

Grasping
GOD'S WORD

Grasping GOD'S WORD

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³ His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. ²⁴ These things may be taken figuratively (ἀλληγορούμενα), for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to

Grasping GOD'S WORD

be slaves: This is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." ²⁸ Now you, brothers, like Isaac,

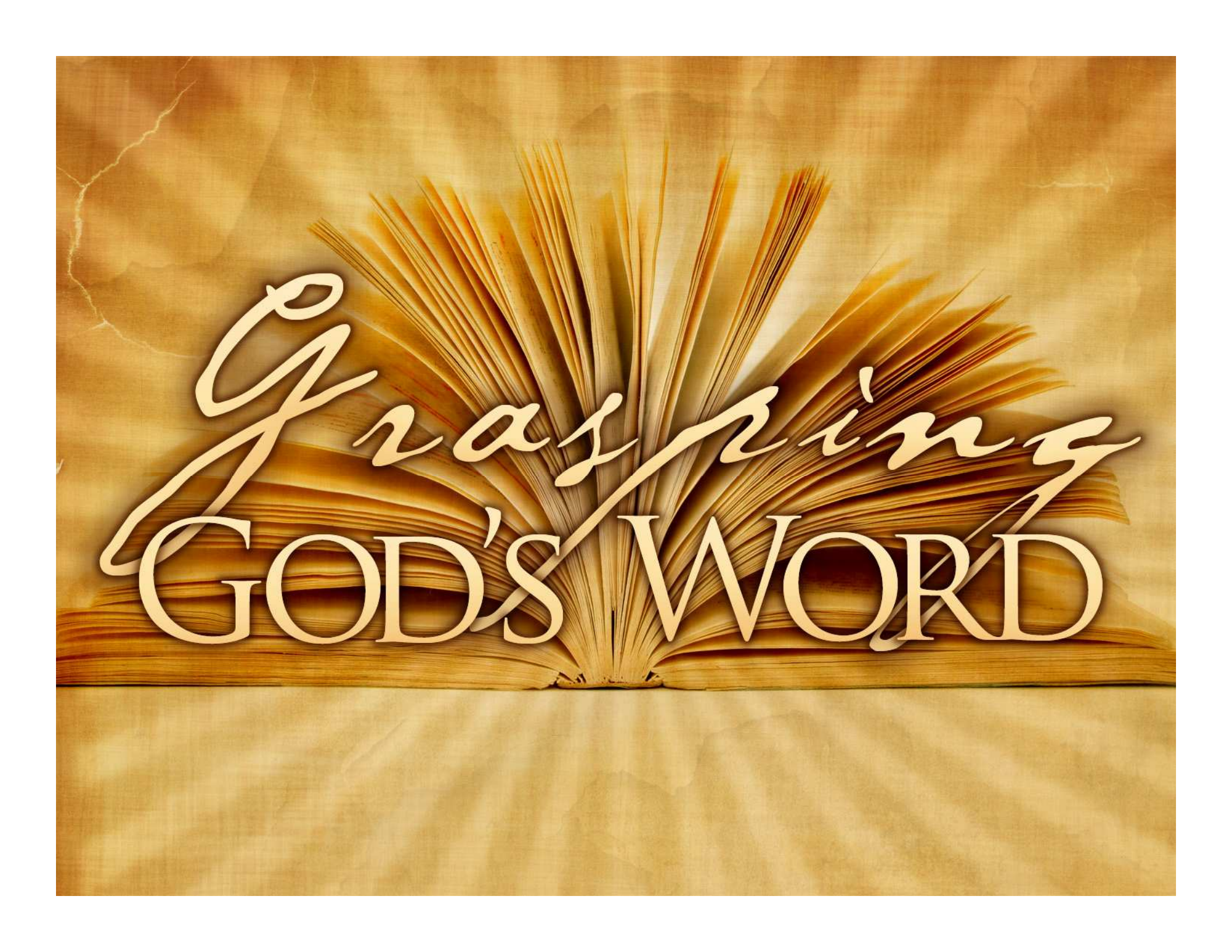
Grasping GOD'S WORD

are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." ³¹ Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman. ¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves



Grasping GOD'S WORD

be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Gal. 4:21-5:1, NIV)



Grasping
GOD'S WORD

• Definitions - Review

Author

With reference to the Bible, the term “author” refers to both the human and divine author. God works through human authors to communicate.

Meaning

This term refers to what the author intended to communicate when he wrote the text. Meaning will be same for all Christians.

Application

This is the response of the reader to the author’s meaning communicated in the text. Application will vary from Christian to Christian.

• Definitions and the Interpretive Journey

Meaning

- 1 – Grasping the Text in Their Town
What did the text mean to the biblical audience?
- 2 – Measuring the Width of the River
What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

Meaning

- 3 – Crossing the Principlizing Bridge
What is the theological principle in this text?

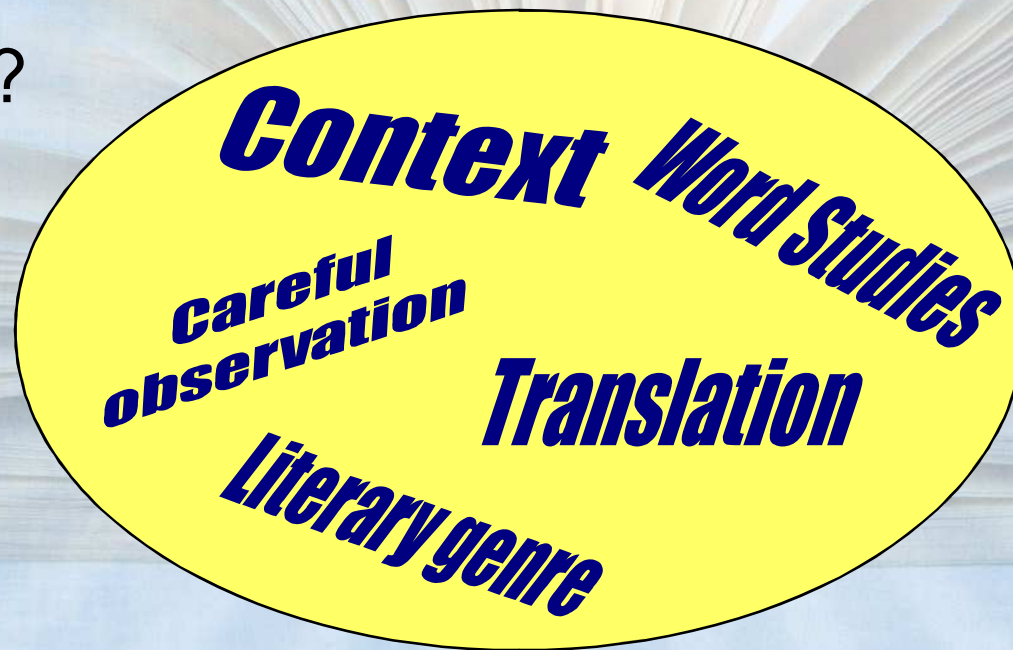
Application

- 4 – Grasping the Text in Our Town
How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle(s) in their lives?

- Determining what the author meant

- For proper interpretation (communication) to take place, we must determine what the author meant.

- How?



Levels of Meaning

- Introduction

- Does the Bible have multiple levels of meaning?
- Are there deep “spiritual” meanings hidden in the text of the Bible that are unrelated to the historical-cultural and literary contexts?

- Spiritualizing

- Looking for deep, secret, “spiritual” meanings apart from what the author communicated in the text. Poses a dichotomy between spiritual and literary.
- Since God used literary conventions to communicate to us, the real spiritual meaning of the Bible will be the same as the literary meaning!
- Question – will we seek the literary (and truly *spiritual*) meaning intended by the author or the “meaning” created by our own speculation?

- Allegorizing

- Allegory – a story that uses an extensive amount of symbolism (e.g., Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*)

- Allegorizing (or allegorical interpretation)

- Looks for deeper, “spiritual” meaning below the surface of the text
 - The details of the biblical text stand for many different things (e.g., tent pegs representing Jesus)
 - Goes far beyond comparison or symbolism
 - Limited only by the fanciful imagination of the reader

- Typology

- Event or person in the OT that serves as a prophetic pattern or example of a NT event or person.
- OT sometimes *foreshadows* or points to what is fulfilled in the NT.
 - Example – entire sacrificial system foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice of Christ
 - Part of one salvation story where we see a promise (OT) and later see its fulfillment (NT)
 - General connections made explicit by the NT (and therefore intended by the divine author)

- Bible codes

- *Gematria* – letters of the Hebrew alphabet represent numbers and words are analyzed for their numerical value
- *Equidistant Letter Sequencing (ELS)* – uses computers to string together the text of the Bible without spaces and search the string for hidden messages
 - Consensus of biblical scholarship that ELS is a sham!
 - Problems with probability (e.g., *Moby Dick*)
 - Unaware of variations in the Hebrew text of the OT

- Conclusion

- Does the Bible have different levels of meaning?

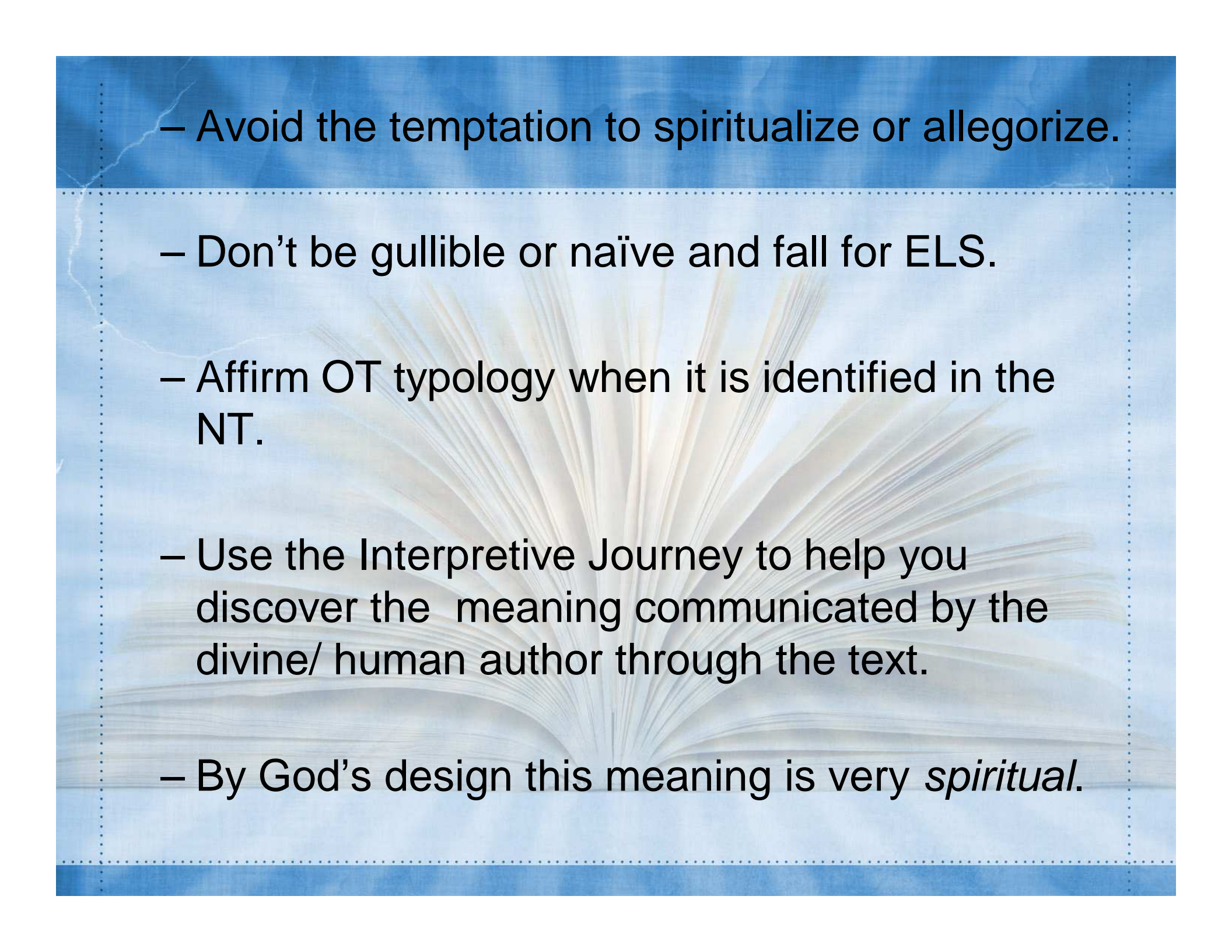
- We believe the answer is “no.”

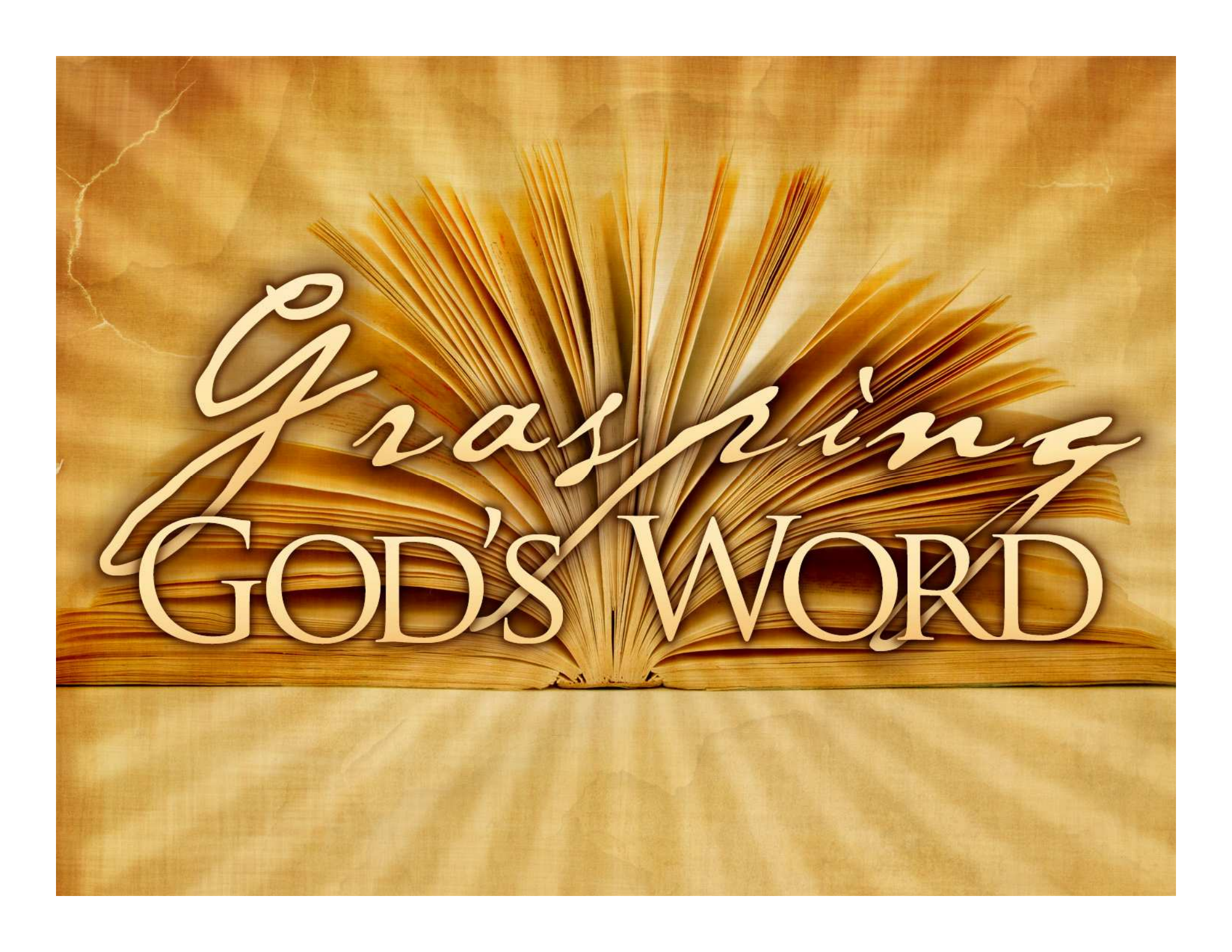
- One level of meaning—the *literary* meaning (intended by the divine/human author). Includes:

- Meaning for the biblical audience (Step 1 of *The Journey*)

- and

- Theological principle (Step 3 of *The Journey*)

- 
- Avoid the temptation to spiritualize or allegorize.
 - Don't be gullible or naïve and fall for ELS.
 - Affirm OT typology when it is identified in the NT.
 - Use the Interpretive Journey to help you discover the meaning communicated by the divine/ human author through the text.
 - By God's design this meaning is very *spiritual*.



Grasping
GOD'S WORD

Grasping GOD'S WORD

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us. We have seen his glory (δόξαν), the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14, NIV)

Grasping GOD'S WORD

1. John is echoing the language of Exodus 33 and 34. The glory of God (Ex 33:18,22), his abundant goodness and truth (34:6) his grace (33:13,16,17,19), and his very presence in their midst (33:14,15,16; cf. 32:7-11) are now localized in the person of Jesus.

Grasping GOD'S WORD

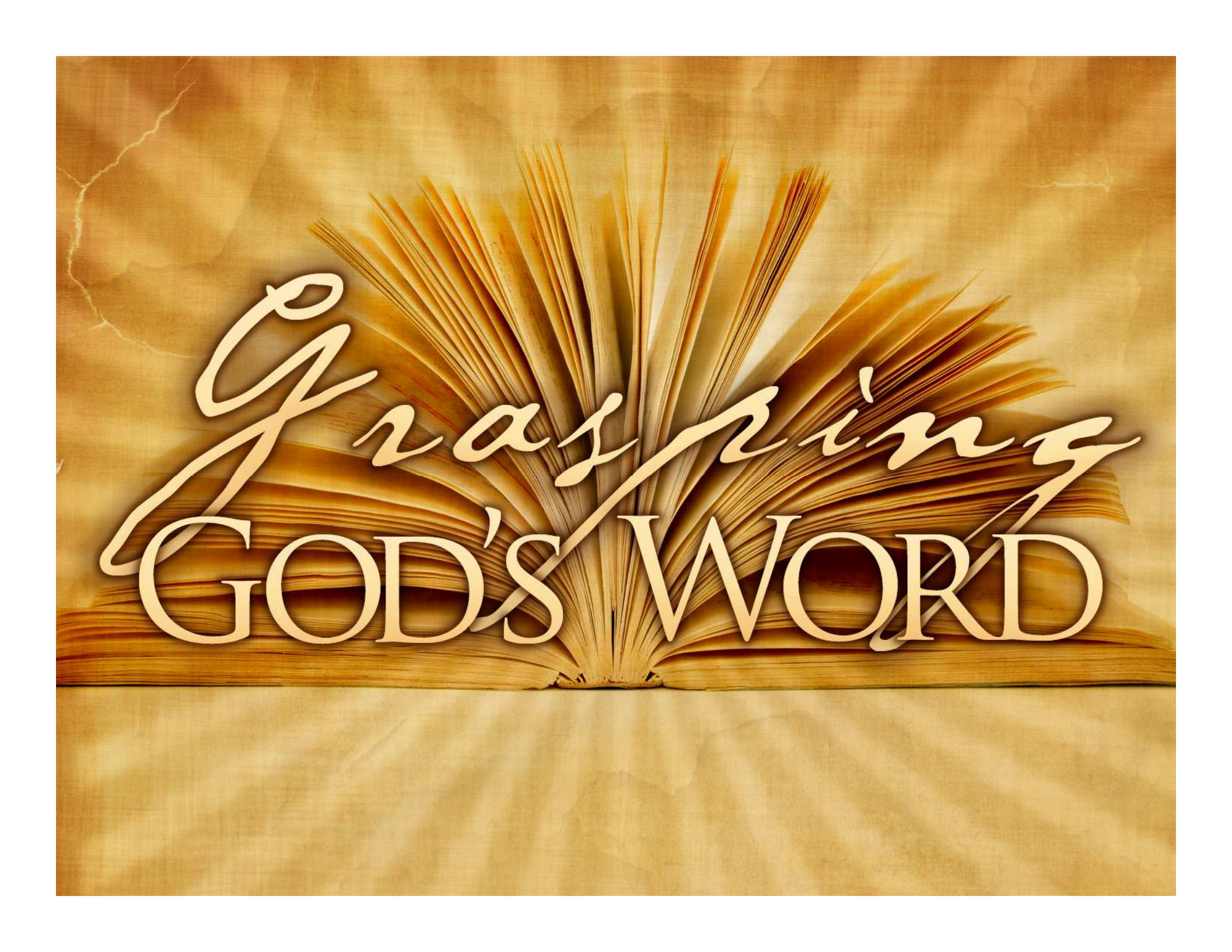
2. Throughout the OT, there was a longing for a more full revelation of the glorious presence of God. Isaiah proclaimed the word of God, "I...will come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory" (Isaiah 66:18, NIV).

Grasping GOD'S WORD

"Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) for them in the countries where they have gone.' ¹⁷ "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.' (Ez. 11:16-17)

Grasping GOD'S WORD

3. The description of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10ff) is of interest here. It is a city which has "the glory of God" (21:11), but there is no Temple in it "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (21:22). The imagery of "Lamb" here corresponds to Jn. 1:29,36 which follows closely upon 1:14. The implication is that the Lamb of God has replaced temple sacrifice. Christ provides the way of access to God's presence and the glory of God's presence.



Grasping
GOD'S WORD