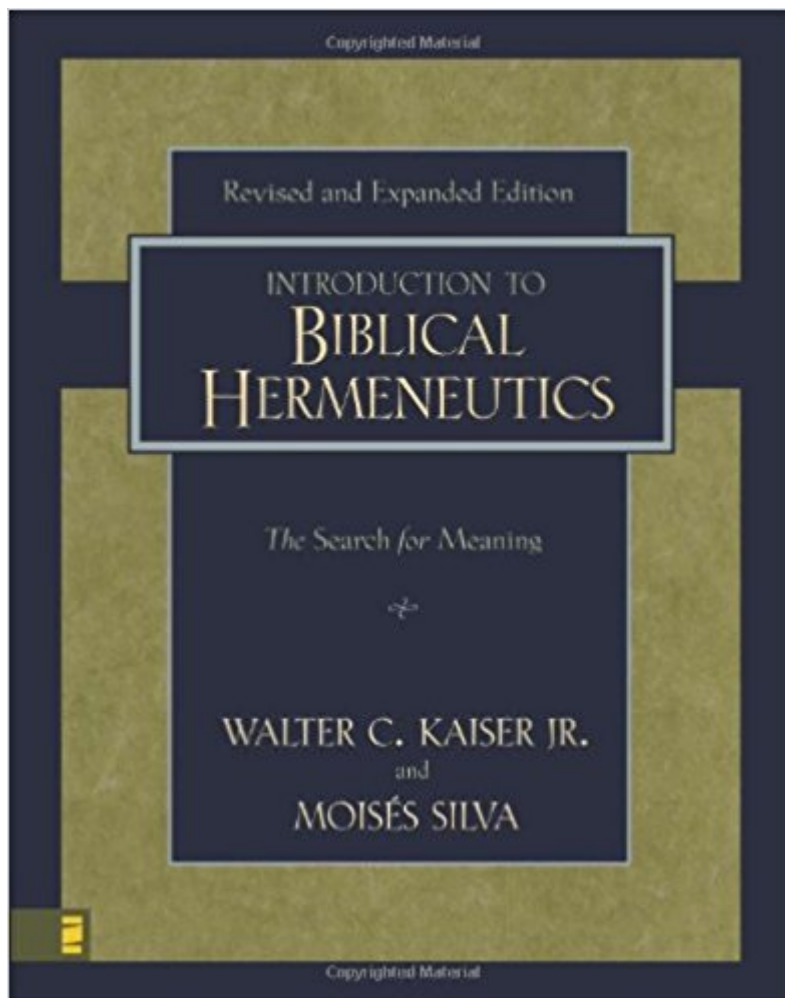




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# Introduction To Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search For Meaning



## Synopsis

Since its publication in 1994, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* has become a standard text for a generation of students, pastors, and serious lay readers. This second edition has been substantially updated and expanded, allowing the authors to fine-tune and enrich their discussions on fundamental interpretive topics. In addition, four new chapters have been included that address more recent controversial issues: • The role of biblical theology in interpretation • How to deal with contemporary questions not directly addressed in the Bible • The New Testament's use of the Old Testament • The role of history in interpretation The book retains the unique aspect of being written by two scholars who hold differing viewpoints on many issues, making for vibrant, thought-provoking dialogue. What they do agree on, however, is the authority of Scripture, the relevance of personal Bible study to life, and why these things matter.

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## Customer Reviews

Since its publication in 1994, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* has become a standard text for a generation of students, pastors, and serious lay readers. This second edition has been substantially updated and expanded, allowing the authors to fine-tune and enrich their discussions on fundamental interpretive topics. In addition, four new chapters have been included that address more recent controversial issues: \* The role of biblical theology in interpretation \* How to deal with contemporary questions not directly addressed in the Bible \* The New Testament's use of the Old Testament \* The role of history in interpretation The book retains the unique aspect of being written by two scholars who hold differing viewpoints on many issues, making for vibrant, thought-provoking

dialogue. What they do agree on, however, is the authority of Scripture, the relevance of personal Bible study to life, and why these things matter.

Walter C. Kaiser Jr. (PhD, Brandeis University) is distinguished professor emeritus of Old Testament and president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Dr. Kaiser has written over 40 books, including *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*; *The Messiah in the Old Testament*; and *The Promise-Plan of God*; and coauthored *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. Dr. Kaiser and his wife, Marge, currently reside at Kerith Farm in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. Dr. Kaiser's website is [www.walterckaiserjr.com](http://www.walterckaiserjr.com). Moisés Silva taught biblical studies at Westmont College, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell Seminary. He is the author or coauthor of eight books and the revising editor of the Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible.

*Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, by Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI and copyrighted in 2007 (ISBN 978-0-310-27951-8, Kindle edition), has been a fun and illuminating read. As opposed to a dry textbook this work opens with engaging examples in Chapter 1 from Shakespeare's *Othello* and in Chapter 2 from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, illustrating how confusing language can be without even requiring translation. The text is broken into four parts including Searching for Meaning, Understanding the Text, Responding to the Text, and The Search for Meaning. While drawing the student in through great examples, the lessons challenge them to think in newer ways such as Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of "The meaning of a text always goes beyond its author;" and Paul Ricoeur's idea that "A text is semantically independent of the intention of its author." The result forces the student to consider the manner in which we read, understand and apply the text. Each chapter offers a strong conclusion sub section, followed by endnotes. The work also offers a glossary and annotated bibliography to accompany the endnotes from each chapter. The authors come together from different hermeneutical views and collaborate to create this single work unifying the approach. This second edition has been updated to answer questions regarding analysis of Scripture regarding subjects such as gender roles, worship styles and other contemporary issues. In the final part, author Silva, while historically a not a strong proponent of Calvinism, offers a chapter on Calvinistic Hermeneutics, focusing on the methods of interpretation which lead to that distinctive theology. The book establishes itself as a great read for

both the expert and the lay person.

Two distinguished theologians come together to give us this Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics. The text is divided into four main parts: "The Search for Meaning: Initial Directions," "Understanding the Text: Meaning in Literary Genres," "Responding to the Text: Meaning and Application," and "The Search for Meaning: Further Challenges." Chapter one, "Who Needs Hermeneutics Anyway," is written by Moises Silva. Walter Kaiser Jr. takes up the next chapter and so the authors alternate throughout the book. Thus, we have a book that presents different--often opposing--viewpoints regarding Biblical interpretation. "In this way, the readers of our text do not get a party line, as it were, but are called upon to come to their own conclusion after eaves dropping on a vibrant conversation between two writers who dare to agree to disagree." Both authors, however, do agree in the unity and inspiration of Scriptures. One unique chapter that would be of particular interest to some readers is titled "The Case for Calvinistic Hermeneutics." Dr. Silva argues that "Whether we mean to or not, and whether we like it or not, all of us reads the text as interpreted by our theological presuppositions. Indeed, the most serious argument against the view that exegesis should be done independently of systematic theology is that such a view is hopelessly naïve." The author then proceeds to make the case for interpreting Scripture in the light of God's sovereignty and the doctrines of grace. In the 2007 Revised and Expanded edition, chapters on the following issues have been added: the role of Biblical theology in interpretation, how to deal with contemporary questions not directly addressed in the Bible, the New Testament use of the Old Testament, and the role of history in interpretation. Both the beginner and the student more experienced in hermeneutics will benefit from this book. It will help the reader establish more sound methods of interpretation. Better than that, it will motivate one to more seriously study and apply Scripture for personal growth and edification.

This book by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moises Silva is an excellent starting point for an investigation into all of the elements involved in Biblical hermeneutics (i.e. Biblical interpretation, as Silva so straightforwardly defines the term in the opening chapter). The book is divided into four major parts (each part contains multiple chapters) which progressively build on one another; the interaction between the co-authors, as they take turns writing individual chapters, is remarkable. Kaiser and Silva do not always agree on all points, but the respectful interplay between their sometimes differing outlooks provides an example of what true scholarship is all about. The four parts of the book have the following headings: 1) The Search for Meaning: Initial Directions (which includes

general background information); 2) Understanding the Text: Meaning in Literary Genres; 3) Responding to the Text: Meaning and Application; and 4) The Search for Meaning: Further Challenges (which includes chapters on both the history of interpretation and contemporary approaches to interpretation). The best thing about this book is that it is not so much a treatise on scholarly interpretation (though it certainly is scholarly), but that it attempts to help the reader to learn both how to interpret the Bible and then how to apply that interpretation to life. As the jacket copy of the book states, "In a culture that prizes individuality and personal freedom, the primary question is no longer 'Is it true?' but rather 'Does it matter?' Hence, the question of relevancy has taken precedence over the question 'What does the text mean?' This book therefore confronts the question of the meaning of meaning and shows how evangelicals may still clearly hear the Word from God amid the cacophony of the age." For those who wish to pursue further study, especially in the areas of genre and critical approaches, the authors provide copious footnotes and an annotated bibliography at the end of the book. This is an excellent introduction to hermeneutics that is accessible to scholars and laypersons alike.

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