

“Understanding the Bible” Lesson 5

Interpretation: “What does it mean?” (continued)

“What does the text mean?” To answer this question, we must discover the author’s intent, that is, “What did the author intend to communicate to his readers at the time he wrote the text?” Discovering the author’s intent is the goal of the grammatical-historical method of biblical interpretation.

As we read the text we must consider the literary form of the text.

Epistles—All the New Testament from Romans through Revelation.

I. The Form of an Epistle

- A. the name of the writer.
- B. the name of the recipient.
- C. the greeting.
- D. a prayer or thanksgiving.
- E. the body.
- F. the final greeting and farewell.

II. Suggestions for Interpreting Epistles

- A. Discover the historical background of the letter.
 - The NIV Study Bible
 - The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary

B. Discover the occasion of the letter.

- All epistles are occasional.
- Consult the study helps, then read the entire letter at one time.

C. Consider the context of the text.

- THINK PARAGRAPHS!!

D. Determine the meaning of the words.

- Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vines
- Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible, Robert Young
- How is the word used elsewhere in the letter?
- How is the word used elsewhere in other letters by the same author?
- How is the word use elsewhere in other letters by different authors?