scripture points to Christ (Luke 24:27). The heart of interpretation is to see Him revealed in every page.

- The Old Testament anticipates Him; the New Testament reveals Him.
- Without Christ as the key, interpretation becomes academic; with Him, it becomes revelation.

- The **Holy Spirit is the true Interpreter** (John 16:13). He takes the written Word and makes it living and prophetic in the believer's heart.

Hermeneutics without the Spirit leads to dry scholarship. Hermeneutics with the Spirit leads to revelation, transformation, and preaching with apostolic authority.

How to Study and Interpret the Bible?

Step 1: Begin with Prayer

Bible study begins not with the mind, but with the heart turned to God. Without prayer, study can become intellectual only. With prayer, the Spirit brings revelation.

- **Pray for guidance**: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." (Psalm 119:18)
- **Pray for understanding**: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God… and it will be given him." (James 1:5)
- **Pray for illumination**: "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)

Enter study with expectation and faith that God will speak through His Word, giving you the message you need for life and for preaching. Do not trust your own knowledge alone — trust the Spirit of God to open the Scriptures.

Step 2: Observation – What Does the Text Say?

Observation is the first discipline in Bible study. It is not passive reading, but active searching. The following tools help us "see" what the text is really saying before we attempt to interpret it.

2.1 Technique: The 5Ws

- **Who?** – Who is speaking? Who is addressed? Who are the key characters?
- **What?** – What is happening? What action, command, or truth is stated?
- **When?** – What time, season, or circumstance is this taking place?
- **Where?** – What is the location, setting, or cultural environment?
- **Why?** – Why is this passage here? What purpose does it serve?

Scripture Example: Philippians 2:5

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." (ESV)

- **Who?** – Paul (the writer), the believers in Philippi (the audience), Christ Jesus (the model).
- **What?** – A command: *"Have this mind"* — cultivate the same attitude of humility and selflessness that was in Christ.
- **When?** – Written during Paul's imprisonment (ca. A.D. 60–62), encouraging the church to live out unity despite trials.
- **Where?** – To the Philippian church, a Roman colony known for pride in Roman citizenship. Paul redirects their identity to Christ.
- **Why?** – Because the unity and witness of the Church depend on believers reflecting Christ's humility. Without His mind, there is division and pride; with His mind, there is love and unity.

2.2. Look for Key Words or Phrases

In every passage there are **key words** or **phrases** that carry the main weight of the message. They are often repeated, emphasized, or central to the author's thought. Identifying them helps shape the theme for preaching or teaching.

- **Example:** In Philippians 2:5–11, the key word is *mind* (*phroneō*), repeated and expanded by describing Christ's humility and obedience.
- **Example:** In John 15:4–5, the repeated phrase is *abide in me*. The entire teaching on fruitfulness hangs on this phrase.

Key words are the backbone of the passage; without them the meaning collapses.

2.3 Look for Lists

Lists often appear in Scripture when an author piles up descriptions, virtues, or instructions. They give shape to the theme and often indicate **progression** or **completeness**.

- **Example:** Galatians 5:22–23 — *"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."* This list shows the many dimensions of the Spirit's fruit.
- **Example:** Romans 12:9–13 — a list of practical exhortations for Christian living: *"Let love be genuine… be fervent in spirit… rejoice in hope… be patient in tribulation… contribute to the needs of the saints."*

Lists show us what the writer considers **important qualities**. They also help in structuring sermons: each point of the list can become a sermon point.

2.4. Observe Contrasts and Comparisons

Biblical writers often use contrasts or comparisons to make truth vivid. They place two realities side by side, showing difference or similarity, so the message becomes clear.

- **Example (Contrast):** Romans 6:23 — *"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life."* Sin vs. grace, death vs. life.
- **Example (Comparison):** Matthew 7:24–27 — Jesus compares the wise man building on rock with the foolish man building on sand. Both build, but the foundations differ.

Contrasts sharpen the warning; comparisons highlight the choice. Both are highly descriptive and powerful for preaching.

2.5 Observe Expressions of Time

Time expressions mark **sequence, order, and progression** in a passage. They tell us when something happens, or in what order, and often connect promises with conditions.

- **Keywords to note:** *until, then, when, after, now, soon.*
- **Example:** Acts 1:8 — *"But you will receive power **when** the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses…"* The mission follows the Spirit's coming.
- **Example:** 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 — *"For the Lord himself will descend… and the dead in Christ will rise first. **Then** we who are alive… will be caught up together with them…"* The sequence is made clear by time words.

Observing time expressions helps us see the **flow of events** and prevents confusion about order in prophecy, history, or instruction.

2.6 Identify Terms of Conclusion

Writers often use conclusion words to summarize or highlight the result of their argument. Words like *therefore, wherefore, for this reason, finally* show us the **main takeaway**.

- **Example:** Romans 12:1 — *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice…"* The *therefore* connects the doctrine of chapters 1–11 to the application in chapter 12.
- **Example:** 1 Corinthians 15:58 — *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord…"* The conclusion flows from the truth of the resurrection.

When you see *therefore*, ask: *What is it there for?* These words show us the **big message** the writer wants the reader to carry away.

Summary

Observation sharpens our eyes to see:

1. **Key words/phrases** – the backbone of the passage.
2. **Lists** – collections of truths, virtues, or commands.
3. **Contrasts & comparisons** – vivid pictures of difference or similarity.

4. **Expressions of time** – the order of events or actions.
5. **Terms of conclusion** – the summary and main point of the text.

These tools, combined with prayer and the 5Ws, allow us to handle the text with clarity, ready for faithful interpretation and powerful preaching.

Step 3. Interpretation — What the Text Means

Interpretation is the careful process of discovering the **intended meaning of the biblical text** as given by the Holy Spirit through the original author. We are not free to invent meaning; we are called to uncover what God has said. **Exegesis** (drawing out meaning) is faithful interpretation. **Eisegesis** (reading ideas into the text) is distortion.

Here are the key principles for sound interpretation:

1. Context Rules

The **first law of interpretation**: a verse can only mean what it means in its context. Words have meaning within sentences, sentences within paragraphs, and paragraphs within books. Ignoring context leads to dangerous misapplications.

- **Example 1:** Philippians 4:13 — *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*
  - Out of context: a slogan for unlimited achievement.
  - In context (4:11–12): Paul is speaking about **contentment in hardship or prosperity**. The verse is about enduring with Christ's strength, not winning every battle of life.
- **Example 2:** Matthew 7:1 — *"Judge not, that you be not judged."*
  - Out of context: "Christians should never judge."
  - In context (7:1–5): Jesus forbids **hypocritical judgment** while commanding righteous discernment (7:15–20; John 7:24).

Rule: **Never lift a verse from its immediate context.**

2. Connect to the Full Counsel of the Word

Scripture is a unified revelation. What one passage teaches will always harmonize with the rest of the Bible. Paul told the Ephesian elders, *"I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27).

When interpreting, we must allow **clear and related passages to fill out the meaning** of our text. This is how doctrine is formed.

- **Example 1: Faith and Works**
  - Ephesians 2:8–9 — salvation is by grace through faith, not works.
  - James 2:17 — faith without works is dead.
  - Taken together: We are **saved by faith alone, but true faith is never alone**; it produces works.
- **Example 2: Christ's Deity**
  - John 1:1 — *"The Word was God."*
  - Hebrews 1:8 — *"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."*
  - Philippians 2:6 — *"He was in the form of God."*
  - Together, these verses leave no doubt: the NT consistently teaches Christ's full deity.

Rule: Do not build theology on a single verse; always connect it to the full body of Scripture.

3. Scripture Never Contradicts Scripture

Since God is the ultimate Author (2 Tim 3:16), the Bible cannot truly contradict itself. Apparent contradictions are resolved by examining **language, context, or perspective**.

- **Example 1: Paul vs. James**
  - Romans 3:28 — *"One is justified by faith apart from works of the law."*
  - James 2:24 — *"A person is justified by works and not by faith alone."*
  - Resolution: Paul is speaking of **justification before God**; James of **justification before men** (the outward evidence of faith).
- **Example 2: God repenting**
  - Exodus 32:14 — *"The Lord relented from the disaster."*
  - Numbers 23:19 — *"God is not a man, that He should repent."*
  - Resolution: Exodus uses **relational, human language** to describe God's interaction; Numbers states God's **unchanging nature**. Both are true, viewed from different angles.

👉 Rule: When two passages seem to disagree, the problem is with our understanding, not with God's Word.

4. Build Doctrine from Clear Texts, Not Obscure Ones

The Bible contains passages that are difficult to understand (2 Pet 3:16). Wise interpreters **do not build doctrine on obscure verses** but on clear, repeated teaching.

- **Example 1: Baptism for the Dead (1 Cor 15:29)**
  - A single obscure reference; not explained or commanded elsewhere.
  - Doctrine of baptism must be based on clear texts: Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4.
- **Example 2: Spirits in Prison (1 Pet 3:19)**
  - Highly debated passage.
  - Doctrine of salvation is taught clearly in passages like John 3:16; Romans 10:9–10.

👉 Rule: Let the light of the clear guide the shadows of the obscure.

5. Interpret the Bible Literally — According to Literary Style

"Literal" means we take the text in its **normal, intended sense**. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. But literal interpretation respects **literary genres**, because God chose different forms of writing.

The Seven Common Styles in the Bible:

1. **Historical (Narrative)** Genesis, Samuel, Kings, Acts.
   - Real events told factually.
   - *Example:* Acts 9 (Paul's conversion) a true event, not a parable.
2. **Prophetic** — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Revelation.
   - Uses imagery, symbols, visions; often interpreted within the text.
   - *Example:* Daniel 2 (statue of kingdoms); Revelation 1:20 (lampstands = churches).

3. **Biographical (Gospels)** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.
    - Theological portraits of Christ's life.
    - *Example:* John 20:31 — the purpose is faith in Christ.
4. **Didactic (Doctrinal)** Romans, Hebrews, Ephesians.
    - Clear teaching on truth and practice.
    - *Example:* Romans 3–5 on justification by faith.
5. **Poetic**, Psalms, many of the Prophets.
    - Parallelism, metaphors, imagery.
    - *Example:* Psalm 42:1 — *"As the deer pants for streams of water…"* A figure describing spiritual thirst.
6. **Epistle (Letters)** Romans through Jude.
    - Address real problems in the early churches.
    - *Example:* 1 Corinthians 8–10 (food offered to idols) — timeless principle: love limits liberty.
7. **Proverbial (Wisdom Sayings)** Proverbs, some James.
    - Short, memorable truths; generally true, but not absolute promises.
    - *Example:* Proverbs 22:6 — a principle of godly parenting, not an unconditional guarantee.

Rule: Read literally, but respect genre. A metaphor is still a metaphor; a vision is still a vision; a narrative is still history.

Summary of Interpretation Principles

1. **Context rules** — meaning lives in context.
2. **Full counsel** — connect your passage to the whole Bible.
3. **No contradictions** — Scripture always harmonizes.
4. **Clarity over obscurity** — build doctrine on what is plain.
5. **Literal sense with genre** — read according to the type of writing.

When followed, these principles allow the Word of God to speak with its own authority and keep us from distortion.

Step 4. Application — What the Text Requires of Me

Text: *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* — 2 Timothy 3:16–17

Definition of Application

Application is the step where God's Word moves from the **mind to the heart and life**. It answers:

- *What truth is God revealing to me here?*
- *Does this passage expose error in my beliefs or behavior?*
- *How must I respond in obedience, transformation, and readiness for Christ's return?*

The value of study is not just information but **transformation** — shaping our lives to reflect God's holiness, His character, His will, and His coming kingdom.

Five Dimensions of Application in 2 Timothy 3:16–17

1. Teaching (Doctrine)

The Word teaches us **what is true** about God, life, salvation, and the future.

- **Application:** Am I allowing the Scriptures to shape my beliefs, or am I building my faith on human opinion?
- **Example:** The Bible teaches Christ's return (John 14:3; Acts 1:11). Application: I must live in readiness.

2. Reproof (Conviction / Exposure of Error)

The Word exposes **what is wrong** in my thinking and behavior. It confronts sin and error directly.

- **Application:** Do I let the Bible confront my pride, unbelief, or compromise?
- **Example:** Hebrews 4:12 — the Word discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Application: I must repent when Scripture reveals my hidden sins.

3. Correction (Restoring to the Right Path)

The Word not only shows what is wrong but guides us back to the truth.

- **Application:** Am I willing to adjust my life when God redirects me?
- **Example:** Galatians 6:1 — restore one caught in sin with gentleness. Application: when Scripture corrects me, I must humble myself and return to obedience.

4. Training in Righteousness (Discipline / Formation)

The Word forms habits of holiness, shaping character over time.

- **Application:** Am I daily letting the Bible train me into maturity?
- **Example:** Psalm 119:9 — *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word."*
- The Word trains us to live holy lives, preparing us to stand before Christ blameless at His coming (1 Thess 3:13).

5. Equipped for Every Good Work (Preparation for Service)

The goal of Scripture is a fully prepared disciple who can serve God effectively.

- **Application:** Am I ready and equipped for what God calls me to do?
- **Example:** Ephesians 2:10 — *"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand."*

- Being equipped means being ready for life, ministry, and ultimately for Christ's judgment seat (2 Cor 5:10).

Summary: Application and Transformation

The study of Scripture leads to **transformation** when we:

- Receive its **teaching** as truth.
- Accept its **reproof** when we are wrong.
- Submit to its **correction** to be restored.
- Embrace its **training** to build a life of holiness.
- Live as **equipped servants**, ready for the Lord's return.

Application brings clarity, respect for God, reverence for His holiness, and readiness for His future kingdom. When we let Scripture shape us in this way, we are not just informed — we are transformed and prepared to meet Christ when He comes.