

Introduction to Bible Interpretation

Part 2

Preston Graham

The Sufficiency of Scripture Rediscovered: The Theologies of Crisis

... those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased...(1.1b), ... unto which nothing at any times is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men..." (1.6)

- *Heb. 1:1-3—God “spoke”... not “speaks”*
- *Eph. 2: 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.*
- *Rev.22:18 ...if anyone adds to them...*
- The Word-Deed-Word Principle of Inscripturation.. where “Redemption and revelation coincide....”(Geerhardus Vos)

Previously:

Reviewed:

- 1) **Why A Seminar On Bible Interpretation for every Christian**
- 2) **And introduction to the Social and Philosophical Aspects of the crisis in Bible Interpretation**

Today:

- 1) **Introduction to the Theological Aspects of the Crisis...**
- 2) **Introduction to Methodology**

C. The Theological Aspects of the Crisis...

1) **Confusion About The Role of Holy Spirit in Interpretation**

1. About the difference between revelation and illumination

Clarification:

Westminster Confession of Faith, Section 6

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

What the Spirit Does and Does not do in Interpretation:

A. Does: “Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word”

Rom. 8:6-8 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able {to do so}; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

1 Cor. 2:12-14--Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.} 14

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1. The subjective role of producing reconciliation. Rom. 8.15.

1. Spirit destroys that enmity between rebellious creatures and God, which is the fundamental problem with interpretation.

2. While we are no longer fundamentally at enmity with God, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is not yet complete.

2. The Spirit's role in enabling us to *receive* the truths of God

1. Rom. 8:5-8-- 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

2. 1 Cor. 2:9-15 9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" -- 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13 And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. 14 Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

C. Conclusions:

"The Holy Spirit plays a subjective, not objective, role in biblical interpretation. In reconciling our sinful hearts to God, he promotes within us a similar desire to love and serve God as we have to love and serve our natural parents. Further, he particularly gives us the desire to embrace and receive the things of God. In doing this, he makes us willing to work hard to understand scripture, and willing to embrace the conclusions of our study of scripture. Our view is distinct from the view of Rome, which argued that the difficulty of understanding scripture aright was due to scripture's obscurity and perplexity; Protestants responded by saying the difficulty was due to our obscurity and perplexity. On the other side of the Reformers, battling from another direction, were the anabaptists, who joined Rome in claiming scripture to be intellectually unclear and in need of further revelation and information. Thus, the Holy Spirit is most necessary in removing that sin and love of sin which is that which effectively prevents us from embracing and receiving the things of God." T. David Gordon

John Owen, vol. 4, pp. 118-235, "Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God", p. 156:

"The things revealed in the Scripture are expressed in propositions whose words and terms are intelligible unto the common reason of mankind. Every rational man, especially if he be skilled in those *common sciences and arts* which all writings refer unto, may, without any especial aid of the Holy Ghost, know the meaning of the *propositions* that are laid down in, or drawn from the Scripture; yea, they can do so who believe not one word of it to be true, and they do so, as well as the best of them, who have no *other help* in the understanding of the Scripture but their own reason, let them profess to believe what they will. And whatever men understand of the meaning of the words, *expressions*, and *propositions* in the Scripture, if they believe not the *things* which they declare, they do not in any sense *know the mind and will of God* in them; for to know a thing as the mind of God, and not to assent unto its truth, implieth a contradiction."

B. Does Not: "unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit,

"The Holy Spirit does not give us insight into the correct interpretation of a given biblical passage. (Caveat: in saying the Spirit does not do this, we are not saying He is *incapable* of doing this, nor are we denying that, in some extraordinary circumstance, He *might* do so, or even *has* done so. What we are denying is the propriety of *expecting* Him to do so. We are denying that belief that it is a regular part of His role in the present church-order to reveal to individuals the meaning of a biblical passage."

T. David Gordon

Evaluation of those misunderstandings of scripture which suggest that the Spirit does give supernatural insight into the interpretation of texts of scripture.

1. John 14:25-26--

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you".

1. To whom is this addressed? The disciples in the Upper Room. The twice-repeated "you" of v. 26 has the same referent as the "you" at the end of 25 and the end of 26.
2. What is promised to the disciples? The Holy Spirit.
3. What will the Holy Spirit do? He will teach-remind (note the parallel between teaching and reminding here). His "teaching," even among the disciples, is not new information, but a remembrance of the many things which Jesus had already said.
4. What will be the content of the Spirit's teaching-reminding among the disciples? What is the referent of the *pavnta*? This is answered by the relative clause, "that I have said to you". This clause is almost certainly further defined by the first clause of 25, "I have said these things to you while I am still with you".
5. Conclusions from John 14.25,26. This text records a special promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples guaranteeing that they will be helped to remember what Jesus taught them while he was with them. A number of other texts affirm that this is precisely what happened.

2. John 15:26-27 --*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.*

1. To whom is this promise addressed? To the disciples again (same discourse context, and also, 27 defines the 2d person plural as those who have been with me from the beginning).
2. What is promised? A special capacity to testify about the Christ. Note the difference between the denying, weeping Peter, and the emboldened Peter subsequent to the resurrection appearances and outpouring of the Spirit.

Conclusions of our analysis: What may we, as Bible interpreters, rightly expect from God the Holy Spirit? That He will increasingly take away our innate rebellion and hostility to the ways of God, which is the primary obstacle to our "receiving" God's truths. In this way, He will "illumine" us, not by adding *content* to the objective revelation in scripture, but by subduing that rebellion which subjectively prohibits the truth from being received and embraced.

2) Confusion About The Role of The Church in Interpretation (c.f. slides

What the Church does and does not do in Interpretation:

1) Does not add to the revelation in scripture: "unto which nothing at any time is to be added, ...nor traditions of men."

Protestant revolution was not about inspiration or tradition, but over a matter of authority. Whether the church in its teaching office had the right to impose meanings on the Biblical text which was not itself subject to correction by that text. Protestants held that Scripture was no longer free-- church teaching was silencing Biblical teaching.

Note the distinction between Westminster and Trent (1545-63) on ecclesiastical traditions:

“The sacred and holy, ecumenical, and general Synod of Trent--...following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament--seeing that one God is the author of both--as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ’s own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession....But if anyone... knowingly condemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema. Let all, therefore, understand, in what order, and in what manner, the said Synod, after having laid the foundation of the Confession of faith, will proceed, and what testimonies and authorities it will mainly use in confirming dogmas, and in restoring morals in the Church.”

The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, "Decree Concerning the canonical scriptures"

“I most steadfastly admit and embrace apostolic and ecclesiastic traditions, and all other observances and constitutions of the same Church. I also admit the holy Scriptures, according to that sense which our holy mother Church has held and does hold, to which it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures; neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.”

Profession of the Tridentine Faith, III.

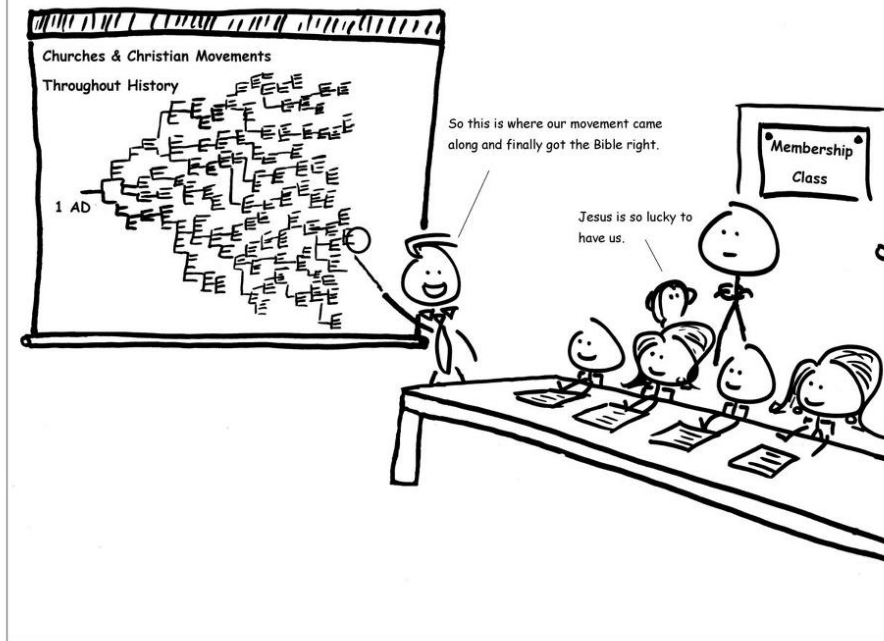
2) Does: To the degree that more qualified Biblical study and simply more of it over a greater period of time has the advantage of being a better instructor than the single untrained individual at one particular time, then the Church has the advantage of better translating the Bible, especially regarding those things "not alike plain in themselves nor alike clear unto all" (section7). The church then becomes a function of illumination vs. Revelation!

1 Timothy 3:15, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of god, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

The Use of Creeds) in Interpretation!!

Rick Lints, The Fabric of Theology

The inductive Bible study approach may encourage individuals to read the Bible as they never have before, but it will also encourage them to read the text according to their own subjective interests. The bible becomes captive to the whims of the individual freed from external constraints, and in such a situation the individual can imagine the text to say whatever he or she wants it to say. If our central concern in approaching the text is how it makes us feel or what it seems to be saying to us, then the church is doomed to having as many interpretations of the text as the interpreters. In banishing all mediators between the Bible and ourselves, we have let the Scriptures be ensnared in a web of subjectivism. Having rejected the aid of the community of interpreters throughout the history of Christendom, we have not succeeded in returning to the primitive gospel; we have simply managed to plunge ourselves back to the biases of our own individual situations.



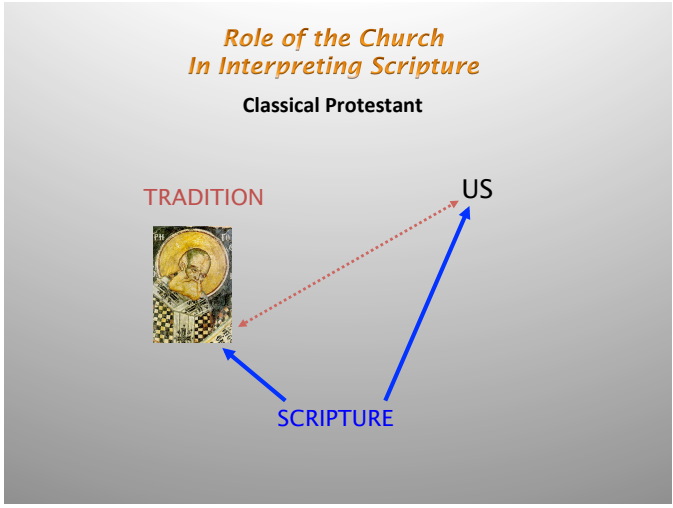
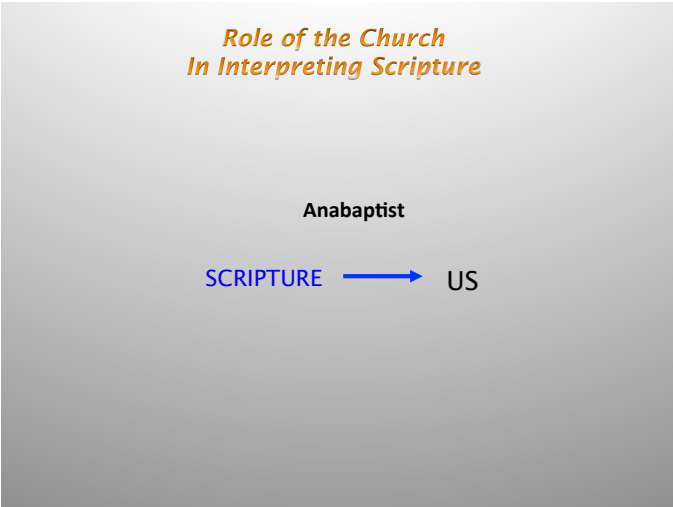
Use of Creeds in Interpretation—A Communal Way of Interpret—C.F. SLIDES

**Role of the Church
In Interpreting Scripture**

Roman Catholicism

SCRIPTURE → TRADITION → US

The diagram shows a flow from "SCRIPTURE" to "TRADITION" to "US". Below "TRADITION" are three small images: a circular medallion with a figure, a figure holding a book, and a figure in a yellow robe.



The Ultimate Goal of Confessionalism: To Preserve the Apostolic Faith for the sake of believing it!

Our own confession teaches about itself that it is fallible (WCF 1:9, 31.3) and that "all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture" (WCF 1.10). And yet, without a corporate reading of scripture as within the organizational structure established by Christ through the apostles (Mt. 16, Eph. 2), we are left with private interpretations and a corporate identity crisis.

- Mt. 28:20**, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...
- Acts 20:26-27**, Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God
- 2 Thess.2:15**, So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

A Biblical History of Confessing

- An Intrinsic quality of faith-- *Let the Redeemed of the Lord say so... Ps.107:2*
- A Confessing history of Israel-- see Dt.6:4-9, 26:5-9
- Peter's Confession—see Mt.16:13-18

- Perhaps the earliest and briefest Christian confession—1 Cor.12:3, “Jesus is Lord.”
- Early Apostolic “statements”—Rom.1:3-4, 1Cor.15:3-4, 1Tim.3:16
- A call to confess—Rom.10:9, 1 Cor.11:2, 12:3, Jude 3, 2Thess.2:15

The Use of Creeds to support Confessionalism

A "creed" is any summary and/or clarification of a certain belief or “a confess in writing.” (The word "Creed" is derived from the Latin word "belief.") Therefore, a Christian creed is an interpretation of the general teachings of the Old and New Testament Scriptures categorized into general themes and topics of relevance to the Christian faith and subscribed to by the church.

2 Timothy 1:13, *Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

2 Thess.2:15, *So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.*

The Usefulness of Creeds: (Quotes by A.A. Hodge)

1. As a basis for Christian Unity

To act as the bond of ecclesiastical fellowship among those so nearly agreed as to be able to labor together in harmony.

Amos 3:3, "How can two walk together unless they be agreed'?"

Phil. 1:27, "stand fast in one spirit with one mind"

1 Cor.1:10, "speak the same thing and be on one accord of one mind"

Philip. 2:2, Make my joy complete, be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Eph. 4:4, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Eph.4:13, "until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God.

If not unity of “faith” then unity of what?

2. For Instruction

To be used as instruments in the great work of popular instruction.

1 Tim. 4:6, *If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed.*

1 Tim. 6:3, *Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness...*

2 Tim.4:3, *For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires.*

3. For Ecclesiastical Discipline

Acts 20:28 *Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.*

Heb. 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing--for that would be harmful to you.*

4. As a basis for evaluating true from false teaching and teacher qualification.

To discriminate the truth from the glosses of false teachers, and accurately to define it in its integrity and due proportions.

Romans 10:2, they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge.

2Pet. 2:1-2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive opinions. They will even deny the Master who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned.

2John 1:10 Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching;

5. For Preserving the "Faith of our Fathers" such as to better protect against cultural "blind-spots."
To mark, preserve, and disseminate the attainments made in the knowledge of Christian truth by any branch of the church in any grand crisis of its development.

2Tim. 2:2 and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.

3) Confusion About the Priesthood of Believers in Interpretation

Sola Scriptura was a rallying cry for our Protestant forebears... neither Luther nor Calvin ever intended that this principle serve as the means by which individual interpreters might bypass the contributions of the larger interpretive community, either past or present. The Reformers maintained that interpretation of the biblical text is a responsibility not of the individual but of the community of believers gathered. It must be a corporate enterprise. Rick Lints, Fabric of Theology

WCF 1.6: The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added...

Confusion Stated: Doctrine of "priesthood of believers" has been misunderstood to mean that all people have equal ability to read, interpret and even teach scripture...

Stated: What about the "Priesthood of Believers" doctrine taught in NT: In so far as every Christian is a "priest unto God", doesn't that mean that all Christians are "ministers" so as to be able to understand and even teach the scripture without theological training?

Clarification:

a. Priesthood of Believers pertains to our having free and total access to God by virtue of being "in Christ" who is our high priest. This objection seems to confuse the implications with what might be described as the "prophecyhood of believers." The "priesthood" doctrine pertains to our relation to God, not our functions in the church or world.

b. This distinction between our "function" and our "status" is common to reformation teaching as for instance John Owens:

"All faithful ministers of the gospel, inasmuch as they are engrafted into Christ and are true believers may as all other true Christians be called priests; but this inasmuch as they are members of Christ, not ministers of the gospel. It respecteth their persons, not their function, or not them as such." ("Digression on the Priesthood of all Christians" in "Duty of Pastors and People Distinguished", Vol. 13, *Works of John Owen*.)

1. Concerning the Ascension gifts: Eph. 4:7-16

Exegetical Observation:

Building up:

In vs. 22 a kind of "union in Christ" is synonymous with "being built up *together* spiritually into a *dwelling place* of God." One ought not to pass over this word "together", as it assumes an assembly or "ekklesia." Nor should we miss the significance of the phrase "dwelling place," as it is one and the same word used in the Greek Old

Testament for “tabernacle” such as in Psalms 46 vs. 4!

Joined and knit together:

The word “joined” can be used synonymously with “assemble,” arrange, structure or even “organize.” In 1Cor.12:20 for instance, God is said to “structure) the body of Christ as to give some greater honor than others.. And perhaps most significantly, Titus 1:5 applies the verb to mean “set in order” or even “organize” as to establish a church by means of the training and appointment of elders.

Paul explicitly references a “structure” that is being “*joined together*” such as to grow into a holy temple in the Lord,” even that which is “in Christ” being “built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God” (Eph. 2:20ff). And then it is observed how this same language of “being joined together” is used again in Ephesians 4:16, this time as related to the descent of Christ in the Holy Spirit as applied to the post apostolic offices!

Under the New Covenant, this conception of “tabernacle” is mediated through different corporate structures related to the activity of the Holy Spirit for the church. Paul teaches that “we are the temple of God” and immediately applies the promises and exhortations once given to the Old Covenant church to the New Covenant church (2 Cor. 6:16-18, see then Exek. 37:26, Is. 52:11, 2 Sam. 7:14.). Paul’s teaching for us under the New Covenant was no different than the prophetic teaching under the Old Covenant, that salvation is described with the promise “I will dwell with them” (2 Cor. 6:16). This “dwelling” after the fall and before heaven always included some mediated structure whereby God, in a provisional way, was present to effect his saving activity. And according to Revelation 21, we are to see all this earlier history as climaxed in the return of Christ.

B. 1 Peter 2:4-10

Does the “you” in vs. 9 mean each *individual* or does it mean the *corporate*?

1. vs. 9, “a holy nation” (corporate)
2. vs. 10, “God’s people” (in plural, not person in singular)
3. OT use of similar phrase always in context of corporate people, who functioned with “priests” so as to bring people to God-- Israel, in so far as it had the priestly ordinances, was as a nation a priestly nation...

Ex. 19:6 but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

Rev. 1:6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

C. One priest forever for all people-- thus the “priesthood (Christ) of all believers such that all believers are enabled to enter into the holy presence of God upon the priestly mediation of Christ-- not that everyone can bring themselves into God’s presence, or that everyone then becomes a “prophet” or qualified teacher of revealed prophecy as recorded in scripture.

Heb. 7:23 ¶ Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.

Heb. 7:26 ¶ For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Heb. 8:1 ¶ Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

Heb. 10:21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

C. Not everyone a "teacher" passages

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

4. Confusion about the Doctrine of Inspiration

B. Clarification: What is the doctrine of "Inspiration?"

Definition: The process in which the words of scripture are made by the Holy Spirit working through responsible human agents to be revelatory without usurping the personality and mind of the writers. Creative work of H.S. through human instruments....

1. Biblical Idea Stated:

2 Tim.3:16- "God-breathed", not scripture breathed into writers by God but rather breathed out "Breathed", always evidence of God's creation. (Ps.33:6, Gen.2:7) - "all", the whole of scripture is inspired.

2 Peter 1:19-21- not a private interpretation. It's more than simply being eyewitnesses of historical events, but the interpretation of those events given by God as well.

John 10:33-34- Jesus defends by the authority of Scripture being that of God Himself. Scripture and God lay so close together in the minds of the writers of Scripture that they spoke of scripture doing what only God can do. The "oracles of God." (Rom.9:17; Gal.3:8; Acts 4:25; Acts 8:3...

2. Summary of Biblical View of Inspiration:

Verbal: the very words of canonical text, not merely the writers or general concepts, are breathed out by the H.S.

Plenary: Inspiration extends to all parts of the Bible as opposed to views of partial inspiration.

Confluent: The divine and human interaction "flow together" such that the individual personalities and styles are not suppressed....

Inerrancy: The text of Scripture is true in all that it intends to affirm.

3. The Relation of the Divine to the Human aspects of Inspiration

1. The preparation of the men, physically, intellectually, spiritually and even personally. Not by dictation, human minds were engaged in the writing of scripture. Therefore, distinctive styles and forms of logic attributed to different authors. Scripture has no problem assigning the writing of scriptures to its human authorship.

2. The preparation of the history which is the subject-matter of Scripture.

3. Therefore, not an isolated event or action. A teleological character is inherent in the very cause of events toward the preparation of Scripture. Inspiration is founded upon the sovereign, providential and supernatural character of God making Himself immanent in history.

Implications: We give authority to the Bible as from the Mind of God, but take seriously that which is "human" such as language, literary, historical and social considerations, etc.

Summary: The Bible is the Word of God in the words of people. Inspiration has as its product the Old and New Testament Scriptures whereby God has brought about by providential control the writings of the canonical text.

4. What Exactly is Inspired:

1. Liberal Protestant View: The Biblical author is inspired. Locus moves from what has been written to what the author experienced. Identify the experience of the author and then a person can experience it him/herself.

2. Neo-Orthodox View: The reader is inspired. Confuses doctrine of inspiration with illumination. Bible is God's Word only in so far as God speaks through it to the individual reader. Denies the objectivity of Theological truth, rather truth is subjective. This view reveals it's existential leanings.

3. Classic Evangelical View: The words are inspired. (see above)

Summary: Both the Liberal and Neo-Orthodox views are subjectivistic. They both confuse "meaning" with "significance." (One emphasizes significance as it was to the author and the other as it is to the reader.) The classic evangelical view understands that the words themselves were inspired such that meaning is objective and governed by the text itself. Significance, is merely the readers own personal responses to the objective meaning of the text.

Implications: *Original intent* as discerned in the text itself is the goal of interpretation. Each unit of scripture has only ONE *meaning*. *Significance* is distinguished from *meaning* so as to preserve the text's place of governing us, rather than we governing it. Each unit of scripture may have more than one *significance* although *significance* ought still to be a good and necessary inference from the *meaning*.

B. On the Nature of Scripture Applied!

WCF 1:9*The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself...*

A. The Dual Nature of the Bible: "Albeit in the words of men, the Bible is the Word of God "

a. The words of men:

The Bible consists of many "books": There are many authors within many socio-cultural-linguist and redemptive contexts that need to be taken seriously.

1. Who wrote the book?
2. How are specific words of interest used in its own vernacular context?
3. What was the culture norms/expectations in its day?
4. What were the historical circumstances surrounding the book and how does it's purpose fit into it. I.e. when, where, how, why, etc.
 - What were the political factors?
 - To whom was the book written and what problem/issue was being targeted?
 - Was there a controversy?
3. What are the major theological themes emphasized in this book? Do you see repetitions, patterns, cycles, etc.
4. What is the specific "genre" of a particular passage/book?

OT Examples (see handouts)

- 1) Narrative
- 2) Wisdom
- 3) Prophetic
- 4) Psalms

5. What is the specific redemptive context of that particular book and what function/purpose/role does it have within the books purpose and significance. (our focus here today)

b. the Bible is the Word of God:

The Issue of Redemptive-Historical vs. "Proof-texting" in Interpretation:

WCF1.1 *"therefore it pleased God at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself and to declare..."*

Key—A Covenantal Way of Reading the Scripture vs. proof-texting—

- *There is many "texts" but one context—The redemptive history of God*
- *NT and OT—not a new religion, but a progressive revelation of redemption wherein the Old is*

developmentally mature in the New... e.g.

- *We must learn to read the Bible backwards and forwards looking to locate each text into the trajectory or context of the whole of redemptive history and the working out of God's covenant with Adam ultimately...*
- *Example: We read Acts, not as an isolated event, but in the context of redemptive expectations and trajectories that have long proceeded it, even if awaiting its final consummation in glory.*

1. A Biblical theology applied to Bible interpretation "deals with the process of God's self-revelation deposited in the Bible throughout redemptive history." G. Vos I.e.

- a. It is God who is ultimately speaking such that we must work hard at JUST being the listeners lest we impose our own voice/narrative into the text.
- b. Truth is from God alone as relevant to God's redemptive historical purposes and is therefore not many voices but one ultimate voice with non-contradicting meaning assigned to a passage in relation to the whole.
- c. The Meaning is developing within a revelation process consistent with a history of redemption that culminates in climax.

2. Main Features of a Redemptive Historical Understanding of the Bible

a. The historic progressiveness of the revelation-process.

Revelation is the interpretation of redemption; it must, therefore, unfold itself in installments as redemption does. (Vos. p.6)

If there may be multiple significances in relation to multiple historical/covenantal/cultural contexts, there is never multiple meanings within a singular text since it is ultimate derived from the one mind of its single divine author—God!

b. The actual embodiment of revelation in history.

"the facts of history themselves acquire a revealing significance."(Vos. p.6)Read p.6-7

"The usual order is: first word, then the fact, then again the interpretive word."

Example: "The Old Testament brings the predictive preparatory word, the Gospels record the redemptive-revelatory fact, the Epistles supply the subsequent, final interpretation." (p.7)

c. The organic nature of the historic process is observable in revelation.

I.e. From seed form to full growth, qualitatively, the seed is not less perfect than the tree. We should therefore read the Bible as within an expectation that there is not multiple theologies presented within it, but rather one theology as becoming more and more clear as redemptive history progresses. We have license then to understand the "theological vision" of an earlier portion by its relevant to a later portion.

Summary:

The genius of the Bible is its narrative. The Bible is less a systematic theology or a collection of wisdom sayings than the story of redemptive history beginning at creation and culminating with the consummation of the new heavens and new earth. As revelation is the interpretation of redemption, "it must therefore unfold itself in installments as redemption does." That is, the organic nature of the historic process of revelation proceeds from seed form to full growth. Within this analogy, if the seed is salvation that began in Genesis, Christ is the full-grown tree as expressed in Revelations. Within a redemptive "word-deed-word" pattern that existed within each of the various epochs of revelation, Vos explains how the whole of the Bible can be read as "the Old Testament brings the predictive preparatory word, the Gospels record the redemptive-revelatory fact, and the Epistles supply the subsequent, final interpretation."¹ And at the

¹ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1975). p.7.

center of all this, is two redemptive historical trajectories that are initiated in Genesis and will culminate in Revelation: They are Covenant (The “scroll” in Rev) and Temple (viewed in Rev. 21:1 as temple above reuniting with temple below to make heaven!) even as the two, covenant/scroll and temple are shown to be mutually inter-dependent, distinct if never separate, as will be represented in the two natures of Christ himself, “The word (covenant) became flesh and tabernacled (temple) among us (John 1:14).

Conclusion: The Perspicuity (Clarity) of Scripture Rediscovered: A Scripture Centered Methodology

WCF 1.7- *All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.*

1 Cor. 2:12, 14–15. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Eph. 1:18. ... the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.
See 2 Cor. 4:6.

e.g. Wouldn't it be strange, that as an act of intimacy and self-revelation such as to drive God to communicate to us by incarnational words—that God would then make such words inaccessible. AS if we could blame it on God that we don't study his word as if it were not attainable to know what it says... Satan is cunning that way!

Common Confusions:

- 1) Confidence vs. Enlightenment biased “certainty”:
E.g. Illumination vs.
 - Empiricism
 - Rationalism

- 2) Clarity vs. Easy

2Pet. 3:16 *as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

e.g. And so while God has made the scriptures accessible, not in a way that would allow us to be independent of God acting in/with/through the Holy Spirit in communion in/with/through our inter-dependence upon one another...

Thus, our method of interpretation will require humility and reliance upon God acting through the Holy Spirit as then also mediated in/with/through the temple-church of God! Thus....

A. The Core Principle of Soli Scriptura Applied: Scripture Interpret Scripture “

Standards: (Notice how the above confirms the teaching of Westminster)

WCF 1.7 *All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.*

1.8 *The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. But,*

because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.

A Basic Method Summarized

A. Pray-- Our affections will largely help or hinder our interpretation in so far as we are willing to submit to God. Only God can create in us such a disposition that is genuinely willing to hear God's voice as He speaks through His Word. "Create in me a clean heart O God... !

B. Have access to Several Versions if Possible: You will want to recognize that you are at a significant disadvantage if you cannot work in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek since you will be attempting to study what amounts to a non-inspired text. You will also want to understand that there are different theories applied to translations. (Literal, dynamic, free, etc.) Furthermore, there are two major sources for the Biblical text itself. (Textus Receptus and Eclectic) Whereas you will not be able to escape these extra-Biblical realities, you can at least minimize these realities if you work with the following texts:

1. So as to have access to the Textus Receptus text, secure a *New King James*. (The text of the *New Geneva Bible*)
2. So as to have access to a more literal translation based on an eclectic text, you will want to have access to a *New American Standard Bible*.
3. So as to have access to a dynamic equivalence translation based on an eclectic text, you will want to have an Revised Standard (or New Revised Standard) or New International Version) or ESV (English Standard Version) I would make this my primary text,

(For example, why did the NIV impose a theology of "flesh" such as in their translation of Rom. 8, or why did they obscure the very significant fact that Paul choose to use one word "boast" three times in Romans 5:1-5, 11 as earlier used in Rom. 3:27, etc.?)

C. Pick Your Passage-- The fundamental unit of all language is not a single word, not even a single sentence, but the unit (paragraph or series of related paragraphs with a discernible start and finish) Look for the beginning and end of an argument, story or poetic piece of scripture. A "self-contained unit" may consist of a single sentence in the case of a proverb or perhaps several chapters of Scripture in the case of an historical story. (as in Genesis for instance)

D. Do a General Study of the whole Book of your passage FIRST

This is very important-- and is why I prefer expositional series so as to not exempt this very important step in exegetical method-- a step that takes quite some time so as to be hard to do every week or so... You will want to answer questions like:

1. Who wrote the book?
2. What were the historical circumstances?
I.e. when, where, how, why, etc.
 - What were the political factors?
 - What was the culture of that day?
 - To whom was the book written?
 - Was there a controversy that is being addressed?
3. What are the general theological themes emphasized in this book?
4. Look for key words often repeated and discern their "technical" use by the author.
5. What Genre is your book and how does this impact the way you interpret it:

See Handouts on Genre specific interpretation:

- Prophets
- Narratives
- Sermon on the Mount
- Gospels

- Epistles

As a rule, to understand the book as a whole, you will want to:

- Read the Book several times, getting the "big picture" even as you attempt to discern a general outline
- List the words most frequently used and do both thematic theological studies and word studies.
- Consult:
 - a. The Introduction in a Good Commentary—FRENCH??
 - b. A Bible Encyclopedia (G.W. Bromiley, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, 1979)
 - c. A Biblical Survey/Introduction
 - New Testament: *A Survey of the New Testament*, Gundry
 - Old Testament: *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Harrison

E. Immediate Context:

1. Given a general outline of the book of the Bible you are studying, where is your passage?
2. What is the main point before and after your passage?
3. How does the author make the transition to your passage? Notice the key transitional words: - *therefore, moreover, but, otherwise, since, etc.*

F. Sentence Flow-- You want to notice the relationships between *clauses* (not verses, or sentences, since these may be artificial anyway)

1. Try to distinguish between supporting clauses and main clauses. (Notice particularly the verbs-- main verbs vs. supporting verbs)
2. Try to distinguish the various relationships between clauses in your passage. (see attached)

Two methods:

(See attached):

Discourse Analysis: Philippians 2:19-30

Sentence Flow: 1 Peter 1:3-6

G. Word Study-- You will want to make sure you understand the significant words in your passage. Don't assume you know the meaning. See how the word is used in the same Book you are studying, by the same author of other books of the Bible, in the Bible itself.

- a. You will then want to discern the "range of meaning" and then see which best fits the immediate context of your passage. (Imagine a X were your word shows up in other passages and fill in what the context suggests it means)
- c. You will want to be particularly careful to notice how the word is used by your author.
- d. Consult a good "lexicon" (dictionary) if you can discern the Greek or Hebrew word in it.

H. Theme Comparison: Where do you see the theme of your passage elsewhere in scripture—e.g. Compare and contrast.

1. Is your passage derived from another passage in the Bible?
Sometimes your bible will actually help you some by noting in the margins cross-references.
2. If you locate an cross-reference that your author has intentionally used, you will want to go back and understand the OT passage in its original context and meaning. Often times, the author will intend to import the whole contextual meaning of the previously revealed text merely with the use of an abbreviated phrase taken from that passage.
Often times, you will discover that your passage assumes knowledge of previous revelation-- the prophets will assume familiarity with the Mosaic law for instance (especially Deut.), NT writers will assume familiarity with both prophets and Moses. But rarely will they directly quote from previous books. You will there need to see if key phrases or even words are used in other portions of the bible.
3. How does your passage compare with the cross-references? Are words used in similar ways? If there is variance, what does it accentuate so as to provide a theological emphasis?

I. Discern and Understand the passage in its COVENANT (or Redemptive Historical) Context-- (c.f. Below)

A redemptive historical orientation is not some kind of dispensable exegetical luxury. At stake is nothing less than the right way of interpreting Scripture. At issue here is simply the fundamental principle that the text is to be interpreted in the light of its context. In the case of Scripture, the redemptive-historical structure or framework established by Scripture itself is the contextual factor having the broadest bearing on a given text. (Gaffin, p.xxii)

1. *Step One: To relate the text to its immediate theological horizon. (immediate covenantal context)*
2. *Step Two: To understand the text in light of God's total revelation especially as ultimately revealed in the New Covenant.*

The Issue of Christ-Centered Interpretation:

c.f. Emmaus Road: Luke 24: 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

c.f. Heb. 1:1-3 Heb. 1:1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son,

Each "book" of the Bible is ultimately ONE chapter in ONE book of redemption. Like a good novel, we must learn to read the Bible both forwards and backwards as to allow the more developed portions to inform the under developed portions, even if the embryonic portions give meaning to the mature portions. Thus, there is a Biblical Theology of the bible that must inform the way we interpret a given passage:

J. Draft a Main point-- Attempt to summarize the plain meaning of your passage, taking into consideration all the above. IF possible write it down in one sentence. This is called the "doctrine" of your passage.

K. Compare your "doctrine" to what the church consensus about what the scriptures principally teach about that doctrine. (e.g Compare to *Westminster Confession of Faith*, or *Heidelberg Confession*)

L. Significance-- You will want to carefully limit your application to only that which naturally and genuinely may be derived from the mainpoint. In some cases, your text may have "secondary" points, but they will related to the mainpoint in an obvious way. Your "application" then ought to be governed by the mainpoint. Also remember that many passages will not have a "to do" application. It may be informative in so far as you better understand the nature of your salvation such that you will be more thankful, for instance.

Some questions you may want to ask are, although not always intended to be answered by your text:

1. What does the mainpoint infer about your relationship to God?
 2. What duty does this passage teach in your relationship to God, to people?
 3. How might I change my understanding of God, His ways, redemption, etc. so as to "grow in spiritual understanding?"
 4. How does this passage challenge assumptions in my culture?
- etc.

See also "Common Exegetical Fallacies" (Handout)

IV. The Use of Scripture In Ministry:

1) From scripture to "Sermon": Lessons from R. L. Dabney's "Sacred Rhetoric"

Robert Lewis Dabney's "Seven Cardinal Requisites" of a Sermon
from *Lectures on Sacred Rhetoric*, 1870

T. David Gordon

Below is a very brief description of the seven cardinal requisites of the sermon, as argued for by Robert L. Dabney in his work on *Sacred Rhetoric* (often reprinted with other titles). What follows merely describes Dabney's thought in brief space;

to be persuaded that he was right, the reader should read his arguments and reasoning on each point. I myself have read and re-read the volume many times over many years, and have become persuaded that he is right, and that the following, therefore, serves as a very good checklist for ministerial students, ministers, and pulpit committees. The “tests” below are mine, not Dabney’s.

1. Textual Fidelity

Here Dabney’s Protestantism is visible. For Dabney, a minister is an ambassador, who represents another, declaring the will of that other. Therefore, he is not entitled to preach his insights, his opinions, or even his settled convictions; he is entitled only to declare the mind of God. Since, for Protestants, the mind of God is disclosed in scripture, the sermon must be entirely faithful to the text; a genuine exposition of the thought of the text.

TEST: Does the significant point of the sermon arise out of the significant point of the text? Is the thrust of the sermon merely an aside in the text? Is the text merely a pretext for the minister’s own idea?

2. Unity

“Unity requires these two things. The speaker must, first, have one main subject of discourse, to which he adheres with supreme reference throughout. But this is not enough. He must, second, propose to himself one definite impression on the hearer’s soul, to the making of which everything in the sermon is bent.” (109)

TEST: If ten people are asked after the sermon what the sermon was about, will at least eight of them give the same (or similar) answer?

3. Evangelical Tone

“It is defined by Vinet as ‘the general savour of Christianity, a gravity accompanied by tenderness, a severity tempered with sweetness, a majesty associated with intimacy.’ Blair calls it ‘gravity and warmth united.’...an ardent zeal for God’s glory and a tender compassion for those who are perishing.” (116,117)

TEST: Do hearers get the impression that the minister is *for* them (eager to see them richly blessed by a gracious God), or *against* them (eager to put them in their place, scold them, reprimand them or punish them)?

4. Instructiveness

“The instructive sermon is that which abounds in food for the understanding. It is full of thought, and richly informs the mind of the hearer. It is opposed, of course, to vapid and commonplace compositions; but it is opposed also to those which seek to reach the will through rhetorical ornament and passionate sentiment, without establishing rational conviction....Religion is an intelligent concern, and deals with man as a reasoning creature. Sanctification is by the truth. To move men we must instruct. No Christian can be stable and consistent save as he is intelligent....If you would not wear out after you have ceased to be a novelty, give the minds of your people food.” (117-119)

TEST: Is there any significant engagement of the mind in the sermon, or is the sermon full of commonplace clichés, slogans, and general truths? Is the hearer genuinely likely to re-think his view of God, society, church, or self?

5. Movement

“Movement is not a blow or shock, communicating only a single or instantaneous impulse, but a sustained progress. It is, in short, that force thrown from the soul of the orator into his discourse, by which the soul of the hearer is urged, with a constant and accelerated progress, toward that practical impression which is designed for the result....The language of the orator must possess, in all its flow, a nervous brevity and a certain well-ordered haste, like that of the racer pressing to his goal.” (122-24)

TEST: Are the earlier parts of the sermon necessary to the latter part shaving their fullest effect? Is there intellectual (and consequently emotional) momentum to the address?

6. Point

Dabney uses the word "point" to describe the over-all intellectual and emotional impact of a sermon. Point is thus a result of unity, movement, and order, where there is a convincing, compelling weight upon the soul of the hearer.

TEST: Is the effect of the sermon, on those who believe it, similar? I fit encouraged one, did it tend to encourage all, and for the same reason? If it troubled one, did it tend to trouble all, and for the same reason? If it made one thankful, did it tend to make all thankful, and for the same reason?

7. Order

We would probably call this "organization," but the point is the same. A discourse (sacred or otherwise) cannot have unity, movement, or point, without having order. Order is simply that proper arrangement of the parts, so that what is former prepares for what is latter. A well-ordered sermon reveals a sermon's unity; makes the sermon memorable, and gives the sermon great point.

TEST: Could the hearers compare notes and reproduce the outline of the sermon? If they could not reproduce the outline, could they state how it progressed from one part to another?

2) Use of Scripture in Leading a Small Group Bible Study by "Directed Discussion

Each Bible Study can be divided into four basic sections,

- a. *point of contact,*
- b. *investigation,*
- c. *discovery,*
- d. *so what?*

About questions:

An "investigation" question will be very different than a "so what" question for instance. Also, while there is no hard and fast rule about asking questions, you will discover that there is an art to giving enough information in the question but not too much information so that the participant will be led by it to discovery rather than confusion and embarrassment.

The most important thing to remember is that you want to avoid making the scripture say more than one thing at once. People instinctively know that if a passage can say anything then it says nothing which has certainly led to less confidence in the scripture being our only rule of faith and practice. So, a question like, "what does this passage, sentence, word of scripture mean *to you*" is never appropriate in the investigation section lest things get turned up-side-down and we become the talkers in revelation and God the hearer.

From Text to Group Study

Point of Contact-- You will want to engage the sympathy of the people in the group. The danger at this point is to say or do *anything* to get their attention. You might tell a joke, story or quote for instance that has nothing to do with the content of investigation. This will tend to undermine your credibility and encourage a license to make the scripture say something that it never intended to say. The study will be better served if you will reflect on the final inferences that are made in the "so what" section and introduce the lesson in a way that

would help the participant begin thinking about that. It is often helpful to begin a theme and return to it at the end such as to tie the whole lesson together.

Investigation-- The important thing to remember at this section is that we are **not** searching for our own opinions. Your lead questions will want to drive a person to the text, less our own thoughts and feelings. We are listening, God is speaking, and this must be kept in mind throughout this section especially lest the word become a window into our own hearts rather than God's revelation. You will want to keep your comments mostly to the comments provided for you in the lesson unless you are qualified to interpret scripture. Example: How does our text divide itself? What words are repeated or emphasized that may be significant to understanding this passage?

Discovery-- Having investigated the text of God's word, we are now ready to summarize the main point. The idea is to state as clearly and plainly as possible the "good news" that is presented by our passage in a summary fashion. You may want to help the participant see the "good news" represented by the main point—which will require some grasp of theology as a complete system. One good rule is to always locate the main point in a category of theology. You may want to consult with your church "Confession of Faith" to know what your church understands the scripture to generally teach about the topic. Example: What is the issue that this text addresses in our Christian life? (Issue of revelation, sin, acceptance with God, godly living, the future, the church, our relationships with the world and/or one another—all of which fall under a category in WCF)

So *What?*-- If you have rightly divided the word of God in the investigation section, here is your second great opportunity to mess up. If we are careful about discerning the point of a passage, we are often lax in our application. Remember that your first level of application (when applicable) may be for the grace that instructs us to godliness and/or to deny worldly desires (Titus 2:11:12) Yet this ought to be honest with respect to what the text intended as by good and necessary inference. There may even be several levels of application, but the ultimate level will be to embrace Christ who in some way satisfies the burden of the text. For instance, the Bible certainly applies the suffering of Christ to our present call to "take up our cross and follow after Christ" in this present age. We might therefore rightly apply the passion of Christ to our passion such as to "share in the suffering of Christ" as exhorted in 1 Peter for instance. Yet whatever relevance may be drawn from this about the particular realities represented by the participants in the group, you will want to conclude with the ultimate level of significance that directs us to Christ's suffering as our vicarious substitute for the penalty of sin under the law. You would want to remind them that no sacrifice on our part could possibly increase our status with a Holy God. Only the perfect sacrifice of Christ can do this. We enjoy perfect status with God as adopted sons and daughters *in Christ*. Our "response" will be to put our hope and confidence in Christ for every spiritual blessing, looking less to ourselves and more to him resulting in growing thanksgiving, spiritual rest and restoration. We are not therefore looking for the "moral" of the story so much as the "grace" of the story that is revealed in Christ.

3. The Use of Scripture in the Discernment of God's Will

- **Two Wrong Views:]**

- View #1: There is NO so called "divine blueprint"**

- View # 2: There IS a "divine blueprint" AND it is our duty to find it!**

- Charismatic Method: The Blueprint revealed "In Word and a word"
Illus. Landscape Design: Letter of basic instructions with architectural Drawings
 - Mainstream Method: The Blueprint revealed in "Word and Sign"
Illus. Landscape Design: Letter of basic instructions with tools and plants provided

- **A Third (Right) View: There is a Divine Blueprint, but it is mostly kept secret to us, and we discover the way that we are to go "step by step" in the discovery of divine wisdom**

A. A Reaffirmation of the Sufficiency of Scripture in Decision Making Pss. 119:105ff, John 15

B. View #3: The Search For “Divine Wisdom”

Divine Wisdom discovered in word relative to “the system”

Assumptions:

1. God has a specific and detailed plan for each Christian’s life (blueprint) there IS a specific plan of God for individuals
2. God DOES NOT will to reveal it all at once
3. Scripture doesn’t speak to everything directly, BUT SCRIPTURE IS SUFFICIENT FOR DIVINE WISDOM EVEN FOR THE LEAST THINGS by Biblical Wisdom Applied!

AGAIN: Assumption -- There IS an individual and specific plan for every Christian, but it is strictly and intentionally kept secret... God does NOT normally reveal anything about it to us.. it is information that is for now at least for God’s use alone as he directs the affairs of our life... we simply discover it after the fact!

OUR RESPONSIBILITY: To live according to divine wisdom—

E.g. In this view, divine guidance has nothing to do with discerning this secret plan and using it to make decisions. Guidance rather is given by God when he gives us insight into issues and choices so that we make the decisions with divinely inspired wisdom. Guidance comes, in short, by God making us wise... there is no seeking for the clues or signs, there is no need for a direct word... e.g. step by step—God is in the system therefore we trust that he is in the system and that in due course, as we need, it, we will be wise unto wise decisions. Again, the wisdom view does believe in divine guidance and does believe there is a sovereign plan, but that God’s guidance comes gradually as to include everything, every experience, every training, every knowledge of Scripture—that has accumulated up to the point when the decision must be made--- His guidance is mediated by the illumination (not revelation) of our minds and hearts in keeping with the Scripture! ..

Illustration: The Darkroom

First two views assume darkness and therefore need a guiding hand to lead us through unfamiliar and dark room....

Charismatic—by audible/supernatural instructions.. turn right, turn left... stop.. e.g. “ a word from the Lord, dreams, divine “intuitions”, strong sense of.... etc.

Mainstream Christian—by shuffling along with a stick seeking the clues of where the wall turns left or right, etc...

Divine wisdom—takes into account the things he/she has learned over the years about rooms—and knows that most rooms in the 20th century have light switch near the door... and uses it... —so that we walk in light, even though the light doesn’t tell us where to walk straight and turn... we have the “light” to know this anyway!

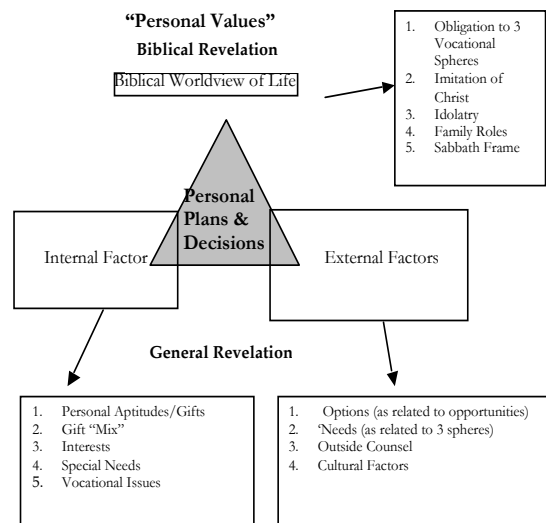
Summary:

- 1) God does have one specific plan for your life
- 2) The events and choices of your life irresistibly and sovereignly work that plan in every detail... one cannot flunk out of it.. it has all our mistakes, blindnesses and sins accounted for in advance.. e.g., God’s all encompassing providence...

Note: WCF chapter 5...

- i. Inner circle: Prohibitions (Law)
- ii. Middle Circle: Positive Commands (Love)
- iii. Outer Circle: Biblical Worldview (Wisdom)

Three Dynamics in Personal Decision Making (Work the Triangle)



A Systems Approach to Divine Guidance

- There IS an individual and specific plan for every Christian.
- It is strictly and intentionally kept secret... God does NOT normally reveal anything about it to us...
- Divine guidance has nothing to do with discerning this secret plan and using it to make decisions.
- Guidance is given by God when he gives us insight into issues and choices so that we make the decisions with divinely inspired wisdom. Guidance comes, in short, by God making us wise... there is no seeking for the clues or signs, there is no need for a direct word...
- An approach that stresses the Sufficiency of Scripture coupled with divine Providence over time, Godly counsel
- Step by step—God is in the system therefore we trust that he will guide us to discover his perfect and good will *step by step*.
 - (Col.1:9-10, Philip.1:9-11, Eph.5:15-17, James 1:5-7, 13-17)

Christian Calling
1Cor. 1:9
The Imitation of Christ
Eph. 5:1-2

Christian Callings
1Cor. 7:17, 20

Public Service
Rom. 13:1ff

Church Service
Rom. 12:1ff

Family Service
Eph. 5:21ff