

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*I have heard too many politically biased interpretations of the scripture or of speakers actually ignoring the text to promote an agenda.*

*So when I found this article by Joseph Mattera, I thought it wise to share it with you, as well as another appended to it from several years ago from The Catholic Thing.*

*I encourage reading the bible rather than only to listen to a clergyman's personal interpretation.*

*The Bible may seem confusing at times because it needs to be understood in 4 ways:*

*1. What was happening at the time the passage was written? This history might require a commentary for beginners.*

*2. How does it refer to Jesus.*

*3. What is the moral implication; how do I apply it to my life?*

*4. How does it point to heaven?*

*I offer to you this method that I use of reading the Holy Bible.*

*Before reading, I ask the Holy Spirit to teach me the Scriptures.*

*I divide the Bible into 6 sections, and put my ribbons or holy cards at the beginning of each section, moving them daily to the next chapter when I have finished reading the chapter of that section.*

*I read one chapter from each section, that is 6 chapters daily.*

*When I finish one section, I begin that section again. Some shorter sections, such as the Gospels, will be finished first. I simply begin them again even though other sections will take much longer.*

- *PENTATEUCH:           Genesis — Deuteronomy*
- *HISTORICAL:           Joshua — 2 Maccabees*
- *WISDOM:               Job — Sirach*
- *PROPHETS:             Isaiah — Malachi*
- *GOSPELS:               Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*
- *POST GOSPELS:        Acts of the Apostles — Revelation*

## **8 Common Ways People Interpret God's Word**



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By [JOSEPH MATTERA](#) Published on September 28, 2024

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Throughout my years of advanced study in ministry and theology, I've delved deeply into hermeneutics, the science of biblical interpretation. In my view, no subject is more crucial for anyone seeking to understand the Scriptures. Hermeneutics is the key to unlocking the true meaning of the Bible, yet many believers are unaware of the "lens" through which they interpret it.

In this article, we'll explore eight common approaches to interpreting Scripture.

## **1. Through the lens of truth from the Holy Spirit**

Jesus promised His followers that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth, a promise reaffirmed by Saint John the Apostle (John 14:26; 1 John 2:27). This assurance, however, comes with **a profound responsibility: the task of discerning, with the Spirit's help, what the Word of God is truly conveying both individually and to the Church as a whole. This journey is not quick; it requires years of study and careful distinction between personal assumptions, cultural influences, and the Spirit's divine insight.**

## **2. Through the lens of culture**

**A widespread tendency is to interpret Scripture through the lens of contemporary cultural values, placing the Bible on par with the prevailing ethos of society.** When this happens, people often approach Scripture primarily as a means to extract lessons that align with their cultural context. This approach, in my view, significantly diminishes the transformative power and divine intent of the Scriptures, reducing them to mere anthropological artifacts, literary works that are treated no differently than other texts esteemed by society's intellectual elite.

## **3. Through the lens of truth for culture**

**This approach to interpretation focuses on using Scripture primarily for apologetics — to speak truth to contemporary culture. While there is undeniable value in this, it can fall short of Scripture's deeper purpose: the pursuit of knowing God intimately and understanding His ways (2 Peter 3:18).** The Bible certainly provides a comprehensive worldview that offers eternal principles relevant to politics, law, education, science, music, art, and

culture. However, it is far more than a handbook for shaping societal norms, ideologies, or policies.

**The ultimate aim of Scripture is not merely to inform nations' governance but to transform individuals' hearts.** This should be the ultimate aim of all biblical interpretation, guiding us beyond cultural engagement to a life centered on communion with our Creator.

#### **4. Through the lens of culture for faith**

**Many believers inadvertently read the Scriptures through the lens of their cultural values, interpreting biblical passages through frameworks like the American value system rather than through a purely biblical lens.** While this is common, particularly among Christians in the USA, it's essential to recognize that this approach is not unique to any nation. Christians worldwide often view the Bible through the lens of their own national cultures, whether African, Asian, Latin American, or otherwise.

Despite these cultural filters, **God's Word remains powerful enough to reach and transform lives, ministering to people even within the constraints of their cultural, emotional, mental, and historical contexts.** However, as we grow in our faith, moving beyond these national frameworks becomes crucial. We must strive to read the Scriptures through a truly biblical lens, ensuring we do not impose our national values or worldview upon the sacred text.

#### **5. Through the lens of a doctrine**

**Many Christians approach the Bible with a preconceived doctrinal bias, already committed to proving a particular theological framework before they**

**even open the Scriptures.** This mindset can severely limit one's understanding of the text. For instance, a hyper-Calvinist **might interpret every passage through the lens of God's sovereignty, often downplaying or ignoring human responsibility.** Conversely, an Arminian might focus so heavily on human free will that they overlook the significance of divine sovereignty.

**To interpret the Bible accurately, we must resist the urge to impose our doctrinal assumptions onto the text.** Instead, we should let the Scriptures speak for themselves, allowing their content to unfold naturally in the way and order they were written. **Only then can we grasp the full depth and truth of God's Word, free from the constraints of our own theological biases.**

## **6. Through the lens of inward mystical truth**

Some Christians, particularly those with a **hyper-mystical bent, tend to overlook the literal, historical, and grammatical meaning of Scripture, choosing instead to interpret it solely through the lens of allegory and mysticism.** For them, the plain text is merely a surface layer, obscuring what **they believe to be a more profound, hidden spiritual meaning that the Holy Spirit reveals only to a select few.**

While it is true that the Holy Spirit illuminates and reveals profound insights within the Scriptures, **we must be cautious not to veer into subjective interpretations that disregard the fundamental principles of biblical hermeneutics.**

To fully grasp its meaning, **we must honor the text as it is written, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us within sound interpretive practices.** Only then can we avoid the pitfalls of mysticism that distort the Word of God and remain anchored in the truth it seeks to convey.

## **7. Through the lens of political activism**

Over the past several decades, I've encountered books by so-called public theologians on the far left and popular preachers on the far right. Despite their opposing views, they share a troubling commonality: both engage in **“proof-texting,” cherry-picking Scripture to support their political agendas while disregarding fundamental principles of biblical interpretation.**

**When the gospel is manipulated to serve political ends, it becomes entangled with the flawed and often corrupt systems of human governance that overshadow the message of Christ's Kingdom, which transcends any earthly political framework.**

## **8. Through the lens of moral principles**

**Many believers approach the Bible primarily as a devotional tool, seeking principles for business, leadership, purpose, and moral living. While the Scriptures indeed offer profound wisdom for these areas, reducing them to a mere guidebook for personal success is to miss their true essence.**

**The Bible is far more than a collection of practical tips; It is the living Word of God, revealing the all-consuming presence of a God who desires to engage with us. Through its pages, we are invited into a transformative encounter with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.**

**To read the Scriptures for anything less than this is to view them through a human-centered lens, risking losing the Christ-centered focus at the heart of the sacred text. The ultimate purpose of the Bible is not just**

**to enhance our lives but to draw us into a deeper relationship with the living God, where His grace and truth continually transform us.**

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## **Ignorance of Scripture is Ignorance of Christ**

**By Jay Scott Newman**  
**SUNDAY, JULY 17, 2022**

Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ. This stark judgment of St. Jerome's on the necessity for each Christian to have direct, personal knowledge of the inspired books of the Holy Bible comes in a commentary on Isaiah. There, Jerome insists that Isaiah is not only a prophet of the Old Covenant, but he is also an evangelist and an apostle of the New Covenant, because of his essential role in teaching us the mission of the messiah and the identity of the Word made flesh.

In this conviction about the need to know the Scriptures, Jerome anticipated the insight of St. Augustine that in the Old Testament the New is concealed, and in the New the Old is revealed. So much for Marcionism, with its wish to discard the Jewish Scriptures and to deny

that the God of Israel is Our Father, too. And so much for those who contend that because of Christ's presence in the sacraments it is possible to be a mature disciple of the Lord Jesus without regular and intimate contact with the Sacred Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments.

On the afternoon of Easter Sunday, the Risen Lord Jesus joined two dejected disciples as they journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus, "but their eyes were kept from recognizing him." (Luke 24:16) The two men offered the stranger an explanation of their incomprehension at the death of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had been convinced "was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." (Luke 24:19)

And then after the two men acknowledged that some women of their group had claimed to have seen angels that morning who announced that Jesus was alive, the Risen Lord declared to them "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27)

Finally, after joining the two disciples for supper, Jesus "took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?'" (Luke 24:30-32)

To recognize the Risen Lord in his incomparable gift of the Most Holy Eucharist, to recognize him in the distressing disguise of the poor, and to recognize him in the fellowship of other Christians gathered to sing the praises of God, it is first **necessary to recognize him in the Sacred Page, to hear and heed the Word of God in the Bible because "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."** (2 Tim 3:16-17)





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**There simply is no substitute for one's own direct and personal knowledge of Holy Scripture acquired over many years of study and prayer, and the more deeply one understands the Bible, the more deeply one can know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.**

But such direct experience of Holy Scripture affects not only the discipleship of individual believers. **It also shapes everything in the life of the Church, including her teaching and her worship.** In its Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council taught that "holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are

sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.” [11]

Thus, the Bible is received and revered as divinely revealed, and the same cannot be said of any other text in the Church including liturgical books, devotional prayers, and conciliar decrees, which is why the Council insists that the Scriptures, together with sacred tradition, are “the supreme rule of faith, since as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God himself without change and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles.” [21]

**If Christianity is not a revealed religion, it is a false religion, and the supernatural gift of divine revelation is handed on in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16)**

Yes, the proclamation of the Gospel did indeed begin before the texts of the New Testament were written, but the Holy Scriptures are a unique and divine gift to the Church. “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

And that is why mature Christians must know the Bible through their own prayer and study, because ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.

**\*Image:** *Saint Jerome in His Study* by Albrecht Dürer, 1521  
[National Museum of Ancient Art, Lisbon, Portugal]

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