

## **Observation and Original Meaning Questions**

\*Make sure they pray for the Holy Spirit to give them understanding as they read before they read each day.\*

“Read Text/Read” means read the text slowly three times.

If journaling on “a whole chapter” (i.e. Genesis 1), have them select a few verses (2-12) to journal on with these questions specifically.

### **Priority #1: Context**

- The reader does not declare the meaning, the text declares the meaning.
- Our role as students of the Bible is to uncover what the original author intended to communicate to his original audience.
- The context determines the meaning
  - Literary and Historical/Cultural
- A text cannot mean something today that it did not mean when it was originally written.
- The context determines the meaning.
- Every verse of the Bible is connected to...
  - The verses around it
  - The book in which it appears
  - The testament in which it is set
  - And the message of the entire Bible
  - Also, whom it was written to
  - Time and circumstances in which it was said.
- "If you do nothing else besides read what comes before and what comes after your passage, you will eliminate about 75 percent of all interpretive mistakes."

### **Observation: What Do you see?**

- “If you went to the doctor and he just gave you the diagnosis without assessing your conditions first.... what would you say?”
  - Observation: assess the patient
  - Interpretation: give diagnosis
  - Application: prescribe the medication
- Things to look for:
  - Repeated words
  - Contrasts (conjunctions-and, but, yet, etc.)
  - Comparisons
  - Lists
  - Cause and Effect or Purpose/result statements (so that, therefore, for)
  - Means (how something is accomplished)
    - By the spirit, in the spirit
- Good questions to ask of the text:
  - What genre is the text?
    - Narrative, Prophecy, Apocalyptic, Hyperbole, Figure of speech, proverbs, poetry, psalms, parables epistles.

- Who is the author?
- Who are the recipients?
- Who are the main characters involved in the text?
- What is happening in the text?
- What is the author intending to communicate?
- What are key words in the text?
- What is the context of this verse?
  - Immediate, rest of larger section, rest of book, rest of Bible
- What important comparisons or contrasts do you see?
- When do the events take place?
- Why do the events take place?
- Why was this text written?
- How do these events occur?

\*You should always seek to find these things about the book before you start reading. All of this information can be found in a good study Bible:

Example: Historical Background of the Letter to the Philippians:

- **Author:** Paul the Apostle
- **Date:** Around 59AD (most likely before Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon)
- **Provenance (where the letter was written):** Roman Imprisonment
- **Destination:** The Church at Philippi
- **Occasion (Background):** Thanksgiving for the Philippians partnership in the gospel and warnings against disunity and false teaching as hinderances to the spread of the gospel
- **Purpose:** to promote gospel-centered unity for the sake of advancing the gospel.
- **Theme:** partnership in the gospel and walking worthy of the gospel.
- **Key verse:** Philippians 1:27-30

**Original Meaning:**

- Summarize the passage into one or two sentences. Use the past tense and refer to the Biblical audience.
  - Moses showed the failure of...
  - Jesus encouraged his disciples to...
  - Paul encouraged the Corinthians to...
- Example from Joshua 1:9:
  - The Lord commanded Joshua, the new leader of Israel, to draw strength and courage from God's empowering presence, to be obedient to the law of Moses, and to meditate on the law so that he would be successful in the conquest of the Promised Land.