

APPENDIX

A. BIBLE STUDY TOOLS OVERVIEW

OBSERVE:

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. Here are four tasks involved in observation which should be performed in the order below:

Observation Task 1: Mark up the passage by visually identifying the following specific elements:

- **Underline** all verbs. A verb is a word or group of words used to indicate either that an action is taking place (“we will reign with Him”) or that a state or condition exists (“we are faithless”). Verbs are often the most significant indicators of the author’s flow of thought.
- Circle key words or phrases. These are words or short phrases that are important theologically or thematically (they set the theme or main idea for the passage).
- Highlight repeated words or phrases. Also, include words and phrases that are closely related even if not exact duplicates (such as “suffer hardship” and “endure suffering”). You’ll also want to highlight things that are repeated from previous passages.
- Box connecting words. These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:
 1. **Comparison** either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so.
 2. **Contrast** points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however.
 3. **Purpose** indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that.
 4. **Result** is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that.
 5. **Cause** expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for.
 6. **Explanation** is what follows and further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word “for.”
 7. **Inference** provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason.
 8. **Condition** presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can take place. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is “if.”

Observation Task 2: List 2-3 primary themes you see in the passage each week

A primary theme is the big idea, the central truth, or command that the passage focuses on. After reading the passage, write your themes as single words or short phrases. Identifying these themes at the beginning of your study will help you develop a good overall grasp of the passage.

Observation Task 3: Write two or more observations per verse

Our observations might identify people, places, or events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences, or even point out something missing that we expected to see.

Observation Task 4: Record your own interpretive questions

Here are a few examples:

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID THE AUTHOR	HOW
....Paul talking about?accomplishing the action?benefiting from the action?meaning of this word?significance of this phrase?implication of this statement?relationship between these phrases?choose this word?include this phrase, statement or command?not say _____?was this action accomplished?will this situation occur?

INTERPRET:

Our observation of a passage should stir interesting yet challenging questions, leading us to the second stage of our Bible study: interpretation. Fortunately, we do not have to run to a commentary or study Bible for answers (though these are helpful tools to check our conclusions). Use the following six methods, as needed, to tackle a variety of questions.

Interpretation Method 1: Use the context.

Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author's flow of thought through the whole chapter. This may take you to the previous lesson, so have it handy as a review. You may need to read ahead for clues.

Interpretation Method 2: Study cross-references.

Cross references are simply other passages in any book of the Bible that are somehow related to the verses you are studying. They often prove incredibly helpful as you seek to understand your passage. A few such cross references can be found in the margins of most English Bibles, but more can be found by visiting the online reference www.biblestudytools.com. Simply type in the book and chapter in the box to the left of the "Search" button and then click "Search." All of the chapter will appear on the screen. Be sure that "New American Standard" is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then click the box next to "Cross References" so that numbers appear throughout the passage. Clicking any of these will move your screen to the bottom of the page where you will find a series of cross references for specific verses within the passage. This is a great tool for answering tough questions!

Interpretation Method 3: Look up key words.

While looking up a key word in English is helpful, doing so in Greek is far better and is surprisingly easy, thanks to the internet. Simply log onto www.biblestudytools.com, and as an example, type in the book and chapter in the box to the left of the "Search" button and then click "Search." All of the chapter will appear on the screen. Be sure that "New American Standard" is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then click the box next to "Strong Numbers" so that most of the words will be highlighted in blue. Clicking on any of these will bring up a new screen that will tell you the Greek word used here, its possible definitions, and the total number of times it is used in each book of the New Testament

(NT). Click on any of the other NT books (under the title “NAS Verse Count”), and get a list of every verse in that book that uses this Greek word. What used to take hours now takes seconds!

Interpretation Method 4: Look up background information

You can find helpful insights by looking up confusing names or words in a Bible dictionary or by looking up the particular verses you are studying in a background commentary. One of the best dictionaries is The New Bible Dictionary by Wood & Marshall. The IVP Bible Background Commentary by Craig Keener is another excellent example of a verse-by-verse background commentary.

Interpretation Method 5: Tackle tough questions step-by-step

When trying to answer the most challenging questions, follow this four-step process:

1. List all the options. Always start by brainstorming every possible answer to your question.
2. List pros and cons for each option. See all the evidence you can find that either argues for or against a particular option. This evidence comes from your study of key words, the grammar of the sentence, the context of surrounding verses and the book as a whole, cross references to other books, and comparison with your overall understanding of Christian theology.
3. Choose the most likely option. Look at your evidence for each option. Typically, evidence from the immediate context is most important, followed closely by evidence from the book as a whole. Evidence from other books of the Bible, or from Christian theology as a whole, does not carry quite as much weight unless the solution contradicts a clear passage elsewhere or a major tenant of Christian doctrine. In that case, since Scripture never lies and God cannot contradict Himself, you must eliminate that option.
4. Decide on your certainty level. Once you have chosen the best solution, step back for a second and humbly gauge how certain you are of its accuracy (90% = I am very sure this is correct ... 60% = This solution is just a bit more likely than the others!). Finally, talk with others and check commentaries or reference books to see what solutions they have chosen and why.

Interpretation Method 6: Compare multiple translations

This packet uses the New American Standard (NASB) translation. You can often find helpful interpretive clues by comparing this translation with other translations. The New King James Version (NKJV), like the NASB, is a fairly word-for-word translation of the Greek text. The New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are excellent phrase-to-phrase translations of the Greek and thus often easier to read. Another excellent phrase-to-phrase Bible, which includes extensive translation notes, is the New English Translation (NET) available online for free at net.bible.org. You can find and compare numerous translations of any Bible passage at www.biblestudytools.com.

APPLY:

Our Bible Study is not over until we practically apply what we have learned to our everyday lives. And, we know that because we are relational by nature, our learning and growth can and should impact other people in our lives.

The Relational Application section in this study provides an opportunity to **connect the personal application** of God's word **with the relational spheres** we live in.

Application Task 1:

1. Prayerfully determine the **main biblical truth or principle** that God revealed to you during your study. A principle is a fact stated or implied in a passage that is relevant to our lives and not specific to a particular person or time. A few questions to ask are:

- Is there a promise for me to claim?
- Is there a truth for me to believe?
- Is there a command for me to obey?

Application Task 2:

2. Determine how this truth impacts the **four main relational areas** in your life.

God

- How does this truth stretch me in my relationship with God?
- Is there something from which I need to confess and repent?
- Are there some characteristics of God of which I am reminded to praise or worship Him?

Family/Friends

- How does this truth impact my relationship with my family or friends?
- How could I share this truth with these loved ones?
- Is there something or someone specific I can pray for?

Ministry/Work

- Is there an opportunity to integrate this truth in my work environment?
- Is there a next step of ministry I can take based on this truth?
- How does this truth impact my attitude, decision-making and conversations in work or ministry?

World

- How does this truth change my view of the people in the world around me?
- Is there a way to care for, serve or reach out to the world around me based on this truth?

(Example on next page)

Here is an example from Psalm 1:

- Pray that Bible translation ministries will make significant progress in unreached areas of the world.

WORLD
GOD

- Praise God each morning this week for the gift of His Word.
- Meditate on each lesson's memory verse during each week of this study.

MAIN TRUTH: A healthy, righteous life is rooted in God's word

- Look for ways to winsomely speak truth into the conversations I have at work.

MINISTRY/WORK
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- Ask my spouse what God is showing him/her through the Word this week.