

Questions for Observation

Larger Sections, (perhaps a story or a Psalm)

Look for the following:		Some Suggested Questions:
Storyline		Where does this section fit in the storyline of the Bible?
Genre [type of literature]		Is this Narrative, Law, Wisdom, Poetry, Prophetic, Gospel, Epistle Or Revelation? Refer to notes on genres.
Who? (author and audience)	People	Who was the author? His background? Ministry? Who is the audience? The writer's relationship to the audience? Who are the characters in the narrative? Social, political, technological, spiritual or influences.
What?	Events	What events preceded this narrative or occasion? Is there a cause and effect that is happening? [if, therefore, then...] What is the cultural setting? Does the event(s) of the text lead to "other" events?
When?	Time	When did the author write? When did these events take place?
Where?	Location	Where is the location?
Why?		Why did the author write? Why did these events take place? Why is the timing important? Why is the location significant if it is? Depending on context, why was it significant for Israel or the Church?
Repeated words		What words are used often? i.e. holiness, grace, forgiveness, lost
Repeated concepts		What concepts are being described more than once? i.e. covenants, redemption, a prophetic message.

Paragraphs

<p>Because the words aren't isolated from the sentences in which they occur, we want to learn how better to see what's happening. None of these tools is the ultimate means by which we uncover the meaning of a text, but they combine to help us discover the divinely-intended aim of the passage.</p>		
Repetition of Words	What word or concept repeats?	2 Corinthians 1:3-7
Contrast/Comparison	Look for items, ideas, or individuals that are contrasted or compared with each other.	"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)
Lists	See more than two itemized things? What's included? What are those things describing?	Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Ask: why is this list here? How does it help me think in a more biblically comprehensive way

		about this area (i.e., spiritual gifts, works of flesh, evidence (fruit) of the Spirit)?
Cause and Effect	Is there a cause-effect relationship here?	“For God so over the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
Conjunctions	“If we imagine a biblical text to be like a brick house, then conjunctions are the mortar that holds the bricks (phrases and sentences) together. One critical aspect of careful reading is to note all the conjunctions (and, for, but, therefore, since, because, etc.) Our tendency is to skip over them – but don’t do it! Without the mortar the bricks fall into a jumbled mess. So always take note of the conjunctions and identify their purpose or function. That is, try to determine what the conjunction connects.” – Duvall and Hays, Grasping God’s Word, p.35	Roman 12:1 What does this “Therefore” tell us about the relationship between the gospel and practical Christian living?
Verbs	What kind of verb is used? Past tense (I went), present tense (I go), future tense (I will go)? Is it an imperative (Go!)? Notice any pattern in the verbs? What do these patterns of verbs communicate? Are they active or passive (I spoke/I was spoken to)? Who’s doing the action of the verb (And Jesus said to the crowds)? Who’s receiving the action (you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit)?	Ephesians 1:3-14 Notice any pattern in the verbs? What do these patterns of verbs communicate?
Conditional clauses	Conditional clauses are usually set up by the word “If”, and followed by a resulting “then” statement (though “then” is more often implied rather than used explicitly). “Conditional clauses present the conditions whereby some action, consequence, reality, or result will happen... Whenever you encounter a conditional clause, always determine exactly what the required conditional action is (the “if” part) and what the result or consequence is (the then part).” –Duvall and Hays, Grasping God’s Word, p.51	2 Corinthians 5:17 1 John 1:5-10 How does conditional language shed light on these verses?
Figures of speech (metaphors)	Look for expressions that convey an image, using words in a sense other than the literal sense.	
Pronouns	Identify the antecedent (originator) for each pronoun.	
Purpose Statements	Look for words such as “that,” “in order that,” and “so that”. Purpose can also be introduced with the simple infinitive (“I chose you and	Ephesians 2:8-10 How does an observation of “purpose language” in vs. 10

	appointed you to go and bear fruit..." – John 15:16).	keep us from a common error?
Emotional terms	Does the passage use terms that have emotional energy like "pleading or we beg you"....	
Actions/roles of God or people	Identify actions or roles that the text ascribes to God or people	
Questions/Answers	Note if the text is built on question/answer format	

Words (Word Study)

<p>First step: Chose a word.</p> <p>Word studies tend to take up a lot of time, so it is very important to pick your words wisely.</p>	<p>Here are some general guidelines when picking a word to study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Focus on a word that is translated differently in various translations – Consider words that are not clear or are ambiguous in English – Consider theological terms [i.e. grace, redemption] – Look at repeated words, which tend to point out a theme of the author – Look at rare words or words that only occur once.
<p>Second step: Write</p>	<p>Write out your pre-understanding of the word in an attempt to recognize and limit the effect that this may have in biasing your study.</p>
<p>Third step:</p> <p>Look up original word for study</p>	<p>Find out what the Greek or Hebrew word is behind the word you have chosen. This can be done by using a concordance, such as the Strong’s Concordance. Once you have located the Greek or Hebrew word in the concordance, you will also be provided with the number of times it is used in the Old Testament or the New Testament, a list of related words, a list of word definitions, and a list of different ways that it has been translated.</p>
<p>Fourth: Determine context.</p>	<p>In order to continue to discover the word’s range of meaning, you need to examine the context in which it is used. Remember the importance of context! As Duvall and Hays put it, “The one rule in doing word studies that overrules all other rules is this: <i>Context determines word meaning</i>” (143). Each use of the Greek/Hebrew word can be found by looking up each word that is in the list of the different ways that the Greek/Hebrew word has been translated in the “Greek to English Dictionary and Index,” and finding the Bible references with the corresponding Strong’s number. As you go through these uses and their context, a clearer picture should come into view. Remember, all of this is to help you determine what your word could mean.</p>
<p>Fifth: Select meaning</p>	<p>Select from the possible meanings the one which best fits your word. Keep in mind the other things we have learned about observation such as the context of the storyline and the culture.</p>
<p>Sixth: Verify</p>	<p>Lastly, with all of the resources that are available from experts, you can double check your results. Some helpful resources that I have come across include the <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>, the <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains</i>, and the <i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i>.</p>

Six Word Study Fallacies [Misconceptions, Mistakes]

English-Only Fallacy:

Remember, the Bible was originally written in Hebrew (OT) and [Greek](#) (NT). As it is translated into English, one Greek or Hebrew word can be translated into several different English words, some of which can mean very different things depending on the [context](#). On the flip side, several different Greek or Hebrew words could be translated into the same English word. Without considering these facts, one can come to wrong conclusions about a certain word. For example, there are several Greek words that are translated as “love,” and treating them all the same may do a disservice to what the author may be trying to communicate.

Root Fallacy:

Some people tend to assume that the real meaning of a word can be found in its original root (the etymology of the word). While this may be very helpful at times, it is wise to give context priority over [etymology](#). Using an English example, one could draw some interesting conclusions from just drawing on the etymology of the word “sawhorse.”

Time-Frame Fallacy:

This fallacy is best explained by Duvall and Hays, who say, “This fallacy occurs when we latch onto a late word meaning (usually a meaning popular in our own time) and read it back into the Bible...” (134). For example, even though Paul used the Greek word *dynamis* (a word that sounds a lot like the word “dynamite”) in the phrase that is translated as the “power of the gospel” in [Romans 1:16](#), he did not have “dynamite” (and all that that word imagery conjures) up in mind...dynamite wasn’t even around then.

Overload Fallacy:

When a word that has several meanings is used, one should not assume that all of the nuances are being communicated. For example, if the word “set” is used in a sentence, one should not think that it carries with it all of the senses of the word. Again, [context](#) is a good guide.

Word-Count Fallacy:

We must continually remind ourselves that words simply do not have the same meaning every time that they occur.

Word-Concept Fallacy:

If someone wanted to study what all of a book had to say about the “church,” he/she would commit this fallacy if they limited their search only for verses that included that word (*ekklesia*). Sometimes there are other phrases that communicate that same concept. In regard to this example, they could be the “body of Christ,” “temple of the Holy Spirit,” or even the “household of faith.”³

Bibliography

¹ - J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), (135-152, 211).

² - http://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_273.cfm

³ - <http://www.biblestudyforyou.com/bible-study/word-studies-part-1/>