

Bible Study Tip 3 – Handout

So far we've learned about **the interpretive process** and then we looked at the importance of **observation, first noticing words and sentences**.

Matthew 3 – Interpretive Process Example

Here is one example of the interpretive process for Matthew 3. If you were to do this – the words would be different, but the overall meaning and truth of the passage would be the same. The applications listed may also be different but probably similar depending on how personal versus general you make them. Use this as a guide for next week's Bible Study assignment.

1. What does the passage say, and what did it mean to the original audience?

John the Baptist preached repentance, baptized people in the Jordan, and warned of God's coming judgment. For the Jewish people, this was a prophetic call to turn from sin and prepare for the Messiah's arrival. Jesus was baptized, identifying with sinners and fulfilling all righteousness, and God publicly affirmed Him as His beloved Son.

2. What are the differences between that audience and us?

The original audience awaited the Messiah's first coming. We live after the cross and resurrection, knowing Jesus has already accomplished redemption. Instead of preparing for His arrival, we now live in the light of His finished work and anticipate His return.

3. What are the eternal truths / theological principles?

- Repentance is necessary to enter God's kingdom (Matthew 3:2).
- God fulfills His promises in Jesus, the true Son of God (Matthew 3:17).
- Obedience demonstrates true faith and pleases the Father.
- Jesus identifies with sinners so that He might save them (2 Corinthians 5:21).

4. How does this passage fit into the biblical map? What other verses give insight?

John's role fulfills Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 4:5–6, showing God's faithfulness to send a forerunner. Jesus' baptism points to His substitutionary role (2 Corinthians 5:21), foreshadows Christian baptism (Romans 6:3–4), and reveals His identity as both King (Psalm 2:7) and Servant (Isaiah 42:1). Together these passages confirm that Jesus is God's chosen Son who begins the work of redemption.

5. Application & Prayer

Applications:

- We turn from sin, trust in Christ's righteousness, and live as witnesses who prepare the way for others to meet Jesus.
- Baptism and obedience flow from true faith.
- Examine our hearts: regularly confess sin and practice daily repentance.
- Identity in Christ: rest in the truth that we are beloved children of God in Him (Galatians 4:4–7).
- Witness to others: like John, use our words and lives to prepare the way for others to encounter Jesus.
- Obedience matters: trust that even small steps of obedience please God.
- Live in anticipation: remember we are awaiting Jesus' second coming and live ready for His kingdom.

Prayer:

Lord, give me a repentant heart, joy in Christ's finished work, and courage to point others to Your Son, my Savior and King.

Using Matthew 4, here is a practice sheet of these concepts. They seem straightforward, but practicing them will train your mind to look for them more naturally as you read and study God's Word.

Look for	
Repetition of Words	
Contrasts	
Comparisons	
Lists	
Causes and Effects	
Figures of Speech	
Conjunctions	
Verbs	
Any other word/sentence observations?	

1. List your observations about the passage (perhaps details that you have not seen before). What are the details?
2. What **questions** (that you would like to answer) and **insights** (where the Holy Spirit is working to give you greater understanding) do these observations bring to your mind?

Jot down the 5 steps of the interpretive process for Matthew 4.

What is the meaning of the passage for the audience to which it was written?	
What are the differences between the audience and us?	
What are the theological principles/eternal truths of the passage? What does this passage teach you about God? What does this passage teach you about the Kingdom of God? About us?	
What does the rest of the Bible say to give further insight to this passage?	
What are the applications for you today? How does this challenge and grow you this week?	

Now go on to the Bible Study Guide questions and see how they further increase your knowledge of this passage. It will be interesting to see what questions are asked that we did not already ask ourselves! 😊