

HOW TO: Interpret Scripture Properly

Many Christians misquote scriptures which shows the ignorance of their Bible reading. Also, many don't understand some scripture verses which shows their lack of knowledge because the teaching they've received. Here are 2 such verses.

✳️“Equipping the Saints”✳️

It is said in Christian circles that the purpose of the ascension gifts¹ is to equip believers for getting into ministry:

Ephesians 4:12 (NKJV) – *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

The Amplified clears up the problem with ‘ministry’, accurately showing that it is for servicing, not a ministry vocation or business.

Ephesians 4:12 (AMP) – *[and He did this] to fully equip and perfect the saints (God's people) for works of service, to build up the body of Christ [the church];*

But, is ‘equipping’ all about training believers to become ministers?

The Greek word translated ‘equip’ is *katartismos* (καταρτισμός), which is usually translated ‘complete furnishing’, ‘perfecting’ or ‘equipping’. However, the word is an ancient medical term which means to put bones back together again. This is like what a chiropractor does when they realign bones and surgeons who repair breaks so that the bones are in their proper positions. With that in mind, the verse infers that the ascension gifts are given to the ekklesia to bring the members into alignment.

See Jonathan Welton's free graphic statement about this verse:

(gallery.mailchimp.com/97daf68350707ef6971ca3e7c/_compressed/f6dfa238-89bb-4f01-a045-07a57ac85419.jpg)

✳️“Thou Shalt Not Kill”✳️

Many conscientious objectors to military service have misquoted this verse from the KJV saying that God forbids us killing people.² Actually, the Hebrew word used in the verse refers to murder, homicide, assassination, etc. It is rendered like this in the Amplified version:

Exodus 20:13 (AMP) – *You shall not commit murder (unjustified, deliberate homicide)*

It is true that the blood of a person killed is required of the killer,³ and the blood of innocent people is required especially for accountability.⁴ But that doesn't indicate that killing is wrong in every situation.

Military killing and the execution of criminals is sanctioned by God. This was not his plan for humanity, but seeing that evil is now present in our ‘fallen’ world, he had to spell out what killings he would see as righteous.

Even the military killings of King David was held against him as making him unholy so that he was forbidden to build the temple.⁵ God gave the task to his innocent son, Solomon.⁶

1 – Ephesians 4:11 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers)

2 – This was the case with Christian in the movie, “Hacksaw Ridge”. (It was based on a true story)

3 – Genesis 9:5-6

4 – Genesis 42:22; 1 Kings 2:32; Psalm 9:12; Luke 11:50-51

5 – 1 Chronicles 22:8

6 – 1 Chronicles 22:9-10

If God forbade all killing then these would not have been sanctioned:

1. The God-directed annihilation of the accursed giants from the land of Canaan.⁷ They were *chêrem* (Hb) – ‘devoted to destruction’.⁸ *Chêrem* included killing all members of their communities because they could possibly carry some of the giants’ DNA. Their livestock were all killed and even their possessions were to be treated as unholy.
2. The God-directed attacks on Israel’s enemies by Gideon⁹, King David¹⁰, King Saul¹¹, and other kings.
3. National governments having the God-given responsibility to execute criminals.¹²

We need to properly understand the scriptures so that we have accurate understanding. To do this we need to interpret the bible like this:¹³

1. The intended meaning of the original writer, and relevance to the original readers, are the most important starting points for understanding scripture.
2. A verse cannot be interpreted to mean what it never could have meant to the original writer or reader.
3. Specific attributes of the faith cannot be used as an interpretive lens without harming the text, such as trying to insert grace, faith, the supernatural, the cross, etc. into every passage.
4. The original wording, grammar, and language of the author's time period is invaluable for understanding the meaning of a text.
5. Knowing the historical setting is essential. One must ask contextualizing questions of the text such as: What covenant was the writer operating under? Who was the political ruler at the time? Where was the writer located? The reader?

See Jonathan Welton’s free graphic statement about bible interpretation:
(cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0832/8421/files/Interpret.pdf)

Reinterpretation Difficulties

On the other hand, sometimes the English translations we are reading may need interpretation, even though a piece of text seems to have straightforward meaning. Here’s an example from Dr. Lizorkin-Eyzenberg of the Israel Study Centre¹⁴, part of the Israel Bible Institute in Tel Mond, Israel.

“We read in Genesis 25:23 – “Two nations are in your womb, two separate peoples shall issue from your body; One people shall be mightier than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.”¹⁵

When translated literally we read: “Two peoples are in your stomach” – שְׁנֵי גֵיִים בְּבֶטְנִיךָ. “Two peoples will separate from you” – וְשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֶּעֶיךָ יִפְרְדוּ. “One people over another will exercise strength” – וְלֵאמֹם מְלֵאִם מְלֵאִם יִאֶמְצוּ. But it is the last portion of this verse that introduces a considerable ambiguity – וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר. Traditional translations render it as “the older will serve the younger”.

7 – Joshua 6:17

8 – Even Israel was treated as *cherem* when they sinned by having some of the possessions of the giant communities in their own camp. (Joshua 7:11-13)

9 – Judges 7:7, 19-25

10 – 1 Samuel 17:45-54; 19:8, 2 Samuel 5:24

11 – 1 Samuel 11:11

12 – Romans 13:4

13 – Points from Jonathan Welton’s graphic statement (cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0832/8421/files/Interpret.pdf)

14 – israelstudycenter.com

15 – Unknown English version, but close to NKJV

If the phrase is to be translated as "the older will serve the younger" then the word תא is missing before צעיר. Without תא it is not clear if the younger will serve the older or as liturgical Jewish singing practice implies, the other way around!...

It is indeed a great challenge to make a responsible translation decision, when the text in Hebrew clearly has a built-in ambiguity. But could it be that translator's practice of alerting us only to one choice obscures something that was intentionally left in the text by its author? Probably so."

Here's a second one from Eli:

"In Isaiah we find a curious text: "...these I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in the house of my prayer"¹⁶ (וְשִׂמְחֵתֵם בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי). Note the wording: not "my house of prayer", but "the house of my prayer."¹⁷

Again the English translations have the message wrong, requiring us to reinterpret it.

Interesting information from Eli?

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16 – Isaiah 56:7

17 – “What Does Prayer Mean in Hebrew?” (12-11-2017) israelstudycenter.com/prayer-mean-hebrew