

# How does Unity read the Bible?

by

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What does Unity do with the Bible? This is an excellent question for many reasons. Many of us have been brought up in religions where nothing is true or important unless it is based on Scripture. It is good to know that we in Unity consider the Bible our primary textbook — the foundational text and basis of our movement. Everywhere we look in Unity, from the works of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore to Sunday morning services to Unity publications, the Bible is present as the guiding text.

It is true that all sorts of religions read the Bible and claim It as their basis, and yet look, speak, and act very different from each another. This may seem challenging at first, but is really a wonderful demonstration. It is wonderful that the Book of Life should appeal and apply to all life in all its sacred diversity! This is also an important knowing because it allows us to look within. If different people feel the Bible's call in different ways, what is Unity's response to the Bible? How do we interpret the call? The answers to these questions not only free us as we unlock the healing Truth in the Bible, but are also good for Unity. As Unity people learn about and read the Bible, they are empowered to talk Truth with people in other Bible-based religions. In that sharing, all who participate can grow in wonderful ways. Before that sharing can begin, though, we must understand what it is that the Bible is saying to us.

The Bible is one, but there are many methods and ways to read the Bible. Through finding, understanding, and advancing a way of reading the Bible that speaks to the Christ in us, we allow ourselves access to the unlimited healing power taught in the Bible!

The word that Bible students and scholars use to talk about reading the Bible is *Exegesis*.

Exegesis means “to draw out of,” which describes what we do when we read the Bible — we “draw out” the Bible's meaning for us. There are two basic ways of “drawing out” the Bible's message, *Literal* exegesis and *Allegorical* exegesis.

Literal exegesis means what it sounds like it means: Taking the Bible literally. People who do literal exegesis feel that the events, characters, and situations presented in the Bible stories are real, historical facts, and the meaning that the Bible holds for its readers is found in applying the examples set by the Bible stories to the life of the individual. In a sense, a literal read of the Bible is done in the same way that a person might read a novel. There are some real benefits of literal exegesis. Interpreting the Bible literally is in some ways easy, as there is no need for anyone to tell readers what is meant, and no room for disagreement: Either the Bible says it, or It doesn't. There are also some challenges to literal exegesis, though. What is the Bible saying? The meaning of Bible passages is not always clear in a literal sense, and there is also some debate over what words are the correct Bible words. Because proper literal exegesis depends upon the exact, correct words being used in the Bible, literal readers must deal with questions about which translation is correct.

Unity does do literal exegesis, and teaches that the contents of the Bible stories are real and factual. We do seek the most literally and historically accurate Bible translation, but we also understand that the Bible was not written by one person at one sitting. The Bible is the product of thousands of years of thinking and writing, with multitudes of writers, editors, and translators, all of whom with varying mindsets, historical circumstances, and religious points of view. Unity does not teach that the Bible is the Word of God, because we believe that the Word — the Creative Power of God — cannot be contained by any object or book, no matter how special or sacred. Because the Bible teaches about God's Presence and Power right here and now, Unity teaches that the Bible is not the Word, but that the Bible *testifies* to the Word of God. There are many special writings in various religions that testify to God's Presence and Power, and

Unity upholds any and all of these as sacred. The Bible is special to Unity because we feel that It best explains the relationship we have with God according to what we believe in our hearts to be True. Writing about the Bible as Unity's primary textbook, Charles Fillmore taught that “It has been preserved and prized beyond all other books because it teaches [humanity] how to develop the highest principle of [its] being, the spirit” (taken from *Mysteries of Genesis*). The Bible is our primary textbook because It teaches us about God, not as some distant person or historical process, but as Spirit, the True Being within each and every one of us.

“Now all this is an allegory” (Galatians 4:24, New Revised Standard translation). Because the Bible is not just a collection of stories from history, but is instead a textbook about the spiritual life right now, we are called beyond literal exegesis, and into the realm of allegorical interpretation. As the word *allegory* has a meaning much like the word *symbol*, it is understood that allegorical exegesis of the Bible is a reading of the Bible with the understanding that the events, characters, and situations portrayed are symbols for something else. Unity teaches that the Bible is a story about us, as we grow and express more of our God-given potential. “The characters in the Bible represent ideas in one's own mind. When this symbolism is understood one can follow the characters in their various movements and thus find the way to solve all one's life's problems” (Charles Fillmore, in *The Revealing Word*). Because allegorical interpretation involves meanings that are more than physical, the word *metaphysical* is sometimes used to describe Unity's reading of the Bible. However, because *metaphysical* is a term used to describe many different kinds of beliefs, methods of interpretation, and religious systems, and also because Bible scholars do not use this term to describe their work, *allegorical* is the preferred description of Unity's exegesis. There are a great many benefits to allegorical exegesis, and most important among them is the knowing that this kind of reading of the Bible unlocks the greatest healing message contained therein: *The Bible is a story about you*. One challenge that we must face when engaging in allegorical exegesis is that, because we are looking at more than the Bible text, our work is only as meaningful as our method of reading the Bible is well-thought-out

and sound. Without a good basis for deciding what Bible items are symbols for what ideas in mind, our work of interpretation becomes meaningless.

Unity does have a good and sound way of reading the Bible. Unity's Bible interpretations rest upon our allegorical method and Unity's Five Basic Beliefs, which are:

- 1.) God is Good, and God is All
- 2.) Humanity is Divine
- 3.) Mind is Primary and Causative
- 4.) Individuals are Free in Matters of Belief
- 5.) Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother, Master Teacher, and Wayshower

(for more information on these, please consult our publication entitled “*Unity's Five Basic Beliefs*”)

With these in mind, any story of the Bible can be read in the Unity way, with spiritual growth as the result!

*The student of history finds the Bible interesting if not wholly accurate; the faithful good [person] finds in it that which strengthens his [or her] righteousness, and the overcomer with Christ finds it to be the greatest of all books as a guide to his [or her] spiritual unfoldment. But it must be read in the spirit if the reader is to get the lesson it teaches. The key to its spiritual meaning is that back of every mentioned thing is an idea. The Bible will be more readily understood if the fact is kept in mind that the words used have both an inner and an outer significance... Seek to understand and to reveal the within, and trace the lawful and orderly connection between the within and the without.  
(Charles Fillmore, in *Mysteries of Genesis*)*

***Affirmations for the  
Realization of the Word of  
God***

*The Loving Presence of God  
is revealed to me now!*

*The Healing Life of God is  
the Spirit in all things!*

*The Prospering Abundance  
of God is the Source of  
all!*

*The Peace of God is  
established now!*

For further learning:  
*Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*  
(Preface)

*Mysteries of Genesis*  
*Mysteries of John*

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Founded in 1996 as a ministry of Unity Church of Clearwater, the Unity Tract House is dedicated to furthering the tradition of Unity's Cofounders in teaching Truth through the written word. As a tract is a religious document, written to offer the message of a religious movement, the documents put out by the Unity Tract House are designed to offer a Unity perspective, and teach the Unity way as it applies to life right here and now.

*Our Mission Statement:*

Jesus Christ is the Head of this Ministry!  
The Unity Tract House exists to serve the  
Christ Truth  
through carrying the word of Unity  
and the tradition set forth by Charles and  
Myrtle Fillmore  
into new expression everywhere!

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*This Tract was Obtained at:*

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