

COURSE SYLLABUS

ML507: Biblical Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation

Course Lecturer: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., PhD

About This Course



This course was originally created through the Institute of Theological Studies in association with the Evangelical Seminary Deans' Council. There are nearly 100 evangelical seminaries of various denominations represented within the council and many continue to use the ITS courses to supplement their curriculum. The lecturers were selected primarily by the Deans' Council as highly recognized scholars in their particular fields of study.

Course Description

Welcome to *Biblical Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation*, an online graduate-level course designed to expand your understanding of biblical hermeneutics.

The term *hermeneutics* can be intimidating. It sounds academic and is foreign to most of our vocabularies. However, the act of interpretation is as common as communication itself. Whenever someone speaks, a listener interprets what the speaker means. But what is interpretation when we apply it to reading the Bible? How can we legitimately and effectively interpret the Bible? This course will instruct in various parameters for biblical interpretation and will show how specific methods are applied to Bible study.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the characteristics of a good interpreter of Scripture.
- Defend your position on whether a passage of Scripture can have only one or multiple meanings.
- Describe the basic assumptions of the liberal schools of higher criticism of the Bible.
- Articulate particular biblical theologies that provide argument for the unity for all of Scripture.
- Identify and interpret literary devices used in biblical narratives.
- Formulate teaching or preaching outlines of biblical narrative passages.
- Appreciate the depth of understanding of Scripture that can be reached by a more

complete understanding of poetry, proverbs, and allegory.

- Recognize key interpretive clues as you approach the study of prophetic passages of Scripture.
- Defend the relevance of the Old Testament for today's world.
- Understand the importance of context in correctly interpreting Scripture.
- Cite numerous principles to be applied in seeking theological truths from Scripture.
- Develop an attitude of both confidence and caution in interpreting Scripture doctrinally
- Explain the right relationship between authorial intent and the role of the reader in determining the meaning of a text.
- Show how cultural aspects of the Bible can be used to teach overarching truths.
- Discuss the concept of principled application of Scripture to contemporary issues.
- Commit to a regular practice of devotional Bible reading, prayer, and meditation.

Course Lecturer



Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., PhD

Education:

- Brandeis University, MA and PhD
- Wheaton College, BA and BD

Teaching Career:

- President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Old Testament and Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Distinguished Colman M. Mockler Professor of Old Testament Studies, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1966-1993)
- Professor of Bible and Archaeology, Wheaton College (1958-1966)
- Leader of more than 20 graduate and undergraduate study tours abroad, while lecturing and preaching at thousands of schools and churches around the globe

Other Career Highlights:

- Advisory Editor, *Christianity Today*
- During his presidency at Gordon-Conwell (1997-2006), theological enrollment increased from 900 to 2,200 students
- Added five PhD programs during his tenure as Academic Dean and Senior Vice President for Education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1980-1993)
- Chairman for the Evangelical Seminary Dean's Council (1982-1993)
- President of the Evangelical Theological Society (1977)
- Regularly consulted for his expertise by several Christian publications and organizations

Publications:

- Author of more than 40 books, including *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, *Biblical Ethics: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching*, and his magnum opus, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*

Course Texts

Required:

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. and Moises Silva. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.

Why Trust the Bible? Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2008.

Textbooks can be ordered through our online store at CUGN.org, through your local bookstore, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Course Requirements

1. **Recorded Lectures:** The student is required to listen to all 12 audio lectures recorded by Dr. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.
2. **Required Reading:** Complete the required reading assigned with each lesson in Lesson Assignments at the end of this syllabus.
3. **Additional Reading:** Your proctor may require you to read supplementary materials for many of the lessons. The bibliography at the end of this syllabus was provided by the professor at the time the course was created and may be used in part or in whole for your further study.
4. **Vocabulary:** Throughout the course you will find terms necessary to the understanding of the subject matter presented. You should become familiar with any unfamiliar words and their meanings as a requirement of this coursework.
5. **Quizzes and Final Exam:** You will take a 10- to 20-question, multiple choice and/or true/false quiz at the end of each lesson. At the end of the course, you will take a 45-question final exam which will also be in multiple choice and/or true/false format.

Course Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Reading	10% of Course Grade
Quizzes	40% of Course Grade
Final Exam	50% of Course Grade
Total	100%

Additional Reading (Optional)

You may choose to read supplementary materials for many of the lessons. The following bibliography was provided by the professor at the time the course was created and may be used in part or in whole for your further study:

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981.
- Bullinger, E. W. *Figures of Speech in the Bible Explained and Illustrated*. 1898; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968.
- Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Hirsch, E. D. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Teaching and Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.
- Scalise, Charles J. *From Scripture to Theology: A Canonical Journey into Hermeneutics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- Terry, Milton S. *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*. 1885; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.
- Virkler, Henry A. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Second ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Lesson Assignments

Lesson 1:

- Listen to Lecture One.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 1 and 2; begin reading *Why Trust the Bible?* (You may read this text at your own pace but you must read the entire book by the end of the course.)
- Take the Lesson 1 quiz.

Lesson 2:

- Listen to Lecture Two.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 7 and 16; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 2 quiz.

Lesson 3:

- Listen to Lecture Three.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 3 and 4; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 3 quiz.

Lesson 4:

- Listen to Lecture Four.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 5 and 8; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 4 quiz.

Lesson 5:

- Listen to Lecture Five.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 9; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 5 quiz.

Lesson 6:

- Listen to Lecture Six.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 12; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 6 quiz.

Lesson 7:

- Listen to Lecture Seven.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 6, 10 and 11; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 7 quiz.

Lesson 8:

- Listen to Lecture Eight.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 15; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 8 quiz.

Lesson 9:

- Listen to Lecture Nine.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 17; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 9 quiz.

Lesson 10:

- Listen to Lecture Ten.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 14; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 10 quiz.

Lesson 11:

- Listen to Lecture Eleven.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 18; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 11 quiz.

Lesson 12:

- Listen to Lecture Twelve.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 13 and 19; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Take the Lesson 12 quiz.

Course Contributors

CUGN utilizes the radio and television teams of Our Daily Bread Ministries to enhance the students' educational experience. This course uses two videos from the *Day of Discovery* television program. The expert contributors to these programs are listed as follows:

- Darrell Bock, Ph.D. (University of Aberdeen), Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary
- Mart De Haan, Litt.D. (Cornerstone University), Senior Advisor of Ministry Content at Our Daily Bread Ministries

- Jimmy De Young, Ph.D. (Louisiana Baptist University), Journalist and Conference Speaker
- Paul Maier, Ph.D. (University of Basel), Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University
- Richard Abanes, Ph.D. (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Professor of Archeology and Biblical Studies for Azusa Pacific University
- Charles Ryrie, Ph.D. (University of Edinburgh, Scotland), Former Dean of Doctoral Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary
- Daniel Wallace, Ph.D. (Dallas Theological Seminary), Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary