

## Lesson 6 - Making Detailed Observations

One of the main objectives of this course is to equip you with the skills necessary to effectively study and apply God's Word. We are taking an inductive study approach where we methodically move from making exhaustive and thorough observations, to compiling evidence in order to make interpretations, then identifying principles for the purpose of personal application. So far, it seems that the only part of the inductive bible study process we have been doing is making observations. Good news! This week is the last week we are going to make observations. We have been progressing slowly up our pyramid, making observations of smaller and smaller portions of text. We will be making observations about the smallest units of our text - the single (sometimes two) verse.

Before getting into the details of this last stage of making observations, let's look a little more closely at the work we have done. We made observations about the book as a whole by identifying the recurring ideas, structures, and how all of these relate to one another. Identifying those relationships, while primarily an observational step, required making a decision, which is an interpretative step. When you were creating your outline of the whole book, you were making subtle interpretations. After you identified all the smallest segments of the text that communicated a singular idea, you then grouped those ideas into larger sections, and possibly did something similar with those larger sections. Those decisions require some interpretation of how the ideas are organized.

When you shared your work with others in the class, you most likely witnessed that not everyone outlined the book in the same exact manner with the same exact section titles, etc. It is quite likely that each of you even focused on slightly different themes. This fact begs an important question. If we are approaching the text from a historical-grammatical approach, then we are taking the stance that the text has an *intended* meaning, directed by God himself. If there is an intended meaning as determined by God, shouldn't we all get the same outlines, ideas, etc.? If we differ on any of these, shouldn't at least one of us be wrong?

These questions should not be taken lightly. God's truth is so broad, so thorough, so encompassing, that we could never grasp it all. Think of how many different sermons, by different preachers, you may have heard on the same text. Were they all the same? No. God directed those men to attend to certain ideas and nuances of the truth he intended to convey. Three years from now, you will probably change your own work as well.

We begin the interpretative process when we ask questions about our observations. In Lesson 3, you were given a list of questions to ask about the grammatical structures you identified. Those questions plant the seeds of the interpretative process. Right now, this larger system we are learning is mechanical and clumsy, like all new things we learn. Your attention is focused on completing these new steps. As you become more familiar with this system, you will move more quickly and smoothly through all the steps. You will genuinely be employing all parts of the observation-interpretation-application process simultaneously as you move through the steps of the system.

## Breaking Down the Segment

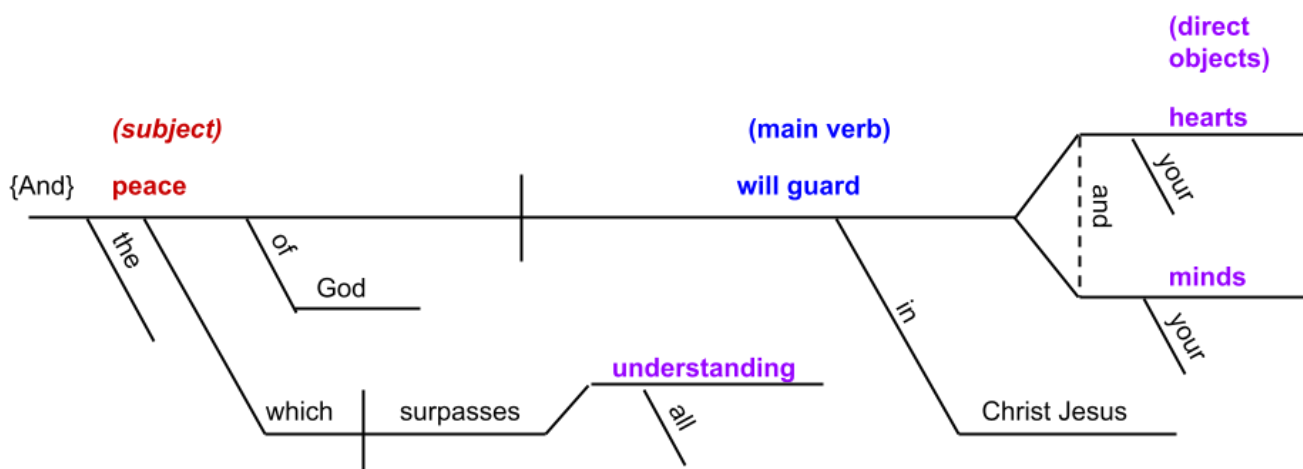
The step of the inductive bible study method we are learning this week feels more like the type of bible study to which you are probably accustomed. In this step, we look at a portion of Scripture ranging in length from one to three, maybe four verses. You big picture folks out there may get bogged down here. Calling this step “detailed” may seem like an understatement. On the other hand, those of you who cannot see the forest for the trees will love it.

Some of you will still need to resist the urge to begin with a word-by-word breakdown. Make observations about the whole segment, then make observations about individual clauses and phrases. Only then begin to make observations about individual words along the way. We will continue to apply the grammatical structures we used in making our book outlines to even these smaller segments. These smaller sections may have repeating ideas, themes, and words, so we need to be intentional about identifying those. Most importantly, we will continue to pose questions about every observation we make.

## Observations about the WHOLE Segment

Like all other steps in the observation process, read the segment a few times. After reading it:

- Identify any ideas, words, or phrases that repeat in this one or two verse segment. Most likely, singular words, maybe a phrase, will be the only thing that repeats in such a small section. For this step, DO NOT label something a recurrence because it repeats elsewhere in the whole book. Your only concern is whether it repeats *in this portion only*.
- Using all that grammar you used in middle school and did not think you would ever use again, diagram the sentence. Here is one way to diagram Philippians 4:7.



- If that young adolescent student has disappeared forever from your mind, ask yourself these questions to help you identify the grammar of the segment:
  - Who or What is doing the action?
  - What action is being performed?
  - Is the action being performed on anyone or anything? Is anyone or anything receiving the object of that action?
  - What words or phrases are being used to describe any of the people, places, or things in this sentence? The actions being performed?
- Identify any important conjunctions, prepositions, or other keywords in the segment that indicate a structural relationship. Go back to Lesson 3 to review those. Some examples would be: therefore, because, in order that, for, like, as, and, but, however

## Observations about Clauses & Phrases

Now, take the entire sentence or verse and break it into individual phrases. Your sentence diagram can help you with that. If your forgotten adolescent offered you no help, take the sentence and group all the stuff together that goes with the subject (who or what is doing the action and any descriptions or modifiers) and all the stuff that goes with the predicate (the action being performed, the objects of those actions, and any descriptions or modifiers). If you identified any keywords in the above step, they mark the beginning and end of individual phrases. Use the commas and other punctuation provided in the text to help divide the segment into phrases.

Once you have divided the segment into its individual clauses and phrases, begin making observations about each unit. Depending upon the level of detail you addressed in the whole

segment step, you may not have much to add here. If you are not sure if you have identified everything for this step, check for these two important types of observations. 1) Be sure you have identified any relationships identified by the keywords above. 2) How, if at all, do those phrases modify the subject? the verb? the objects?

## Observations about Individual Words

You made it! This is the step you've been waiting for. All those years of sitting in verse-by-verse exposition of the Bible you've come to appreciate and admire have given you a desire to do this part. But first . . . remember you are still making OBSERVATIONS only. Do not try to make interpretations here. Interpretations come by way of asking questions. Questions come via observations. You *must* make observations. 😊

Here again, the level of detail from the whole segment step determines what you do here. If you diagrammed your sentence, at least half your work here is complete. All that's left might be to record the questions generated by the observations. Here's a checklist of the types of observations needed to complete this step.

- How are all the *nouns* (persons, places, or things) used? Are they performing actions (*subject*), receiving actions (*indirect objects*), or having actions performed on them (*direct objects*)?
- What type of *verbs* are being used? Are they *active* — performing some type of action, or *passive* — describing how the subject may have been the object of an action?
- What are the *tenses* of any verbs? Is the action occurring in the *present*? Did it occur in the *past*? Will it happen in the *future*? Is it an action that is continuing to occur? NOTE: we will explore the various tenses a little more in lesson 7 when we cover interpretative tools.
- Have you identified what is being modified and how it is being modified by all the *adjectives* and *adverbs* (describing words)?

## Types of questions to ask

As in all the previous levels of observation making, asking questions about the observations is a must. Use the guide from Lesson 3 to help you here. For any repeating words, i.e. recurrences, and structural relationships you identify, you will ask the same exact questions. When you get down to the word-by-word level, pose questions that address the *Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, *How*, and *Why* about the word.

For example, in Philippians 4:7, you make note that “all” modifies “understanding.” Here are the questions you should pose about that observation:

- What is the meaning of “all”? Is any type of understanding excluded?
- How does “all” provide meaning to “understanding”?
- What are the conditions that qualify “all” to be used in this situation? Can those conditions be negated or canceled?
- Why is “all” used to modify “understanding”? What are the implications of using “all” to modify “understanding”?

Format and organize your work in the way that helps you most. You may find a two column format works well for you with observations in one column and questions in another. A sample two-columned detailed observation is provided for you. It might be easier logistically to simply list them sequentially as you move through the text. Whatever format you choose, choose one that you can easily use and understand while giving you a good overall picture of how everything fits together.

## Homework

This week, complete a detailed observation of Philippians 2:12-13. Remember to bring your work with you next week to share with your classmates.

- Pray!
- Read the verses a couple of times.
- Identify any repeating ideas, phrases, or words IN THIS SEGMENT only.
- Identify the subject(s) and their modifiers.
- Identify the verb(s), their tenses, any objects they may have, and any modifiers.
- Identify key words and any structural relationships they may signal.
- And as always, don’t forget to actually write the questions that are happening subconsciously and are necessary for the interpretation process to come.

## Detailed Observation - Philippians 4:7

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

OBSERVATION	QUESTIONS
<p><b>Observation of Segment as a Whole</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The segment relates to the rest of the paragraph (4:4-6) via <i>CAUSATION</i>, created by the word “And”. Paul exhorts his readers to “rejoice”, to not become “anxious”, and to make requests of God via “prayer and supplication with thanksgiving”. The effects of these attitudes will be the <i>guarding action</i> of the “peace of God”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the major elements in the <i>EFFECT</i> of “guarding hearts and minds” caused by the previous verses? What is the meaning of “guard”? “heart”? “mind”? What are the major elements in the <i>CAUSE</i>? What are the meanings of those elements (the attitudes)? How do the attitudes lead to the effects? Why did Paul include this causation? What are the implications of this causation?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Observation of Clause/Phrase as a Whole</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The peace of God” performs the action of “guarding your hearts and your minds”.</li> <li>“Of God” modifies “peace”, the subject of the sentence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the meaning of the term “peace of God”? What is the meaning of “guard”? How does the “peace of God” perform the action? Can another element perform the same action, in the same manner, and in the same degree? Why? What are the implications of “the peace of God” being the subject which performs the action of “guarding”?</li> <li>Who is “God”? Does this phrase indicate a force or entity that is employed in the service “of God” or is it simply a peace that is <i>owned</i> by God? Why did Paul provide this modifier for “peace”? What are the implications of the peace being “of God”?</li> </ul>

- “Which surpasses all understanding” modifies the subject “peace of God”. Paul qualifies the “peace of God” as the subject by describing the extent of one of its attributes, namely that understanding this peace is beyond our capabilities.
- “Will guard” is a future tense verb, serving as the main verb of the predicate.
- “Your hearts and your minds” are the direct objects of the main verb “will guard”. The guarding action is performed on “hearts and minds” by the “peace of God”.
- “In Christ Jesus” is a prepositional phrase. It could possibly modify the main verb “will guard”. It might also modify “hearts” and/or “minds”. The ESV, NIV, NASB, and LSB render the verse almost identically. The KJV translates it as “through Christ Jesus,” indicating that the verb is the object of the modifier. The NLT translates the predicate as “His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live Christ Jesus”, further strengthening the idea that the phrase modifies the main verb.

- What is meant by surpassing all understanding? Is it human understanding only, or does it include other heavenly beings? How does the “peace of God” accomplish this? Is “all” used literally or metaphorically? Why did Paul add this qualifier? What are the implications of this qualifier?

*NOTE: Questions about the meaning of “guard” were already stated above in the first bullet point of this section and not repeated here.*

- Does the future tense use of this verb indicate a *possible* action or a *definite* action? What are the implications of the possible vs. definite action?

*NOTE: The question about HOW the guarding action is performed on these direct objects is already stated above in the first bullet point of this section and not repeated here.*

- What is the exact and precise meaning of “heart” and “mind”? What is the relationship between “heart” and “mind”? Are these the only possible objects of the guarding action performed by the peace of God? If no, why are these two singled out? If yes, why this limitation? What are the implications of the heart and mind being guarded by the peace of God?
- What is the meaning of “in Christ Jesus”? Does *in* refer to a location or a means? If this phrase modifies the verb, how does this add meaning to the guarding action? If it modifies “hearts” and/or “minds”, how does it add meaning to those elements? Is “in Christ Jesus” a necessary condition? Why is this phrase included?

### Observation of Word as a Whole

- The sentence begins with the conjunction “and”. Instead of joining more than one element to function in some sort of compound function, it is connecting this sentence to the previous, indicating a continued flow of the thought and possibly a *cause and effect* relationship.
- “All” modifies “understanding”, indicating the scope of understanding being discussed.
- “Your”, as in “your hearts and your minds”, is in the plural form. Paul is addressing the community of believers at Philippi.

*NOTE: For questions RE: the cause/effect relationship, see the section **Observation of Segment as a Whole**.*

- Why does Paul begin a new sentence with the conjunction “and”? What are the implications of this usage?
- What is the meaning of “all”? Is any type of understanding excluded? How does “all” provide meaning to “understanding”? What are the conditions that qualify “all” to be used in this situation? Can those conditions be negated or canceled? Why is “all” used to modify “understanding”? What are the implications of using “all” to modify “understanding”?
- Does this mean the effect *MUST* be administered corporately or can it be experienced individually? How do the individual and corporate effects influence one another and the meaning of the effect? Why does Paul address the community instead of the individual? What are the implications of Paul’s choice to address the community instead of making an individual reference?