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# Hermeneutics

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## *The Art and Science of Studying the Bible*

Good Bible study will start with good exegesis. Exegesis simply means to draw meaning out of a passage as opposed to eisegesis, which means to put meaning into a passage. So, what does good exegesis entail? Below are 5 basic principles for solid exegesis, which will be unpacked in more detail later:

### **Exegetical Principles for Bible Study:**

**1. The Grammatical Principle.** The Bible was written in human language, and language has a certain structure and follows certain rules. Therefore, we must interpret the Bible in a manner consistent with the basic rules of language.

Usually, the exegete starts his examination of a passage by determining its genre as that will greatly impact how the passage is interpreted and applied.

Next, the exegete examines the syntax, or the grammatical relationships of the words in the passage. He finds parallels, he determines which ideas are primary and which are subordinate, and he discovers actions, subjects, and their modifiers. He may even diagram a verse or two.

**2. The Literal Principle.** We assume that each word in a passage has a normal, literal meaning, unless there is good reason to view it as a figure of speech. The exegete does not go out of his way to spiritualize or allegorize. Words mean what words mean.

So, if the Bible mentions a “horse,” it means “a horse.” When the Bible speaks of the Promised Land, it means a literal land given to Israel and should not be interpreted as a reference to heaven.

**3. The Historical Principle.** As time passes, culture changes, points of view change, language changes. We must guard against interpreting Scripture according to how our culture views things; we must always place scripture in its historical context.

The diligent Bible student will consider the geography, the customs, the current events, and even the politics of the time when a passage was written. An understanding of ancient Jewish culture can greatly aid an understanding of Scripture.

**4. The Synthesis Principle.** The best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself. We must examine a passage in relation to its immediate context (the verses surrounding it), its wider context (the book it's found in), and its complete context (the Bible as a whole). The Bible does not contradict itself. Any theological statement in one verse can and should be harmonized with theological statements in other parts of Scripture. Good Bible interpretation relates any one passage to the total content of scripture.

**5. The Practical Principle.** Once we've properly examined the passage to understand its meaning, we have the responsibility to apply it to our own lives. To “rightly divide the word of truth” is more than an intellectual exercise; it is a life-changing event.