

Observation: The Role of a Detective - Exercises

- 1) Observation means to make a careful and thorough examination to see what the text is saying. It requires concentrated looking and thinking. Aim for clear recognition of what God has revealed. Ask the who, what, when, where, why & how questions.
- Who? - *Who is the subject of the passage? Who is the object of the passage? Who is speaking?*
- What? - *What is happening in the passage? What is the subject doing? What is happening to the object in the passage? What type of passage is this: Poetry? Narrative? Direct teaching? Prophetic? etc. What is the context of the passage? What is the atmosphere of this passage: Calm? Emotionally intense? Fearful? Rejoicing? What words do I need to look up to understand? What is God doing in this passage? What do I learn about God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit in this passage?*
- When? - *When do the events in the passage take place? Or will take place? What time sequences is there in the passage? What events occur before or after?*
- Where? - *Where does the passage take place? What places do the passages talk about? What are the characteristics of those places?*
- Why? - *Why are the subjects doing what they are doing? Why is this passage included in the Bible - particular book, chapter, passage? Why were particular words in the passage used? (Lexical/syntactical)*
- How? *How should this passage affect my life? How would I have handled the situation? How did God work in this passage? How does this passage relate to other parts of Scripture?*

Example:

Read Acts 1:8 to see how many observations you can make from this verse.

- a. The word *but*, shows that the statement to follow is contrasted with what has been said earlier.
- b. A specific event is mentioned as the point at which the disciples would receive power.
- c. This specific event is the Holy Spirit coming upon them.

What other observations do you see? List as many you can:

Now read John 3:16, and try to list ten observations you find in this passage.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

2) Key Words

One way of helping to observe a passage closely is to look for key words. Often they (or a cognate) is repeated frequently.

1. Read 1 John 4:7-21. What important word is used repeatedly in this passage? _____

How many times is it used. _____

2. Read each of the following passages. List the important word which is repeated in each one.

Luke 9:57-62 _____

1 Timothy 6:17-19 _____

Ephesians 6:10-20 _____

The word or phrase might be repeated throughout a large section of Scripture.

For example, examine Ephesians 4:1; 4:17; 5:1,2; 5:15.

What key word occurs:

3. Reading through a passage you may notice that while a particular word is not used repeatedly, the same idea is repeated using synonyms or phrases referring to the same thing.

What central subject is repeated in Psalm 19:7-9? _____

How many different synonyms or phrases are used? _____

Who is the subject in John 1:1-18? _____

What different terms are used? _____

Remember though that while a key word maybe repeated it does not have to be and may occur only once. For example, what might the key word be in Psalm 1:1-3? _____

3) Comparisons & Contrasts

Comparisons show how things are alike. Contrasts show how things are different. Some of the words that often indicate a comparison are “even so” “as . . . so” and “likewise.” Words that may indicate a contrast are “but,” “nor,” “not.”

What are the comparisons in the following:

John 3:14 - _____

Romans 5:18-19: _____

Mark 12:21 _____

Luke 17:26 _____

What are the contrasts in the following:

Genesis 2:16-17- _____

Psalm 30:5: _____

Proverbs 11:24 _____

Revelation 3:1 _____

4) Cause and Effect Statements

Another helpful observation is to take note of cause and effect statements. These are statements that say, "if *this*, then *that*." i.e. if you plant corn (the cause) you will get corn (the effect)- not beans." If you have faith in Jesus Christ (the cause), then you will receive eternal life" (the effect).

A quick identification of these statements can be made by looking for sentences that begin with words such as *if*, *because* and *since*. For example, Romans 5:1. *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith* (the cause clause) *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ* (the effect clause).

Examine the following Scriptures and mark the cause and effect clauses:

John 15:5 - Cause: _____

Effect: _____

1 John 1:9 - Cause: _____

Effect: _____

1 John 5:14 - Cause: _____

Effect: _____

Psalm 66:18 - Cause: _____

Effect: _____

Proverbs 24:14 - Cause: _____

Effect: _____

5) Commands

Commands give instruction or an order that is expected to be carried out. We can think of them as requirements or rules. There are many direct commands in the Scriptures.

Example: Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 "Nor do [men] light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

This passage, which teaches how Christ's disciples are the light of the world, contains one direct command: *Let your light shine before men.*

List below the commands given in Romans 12:9-13

6) Linking Words

Various phrases and sentences in Scripture are tied together using various connecting words.

These words can be very important in giving meaning and understanding to a passage.

Contrast is shown by the word **but**. In Titus 1:16 Paul uses it to show contrast about certain people who were spreading false teachings. *"They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him."* Their actions are contrasted with their claims.

Purpose can be emphasized by using phrases such as: **so that** or **in order that**. Example: 1 John 5:20 *"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."*

Reasons can be introduced using words such as **for** and **because**. Example: Psalm 136:1 *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting"*.

Conditional clauses are introduced with the word **if**. Example: 1 John 1:7 *"but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."*

There are many other linking or connecting words in Scripture, most of which we often use in our own speech.

1. Read Acts 1:6-8 and look for the importance of the connecting word **but** at the beginning of verse 8. What were the disciples looking for?

What, instead, did Jesus say they would receive?

2. Find the linking word used most often in Acts 9:23-28. What is it? _____

3. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. List the major linking words in this passage:
