

# Descriptive vs Prescriptive

In the Bible, a descriptive passage recounts \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_, while a prescriptive passage provides direct \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_. Understanding this difference is crucial for interpreting Scripture accurately, as we don't always apply \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_.

## Descriptive

- **Definition:** Descriptive passages narrate what happened, offering accounts of events, characters, and their actions.
- **Examples:** Stories from the Old Testament, such as the story of David and Goliath, much of the book of Acts, or the accounts in the Gospels.
- **Interpretation:** These passages are not meant to be followed as specific instructions for modern-day believers. They offer historical context and insights into God's dealings with humanity, but not necessarily moral directives.
- **Caution:** We must avoid taking descriptive passages as universal commands or moral principles. Most narratives that describe events are not an \_\_\_\_\_.

## Prescriptive

- **Definition:** Prescriptive passages give \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ for believers to follow.
- **Examples:** The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, or much of Paul's letters (epistles).
- **Interpretation:** These passages are meant to be followed as guidance for living a life pleasing to God.
- **Focus:** Prescriptive passages often address \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

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# One prime example of why descriptive narratives are not instructions to be followed:

In the biblical account of King Solomon, he is said to have had a large harem including 700 wives and 300 concubines. These concubines, alongside his wives, are presented as a consequence that led to Solomon's later idolatry and downfall

- **Direct Disobedience:** The Bible states that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Concubines were viewed as having a lower status than wives. They could fulfill a role in providing an heir if the primary wife was infertile, or for the king's sexual pleasure. This directly disobeys God's plan for marriage. In Genesis 1, God's plan for marriage is revealed as a foundation for human relationships, reflecting His image and purpose for humanity. Specifically, in Genesis 1:27-28, God creates man and woman in His image and blesses them to be fruitful and multiply, showing God's divine design for marriage and family life. Strike one leading to Solomon's downfall
- **Foreign Women:** Solomon's wives included foreign princesses, such as the daughter of Pharaoh, as well as women from Moab, Edom, Ammon, Sidon, and the Hittites. This marriage to foreign women is seen as a form of political alliances, but also a deviation from the law against marrying foreign women in Israel. Strike two leading to Solomon's downfall
- **Idolatry and Sin:** The biblical narrative portrays Solomon's large harem and his marriages to foreign women as contributing to his idolatry and his heart turning away from God. The foreign wives, with their own gods, are said to have influenced Solomon to worship them. This abomination along with the other two ensures Solomon's downfall.

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# Over Allegorizing / Over Spiritualizing

Over-allegorizing Bible passages, where you believe there are spiritual, mystical, or hidden meanings can lead to several problems. It can misinterpret the text, strip away its historical and cultural context, and potentially create subjective, personal interpretations rather than seeking the intended meaning of the passage. Always remember that Biblical passages are rooted in specific historical and cultural settings.

## 1. Misinterpreting the Text:

- When allegorical interpretations are overused, the actual meaning of a passage can be lost or ignored.
- Instead of understanding the message within its original context, it can become an opportunity for personal symbolism, potentially twisting the author's intent.
- This can lead to misrepresenting the teachings of the Bible and the message God intends for His people.

## 3. Subjective and Personal Interpretations:

- Over-allegorizing can lead to interpretations that are based on personal preferences and opinions, rather than on the text itself.
- The passage becomes a vehicle for projecting your own thoughts and desires onto /into the text, rather than allowing the text to speak for itself. Eisegesis vs Exegesis.

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# Over Personalizing

Over-personalizing Bible passages can involve adding personal opinions or interpretations to the text, potentially misrepresenting the meaning or context of the original scripture. While personal reflection and application are encouraged, it's important to distinguish between personalizing a passage to understand it better and altering the text to fit a personal agenda.

- **Adding Personal Interpretations:** While personal reflection is encouraged, it's crucial to avoid adding personal interpretations or opinions that contradict the original meaning of the passage. This can lead to misrepresenting God's message or even distorting the truth.
- **Context Matters:** Understanding the historical, cultural, and literary context of a passage is vital for accurate interpretation. Over-personalizing can ignore or dismiss these crucial elements, leading to a misunderstanding of the scripture's purpose.

Examples of Over-Personalizing:

- **Adding Personal Opinions:** Inserting opinions or beliefs that are not supported by the text can distort the meaning of the passage.
- **Changing the Meaning:** Altering the wording or interpretation of a passage to fit a personal viewpoint can change the intended message.
- **Ignoring Context:** Ignoring the historical, cultural, or literary context of a passage can lead to a misunderstanding of its purpose and application.
- **Potential for Distortion:** Adding personal opinions or interpretations can distort the meaning of the passage and lead to a false understanding of God's will.

How to Avoid Over-Personalizing:

- **Study the Context:** Learn about the historical, cultural, and literary context of the passage you are reading.
- **Focus on Application:** While personal reflection is encouraged, avoid adding opinions or interpretations that change the meaning of the passage.

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