

## LOOKING AT THE BIBLE THROUGH INTERPRETIVE LENSES

As we each interpret life from our own unique perspective, so do we also interpret the Bible. Our interpretation of scripture at any given time depends on what we are receptive to and ready to understand.

Listed below are a variety of interpretive lenses through which scripture can be read and understood. Studying the same passage with more than one lens can increase what we glean from our study.

**Allegorical:** An allegory uses symbology to convey a hidden meaning behind the literal word. Because of the politics of the times, writers used a great deal of allegory.

**Dramatic:** Read the stories as though they were a part of an epic screenplay. There certainly is no shortage of drama in the Bible!

**Factual:** According to Alden Studebaker, factual interpretation means “attempting to determine if what we are reading actually happened.” We can merely assess the *probable* facts, as the only true evidence lies in such things as archeology and original manuscripts.

**Historical:** Authors wrote biased history that was intended to promote certain religious and/or political viewpoints. The Bible can be considered a pseudo historical book, rather than a factual, historical account of events.

**Literary:** Many parts of the Bible can be considered great literature, particularly the wisdom and poetry writings in the Hebrew Bible.

**Metaphysical:** Metaphysical means that which is beyond the physical—or beyond physics. In metaphysical interpretation, we look beyond, beneath or behind the words on the page to uncover a personal spiritual meaning.

**Moral:** There are plenty of moral messages describing right from wrong in the Bible. In reading scripture, you must decide for yourself what moral issues are meaningful to you.

**Mystical:** Fillmore’s *Revealing Word* tells us that ‘it is necessary to call on one’s own spiritual light to enter into the deep mysticism of the Bible.’ Mystical interpretation takes Bible reading to much deeper and greater levels.

**Prophetic:** The Bible contains numerous prophetic writings, many of which can be quite controversial. Again, our inner wisdom guides us to the personal meaning of scripture.