

- **Hermeneutical axiom #1** states the Bible was written by men (2 Pet 1:20-21), therefore it is like any other book. Axiom *means* self-evident truth.
- **Corollary:** a logical inference from an axiom (proposition that follows from one already proved).
 - *Therefore*, Scripture: 1) is clear; 2) can be interpreted literally (naturally); 3) has a single meaning; 4) uses context.

Chapter 14: The Principle of Word Study (Corollary #7)

Each language is an accumulation of words that a certain community uses to communicate its thoughts. A language only has value for communication inasmuch as the speaker and hearer agree on the associations conveyed by the words. To understand the language of the ancient writer, you must first understand the meaning of words.

I. Methods of word study

A. ***Words may be studied etymologically.*** One way to study words is according to how they are formed, as in compound words (two words combined into one). This method may be helpful sometimes, but not always.

1. *Definition of etymology:* A technical definition of etymology is “the history of a linguistic form shown (1) by tracing its since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found; (2) by tracing its from one language to another, (3) by analyzing it into its component parts, (4) by identifying its cognates in other languages, or (5) by tracing it and its to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* [1961] 286).

2. *Examples of etymology:*

a) The Greek ἐπίσκοπος ("overseer") is formed from ἐπί (over, upon) and σκοπος (to look), hence "to look over, to oversee." The word came to be used of a NT "overseer," a bishop (cf. Phil. 1:1). The basic root etymology does help us see the true idea of the word and the office it comes to designate in the church.

b) "Apostle" (ἀπόστολος) comes from ἀπό, ("from") and στέλλω ("send"). Hence an apostle is a sent one, a delegated one.

- c) The word for "parable" is *parabole*, formed from *para* ("beside") and *bole*, (something thrown or cast, from *ballō*). When we have a statement that Jesus told a "parable," we are being told that He told a story in which He cast one thing (from the commonly-known realm, such as farming, weddings, etc.) alongside another realm (which men do not know, necessarily).

3. *Warnings concerning etymology*

- a) DO NOT seek to establish or illuminate the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew term on the basis of the etymology of the *English* word into which it is translated.

(1) e.g. pineapple.

- b) BEWARE of always thinking etymology will provide the correct sense of a word in a passage—it may not. The real information we need is the actual usage of a word in a given culture at a given time, as words can and do change in meaning.

(1) e.g. "nice" in English is derived from the Latin *nescius*, meaning "ignorant." Obviously we use the word in a different sense today.

B. *Words may be studied comparatively.*

1. *One word may have different usages when we compare.* Here is where context help us to determine which meaning is best. Study may show that a word has one set meaning in all passages used, or different senses in different passages.

- a) Greek *kosmos* ("world") means the world of people God loves (John 3:16), but also the world system that is evil, headed by Satan, and which leaves God out, the world that true Christians are not to love (1 John 2:15-17).

2. *The same word in an English translation may translate different words in the Hebrew or Greek or vice versa.*

- a) "fruit" — *karpos*: fruit, harvest, crop reward

C. *Words may be studied in cognate languages.*

1. e.g. Russian / Ukrainian; Spanish / Portuguese; Hebrew / Aramaic
2. A *cognate language* is a language that belongs to the same language family (i.e. a word from Egypt may also have found its way through commerce and visitation in the OT Hebrew vocabulary.
3. e.g. the Egyptian word *skt* or *skyt* (ship) may help us in knowing the idea of the Hebrew word *sekiyyoth* in Isaiah 2:16, *which some took to mean "pictures of desire" such as pornographic pictures*, but which the NASB, from more up-to-date information, *was able to render "beautiful craft."* This translation also fits the context which says God will judge the large ships of Tarshish and also the beautiful craft, indicating another type of seafaring vessel.

D. *Words may be studied diachronically*, that is, how their meanings have developed over time. The common use of a word at any given time represents a history of use. Yet the common use may differ drastically from the original use, whose meaning may be lost.

1. e.g.
 - a) “sincere” used to be applied to honey (or pottery) with all wax removed (etymologically, “without wax”).
 - b) “Cunning” used to mean knowledge or honorable skill, but today it has taken on a negative connotation.
2. Illustration: *do,xa* (“glory”) represents one of the clearest examples of a change in meaning of a Greek word when it came under the influence of the Bible.
 - a) *The basic meaning of the term in secular Greek is “opinion” or “conjecture,”* but the frequent use of the term in the LXX to denote the honor brought or given to God inevitably meant losing contact with secular Greek.
3. Illustration: *evklhsi,a* (“church”). The term was first used in the Greek language of Greek citizens being summoned by the town crier to exercise their democratic responsibilities, thus an “assembly” or “congregation.” Stephen used this term to refer to the congregation of Israel in Acts 7:38. In the NT, certain contexts define the term in a new way. It becomes a congregation defined specifically as a spiritual building that Christ will

build (Matt 16:18; Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:9), the body of the redeemed who have been purchased by Christ's blood (Acts 20:28).

E. ***Words should be studied according to their use by a particular writer.*** No matter what the original meaning of a word, or its history of meanings, the interpreter must gather the writer's meaning from his context and the familiar use of the word in his historical context.

1. *Sometimes the writer will define a term* (Rom 2:28-29; 2 Thess 3:7; 1 Tim 3:17; Heb 5:14).
2. *The immediate context will generally show what usage is intended by the author* (e.g. pneu/ma, "wind" or "spirit," Matt 10:1; Luke 9:55; John 3:8; 4:24; 6:63; Rom 8:9-11; Gal 6:1; Heb 12:23; Rev 11:11).

II. Suggested process to follow in word study.

A. ***Determine the key words in the context.*** Some words are routine; others are more crucial.

1. Look for theologically loaded terms ("grace," "redeem," etc.). *Let's do Eph 1 again.*
2. Look for thematic or repeated terms (Rom 5:12; James 1:2-4; 1 John 4).
3. Look for emphasized terms.

B. ***Study the context to see how it might define the word, limit its meaning, provide clues, etc.***

1. Consider the context in widening circles — sentence, paragraph, section, book, author, testament, Scripture, extra-biblical literature.

C. ***Determine how the word was used in the time period of the writer,*** particularly in similar contexts.

III. **Tools to use for Word Studies:** concordances; bible dictionaries; lexicons; good commentaries; books on manners and customs.

Chapter 15: The Principle of Historical Appropriateness (Corollary #8)

I. The Principle: Interpret a passage in such a way that your treatment of it is fitting, appropriate, or in harmony with the situation *at that point in Scripture*.

- A. That is, we should interpret certain passages with a realistic sensitivity to how much God may have revealed to the people living at a given time in biblical history.
- B. *Question:* What would they, given the light God allowed them to possess at that point, have most naturally understood a statement to mean?

II. Helpful questions to ask at this point:

- A. ***To whom and by whom was the book written?*** It makes a difference whether a book was written by Paul or Moses. Each writer will have peculiar tendencies, phrases, expressions, and style. Knowing about this writer from other books of the Bible will yield a great deal.
 - 1. The circumstances of the readers also determine the content of a given book. It is important to know the relationship of the writer to the readers.
 - a) What is their nationality (e.g. was Hebrews written to a Jewish, Gentile, or mixed church)?
 - b) What was the situation and condition of the church or person(s) written to?
- B. ***When was it written?*** What role did the historical setting play in shaping the message of the book?
 - 1. Different time periods will give interpretive clues for unlocking the meaning of a text.
 - 2. Who are the writer's contemporaries? Who are the world's powers at the time (i.e., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Rome)? Who are the people mentioned (Romans, Egyptians, Pharisees, Essenes, Herodians, etc)? What is the legal system like? How was crucifixion carried out? Who were the gods of Egypt?
 - 3. e.g. If Revelation was written in the nineties it could be interpreted differently than if written in the sixties. The historical allusions will be understood differently.

C. *Where was it written?*

1. In what city was Paul when he wrote Romans? Was he in prison (Phil. 1:7, 13, 14; 4:15-18)?
2. Geographical and topographical considerations are important — mountains, rivers, plains, crops, seasons, plants, climate, etc. What are the physical features of Paul's journeys as he passed through various countries?

D. *Why was it written?* Understanding a book's purpose and theme is key. Every passage should be studied with a basic knowledge of the problems and situations addressed in the book, and the themes with which the writer addresses those problems.

1. e.g. John? Acts? Philippians? Colossians?

E. *What are the customs and surroundings of the people?* Cf. Principle of culture below.**F. *What was the genre of the book*** (narrative, poetry, didactic, apocalyptic, wisdom literature, etc.)? Cf. Principle of genre identification below.**III. Illustrations:****A. *The Scarlet cord of Rahab:***

1. In Joshua 2, Rahab learned from Israel's spies that due to her faith in the God of Israel, she and her family would be spared when Jericho fell, if she left a red cord hanging outside of her window on the city wall. Some have read into this story that Rahab's red cord denoted Rahab's faith in Christ's work on Calvary's cross. But this assumes more than progressive revelation at that point probably had made known specifically to Rahab.

B. *Galatians:* A understanding of the historical background of this epistle helps us to interpret it properly:

1. The New Testament church as God gave birth to it was Jewish (Acts 2).
2. Enter Cornelius' conversion without his having been circumcised (Acts 10), which obviously created a great stir (Acts 11).
3. Then we have the Jerusalem council called to settle the matter (AD 49-50, Acts 15:1ff; Gal. 2:1-10). Does a Gentile need to become a Jew first before becoming a Christian? How is a man justified before God?

C. *Paul and James---contradiction?*

1. No---different audiences. Paul was dealing with legalists who believed in salvation by works; James at religionists who believed in salvation by orthodoxy.

Chapter 16: The Principle of Culture (Corollary #9)

I. **Introduction.** The principle that we examine here is a specific application of historico-grammatical interpretation; that is, an examination of the historical setting in which Bible books (or passages) were written. In any culture or age, the writers of a document as well as the readers are influenced by their social setting.

II. **Defining Culture.** Zuck says:

- A. Webster defines “culture” as “the total pattern of human behavior [that includes] thought, speech, action, and artifacts,” and as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits . . . of a racial, religious, or social group.” Thus culture includes what people *think* and *believe*, *say*, *do*, and *make*.
 1. This includes their beliefs, forms of communication, customs and practices, and material objects such as tools, dwellings, weapons, and so forth.
 2. Religion, politics, warfare, law, agriculture, architecture, business, economics, and the geography of where one lives and travels, what he and others have written and read, what he wars and the language(s) he speaks — all these leave their mark on how he lives, and if he is an author of a Bible book, on what he wrote.
- B. *Very true.* When we enter the world of the Bible, we encounter a kind of “culture shock” where we are initially puzzled by the scenes and practices of the people in Scripture. As we become more familiar with their unusual ways, the impact of the shock declines and the more we understand the background of their actions.

III. **Cultural Factors influencing interpretation:**

- A. ***Political:*** Kings, tetrarchs

1. *Boaz at the city gate* (Ruth 4:1): Why did Boaz go to the city gate to talk with the town elders about Naomi's land? The city gate was the place where legal business was conducted and court cases were heard (Deut 21:18-21; 22:13-15; Josh 20:4; Job 29:7).
2. *Jonah's reluctance to go to Nineveh* (Jonah 1:1-3). Why? In the ninth, eighth and seventh centuries B. C. the Assyrian Empire became strong and repeatedly attacked nations to the east, north, and west, including Israel.
 - a) The Ninevites were atrocious in the way that they treated their conquered enemies. They would often behead their leaders, and pile up their heads. Other times they would place the captive leader in a cage and treat him as an animal. They would also impale their captives or stretch out their arms and legs, or even skin them alive, giving them an incredibly painful death.
3. *"Take up your cross"* (Luke 14:26). What did Jesus mean when He uttered this command? As we know from Jesus' own death, a person who carried his cross on the way to execution was considered a criminal. So to take up one's cross was to follow Jesus even to the point of death. Obviously then it did not mean putting up with hardships or unpleasant people or circumstances.
4. *"Citizenship in Heaven"* (Phil. 3:20). The city of Philippi was a colony of Rome. The people living in Philippi were actually not citizens of Rome, but the Roman Emperor Octavius Augustus granted the Philippians "Italic rights," that is, he gave them the same privileges as if their land was in fact in Italy. Knowing this fact, Paul wrote of an even greater citizenship for the Christians in Philippi, namely, their citizenship in heaven.

B. **Religious:** (high priests and sacrifices)

1. *Ten Plagues in Egypt* (Exodus 7-12). Why did God inflict these specific plagues upon Egypt rather than other plagues? When Moses had first confronted Pharaoh, the latter had responded, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go" (Exod 5:2; 7:14; 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7, 34). This was a direct challenge against YHWH, and it seems that these plagues were God's answer to Pharaoh's challenge.

The Plagues and the Gods and Goddesses of Egypt

Reference in Exodus	Plague	Possible Egyptian Gods and Goddesses of Egypt Attacked by the Plagues.
7:14-25	<i>Nile turned to blood</i>	<u>Hapi</u> (also Apis), the bull god who was god of the Nile; <u>Isis</u> was goddess of the Nile; <u>Khnum</u> , the ram god was guardian of the Nile; and others.
8:1-15	<i>Frogs</i>	<u>Heqet</u> , the goddess of birth, had a frog head.
8:16-19	<i>Gnats</i>	<u>Set</u> , god of the desert
8:20-32	<i>Flies</i>	<u>Re</u> , a sun god; or the god <u>Uatchit</u> , possibly represented by the fly.
9:1-7	<i>Death of Livestock</i>	<u>Hathor</u> , goddess with a cow head; <u>Apis</u> , the bull god, symbol of fertility.
9:8-12	<i>Boils</i>	<u>Sekhmet</u> , goddess with power over disease; <u>Sunu</u> , the pestilence god; <u>Isis</u> , the goddess of healing.
9:13-35	<i>Hail</i>	<u>Nut</u> , the sky goddess; <u>Osiris</u> , god of crops and fertility; <u>Set</u> , god of storms.
10:1-20	<i>Locusts</i>	<u>Nut</u> , the sky goddess; <u>Osiris</u> , god of crops and fertility.
10:21-29	<i>Darkness</i>	<u>Re</u> , the sun god; <u>Horus</u> , a sun god; <u>Nut</u> , a sky goddess; <u>Hathor</u> , a sky goddess.

2. *Mt. Carmel as the showdown with Baal* (1 Kings 18). Why did Elijah suggest this place as the site of his contest with 450 Baal prophets? Followers of Baal believed Mount Carmel was a dwelling place of their god. So Elijah was letting them “play” on their “home field.”
3. *Questions of Jesus* (Mark 12:13-28). Why did the Herodians, Sadducees, and a scribe ask the questions they asked of Jesus in Mark 12:13-28? The questions related to their separate occupations and beliefs. The Herodians were supported by Herod and the Romans, and so they debated with Jesus about paying taxes to a foreign power (v. 14).

4. *Meat sacrificed to idols* (1 Cor 8:1ff). The best meat in town was reserved for offerings to the idols; so the best markets and restaurants were located right next to the Temple. People in Corinth would buy meat in the marketplace, offer some of it to pagan idols in one of several temples, and then take the rest of it home for dinner. But for a recent convert who had come out of a pagan background, eating that meat would take him back to his pre-Christian days, and many would believe eating such meat involved them in idol worship.

C. **Economic** (drachma; monetary system):

1. *A floating axe-head* (2 Kings 6:4-6). Occasionally, knowledge of the social situation shows how a seemingly miscellaneous event in the OT relates to God's redemptive activity. Remember when Elisha made the axe-head float? This seems to us to be a rather unnecessary miracle. But two things in the text are stressed: that the axehead was iron, and that it was borrowed. This took place right at the beginning of the iron age, when iron smelting was a military secret, and iron axes were extremely valuable.
2. *Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's* (Matt 22:21).¹⁰ Whole theologies of cultural integration have been built on Jesus' response to the Herodian's trick question. He was giving an answer in kind to those who would trap Him with an insincere question. Research into the cultural background indicates that "secular money" was not legitimate as an offering in the Temple. That is why there were money changers in the Temple. Temple offerings has to be made in Temple currency, so there were money exchange banks on the premises. The Herodians were trying to trap Jesus into making an unpatriotic statement. Either He would have to oppose the law of the land, the hated Roman taxation, and thus be unlawful; or He would have to favor the taxation and be a traitor to His own people.

D. **Legal**:

1. *"Double-portion of your spirit"* (2 Kings 2:9). The request of Elisha for a "double-portion" of Elijah's spirit has been perplexing to many. It was not a request for twice as much spiritual power in working miracles as Elijah had, nor did it mean a higher endowment of the prophetic spirit, as is sometimes affirmed. Elisha was neither superior to, nor perhaps equally

great with his predecessor. In fact, because of this, one suggestion has even been given that Elisha received two-thirds of the portion of the Spirit Elijah had. No--Elisha was simply stating that he wanted to be Elijah's successor. The term "double-portion" is used to speak of inheritances. The same expression is found in Deuteronomy 21:17, where the law commands that the father, in making out his will, "shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn."

2. *"Firstborn over all creation"* (Col 1:15). Does this expression mean that Christ was created? No, this means that He is the Heir of all creation (Heb. 1:2), much as a firstborn son had a special place of honor and privilege in a family.

E. *Agricultural*:

1. *The wicked are like chaff* (Psa 1:4). Why does Psalm 1:4 compare the wicked to chaff? This was to depict that the wicked have no security. When farmers winnow wheat, the chaff, light in weight, blows away. No farmer tries to retain and use the chaff because it is useless. The wicked, like the chaff, have no security and are worthless.
2. *Denouncing a fig tree* (Mark 11:12-14): Why did Jesus denounce a fig tree for having no fruit when it was not even the season for figs? In March, fig trees in Israel normally produce small buds followed by large green leaves in April. The small buds were edible "fruit." The time when Jesus "cursed" the fig tree was the Passover, that is, April. Since the tree had no buds it would bear no fruit that year. But the "season for figs" was late May and June, when the normal crops of fig ripened. Jesus' denouncing of the tree symbolized Israel's absence of spiritual vitality (like the absence of the buds) in spite of her outward religiosity (like the green leaves).
3. *Herod is a fox* (Luke 13:32). By calling Herod this, did Jesus mean that he was sly and cunning? No, a fox in those days was considered a treacherous animal, and so Jesus was suggesting that Herod was known for his treachery.

F. *Architectural* (temple, house, palace):

1. *Rahab's house on a wall* (Josh 2:15). How could Rahab have her house on a wall? The walls in Jericho were double walls with space between where dirt was built up so that houses could be built between them and yet be near the top of the walls.
2. *Meeting in an upper room* (Acts 1:13). Why did the disciples meet here? This is because rooms on an upper level were often larger than the rooms below. The upper room would therefore more comfortably accommodate the 11 disciples.

G. ***Clothing*** (outer garment, sandals, girding):

1. *Gird up your loins* (Job 38:3; 40:7; 1 Pet 1:13). What is meant by this command? When a man ran, worked, or was in battle, he would tuck his robe under a wide sash at his waist so that he could move about more easily. The command thus means to be alert and capable of responding quickly.
2. *No wedding garment* (Matt 22:11). Christ told the parable of the wedding guest who could not get in because he did not have a wedding garment. That really seems unfair, particularly since the guests did not ask to come but were “drafted” from the highways and hedges. It seems even more unreasonable when the one without a wedding garment was tied hand and foot and thrown out! A study of the cultural background helps to unravel (no pun intended) the mystery. The wedding garment was provided by the host. One who would refuse that provision by the host would thereby prove himself to be a usurper and be deliberately disqualified.
3. *A Head Covering* (1 Cor 11:5-6, 15). What is the woman's head covering in this passage? What was the significance of a woman having her head shaved in biblical times?
 - a) In verse 15, Paul says that a woman's hair is given to her for [avnti], a covering. Thus, Paul seems to suggest that the Christian woman's hair is to be considered a proper substitute for a head covering in worship. Morris cautions against taking what appears to be a culturally dictated necessity and imposing it upon believers today. In our culture, the wearing of head coverings on women

does not have the same connotation. The principle is that the wife is to be in submission to her husband.

H. *Domestic* (tools, objects, dwelling):

1. *Foolish virgins* (Matt 25:1-13). Why were the five virgins foolish for having taken lamps but no extra oil? The reason is that a marriage ritual could last as long as three hours and so the oil could have been used up from their lamps. The five wise virgins, however, “took oil in jars . . . with their lamps” (v. 4), thus showing their preparedness.
2. *Let me bury my father* (Luke 9:59). Why did the man say that he wanted to go bury his father before he could follow Jesus? He did not mean that his father had just died. Instead he meant that he felt obligated to wait until his father died even if it meant several years, probably so that he would then receive his father’s inheritance. This explains the man’s reluctance to follow Jesus.

I. *Geographical* (up to Jerusalem; mountains)

1. *Lukewarm* (Rev 3:16). What significance would the allusion to “lukewarm” water have to the Laodicean church?
 - a) The word “lukewarm” occurs only here in the New Testament. As one stands today amidst the ruins of an ancient church in Laodicea, he can see in the distance (6 miles away) the white cliffs of Hierapolis produced by the chalky white deposit of the mineral springs that flow over the brink into the Valley. The waters are very warm (almost 90 degrees), and nauseous to the taste. As the Laodiceans had their water piped in from these springs, the concept of “lukewarm” would have very special meaning to them! The cool, pure water from Colosse provided refreshment, but lukewarm water would often cause visitors to Laodicea to vomit after it.
2. *Bring my cloak* (2 Tim 4:13, 21).. The physical circumstances of Paul when he wrote these words illuminate their meaning. Tradition tells us that Paul was in the Mamartine Dungeon, a dank hole with irregular slabs of stone as a partial floor above the Tiber River that flowed beneath the dungeon.

J. ***Social*** (weddings, dinners, funerals, burials, family structures, slavery):

1. *Joseph shaving before seeing Pharaoh* (Gen 41:14). Why did Joseph do this? Did not the Hebrews normally wear beards? The Egyptian custom was not to wear beards, so Joseph was simply following the custom of that country.
2. *Don't greet anyone on the road* (Luke 10:4). Why did Jesus tell the disciples not to greet anyone on the road? Rather than suggesting an antisocial attitude, Jesus was suggesting that they not be delayed in their mission. Greetings would often take a long period of time in which the people would bow several times, repeat their greetings, and then discuss the affairs of the day.
3. *Put out of the synagogue* (John 9:22). It seems strange that the parents of the blind man were so afraid of "being put out of the synagogue" that they would not stand with their own son. Even stranger, the context reveals that when this fear was expressed, they were not in a synagogue at all, but that the healing took place in the Temple. From extrabiblical, Jewish sources, we learn that membership was not in the Temple, but in the local synagogue. To be "put out" was an excommunication that involved virtual disenfranchisement. As far as the Jewish community was concerned, excommunication was the loss of citizenship rights.
4. *Greet one another with a holy kiss* (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14). Kissing was very much a part of the Jewish culture and became a significant expression in the church. Guests in Holy Land homes expect to be kissed as they enter. The difference between the Oriental and the Western way of greeting each other is aptly summarized by Neil:
 - a) Here men shake hands when they meet and greet, but in Palestine, instead of doing this, they place their right hand on their friend's left shoulder and kiss his right cheek, and then reversing the action, place their left hand on his right shoulder, and kiss his left cheek. In this country men never kiss each other's faces; there it may be constantly seen. But how the practice lights up the numerous allusions in Scripture which are naturally lost to a Westerner! Once grasp the fact that their kiss answers to our hearty handshake

between friends and social equals, and how much---how very much---becomes plain that was before obscure!

- IV. **To what extent are passages of the Bible limited by the culture?** It should be immediately evident that all practices in the Bible are not transferable to the present day. If that were true, then when you buy a house, the former owner should take off one of his sandals and give it to you, the buyer, following the practice in Ruth.

A. *To illustrate the problem, read each of the following items and circle the "P" (for permanent) or the "T" (for temporary) after each sentence.*

- P T Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:16)
- P T Abstain from meat that has been sacrificed to idols (Acts 15:29)
- P T Be baptized (Acts 2:38).
- P T Wash one another's feet (John 13:14).
- P T Extend the right hand of fellowship (Gal 2:9).
- P T Ordain by the "laying on of hands" (Acts 13:3).
- P T Prohibit women from speaking in a church assembly (1 Cor 14:34).
- P T Have fixed hours of prayer (Acts 3:1).
- P T Sing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16).
- P T Abstain from eating blood (Acts 15:29).
- P T Slaves should obey their earthly masters (Eph 6:5).
- P T Observe the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:24).
- P T Do not make any oaths (James 5:12).
- P T Anoint the sick with oil (James 5:14).
- P T Permit no woman to teach men (1 Tim 2:12).
- P T Preach two by two (Mark 6:7)
- P T Go into Jewish synagogues to preach (Acts 14:1).
- P T Eat what is set before you asking no questions of conscience (1 Cor 10:27).
- P T Prohibit women from wearing braided hair, gold, or pearls (1 Tim 2:9).
- P T Abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29).
- P T Do not seek marriage (1 Cor 7:26).
- P T Be circumcised (Acts 15:5).
- P T Women should pray with their heads covered (1 Cor 11:5).
- P T Drink Communion from a single cup (Mark 14:23).
- P T Take formal religious vows (Acts 18:18).
- P T Avoid praying in public (Matt 6:5-6).
- P T Speak in tongues and prophesy (1 Cor 14:5).
- P T Meet in homes for church (Col 4:15).

- P T Work with your hands (1 Thess 4:11).
- P T Lift your hands when praying (1 Tim 2:8).
- P T Give to those who beg from you (Matt. 5:42).
- P T Pray before meals (Luke 24:30).
- P T Support no widow under 60 years old (1 Tim 5:9).
- P T Say "Amen" at the end of prayers (1 Cor 14:16).
- P T Fast in connection with ordination (Acts 13:3).
- P T Wear sandals but not an extra tunic (Mark 6:9).
- P T Wives should submit to their husbands (Col 3:18).
- P T Show no favoritism to the rich (James 2:1-7).
- P T Use unleavened bread for Communion (Luke 22:13, 19)
- P T Cast lots for church officers (Acts 1:26).
- P T Owe no man anything (Rom 13:8).
- P T Have seven deacons in the church (Acts 6:3).
- P T Do not eat meat from animals killed by strangulation (Acts 15:29).
- P T Allow no one to eat if he will not work (2 Thess 3:10).
- P T Give up personal property (Acts 2:44-45).
- P T Have self-employed clergy (2 Thess 3:7-8).
- P T Take collections in church for the poor (1 Cor 16:1).
- P T Men should not have long hair (1 Cor 11:14).

V. **Guidelines for determining whether Bible practices are culture-bound or trans-cultural.**

A. ***Permanent (and therefore transferrable)***: Some situations, commands, or principles are repeatable, continuous, or not revoked, and/or pertain to moral and theological subjects, and/or are repeated elsewhere in Scripture, and therefore are permanent and transferable to us. *We need to ask if the Scriptures treat the situation, command, or principle as normative.* Sometimes a reason is given for a command. e.g. Capital punishment is considered a permanent command because, after being given in Genesis 9:6, it is nowhere revoked, and the reason given in that verse is that man is made in God's image.

1. *Repeatable*: The command in Proverbs 3:5-6 to trust the Lord is certainly repeated, though stated in various ways throughout Scripture.
2. *Continuous*:
3. *Unrevoked*:
 - a) (+) The command to believers to put on the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-19) is in no way revoked. Nor has God withdrawn the command for humility, as stated in 1 Peter 5:6. The command for men to pray with hearts of purity is universal as suggested by the words "men everywhere" (1 Tim. 2:8).
 - b) (–) A Nazarite was to let his hair grow as a sign of his dedication to the Lord (Jud. 13:5; 1 Sam. 1:11). But in the New Testament long hair for any man is considered dishonorable (1 Cor. 11:14). The New Testament has thus revoked the Nazarite practice, which was part of the Old Testament Mosaic Law.
4. *Repeated elsewhere in Scripture*: One way we can determine which commands are to be repeated is by examining whether the command or situation is paralleled in Scripture elsewhere.

B. ***Temporary (and therefore non-transferrable)***:

1. *Non-repeatable*: Paul's instructions to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:11-13 to bring his cloak and scrolls is obviously limited to Paul's situation.

2. *Revoked*: Hebrews 7:12 and 10:1 indicate that the Aaronic priesthood and in fact the entire Mosaic Law have been done away.
3. *Pertain to Non-Moral and Non-Theological Subjects*: In the Old Testament, incest was punished by stoning (Lev. 20:11), but in the New Testament incest is treated by excommunication (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

C. ***Partially transferrable***. Culturally dissimilar or only partially similar, but the principles are transferable.

1. *Some situations or commands pertain to cultural settings that are only partially similar to ours and in which only the principles are transferable.*
 - a) Greeting others with a *holy kiss* (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). The principle behind this should be followed, namely, to express friendliness and love to others. In Latin America the same principle is expressed by a hug rather than a kiss, and in America a handshake is sometimes accompanied by a hug or a pat on the back.
 - b) Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Certainly parents are to love the Lord and to teach His commandments to their children at various times. However, the command in verse 9 to "write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" seems to have a cultural setting similar but not identical to today. Perhaps the modern-day counterpart is having Bible verses on plaques hung on the wall. Obviously the principle still holds true that parents should keep the Scriptures before their children.
 - c) Meat offered to idols. Though meat we purchase has not been sacrificed to idols, the principle of I Corinthians 8 holds true, namely, that we ought not be involved in any practice that would be a stumbling block to weak believers.
2. *Some situations or commands pertain to cultural settings with no similarities but in which the principles are transferable.*
 - a) A sinful woman expressed her love to Jesus by pouring perfume from an alabaster jar on Jesus' head (Matt. 26:7-8). There is

obviously no way in which we can do this to Jesus now, but the principle holds that we can express our love to Him sacrificially.

- b) When Moses stood in God's presence on holy ground, he removed the sandals from his feet (Exod 3:5). *Does this mean that a person today must remove his shoes when he is in God's presence?*

D. *Practical Steps.*

1. *See if the behavior in the biblical culture means something different in our culture.*

- a) e.g. This would seem to be the case with shawls and the holy kiss.
 - (1) Wearing a shawl in church today and greeting others with kisses have meanings today that differ from their initial significance in Bible times.
 - (2) Related to this step is determining if the practice is missing entirely from our culture.

- b) e.g. *Footwashing* is considered by many to be an example of this.

2. *If the behavior does mean something different in our culture, then determine the timeless principle expressed in that practice.*

3. *Determine how the principle can be expressed in a cultural equivalent.*

- a) Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:1–2 that we are to pray for kings. But what about believers who live in countries, such as in the United States, that have no kings?
- b) James wrote that a Christian was discriminating and sinning if he gave his seat in a church gathering to a wealthy Christian and told a poor believer to stand or sit on the floor (James 2:1–4). Does that mean today that rich parishioners should be seated on the floors of churches so that the poor may be seated on pews?
- c) Should women today wear shawls on their heads in church? No, because the significance of women wearing shawls in the Greco-Roman world no longer holds true in our culture. The act

does not carry the symbolism it once had. But is there a principle here to be followed, and to be expressed in a modern-day cultural equivalent? The principle of subordination (not inferiority!) of the wife to her husband still holds because that truth is stated elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18; I Peter 3:1-2). A possible modern cultural parallel, some have suggested, is the wife's wedding ring (and changing her last name to that of her husband) which shows that she is married and thus is under her husband's authority.