



# Is Interpretation Possible?

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

In the world of “your truth” and “my truth” an objective standard of truth makes no sense. If we perceive truth to be, by definition, the subjective insight of each individual, then written standards are obsolete norms. This is the case in the secular realm as it is in the religious realm. Is the Constitution normative for Americans? Is the oath of office for our public servants a mere relic of an obsolete understanding of truth? Is the Bible normative for Christians? Is the ordination vow a mere relic of ecclesiastical heritage? Sometimes, though rarely, proponents of “my truth/your truth” will admit that these old norms are irrelevant and should be discarded as practical realm standards. But most people, even in the subjective end of the truth spectrum, seem to acknowledge that certain written documents still bear some kind of normative authority ..... with this caveat, of course: “if it is rightly interpreted.” In other words, the Constitution/Bible/Confessions do not say what the Constitution/Bible/Confessions say, but what I SAY the Constitution/Bible/Confessions say. That is probably a complicated sentence to “interpret,” but it is important to consider what is at stake in the modern conception of interpretation and truth.

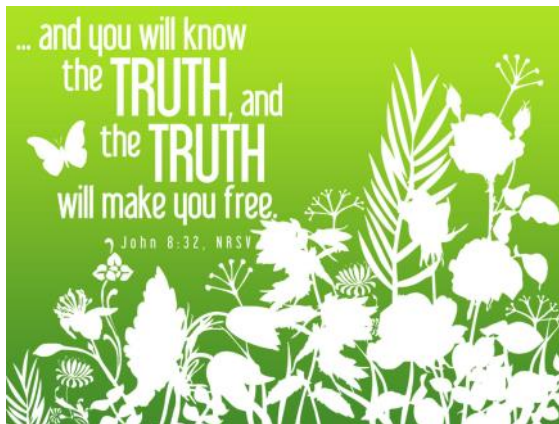
According to the Jehovah Witnesses, and Mormons (and the Pope long before them) the Bible itself is not really the standard or norm for doctrine. The standard is actually the official INTERPRETATION of the Biblical text. In other words, “the Bible means what we say it means.” It is futile to argue in these communities about the Biblical *words themselves*. Perhaps one can argue about

what the official interpretation means, but that would obviously be a perpetual loop. The interpretation means what we say it means, and the interpretation of the interpretation means what we say it means, etc., etc. Thus, the standard is, in the end, the view of the official interpreter.

The situation, however, is even worse than that! Very few today recognize an “official interpreter.” They think, “My interpretation is as valid as yours.” In fact, if this is right, every interpretation is as valid as every other interpretation. We can all defend whatever positions or doctrines we hold by interpreting the Bible accordingly. This renders the Bible useless as an objective authority. Yet, strangely enough, almost everyone can find an arrow or two from the quiver of Scripture to shoot at our opponents. A few of these, such as “Judge not lest you be judged,” and “God is love,” are prominently used even by those who otherwise detest the use of the Bible as an authority. It does not seem to occur to such folks that if these Bible words are clear in themselves, perhaps there are other less appealing words and sentences of the Bible that are just as clear in themselves. Or perhaps, on the other end of the argument, they have never considered that someone might not interpret “judge” the same way they do. Why do they bother quoting from the Bible or the Constitution or the Lutheran Confessions? Do they not assume by their view of interpretation that words and grammar have no objective meaning? Do they not assume that it is impossible to communicate by language?

Fewer numbers of people today want to acknowledge that words have objective meaning apart from a meaning the interpreter might choose to give them. They do not want to acknowledge that grammar conveys objective meaning to which the interpreter must submit rather than rule over. They do not want to acknowledge that the writer (or speaker) conveys meaning through the whole context of his communication, and that words and sentences cannot be taken out of that context and placed into another context without damaging the meaning of his words, and maybe even making them say the opposite of what he did say. They do not

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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

## Stewardship, cont.

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want to acknowledge that human language has an objective meaning – usually a clear one – quite apart from any interpreter. They hesitate to grant these truths because it binds them to objective communication and prevents them from creative imposition of their own meanings to the words.

So, the question remains, is interpretation possible? Does Jesus turn us to His words as the source of authority foolishly? Did He ignorantly think that His words, given to the Apostles, and written by the inspiration of the Spirit for future generations conveyed objective meaning, meaning that conveys true understanding? Did He really think that He could provide Scripture as a practical norm for discerning truth and opposing error? It seems that this is exactly what Jesus thought!

*So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'*  
—John 8:31-32

*What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.* —2 Tim 2:2

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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 3:15 ff

If, indeed, words, grammar, sentences, etc., do not convey objective meaning, none of these commands and encouragements are possible. If written language has no ability to convey objective thoughts, transmission of Christ's truth from generation to generation is impossible. A Lutheran should never bow to the frivolous assumption that correct interpretation of words is an impossible task. Lutherans have always believed that words and grammar convey objective meaning and that the meaning is discoverable and defensible. We don't argue that our interpretation is better than yours because of ...whatever. We always place the *words themselves* on the table and let them do the speaking. We do not allow our opponents to impose upon these sacred words their own favorite meanings. We do not allow our opponents to violate the common meanings of words, or grammar, or interpret words outside of the given context. If our opponents are misinterpreting Scripture, we show them by words, grammar, context, etc., why their interpretation is wrong, and if our opponents can, by the same objective standards, expose error on our part, we are ready to humble ourselves before the Word. The Word alone reigns among us because correct interpretation is, indeed, not only possible, but necessary.

There is no other way to God without "the Word made flesh" (John 1:18) and there is no other way to Christ and His salvation than through the written and preached word of Scripture. Let us rejoice in the gift of language through which we have come to know that Truth that sets us free. Let no one take that gift from you.

## Music Ministry Kick-Off Gathering

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**Saturday, August 25, 4:00pm - 7:00pm**

Please mark your calendar to 'come to the cabin' on the 25<sup>th</sup> of this month as we gather to celebrate the start of another music season. It's a time to eat, meet and greet (friends old & new), eat, laugh, eat, and just enjoy being together - and also eat. It is a gathering for all the instrumentalists & soloists, vocal choir, handbell choirs, those newly interested in joining, and any and all encouragers of the music ministry—even if you don't have a voice to sing or an instrument to play. This is a **"family-thing"** so no need for anyone to stay home.

Ray & I will provide ice, plates, utensils, flavored waters.

**You can bring** your favorite personal beverage to drink and an appetizer or dessert to share.

The address is 945 Stonecrest Road, Argyle.

Look forward to seeing you!

Vicki Main 940-391-8593 vickinotes@msn.com

## Year End Report-Treasurer

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The church had an amazing year for contributions compared to the potential loss that was forecast in December 2017. We closed the year in June with the &744,921 in plate collections and another \$123,449 in special funds.

With spending restraints our expenses were \$646,850 yielding 98K surplus in general fund. The school had an income of \$701,000 and expenses of \$885,832 yielding a loss of \$184,833.

Our current budget year is based on \$715,500 in church income, and \$735,700 in school. After expenses we forecast a loss of \$162,000

Please continue to support both church and school as the need in supporting this mission in the gospel is always pressing.

Thank you.  
Herbert Herrmann Jr., Church Treasurer

# Christian Parenting in the Internet Age by Pastor Tom Chryst

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* Philippians 4:8



Of course parenting has always been a challenge. As is often said, children don't come with an instruction manual. We learn on-the-job, through advice from friends and family, books and resources and yes, even our own mistakes. Children are sinners, and so we have to confront that reality, and so are parents. But most important of all is that we "train up a child" in the fear and love of the Lord. Faith is our first priority, as much as it lies in us, to encourage and nurture our children as Christians. So the obvious habits of church attendance, bible reading, prayer, and the like are essential. This is timeless advice for Christian parents (and we need to keep encouraging these things).

But lately, the world has changed. The rapid pace of change, especially in technology, has brought new challenges that generations of parents haven't had to face ever before. Sin has always lurked within our nature, and expressed itself in the lives of our children. But never before have we seen anything with the unique challenges presented by the immediate, free and open access to all kinds of information the internet and modern technology provide. A generation or so before, much of the same kind of concern was raised over kids and "too much tv". But with the internet, the stakes have only risen.

Many have sounded the warning cries. The dangers are obvious. Even as casual observers, many of us can sense the ill effects of "too much screen time" and are already blaming technology for perceived social maladjustment among our youth. The scientific studies are just starting to confirm what most of us can tell by common sense: too much of a good thing, in this area, just isn't good. In spiritual terms: the potential for sinful misuse is great – and the danger of the wicked world influencing our children is just as prevalent. I don't think I need to spell it all out for you.

And yet, the arrival of these technologies is not something we can entirely avoid, especially for the long term. So the answer isn't as simple as rejecting technology altogether. In today's world, you couldn't do so, even if you tried.

Furthermore, the presence of technology in and of itself isn't all bad. In fact it brings many potential benefits. Communication is easier. Information is accessible. All of this can be used to the glory of God and in service to our neighbor. As a pastor, I've appreciated the accessibility that technology affords me to parishioners and vice versa. Our children can and do benefit from all of this, when used responsibly and with proper aims and limitations.

The challenge for parents, as I see it, is finding ways to gradually and carefully help our children to grow into responsible Christian users of technology. And I say challenge, because it's not easy!

How does our Christian faith, and the word of God inform us toward such a task? While there's no step-by-step manual, I believe there are some principles to help guide us. Here's a few to start:

## **Teach your children your values, and to discern the good and the bad.** (cf. Philippians 4:8)

Children don't just learn information from parents, they also learn, more importantly, values. And so we can and must teach them – in fact, we can't avoid teaching them values, priorities, a worldview. Christians ought to do so intentionally, with all things subject to and informed by the Word of God. We must be discerning, testing the spirits – even the spirits of our day and age. Don't be afraid to teach your children right and wrong – or right and wrong ways to use the tools God gives us. Whatever is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things! Flee from sin and wickedness. These core values can then be applied to our interactions with technologies.

## **Impose limits. Parents have authority, and responsibility!** (The Fourth Commandment!)

You are the parent, and God has placed you in charge of your children! Your calling, your vocation, isn't just to feed and clothe but also to shape and mold them. Just as God sets healthy limits for us in his law, and Scripture is replete with praise for it (read Psalm 119), so also an earthly parent reflects this good and godly authority when raising children. So if you think the kids are on their phones too much, set rules. Don't be afraid to forbid certain apps or sites, or to limit certain kinds of usage. The secular world offers many helpful suggestions for such limitations, and we Christians ought not be afraid to learn from it. But the responsibility is yours as a parent, and simply letting the kids run the show is a parenting fail.

## **Gradually relax limits as children take responsibility for their own actions. Teach self-discipline!**

Ultimately, we want our children to practice self-discipline. This applies to their lives in general, to their morality and spiritual life, their everyday habits, and yes, including their use of technology. Paul can teach us about disciplining himself as an athlete (1 Cor. 9:24-27), but all the more when it comes to things spiritual.

Most parents of ages past have successfully navigated this as children grow to manage their own money, their



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Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

[www.messiahkeller.org](http://www.messiahkeller.org)

## Christian Parenting cont.

own hygiene, their own sleep-schedules, and eventually their entire lives. So we must also recognize the need for gradual, age-appropriate, handing over of control when it comes to their technology usage. Because eventually they will be on their own without us.

**Realize that both you and they will fail, and so rejoice to live in repentance and forgiveness.**

If scripture teaches us anything as parents, it's

our own sinful nature – which is passed to our children. The sins of the Fathers are passed on. Adam's sons came forth in Adam's (broken) image. Parenting is tough, and the consequences of our failures are fearful. We don't just harm ourselves when we do it wrongly, but our children whom we love. Likewise, these little sinners we are raising won't make it any easier for us. Repentance and forgiveness all-around is essential in the Christian home. So teach that, too, by word and deed. Teach it to your children explicitly and by example. The



grace of God in Jesus Christ is the foundation and glue of every Christian home and family.

While the world has changed, and continues to change around us in so many ways, the human condition has not changed. While technology brings new opportunities and conveniences it brings temptations and dangers. But our enemies of sinful world, sinful self, and a scheming devil still remain. And our only hope and salvation from it all is even more eternal: Thanks be to God for the blessings of Christ – forgiveness, faith, life. Let us work out this salvation with fear and trembling, for the love of God and the benefit of our neighbors – especially some of our closest neighbors – our own kids. And ever more pray the protection and provision of our loving God for them. Christians- and Christian parents – remain militant and vigilant, and ever more as you see The Day approaching!

## Vocations in Life – Parenting/Grand Parenting Series:

After the birth of a child, the first major act of training up your child is baptism! Yes, baptism is part of the training up of a child. This sacrament is one of the ways God grows faith. But, God expects parents to actively raise up a child in the faith. And, there are consequences good or bad depending on if training occurs or not.

So, what would some goals be for a child and how might these be accomplished?

1. Hear the Word daily
  - Read an Archway bible story book
  - Say prayers at meals (even in public)
  - Say prayers at bedtime with hands folded and head bowed
2. Worship on Sundays
  - Sit quietly in Sunday service

- Follow the hymn
- Follow the liturgy
- Sing the hymn
- Say the liturgy

The above goals obviously progress with the child's age. A one to two year old would be challenged at sitting quietly. But with intentional guidance from a parent, it can be achieved. This will be hard and exhausting work. You might have to take the child out of service. Here is the hard part. When the child is taken out, this cannot be a reward. It has to be a discipline time. The goal is for the child not to want to be taken out. We want the child to hear God's word. As a congregation we will not be judgmental about having to take a child out. We will be supportive even if it takes multiple times and across many Sundays. It is exhausting and there may be Sundays you cannot even remember what pastor preached. But over the

long haul, it will be worth it. Your child will eventually understand that Sunday worship is a divine and sacred service.

From three to ten you want to prepare your child for confirmation instruction. Here are some thoughts in how to accomplish this:

1. Read an Arch Book Bible story book
2. Read from a children's bible
3. Say prayers at meals & bedtime
4. Attend Sunday school regularly
5. Memorize the ten commandments
6. Start to study the catechism

You can avoid a lot of stress for your child and yourself by taking these years to learn about God's word. Give your child this blessing. It is one that they will never forget.

(to be continued)

-from the Board of Elders