

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BIBLE

Session One — Observation

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: Take the language in its normal sense, accepting it at face value, unless doing so does not make sense or something in the text indicates it should be

The **three-step process** for getting the most out of your Bible: (1) observation; (2) interpretation; and (3) application. But first, let's consider some core doctrines important to this study.

1. **Inspiration:** God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings. (2 Timothy 3:16) Thus, the Bible is inerrant.
2. **Preservation:** God providentially preserved His word. (Psalm 119:152, 160; Matthew 5:18)
3. **Clarity:** The clarity of Scripture is that quality of the Biblical text that, as God's communicative act, ensures its meaning is accessible to all who come to it in faith. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, 30:11-14; Psalm 19:7, 119:105, 130)

TIPS: First, study because you "delight" in God's Word and not to check a box. Second, study prayerfully. Third, read the book through a few times as a first step. Fourth, be teachable even if it cost you something. Fifth, quality not quantity.

Deuteronomy 30:11 For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. **12** It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? **13** Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? **14** But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

OBSERVATION answers the fundamental question, "What do I see?" Each of us is a "biblical detective" walking a path where we need to pick up each stone (clue) and examine it carefully. We are looking at **four** things:

1. **Terms** — What do the terms mean? How are they used or emphasized? What are the author's key terms?
2. **Structure** — What is the grammatical structure (e.g., subject, object, main verb)? What is the literary structure (e.g., cause and effect)?
3. **Literary form** — What is the genre of what you are reading (e.g., Hebrew poetry, parable)?
4. **Context** — What is the setting for the passage? Chronologically, geographically, culturally, politically, and within the immediate unit of thought, the chapter, the book, and the larger corpus of the Bible?

What are the clues for good observations?

- things that are **emphasized**
- things that are **repeated**
- things that are **related**
- things that are **alike / unlike**
- things that are **true to life**

EXERCISES:

1. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..." (Romans 1:16)

Key terms: _____

What do the key terms mean? What tools can we use to understand what these terms mean?

2. "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." (Proverbs 8:35-36)

What is the literary structure? _____

What are the two key words? _____

What is the context (and especially, who is the speaker)?

EXERCISES CONTINUED:

3. Read John 8:1-11 and answer the following questions from your observations:

What verses provide the critical background context? _____

What is the setting (what special time and place)? _____

What part of the Law is pertinent in this passage? _____

What two words show the contrast between the accuser and the accused? _____

Who is missing from the scene? _____

What did Jesus write on the ground? Does it matter? _____

What is the significance of “finger” in John 8:6? _____

Did Jesus flaunt the Law or apply it correctly? _____

How does the passage further the purpose statement of John 20:31? _____

4. “But you shall receive power,
after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:
and ye shall be witnesses unto me
both in Jerusalem,
and in all Judaea,
and in Samaria,
and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Key terms: _____

What single word do you think is most important? _____

What does that most important term mean? _____

Other observations beyond the terms: _____

Continuing our observations, what do we know about Jerusalem? _____

What is the relationship to Judea and Samaria? _____

In what way is this passage structured as a “cause and effect” form? _____

How does the verse relate to the book of Acts as a whole? _____

