

Introduction to Hermeneutics

Proper use of the text (Hermeneutics)

Introduction

II Timothy 2:15—Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The preacher needs a right understanding of the Word for himself, so that he can proclaim the truth to others. This class will help the student learn how to study the Word and to understand the meaning of Scripture. The power of a sermon rests in the preparation. The preacher needs a message from God. The Scripture text should be chosen with much prayer and consideration. Once the text has been chosen the preacher needs to study the Scripture passage. The goal is to know where you are going before you get to the pulpit.

Every preacher will develop his own style of preaching and note taking. Some preachers will preach with no notes at all; others write out the text of their entire sermon. This class will suggest a simple method of notes for use by the preacher. Some preachers may use the notes only for their personal study and not use them in the pulpit at all. *Whatever method the preacher uses, he will need to study the Scriptures.*

Meaning of hermeneutics

Webster's dictionary defines hermeneutics as "The art of finding the meaning of an author's words, and of explaining it to others." Biblical hermeneutics is the study of biblical interpretation. Biblical hermeneutics is simply the process of correctly interpreting the Scriptures. Hermeneutics deals with issues such as:

- What is the *formal* interpretation of this text?
- What is the *official* interpretation of this text?
- What did the author intend to say?
- What message did the author intend to convey?
- Is the use of a particular word, grammatical construction, verb tense, etc., significant in this instance?
- Who were the author's readers or listeners, culturally, etc.?
- How was the text interpreted by the author's contemporaries?

Value of Hermeneutics

It is not only foolish, but dangerous to misinterpret the Bible. It is especially detrimental to abuse Scripture intentionally. There are objective principles of interpretation that guide us in understanding and teach Scripture. These principles serve as boundary lines that keep our explanation and presentation of biblical thought "within bounds."

We refer to the issue of Scripture as an accommodated text and some preachers wrongly attempt to make the Scripture accommodate their own philosophies. The Bible is not to be subjected to what we want it to mean, but our study of Scripture should always be to discover God's message. To do this we must use objective principles of interpretation good hermeneutics and allow Scripture to speak for itself (2 Pet. 1:16–21).

The ministry of the preacher is to feed the people with the truth of God's Word (Jer. 3:15). The preacher needs to be able to help people to understand the Bible. The preacher must first understand the Word for himself before he can preach to others. Nehemiah read from the book of the law, and then he explained the meaning to the people so they could understand God's Word for themselves. This is what preaching is all about: proclaiming the Word of God in such a way that people can understand and receive the Word and then be encouraged to act on the

Word. The goal of this class is to help the student learn how to study the Word. There is no set way of study; every preacher will develop their own style of studying the Scriptures. The preacher should develop a habit of reading the Bible every day. The preacher must know the Word before he can preach the Word.

The Bible is God's message to man, and God knew what He meant when He gave man His Word. The Holy Spirit will help man understand the Word (John 14:26; 16:7–13; I Cor. 2:13). Man will not receive the full understanding of the Word all at once. As the preacher prays, studies, and learns more of the Word, God will help him to understand more. The preacher should at least have an understanding of the passage he intends to preach.

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