

The Top 5 Principles of Proper Biblical Interpretation with Mike Winger

(August 1, 2025)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, you may see that quite often on a college campus when I get a question, it's a big question. I only have a couple of minutes to answer it. You may have seen me say something like, you know, my friend Mike Winger has a video on that. In fact, he has several hours on that topic. And I'll recommend Mike Winger to go a lot deeper than I can obviously do in two minutes. And if you go to his YouTube channel, just look for Mike Winger, you're going to see the Bible Thinker.

Mike has done such great work on biblical interpretation, even on issues which are very controversial, whether it's praying in tongues, women in the church, music, even false teachers. He gets into the Trinity. He gets into apologetics. He gets into Scripture twisting, the difference between Catholics and orthodox, angels, demons. He covers it all, and he does it in a very thorough way, and a very easy way to understand.

So, I thought I'd have Mike on to talk about some principles of biblical interpretation. So, here he is, ladies and gentlemen, the great Mike Winger, all the way from the People's Republic of California. Mike, how are you?

MIKE:

I'm not deserving of the intro, but I'm grateful to be here. [Laughter]

FRANK:

Sure you are.

MIKE:

Yeah. Thanks for having me on, friend.



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FRANK:

Oh, it's great having you on. You know, I follow your work quite a bit. A lot of times I tune into the Q&A sessions that you do where you have-- Every Friday, you do 10 questions.

MIKE:

Yeah, we both do a lot of Q & A. Yeah.

FRANK:

Yeah. Well, I love listening to you on those issues because, like me, you just get the question, and you got to have some information behind you to answer them. These aren't questions that you have looked at before, so, it's quite a challenge I know sometimes. And you do such great work. Tell our listeners how you got involved in this, Mike.

MIKE:

Well, it really goes back to when I was serving full time on staff at a church as a pastor, one of several pastors there. I was focused on youth ministry, and I had this just heavy weight on my heart that I felt like was God saying, you need to do something else, and if you don't do it, you're missing out on my calling in your life. I know that sounds wild to say this, but I said it out loud to my wife even before I started.

Now, I didn't know what I was going to do. I didn't want to stop doing my local church ministry stuff, so I just started researching how I could maybe do stuff online. I looked at statistics and found that YouTube, which didn't have much of a Christian segment at the time, would have been the best place to break through.

They had no real competitors. The reach was incredible. There was like over a billion monthly users at the time. It's way more now. And so, I started just creating content, teaching and stuff like that, experimenting on YouTube, and just stuck with it for a long time until eventually it did become my whole ministry and reaches people by God's grace around the world. And I'm thankful I get to hear testimonies of people whose lives have been impacted all the time.

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FRANK:

Almost 900,000 subscribers right now, ladies and gentlemen. Check out Mike Winger on YouTube. Mike, let's talk about, you know-- Well, let me say this. It kind of amazes me. I don't know if it amazes you as much as it amazes me. We would think as Christians, if we believe the Bible is the word of God, the first thing we would teach people at a church is how to interpret the Bible. And yet, I rarely see that being taught in church. We have our own course because of it, 'How to Interpret the Bible.' Why do you think churches don't really talk about how to interpret the Bible?

MIKE:

I think maybe because a lot of pastors don't know how to interpret the Bible. I think a lot of pastors, I know from experience, when you first start, you don't know what you're doing. You feel like you're in over your head. And so, what you do is you just start copying the things you're seeing. Other leaders do. You echo and repeat their statements.

So, you're not just doing a Bible study. Often what happens is you are listening to someone else's study and then repeating what they've said, and they're busy. Pastors get busy. A lot of pastors just don't really spend a whole lot of time in the Word. And you can get away with it. You can get away with not spending a lot of time in the Word.

I could have an AI write my sermon today, and then share it, and that's fine. Or you could do the commentary thing, where you're reading commentaries not to understand Scripture, but merely to grab talking points to throw into your message. But I guess because you can get away with it would be my answer. You can appear to have a successful church without actually teaching people how to interpret Scripture.

FRANK:

Well, you've got five principles we're going to talk about today on good biblical interpretation. How do you do what you do? Why don't we start with number one?

MIKE:

Yeah. Well, first I'll just say, what I do is there's aspects of it that seem complicated, but the foundation of it is very simple. And so, the first principle would just be check the context. And

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when we say check the context, we mean you just read the verse, read it again, read before it, read after it, and you just try to figure out what it means. And a good example of checking the context is always used, common verse, one of the verses that non-believers know the most. And it's don't judge.

FRANK:

Let's do that. [Laughter]

MIKE:

Yeah. So, Matthew 7 says, "Judge not that you be not judged." That's Jesus words. And that's the verse that people will quote, Matthew 7:1. But now if you quote it by itself, it sounds like a blanket policy. Like you're not allowed to ever discern right and wrong, or to say something's evil and something is good, or that person's being bad.

But if you read the whole thing, let me just read to you. This is what Bible study is. You just read. I'm going to read five verses. "Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite." And then Jesus' solution to this problem of hypocrisy which is what his real concern is. It's not people using judgment.

He says, you hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Which means he does want us to look at our brother's eyes and see problems and help them. We just have to deal with our hypocrisy first so that we can be someone who really helps.

Which, you know, we see this all the time. This is a real big issue. Yeah. Hypocritical judgment is the thing we have to avoid, not actual judgment. So, that's just one simple example. Another one would be, when Jesus says, turn the other cheek in Matthew 5, he says, you've heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, don't resist the one who's evil.

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If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other. Also, the thing is, I've heard this used many times to suggest Jesus is disagreeing with the Old Testament. You've heard it was said, and he quotes Leviticus, and then he says, but I say to you and says something different.

To read it in context, you start to see, oh, he's actually fighting against hijacking a legislative term to use for personal vengeance. So, he's opposed to a personal vengeance and vendettas. And he's not disagreeing with the Old Testament here. He's disagreeing with a misapplication of it. And it just requires reading in context, because Jesus also says elsewhere that every word from God is pure, that we have to take as the word of God. In fact, you could do a whole study on what Jesus's view of Scripture was. It's a beautiful thing.

FRANK:

Oh, and, you probably have a video on that, I imagine, because-- How many videos you have? Over a thousand videos.

MIKE:

Yeah, most of them are cat videos, though. No, I'm just kidding. [Laughter]

FRANK:

Yeah. [Laughter] You only understand that if you watch Mike Winger, because he always has his cat. Like, is the cat in there right now?

MIKE:

Not right now.

FRANK:

She'll just show up.

MIKE:

There's a spot here she sometimes chills on.

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FRANK:

And I saw you with a T-shirt on. "My cat thinks I'm cool."

MIKE:

Yeah, she's the only one. [Chuckle]

FRANK:

But go back to the turn the other cheek, because I think so many people somehow interpret that as pacifism. Why is Jesus not necessarily saying we have to be pacifists?

MIKE:

Right. I've read multiple books written from pacifists, Christian pacifists. And that is one of their key verses is turn the other cheek. That's not consistent with other passages of Scripture which talk about Jesus in Revelation, coming with wrath and judgment. Nor with a biblical standard of what self-defense means. In fact, the striking on the right cheek—

Often commentators will point this out because they're reading very carefully and closely, and they notice that to strike somebody on that side of the cheek implies a backhanded insult slap, not a I'm trying to kill you assault.

I think that defending the weak and protecting the innocent is a biblical virtue and value of justice and right behavior. So that if somebody was trying to kill your wife and child, you'd be justified in using lethal force to stop them. That seems very consistent in Scripture. But, yeah, that verse is often used for that as well.

FRANK:

Jesus says, I want to say it's Luke 22, where he tells his disciples to go get a sword if they don't have one.

MIKE:

Yeah, that's-- There's a-- I have a whole video on that topic on that verse.

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FRANK:

Do you? Okay.

MIKE:

Yeah, because I was digging into all this pacifism stuff, and it was that verse, is the-- Is one verse that I think the pacifists have no good explanation for. So, in the video, I go through a number of possible ways they would try to explain it, including that Peter was just acting crazy. And then Jesus was like, it's enough. Like, stop it. Knock it off you weirdo.

And so, I did the whole study in the Greek term. And how is it used? Is it ever used like that? And all that kind of thing. So, yeah, that's another key verse. It's difficult to think that at least the threat of force was not being endorsed by Jesus here.

FRANK:

Oh, yeah, and it's certainly endorsed via government, Romans 13. A lot more with Mike Winger, the Bible Thinker. Check him out on YouTube. Look for Mike Winger. You won't be disappointed. Back after the break. What are some principles of Bible interpretation? Rarely talked about in church, unfortunately, but Mike Winger actually does it every day. In fact, several times a week there are videos put up on the Mike Winger YouTube channel.

Every Friday, he does Q&A, does 10 questions of Q&A that you could submit to him during the chat. And he also puts out videos quite a bit during the week. You can go to Mike Winger at the Bible-- Or you also have a website. Is it BibleThinker.org Mike? Do I see that right?

MIKE:

That's correct, yeah.

FRANK:

BibleThinker.org. You can check him out there. And what I love about Mike is he'll look at a passage from every different angle, as we just talked about for the break. He'll look at all the arguments the pacifists have on a particular passage or group of passages and deal with them, which is something unfortunately I can't do in front of an audience when you've got a line of people. But you can do it at YouTube, and Mike does a great job there. So, the first principle,

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Mike, you mentioned before the break was context. What's another principle that we should look at when we're interpreting Scripture?

MIKE:

Okay, this is one that's a little weird. Hard to explain. I don't have the best way of putting it in words. I would just say, don't assume you know what a word means would be maybe what I would say as a principle.

A fancier way to say it is, sometimes we have theological definitions of words, and we think that the author in the text is using that theological definition. A simple example is the word save. When I say that person got saved, I'm meaning salvation in a spiritual, eternal life sense. But sometimes the Bible just means saved in a very generic, non-spiritual sense. But a good example of this is James chapter two with the word justified. So, Paul has a very technical use of the word justified.

He talks about how we are justified by God, and he means we are made righteous by God. So, this is a salvation issue. And then James in James chapter two, they both actually use Abraham as an example. Paul's like, Abraham was justified by faith apart from works. And then James in James 2:21 says, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? And if you assume the theological meaning of justification that you get in like an actual theological book or that a pastor would use on stage, then you're going to think James is contradicting Paul.

But if you look at just the meaning of the word itself in Greek, like it's—

It's like in English, the word justified can refer to different things depending on the context in which it is used. So, you read the whole passage, and you go, oh, James is talking about how to justify to people that your claim that you have faith is real. And the way that you prove to people that you really have faith is you show them by the life you live. While that guy's claim for faith, that's justified by his works, but he's not justified like, I'm saved by my works. And this is something that constantly comes up.

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I think it's a key passage on this topic. You just have to let James use the word justified like it's a Greek word and not a theological word. And this occurs in other places as well. We just have these-- Unintentionally, we assume too much as we go into the text. And we're not letting them-- You know, there's no holy language in the text of Scripture. It's just the available words they had in the language they were writing in. And so, they have all those varieties of meanings.

FRANK:

I know my mentor, Dr. Geisler, during seminary, said this at one point. It sounds wrong, but I think he's right. He said words don't have meanings. They have usage. They only have meaning inside the proper usage in other words. And, in this case, what does justified mean or saved mean? It depends on how it's used. That's how you know what it means.

MIKE:

Yeah. So, like the word brother, for instance. This came up recently online, and people are debating this. They do, occasionally. Did Jesus have actual brothers from Mary? And so, the word brother can refer to cousins. And I looked at all the uses of Luke.

Every time he says brother and all this other stuff, it's a whole video. And what we find is that one of the clues as to what's meant by Jesus' brother is that it's tied in with his mother. And so, it's Jesus' mother and brothers came to him. And when you take it in that context, it implies that she's the mother not only of Jesus, but of also his brothers. And now, this is word usage.

You know, you use the word brother in connection with the word mother, then they're connected together. And that's just simple English stuff, really. Honestly, learning how to read any book is like the best equipment for learning how to read the text of Scripture, I think, to be honest.

FRANK:

Yes. Because I know the Roman Catholic position is they were cousins, but that wouldn't make sense if as you say, every time brother's used, it's used in conjunction with Mary the mother, it wouldn't seem like, okay, Mary is the mother of Jesus, but she's only the aunt of the other brothers.

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MIKE:

Yeah, it wouldn't really make a lot of sense. And there's another Roman Catholic position that's sometimes held that is that Joseph was a widower. He was an older, an old man, and he was a widower who had kids from a previous marriage. So, these are the brothers of Jesus. And that goes back to like an ancient, actually ancient Gnostic writings about Jesus because they were getting uncomfortable with the idea.

This is just being uncomfortable with the idea of sex, to be honest. And so, they were like, we don't want Mary doing that with Joseph, so let's make her a perpetual virgin. So, you have that stuff. It's all extra biblical stuff. But anyway, I'm probably starting fights when I bring up all this stuff. [Laughter]

FRANK:

Was that out of Augustine or before Augustine?

MIKE:

It was before Augustine, yeah. This is like the proto evangelion of James, I think might have been the first. And I do have a whole video on this, people interested in the proto evangelion of James. But this talks about her having some sort of—

She's basically like a committed chaste, I will never get married person. And then the guys in the temple have a whole big search for a husband who's not allowed to sleep with her, but he has to take care of her.

It's all anachronistic, like written after the fact. You know, people care about the Jesus story. They care about these things deeply. Even people who reject it care about it. And they often want to make it say what they want it to say. And so, this is why you get New Agers who like Jesus is New Age, and you get Buddhists. Jesus was like one of the Buddhas.

And everybody wants to claim Jesus. The Muslims, Jesus was a Muslim. But we have to stick with the text of Scripture, with the actual teaching of the Apostles, lest we invent a Jesus for ourselves.

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FRANK:

Yeah, notice everybody wants a piece of the most influential human being to ever exist, and that's Jesus. By the way, J. Warner Wallace's book, 'Person of Interest' is great on that. If you want a book on the uniqueness of Jesus, check that out. Hey, Mike, while I have you here, I'm going to ask you a question just like I was, if I was on your Q&A program on Fridays.

MIKE:

Okay.

FRANK:

Let's go to James 5 for just a second and see if you've ever heard this possible interpretation of a difficult passage. It's about anointing sick people with oil. And my colleague Dr. John Ferrer here at CrossExamined pointed this out and I want to know if you've ever heard this. The passage is talking about people who are sick. Here's what it says in verse 13. Beginning in verse 13.

Is anyone among you in trouble? Let him pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick, let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well.

The Lord will raise him up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Now, this almost seems like it's a guarantee, right?

That if you do these things, the sick person will be healed. And we know that sometimes that doesn't happen. And Dr. Ferrer was saying this could mean-- This could be a reference to the resurrection rather than physical healing.

In other words, it says, and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Have you heard that interpretation before?

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MIKE:

I don't think I have, not to my memory. And I've read a number of commentaries on this passage. So, what we're doing here, taking verse 15, let me just try to absorb what you're saying here. The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. I guess I have questions about that. Now, I want to look at the word save and see how James in particular uses save. And is there a reason to think he uses it to refer to salvation and raise him up? Obviously, that terminology has resurrection implications.

FRANK:

Sure.

MIKE:

Is that a punishment or is he just saying, the sin is the real issue, not the sickness at that point? And it's overcoming the sickness is about dealing with the sin so that the person will be resurrected.

FRANK:

And we know that not all sin is or not all sickness is due to the personal sin, as Jesus pointed out. That's why it's interesting when he says, if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. What does that have to do with becoming healed?

MIKE:

But here I'll push back a little. Verse 16, it does say, therefore, same context, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

FRANK:

Yes.

MIKE:

And the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it's working. And the suggestion, the description then is with Elijah and how he prayed, and there was like real world changes in the moment, not like an eschatological thing. So, those two things there, verse 16, and then the rest of the section, they would make me lean towards thinking that healing is in view here.

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Now, you don't have to rule out the resurrection being connected to it. Maybe raise him up is intentional pointing to the resurrection. But seems like healing is—
The way, so you want to hear my theory on James 5?

FRANK:

Yeah. Yeah, go ahead.

MIKE:

Okay. So, my theory on James 5 is that the prayer of faith is a prayer in which the Holy Spirit has given you faith with a revelation of like, I'm going to heal this person. And so, he grants you the faith. That's why it's the prayer of faith will save him. And so, that that is conditional.

And there's times, and I've experienced in my own life where I've prayed for people and had people will interpret this their own way but had no faith that they would actually be healed. I believed that God could heal them, and he would hear my prayers, but I didn't know, I had no—

But there's other times where I actually had expectancy that I think was from the Lord that God's going to actually heal this person and have seen it happen. And so, I'm thinking that that could be a reference to the prayer of faith. Now, that's just conjecture. It's not clear as you read the passage that that's what it means, and I should make that obvious. Yeah.

FRANK:

But you do have several passages on—

Not passages, videos on word of faith passages. I know you have one on Mark 11:25. I want to say it is. It almost seems like it's a name and claim it verse. Whatever you pray for, God's going to give you. So, there's an entire video on that.

This is why I love Mike Winger, ladies and gentlemen. He dives into the most difficult passages, and he analyzes all sides of it, and then gives what he thinks is the correct view. How did you--?
Can you summarize that video a little bit for us?

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MIKE:

Yeah. That video, I think it was the thumbnail says something like how correct is Kenneth Copeland? And analyzing the best name it and claim it verse, something like that. So, whatever you ask, you'll receive if you ask it in my name. That is true, but that their summary that there are other qualifiers as well. So, whatever you ask, the real issue there wasn't to give you a blank check. It was to transfer their requests into the name of Jesus that they would be going, I'm going to ask through Jesus.

Jesus is my access to the Father. Jesus is how my prayers are heard. Jesus is the one. That's the thing. Asking in my name is the focus, not getting whatever you want. But there are other qualifiers such as the will of God, such as the motives of the person. I can ask in Jesus' name. But James 3 says, if I ask to serve my own pleasures, I'm asking amiss, and I shouldn't expect an answer from God on that.

So, there are other qualifiers. Interestingly, I actually explained my little theory, I think, about James 5. I think I explained it in that same video. But I delayed that video like two or three weeks from the time I was supposed to teach it because I was just struggling, trying to make sure I put it together in a way I thought was good and right. So, yeah.

FRANK:

It takes a lot of work to do that. Check Mike Winger out. Look for Mike Winger on YouTube. Also, his website is-- I just lost the website. Biblethinker.org right?

MIKE:

That's the one.

FRANK:

That's it, Biblethinker.org. We got two more segments with the great Mike Winger. Don't go anywhere. Back after the break.

Ladies and gentlemen, are you ready to fearlessly defend your faith against the opposition or in a hostile culture? Well, you want to take Fearless Faith, the new online course, new updated course. We used to have a course named Fearless Faith. This is brand new. This is with me, Greg

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Koukl, Alisa Childers, also Phoenix Hayes, John Ferrer and Jorge Gil. We're going to show you how to defend your faith in a hostile culture. It begins in early August. Go to crossexamined.org, click on online courses. You will see it there.

And then Digging up the Bible, 22 hours of video on the top archeological discoveries from Genesis all the way to maps to the end of the Bible. We pull out the biggest archaeological discoveries that impact our faith in the text. And you will see those if you take Digging up the Bible. I'll be your Instructor along with Dr. John Ferrer. We'll also have Dr. Titus Kennedy on for one of the Zoom sessions. So, you can ask him any question. He is a real live archaeologist and a great one, ladies and gentlemen.

So, check all that out on our website, crossexamined.org. Also check out the website of my guest today, Mike Winger, BibleThinker.org, and go to his YouTube channel. Just look up for Mike Winger right there on YouTube. So far, we've covered a couple of the things you ought to keep in mind when you're trying to interpret a passage properly. Mike, let's go to number three. What's the third thing we ought to keep in mind?

MIKE:

I'll just call this one books are books. How's that? Books are books. Just a reminder. So, the book of Proverbs is a very, very different than Revelation, which is very different than James that we talked about earlier, or Matthew. They're written in different times, different audiences.

This can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. If you're new to really studying Scripture, chances are in your Bible, there's a brief little intro to each book to just get you started, get you going, okay, this is what it's about. But an example of this is the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a book of wisdom.

Now, it's actually in a class of literature called wisdom literature that has its own unique characteristics. You don't need to learn all that, but you need to know that the sayings in Proverbs are often not rules or laws, they're sayings. And this helps because otherwise, you'll read Proverbs, and you won't gain wisdom. Like, an example of a saying here is the early bird catches the worm.

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Now, imagine if birds could think and hear, and they heard this phrase, and then a bird got up early, and went, I didn't catch a worm. You lied to me. You'd say, no. I didn't lie to you. It's a principle. It's a proverb. It's a saying of wisdom. It's not a rule. And there's statements like, train your child up in the ways of the Lord, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. That's a general statement of wisdom. It's not a solid rule of life, although we all wish it was. It's just—

That's how life has to be. So, knowing that about, say, the book of Proverbs, it really causes you to read it differently. Instead of you just going, let me get out my logic chopper and figure out exactly what this means, you instead try to like, milk it for all the wisdom you can. And you go, ooh, what does this mean? Don't rebuke the fool because you're going to end up like him. And if you fail to rebuke him, you actually should rebuke him, because otherwise this other bad thing will happen. And you go, wait, so, don't rebuke him and rebuke him?

Is that a contradiction? And you're like, no, no. The wisdom here is that when you're dealing with a fool, there is, in a sense, no right answer. And there's the reality that you have to be very careful because this is treacherous territory dealing with someone who's acting like a fool. And, yeah, Proverbs is wisdom. You look at the Old Testament, you could see if you jump into Leviticus, you're thinking, oh, boy, there's a lot of laws that I need to start obeying. Even if you go to the Gospels, actually, here's a really good example of this. Jesus in the Gospels, he instructs people to follow and teach the Old Testament law and obey it.

Now, groups today will grab this and go, Christians, Jesus said that we should be obeying the law. Why aren't you doing it? But you're not reading the book in its context. Jesus' ministry on earth was to the Jews, and it was only after his resurrection, he sent his Apostles to the Gentiles, and when he sends them to the Gentiles, Acts has an extensive history of how the Gentiles, and the Jews, and the law interact. In the book of Acts, there's a culminating moment in Acts chapter 10, I believe, is in 11, where Cornelius gets saved, and it's apart from the law.

He's not circumcised. Where in Acts 15, they have a council, and they're like, we're not going to put the law on these people. God is not calling us to do that. So, just knowing Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, these are books during Jesus' earthly ministry, mostly to Jews. Acts is where the Gentiles come in and we learn more about that. The Epistles, they teach us even more. Knowing those things can save you from falling into some strange groups, actually. The Hebrew

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Roots movement is the group you want to be concerned about. There's some in there that are wonderful believers, but there's also a lot of errors that in that same group.

FRANK:

You also want to ask those folks, if we're supposed to obey all the Old Testament law, why does Hebrew say, the writer of Hebrews say the Old Covenant's obsolete? And then where's the temple? Where do we bring our sacrifice if there's no temple? It wouldn't seem like you could do that.

MIKE:

Some of the Hebrew Roots guys would actually be ejecting Paul and certain New Testament writings because it conflicts with them. Other ones reinterpret and they go, no, no. This is consistent. You know, when Paul says everything's clean, he means all of the kosher food is clean.

FRANK:

Oh, that's how they interpret it? Although Jesus did away with those laws, I guess Jesus didn't get it right either, according to them.

MIKE:

Yeah, yeah. They have a different interpretation for that, too. I have a couple videos on the Hebrew Roots stuff if you guys are interested in that.

FRANK:

It's hard to keep track of all these aberrant views, Mike. I don't know how you do it, but somehow you do.

MIKE:

Just one at a time.

FRANK:

Go to BibleThinker.org and check Mike out at the YouTube channel, Mike Winger. And Mike, every Friday, 1:00 PM Pacific, 4:00 PM Eastern, you're answering questions live, correct?

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MIKE:

Right. I take ten questions, because, you know, so a lot of people won't be able to get their questions in. But if you want to watch that, yeah, it's live. Almost every Friday I do it, and I don't have the questions ahead of time. At least nine of them. The first one I know to get a thumbnail going, you know. But, yeah, that's a—

It's a good time. And we just kind of process together how to answer some of these challenging questions.

FRANK:

Sorry, I thought I had my Do Not Disturb on, but apparently, I didn't. Someone's trying to call me, but I'm not answering the phone because I'm talking to the great Mike Winger, ladies and gentlemen. All right, so, Mike, we've got three of those principles that you keep in mind when you're trying to interpret the text. Let's go on to number four.

MIKE:

Number four, I would just say we need to be aware of the original audience when we were reading a text of Scripture. And you don't mind a controversial example here, do you?

FRANK:

No, we love controversy here. That's what we do at I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.

MIKE:

And you could feel free to disagree with me. But the principle, I think is sound. So, consider Genesis chapter one. In modern discussions and debates, when you think Genesis chapter one, the main emphasis is on how long were those days, or something along those lines having to do with the age of the earth, and that kind of thing. To the original audience, this would not have been the focus at all.

Now, I'm not saying that doesn't matter or the text doesn't speak to that. What I'm suggesting is, don't miss the main focus of the passage because you have a question that's burning in your heart right now. So, the original audience would have seen Genesis 1 as a reprimand against all

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false gods, as well as something that would establish that God is unlike creation, and that creation is not a bunch of gods.

So, they would have seen at the time a planet like Jupiter or something and thought that's a god somehow connected with this planet, and that the creation of the world was through, like, this sort of fight between chaos, or Tiamat, or whatever, you know. Cut her belly open, and her guts spill out, and that creates the continents and different things like this, these different sort of views.

And when you read Genesis 1 in that context, you go, oh, yeah. God simply exists eternally, and he just makes everything purely from his command. There's no battle. There's no fight. He creates everything. He creates all the order, and he gets all the credit. What this is is screaming loud and clear monotheism in the midst of a pluralistic and pagan culture.

That, I think is more of the emphasis. Then you look at man and what it says about humankind and all this. And this is just, you know, you can have an argument, you should, about what does this say about the age of the Earth or the days? How long are the days? I just think it's wise to recognize that we don't want to miss the main point that the text actually has right there, that this happens over and over in Scripture.

If you ask what the original audience was thinking when they read this, it helps you get out of your own head, because they don't know what you know. They know what they knew. And it just-- It gets you out of your own head and away from your presuppositions, and you can learn just what the text is saying.

FRANK:

I've heard it put this way. The Bible was not written to you, it was written for you. And you have to keep in mind who it was written to first in order to understand how it is written for you. How can you apply this? And I couldn't agree with you more, Mike.

I just discovered that in the past, say, five or ten years, there are scholars who are saying that Genesis 1 appears to be more of a polemic against the Egyptian creation stories. And that's the purpose of it. You know, God is not, as you said, a kind of a superhero inside the universe, fighting off chaos, other gods. He's outside the universe.

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He just speaks and brings order to chaos.

MIKE:

Yeah, I think so. You get an example of this in Psalms 2, where it talks about God riding on the clouds. And when we—

Look, this is historical research. I'm not—

This isn't one of my points, but it's good to know the historical stuff when it intersects with Scripture. But Baal rides on the clouds. That's one of his things. Now, the cynical scholars want to go, so God is really Baal, and he's borrowing from Baal, and all this other stuff. But instead, I think what we're looking at here and other scholars would agree. Not that I'm a scholar, but there are scholars that would agree that this is a challenge to Baal.

It's spitting in the face of Baal. Oh, your God rides on--?

No, no, no. Yahweh rides on the clouds. Your God is this planet over here? Nah, that planet, God made it, gave it a name. He put it into its place, and your false God is just an idol. And, this is the polemics against false gods, we miss because we're in a monotheistic culture created by Christianity, so we miss that. And we can miss some of the cool stuff that's happening in Scripture.

FRANK:

Yeah, I think Isaiah 19 says, Yahweh rides the cloud in judgment. And would this also pertain, Mike, to when Jesus is asked, are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One? And he says, I am, and you will see the Son of man coming with power on the clouds. Is that also a reference to that, do you think?

MIKE:

I think it—

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Okay, so I want to say yes, although I just want to admit that that is not like, for sure, but that's something that seems to be connected there. But he's referring to Daniel as well there. And you go and you study Daniel. And this one, who Daniel sees the Son of man coming, in judgment, this is really cool stuff because he's talking to those spiritual leaders who know the Bible. Maybe they don't understand it like they should, but they know what the words say, so they knew exactly what he meant. That's why they tear their clothes. Oh, he's blaspheming, and we've got to kill him. Because they know Jesus is claiming he's not just man, but he's also the coming judge who's claiming deity. That's amazing. It's an amazing passage.

FRANK:

Oh, it is. And Bart Ehrman got caught on that. I don't know if you've ever saw that little video. There's a Catholic scholar by the name of Brant Petrie who, down at New Orleans Seminary, asked Bart Ehrman a question about-- Because Bart kept saying, you know, Jesus doesn't claim to be God in the Gospel of Mark.

And so, Bart-- I mean, Brandt, brings that up. He brings up, I think it's Mark 14:64 or something, where Jesus says, I Am, and you will see the Son of man coming with power on the clouds. And you know what Bart Ehrman said? Well, how do we know, Mark's--?

How do we know? How do we know he actually said that? So, he just discounts what is inconvenient in the Scriptures, after saying the Scriptures don't say that. He says, oh, well. How do we know Mark even knew that Jesus said that? So—

MIKE:

And I want to highlight how bad of an answer that was because when Bart says Mark doesn't present Jesus as God, then he gives an example where Mark does. Now he's doubting whether it was even in there in the first place.

FRANK:

That's right.

MIKE:

But he has no valid reason for that.

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FRANK:

Well, hold the thought. We'll come back to it in more principles right after the break with Mike Winger. Look up Mike on YouTube, Mike Winger. We're back right after the break. What are some principles you need to have in mind when you interpret the Bible? My friend Mike Winger does this every week on his YouTube channel, the Mike Winger YouTube channel, also BibleThinker.org.

He does a great job of looking at the Scriptures, and I think coming to the proper conclusion regarding what do these Scriptures mean. And he deals with very controversial issues. And so far, we've talked about some principles, four principles of how to interpret the Scriptures. Before we go to the fifth Mike, you wanted to say more about the Bart Ehrman situation and the Gospel of the Mark. Go ahead, sir.

MIKE:

So, I actually, I did a full over a year, maybe two years, year and a half, of going through the Gospel of Mark verse by verse. And I did this intentionally. I did something experimentally. I thought, I'm going to do a lot of apologetics when I go through the Gospel of Mark. So, it's like 65 or 72 videos or something. And I cover Bart Ehrman in particular, and I give examples of how he has, to be honest, misled people about Mark. Mark is targeted.

People don't realize this. It's targeted. One of the most targeted gospels from the skeptical side, where they're going to suggest all sorts of things because they want to show development and change over time. But the stuff in Mark is amazing. There's an amazing passage in Mark where Jesus walks on water.

And if you parallel this with the Book of Job, you see this, and it looks like he's presenting himself as God when related to the Book of Job. And that seems to be how Mark is interpreting the events as he writes it. It's neat stuff. It's really cool stuff. Yeah. So, I think that Bart Ehrman has tied himself in knots in the Gospel of Mark a number of times.

FRANK:

Not only that, I'm sure you've seen it, maybe you've taught on it, how every chapter of Mark depicts Jesus as God in some way. You know, he forgives sins, he casts out demons, he walks on

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water, he does all these things that only God is supposed to be able to do. And in fact, we had Dr. Warren Gage here on the program a couple of weeks ago.

And Warren and other, not just Warren, but other scholars have detected chiasms or chiasms, in many of the Scriptures. The entire Gospel of Mark is one huge chiasm. And the center, by the way, chiasm is the idea that a passage builds up to a main point and then recedes in a mirror like fashion from that point. And according to Dr. Gage and others, the center of the Gospel of Mark is Mark 9:7 in the transfiguration, this is my son, listen to him.

And so, it builds up to that and then it recedes from that in a mirror like fashion. Which, by the way, if you look at some of the chiasms, in the Gospel of Mark, I know we're going a little far afield here, we'll do a whole program on this in the future. But the ending of Mark is authentic then, because if you don't have the ending of Mark, verses 9 to 20, the chiasm doesn't work. So, I mean this is mind-blowing stuff. When you look at the Gospel of Mark, how much forethought it took to put that together. It's probably not just a human document. There's inspiration going on here.

MIKE:

True story, I once had an atheist who I went back and forth with online for a little while and his theory was that the gospel writers were ignorant and so they made all these mistakes. Right? Now, he kept watching my videos and we kept going, and he eventually flipped his theory, and he was like, well, they were brilliant because there's too much stuff in there that they would have had to fabricate and put together just perfectly. So, they must have been brilliant. And I like, what, is it Peter Williams, who says, there is one brilliant author, but it's the Holy Spirit, it's not—

FRANK:

That's right.

MIKE:

All of these authors are brilliant. It's him who weaves it all together.

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FRANK:

When you see all this too, and Gage, and another scholar have discovered that the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation are one giant chiasm as well. Chiasm. And we'll talk about this in the future. Those are written by the same author. But this couldn't be done, and it's not likely it could be done just through human effort. I mean, it is so amazing when you see it. But, Mike, we've got to go to your fifth principle of biblical interpretation. What's the fifth one you want to share with us?

MIKE:

I like this one. And there's lots of different ways to express it and talk about it, but I would say Scripture interprets Scripture is a great rule. It will keep people from all kinds of wild error because it's so easy to grab a text, and get it wrong, and then build your life on that in some way.

FRANK:

By the way, John MacArthur was great at that.

MIKE:

Yeah, I think he was, too. Yeah.

FRANK:

You know what I mean? That's what he did. He was always like, okay, comparing it with other Scripture. But we've just got to give him that tribute. He just passed on, but go ahead.

MIKE:

Yeah, yeah, he spent time in it. I think it was R.C. Sproul said of him, I always know that John has spent time in the text. And that's a high compliment for those who understand what that means. But Scripture interprets Scripture. I think an example of this would be, when Jesus says, don't call someone fool. You'll be subject to judgment, right?

And then later, same book, he calls the Pharisees fools. And this causes you to go, what does this mean? Is this a contradiction? I think you add that together with a bunch of other things,

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and you realize that Jesus is often giving statements that are sweeping, and they're general truths, but they're not meant to be without exceptions.

And so, yeah, don't run around calling people fool like you're just calling names unjustifiably. But there are such things as fools, as Proverbs makes very clear. And it's okay to acknowledge those things when people are genuinely being foolish. So, there's a balance that's there. Another example, also controversial, is Jesus' instructions on divorce. He says divorce, except for adultery, is committing ultimately adultery or sinning in it. And then Paul offers abandonment in 1 Corinthians 7, as another example.

And I think abandonment could be also domestic violence, when you drive them away for their own safety. I consider this a form of abandonment, just a violent form of abandonment. And I have a whole three hour video on divorce and remarriage that I did where I talk about this and defend it. But when you look at this, you go, okay, yeah, it's consistent to say that just because Jesus offers this as an exception doesn't mean there couldn't also be other rare exceptions, although the majority of divorce is immoral. I think that that seems clear. I'm not suggesting that there's some kind of blank check.

Jesus obviously isn't doing that. But there's an example of Scripture interpreting Scripture. We get this a lot. The clear passages help interpret the unclear passages. That's also a truth. And we want to just be thoughtful and recognize that you're dealing with a big old book written to people from a long time ago. And there's a lot of different texts in there that have different contexts, and situations, and have the awareness that the simple things will help guide you in the complex things.

FRANK:

So, you did that same kind of principle when you did your study on Mark 11:25, or 11:24-25, about let's use other Scriptures to interpret what appears to be a blank check here. Correct?

MIKE:

Right, exactly. Here's a very bold statement about prayer. Whatever you ask in my name, believing you'll receive it. And then I add all these other verses to go, okay, but that wasn't the

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only thing we know about prayer. There's other things as well. James 3, you ask and don't receive, and he gives him why.

And he doesn't say because you didn't ask in his name or because you didn't believe. He says, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Oh, so there's these other qualifiers and Scriptures helping to interpret Scripture here. And that would prevent guys like Kenneth Copeland from ever gaining a platform if people would interpret their Bibles carefully.

FRANK:

Now, Mike, you've also rightfully, I think, because Paul mentions false teachers throughout his writings. Every New Testament book, with the exception of Philemon in some way talks about false teaching or false teachers. And you think rightfully so, as I said, that when you can, you need to protect people from false teachers. Why do you think that's kind of a calling for you at this point?

MIKE:

You know, when a pastor looks at their flock and they think, should I mention Kenneth Copeland, or should I mention one of these guys that I know are false teachers? The question that I think he rightly asks is, are my people being affected by this guy? Because I don't just need to make a thing about him if he's not affecting them, who cares?

So yeah, there's some cult in South Korea, but they're not affecting my people. So, why would I worry about it as much? Because this is my sort of sphere of responsibility. Doing online ministry, my sphere changed.

And I'm getting people reaching out to me who are in cults, who are under these false teachers, who are being influenced by them. They're, hey, Mike, can you help me out? Some people came to my door saying that there's a Mother God, and I don't know what to think about it. And I look and I don't see resources helping people with this stuff. So, it's just—

This might sound like I'm puffing myself up, but it is genuinely a pastoral heart that says, and I don't call myself a pastor right now because I'm not serving that way in my local church, although I am a member and I'm involved.

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But it just says, let me look at the people I have influence over, and try to assess, and deal with the things they're dealing with. That's the main reason right there. And especially when a teacher's out there causing real harm, and they're going unchecked. And if there's other leaders around them who should call them out, but they refuse to, which is often going on, especially right now in the charismatic, the more hyper charismatic side of things. Nobody's calling this out and it becomes like, this is a whole cultural problem, then I'm doing something bigger. It's not my normal thing. My normal thing is teaching Scripture. But this is something I think, for the sake of protecting the people, I think I should do.

FRANK:

Well, it is a normal thing. It was a normal thing for the Bible writers. They did it all the time, rightfully so. So, we need more people who will protect others from false teachers. And so, I commend you for doing that. And I know you're very careful about it. It's not like you're just going off halfcocked and just you hear one sermon and go, oh, well, this guy's got to be awful. I'm just going to hammer him. You're careful about doing the research and getting some firsthand testimony about it too, so I commend you.

MIKE:

This year, I have interviewed witness, after witness, after witness. A lot of them who don't want to go on the record, a lot of them who just want me to know so I can have a full understanding, and who are like, I hope you'll do something about this guy. He's been hurting people. He's been lying. He's been abusing others in his ministry. And I hope that someone will raise their voice. We went to these other leaders, and they don't want to help. They just recuse themselves. And I've been getting a lot of that. And more will be coming out. I have more stuff coming out this year that's—

It's not pleasant.

I don't enjoy this at all. And for anybody who thinks-- I'll defend myself here, Frank, if you don't mind. For anybody who thinks Mike's doing this for clicks, and views, and money, I'm actually not. So, the money that comes in from my YouTube channel does not affect my paycheck. That's how my ministry is set up.

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We talked a long time ago when I was wrestling with this, like, should I be getting this money that comes in? I'm doing this as a ministry. So, that goes to the ministry and by our policies, does not affect my paycheck. But in addition to that, I'm not monetizing any of these exposure videos I'm doing. They're all unmonetized. So, the monetization of the channel, which just goes to ministry, is actually going down at the moment.

FRANK:

Well, Mike, thanks for all the work you're doing. We're out of time here, but ladies and gentlemen, check out Mike Winger on YouTube and also BibleThinker.org and pray for his work. It's important work. Thank you so much, Mike.

MIKE:

Thank you, Frank.

FRANK:

All right. God bless. We'll see you here next time.

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