
Week 4 — Understand the Word

Introduction

3 Important Assumptions

- **Dual Authorship**
- **The Historical-Grammatical Method**
- **Inductive Bible Method**

Observe & Interpret: A Quick Reference Guide

STEP	PRACTICE	QUESTIONS TO ASK
OBSERVE <i>What does the text say?</i>	1. Compare Translations	What differences do I notice between several good translations? Do any differences affect how I understand the passage?
	2. Ask Questions	Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? What is unclear? What is surprising? What seems important?
	3. Identify Key Words & Phrases	What words are repeated, unusual, theological, or especially important to the author's thought?
	4. Notice Literary Features	Do I see repetition, commands, reasons, conclusions, contrasts, comparisons, purposes, or conditions ? Watch for <i>therefore, for, because, but, if, so that</i> , etc.
	5. Identify Genre, Unit & Structure	What kind of literature is this? Where does the author's thought begin and end? How does the passage break down? How do the parts fit together?

INTERPRET <i>What does the author mean?</i>	1. Consider the Context	What comes before and after? How does this passage fit into the book? What historical circumstances matter?
	2. Define Key Words & Phrases	What do the important words mean here ? Start with the passage itself: Passage → Book → Same Author → Rest of Scripture .
	3. Determine the Main Point	What is the author actually trying to communicate? Can I state it clearly in my own words?
	4. Trace the Author's Reasoning	Why does the author think I should believe or do this? Main Point → Because... → Therefore...
	5. Compare Scripture with Scripture	How do clearer or related passages help me understand this passage? Remember: nearer context takes priority over farther context .
	6. Correlate with Biblical Teaching	How does this passage fit into the Bible's larger teaching? Exegesis first → theological synthesis second .
	7. Consult Resources	After doing my own work, what help can I get from dictionaries, cross-references, study notes, commentaries, sermons, or trusted teachers?

GENRE: KNOW WHAT YOU'RE READING

GENRE	PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO...
Expository / Epistle	Key words • Commands • Main points • Reasons • Conclusions • Logical connections
Narrative	Events • Plot • Dialogue • Characters • Repetition • Emphasis • Climax
Poetry	Imagery • Metaphor • Parallelism • Repetition • Emotion • Figurative language
Wisdom	General principles • Comparisons • Contrasts • Patterns of wise/foolish living
Prophecy	Historical setting • Covenant language • Judgment & salvation • Imagery • Fulfillment
Apocalyptic	Symbols • Visions • Old Testament imagery • Cosmic conflict • Ultimate victory

The basic movement:



Start with the passage. Stay with the passage. Let the author's words, structure, context, and genre lead you to his intended meaning.