

Scripture Union's Approach to Handling the Bible

We believe that the Bible should be interpreted:

- a. **Prayerfully:** Only the Holy Spirit can open our blind eyes and illumine our dark hearts to what God is saying. The Spirit will lead people to engage with the text and to face God's challenge in the here and now, helping them to understand and apply the Bible
- b. **Corporately:** We are the body of Christ. We can learn from those who have read and lived by the Bible in previous generations. Our understanding today is enriched by listening to the insights of others and by studying together. God gives special gifts and skills to some which enable them to interpret the Bible more effectively and the whole church can benefit from them.
- c. **As a whole:** The whole of the Bible is God's inspired word to his people. We are therefore committed to the whole of Scripture, and to allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. We want users to see the broad sweep of God's dealings with humanity from creation to new creation and to see this as the story which gives meaning to all of life, and by which all of life must be judged. We help people to enter imaginatively into the biblical story, seeking always to lead them to live under its authority. We also want them to see the significance of the individual statements of Scripture.
- d. **As it was written:** The Bible contains different literary forms (genres) and the way God communicates often differs from one to another. Therefore interpretation includes recognizing and respecting the genre of each passage. The passage is then to be interpreted according to the author's intention and in terms of its place in history.
- e. **As it is encountered:** The people that we are and the things that are going on in our lives and communities always colour our encounter with Scripture. We want to be aware of this and constantly to bring our understanding of Scripture back to Scripture.
- f. **As it is lived out:** Encountering God through his Word will have an impact on our lives, encouraging us in worship, mission, and holiness. As we commit ourselves to obeying God's Word, our experience will help us to understand the Bible better, and deepen our faith in, and our fellowship with, God.
- g. **Looking for Christ: Jesus Christ** (his birth and life on earth, his death and resurrection, his ascension and second coming) is God's key Word in his dealings with human beings. He is the focus of God's revelation in the Bible. Our basic aim states that meeting God through the Bible and prayer will lead to personal faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit leads us into the truth, always testifying to and glorifying Jesus. We should consider how a passage ultimately relates to Jesus Christ.

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h. **Relationally:** We do not read the Bible simply to collect information about God. Rather, through the stories, promises, commands, warnings and examples, we begin to understand God, meet with him and know him personally. To attempt to interpret Scripture and yet somehow to stop short of enjoying that relationship of love, is to miss the entire purpose for which God has revealed himself in the Bible. All our interpretation of Scripture is to be rooted in our relatedness to God as his children, and our relationships with others around us.

Fundamentally, engaging with the Bible is about a relationship with God, and this can only be achieved by dependence on the Holy Spirit.

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