

Week 3: Interpretation

In this session, we come to the central step in the interpretive process being the interpretation of Scripture.

I. **Step #4: Interpretation**

- The chief aim of Observation is to ask the question: what does the text say? Once that has been completed the next step and chief question becomes: *what does the text mean?*

II. **First**, when interpreting Scripture, seek the *Author's Intent*.

- Absolutely essential to reading and interpreting scripture is knowing: *The biblical author is the authority over his words: no one else.*
 - A. There is one meaning of Scripture (the author's intent), but many applications which will look different in different contexts.
- *There are two essential questions for determining the biblical author's intent:*
 - i. What did the author mean by what he wrote?
 - ii. How would the original recipients receive what he wrote?

III. **Second**, when interpreting Scripture, *interpret the text literally (naturally) and in light of the context.*

- Literal interpretation of the Bible simply means explaining the text of Scripture according to the normal and customary uses of its language.
- The Natural sense of words simply means we don't look for hidden meanings or interpret the words of Scripture different than the responses you receive in conversation or in other books you read.
 - A. The natural sense of language includes figures of speech. When Jesus says, "I am the door" (John 10:9), He obviously doesn't mean that He's literally a door. Rather, Jesus is saying metaphorically He is the only way to enter into salvation and life through faith in Him.
- So, the literal meaning of Scripture is the natural meaning of Scripture and figurative language is a part of literal interpretation.
 - B. Important question to ask when interpreting Scripture and determining meaning:
 - i. *Does this make good sense of the text (author's intent) and the context?*

IV. **Activity:** Read John 3:16-18 and in one sentence summarize what John is teaching in these verses.