

Week 4 Bible Study: Introduction to Observation, CONTENT

Observation is **Discovering what the passage says.**

Observation is the **1st stage** in studying the Bible. Observation is the active process of trying to *discover* _____ and _____.

Observing the content is the discipline of discovering the _____ & _____ of what was said.

CONTENT

Discovering the **structure** of the writing includes (1) studying the **words used**, (2) **the amount** particular words were used, (3) the **original language** used and (4) the **writing style & tone**.

This process also requires gathering the **specifics** of the major **themes, topics & persons** mentioned within the passage. We are trying to find out as much as possible about the **‘what’** of the writing.

10 Steps for Discovering Content

-Get a Note Pad & Pen -Print off the full passage. -Double spaced. -Make wide margins. -Make space for header/footer.

Step 1: Read and Re-read the Book

The first step is to read through the book as many times as you can in 1-3 days. You should read through it at least twice. Though 3-4 times is ideal. The goal is to read the passage 1-2 times without making major observations, without asking questions or taking notes. The goal is simply to read the book with an open mind and clear perspective. The goal is to read the passage 1-2 more times while beginning to make general observations about trends you see, major themes discussed or questions you would like to answer down the road.

Step 2: Identify the Language & Style

The second step is to discover the original language and observe the writing style. Was this written in Greek? Hebrew? Is it Poetic? Biographical? Historic? Prophetic? The goal is to gain perspective and become aware of the overall structure & style of the book. If you have time, for one of your ‘read throughs’ you may want to read a word for word, literal direct translation in the original language. If you choose to do this, I recommend visiting BibleHub.com where you can easily read the Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic for any passage. This also allows for an instant scroll over concordance, defining in detail the original meaning of any word in the passage.

Step 3: Identify the Obvious Names

The third step is to identify the ‘major players’ in the passage. Who is being spoken about? Who is mentioned the most? What can/do we know about them? The goal is to gain perspective and familiarity with who the passage is primarily speaking about. We want to identify every person/group of people mentioned. Author. Recipients. All mentions of the Trinity. Others mentioned. Uniquely mark each person or groups of people mentioned, including their pronouns. **I, me, my, we, us, our, you, they, them, their, God, Father, Him, His, Jesus, Son, Him, His**

Step 4: Identify the Obvious Events

The fourth step is to identify the ‘obvious events’ or ‘issues’ in the passage. What is happening? What has occurred? What is being addressed? The goal is to gain perspective and familiarity with the events surrounding the passage. We want to identify each event or issue being discussed.

Step 5: Mark Key Words & Phrases

The fifth step is to identify the ‘key words’ or ‘unique phrases’ in the passage. What is primarily being talked about? The goal is to gain perspective and familiarity with what the passage is specifically trying to address. We want to identify each key word, topic or theme being discussed. The more a word or topic is repeated, the more likely that word represents an important subject. The more that subject is repeated, the more likely it is that subject represents a major theme within the book.

Step 6: Mark Lists & Repetitions

The sixth step is to identify any lists or groups of items that occur/appear. Identify any rhythm and items that are repeated or restated over and over. Labeling lists include taking note of anything given in a group or sequence. Dates, people, places, topics, doctrines, actions, events, attributes, commands etc. Lists, groups or repetitions don’t have to occur within the same verse or paragraph. For instance, the days of creation are spread over 31 verses and 10 paragraphs but the account contains many lists and many repeated phrases.

Step 7: Mark Comparisons/Contrasts

The seventh step is to identify any comparisons, contrasts, illustrations, analogies or word pictures made within the passage. Comparison is when two or more similar things are compared or listed side by side. The words “like” and “as” typically signal a comparison is about to occur. Contrasts is when two or more different things are compared or listed side by side. The words “but” “not” and “not like” typically signal a comparison is about to occur.

Illustrations, analogies, parables and other word pictures are more detailed ways of comparing and contrasting. The Bible is full of this type of structure and when they occur they are very important to the meaning of the text.

Step 8: Mark Unknowns & Questions

The eighth step is to identify any unknown words, concepts, themes etc. and to note any questions that you have. In this stage the goal is to take note of anything that you do not understand or need to look into further, in order to gain a better understanding. This may include words that you do not understand, arguments that don’t quite make sense as stated, analogies that you don’t grasp, themes/concepts that are new to you and even events/occasions/cultural issues that you don’t understand.

Step 9: Answer Content Discovery Questions

The ninth step is to seek to answer the standard content discovery questions. What was said? How was it said? What words were used to say it? What words appear the most? What themes were repeated?

Step 10: Discern the Main Theme

The tenth step is to try to determine what the main theme or goal trying to be communicated is...and to write it in a summary statement. The goal is to summarize in a sentence or two the core theme of the passage. The goal is to pin point in a brief statement the main things that God is trying to communicate through this passage.

NEXT WEEK: OBSERVING THE CONTEXT!