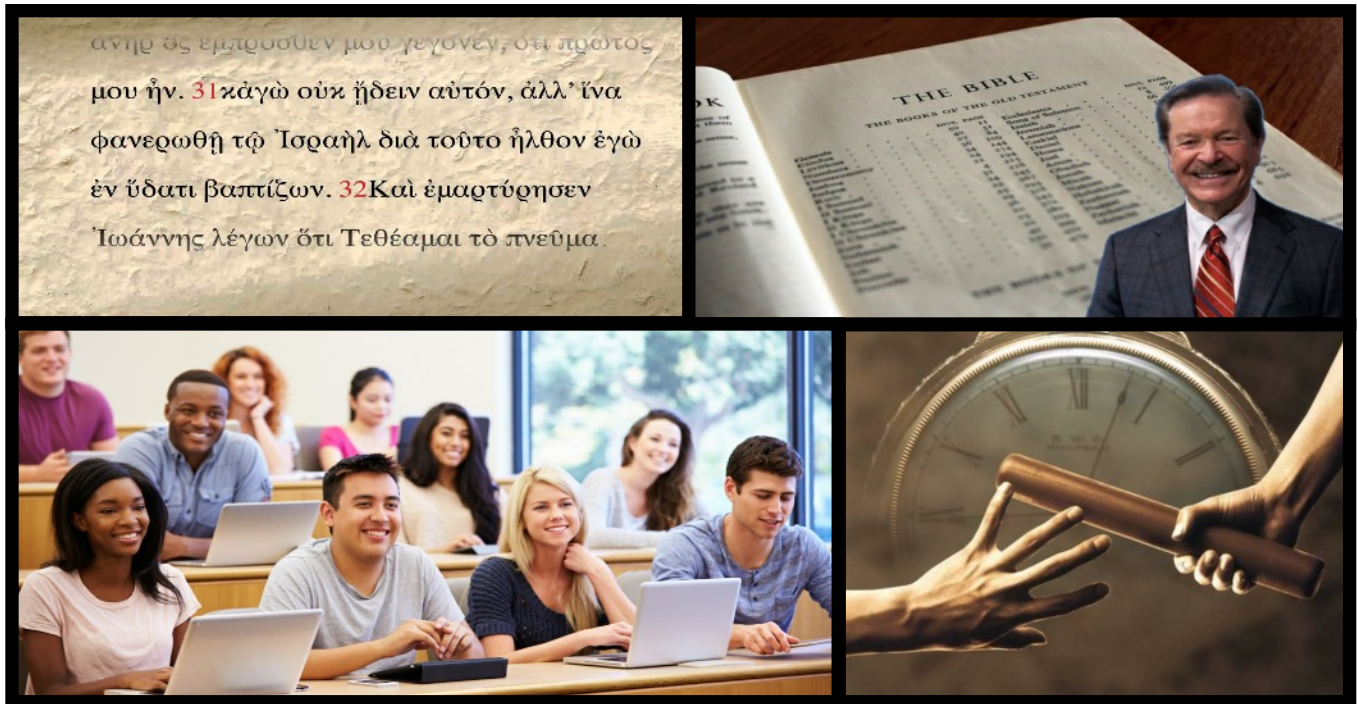


# EMBASSY COLLEGE



## SYLLABUS AND STUDY GUIDE Developing Sound Hermeneutics BT640

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# **COURSE SYLLABUS**

## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Bible is the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God and it behooves us to fully grasp its fullness, richness and depth. We need to understand the principles of interpretation and develop skills in applying them if we are to learn the truths and promises contained in the Scriptures.

## **II. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The student will be able to:

- A. Define and apply the rules of biblical interpretation. (Knowledge and Application)
- B. Explain the dangers of subjectivity, convenience, denominationalism, non-criticism, super-spirituality, pietism and allegoricalism in biblical interpretation. (Knowledge and Comprehension)
- C. Identify the historical, cultural, geographical, philosophical, linguistic and sociological gaps between the biblical authors and today's students of the Bible, and explain how they are bridged. (Analysis and Synthesis)
- D. Summarize the general, grammatical, historical, and theological principles of interpretation and relate them to different literary types of scripture. (Comprehension and Synthesis)
- E. Relate exegetical principles to actual scripture passages. (Evaluation)

## **III. SUGGESTED TOOLS OF STUDY**

- A. The Holy Bible—New King James Version
- B. Another version of the student's choosing with a good chain reference system
- C. This Study Guide Syllabus
- D. Textbooks
  - 1. Ian A.H. Bond. *Developing Sound Hermeneutics*. Columbus: CLP, 1998 (Required).

2. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993 (recommended, not required).

#### IV. PRE-COURSE WORK

- A. PRAYERFULLY read the following Scriptures: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Psalm 19:7; Proverbs 30:5,6; 2 Corinthians 3:5-8; Ezra 7:6-21; Nehemiah 8:7,8; Luke 24:13-35; Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; John 14:26; 16:12-15; 1 John 2:18-27; 2 Timothy 2:15; Proverbs 2:1-5.
- B. CAREFULLY read the course **textbook**.
- C. Become THOROUGHLY familiar with this Study Guide. FIX the Outline of the course firmly in your mind and heart.
- D. OPTIONAL—read and study as many books from the Selected Bibliography as you can.

# INTRODUCTION

The following notes have been prepared to enable you to prepare for the Hermeneutics course. Please read the notes carefully and start putting the suggestions into practice straight away.

## I. THE BIBLE

Because the Bible was not originally written in English (the Old in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek), we are forced to rely on translations. Most translations are quite good, but not all are in modern English, and not all are translated using the same methods. We can recommend some versions for study (and some to avoid).

### A. RECOMMENDED

#### 1. Form Equivalent (literal or “word-for-word”)

- a. New American Standard Bible (NASB): A very sound translation in modern English that can generally be relied upon to provide a close to exact translation.
- b. King James (or Authorized) Version (KJV or AV): Translated about 400 years ago, it’s influence over the English speaking church has been enormous. Rather archaic today, it is still largely reliable. Some English words have changed their meaning in the last 400 years, so take care. It has however recently been completely revised.
- c. New King James (or Revised Authorized) Version (NKJV): Much preferable to the older King James Version. The rusty and archaic language is gone, but without losing the powerful almost poetic tone of the previous edition. Very accurate.
- d. Revised Standard Version (RSV): An attempt in the early 1950s to replace the King James Version, but now in decline. There are some problems with the exact words used to translate some important New Testament teachings.

#### 2. Dynamic Equivalent (“thought-for-thought”)

- a. New International Version (NIV): A very popular translation today, however it has the tendency to drop into paraphrase type translation in places and is guilty of imposing interpretations on occasions. It is the most readable of our recommended translations.

- b. Good News Bible (GNB) or Today's English Version (TEV): Published shortly before the NIV and largely eclipsed by the latter's market popularity. A very readable and vivid translation.

## B. NOT RECOMMENDED FOR STUDY PURPOSE

Some versions are paraphrases (only the thoughts underlying the original words are translated) in these the danger of an imposed interpretation is very high. Other versions deliberately have a reduced vocabulary so that they may be used among those who speak English as their second language, or are for children, and as a result they are unable to carry the exact meaning. While being very good for general reading they are not too good for real Bible study, and so we cannot recommend them for that purpose:

1. The Living Bible—Kenneth Taylor Version
2. The Message—Eugene Peterson Version

## C. TO BE AVOIDED

Some religious Groups or, persons have deliberately made editions, to bolster their own views. These tackle certain verses in a deceptive or naive fashion and as such have no value for Bible Study:

1. The New World Translation—Watch-Tower Publishing House
2. The Jerusalem Bible—Roman Catholic Publishers

## D. WORTHY OF SPECIAL COMMENT:

Some versions are special, in that they are deliberately made to be aids to Bible Study, giving very special insights into the exact meaning of the original words, or the structure of the language. These versions are usually very difficult to use for normal reading or for public reading such as from the pulpit or lectern. But for study purposes they come into there own, and are best used only in that environment:

1. Amplified Bible: gives alternative renderings for crucial words thus amplifying the meaning.
2. Expanded New Testament Translation: Kenneth S. Wuest was a brilliant Greek Scholar who gave his latter years to this translation, which carefully represents the fine points that could only be noticeable in the original language.

## **II. MAKE NOTES**

Alongside your study of the Bible read the scriptures daily, making notes wherever necessary. Keep your notes together, perhaps in a notebook or loose-leaf ring binder. This will give you background resources that you can call upon during your studies. If you have questions, note them as such, you will be amazed at the way that God's Holy Spirit will arrange for you to discover the answer.

## **III. PRAYER**

Rely on the true literal interpreter of scripture, the Holy Spirit, by asking for His guidance, to lead you into all truth. Remember prayer is essential to true Scripture study.

## **IV. GUIDELINES**

Follow precise rules of Bible Study:

### **A. THE RULE OF FIRST USE**

Look for the first occasion in the Bible where the subject that you are studying is found, to give you guidance and insight into its meaning. Repeatedly you will find that an unclear or uncertain meaning will become more obvious when opening up the verses that contain the first use of the "key word" or "key phrase." This will mean digging well into the Old Testament on many occasions.

### **B. THE RULE OF SCRIPTURE COMPARISON**

Compare verse with verse, passage with passage. There is no question of importance that you can put to the Bible or one which the Bible asks that cannot be answered from within its own pages.

### **C. THE RULE OF CONTEXT**

It has been said that a "text" away from its "context" is usually a "pretext," and this is quite true. Proof texts can be dangerous. You should always read the paragraphs before and after the text, to pick up its immediate context, so as to avoid adopting a meaning that cannot be supported by the cut and thrust of the passage. General reading of the Bible will enable you to grasp the wider context into which Christian teaching fits.

## **V. FELLOWSHIP**

Share what you learn with others. Do not be afraid to ask other Christians what they think a Scripture passage means. God has decreed that one way of learning is by sharing.

## **VI. BIBLE TEACHERS AND COMMENTATORS**

Remember the place of Bible teachers in your study as their comments will give you great assistance because of their devotion to teaching. Bible teachers are to be found in your church and in others. Some Bible teachers extend their ministry to as many people as possible by cassette tapes and books. We can even take advantage of the written works of Bible teachers from past ages whose commentaries are still available today. While you must not become slaves to their teaching and you should always check what they say against the Scriptures. There is nothing wrong with reading good commentaries, but beware, there is some real rubbish about.

## **VII. USE BIBLE STUDY AIDS**

Do not be afraid to use the various tools and helps that are available to assist with Bible Study. The next three pages list some Bible Study “aids” that can be used to great advantage.

### **A. CONCORDANCES**

If you do not know where to find a part of the Bible you have read before, but can remember a word or two from it, a concordance can be used to easily locate the verse. Like a dictionary, with the words laid out in alphabetical order, each occasion that the word is used it is shown along with its reference. There should be a good concordance for the Bible translation that you use for your study.

The King James Version is served very well, with Strong’s and Young’s concordances setting standards others should emulate. The Complete English Concordance to the New International Version is recommended if you use this translation. Good concordances are available for the NKJV, NASB and RSV.

### **B. BIBLE DICTIONARIES**

Very helpful. Obviously the more that you pay, the better the product. Your local or county library may have examples in their reference department or may even have one or two in their lending department.

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, the Revell Bible Dictionary, and the New Bible Dictionary (2nd Edition) are very good.



### C. COMMENTARIES OF BIBLE BOOKS

We can recommend commentaries on request. In our studies some will be mentioned. Commentaries come in many different levels, both in price and academic style.

Basic commentaries are available from Tyndale that are very good value.

Particularly good, though expensive, is the *New International Commentary* series.

Many commentaries are reprints of works from earlier centuries (usually the 17th, 18th and 19th). Do not let age put you off. Some of the greatest commentaries available today are reprints. It is often a good guide to look at the publisher of a commentary, Eerdmans, Baker, IVF, Zondervan, and the Banner of Truth are usually very reliable.

### D. MARGIN REFERENCES

Many editions of Bibles have references in a center (or edge) margin. These are just cross references to other Bible passages or verses. Various devices inserted into the text will draw Your attention to the margin reference to assist in study by cross reference. It is recommended that the Bible you use for study has margin references. While some are better than others they are all very helpful.

The International Bible Society's "Center Column Reference system," published in 1984 (and found in some NIV Bibles) is by far the best available.

### E. STUDY BIBLES

These Bibles do not only have margin cross reference systems, but also extensive extra helps in the form of elaborate footnotes, suggested interpretation notes, subject indexes, charts, maps, a concordance (usually very sketchy), and possibly a chain reference system as well. It is difficult to advise on Study Bibles because they vary so widely in application, however avoid those that over-indulge themselves in the interpretation of scripture.

1. The *Thompson Chain Reference Bible* can be recommended, and it is available with either the KJV or NIV text.
2. The recently introduced "Study Bible," based on the NIV, and "Spirit Filled Life" Study Bible, based on the NKJV, are very good.