

Interpreting the Bible Ray L. Winstead

I pray for myself a continual discernment of the truth of what God is trying to tell me through the words of the Bible. I believe too many people today - regardless of their prayerful sincerity - misunderstand many important words and ideas presented in the Bible. Even besides different contexts - which present their own problems in trying to understand what is in the Bible - the English translations we read today imply different current meanings than the words and concepts translated from the original intent of the words as they were originally written in Hebrew and Greek long ago. I believe that many of these misunderstandings are at the heart of current controversies in the different denominations of The Church and certainly do not further The Kingdom of God - regardless of the sincerity of "the different sides." Thinking that all the English words in the different Bible versions of today accurately reflect the true meaning of the original writings of the past is not reasonable, and you can be convinced of this with just some more study on your own. This is not to mean to throw out the Bible, but it does mean that we must be careful in reading it. I do believe that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God (*sola scriptura*). Just to illustrate this idea with an important example that is less controversial than many, consider the Biblical phrase of "Fear the Lord." People often interpret the meaning of the word "fear" in this phrase the same as in today's dictionary definition as meaning "an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat" or "to be afraid of (someone or something) as likely to be dangerous, painful, or threatening." This is not what "Fear the Lord" originally meant in most Biblical passages - although that's the interpretation I hear today! I like what Emmanuel Community Church in New York says on its website about a better understanding of the meaning of these words and concept as used in the Bible: "In the Psalms we see that fearing the Lord means to stand in awe of the living God (Ps. 33:8), to glorify him (Ps. 22:3), and to trust him wholeheartedly (Ps. 40:3)."

Many, many other examples of this concept of the words in our English translations of the Bible not really meaning what you think they mean are common. Check it out for yourself! If we are really serious about understanding what is in the Bible, then we must be serious about studying the Bible from an exegesis and hermeneutics perspective.

I certainly don't claim to know the truth myself - but I do claim a heartfelt attempt at that objective.

For an OpenAI-ChatGPT essay/sermon on this topic see

<https://abrahamisaacson.com/AbrahamIsaacsonSermon-BibleInterpretation.shtm>

For examples of the phrase "Fear the Lord" in the NIV Bible, see the list on the Bible Gateway website at

<https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=%22fear+the+Lord%22&version=NIV>