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devotionals by Beth Ann Phifer

HIS SIGWORK

10 Key Principles of Responsible Scripture Interpretation

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Dear friends,

If I were to choose my greatest passion, I think it would be **purity** – purity in the food I eat, purity in the soil that grows the herbs in my backyard, purity in my morning coffee, the pure smell of sheets on the laundry line, the purity of simple times with friends, and the purity of God and His Word.

April 3, 2020 I will have been on this journey of knowing Jesus for 40 years. Through many trials, wildernesses, misguidances and joys, a single passion has emerged – to handle the precious Word of God rightly and magnify its beauty.

My desire for all the Scripture Studies is to bring, not my own opinion or bias, but my conclusions from the study of the beautiful and rich Hebrew and Greek words found in the passages. My conclusions are not perfect, because I am still learning and praying to rid myself of bias. But this is my quest – to interpret God’s Word as He inspired the original writers to convey it.

Along the way, I have gathered principles of interpretation that have guided me. So, I wrote a study guide using the acronym HIS SIGWORK to remember the phrase *His Signature Work* that represents **10 key principles of responsible Scripture interpretation**. I expand on many of these principles in separate documents on the blog.

1. **Highest Purpose** – The highest purpose of Scripture is to reveal the Creator and Redeemer of the Universe. Jesus the Messiah is the exact expression of His nature (Hebrews 1:1-3).
2. **Inexhaustible Riches** – The riches of Scripture cannot be mastered. So, we can rest and enjoy His company as we dive deeply into its waters to discover a coral reef exploding with life and beauty!
3. **Spirit** – We must acknowledge the Holy Spirit’s presence in and with us and our reliance on Him for understanding. He invites us into an intimate relationship with Himself through His Word.
4. **Speculation, Imagination, Assumption and Connecting the dots** – It is important to understand the difference between these approaches to avoid error.
5. **Insider Scoop** – The history and culture surrounding the text, as well as the intent of the original author to the original audience. (For an expansion on this principle of interpretation, please see my paper called *HIS SIGWORK - No. 5, Insider Scoop - 1st Corinthians, the Context and Culture.*)
6. **Genre** – The literary type of each book. (For an expansion on this principle of interpretation, please see my paper called *HIS SIGWORK - Principle No. 6, Understanding Bible Genres.*)

7. **Whole Counsel of God** – Scripture interprets Scripture. The Bible is a beautiful gem; each book in it is a facet reflecting onto the other books. Good translations allow us to see the connections that tie the entire Bible into a beautiful whole, orchestrated by the Lord over hundreds of years. (For an expansion on this principle of interpretation, please see my paper called *HIS SIGWORK - Principle No. 7, Whole Counsel of God + A Bible Overview.*)
8. **Original Languages** – Most often, one English word cannot convey the full, rich meanings of Hebrew and Greek words. We don't have to become Hebrew or Greek scholars to understand their fuller meanings! We can easily learn from a good Hebrew/Greek dictionary in order to ponder their truth and be amazed and changed by their beauty! (For an expansion on this principle of interpretation, please see my paper called *HIS SIGWORK - Principle No. 8, Whole Counsel of God + A Bible Overview.*)
9. **Rhema Revelation (RR)** – The written word (*logos*) becomes the living word (*rhema*) when God highlights His Word in our spirits in a personal way. (For an expansion on this principle of interpretation, please see my paper called *HIS SIGWORK - Principle No. 9, Rhema Revelation.*)
10. **Knowledge of His Love** – We must have a deep knowing that He couldn't love us more than He does right now. Otherwise, our understanding of God's Word will be skewed. We must see Scripture through the lens of His love. (For an expansion on this principle of interpretation, please see my paper called *HIS SIGWORK - Principle No. 10, The Lens of His Love - Two Scripture Studies.*)

Learning God's Word is a never-ending, life-changing adventure! Every day I say, "Wow, I never knew that before!"

Blessings,
Beth Ann