**Book/Paragraph/Sentence Level Observations**

**As we have already discussed in other disciple-making resources, proper observation is a critical part to proper study of Scripture. The three levels of observation are:**

* **Book Level**
  + **Disregard chapter/verse separation**
  + **Look at the book as one coherent story**
  + **Look at the context surrounding the book as a whole, and how it fits in a societal picture**
* **Paragraph Level**
  + **Examine a passage (or chapter)**
  + **Begin to note observations as to the general structure (Dr Smith’s TrueNorth guidelines for observation points can be found below)**
  + **Formulate some high-level questions about the cultural significance, ideas that repeat in the paragraph etc**
* **Sentence Level**
  + **Look at an individual sentence/phrase**
  + **Examine closely all the aspects of the sentence**
  + **Determine what words mean in the context they are presented**
  + **Formulate and start to answer questions that are found in the observation process**

**Observational Guidelines – TrueNorth – Paragraph & Sentence Level Observations**

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| **General Structure**  **Repetition and**  **Progression**  **of Ideas** | 1. The key issue to keep in mind is the general structure or logic of the passage. What holds it together “logically?” Where are the major breaks in the flow of the passage? And explain how they are connected? Maybe diagram the passage.  2. Be alert for repetition of words, ideas, or statements. This often will give you a clue as to the author’s purpose in a passage. Take special note of lists of item or ideas. Compare the items and see if there is any significance in the order. Is there a progression of ideas toward a climax? Note the arrangement of the ideas in a passage, the relationship of verses to each other. Sometimes the author makes a general statement, then explains it with examples (e.g., 1 Tim 2:1). |
| **Basic Content** | The readers’ friends of “**who**? **what**? **where**? **when**?” prove most helpful. Moreover, the matters of “**why**” and “**how**” can be particularly powerful tools in probing deeply below the surface. |
| **Key Words**  **Word Meanings** | When you first read a passage, look for the key words; those words you think are important in the passage. Repetition of words will sometimes give you a clue. Underline them in your Bible.  Each word can be lifted up and examined from different angles like a gem. Too often we either overlook the rich implications of words, or download heavy theological meaning into unsuspecting words. **Make note of words which you need to perform detailed studies upon** |
| **Important**  **Connectives**  conjunctions  prepositions  adverbs | Connectives are very important in revealing key ideas and relationships. Be on the alert for some of the following:  *but* – introduces a contrast  *if* – introduces conditional clause (If…then…)  *for, because, therefore* – introduces reason and results  *in order that* – sets forth a purpose  *in, into, with, by, upon*  – important prepositions  *after, while, until, immediately* – important adverbs |
| **Historical / Cultural Context** | As a careful, be alert for matters pointing to:  1) Specific cultural issues and values involving either the characters in a narrative or the writer of the passage;  2) Historical, political, economic, and cultural framework of the passage. In fact, these matters are *always* at work! |
| **Grammatical**  **Construction**  Verbs, nouns, pronouns  Adverbs, adjectives  words of scope | Note the grammatical construction of some statements. Be on the alert for the verbs and their tenses, for the use of pronouns, and for the use of adverbs and adjectives and the way they describe things.  Note words of scope: All, each, every, some, none, etc.  Note words of time: After, while, immediately |
| **Atmosphere**  **Emphatic**  **Statements** | Note the general tone of a passage. It may be characterized by the mood of joy, thanksgiving, concern, humility, zeal, anger, or caution. The tone of a passage may vary as a writer moves from one idea to another. The way a writer addresses readers often reveals the mood.  Also note the use of emphatic words, and phrases to reveal feelings. |