

## BIBLE STUDY HELP | Observation, Intended Meaning, Application

We want to take time to work through a passage and let the Bible speak. Don't be frustrated if it feels like a foreign land to you at first. Like any other subject we study, our understanding of the Bible will grow in time. The more time we spend reading, studying and prayerfully engaging it, the more we will grow in our understanding of it. Remember, we need the Spirit of God to help us comprehend and apply Scripture. Thankfully, he's eager to do just that.

OK, let's get started. Begin with prayer. Ask God to quiet your heart and make you receptive to the truth you will hear. You might pray something like, *"God, open our eyes to see and our ears to hear all that you have for us. Amen."*

Now, read through whatever passages/text you have before you.

Take time to reflect on the passage; don't move on too quickly. One practice that can help is using the acronym "OIA" which stands for *"Observation, Intended Meaning, Application."*

### **O = OBSERVATION**

Say what you see happening in the text. Just say what you see. This can be anything you observe in the passage— just call it out. Like a beautiful work of art, take time with it.

You are NOT trying to interpret the passage; you're simply slowing down to make observations. Enjoy what you discover. This could be things that are obvious, interesting, strange, words that are repeated - *anything* at all. You can't get this *"wrong"*! Slow down and say what you see.

### **I = INTENDED MEANING**

Every passage of Scripture has an intended meaning. We will be tempted to say, "This is what it means *to me*..." But when we do that, we make ourselves the authority on the passage and run the risk of missing why it was actually written in the first place.

Take time to *"interview"* the text. In other words, ask the passage/text some questions (this is the *"who, what, when, where"* of the passage).

NOTE: Answer 2-3 of the questions in this section. If you don't know the answer to any of these questions, fine – simply move on. You can always circle back around another day.

- What kind of writing (genre) is this?
- Are there clues as to the circumstances under which it was written?
- Who is the passage about? Who is the original audience?
- Who are the main characters?
- What's happened so far? What is the surrounding context? What surprises are there?
- What are some key words in the passage? What words or ideas are repeated?
- Is there a theme that emerges?
- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?

Since God is the main character of Scripture it's *vital* to ask: what does this passage teach us about God?

We should then go on and ask questions like: what does it teach us about humankind (people)?

How does the passage relate to Jesus? Does it anticipate his coming? Reveal our need for him?

Finally, how could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

**A = APPLICATION**

Application varies, depending on season of life, what we're facing at the time and more. Ask: Is there something the passage/text is calling me to change? An attitude? Behavior? Is there something it is inviting me to do? The passage might move you to celebrate God's love and grace (respond with worship) or remind you of God's faithfulness and presence. It might be calling you to lay something down or begin to live in a way you hadn't considered before.

End your time in prayer.