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How to read the Bible

It isn't very hard to understand the intent and meaning of the messages articles in newspapers try to convey; but somehow the messages in the Bible seem to be harder to decipher. Many people seem to glean many different messages from the same passages and verses. This lesson is designed to enable people to read and understand the Bible as the author's intended by applying these simple rules.

- Never read a verseⁱ
 - Verse numbers were added in 1551AD by Robertus Stephanusⁱⁱ
 - 313 years after chapters (1238 AD by Cardinal Hugo)
 - Meaning is derived from the whole, not the part
 - To Judge or not to judge
 - Matthew 7:1-5 (NIV): ¹"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
 - Luke 6:37-38 (NIV): ³⁷"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
 - John 7:24 (NIV): Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.
- Examine the circumstances
 - When was this written?
 - Where was this written?
 - Who was this written to?

- A closer look at Hanukkahⁱⁱⁱ
 - John 10:22-39 (ESV) ²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one." ³¹The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³²Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" ³³The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." ³⁴Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵If he called them gods to whom the word of God came--and Scripture cannot be broken-- ³⁶do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." ³⁹Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.
 - Hanukkah is the celebration of the rededication of the temple after it had been defiled by Antiochus IV
 - Jesus answers in the affirmative, but not directly so as not to be arrested by the Romans for insurrection.
 - Solomon's porch had an inscription describing the coming messiah as a conqueror.
 - This celebration was much like our "fourth of July"
 - Jesus' answer spoke volumes to the Jews and others who knew the history of the festival that was being celebrated.
 - Answers critic's questions of why Jesus didn't "just give a plain answer"
- Look for similar passages
 - The Bible is redundant
 - Scripture interprets Scripture in many cases
 - Speaking in tongues
 - Case from an Apostolic viewpoint^{iv}
 - Acts 2:4 (NIV): ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

- **Acts 8:16-18 (NIV):** ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money
- **Acts 10:44-47 (NIV):** ⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."
- **Acts 19:6 (NIV):** ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.
- **1 Corinthians 12 (NIV):** ¹Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. ²You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. ¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

- When in doubt, look at the source

- Greek, Hebrew interlinear
- Strong's numbers provide contexts for words in other passages
- Various versions

Now that you have a basic understanding of hermeneutics^v, or the study of the original meaning and intent of texts, you will be able to accurately read and understand the Bible in order to apply it to your life.

ⁱ Never Read a Verse by Greg Koukl, <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5466>

ⁱⁱ King James Bible facts by Bill and Margaret Agard, http://agards-bible-timeline.com/q10_bible-facts.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Hanukkah, the Festival of Light, <http://www.ldolphin.org/hanukkah.html>

^{iv} <http://www.apostolicministries.net/biblicalsalvation.php>

^v Hermeneutics, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutics>