



Hermeneutics

Credits: 3

Release Version: 2019

LEARNING MODULE ONE: The Bible – From Then To Now

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-CONNECTION ACTIVITY-

The Connection Activity is a brief exercise designed to help you prepare for the learning and skills development found in this Learning Module (LM). While there are no assignments to submit, this does not negate the importance of this activity.

How you *do this activity* is really up to you. You may write your comments on a page, send yourself an email, or you may draft a response your own words. Or you can just give consideration to the content of this opening section of the LM in your own way.

Any way you do it; we hope it helps to move you from *shared experiences* to the new learning you will encounter in a few moments.

We are pleased to provide this activity for you as a student to connect with the learning in this module, and we hope that it will be useful to you as a teacher/preacher/leader in some context in the future, to help your learners *Connect* with your lessons.

Tracing your Tree

Take a piece of paper and, working backwards track where you came from by tracing both sides of your family tree. How far back in your family tree can you track? What place(s) did your family of origin come from? What ethnicities and cultures are traceable within your family blood? Finally, when did your family settle where you are today, and what brought them here?

To better understand the present, one must study the past. The same can be said about the Bible. It is simply impossible and, I would add, reckless, to try to understand the Bible today if we aren't willing to honestly look back in history. What did the Bible mean to its original recipients? This critical question must be asked and answered before one can ever safely conclude on what the Bible means to us today.

Please review the *learning outcomes & summary of objectives*, and then proceed to the Exploration Activity.

-SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES-

HERMENEUTICS

LEARNING MODULE	SUMMARY OF OUTCOME AND OBJECTIVES
<p>LM ONE <i>Introduction and History</i></p>	<p>Upon completion of this learning module, the student will be able to track the historical, chronological transmission of the Holy Bible from its divine authorship down to the reception of many contemporary translations. As well, s/he will be able to defend six main rational reasons why the Bible can be deemed reliable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon completion of this learning objective, the student will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Define what hermeneutics is from both an historic and biblical perspective ○ Recognize the importance of bridging both ancient and contemporary worlds when attempting to interpret the Bible ○ Explain why the Bible is more reliable than most ancient manuscripts deemed trustworthy by modern scholars

Hermeneutics? *What's that?*

As we embark on this learning journey together, allow me to introduce myself. I am Rob Bedard, a Christ-follower since 1984 and pastor since 1989. Like the pre-Reformation Catholics, I too was raised in a church and school where the Bible was something the priest read from (among other non-biblical books) at Mass on Sundays.

So, when God pursued me and found me at the age of 14 after attending a Pentecostal youth group and church, I began to see the Bible in a whole new light. It was an ancient, sacred, God-given book with undeniable, proven-in-my-own-life dynamic and life-transforming power. It was nothing short of a sacred book containing absolute truth. In short, the Bible was just as the Apostle Paul promised it would be:

2 Tim 3:16-17 (NIV) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Like finding a treasure map, I just couldn't put the Bible down. There was so much more to discover and unearth with every turn of the page, chapter and Bible book.

As a new believer, I asked Colin Reade, my youth pastor, the usually impossible question: Could I teach a weekly Bible study for my peers? It wasn't until months later after reading through Paul's epistles I learned that having new believers teach God's Word was not encouraged.



Though a risky proposition, my youth pastor encouraged my hunger for God and His Word, and supported my sense of God's calling to teach and minister Bible truths to others. Being the wise man that he was, Colin volunteered to also attend, just in case I couldn't answer certain Bible questions. After nearly 30 years of pastoral ministry, I see now that was pastor-speak for, "I want to be there to fix your theological messes, should or when they arise."

The book of James was my first teaching assignment. I thoroughly read it, looking deeply at the word choices, and structures of each sentence, paragraph, and section within the book. While all of this helped with my understanding, I knew there was more. I sensed, like gold-diggers of old, beneath the surface of the English text lay countless unearthed nuggets of truths yet to be excavated from within the Greek text. To aid me in going deeper, I purchased my very first Bible commentary on the book of James, which still sits on my shelf today.

As well, I borrowed a Bible dictionary and *Strong's Exhaustive Commentary* with Hebrew and Greek language tools enclosed. So now, instead of digging up God's precious truths with a proverbial shovel, my newfound tools enabled me to properly and carefully unearth God's richest truths. Over time I learned how and when to use each tool, like an archaeologist does with his plethora of instruments and tools. Looking back, I think God must have intervened on my behalf, because my youth pastor stopped attending, and merely coached me from a distance.

Now, over 30 years later, my reference library has burgeoned from one commentary to dozens of commentaries, Bible dictionaries, Bible background books and language tools. After decades of practice, I



have learned a number of additional skills to properly interpret the Bible. That said, I know it will take a lifetime plus to ever master the practice of hermeneutics, but I'm good with that reality.

How can one accurately examine and interpret the Bible without imposing one's personal agenda and/or opinion upon it? That's where Hermeneutics can help us. Hermeneutics is both the art and science of interpretation. When the laws of hermeneutics are properly enforced, they act as guardrails keeping us on track while delicately unearthing Bible truths.

Why, you ask, is it called hermeneutics? I'm glad you asked. Ironically, the answer lies in the Bible itself. So let's dig in, shall we?

The Early Church historian, Dr. Luke, wrote:

Acts 14:8-12 In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. 11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker.

As Luke reported, Paul was called Hermes – one of the root words within the word hermeneutics, because he was the chief messenger. Pop quiz time: Who was Hermes from your Greek Mythology studies in high school?



If you don't recall, then allow me to refresh your memory. Hermes wore a hat and shoes with wings on them, which enabled him to fly freely between the mortal and immortal world as the messenger between the gods and humans.



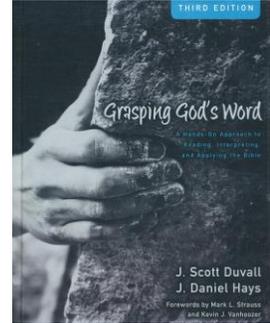
Interestingly, both Federal Express and Universal Parcel Service, which began as messenger services, adorn their employees with Hermes' wings:

By the exercise of proper and careful hermeneutics, we can do the same. Hermeneutics enables us to carefully receive and accurately carry messages across the vast expanse between two worlds – the ancient Middle-Eastern world and the post-modern Western world. Hermeneutics prevents us from somehow losing the original message from God in translation (Watch this funny depiction of messages being lost in translation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdp4sPviV74>).

The good news is: We don't have to be sons of the Greek god, Zeus, to do this. We just have to be humble, diligent and careful to exercise proper hermeneutical laws.

-EXPLORATION ACTIVITY-

J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays serve as professors at Ouachita Baptist University. Scott specializes in New Testament studies, while Danny specializes in Old Testament studies. Together they form an enlightening team as they joined forces to write, *Grasping God’s Word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting and applying the Bible.*



Read carefully chapters 1 and 12 of Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays’ book, *Grasping God’s Word*. In these chapters the authors track the chronology of how the Bible came from God to us (Chp.1), and how the God, the original Author of the Bible, used many human authors to transpose His divine message of Good News to all who will venture to read it (Chp.12).

ASSIGNMENT TIP: Take detailed notes on the chronology of the Bible, as you will be required to create a detailed historical timeline in your LM assignment.

Is The Bible Reliable?

When 18th Century Sir Walter Scott, legendary author of more than 60 books, was dying on his deathbed, he asked his son-in-law, Lockhart, to bring him “the book” from his huge library. When Lockhart asked him to clarify, “Which book?” Sir Walter answered, “Only the greatest book that has ever been written – *The Holy Bible!*”

The Apostle Paul was speaking undeniable, eternal truth when he wrote:

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Sadly, not all highly intelligent people still believe this. The question begging an answer is: Is it right or wrong to believe this about The Holy Bible?

Dan Brown (2003), author of the pulp fiction novel, *The da Vinci Code*, staked the claim, “The Bible is a product of man ... not of God. The Bible did not fall magically from the clouds. Man created it” (p.231). So who was writing fiction and who was factual? The Apostle Paul or Dan Brown? You be the judge.

1. Antiquity – the closer the accounts, the better the accountability

William F. Albright, arguably the greatest archaeologist of his day, said, “We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80.” That means the New Testament books were current writings in their day. Here’s a chart depicting this for you to see firsthand:

Work	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span
Herodotus	488 - 428 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 years
Thucydides	460 - 400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 years
Tacitus	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1,000 years

Caesar’s Gallic War	58-50 B.C.	900 A.D.	950 years
Livy’s Roman History	59 B.C. - 17 A.D.	900 A.D.	900
New Testament	40 - 100 A.D.	130 A.D. (full manuscript 350 A.D.)	300

Even a conservative estimate, holding off on the full New Testament to be fully assembled by 350 A.D., measures the time span of 300 years between the original writings and the earliest copies. Compared to other historical books, which most experts accept without question, the New Testament is between three and over four times as current, and therefore as reliable.

That’s not all. Look at the number of copies that were in circulation.

2. Multiplicity – the more accounts, the better the accountability

Work	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of copies
Earliest Non-Biblical Copies				
Herodotus	488 - 428 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 years	8
Thucydides	460 - 400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1,300 years	8
Tacitus	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1,000 years	20
Caesar’s Gallic War	58-50 B.C.	900 A.D.	950 years	9-10
Livy’s Roman History	59 B.C. - 17 A.D.	900 A.D.	900	20
Earliest Biblical Copies (New Testament)				
New Testament	40 - 100 A.D.	130 A.D. (full manuscript 350 A.D.)	300	5,000+ Greek 10,000 Latin 9,300 Other

According to experts, the more copies of a document, the more accountability there is when comparing them, therefore the more potential historical reliability. In spite of this law of literary antiquity, sceptics of the New Testament insist on discrediting the Bible’s reliability, all the while very few of them would ever dare question the historical accuracy of the other ancient books listed above. Such a two-faced practice reveals sloppy academic work and exposes an obvious bias against the Bible.

Mark Roberts (2007), in his book entitled, *Can We Trust The Gospels?* wrote:

The histories of Tacitus exist today in three (20 in the chart above) manuscripts, none of which contain all of his writings. We’re better off in the case of Suetonius, whose writings are found in more than 200 extant (existing) manuscripts. For Josephus we have 133 ... The number of Gospel manuscripts in existence is about 20 times larger than the average number of extant manuscripts of comparable writings. I have not even considered the tens of thousands of manuscripts of Gospel translations into languages such as Latin and Syriac (brackets mine) p.31.

Beyond the literary antiquities themselves, what in the New Testament writings proves their reliability? Let’s look again at the Gospels, only this time let us focus on the Gospel message upon which the Christian faith and all other New Testament books are built.

3. Authenticity – unbiased reporting, non-conspired recording

One of the most convincing proofs that the Bible is unbiased is that the human authors of these books made themselves look really bad. For instance, Peter repeatedly makes himself look foolish in his own Gospel account, which, according to tradition, he dictated to his scribe, Mark. One prime example can be found in chapter 8. There, Jesus sternly rebuked Peter for thinking and behaving like the devil. Peter did not clean up his ugly side when writing his Gospel account.



Then, in chapter 14 Peter showed himself a coward after he adamantly denied even knowing Jesus to a servant girl, let alone two other witnesses, who questioned him about being one of Jesus' disciples.

Another most convincing proof that the Bible writers did not conspire is that they did not clean up their differing viewpoints. For instance, look at these different accounts of the same story told by two of Jesus' disciples, Matthew and Peter (through Mark):

Matt 8:28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him.

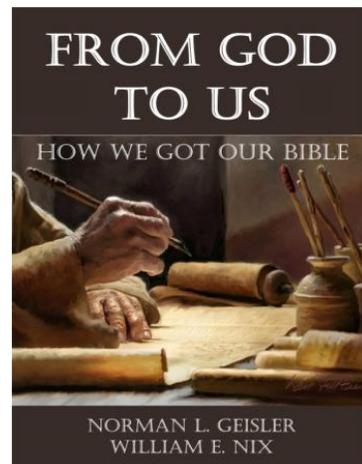
Mark 5:1-2 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes (AKA *Gadarenes*). When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. (Brackets mine).

As we can see, Matthew saw two demon-possessed men, while Peter only saw one. Why this discrepancy? Could it be that perhaps Matthew was twice as scared as Peter, thereby seeing double the trouble?

Critics of the Scriptures love to cite this contradiction, deeming the Bible therefore unreliable, yet unwittingly when they do, they are inadvertently reinforcing the authenticity and reliability of the four varying Gospel accounts. Rather than conspiring to tell the exact same story the exact same way, the Gospel writers allowed their varying perspectives to authenticate the reliability of their four Gospel accounts which all agree on the doctrines and principles that matter most.

In their jointly-authored book, *From God To Us*, Norman Geisler and William Nix (1974) reported on the subject of mistakes in the Bible when comparing multiple copies of the ancient manuscripts:

"If a single word were misspelled in 3,000 different manuscripts, they were counted as 3,000 variants." Of these mistakes, however, they calculated, "only one-sixtieth rise above the level of trivialities." They then cite many reputable theologians "have carefully evaluated the evidence and have concluded that the New Testament text is over 99 percent pure" (pp.177,180).



The Bible is indeed an amazing, outstanding and miraculous book in it's own right. For it was written over 1600 years on three continents by 44 vastly different authors, using vastly different literary styles, yet nevertheless the Bible stands undeniably harmonious and unified in nature and content.

Harmony is one thing, but is it historically accurate and verifiable?

4. Historicity – historical support

Today's Bible sceptics argue the Bible is littered with fictitious fables and fanciful fairy tales, such as the Red Sea crossing of Moses and the Hebrew slaves. Meanwhile, the ancient Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, reported in his historical annals:

It is an ancient report among (those) who inhabit the shore of the Red Sea, that by a mighty reflux of the sea which happened in former days, the whole gulf became dry land, and appeared green all over; and that the water overflowed the opposite shore, and that all the ground continued bare to the very lowest depth of the gulf, until the water, by an extraordinary high tide, returned to its former channel.

While the Old Testament may be verified by ancient historians, what about the New Testament, specifically with regard to this person named Jesus? Former sceptic and self-proclaimed atheist, Lee Strobel (2000) discovered, "One expert documented thirty-nine ancient sources that corroborate more than one hundred facts concerning Jesus' life, teachings, crucifixion, and resurrection" (p.367).

It would seem history indeed corroborates the Gospel claims, but does the empirical science of archaeology in the Middle East unearth support for or against the Bible's claims?

5. Archaeology – unearthing support

Until 2007, scholars argued Nehemiah's wall was just another children's fable told by well-intentioned blue-haired Sunday school teachers to naïve children with the use of flannel graphs, paper cut-outs and dusty old Bibles.



That explains why Middle-Eastern archaeologist, Dr. Eilat Mazar, was so surprised by her discovery of what proved to be the remains of a wall with an ancient inscription – an inscription containing a name listed in Nehemiah 7:55. Dr. Mazar said, "(The seal) gives us a direct connection between archaeology and the biblical sources ... One cannot help being astonished by the credibility of the biblical source as seen by the archaeological find."

Yale University professor, Dr. Millar Burrows believes:

The excessive scepticism of many liberal theologians stems not from a careful evaluation of the available data, but from an enormous predisposition against the supernatural ... On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record.

Look a lot higher than archaeology, some highbrow sceptic-scientists quip. Sure thing. We can accept that challenge also. Let's look to astronomy to see if science supports or denies the Bible's claims

6. Science – scholarly support

Prior to the invention of the Hubble telescope, scientists adamantly did not believe there was water in space. Apparently God – the One who created the entire universe – did.

Arguably, the oldest book in the Bible, Job, states, “Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens?” Job 38:29. It’s good to see science catching up to The Bible, isn’t it?

A favourite of Bible critics used, until recently, as a proof-text that the Bible is unreliable was Amos 5:8. Their science told them that the constellation, Pleiades, was comprised of six stars. For years they argued Amos 5:8 was inaccurate, therefore the entire Bible ought to be trashed as unreliable.

They reasoned, the Hebrew word used for Pleiades literally means seven stars, however, they knew by scientific fact that this constellation only had six. Pompously they stomped on the Bible under the foot of astronomy. That is, until the invention of powerful telescopes. Turns out God was right and they were wrong. Pleiades is actually comprised of seven stars, not six. Once again God knew what He was talking about all along.



There are many more arguments we could use in favour of the reliability of God’s Word, but suffice it to say, these are just some rational reasons, I propose, we can in fact trust in the Bible and its authoritative claims.

ASSIGNMENT TIP: You will need to become well-versed with the above six reasons why the Bible is reliable, as you will be required to succinctly and rationally defend them in writing before a Bible critic.

-EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITY-

As with all assignments in this course, you will be required to include a title page, thesis statement and bibliography.

What is a thesis statement? A compelling introductory thesis statement must reveal WHAT you are going to write about and HOW you are going to do so. This thesis statement is then to serve as the outline for the body of your paper, and is to be revisited in your concluding words where you will show HOW you accomplished WHAT you set out to accomplish back in your introductory thesis statement.

Prove your reading. Because Vanguard online is graded completely through written assignments, you must prove you have completed and comprehended all of your readings by citing (quoting) them directly, and/or by borrowing from and paraphrasing their claims, while giving them proper credit through proper referencing (see APA Sample Paper).

By now you should have read chapters 1 and 12 of *Grasping God’s Word*, having taken detailed notes on the chronology of the Bible coming from God to us. You should have also read and become familiar with six of many reasons why the Bible is reliable, so you can defend them before a Bible critic. If you are ready to move on, then let’s test your learning.

The following assignment will test the two learning parts to this LM entitled, “The Bible: From Then To Now”: 1) The History of the Bible, and, 2) The Reliability of the Bible.

PART 1: The History of the Bible

On a one-page timeline chart, accurately (to-scale timeline), thoroughly (capturing all translations addressed by the authors) and creatively portray the chronology of the Bible, as

taught in *Grasping God’s Word*, beginning with the Bible’s divine inspiration and ending with recent Bible translations.

PART 2: The Reliability of the Bible

In no more than a two-page double-spaced letter, defend the reliability of the Bible to a friend who is skeptical of its reliability. You will be graded on the clarity of your writing, as well as the rational reasoning of your arguments.

ASSESSMENT

Your assignment will be assessed using the following marking rubric:

LM1	Max Marks	Criteria
Part 1: The History of the Bible	40	On a one-page timeline chart, accurately (to-scale timeline), thoroughly (capturing all translations addressed by the authors) and creatively portray the chronology of the Bible, as taught in <i>Grasping God’s Word</i> , beginning with the Bible’s divine inspiration and ending with recent Bible translations.
Part 2: The Reliability of the Bible	40	In no more than a two-page double-spaced letter, defend the reliability of the Bible to a friend who is skeptical of its reliability. You will be graded on the clarity of your writing as well as the rational reasoning of your arguments.
Grammar and Formatting	20	In this assignment you will also be graded on the following: 1) Proper thesis statement given in introduction and revisited in conclusion 2) Inclusion of short citations and/or references drawn from all assigned readings 3) Proper grammar and spelling 4) Proper APA formatting (proper title page, citations & references to borrowed concepts) 5) Proper Bibliography/Reference List
Total	100	

Title of the assignment: Hermeneutics LM 1 EA

Value to the final mark: 10%

Upload your assignment named Hermeneutics.LM1.EA

Assignment due date: Please see the Summary of Assignments and Due Dates in the Course syllabus.

Please Note:

Please make sure you submit this assignment by the due date shown on the course syllabus.

Students **will lose 10%** of the assignment marks for work submitted up to two weeks after the due date as shown on the course syllabus. Assignments received two weeks after the due date will be awarded a **zero mark**.

-LEARNING MODULE SUMMARY-

In this module, through the reading of the enclosed LM notes and chapters 1 and 12 of *Grasping God's Word*, the student has been introduced to hermeneutics. In this first LM, the student has tracked the history of the Holy Bible as it was transmitted from God to us. Learners then studied six reasons to believe the Bible is reliable.

They have been assigned two parts to the LM, "The Bible: From Then To Now." First, they will create an accurate, thorough and creative chronological timeline of the Bible, beginning with the time of divine inspiration and ending with post-modern Bible translations. Second, they crafted a letter to a skeptic, rationally explaining why the Bible is in fact reliable.

Students

Now that you have completed this module and your assignments are submitted please proceed to the next (LM) Learning module.