

February 2, 2022

What Do We Bring to The Text?

Foundational Beliefs (Evangelical Presuppositions) – Doing Hermeneutics as Christians

As we study God’s Word as Christians, we authentically have fellowship with the Holy Spirit who develops within us our confession of these foundational beliefs that positively informs our interpretation of the biblical text.

1. The Bible is a supernatural book, God’s written revelation to his people given through prepared and selected spokespersons by the process of inspiration.
2. The Bible is authoritative and true.
3. The Bible manifests unparalleled spiritual worth and a capacity to change lives.
4. The Bible is a unit, yet it is diverse.
5. _____
6. _____

Defining Preunderstanding

Our presuppositions (good and bad) along with our traditions, experience, culture, etc. all affect the way you will interpret a text before studying it.

“We define preunderstandings as the set of assumptions and attitudes which a person brings to his apprehension and interpretation of reality or any aspect of it.” – Duncan Ferguson’s PhD Dissertation for the University of Edinburgh in 1969

“Preunderstanding refers to all of our preconceived notions and understandings that we bring to the text, which have been formulated, both consciously and subconsciously, *before* we actually study the text in detail.” – Duvall and Hays

What are some examples of preunderstandings we might have when looking at Scripture?

Example 1: (Theological Tradition)

Example 2: (Personal Experience)

Example 3: (Culture/Society)

Example 4: (Culture/Society) Honor/Shame Culture vs. Guilt/Innocence

Example 5: (American Culture)

Never should we allow our culture to determine the meaning of Scripture.

Suggested Guideposts (Preunderstandings) To Help with Interpreting a Text

1. Rule of Faith
2. Creeds/Catechisms
3. TIS

Submitting Our Preunderstandings To The Text

1. Identify Your Preunderstandings
2. Be Open To Changing Your Preunderstandings
3. Study The Text In Context
4. Evaluate Your Preunderstandings
5. Modify Appropriately

Reflection For the Week:

Read through this article on TIS: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/theological-interpretation-of-scripture/>

Preparation For Next Week:

Read the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman recorded in John 4:1-39. Then research the historical and cultural significance of the Samaritans in your study Bible or online and make a list of all the ways this information helps you understand the conversation between Jesus and the woman.

Resources For Going Further:

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Journey Into God's Word*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

Kostenberger, Andreas J. and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation To Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

Richards, E. Randolph and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture With Western Eyes*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012.