How Can I Interpret Scripture Correctly?

USE THESE SIMPLE PRINCIPLES FOR FAITHFUL BIBLE INTERPRETATION

Context is key. Read a verse in light of the surrounding passage, chapter, book, and the whole Bible.

Let Scripture explain Scripture. Use clear passages to help interpret difficult ones, since God's Word does not contradict itself.

Seek the author's intended meaning. Ask who wrote it, to whom, why, and in what setting before asking what it means for you.

Read normally unless the genre signals otherwise. Take the text in its ordinary grammatical and historical sense, while recognizing figures of speech, poetry, parables, prophecy, and apocalyptic imagery.

Respect the genre. Narrative, law, wisdom, poetry, prophecy, Gospels, and letters communicate truth in different ways.

Build doctrine on clear teaching. Do not base major beliefs or practices on one difficult, debated, or isolated verse.

Follow the unfolding story of redemption. Later Scripture—especially the New Testament—clarifies and fulfills earlier revelation.

Pray for illumination. Study carefully but depend on the Holy Spirit to help you understand and receive God's Word.

Separate meaning from application. A passage has one intended meaning, but it may have several faithful applications.

5 STEPS IN BIBLE STUDY

PRAYER

How should I pray? Pray that God would lead you into truth and give you the grace to apply His Word.

OBSERVATION

What does it say? What are your first reactions? What details, repeated words, prominent ideas, contrasts, commands, or questions stand out?

INTERPRETATION

What does it mean? How does this passage fit into the flow of Scripture? Why was it written?

APPLICATION

What do I do? How can I apply these truths and faithfully, practically live out what Scripture declares?

REVELATION

Who is God? What is God revealing about Himself—His character, purposes, or ways?