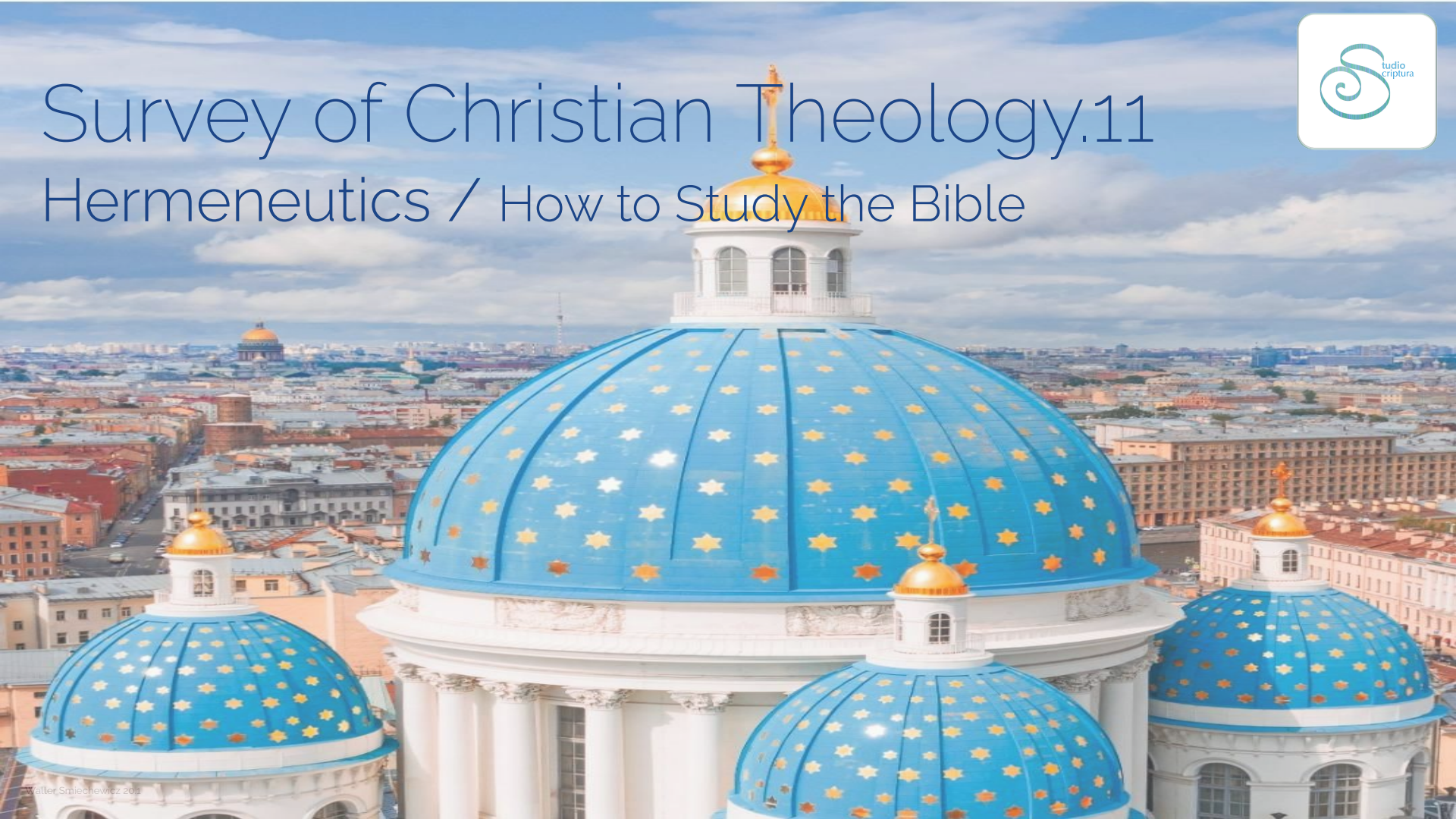


Survey of Christian Theology.11

Hermeneutics / How to Study the Bible





Logistics & Learning Objectives:

1. Learning Objectives. Participants will gain an understanding of:
 - a. The definition of and the biblical basis for "hermeneutics"
 - b. The basic principles of hermeneutics
 - c. Some supportive knowledge from the disciplines of philology and the legal profession.
 - d. How to prepare to teach the Bible.
2. For more information please visit studioscriptura.com



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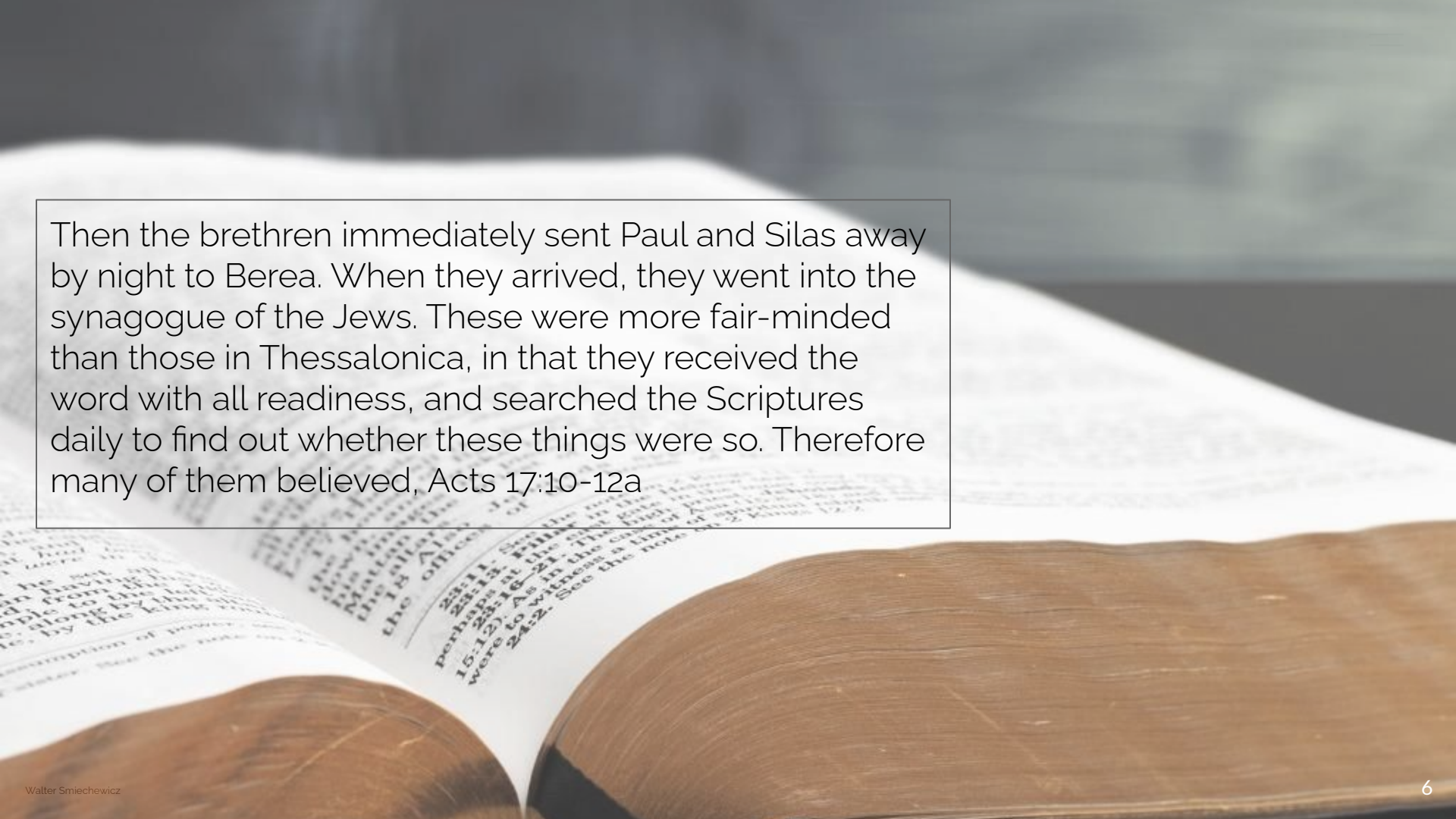
Key Sources:

"Rightly dividing the Word of truth"

2 Timothy 2:15

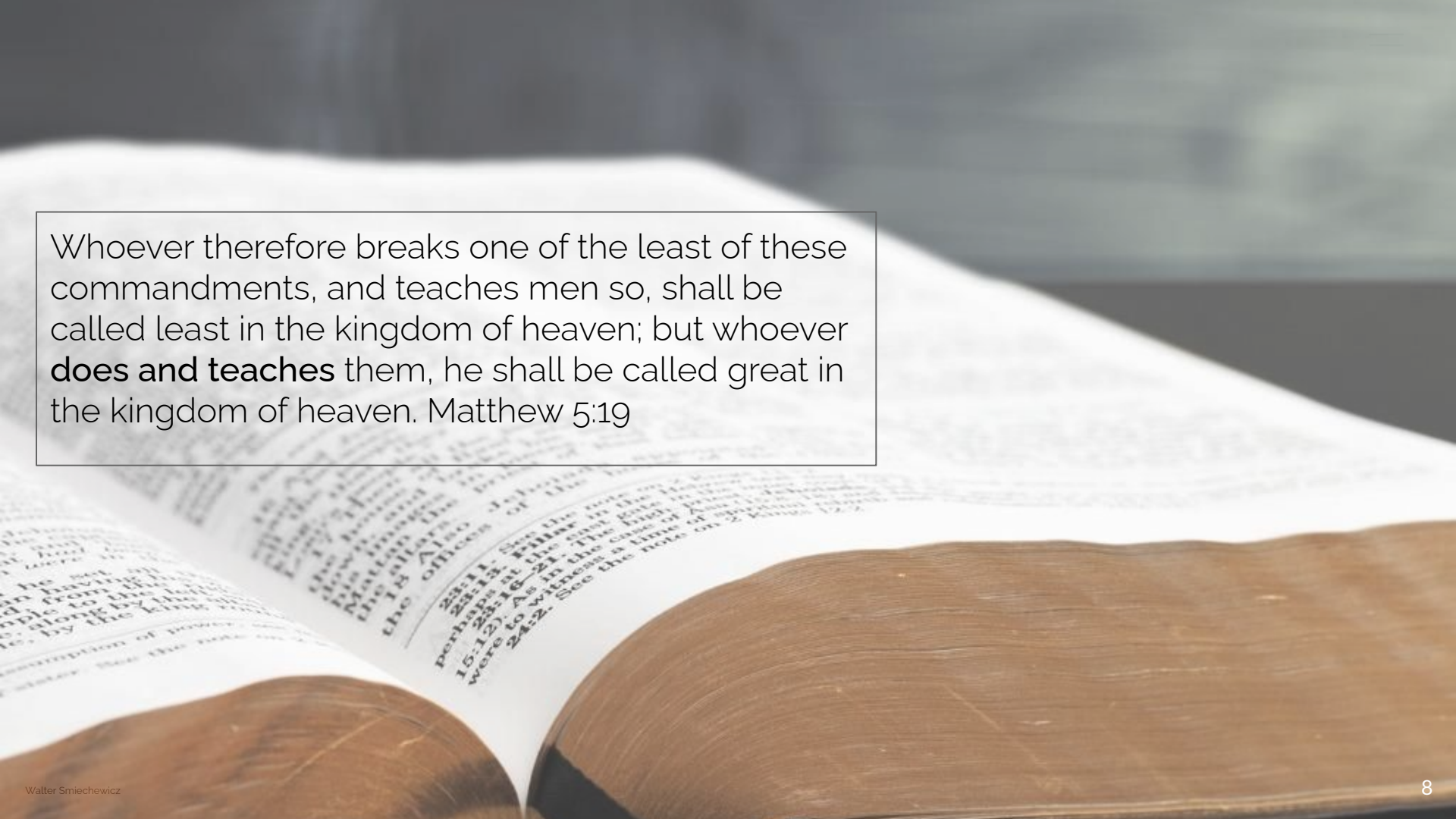


Study to show thyself approved unto God, a
workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.
2 Timothy 2:15

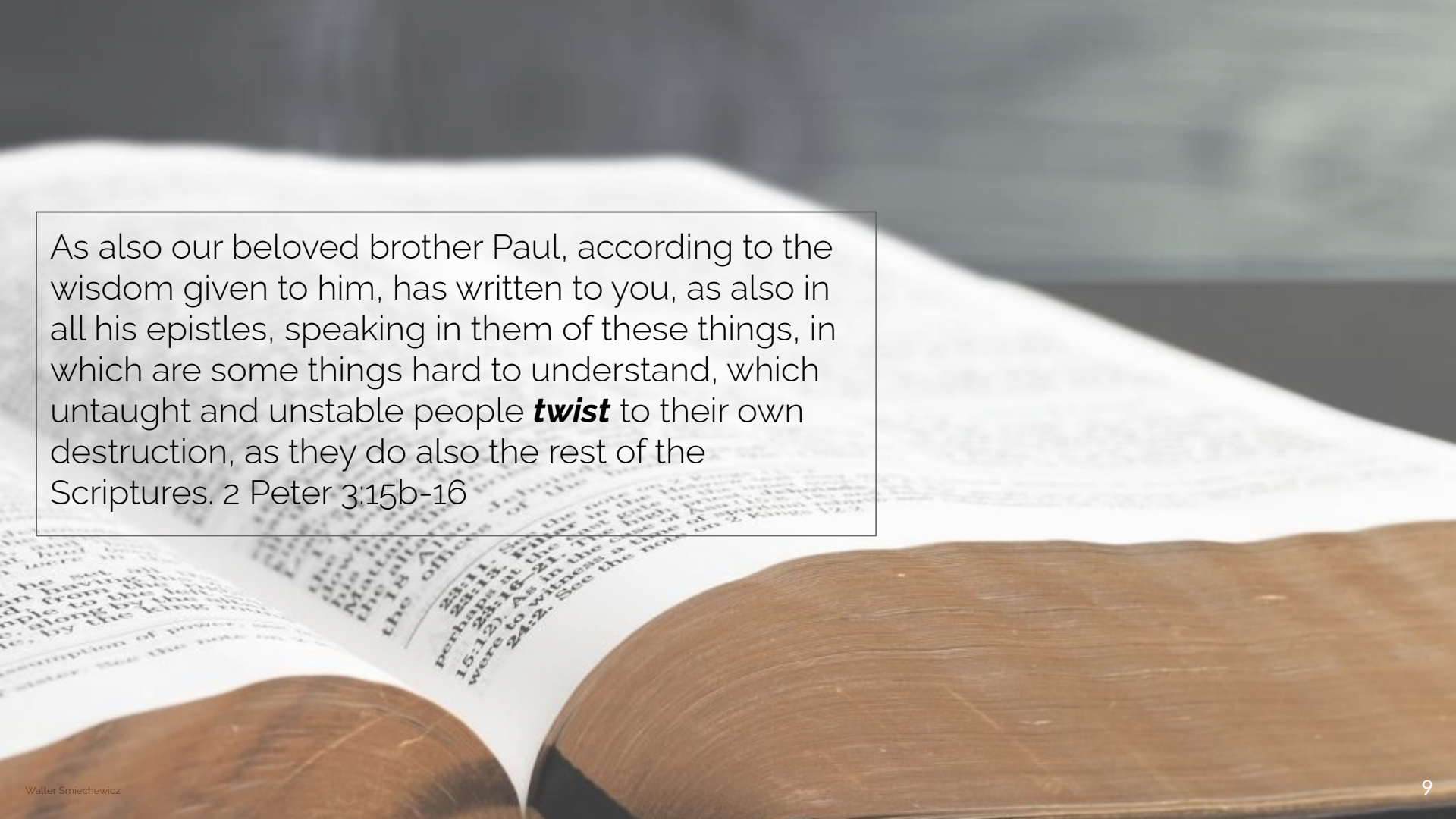
An open book with a text box overlaid on the left page. The text box contains a quote from Acts 17:10-12a. The background is a close-up of the book's pages, showing some text from the Bible, including references to Acts 15:12, 23:16, and 24:2.

Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, Acts 17:10-12a

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, **able to teach**, patient 2 Timothy 2:24

An open book with a text box overlaid on the left page. The text box contains a quote from Matthew 5:19. The background shows the pages of the book, with some text visible on the left page and the spine of the book in the foreground.

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **does and teaches** them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:19

An open book with a text box overlaid on the left page. The text box contains a quote from 2 Peter 3:15b-16. The background shows the pages of the book, with some text visible on the right page and the spine of the book in the foreground.

As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people **twist** to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:15b-16

Hermeneutics

To interpret, the art of interpretation. "The theory and methodology of interpretation, especially of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts."

Potential origin of the term from *Hermes*, the mythological Greek deity who was the 'messenger of the gods'.

Exegesis - to interpret *from {out of}*. Critical interpretation of and then explanation of a text.

Hermeneutics (continued)

Traditionally, used in the disciplines of biblical studies and legal jurisprudence

Deals with the branch of philosophy, *epistemology*, which is the study of how we arrive at the beliefs we hold.

The goal of Hermeneutics is to answer the question: "Upon reading the text, what do you *understand* as the *intended purpose* of the author when they wrote the text and what is its applicability to you today?"

Hermeneutics *(continued)*

Derived from the Greek word **ἑρμηνεύω** "to interpret". Introduced into philosophy through the title of Aristotle's work "Peri Hermeneias", c. 360 BCE

How to deal with the relationship between language and logic in a comprehensive, explicit, and formal way

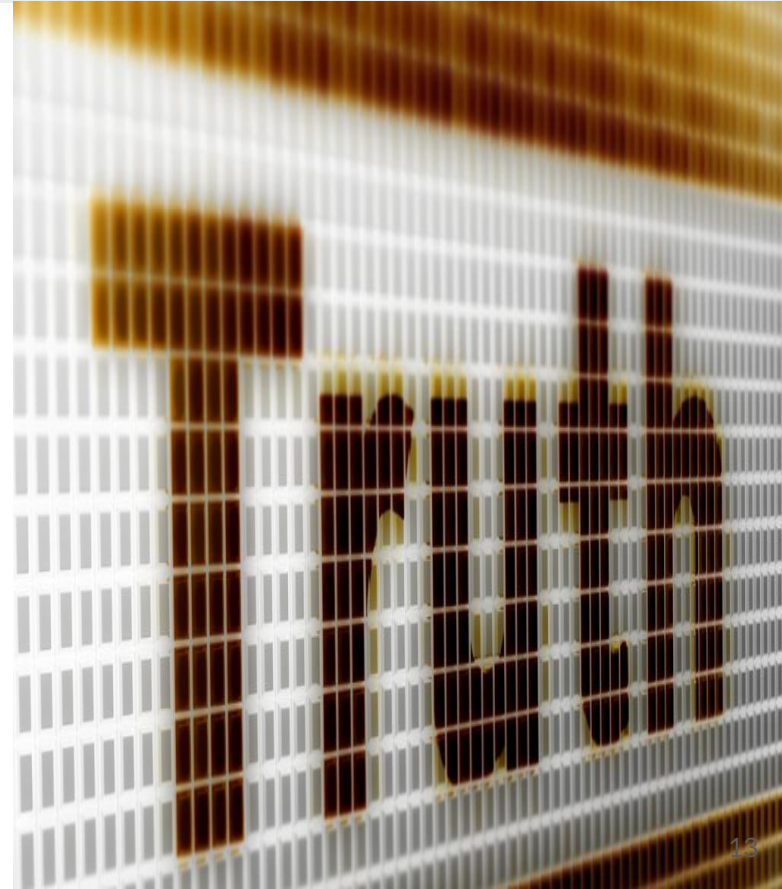
A consistent methodology to read language in a logical way to determine what the author meant when they wrote it. To look at the text in its historical context, and read it within the bounds of normal grammatical usage.

Historical Grammatical Method

Our goal in studying the bible is to “strive to discover the biblical authors' original intended meaning in the text.”
And to then apply it to our life. (Elwell, Walter A. (1984). Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House. ISBN 0-8010-3413)

Through diligent study our goal is to determine:

- What was the author's intended meaning at the time (“*historic*”) he wrote it.
- What normal “*grammatical*” rules should be applied (poetry, allegory, parable, didactic) when reading and interpreting the passage?



Context is King

A fundamental aspect of a solid hermeneutical approach is *context*.

It is necessary to understand a text as a whole (i.e., in its full context) in order properly to understand any of its parts. And it is necessary to understand the text in each of its parts in order to understand how it fits in to the whole. (George, Theodore,

"Hermeneutics", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/hermeneutics/>)



Bible



Testament



Book or Letter



Chapter & Verse

Context is King *(continued)*

Context extends further and includes the following elements. Exploring these areas is important in helping us gain an understanding of the author's original intent and the meaning of and how to apply the passage we are studying.



Situational



Geographic



Cultural



Historic

Checklist for Solid Bible Study

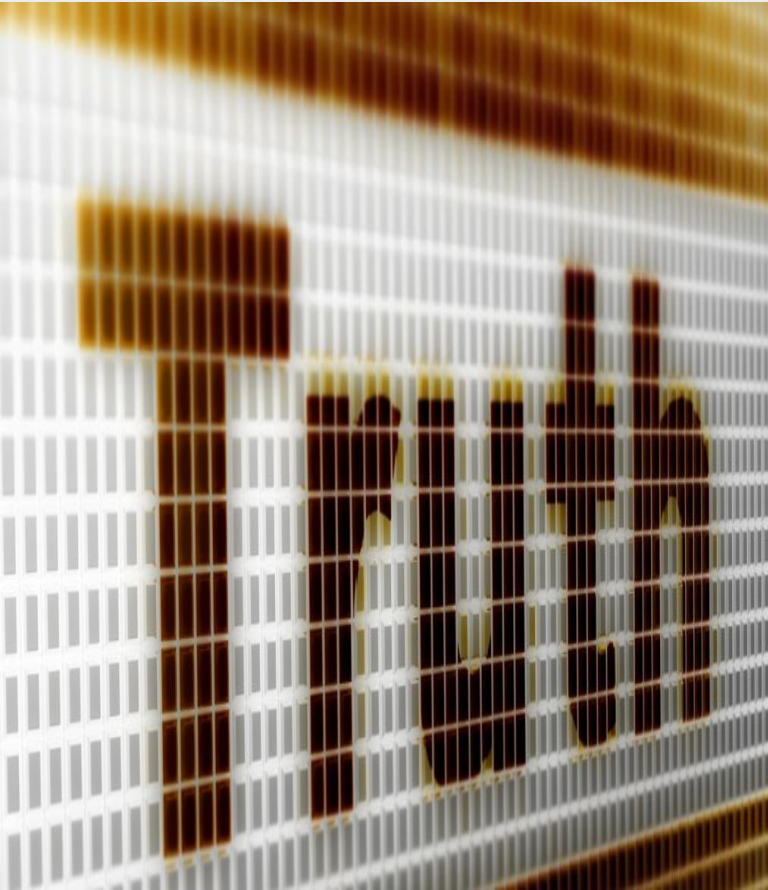
- ❑ Base your study of the bible on the historical, physical, and cultural setting
- ❑ Lookup all unclear, repeated, and important words
- ❑ Analyze the structure of the basic unit of thought, the sentence
- ❑ Examine the immediate context: the passage as a whole; the book as a whole
- ❑ Identify figurative language and determine its intended meaning
- ❑ Interpret parables strictly according to the special principles required by this type of literature.
- ❑ Use the parallelism of Hebrew poetry to gain insight into meaning

Checklist for Solid Bible Study (continued)

- ❑ Compare Scripture with Scripture for light on each passage, and discover the unity of its teaching
- ❑ Establish the coherence of revealed truth
- ❑ Since we hold that the Bible is *God-breathed* and true in all its parts, when a statement appears to be in error, we are committed to seek an explanation
- ❑ To understand predictive prophecy in Scripture, faithfully observe biblical guidelines
- ❑ Every teaching of Scripture is to be received universally, unless the Bible itself limits the audience, either in the context of the passage itself or in other biblical teaching
- ❑ God desires the response of faith and obedience to both the direct teachings and the principles of Scripture

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

A Solid Hermeneutical Approach *Avoids* the Following



1. Allowing any church or conference to have authority over the Scripture
2. Allowing our biases to prompt us to read *into* the scripture what we want it to say
3. Ignoring the fact that some passages are interpreted differently than others, as some are poetry, allegory, history, apocryphal, or didactic passages
4. Applying allegorical principles to reading all texts when it is clear the author intended to present a historical account of what happened
5. Assuming the bible has several levels of meaning and it is up to us to decide what meaning we want to select
6. Bringing a solely reason-based approach to understanding the bible and not allowing the Holy Spirit to illuminate the truth of scripture to us.
7. Ignoring what godly Christian teachers have taught in the past.

Language

- Literal
- Figurative
- Parable
- Poetic
- Prophetic

Figurative Language

- The bible, like all human communications, is a regular user of figurative language. And eastern communication is especially full of figurative language.
- Figurative language refers to words that are used with a meaning other than their common, literal sense. Figurative language can enhance communication and adds a type of visual power to a message. E.g., "They cried a river of tears." "I have a million things to do today." "The last piece of pizza was calling my name".
- Figurative language is used for the following reasons:
 - To emphasize a point
 - Move one to action
 - Helps one to memorize
 - Illustrates new truths
 - Clarifies complex topics

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

Figurative Language *(continued)*

- Guidelines for interpreting figurative language:
 - The goal is always to discern the intended meaning of the author
 - Identify a passage that might be using figurative language
 - If a statement taken literally would obviously be absurd then it is a figure of speech (e.g., "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out." Matthew 5:29)
 - Context will often indicate that language is figurative i.e., taken literally would potentially create a conflict/contradiction
 - Interpret the figure of speech by thorough word study, contextual study, and historical settings the author's intended reason for using the figure of speech
 - Remember that figurative language does not make a section of the bible less important

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

Parables

- Jesus often taught with parables so it is imperative we understand their use and purpose
- A parable is a true to life story to make a point, teach a truth, or answer a question
- Parables were often used by Jesus to obscure the truth from the unresponsive, while making it plain to the responsive
- It is important to identify the central point of the parable and not get hung up on details of the story that do not hold significance to the main point of the parable
- Parables are used to contribute to an understanding of issues of doctrine but in general they are not usually used to building the basics of doctrine
- Parables are used by Jesus to add a visual aspect to presenting the truth of His message to us.

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

Hebrew Poetry

- Distinguished not by rhyming or number of syllables but by the parallelism in thought between verses. Redundancy of thought is the key characteristic. This redundancy helps discern the author's meaning and helps understand how words are used in the Old Testament.
- Biblical authors will, at times, use a poetical structure to emphasize their point and to make the point more easily committed to memory.
- Synonymous poetry - similar thoughts are expressed a second or third time
 - "Wisdom (a)calls aloud outside; she (b)raises her voice in the open squares. she (c)cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words." Proverbs 1:20,22

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

Hebrew Poetry *(continued)*

- Synthetic poetry - the author adds to his original thought in slightly different words to explain or expand his first thought
 - "Blessed is the man who (1)walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor (2)stands in the path of sinners, nor (3)sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:1,2
- Antithetic parallelism - the author contrasts his first thought. This structure is often identified with the word "but"
 - "The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, *but* the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness." Proverbs 15:2

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

Prophecy

- As in all biblical hermeneutical structures we seek to identify the intended meaning of the author and start with the most direct and ordinary meaning of the words used.
- Prophecy, however, is often figurative e.g., the moon will not literally be turned to blood but will most likely become blood red.
- Typology - "Events, persons, or statements in the Old Testament are seen as types pre-figuring or superseded by antitypes, events or aspects of Christ or His revelation described in the New Testament. For example, Jonah may be seen as the type of Christ in that he emerged from the fish's belly and thus appeared to rise from death."
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typology_\(theology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typology_(theology))
 - Types or symbols are often used to to predict something in the future
- Apocalyptic literature - Apocalyptic literature is a genre of prophetic writing that developed in post-Exilic Jewish culture and was popular among early millennialist Christians. Apocalypse (ἀποκάλυψις) is a Greek word meaning "revelation", "an unveiling or unfolding of things not previously known and which could not be known apart from the unveiling"
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalyptic_literature

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Understanding and Applying the Bible." Moody Publishers, 2009-11-25T14:23:31. Apple Books.

Some lessons from Philology *(love of learning)*

Philology is commonly defined as the study of literary texts as well as oral and written records, the establishment of their authenticity and their original form, and the *determination of their meaning*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philology>

"A writer's own words provide the best guide to their meaning. Scholars should resolve linguistic puzzles in a text by checking the same author's usage elsewhere."

"To avoid hopeless confusion, teachers had to assume from the text itself, first of all, a straightforward, foundational, literal meaning."

"One must understand a text in relation to the customs of the period that produced it."

"Students need to study literary texts in light of history and geography."

Turner, James. "Philology." Princeton University Press, 2014. Apple Books.



Some Lessons From the Legal Profession

Begin with the plain language of the contract; i.e., employ "plain language" analysis as the starting point of reading a contract. (Gould, Inc. v. United States).		Historic and grammatical method
The intention of the parties to a contract controls its interpretation. (Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. v. United States)		Author's intended meaning
The intent of the parties entering the contract must be gathered from the instrument as a whole in an attempt to glean the meaning of terms within the contract's intended context. (Kenneth Reed Constr. Corp. v. United States)		Context
Contract interpretation requires examination of the <i>four corners</i> of the written instrument to determine the intent of the parties. (Hol-Gar Mfg. Corp. v. United States)		Context of the entire document & Intent of the author(s)

Source: <https://www.justice.gov/jm/civil-resource-manual-72-principles-contract-interpretation>



Some Lessons From the Legal Profession *(continued)*

By a reading the plain language of the text, in context, determine the intent of the parties with respect to the provision at issue at the time the contract was made".		Determine the intent of the author in context
The contract should be understood as if read by one who is cognizant of the customs, practices, and terminology as generally understood by the particular trade or business involved in the contract.		Understand the text in light of historic & cultural context
"The contract should be viewed in light of circumstances under which it was made. And terms should be <i>harmonized</i> and read in context"		Meaning of words and terms should be harmonized

https://www.reedsmith.com/files/uploads/miscellany/A_Guide_to_Contract_Interpretation__July_2014_.pdf



Some Lessons From the Legal Profession *(continued)*

<p>"Read the contract as a whole; do not read provisions in a vacuum."</p>		<p>Take each verse in context of the entirety of the bible</p>
<p>Best evidence of intent is the text of the contract (i.e., the <i>four corners rule</i>)</p>		<p>Intent of the author should be taken in context of the whole bible</p>
<p>External evidence can/ should be considered - but cannot be used to contradict the terms of the contract. Parties have consciously decided to include all pertinent terms and conditions in the <i>four corners</i> of the contract.</p>		<p>The bible is sufficient in all things that pertain to life and godliness</p>

https://www.reedsmith.com/files/uploads/miscellany/A_Guide_to_Contract_Interpretation__July_2014_.pdf



Hermeneutics & Heretics



1. An incorrect hermeneutical structure can and often does lead to heretical beliefs.
2. Heresy is "doctrine or opinion at variance with established standards"
3. Out of context
4. Presuppositionalism - Reading in to the passage rather than reading from the passage.
5. Personal experience - "What this verse means to me!"
6. Spiritualizing or Allegorizing
7. Correcting the bible rather than allowing the bible to correct us
8. "For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error." 2 Peter 2:18
9. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**". Matthew 7:15

Checklist as you prepare to teach

- ❑ Read the passage, in context, seven (7) times in a couple of sittings
- ❑ Pray
- ❑ Write out, in longhand, the passage from which you will teach
- ❑ Follow a grammatical/historical method of interpretation
- ❑ Prepare your teaching notes

Understand the context of the text	Present an outline in about 3 to 5 sections
Define key words	Explain the geography
Discuss important/applicable theological topics	Present cultural issues (time of writing and today)
Provide the specific context	What are the themes of the passage
Add some color to make it memorable	What is the intended meaning of the passage when the author wrote it
What is the challenge to your audience?	What did you teach? Why is it important? How does it apply?

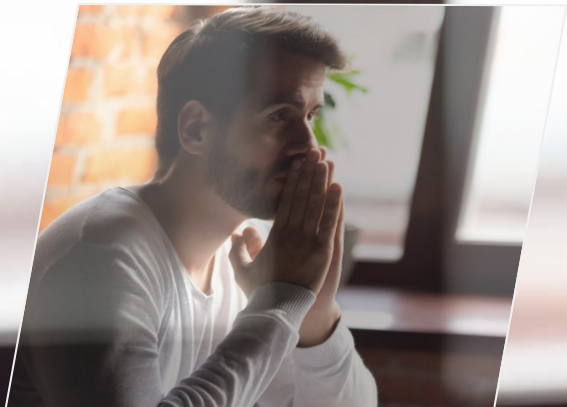
Checklist as you prepare to teach (continued)

- ❑ Practice reading your passage
 - ❑ Emotion at the time of the original event
 - ❑ Tone of voice of the players at the time of the original event
 - ❑ Impact on the original hearers
- ❑ Go for a walk as you prepare your delivery
- ❑ Develop "So What" and "Now What" questions
 - ❑ "What did you learn?" "Now how will you apply it?"
- ❑ Send your outline into Calvary Church no later than Tuesday the week you teach

A solid understanding of biblical hermeneutics is critical to developing sound doctrine, guiding us in salvation, and our sanctification.

A faulty biblical hermeneutic leads to weak believers, anemic churches, and heresy.

A well structured biblical hermeneutic takes the frustration out of reading and studying the bible. A solid biblical hermeneutic provides the *rules of the road* for good bible study





Develop a personal discipline to read and study your Bible on a regular basis

Begin to apply the principles in these slides to all of your Bible reading and Bible study

Be intellectually and spiritually alert to Biblical teaching and preaching that is developed from a faulty hermeneutic - avoid it and seek to correct it

It's time to get to work, roll up your sleeves, and become a "workman" when you read {and study} your Bible!

Now What?

