



How to Interpret Your Bible

Topic: Observe: what does it say

Date: August 25th

Memory Verse: Psalm 119:160

Recommended Resources

- I. Expository Preaching
- II. A quality study Bible

Overview

- I. Method: As we depend on the Spirit, we must observe, interpret, and then apply the meaning the author intended to convey to the original audience.
 - a. Spirit-led
 - b. Observe: what does it say
 - c. Interpret: what does it mean by what it says
 - d. Apply: how should I obey what it means?
- II. Biblical basis: God intends for you to pay attention to the details of his word. (Deut. 29:29; John 5:39, 6:60-69)

Problem of *motivation*; we don't have the energy or see the necessity of why we should study. Problem of *priorities*; too busy, lack of time. Problem of *technique*; we don't know how. Problem of *preoccupation*; we just don't get around to it. (Danny Akin)

Principles of observation

I. Observe literally

“...inspiration does not transform the letters of the words or the sentences of the passages into magical phrases. Under inspiration a noun remains a noun and a verb remains a verb. Questions do not become exclamations, and historical narratives do not become allegories” (R.C. Sproul).

- a. Examples: Jonah; miracles; 40 days of temptation=40 days of temptation.
- b. What about metaphors? (I am the door; bread of life; this is my body)
- c. Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics: “We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.” (1983)
- d. If you can read the newspaper or a book, you can read literally.
- e. If common sense makes sense, don't use any other sense.
- f. Our goal is not uniqueness. It's to see what is right there.

II. Observe historically

- a. Geography (Judges 16:1-3, 2 stories tall, 40 miles. uphill)
- b. Customs (betrothal; covenants Gen. 15; holy kiss: 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Peter 5:14)
- c. Time (Genesis 1; Ex. 20:11)
- d. Synthesize meaning to original readers in 1 or 2 sentences, using past tense verbs.
- e. A text cannot mean what it never meant.

III. Observe contextually

- a. Circles of context
 - i. Immediate: right before and right after
 - ii. Book
 - iii. Author
 - iv. Testament
 - v. Bible
- b. Examples
 - i. Job 15:15, 16 (compare with Job 42:7-8)
 - ii. Ez. 28:12, 13
- c. Text without context is pretext.

IV. Observe carefully

“If you move straight from your initial reading of a passage to the application of that passage, you will remain tied to your previous understanding of that text. You will rarely see anything new and exciting in the text, and the Bible will become boring for you.”

- a. Read carefully-don't interpret or apply at this step.
- b. Don't rush from “there and then” to “here and now.”

V. Observe as a reader

- a. Paragraphs
 - i. Story units
 - ii. From general to specific
 - iii. Questions and answers
 - iv. Dialogue
 - v. Themes
- b. Sentences

- i. The Kernel: subject, verb, modifier
- ii. Subject (who or what is the focus of the sentence)
- iii. Verbs (where all the action is): active/passive (Col. 3:1; Eph. 1:11), past/present/future (have been raised, seek)
- iv. Modifier (what is being explained or acted on)

c. Words

- i. Unique words (only Matthew says “kingdom of Heaven”)
- ii. Repeated words: 1 John 2:15-17-world and love; 2 Cor. 1:3-7--comfort
- iii. Contrasts (differences): Prov. 14:31; Prov. 15:1; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 5:8
- iv. Comparisons (similarities): Prov. 25:26; James 3:3-6
- v. Lists: 1 John 2:16; Gal. 5:19-23
- vi. Cause and effects: Rom. 12:2; Ps. 13:6
- vii. Reasons: Matt. 5:16
- viii. Conjunctions (the mortar that holds bricks together. Don't skip them, your wall will crumble): Rom. 12:1 (therefore); 2 Tim. 1:7-8; Gen. 6:8
- ix. It's true that you can understand your Bible. But it's also true that it takes work.

VI. Final Encouragements

- a. Read with a plan.
- b. Read like it's your first time reading.
- c. Read as if you could see Christ.
- d. Read as if you could hear God speaking.
- e. Read as if you could not live without these words.

“There are three kinds of Bible students:

1. To the first it's like castor oil – bitter and hard to take.
2. To the second it's like shredded wheat – dry but nourishing.
3. To the third it's like peaches and cream – can't get enough.” Howard Hendricks

Ephesian 1:7-10

We have redemption

In Him

through His blood

the forgiveness of our trespasses

according to the riches of His grace

which He lavished upon us

in all wisdom and insight

making known to us the mystery of his will

according to his purpose

which He set forth in Christ

as a plan for the fullness of time

to unite all things in Him

things

in

heaven

and

things

on

earth