

How to Study the Bible - Observation / Interpretation / Application

Observation

- When did this take place in time or history? Are there markings that show the passing of time.
- Who is the audience or receiver of the message?
- Who is speaking, writing, or acting in the passage?
- Where is this happening (the geographical setting)?
- What are the major events, ideas, or commands?
- What transition words appear (therefore, however, but, meanwhile, now)?
- What comparisons (things that are alike) or contrasts (things that are different) are made?
- Is there repetition of words, phrases, concepts? (repetition often shows importance)
- Is there a list given?
- If there are pronouns, who do they refer to? (he, she, them, they, you, me, etc.)
- Are there any figures of speech or idioms?

Interpretation

- What literary genre am I reading (narrative, poetry, epistle, prophecy), and how does that affect the meaning?
- What was the main point the author wanted the original readers to understand?
- How do other parts of Scripture help explain or clarify this specific verse/passage?
- What does this passage reveal about the character, nature, or actions of God?
- What does the text teach about human nature, sin, or our need for help?
- How does this text fit into the larger story of the whole Bible?
- How does this passage point forward or look back to Jesus Christ?
- What do we learn about relating to God?

- What is the meaning of a word in the original language? (Does the original language give pictures or illustrations to help understand the word better?)
- Is there historical or cultural background helpful to know?
- Look for warnings
- Look for illustrations
- Look for “so that” statements that show purpose.

Application

- What does God want me to understand? To believe? To desire?
- What does this passage reveal about my own attitudes, motives, or secret thoughts?
- In what ways does this text convict me of sin or areas where I need to grow?
- How does this truth challenge my current priorities, goals, or values?
- What comfort, encouragement, or hope does this passage offer to my life right now?
- Is there a specific command to obey or an example of what *not* to do?
- Is there a promise to claim or a truth I need to actively believe?
- What is one concrete step I can take today to put this passage into practice?
- If I fully believed and lived out this text, what habits or behaviors would change?
- How can I pray this passage?

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