

OBSERVATION

Step 1: What does it say?

To get the big picture, read the whole passage a few times. Read it in more than one translation.

Examine words and sentences. The **verbs** are crucial to track what's happening and when. Pay attention to **adjectives** and **adverbs** to catch the mood, impact, or importance of what you read. Note **transition** words like *and*, *but*, *likewise*, and *therefore*.

Define words. Note words/phrases that are **repeated**. Draw a connecting line between words/ideas that are **compared** or **contrasted**. Note any promises, commands, warnings.

Examine characters, events and relationships. Who are the people involved in the passage? Who is the main character and how are they presented?

Keep in mind you're not just gathering information, you are **actively listening** to God's Word.

Make a note of everything that stands out to you...thoughts, impressions, questions.



INTERPRETATION

Step 2: What does it mean?

During observation, you ask questions and gather information. Now it's time to process what you found.

Look over your observations again. Basic questions to ask: What does this say about God? His works, His will, His character, etc. What does this say about people? Are there examples to follow or avoid? Is there a promise to claim? A condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed?

Questions like these prompt you to think about what the writer is saying and keep it in context.

Read cross-references in Scripture that reinforce what the passage says and to help you understand it.

The Bible is filled with *timeless truth* that forms the foundation of what we believe and guides the way we relate to God and others.

Write down one or two takeaway points (spiritual lessons) you glean from the passage.

Tip: Make your lesson brief and easy to recall. It should be clear enough that, later on, you can say, "I understand and I know how I should respond."



APPLICATION

Step 3: How does this apply to me?

Application is not the last step—it's the *next* step in spiritual growth. What will you do with the insight you've been given?

If we do nothing, it's like seeing our face in a mirror and walking away, forgetting what we look like (James 1:23-24).

Write your application in the form of a question to ask yourself and how you will respond.

.....
**I PONDERED THE DIRECTION OF MY LIFE
AND TURNED TO FOLLOW YOUR STATUTES.
I WILL HURRY, WITHOUT LINGERING, TO
OBEY YOUR COMMANDS.
PSALM 119:59-60**
.....

Ponder - Think about it; consider it carefully. Be willing to do some soul searching and evaluate priorities.

Turn - A verb that indicates a change of course or direction. Turn *towards*, turn *around*, turn *away from*, return *to*.

Obey - A verb that indicates change of action or attitude that follows through without hesitation.



THE UNFOLDING OF YOUR WORDS
GIVES LIGHT: IT GIVES
UNDERSTANDING TO THE SIMPLE.
PSALM 119:130

Basics of God's Will

God's leading is always in harmony with God's Word. Knowing God's will begins with knowing what the Bible says. If our desire conflicts with the plain teaching of the Bible, it cannot be the will of God. Obviously the Bible doesn't spell out what to do in every specific situation. But as we learn more from God's Word, we will grow to think and see things according to God's perspective.

To discern God's will, we need the Holy Spirit. Jesus set the example of being led by, and filled with, the Spirit (Luke 4:1). You can be certain God will lead you in His will when you listen and cooperate with the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17 + John 16:13-15).

Do's and Don'ts

- Set aside time to read God's Word every day.
- Keep your study habits simple & practical.
- Be careful to keep the verses you are reading in context.
- Don't forget to pray! The Holy Spirit is your Teacher (John 14:25). Ask for His help.
- Don't settle for head knowledge without heart change.

THREE STEPS TO GROW YOUR FAITH

The Bible is not just any book—it is God's Word. When you read to *listen* and *learn*, God's Spirit is right there to teach you. This 3-step method isn't about consuming information, it's about being actively engaged in conversation with God. Proverbs 8:34 pictures it like this:

**BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO LISTENS TO ME, WATCHING DAILY AT MY GATES, WAITING AT MY DOORPOSTS.
FOR ONE WHO FINDS ME FINDS LIFE, AND OBTAINS FAVOR FROM THE LORD.**



What to Look For in Different Writing Styles

NARRATIVE (STORIES)

- Look for clues that tell you when & where the story is taking place.
- Who is mentioned and what part do they play?
- What events led up to this? What's happening now?
- How do the characters respond to their situation?
- Look for more details in another part of the Bible. Much of OT history is recorded in more than one book. Many NT stories are found in more than one gospel.

BIOGRAPHY + BIBLICAL CHARACTERS

- Focus on God's dealings with that person through various events and developments of their life.
- What role do they have in the story? What happens to them? How do they respond?
- What qualities & traits do they have? What choices do they make? What successes and/or failures?
- Look for more details about this person or event in other parts of the Bible.
- Examine secondary characters in the story. Who is mentioned & what part do they play? What relationship do they have to the main character?
- What can you learn about the culture and time this person lived in?

NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS (EXPOSITION)

- Exposition is a straightforward argument or explanation of objective truth. It appeals to reason, logic, and a clear sense of purpose. Spiritual lessons practically jump off the pages!
- Concentrate on following the writer's train of thought. Focus on terms, attitudes, and concepts.
- Trace the meaning of a word, how and where it's used in the Bible. A concordance & dictionary are essential for this.
- If you have a Study Bible, reading the introduction, background, and timeline information is very useful.