

# Principles of Interpretation

## Understanding the Passage

### **Tool #1: Getting the Big Picture**

- a. What do I learn about the author and the recipients?
- b. Are there any background details – history, politics, geography, or customs – given?
- c. What words, phrases or ideas are repeated?
- d. Why did the author write this book?

### **Tool #2: What is the structure of the book?**

### **Tool #3: What are the main themes?**

### **Tool #4: What is the context?**

- a. What is the “normal meaning” of the words, sentences and figures of speech?
- b. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. How does this verse fit into the immediate context, nearby paragraphs and chapters, in this book, and into the Bible?

### **Tool #5: Ask lots of questions of the passage**

- a. What words are repeated?
- b. What pronouns are used?
- c. What verbs are used? Are there any verbs with emotional overtones?
- d. Are any items compared or contrasted with each other?
- e. Are there any lists?
- f. Is there any cause and effect?
- g. Are there any figures of speech used – simile, metaphor, personification, or hyperbole?
- h. What conjunctions are used – and (joins items), for/since/because (reason), but (contrast), therefore (conclusion/reason)?
- i. What is the structure/outline of this passage?
- j. How does this passage fit into the whole book?
- k. What themes and doctrines are present in this passage?

## Application

- a. What issues does this passage raise that are relevant to my life?
- b. What kind of response does this passage call from me? Are there...
  - i. Examples to follow?
  - ii. Commandments to obey?
  - iii. Sins to forsake?
  - iv. Promises to claim?
  - v. Principles to live by?
  - vi. New thoughts about God, Christ or the Holy Spirit?
- c. How does God invite me to experience Jesus by this passage?