

paragraph, chapter, section and book. Words and sentences must be understood according to their definition and grammar at the time of the writing and within their literary genre such as narrative, poetry, didactic and prophetic. Furthermore, all of this must be understood within its historical setting. Proper interpretation demands a quest to understand authorial intent. Those who use allegorical methodology, eisegesis, or force modern ideas into the text invariably distort it and end up with interpretations that range from being incorrect to aberrant to heretical.

How important is proper interpretation? Consider that nearly all of Jesus' conflicts with the Jewish religious leaders were due to their wrong interpretations and subsequent applications of the scriptures and not because they rejected scriptural authority. The same is true of the apostles. By the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church gave lip service to Scriptural authority for they overrode it with claims of authority for the church to add to Biblical doctrine, but more insidious was its claim to be the sole authority for interpretation of the Scriptures. The claim of authority to add doctrine to the scriptures or to be the only proper interpreter of it are hallmarks of cults.

In Biblical Christianity, Scripture alone is the authority and its interpretation is the humble quest to understand what God has revealed in its context that we may believe and live for Him.

Scriptural Sufficiency

Directly related to Scriptural authority is scriptural sufficiency for if the scriptures are not sufficient to direct us in all areas of life, then outside sources become authoritative and then easily supplant the Scriptures either by a claim of superiority or by becoming the basis of reinterpreting Scripture to match it. Here are two quick examples.

The claim is made that Scripture is not a book of science and therefore we must look to science to determine truth and interpret the Bible accordingly. While the Bible is not a comprehensive book on science giving us details of nuclear physics and explaining the chemistry of biological systems, it must be clearly and forcefully proclaimed that wherever the Bible touches on an issue of science it is absolutely true. The Greeks, not the Hebrews were the flat earthers, for Isaiah 40:22 describes God sitting above the circle of the earth. The book of Job describes the hydrologic cycle (36:27-28), atmospheric circulation (28:25; 37:9), gravitational fields (26:7); springs in the ocean (38:16), the relationship of clouds and lightning (37:11), and that the moon has no brightness of its own (25:5). Leviticus gives extensive principles of health and sanitation, and if medical doctors had taken seriously the statements in Leviticus 17:11,14 that life is in the blood, they would not have practiced blood letting which contributed to the death of a lot of people, including George Washington. We can stand firm on the statements of Genesis that life came from God and that animals reproduce after their own kind which refutes evolution's spontaneous generation of life and transmutation of one life form into others.

Psychology claims to solve problems the Bible does not address. Really? Which line of psychology since its many branches often contradict each other? And what about the studies over the years that show that people without treatment by a psychologist do as good or better than those receiving treatment? Scripture does not give clinical descriptions of anorexia, arachnidphobia, bi-polar disorder, psychopathy or the host of other problems listed in psychology books, but the Bible does give clear descriptions of man's sinfulness and depravity of mind which underlies all those things. Human behavioral studies may be helpful in figuring out how people think and react, but solutions in helping people recognize and walk in truth must be founded in the source of truth which is God's word.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 give a simple description of the sufficiency of the Bible stating,¹⁶ *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* The Bible tells you how to get on the path of life, warns you when you stray off of it, instructs you how to get back on it, and trains you how to stay on it so that you will be able to live a good life in serving the Lord and others.