

## **Bible Study Tip 2: Disciplined Observation to See What the Text Says**

### **Looking at Sentences** (from *Grasping God's Word* by Duvall & Hays)

Plunging into the Word of God is similar to sitting down to a meal. We expect to eat something nourishing, something substantial, and something appropriate to our maturity level. We want to dig into the real meat. But often we are only able to come up with baby food. This is not a reflection on the Word of God, which is loaded with meat, but rather on our ability to extract the meat and enjoy it. What about you? Do you long to dig deeper into God's Word?

If you move straight from your initial reading of a passage to the application of that passage, you will likely remain tied to your previous understanding of that text. You may not see anything deeper or new, and the Bible could become boring for you. God wants to have deeper and more mature conversations with you, but if you are tied to superficial and surface readings of the Bible then you may miss the growth God intends for you through His Word. If you want to hear and understand some of the deep and wonderful truths that God has placed in Scripture – you will have to exert considerable effort. It takes work – hard work and serious reading.

One of the most critical skills needed in reading the Bible is the ability to see the details. The first step in grasping a Biblical text is to observe as many details as possible. We want to see as much as possible. Learning to observe the details is a developed process.

So, how do we develop the skill of observing the Bible? We read the text over and over, noting the details of the text. Keep in mind that reading seriously involves a combination of analyzing small pieces of text and big pieces of text. We have to understand the small parts of the text (words, phrases, and sentences) to understand the larger chunks (paragraphs and chapters). Usually, the process of observing the text involves looking at the small parts and the larger chunks simultaneously, but to start, we will first learn what to look for in the small parts (words, phrases, sentences) of a Bible passage. There are several basic features to look for that will help us get started with this observation stage. There are other things to see too, but the list on the following page gets us started with the most common.

Extra Practice assignment: Make at least 30 observations in a list about Matthew 2: 16-18 OR Matthew 3: 1-3.

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<b>Look for</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Practice and Examples</b>
<b>Repetition of Words</b>	Look for words that repeat	Practice with I John 2:15-17; I Cor 1:3-7
<b>Contrasts</b>	Look for differences through items, ideas, or individuals that are contrasted with each other	Prov 14:31; Prov 15:1; Rom 6:23; Eph 5:8; I John 1:5-7
<b>Comparisons</b>	Look for similarities through items, ideas, or individuals that are compared with each other	Prov 25:25; James 3:3-6; Is 40:31
<b>Lists</b>	Anytime you encounter more than 2 itemized things, you can identify them as a list. Write the list down and explore its significance. Is there any order? Are the items grouped in any way?	I John 2:16; Gal 5:22-23; Gal 5:19-21
<b>Causes and Effects</b>	Look for when a cause is stated followed by the effect	Prov 15:1; Rom 6:23; Rom 12:2; Ps 13:6
<b>Figures of Speech</b>	Figures of speech are images in which words are used in a sense other than the normal, literal sense. They are powerful literary forms because they paint images to which we can relate emotionally.	Ps 119:105; Isaiah 40:31; Ps 18:2; I Cor 3:6; Luke 13:34
<b>Conjunctions</b>	Conjunctions are the mortar that hold the bricks (phrases and sentences) together. Note all the conjunctions (and, for, but, therefore, since, because, ...) For example, " <i>but</i> " usually precedes a contrast and " <i>therefore</i> " usually presents a conclusion to an earlier argument.	Rom 6:23; Rom 12:1; Heb 12:1
<b>Verbs</b>	Verbs are important because they communicate the action of the sentence. What is the tense? Are they commands? Are they active or passive? Passive verbs often underscore what God has done for us.	Eph 4:2-3 (commands)  Col 3:1; Eph 1:11; Gen 12:3 (passive verbs)
<b>Pronouns</b>	Note all pronouns and be sure to identify to whom or what they refer to	Eph 1:3; Phil 1:27-30