

THE CHECKING PRINCIPLE

As you study your Bible and begin to formulate your overall understanding, you will encounter many passages with meanings that aren't obvious at first glance. These articles on hermeneutics (principles for interpreting the Bible) are designed to help you deal with that problem. The harder a passage is to understand, the more important careful application of good hermeneutics becomes.

This article is about a principle that reinforces all the others. You should study the Bible on your own, but you should also be humble enough to submit your ideas to the scrutiny of others. Hence we call this the "Checking Principle" because it involves checking your own insights against the insights and research of others.

God has promised the body of Christ in every age that certain members are especially gifted in teaching and exhortation (Romans 12:6-8). Through the writings of people who have had such gifts in the past and through the present ministries of people with such gifts, we have available to us a phenomenal amount of information to help us in our own study and discovery.

If we want to be faithful to God's word, we must take the time to check out the validity of our interpretations. That process involves a concept best described by a four-letter word: WORK. The resources for this work are excellent investments (and they make great gifts). Here are a few:

Your Bible. You should have a good literal translation (New American Standard is the best) with lots of footnotes and other helpful information. *Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia*. In these you can look up any person, place, concept, doctrine, or word from the Bible. The best of all of them is *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (five volumes). *Commentaries* are books that contain teaching on each verse of a Bible book. To do a thorough study of a passage, ask a good Bible teacher for recommendations of the best commentaries on that book. *Reference Books* are basic tools for a Bible student. A Concordance gives basic definitions and all the uses of Bible words. There are many excellent books to help you study key words. A Harmony of the Gospels helps you fit together the overlapping records of the four gospels.

Our pastors will help you with resources and guidance for any Bible questions you have. Each time you deal with a passage is an opportunity to learn more about the process of Bible study.