



Good Eats for the soul

Lesson 1 In Search of Meaning June 5, 2022

her • me • neu • tics:

hərmə'nōodiks

NOUN: a method or theory of interpretation.

ORIGIN: late 17th century: from Greek *hermēneutikos* 'interpret'.

I. **Introduction:** *Imagine you meet a new neighbor who is from another country, and you begin to be friends. From time to time he asks you about certain phrases he hears but doesn't understand. Below are two examples. Use the space provided and fill out all possible answers.*

A. Your friend asks, "What do you mean when you say, 'I'm game'?"

List some ways you would explain what you mean:

List the ways he could easily misunderstand this phrase:

B. Your friend asks, "What do you mean when you say, 'That car is sick!'"

List some ways you would explain what you mean:

List the ways he could easily misunderstand this phrase:

II. **What is hermeneutics?**

A. Definition

B. Biblical example: John 1:42

1. ...Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which *means* Peter).
2. "Means" – *hermeneuetai*

C. The search for meaning: we all practice hermeneutics everyday

1. Reading new articles
2. A restaurant server: "Can I get you anything?"
3. Conversations with your boss, neighbor, spouse, child, etc.

III. **The search for meaning in the Scriptures**

A. What does a text mean?

1. What did the text mean to the original author?
2. What did the text mean to the original hearers?
3. What does the text mean to me?
 - a. Avoid subjectivity
 - b. Strive for objectivity
4. What does the text mean to the church?

Additional Notes

- B. Hermeneutic help from above (or, rather, within)
 1. Scripture interprets Scripture ¹
 2. Perspicuity of Scripture ²
 3. Holy Spirit as instructor ³

III. Why do we need hermeneutics?

- A. Because we're fallible ⁴

- B. To avoid the dangers of misinterpretation:
 1. Can lead to differing doctrines

 2. Can lead to bad doctrine (heresy)

 3. Can lead to abuse



Additional Notes

IV. Goals of this Class

- A. Equipping the saints (Eph 4:11-12)

- B. Discernment (Acts 17:11)

- C. Better living by consuming the Word (Matt 4:4)

V. Yes! Try this at home

- A. Don't be a one-translation reader

- B. Always have access to a good study bible

- C. Context, context, context!

- D. Heed the footnotes

Ephesians 4:11-12

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...

Acts 17:11

¹¹ Now these Jews [*in Berea*] were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Matthew 4:4

⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" [quoting Deut. 8:3].

¹ WCF 1:IX: The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly [Acts 15:15. *And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written...* John 5:46. *For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.* See 2 Pet. 1:20–21].

² Ps 119:105, 130: *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*

³ 1 Corin 2:11-12: *For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.*

⁴ Kaiser & Silva. *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. It turns out, in fact, that we need hermeneutics not precisely because the Bible is a divine book but because, in addition to being divine, it is a *human* book. Strange though that may sound, such a way of looking at our problem can put us on the right track. Human language, by its very nature, is largely equivocal, that is, capable of being understood in more than one way. If it were not so, we would never doubt what people mean when they speak... What we need to appreciate, however, is that the *potential* for misinterpretation is almost always there.