

# UNLOCKING GODS WORD

## SESSION 2: 'The Role of STUDYING God's Word'

### A. INTRODUCTION:

This week we're looking at OUR role in this partnership, and asking the questions:

**Q. Why is it so important to expend our effort in unearthing the truth of God's Word?**

**Q. How do I go about doing that?**

**2 TIMOTHY 2:15** (NIV) *'Do your BEST to present yourself to God as one APPROVED, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who CORRECTLY handles the word of truth.'*

- DO YOUR BEST

DEFINITION: 'spoudazo' (spu-da-zo) ...to exert one's self, endeavour, give diligence

- As one APPROVED

DEFINITION: 'dokimos' (do-ke-mos) ...accepted, pleasing, acceptable

- CORRECTLY HANDLES the Word of truth

DEFINITION: 'Orthotoeo' (or-tho-to-me-o) ...to cut straight, hold a straight course, doing right

*Personal INTEGRITY and ACCURATE handling of God's word go hand-in-hand*

### B. 'GUIDELINES' FOR INTERPRETATION:

...Simply trying to get at the **'plain meaning'** of the text

A common objection to interpretation is this:

*'Surely you don't have to interpret the Bible; you just read it and do what it says.'*

## 2 FACTORS TO CONSIDER:

- **The nature of the READER**

What we invariably BRING to the text:

‘...our experiences, our culture, our prior understandings of words and ideas.’

- **The nature of SCRIPTURE**

‘The Word of God given in HUMAN words in HISTORY.’

...It contains ETERNAL relevance ...and HISTORICAL particularity.

**INTERPRETATION** involves the reader on 2 levels:

**JOSHUA 1:8** (NIV) *‘Keep this book of the Law always on your lips; MEDITATE (Exegesis) on it day and night, so that you may be CAREFUL TO DO (Hermeneutics) everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful’*

## 1. EXEGESIS

DEFINITION: ...the study of the *historical* and *cultural* backgrounds for the AUTHOR, the TEXT ...and the original AUDIENCE.

Q. What did this mean to them?

**THE KEY:**

...Read it CAREFULLY and ask the RIGHT questions of the text:

- Read the WHOLE BOOK (in different versions, even – out loud. ‘BIG PICTURE’)
- Read the WHOLE CHAPTER (Before and after)
- Read the text through SEVERAL TIMES (making notes of observations)

## 2 BASIC QUESTIONS to consider:

- **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Including questions about the:

Times

Culture

Author

Audience (geographical, topographical, political factors)

Q. What's the point?

Q. What is the author saying and why does he say it right here?

Q. What is he saying next and why?

- **CONTENT**

Has to do with:

The *meanings* of words

The grammatical *relationships* between words

The choice of the *original text*, where the manuscripts *differ* from one another.

To answer these kinds of questions a reader will ordinarily need OUTSIDE HELP

...like a good exegetical commentary (one of the last tasks that you perform)

## 2. HERMENEUTICS

DEFINITION:

...the study of the 'principles of interpretation' of the Bible

...with the goal of putting God's word into PRACTICE

...discovering the CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Q. What does this mean for us?

- **THE BASIC RULE** (an absolute parameter):

*'The text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or readers.'*

This may not explain what it DOES mean

...but it at least sets limits on what it CANNOT mean

NB:

*In the case of prophecy it's possible that there is an additional [or deeper, or fuller] meaning beyond the original. However, careful CONTROLS are required.*

- **THE SECOND RULE**

*Whenever we share comparable life-situations with the first-century hearers, God's word to us is the same as His word to them.*

## **4 DANGERS TO BE AWARE OF:**

### **1. The problem of EXTENDED APPLICATION (pg79)**

Q. Is it legitimate to extend the application of the text to other contexts?

#### **EXAMPLE:**

**2 CORINTHIANS 6:14 (NIV)** *'Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?'*

Q. What is the original text forbidding here?

Q. Can this be interpreted to forbid marriage between a Christian and an unbeliever?

### **2. The problem of DETAILS that are NOT COMPARABLE**

Has to do with 2 kinds of passages:

- Those that speak to issues back then that are *without present-day counterparts*
- Those that speak to problems that could happen now but are *highly unlikely*

**EXAMPLE:** 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-33

Q. What do you do with those texts? How do they address us? Do they address us?

### **3. The problem of CULTURAL RELATIVITY**

Has to do with issues of changing cultures?

**EXAMPLES:** Compare the following 2 passages

Q. Which are principles that are cultural and which ones transcend culture?

1 CORINTHIANS 11:12-15

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10