Introductory Notes on Proper Biblical Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

2 Peter 1:21, **1 Cor 2:9-11, 2 Timothy 2:15**

The Bible was written over period of **1600 years by 40 different authors** in different geographical areas, different continents. The entirety of scripture provides a coherent worldview. Christians are able to understand its central message and topical themes. It is, however, an ancient book and certain portions of scripture may be challenging to understand at times, for a variety of reasons.

When reading the Bible, it's always important to apply proper rules of biblical interpretation? These rules for interpreting the Bible are simply derived from the logical use of language itself. Their purpose is to help us think through how we are going about understanding the meaning of the words / phrases being communicated to us in scripture. They include, but are not limited to, the following principles:

- **Approach the Bible reverently**, being open to receive correction and instruction from it. Are we willing to **change our doctrines and our worldview in light of the truths being revealed to us in scripture**? Many people are not. And much erroneous interpretation of scripture comes from personal unwillingness to let scripture form our doctrines, rather than conforming our interpretation of scripture to any false beliefs we currently hold or WANT to be true.)

- **The Bible is God's Word, and thus, its doctrines are harmonious within it.** When studying God's Word, we cannot take portions of scripture that we like, while casting aside portions we do not like. Scripture is not like being in a smorgasbord where one says, "I'll take a little of this and a little of that..." A correct interpretation of scripture will be in **harmony with what other scripture is teaching throughout the rest of the Bible**. God would not contradict Himself in His Word.

- **Engage in exegesis (drawing from the text) rather than engaging in eisegesis (reading our current understanding of doctrines into the text).** Another way to say this would be, "Allow the teachings of the Bible to form our doctrines rather than using our doctrines as the standard by which we interpret the Bible." This is very difficult for most of us to do. Many of us aren't even aware that we're doing this - our doctrines are so ingrained within us that we do not realize our doctrines have really become the standard for truth (God's Word) rather than allowing the scripture itself to be the standard for truth.

- **Look at the context of the verse or passage in question.** Look at what the verses that come before and after any particular passage(s) being studied in order to try and understand the meaning of the passage(s).

- **God reveals "true truth" to us in scripture but not "exhaustive truth"**. By this we mean God reveals true things about the nature of reality, while not revealing all details about reality.

- **Differentiate between "literal" and "figurative"** language. This is sometimes very difficult to do, and preachers may often debate what is "literal" and what is "figurative" or "metaphorical" language in certain passages of Scripture. Keep in mind that figurative / metaphorical language does appear all throughout scripture and is found heavy in prophetic literature.

- **Compare Scripture with Scripture**. See how the word or phrase being studied is used / applied in other parts of the Bible.

- **Study the historical background of the passage in question.** Consider its connection when interpreting the verse(s) or passage(s) in question.

- **Check the grammatical use of the key words in a verse or passage** - There may be some variations in meaning. Use Bible concordances, Bible dictionaries and other study helps.

- **Study portions of scripture along the line of a particular "Subject."** See if there is a distinct meaning found in words or phrases as they relate to the particular subject in question.

Roman Catholic (example of eisegesis)

Matthew 16:17-20 - Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. **And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Do the preceding verses offer "proof" that the Bible teaches that Jesus made the Apostle Peter the first pope? No.

Faith-Healing Theology (example of eisegesis)

Isaiah 53: 1-5 – "…But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes **we are** healed."

Matthew 8:16-17 – "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities And **bore** our sicknesses.""

1 Peter 2:24 – "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you **were** healed."

Do the preceding verses offer "proof" that the Bible teaches a Christian can be healed of any sickness/disease in the present life on earth? No.