

COURSE SYLLABUS

Biblical Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation

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

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*

Recommended Reading

Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning.

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 your local bookstore, various online bookstores, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Course Methods

The lecture content for each lesson is provided in two easy-to-use formats: audio and PDF text (if available). Students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

Media/Materials

The course will include media presentations of lectures to be listened to and/or read throughout the lessons of the course.

- **Audio-based teaching**

The primary course content will be delivered via audio lectures, including the full transcript of each lecture. A guided outline to assist you in note taking is also made available in PDF format.

- **Additional Resources**

Lessons may be accompanied by additional readings, images, etc. that you can use to supplement your learning.

Course Requirements

Course requirements include:

1. Viewing the Class Time lectures for each lesson, which include:

- **Lesson Overview:** A brief outline of what the lecturer will cover in the lesson.
- **Lesson Objectives:** Objectives describe the learning outcomes you should achieve by the end of the lesson.
- **Lectures:** Approximately 45-minute lectures that can be listened to as many times as needed.
- **Lesson Outlines:** Outlines of each lecture to assist you in note taking.

2. Taking each lesson Quiz and the Final Exam.

Quizzes and the Final Exam will cover the material presented in the Class Time lectures.

Note: Quizzes and the Final Exam are automatically graded and your course grade is weighted as follows:

Quizzes	40% of Course Grade
Final Exam	60% of Course Grade
Total	100%

In order to obtain a Certificate of Completion your overall score in the course must be 70% or higher.

Additional Reading (Optional)

In addition, 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.

Course Contributors

Our Daily Bread University 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