

"Tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD!"-1King 22:16

That's Your Interpretation"

That's just your interpretation! How many times has someone said that to you when you attempted to teach them the truth from the Scriptures? Rather than take the message of truth to heart, it is quickly dismissed as *merely* your opinion and not taken seriously at all.

If you have ever heard this before, you know that it is sort of like "hitting a brick wall." Further discussion of the truth with such a person can be very difficult. The potential for meaningful Bible study is not very promising.

What Is Your Interpretation? The best way to begin in your response to someone who says: "That's just your interpretation" is to hand the passage over to them and ask for their interpretation. An interpretation in Bible study is simply *an explanation of the meaning of* a particular passage of Scripture. Rather than be discouraged and give up, make this offer instead: "I am willing to hear your interpretation and correct my own position if I am wrong. What is it?" This demonstrates fairness as well as humility, both which are necessary for Bible study (**Prov. 18:12-13**). Be open-minded and willing to hear any evidence that they might have for their beliefs and practices. Just as we hope for positive change in the people we teach, we too must demonstrate a willingness to change our own beliefs and practices when we are corrected (e.g., **Acts 18:24-26**).

Speak in Terms of Evidence: When making the offer to listen to other people's interpretation of Scripture, be sure to include this request: "You must have evidence to support your interpretation over mine. What is it?" Before allowing an exchange of interpretations to take place, it is important to come to a mutual agreement that true, saving faith is based on the evidence or the teaching of the Scriptures. *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (**Rom. 10:17**).

We must speak of the importance of providing book, chapter, and verse for the beliefs that we hold (**1 Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17**). We must emphasize that a fair hearing must be given to *all* that God has said on the matter to get a proper understanding of God's will. When studying any subject, *"the whole counsel of God"* (**Acts 20:27**) should be sought in the pursuit for

the truth. Passages must be examined in its proper context. Concordances and Hebrew or Greek Bible dictionaries are very helpful to gather even more evidence.

No Legitimate Interpretations?

Sometimes people reject the truth because they are convinced that no interpretation of Scripture can be relied on as the truth. Many are convinced that *every* interpretation involves man's opinions and thus everything is spun, biased, or slanted to favor a particular doctrine, practice, or personal viewpoint.

Let us admit the fact that there are indeed many interpretations of Scripture offered today that are according to man's opinions that must be rejected (**2 Pet. 3:15-17**). However, not all interpretations are false. There are *real* differences between interpretations. Many will lead to eternal destruction, yet only the truth will lead to eternal life (**Mat. 7:13-14**).

Finding the truth requires a recognition that there is *ultimately* only one right interpretation of the Scriptures. There is only one faith (**Eph. 4:5; Jude 3**) or one truth (**John 8:32; 17:17**) that God has revealed to us. God has promised us that we can know what the truth is (**1 Tim. 2:4; Eph. 3:4**). These facts ought to bring hope to the skeptic who says there are no legitimate interpretations.

Will Any Interpretation of Scripture Do?

Sometimes people take the opposite extreme and declare that though there is only one faith or truth, it is too confusing or difficult to find. Many people, in response to the multitude of religious groups and doctrines, conclude that almost any interpretation will do. Rather than rule out certain religious beliefs on the basis of Scripture, there is the desire to respect every belief as *equal* in merit or legitimacy. Many people want to "just get along" and do not want to debate or discuss their differences. The preferred "solution" of many is to just choose the interpretation that *personally* suits you best and call that "the truth."

Some Interpretations Are Better or More Plausible Than Others:

The answer to any confusion or challenge that we may have in searching for the truth



