PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

In answering interpretative questions, one must conform to certain rules or laws of interpretation. These rules are:

A. General Principles of Interpretation

1. Each Christian has the privilege and responsibility to study God's Word for himself (2 Tim. 2:15). (The more skilled you become in personal Bible Study, the more your reliance on commentaries and fellow pastors becomes a check rather than a crutch.)

2. Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary for us to understand and interpret Scripture properly (1 Cor. 2:12-16; 1 John 2:27).

   The Bible is a spiritual book, therefore we need the Spirit to help us understand it.

3. The primary purpose of the Bible is to change our lives, not simply increase our knowledge (Psa. 119:97-105; Matt. 7:21-29; Jn. 8:31-32).

4. Work from the assumption that the Bible is authoritative and true (Jn. 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

   The Bible is the final court of appeal.

   Once you remove the authority of the Bible, you have a religion of doubt. If it’s untrustworthy in one area, it’s untrustworthy in every area.

5. Interpret personal experience in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of experience. (The New Testament does not teach that because Jesus rose from the dead, He is therefore the Son of God. Rather, because He is the Son of God, He rose from the dead.)

   Scripture, not experience, determines truth. For example, "I have spoken in tongues, therefore tongues are for the church today." WRONG!

   See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

6. The Bible interprets itself. Scripture best explains Scripture. We believe in verbal (the words), plenary (the whole) inspiration. God cannot contradict Himself, therefore His Word is always consistent with itself.

7. Biblical examples are authoritative only when supported by a command. All the words of Scripture are inspired but not all the actions it records are to be followed. For example, Abraham's lie in Gen. 20 and Rahab's lie in Joshua 2.

8. The promises of God throughout the Bible are available to the Holy Spirit for the believers of every generation.

   a. General promises are promises given to every believer. (1 John 1:9)
b. Specific promises are promises given to specific individuals on specific occasions

For example, Acts 13:47 is a specific promise given to Paul (and possibly Barnabas): "This is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" (Compare with Isa. 42:6-7). The principle of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) applied to us, but the promise of Isa. 42:6-7 doesn't.

9. Some passages don't apply now as when they were written. For example, the sacrificial system was for the Jewish people (Lev. 7:1-2 - burnt offerings).

10. Application must always be consistent with correct interpretation.

11. Church history is important but not decisive in the interpretation of Scripture.

a. The church does not determine what the Bible teaches, the Bible determines what the church teaches.

B. Grammatical Principles of Interpretation

1. Scripture has only one meaning and should be taken in their literally. Ask yourself the following questions:

a. Am I questioning this passage being literal because I do not want to obey it?

b. Am I interpreting this passage figuratively because it does not fit my preconceived theological bias?

2. Interpret words in harmony with their meaning in the times of the author. In studying a particular word, determine four things:

a. Its use by the author (In the book under study as well as other books written by the author).

b. Its relation to its immediate context.

c. Its current use at the time of writing.

d. Its root meaning (Vine's Expository Dictionary).

3. Interpret a word in relation to its sentence and context.

a. The study of the context to determine the proper meaning of a word is one of the most basic and important rules of interpretation.

4. Interpret a passage in harmony with its context. (Ask yourself the following questions:)

a. How does the passage relate to the material surrounding it?

b. How does it relate to the rest of the book?

c. How does it relate to the Bible as a whole?

c. How does it relate to the culture and background in which it was written?
5. When an inanimate object is used to describe a living being, the statement may be considered figurative (I am the bread – John 6:35; I am the door – John 10:7)

When life and action are attributed to inanimate objects, the statement may be considered figurative (Micah 6:2).

6. When an expression is out of character with the thing described, the statement may be considered figurative (Philippians 3:2-3 --- dogs).

7. The principal parts and figures of a parable represent certain realities. Consider only these principal parts and figure when drawing conclusions.

   a. Determine the purpose of the parable.
   b. Make sure you explain the different parts of the parable in accordance with the main design.
   c. Use only the principal parts of the parable in explaining the lesson.

8. Interpret the words of the prophets in their usual, literal and historical sense, unless the context or manner in which they are fulfilled clearly indicates they have a symbolic meaning. Their fulfillment may be in installments, each fulfillment being a pledge of that which is to follow.

C. Historical Principles of Interpretation

1. Since Scripture originated in a historical context, it can be understood only in the light of biblical history.

   The historical context helps to determine:

   a. What was the background of the writer?
   b. To whom was the letter (book) written?
   c. What was the experience or occasion that gave rise to the message?
   d. Who are the main characters of the book?

2. Though God's revelation in the Scriptures is progressive, both Old and New Testaments are essential parts of this revelation and form a unit.

3. Historical facts or events become symbols (types) of spiritual truths only if the Scriptures so designate them (1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Galatians 4:22-24).

D. Theological Principles of Interpretation

1. You must understand the Bible grammatically before you can understand it theologically.

2. A doctrine cannot be considered biblical unless it sums up and includes all that Scriptures say about it.

3. When two doctrines taught in the Bible appear to be contradictory, accept both as scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves into a higher unity.
a. The Trinity
b. The dual nature of Christ
c. The origin and existence of evil
d. The sovereign election of God and the responsibility of man

4. A teaching merely implied in Scripture may be considered biblical when a comparison of related passages supports it.
PRINCIPLES IN INTERPRETING BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

A. Principles in Interpreting Narratives

1. Narratives usually does not directly teach a doctrine.

2. Narratives usually illustrate a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere in Scripture.

3. Narratives record only what happened at one point in time --- not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time.

4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.

5. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to judge that on the basis of what God has taught us directly and categorically already in Scripture.

6. All narratives are selective and incomplete. Not all the details are always given (see John 21:25). Everything that the inspired author thought important for us to know does appear in the narrative.

7. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions. They have particular, specific limited purposes and deal with certain issues, leaving other to be dealt with elsewhere, in other ways.

8. Narratives may teach either explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by clearly implying something without actually stating it). Implicit does not mean secret or hidden. The task is to take note of all that the narrative actually tells you---directly and indirectly---but never mystically or privately.

B. Six Common Errors of Interpreting Narratives

1. Allegorizing

Instead on concentrating on the clear meaning, people relegate the text to merely reflecting another meaning beyond the text. There is allegory in the Bible, but none of the scriptural allegories is simple narrative.

2. Decontextualizing

Ignoring the full historical and literary context, and often the individual narrative, people concentrate on small units only and thus miss interpretational clues. If you decontextualize enough you can make almost any part of Scripture say anything you want it to.
3. **Selectivity**

This is analogous to decontextualizing. It involves picking and choosing specific words and phrases to concentrate on, ignoring the others and ignoring the overall sweep of the passage being studied. Instead of balancing the parts and the whole, it ignores some of the parts and the whole entirely.

4. **False Combination**

This approach combines elements from here and there in a passage and makes a point out of their combination, even though the elements themselves are not directly connected in the passage itself. An extreme example would be the conclusion the one’s real enmities are in the church rather than outside the church because in Psalm 23 David says that he will dwell in God’s house forever, and that God has prepared him a table in the presence of his enemies. The enemies must therefore be in God’s house along with David, or else he could not be in their presence.

5. **Redefinition**

When the plain meaning of the text leaves people cold, producing no immediate spiritual delight or saying something they do not want to hear, they are often tempted to redefine it to mean something else. For example, they take Jesus’ words, "Woe to you who are rich" and "Woe to you who love money so much you have renounced the faith in God" and "Woe to you who have become atheist in order to have cheap praise from worldly infidels." These sayings have been redefined in such a way that they are narrow enough to no longer to be a threat to the people doing the redefinition.

6. **Extracanonical Authority**

By using some sort if special external key to the Scriptures, usually a set of doctrines or a book that claims to reveal scriptural truths not otherwise knowable, people suppose that they can unlock the mysteries of the Bible. Cults usually operate on the basis of an extracanonical authority, treating the Bible somewhat like a series of riddles needing a special knowledge to solve.

7. **Warning in Interpreting Narratives**

Do not be a monkey-see-monkey do reader of the Bible. No Bible narrative was specifically about you. You can learn a great deal from narratives, but you can never assume that God expects you to do exactly the same things the Bible characters did, or to have the same things happen to you that happened to them. Your task is to learn God’s Word from narratives about biblical characters, not to try to do everything that was done in the Bible. Narratives are precious to us because they so vividly demonstrate God’s involvement in the world and illustrate His principles and calling.
PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PARABLES

A. Determine the Specific Context

1. Study the wider context for the development of thought and try to pinpoint the situation to which Christ is specifically speaking. Know the kingdom theme in the gospels.

2. Study the immediate context to discern the issue.
   a. It could be introduced with a question. Matt. 9:14
   b. It could be stated simply in the text. Luke 18:1
   c. It could lie in criticism of Jesus. Luke 15:2
   d. It could lie in some request. Luke 12:13

B. Discover the Cultural Setting

Know things like marriage customs (Matt. 25:1-3), use of leaven in Israelite homes (Matt. 13:33), etc.

C. Determine the Main Point or Central Idea

This is the reference point or master key for the interpretation of each detail which serves it. This allows the student to see how the details develop the main trust of the parable. It anchors the student so that he is not likely to wander off on his own tangents or blind alleys.

D. Cross Reference

Other Scripture often helps in establishing the meaning of details. Compare Matthew 13 (mustard tree) with Ezekiel 17, 31; Daniel 4.

E. Interpret Details Properly

1. Is this detail which you think has a certain spiritual meaning emphasized by Jesus when He concludes or makes His point?

   For example, is “to kill the fattened calf” (Luke 15:23) a picture of Christ on the cross? Why or why not?

2. Does the context (or other Scripture) help explain what a certain detail means? How does the Bible help explain Matthew 13:32-33?

3. Does the context (or other Scripture) specify any truth that would nullify a given meaning placed on some detail of the parable?

   In Matthew 25:1-13 should we say that the Lord will come at midnight because the bridegroom does here? Is God like the man in Luke 11:7?
PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETING POETRY

A. Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry

1. Parallelism
   The most noteworthy characteristic of Hebrew poetry is its parallelism. This term refers to the practice of balancing one thought or phrase by a corresponding thought or phrase containing approximately the same number of words, or at least a correspondence in ideas.

2. Four Types of Parallelism
   a. Synonymous Parallelism - The second line repeats the first line. (Isaiah 1:3; Proverbs 17:4).
   b. Antithetic - The second line contrasts or negates the first line. (Proverbs 15:1,2,20).
   c. Synthetic - The second line adds to the first line in any manner which provides further information. It could complete the first line (Ps. 2:6); make a comparison with the first line (Prov. 15:17); give a reason of the first line (Prov. 26:4); or bring the first line to a climax by taking up some words from the first line and then completing the thought (Ps. 29:1; 92:9; 93:3; 96:13).
   d. Emblematic - One line takes the form of a literal or factual statement. The other line is a figurative illustration. (Prov. 11:22; Ps. 42:2; Prov. 25:25).

B. Principles in Exegeting the Psalms

1. Do not over-exegete the Psalms by finding special meaning in every word or phrase, where the poet intended none. Poetry by nature was addressed to the mind through the heart. That is to say, there is much language filled with emotion. For example, it may be forcing the language to see the second line in the parallel structure of a verse as saying something new of different from the first line (see Psalm 19:1 heavens/skies).

2. It is dangerous to read a Psalm as if it taught a system of doctrine. The Psalms are musical poems, that is intended to appeal to the emotions rather than propositional thinking. While the Psalms do contain and reflect doctrine, they are hardly repositories for doctrinal exposition. For example. See Psalm 51:5. Is conception sinful? No, he is merely emphasizing the fact that he is a sinner.

3. The vocabulary of poetry is purposely metaphorical. Thus one must take care to look for the intent of the metaphor. See Psalm 114:4; 59:7. Is Psalm 23 a treatise against city life? It is important not to press metaphors or to take them literally. An inability to appreciate symbolic language and to translate it into actual fact, the more abstract symbolic notions of the Psalm could lead a person to misapply it almost entirely.

C. The Use of Proverbs

1. Proverbs are often figurative. Keep this in mind.
2. Proverbs must be balanced with others and understood in comparison with the rest of Scripture. Proverbs 26:4, 5.

3. Proverbs are worded to be remembered and so are not technically precise. See Proverbs 6:27-29 (touch?); 15:9 (thorns).

4. Proverbs strongly reflect ancient culture and may need sensible "translation" so as not to lose their meaning. Proverbs 22:11 (king); 25:24 (houses).

5. Proverbs are not guarantees from God, but poetic guidelines for good behavior. See Proverbs 16:3, 7.

6. Proverbs are practical not theological.

7. Proverbs give good advice for wise approaches to certain aspects of life, but are not exhaustive in their coverage. It takes wisdom to apply them.
PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

A. Use Fundamental Principles for Scripture in General

B. Special Principles of Interpretation of Prophecy

1. Does the natural sense make sense? Oftentimes it will.

2. Are there any similar prophecies in the same general section of book which shed light? (Compare Isaiah 7:14 with Isaiah 9:6; 11:1 53:1)

3. Are there clues defining the time in which this is to occur? The passage may speak of features that will be true at the same time of the fulfillment of the prophecy. There may also be key words of phrases which are used for some specific time period. The phrase "at the time" in Daniel 12:1 causes the reader to go back into chapter 11 to find the proper time frame. Daniel 11:36-45 points to the Antichrist and the time of the Tribulation. Finally, later Scripture may speak of the event as not yet fulfilled. This pushes the fulfillment back further. For example, Daniel 9:27 speaks of the Abomination of Desolation and so does Christ in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:15).

4. Does the passage telescope the near event with the far? See Isaiah 13 (Babylon or the whole world); Matthew 24 (A.D. 70 or Tribulation)

5. Does the New Testament give some fulfillment for this specific passage?


7. Is the passage figurative?

8. There may be a mingling of details true of an immediate person with details speaking of Christ. This is often true in Messianic Psalms (2, 16, 40, 45, 69).

9. Be Objective! Am I being objective, or am I manipulating this passage toward the conclusion I want to come to? Is my interpretation dubious, strained, or lacking adequate evidence? Am I working to shocking people with some different view?
Principles of Expository Preaching

1. **The Word of God is a holy and sacred thing, treat it with awe and respect, protect its purity and never knowingly violate its sanctity.**

   The Word of God emanates from the holiness of God. It reflects the mind, the heart and the will of God. Therefore, it must be treated with a tremendous amount of respect. It must not be dealt with flippantly or with lack of diligence, but with commitment.

   Liberals have a low view of Scripture and never deal with the Bible. Some add experience to the Bible and put it right alongside Scripture as being inspired. The Bible is used to say whatever you want to say because your experiences, emotions, revelations are equivalent to Scripture. Evangelicals would die for the Scripture but never delineate its principles. If We do not exposit the Scripture, we deny that it is the Word of God in every word. You can not do Bible exposition if you are not diligent to study it.

   This means that you are careful how you use humor. Learn when to be serious and when humor is appropriate. When you use humor in preaching, never use it at the expense of Scripture, use it in the illustration.

2. **Be sure you are acquainted with the human author, the person(s) to whom the passage is written, and the historical, cultural and circumstantial contexts to and from the passage is written.**

   You can’t interpret a passage unless you understand the elements around that passage. You have to understand the human author, insights to his personality, ministry, his circumstances at the time. Why did he write what he wrote? To whom did he write it? What were their circumstances? This is utterly important.

   Let’s take Matthew for an example. What was Matthew's perspective? To whom did Matthew write? To the Jews. What is his purpose. To present Jesus Christ as the Messiah? So as you go through the book you should see that all the elements of the book reflect this aspect of the kingship of Christ. The overview of the book helps to understand the text.

   As you come to any given text you consider the historical, cultural, circumstantial contexts of that passage. For example, in Matthew 8:1-4. Jesus heals a leper. What was leprosy? The man came to Jesus. But lepers were not allowed to do that. The leper has set aside all shame, all sense of social code, because he was a desperate man. As you fill in the context, things begin to make sense. Why did Jesus tell this leper to go to the priests and not to tell any man about what Jesus did? Didn’t Jesus want the message spread abroad? Two reasons for this. Jesus came to fulfill the law. Jesus wanted to affirm to that man the importance of obedience to the law of God. Leviticus states that a healed leper must go to the priest. Jesus reminds this man that he is responsible to the law of God. Secondly, the priest went through an intricate process of examination of a leper. By this process the priest would discover whether the man was healed. They would then be trapped in their own evidence to affirm the power of Christ.

   If your introduction is good enough, the sermon will preach itself. But if you don't do that background material, it will be difficult for the hearer to understand the meaning of the text.
This is the process of interpretation. You must find out what the text says, then you must find out what it means by what it says, then you must apply the text.

3. **Be sensitive of the sequence and understand the scope and depth of the divine truths contained in the passage and where they fit into the total scope of the book in which they reside and the Bible as a whole.**

Look for the logical flow which reveals spiritual principles. Then you probe into the depths of those spiritual principles. Principize the text. You want to transform the text into principles. This flows out of the interpretive process. From Matthew 8 the spiritual principle is to obey the Word of God. How does the passage interrelate with the rest of the Bible. Be a first-rate theologian. As you develop the text, the principle comes, the principle is the basis on which you survey the Scripture. In Matthew 8 the principle is to obey the law of God. So you reinforce this principle by finding it wherever you can to supper that this is a Scripture wide truth.

4. **Do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit.**

This is a warning. By this point you probably fell real smart. You have all this data and you have forgotten about prayer and dependence. So stop and give time to allowing the Holy Spirit to purify your heart and mind. In 1 John 2:27 John says we don’t depend on human wisdom but from the wisdom of God. To be an effective student of the Bible, you must walk in the Spirit, be yielded to the Holy Spirit. You are either controlled by the Spirit or not. Make sure you are right before God. 1 Peter 2:2 says to grow by the Word, but you must first lay aside sin (2:1). Make sure you have recognition of the presence and power and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. So that you don’t go astray and find yourself in something that isn’t really true, and you don’t want to check with the Holy Spirit because it sounds so good and makes so much sense to you.

5. **Keep in mind that Jewish thought is always pragmatic, whereas Greek thought is conceptual or idealistic.**

Most, if not all, Scripture is written from the Jewish viewpoint, so it must be preached from that perspective. To the Jewish mind, wisdom was to do. To the Greek, wisdom was to know. To know was the epitome. The book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom and is amazingly practical. It evades the abstract. Hebrew is a concrete language. God present truth in a practical life related way. When we preach. We do not preach with a view that people understand something, we preach with a view toward them doing something. They have to understand to do, lest they be fools. The Hebrew approach to life is: to know that I may do. Do not feed the mind in preaching.

6. **All derived doctrine must be tested against the attributes of God.**

No doctrine can be true if it violates one of God’s attributes. The ultimate backdrop in all conclusions is the character of God. This is why you must know God. If you don’t understand that God is just, you will misunderstand much of the Old Testament and may conclude the wrong things. Many start from the premise that God is love, but that is not the premise. God is kind to everybody. How could He do what He did in the Old Testament? But we need to start from Genesis where the standard was if you
7. Due to our human frailties and finiteness there are some doctrines however, which appear to be paradoxical or apparently contradictory to other doctrines.

If we are to deal with these, we must be able to accept non-closure, ambivalence, and must be able to preach and teach some things which are past knowing. There are paradoxes in Scripture. One such issue is sovereignly and free-will. Does the Bible teach the sovereignty of God? Yes (Eph. 1, Rom. 9). Does the Bible teach the free-will of man? Yes (He who comes to Me I will in no way cast out). There must something in the middle. That is, God sees into the future and sees that we are going to choose Him, so He chooses us. But this takes away God's sovereignty and makes man sovereign. Just leave sovereignty and free-will separate and you do not harmonize them. You teach sovereignty in a passage where it appears, and teach free-will in a passage where it appears. Who wrote the Book of Acts? Luke or God? Yes. Is Christ God or Man? Yes. Who lives your Christian life? Gal. 2:20. In every major doctrine of Scripture there is an apparent paradox, because you cannot reduce the infinite mind of God to finite understanding without a lot of leakage. You must live with tension, lest he give to the world a book with logical inconsistencies. One of the greatest proofs for the authority of Scripture is that there is no resolution to the paradoxes found in it. Don't worry about it. When you teach a passage on sovereignty, you don't have to spend an extra 20 minutes dealing with the other side of the issue.

8. It is important that a preacher/teacher have an maintain a parable perspective. Like Jesus, He is able to see God and His divine truth manifested in all that He has made and to draw on the concreteness of the material realm to teach spiritual and abstract truths.

The Bible contains so much of this. The sacrificial system was a picture. Jesus taught in parables. All good communicators speak in analogies. Learn to be able to see God manifested in the material realm. Draw on everything available to make pictures. Be a voracious reader. Everything is either true or error and the preacher preaches on both. Everything can be used as a fact or an illustration.

9. A problem whether it be in the understanding of Scripture or a problem in living should always be met with a thorough examination and a clear definition of the problem first. A delineation of all the possible alternatives or options secondly. And finally the selection of the alternatives or option which will best satisfy the Scriptural parameters, the option which would best please God.

Don't avoid problems. When you come to the problems, deal with them. That is what excites people. Tell them what they can't figure out. Present the problem and present the solution to the problem. If you can involve the people in the process of discovery, the learning is increased immensely. It could be a problem in application. What does it mean that women are to be keepers at home? What are the parameters of this?
10. Always study for your own edification first.

Do not go to the text to get a sermon. Go to the text to get its meaning for your sake. Out of this comes the sermon. If you go to the text to get a sermon, you usually will read something into the text (eisegesis). You will make the text say what you want it to say.

11. The preacher and teacher's role is to consistently cast thoughts or problems before the mind of the hearer. He must make the hearer consider and be able to defend things they hold to and things they may not have considered before.

When you teach, you have to give people conclusions, but you have to give them reasons for conclusions else they are stuck with positions they can't defend. The church is loaded with people who can't defend the reason for their beliefs. Give them the answer, the solution, but put them into the process. Tell them why, how and wherefore, so that they have a sense of confidence in dealing with Scripture as they pass it on to someone else. Find the problem, solve the problem, and give them enough of it so that they can defend themselves when they pass it on. Dealing with questions raises a high interest factor in the minds of the people. Why did Jesus send the man to the temple instead of allowing him to witness what Jesus did to him?

12. The preacher or teacher must be always willing and receptive to learn from those he preaches to.

Listen to the feedback from your people. You are not invincible. Be humble enough to correct yourself when you are wrong.

13. The preacher/teacher should not attempt to cover up a mistake or an erroneous teaching on his part. People will accept, respect and appreciate you if you are open about your own human frailties. You are even encouraged to make yourself the target of your own humor, rather than others. In doing so, you increase your credibility and identity with those who hear and those you teach.

Your people will identify with your frailty. Tell things about yourself that show your humanness and weakness, you don't have to unbear your heart and tell all the evil in your mind. That doesn't help. Use yourself as the target or humor.

14. A better kind of learning and deeper understanding occurs when the hearer is led to discover truth for himself rather than simply having the preacher or teacher give it to him.

Good preaching and teaching forces the hearer to be in the process of discovery. What is more thrilling, to discover something or have it handed to you?

15. Preach and teach with authority.

This is self-confidence. Whenever the Word is clear and indisputable. Where there doesn't seem to be an absolute opposition, it is good to present the strength and weaknesses of the views, and to encourage the hearer/learner to search out a position for himself. If there are three or four good
views and I can't make up my mind about any of them, I just them all and let the congregation to take their pick. Perhaps the answer is a mixture of them all. You can't effectively teach unless you teach with authority. In order to speak with authority you must know what you are talking about. If you are tentative in your preaching or teaching, it probably means you have done your study.

16. Once divine truths and principles are delineated, one must discern how they are relevant and applicable to his own life and test them out experientially.

Apply it in your own life and the lives of your people. That is the pragmatic, experiential application.

17. The preacher/teacher is to always encourage his hearers to see the relevancy and applicability of those same truths and principles in their lives, and the teacher should develop assignments which will maximize the possibility of them knowing those truths and principles experientially.

First preach with conviction, take it to a demand. Demand application in their lives. Give them assignments or structure how to apply it. Come right down to where they live.