

Handling the Word

Lesson 5 - Interpretation: What Does It Mean?

Conversation Notes

Today, we are asking one simple question

What does this passage mean?

We have already practiced slowing down to notice what a passage says, and reading around the passage to understand its context. Now we are asking the next question: what does this passage mean?

2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 8:26-35; Judges 6:36-40; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; Luke 24:44-47

A few things we are looking for today

- We learn that meaning is received from the text, not invented by us.
- We ask what the passage meant when God first gave it.
- We remember that needing help to understand is not failure.
- We learn the difference between what Scripture describes and what it commands.
- We keep Christ and God's redemptive plan at the centre of Scripture.

Let's check in honestly.

How did you go with the pre-reading for this session?

Was there a verse or thought that encouraged you, challenged you, or stood out to you?

Before today, what did the word "interpretation" make you think of?

A kind reminder before we read

You do not need to understand everything immediately. A faithful question is better than a rushed answer. Needing help to understand Scripture does not mean you have failed. It means you are learning, and the Lord is patient with His people.

A simple Bible study principle

We do not give the Bible its meaning. We seek to receive the meaning God has given.

A passage may have many faithful applications, but it does not have many contradictory meanings. Before we ask, "How does this apply to me?" we first ask, "What does this mean?"

What is interpretation?

Observation asks: What does the passage say?

Context asks: What surrounds this passage?

Interpretation asks: What does this passage mean in that setting?

Read and talk together

2 Timothy 2:15

This verse reminds us that the Word of truth is to be handled carefully.

What does this verse say about handling the Word of truth?

Why do you think careful handling of Scripture matters?

Acts 8:26-35

This passage is a great encouragement. The Ethiopian man was reading Scripture, but he still needed help to understand.

What was the Ethiopian man reading?

What did he not yet understand?

Acts 8:26-35 continued

How did Philip help him?

How did the Scripture point to Christ?

Main practice passage

Judges 6:36-40

This passage is sometimes used to make decisions. Before we apply it, we need to ask what it actually means in context.

What had God already told Gideon?

What does Gideon ask God to do?

What does this passage show us about Gideon?

What does this passage show us about God?

A helpful question - describing or commanding?

Sometimes the Bible describes what happened. Sometimes it commands what we should do. A passage can teach us even when it does not offer a method to copy.

Is Gideon's fleece mainly a way to copy, or a story that shows God's patience with a fearful man? What do you notice?

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11

Paul says Old Testament events were written as examples and instructions for us.

How does Paul say these Old Testament events help us?

What is the difference between learning from an example and copying everything that happened?

Whole-Bible meaning

Luke 24:44-47

Jesus teaches that the Scriptures point to Him and to God's redemptive purpose.

How do the Scriptures point to Christ?

Why should Christ shape how we understand the Bible?

Pulling it together

Finish this sentence in your own words: Interpretation helps me...

What is one question I can ask before applying a passage?

Today's simple takeaway

Faithful interpretation means seeking the meaning God has given.

We read carefully, consider the context, ask honest questions, and seek to understand the passage before applying it to ourselves.

This week - keep it simple.

Read Acts 8:26-35 twice during the week. Each time, write one honest sentence about what this passage shows you about needing help to understand Scripture.

One thing I noticed this week was...

Prayer to finish

Lord, help me to handle Your Word carefully. Teach me to listen before I speak, to seek the meaning You have given, and to see Christ more clearly in the Scriptures. Amen.