



OBSERVE THEIR HOME: What Do I See? (cont.)

Learn to Look ... (cont.)

Remember, what we're doing right now is we're learning to look. Look for what the Word emphasizes. We listed those things that show emphasis in the Word. Now, I want us to think about looking for what the Word repeats. Remember, these are six things we're looking for when we are learning to listen, asking all these questions when we come to a text. Now, we're looking for certain things, looking for what the Word emphasizes, and then, second, what the Word repeats.

Every time we see this, we're going to unlock some gold in the text. Does the author intentionally repeat anything in the text? Whenever you study the Bible and notice something that is repeated, it's not because the author forgot he'd already mentioned that. He's doing this for a reason. It's his way of pointing out something is really, really important. So what kind of things are repeated? Well, many times certain words, terms, phrases or clauses are repeated.

You go to Psalm 136 – I don't think these are in there – but Psalm 136, and you see over and over and over again, "His love endures forever...His love endures forever...His love endures forever." You look at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, and you count out the number of times that Jesus refers to God as Father over and over and over again, and it's amazing even in the Gospels. In the Old Testament, this is a little lagniappe. This is not in your notes, but man, it's such an incredible picture. Fifteen times in the Old Testament God is referred to as Father – 15 times.

When you get to the New Testament, just in the Gospels alone, He is referred to as Father 165 times. Over and over and over again, Jesus is calling God Father. That clues us in that something is going on here, and in all those times, what's certainly interesting, 165 times, in 164 of them, He is talking about God as Father when He's talking with His disciples. What we're seeing is that Christ is ushering in a picture of God as a father to His people. It's incredible.

Just by looking for the what the Word repeats. You look at 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Let's ask the question, "Is this text repeating anything?" See if there's a word or a couple of words that were repeated here.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

Have you picked up on it, yet? This isn't even a chiasm. This is just right here. This is easy.

For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, we get the point, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

What you see in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 is this picture of comfort and suffering and how they go together. Those two words don't often go together, do they? In Christ, they do. Comfort, suffering, repeated over and over and over again, setting the stage for the whole book of 2 Corinthians.

1 John 2:15-17, look for what the Word repeats.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

You see the "world" over and over and over again, not just from this passage, all throughout the book of 1 John.

You see "love" all throughout the book of 1 John. Whenever you see these words while you're studying the Bible, underline them, circle them, draw attention to the fact the word is repeating here, something here, for a reason.

You look for characters that the Word repeats. You look in Acts, and every time you see Barnabas, he's coming on the scene, and he's bringing encouragement. He's building up the body. He's helping in this area or that area. Every time you see Barnabas repeated there, he's doing the same thing.

You see certain patterns. In Exodus, you see over and over again this phrase, "Pharaoh hardened his heart," but you also see this phrase over and over again that, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart." So, you see them both repeated over and over again.

You look in Luke. He mentions "*filled with the Spirit*" eight different times in his two books, Luke and Acts. Eight different times, he mentions "*filled with the Spirit*," and there's something that happens every time he mentions it. He talks about how someone was filled with the Spirit, and they began to speak. Someone was filled with the Spirit, and they began to speak. This person was filled with the Spirit and they began to speak. There is a picture here of when we're filled with the Spirit, what do we do? We speak. The Spirit is in you to speak the word of Christ, to speak to bring glory to Christ. That's the picture over and over again. We see that by what the Word repeats, not just in passages, but in large chunks of Scripture.

Characters, patterns, then, New Testament uses of Old Testament passages. You go through Matthew 5, and you see Jesus saying over and over and over again, "You have heard that it was said" this, "but I say to you" this repeated over and over. So look for what the Word repeats. You look for that in individual passages as well as books that you're reading through. Is there something that keeps coming up over and over and over again? Look for what the Word emphasizes and repeats.

Next, third, look for what the Word connects. Look for what the Word connects. There are certain relationships that are established between items, ideas, individuals that are connected together, and there are all kinds of ways that an author will connect things. One way is through conjunctions, words like "and," "for," "but," "therefore," "since," "because." If you imagine a text almost to be like a brick house, then the mortar that holds those bricks together are these conjunctions. They hold the thing together. They tie it together. Connections.

You look at Romans 12:1. The first word is, "therefore," and you underline that. That's a major connector. Paul has just spent eleven chapters talking about the beauty of the gospel, and he says, "Therefore, in light of the great love of Jesus Christ, I urge you, brothers, to offer yourselves to God as a living sacrifice." That's a connector. The practical that's about to come in Romans 12 through 16 is based on Romans 1 through 11.

Same thing in Hebrews 12:1 when he says, "Therefore," at the very beginning, "since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses..." It's a reference to the entire chapter of Hebrews 11, known as the faith chapter. He's just giving a list of all these people – Abraham, Moses, Joshua – these folks who did these things, and then he says, "Therefore, in light of them, I urge you to press on toward Christ."

2 Timothy 1:7-8, underline or circle the different connectors here, the different conjunctions. "For," there's one, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but," there it is, "a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So, do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or ashamed of being His prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God." Now, there are six or seven conjunctions in there that are connecting things, that are saying, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power," connecting these things together. We've got a Spirit, but it's not one that's afraid. It's one that's powerful. So, in light of that, don't be ashamed. Paul is in prison as he writes this. He says, "But, instead of being ashamed, you join with me in suffering for the gospel." These connectors, just see how they relate to each other.

Prepositions. Look for "by," "with," "from," "in," "on," "upon," "through," "to." This is one of my – we studied this a few weeks ago here at Brook Hills. "I have been crucified..." Here is one. "...With Christ..." (Galatians 2:20) Circle that. Do you realize what that means? You're crucified with Christ, identified with Christ in His death. His death for the sins of our lives is our death for sins. It's been paid for, crucified with Christ. It's a good thing to be crucified with Christ. That one word is huge. "...And I no longer live, but Christ lives..." what, "...in me." Isn't that a great picture? Christ is in you, ladies and gentlemen. That is a stout two-letter word right there. "The life I live in the body..." So the life I have in this body "...I live by faith." We live by faith. The only way you can live out the Christian life is by faith, not by works, not by you trying to get it done on your own. It's by faith in the Son of God, in Him. It's faith in Him that makes this thing possible. "...Who loved me and gave himself for me." Praise be to Jesus Christ! He gave Himself on our behalf for us. Now, you just go through there and you've got a good quiet time in Galatians 2:20 just by looking at prepositions.

Look at the next verse, Romans 5:1-2. This also is loaded. "Therefore, since we have been justified..." That means made right with God. "...Through faith..." How are you made right with God? Through faith. "...We have peace with God..." It's a good thing. We have peace with the God of the universe. How? "...Through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." Now, that is just loaded. We have access to God by faith in this grace in which we now stand. In the grace of God, with the peace of God, "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" no matter what happens.

It goes on next,

We rejoice in suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.

Man, it is just loaded with this picture of who we are in Christ, and what we have in Christ, and how we relate to God, and how there is nothing in this world that can stop us, no matter how deep the suffering is, because we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We also have the love of the Holy Spirit. I'm preaching on Romans 5. We need to move on. You got the picture.

Connections between general things and specific things. Look for times when an author introduces a general idea and then provides an explanation through specific supporting ideas, or sometimes vice versa, goes from specific to general.

Look at Galatians 5:16-23. He says,

So, I say, this is Paul talking, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But, if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

So, what we've got is a picture that's set up very general, those who are led by the sinful nature and those who are led by the Spirit, and then he goes to specific. "*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious...*" Here are the specifics over here: "*sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery...*" He lists them all, and then he says, "*I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*" Then, he goes back over to this general idea, the Spirit, those who live by the Spirit, and he gives a list, specific. "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*" From general to specific. How do you know if you're living according to the sinful nature or according to Spirit? You look at these specifics. Are they evident in your life?

From specific to general: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. I didn't put that in your notes, but you know how it gives the specific description of love. Love is this. Love is this. Love is this. All these specifics, and it builds toward the end when it says, "*And we have faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love.*" From specific to general.

All right, next, question and answer. Look for times, and this is really interesting. It's like the text of Scripture is having a dialog with itself, and writers are having a dialog with the readers. Look for questions that are answered, and sometimes those questions are answered; sometimes they're not.

You look at Job 38. The key turning point, at the very end of this book, God comes to Job, and He says, "*Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.*" Things are real quiet at this point in the book of Job, and question after question after question unfolds. God asking Job, "Were you there when I did this? Were you there when I did this? Were you there when

I did this?" It is a powerful picture, questions and not a lot of answers coming from Job in the middle of it.

Malachi 1:6,

'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me?' This is God rebuking His people. 'If I'm a master, where is the respect due me?' says the Lord Almighty...But you ask, 'How have we shown contempt for your name?'

This is God having a dialog with His people through the prophet Malachi.

Matthew 26:40, *"He returned to his disciples and found them sleeping."* I wanted to include this one in light of our time together tonight. *"Could you men not keep watch with me for six hours?"* he asked Peter." Matthew 26:40. But, if they were falling asleep, then I guess it would make sense that some of us will, and that's okay. That's Okay.

Paul writes to the Romans, and what you see – and I just put the first verse in each of these chapters. Romans 3:1, *"What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?"* Then, Paul answers it.

Then, he gets to Romans 4, *"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter?"* He answers it. Romans 6, *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?"* Then, he answers it in Romans 6. Romans 7, *"Do you not know, brothers - for I am speaking to men who know the law - that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?"* You see this dialog going on, and Paul is asking questions, and then he's giving the answer, so look for question and answer.

Then, cause and effect, cause and effect. Look for causes that the author states and the results of the effects that come from that. This is really important. Proverbs 15:1, *"A gentle answer turns away wrath,"* cause; effect. *"...But a harsh word stirs up anger."* Cause of a harsh word is anger, always, and a gentle answer turns away wrath.

Then, you get to Romans 6:23. *"The wages of sin..."* the payment of sin, or the effect of sin, *"is death."* Sin is the cause; death is the effect, and because of God's gift, the effect is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Acts 8:1. I put this one in here, particularly, in light of our brothers and sisters who are persecuted. Listen to Acts 8:1. *"And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."* Isn't that interesting? In Acts 1 through 7, the gospel is stuck in Jerusalem. They've been told to take it to the ends of the earth, and it's stuck in Jerusalem. What causes it to go to the ends of the earth? Persecution broke out, and as an effect of that, all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. It's a picture that we see.

It's Satan's strategy to hinder the advancement of the gospel by stoning Stephen. The picture of the stoning of Stephen in Acts 6 and 7 actually serves to advance the gospel, and the effect of persecution is advancement of the gospel to Judea and Samaria, and, eventually, to the ends of the earth. I praise God for men like Donnie and Ronnie who show us what it looks like to experience persecution as a cause that affects the advancement of the gospel throughout Indonesia. Also, our brothers and sisters around the world who are experiencing great costs in this cause picture of persecution, and the effect is people all

around the world are seeing the gospel through the lives that are being given from the church. Cause and effect.

Means. When something happens in the text, look for the means that brought about that particular action. How did it happen? What was the way through which it happened? Look for "by" or "through." *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word"* (Psalm 119:9). You want to be pure, students? I know there are a lot of students in here, college and high school students struggling with purity, holiness. How do you be pure? By living according to God's Word. The means by which you will experience purity in your life is through knowledge of the Word of God. That's the picture. It's the means.

Romans 8:13-14. *"If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."* The way to live is by the Spirit, through the Spirit. That's the whole point of Romans 8, so those are the means.

Then, there are conditions, clauses that have conditions that bring about a particular response. Look for "if," which is the condition, and then "then," which is the consequence. If this happens, then this will happen, condition and consequence.

Deuteronomy 28. You see these all throughout the Old Testament covenant. *"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God,"* and "then" is not in there, but you see it, *"the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth."* If you do this, then this will happen.

2 Corinthians 5:17, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation."* How do you become a new creation? By being in Christ. If this, the consequence is this. 1 John 1:6, *"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."* Look for condition and consequence.

Finally, well not finally, lists. Look at lists. Look for any instances where two or more things are itemized and observe how – here's the question you want to ask - how is this listed, and why? Why are they ordered in a certain way? Any time you see two or more things that are listed together, you have a list there, and you want to ask how are they listed, and why are they listed this way?

Look at 1 John 2:16, *"Everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, the boasting in what he has and does – come not from the Father but from the world."* That's a list. Those three things are grouped together, and so when you're studying that text, you want to ask, "Okay, why do these things go together? How did God in His Spirit bring these things together in the Word?"

Go to Colossians 3:5-8, *"Put to death...whatever belongs to your earthly nature..."* It gives a list similar to what we saw in Galatians 5: *"sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires...greed...idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived."*

Then, he gives another list. *"But...you must rid yourself of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander...filthy language from your lips."* Put them together. You've got lists, and so if you're studying, and you have this sheet in front of you, then what you're going to do is you're going to write on there "list," and you're going to write that out. Remember, this is the first part. The first part on this sheet that you've got.

You're writing down on there, "What does the Word repeat, emphasize?" All the while, you're writing it down. That's what this sheet is for, to write those things down. When you sit down and study a text, you look for lists.

Pronouns. Pronouns. Now, remember, we're looking for how things connect. Pronouns help us see connections in the text. Now, remember, a pronoun is when instead of saying, "David," it's "I," or instead of saying, "the church," it's "you." So, you use these pronouns - "I," "we," "you."

I want you to look at Ephesians 1:3-14. This is my favorite example of this in all of Scripture. I want you to look for the pronouns and circle every time you see a pronoun, okay? Now, active and passive folks, are you with me on the pronouns? All right. Pronouns - "I," "me," "we," "us," "our," "your." Okay. You understand pronouns? Okay. Here we go.

Praise be to the God and Father of our..." pronoun, "...our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose..." and "He" is a pronoun, but we're just going to assume that's God. "...He chose us..." There it is, circle it there. "...In him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And...

Now, does that look different? There's a pronoun change here. Everything is "we" and "us." It's happened to us. Then, he says,

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal...

Now, why do you think that happened? You go back to what we talked about in the New Testament Secret Church, and you remember that Paul was writing this book of Ephesians, this letter, to a church that was experiencing a lot of division between Jews and Gentiles, and they were tempted to look at Gentiles, because they weren't a part of the original people of God, as almost like second-class Christians. So, Paul starts off the letter, a Jew, saying, "In Him, we have these things," and "us" and "we" and "us" in reference to the Jewish people. Then, he says, "And you also..." He's speaking to Gentiles, and he says, "You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth...you were marked in him with a seal..." Then, he brings it to the end, "...the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing..." Then, he goes back to our inheritance. Isn't that a great picture? There are no second-class Christians in the kingdom of God. It's us together, our inheritance. This picture of community in Ephesians comes alive between Jews and Gentiles when you look at the pronouns here, and the shift that comes there. So, that's what we're looking for, looking at the pronouns.

Even a simple verse like 2 Peter 2:20.

If they... There's the pronoun. ...they have escaped the correction of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

This is one of those verses that people sometimes take and say, "Well, you can lose your salvation." Did you hear what it said? "...*They have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing Christ and then again they're entangled and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.*" Does that mean I can lose my salvation? You go back to the very beginning of 2 Peter 2, and you look throughout where this pronoun is referring to, and you look to the very beginning, and it says, "These are the false prophets. They were with us but not really of us," to use 1 John 2 to describe. We have to know who the pronoun is in order to understand what this verse is saying. Pronouns are key, key.

Major shifts. Major shifts. These are connections. As you read larger units of text, look for critical places where the text seems to take a new turn, where a major shift happens. Now, this could be on a small scale, just verse by verse, or it could be on a large scale.

I think I have listed there in your notes 2 Samuel 11 and 12. A major shift in the book of 2 Samuel. If you were to sit down and read that book through, you would see 2 Samuel 1 through 10 telling us the story of David, and everything is good for David. Everything is good in the kingdom. He is leading well. Then, you get to 2 Samuel 11 and 12. Anybody know what happens? David and Bathsheba – adultery, murder, death of a child, and you read 2 Samuel 13 to 22, and it's a whole other picture of David, an entirely different picture of David. You can't walk away from 2 Samuel and say that this sin did not affect his life. It affected his life radically. Everything is completely different from 2 Samuel 13 to 22 than it was in 2 Samuel 1 to 10. That's a major shift.

Acts 8:26. I included this. "*Now, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'*" What's interesting is that this is a major shift, because they've gone to Judea and Samaria, and people are coming to faith in Christ all over the place, and God says to Philip, "Now, you go south to the desert road." It's kind of like a picture of a Billy Graham crusade where everybody is coming to faith in Christ, and God says to Billy Graham, "I want you to go into the middle of the Sahara," and Philip is like, "Well, I – this is where the action is. I'd rather not go to this road." It's a major shift, but it's showing that God, yes, is concerned about the multitudes, but he's also concerned about a eunuch over here that needs to hear the gospel. It's a great picture.

Romans 3:20-21, one of my favorite shifts in all of Scripture. "*Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*" That caps off the whole picture of the sinfulness and depravity of man from Romans 1:18 to 3:20, and then he says, "*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify,*" and he goes into a picture of the gospel. It's a major shift.

Same thing in Ephesians 3 and 4. You remember, we talked about how, first half of Ephesians, explanation of salvation, second half, application of salvation. See the shift here. The last verse in Ephesians 3, "*To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*" Then, you have a shift. "*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*" It goes

into a whole other, much more practical picture, in Ephesians 4-6. Look for those major shifts. That's what the Word connects. Okay?

We're looking for these six things. Next – I can't remember if we're on number four or five, but look for what the Word compares. Look for what the Word compares. I think that's number four. Look for what the Word compares. Does the author compare certain items, ideas or individuals? Simile. I know some of you are thinking we're back in English class, but this is why. This is why, students, you soak in English class, not so you can write a good paper. Ultimately, so you can know the Word of God, so you can study the Word of God. This is why we sharpen our minds, so that we can know God's Word, so simile.

Some of you haven't heard these things since grammar class a long time ago, but simile. Look for expressed comparison of two things that are different. Now, a simile uses two words, either "like" or "as." Okay, that's what a simile does. Psalm 42, "*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God.*" It's a comparison between a deer that longs for water and my soul that is longing for God. John 3: "*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert...*" a reference back to the book of Numbers, "*so the Son of Man must be lifted up.*" 1 Peter 2:2, which we looked at earlier: "*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.*" Like babies is how we crave the Word of God. Similes give that comparison with "as" or like."

Metaphors do the same thing. Look for implied comparisons between two things. It's not quite as explicit, not necessarily using the word "like" or "as" with a metaphor. You look at John 15. "*I am the true vine. My Father is the gardener.*" This is Jesus using this picture, and this is really just an extended analogy in some ways, which we'll get to in a second, but it's a picture of Him using this metaphor of a vine and branches to talk about His relationship with His followers.

James 3:3-6. You see it all over this.

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body.

You see the comparisons there that give us these word pictures that help us understand the power of our words, the power of the tongue.

Next, allegory. Look for instances where the author uses a certain image to communicate a deeper meaning in the text. There are images that are used. You look at this passage, it's a long one, Galatians 4:21-31. We'll just read the first part that sets up the image.

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. Listen to what the author says. These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves...

This talks about that, and then it goes on to talk about, later on, "*Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise,*" and it begins to compare this picture of the slave woman and the free woman. The picture of that is an allegory, which basically gives us a comparison between that story and what this looks like when it comes to our relationship with Christ and the covenant we are under, Galatians 4:21-31.

Next, type, and this is really similar to that. I know this is kind of – we're getting into some chiasm realm here - but just follow with me, okay? Look for instances where the author uses a picture to demonstrate something to come in the future. This doesn't happen all the time, but just to give you a picture of what's happening, and the most – the clearest one - is when we see the New Testament and Old Testament talking about Adam as a type of Christ.

You've got Romans 5 listed there. "*Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who had not sinned by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.*" What you see, you go back and read through the last half of Romans 5, and you see a comparison over and over again between Adam and Christ. You, also, see it in 1 Corinthians 15. There, too, the picture of Adam being the first man and Christ being the new man. "*For just as through the disobedience of the one man many are made sinners, so also through the obedience of one the man the many will be made righteous*" (Romans 5:19). Just as sin reigned in death through this one man, grace reigns in life to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord through this one man. What we've got is a picture of Adam and Christ, really kind of a comparison between the two, to bridge the gap from the Old Testament to the New Testament. We don't see a lot of those. When you see them, that's what's going on there.

Next, number five, what we're looking for. Look for what the Word contrasts. We looked at what the Word compares. What does it contrast? These items, individuals, things that contrast, and we look for one main word here is "but." "But" is one of the most important words you will see in Scripture, so know that "but's" are very, very important here. Okay? They are very, very important. Just like Romans 3:21, "*But now a righteousness from God has been made known...*" That is huge, so whenever you see it, stop and ask, "What's the contrast here?"

Proverbs 14:31, "*He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.*" "*The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). Look for these contrasting metaphors, differences between two things. We saw a metaphor where two things are compared. Sometimes they're contrasting. Luke 11:11-13, which we studied here at Brook Hills early this summer, "*Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?*" It begins to talk about fathers and how they treat their children good. "*If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!*" It's a contrast between fathers who are evil and the perfect Father, who is completely good and always gives what is good. So, look for what the word contrasts.

Final thing we look for, number six, look for how the Word communicates, how the Word communicates. Are there words, images, phrases that communicate emotions and moods and tones? This is that part of reading the Bible imaginatively.

Emotions. Look for words that convey particular feelings or emotions. We've got to be careful not to study the Bible like it's just this academic lesson that we've got to get in our

minds. That leads to boring study of the Bible. Let it come alive. Listen to this text, Jeremiah 3. This is God speaking to His people.

I myself said, 'How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation. I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel,' declares the Lord.

Can you read that and not be affected emotionally? You get into the heart of God, and this picture that He uses of adultery to describe unfaithfulness among His people, that is a heavy emotion. You get to Galatians 4:12-16, and Paul says,

I plead with you, brothers, become like me, for I became like you. You have done me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

There was conflict at this point between Paul and the churches in Galatia, and he's talking about this love and this tension that's there that is so real emotionally. There are so many examples. When you read Genesis 22, don't just read about Abraham going up on a mountain with his son, Isaac. Imagine the emotions of a father looking at his son that he's about to slay, because his God just told him to do that. What are you feeling at that point? Imagine Isaac looking up at Abraham. What are you thinking about your father at that point? Are you confused, scared?

When you imagine Moses, imagine Moses standing on Mount Nebo and looking out and not being able to go into the land the people of Israel are about to go through, and imagine the hurt involved in that. Imagine those emotions. David, the pain— do not just read 2 Samuel 12 or 13 to 22 and think about the effects of sin, feel the pain and the weight of sin the second half of 2 Samuel. How did that affect him?

Emotions and mood. Look for evidence of the author's demeanor as he writes. I love this, Philippians 4:4. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" That seems okay. We've heard that before, and we sing songs about that, but where did Paul write that? Was he in the Ritz? No. I don't know how that will translate into other languages, but he's not in a very wealthy hotel. He is – he's in prison. He's in prison, and he's writing, "Rejoice in the Lord always." This text looks a lot different when you feel the weight of Paul behind bars.

You want to transport your sense into this passage and feel what it's feeling, this mood, and then the tone. Look at the emotional terms and instances of mood, and then look at the overall tone. Is there anger? Is it scolding? Is it pleasure? You look at Lamentations.

I tell you what, just for sake of time, we're not going to read through these, but Lamentations (3:1-6), feel the tone of heaviness there. Matthew 23, "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" Jesus is probably not saying this with a smile on His face in Matthew 23. Galatians 3, "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" He speaks very sternly to them. It's kind of a scolding tone. Feel the tone in the passage.

So, this is step one. In these sheets, step one is observation. What do I see? Observe, you might in some passages – and we’ve seen some examples. You can do this with an individual verse, and you can spend an hour in one verse if you’re really looking at it. You can do it with paragraphs. You can do it with entire discourses or segments of Scripture, and we’re going to talk about some of that later, and it’s important for us to see not just individual verses. All this stuff connects together. The reminder I want to give you on this first section right here is be patient. Learn to listen, and learn to look, and you will discover things that you never saw before. The beauty is, this is just step one. We can’t jump past this. This is just step one.

I think in your notes there, you have Acts 1:8 mentioned. If we had more time, I’d like for us to walk through this one verse and think through how this would look to write it out, but when you look at Acts 1:8, remember the squares? How many squares do you see? Do you see 30 different squares? You look at Acts 1:8, and I’m convinced there are hundreds, literally hundreds of observations to see there in that one verse. It is a feast. Whenever you see “but” in Scripture, ask what’s the contrast? Then, you begin to dive into Acts 1:1-7, and the contrast from those with verse 8, and you see that Jesus was led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God was on Him, but now the Holy Spirit is going to come on you. It’s a contrast. It’s an incredible picture. The Spirit of God that led Jesus while He was on this earth is the Spirit of God that leads you while you’re on this earth.

Now, that’s good. Okay. “You.” It’s a pronoun, and you see it repeated three different times in the first part. “...*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...*” The Spirit is extremely personal, coming on you, your life, not just the preacher, not just this spiritual giant over here or there – you, ladies and gentlemen. The Spirit comes on you. You let this be personalized. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” They didn’t have the Spirit of God, yet. They were waiting for the Spirit. Now, that’s a significant difference, obviously, with us. We have the Spirit of God. So, what they were waiting for, I’ve already got.

“Receive,” something we let come into us. It’s not something we do to earn. It’s not something we go out to get. The Spirit comes upon us like a gift. We receive a gift, power.

I mean, you see every single word, and you see how they start to connect together – “*in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth*” – and the conjunction that brings them all together is “and.” It does not say, “You will be witnesses in Jerusalem, or Judea, or Samaria, or to the ends of the earth.” You do not choose. “I’m going to impact this place or this place or this place for the glory of Christ.” I’m going to impact it all for the glory of Christ. My life was created to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. To say, “I’m not going to impact the world” is to sell God short of the purpose for why He has put the Holy Spirit in me.

You see there are loads of sermons in Acts 1:8. It’s all over this, and so what should we do? I’ve got this verse here, because we’re going to use this as we think through tonight. You would take Acts 1:8, a page like this, and you would write down significant notes concerning who, what, where, when, why, how. What does the Word emphasize, repeat, connect, compare, contrast? How does the Word communicate? You will just – this should be nowhere near enough room, nowhere near enough room, and this is step one, step one. It’s going to take time to study the Bible, but it’s going to be worth it. It’s going to be worth it. We haven’t even started looking at application, how does this apply to our lives? Do this right here.

UNDERSTAND THEIR HOME: What Does It Mean?

Okay, that's observation. Step two, understand their home. Okay. We're in this other culture now. We've seen all these things.

Moving from exploration to interpretation...

Now, what in the world does it mean from exploration to interpretation? Now, this is key. Taking this step from exploration to interpretation is key because you can look in Scripture and find passages that will justify anything you want it to justify. The reason we have cults is because people have taken Scripture, and they've twisted this verse or that verse to deny the deity of Christ, and as a result, we have Jehovah's Witnesses. Mormons, also, have places they can go in here and look and find where it talks about being baptized for the dead. You've got this or that cult in Asia that I've heard about and seen the effects of, who take this or that verse and put them together and create something that is completely unbiblical. You've got snake-handling churches in some rural areas of the United States that justify snakes in their worship by the Word.

I think it's important for us to know whether or not the Word is telling us to do that or not. So, how do you make sure that you understand what the Word means, from what the Word says to what the Word means? Now, I am not operating under the illusion tonight that if you do these things then we'll all come to my meaning. Remember, that's not the point. It's not about my meaning or your meaning. The goal is to come to the meaning of the text as best as possible. We all know that, even when we walk through some of these things, there will still be some differences, some areas that are not completely clear, and we need to be okay with that. However, what we need to know is, how do you decipher between good interpretation and bad interpretation, because sometimes there is good interpretation that sometimes leads some people to believe this and some people to believe this based on a particular passage of Scripture. Now, obviously, one of them is right and one of them is wrong, and I know when I look at my own life there's a lot of Scriptures I may interpret that are not completely right. I know there are probably areas of my theology that are not completely right. The only problem is I don't know which ones they are, and so until I know which ones they are, until we know which ones they are. We take good interpretation, and we walk through it as best as we can, and we make sure we're being responsible with the text of Scripture.

It doesn't mean, that if we all do this, we're all going to agree on everything, but it does mean, I believe, that we're going to agree on the things that are most central to Scripture. Then, we're going to have interpretation, good, solid interpretation that may lead us to accept a little different here or there, but it's not going to divide us in the body of Christ. It's based on good interpretation from questions of content to questions of context.

Context, context, context

I want us to think about context. The definition of context is "that which goes with the text, that which goes with the text." Now, that, in and of itself, is still a little vague, a little ambiguous, but that which goes with the text. Well, we're going to dive in. I won't even try to begin explaining it because we're going to see it unfold.

The dilemma created by context, two things. The Bible communicates eternal content, so what we've got in this book is eternal, but it also communicates through specific contexts.

There is a first-century context that the New Testament communicates to that's different from the context of the Old Testament, and it's certainly different from the context we live in today. So, the question becomes, how are we going to go from the then and there to the here and now? In order to make that jump, we have to be familiar with context.

The dedication to context. We need to work to step into the author's shoes, and determine his original intent, that's key. We want to go to the Word and discover what the author's original intent, because – now, this is a major statement right here – a biblical text can never mean what it never meant. Okay? Now, follow with me there. It can't mean today what it didn't mean then. Biblical texts can never mean what it never meant. We've got to step into the author's shoes and just recreate his ideas, his experiences, put ourselves in his shoes and try to think through how this was being communicated. How it was being read. What did it mean? It's what we're looking at when it comes to interpretation. Context shapes meaning. It shapes all these things that surround the text, and the culture of that text, the history, historical background and meaning behind this word and that word. Context shapes meaning.

Let me give you just a real practical example that gives you an illustration of context. Imagine a stop sign. A stop sign. A red octagon with "stop" written in white on the front of it. Now, when you see the stop sign, it's going to depend on where you see it that's going to affect what you do. So, if you were driving and you come to a four-way intersection, and you see a stop sign, then you're going to come to a stop, and you're going to be there for eight seconds. You're going to look to the left and to the right, and then you're going to move forward, right? That's what you do. Now, on the road it means one thing, but imagine you're walking through an antique shop, and you see an old, ragged stop sign from a historic place. When you're walking through that antique shop, are you immediately going to stop, wait eight seconds, look to your left and to your right and then continue moving toward it? Do you pick up a brochure, and on the front it grabs your attention by saying, "stop," and you're walking along the road, are you going to stop, look left and right and keep moving forward? When you are saying something to your wife, for example, that is bothering her, annoying her even, and she looks at you and she says, "stop," what are you going to do? Well, you're not going to look both ways. You're going to look down. When you are looking at your wife, and you're saying all kinds of beautiful, lovely things to her about how beautiful and lovely she is, and she looks at you and she says, "stop," what are you going to do? You're going to keep going. Context shapes meaning. Same "stop" in different places means different things, so we've got to look at the context to understand the meaning. Make sense?

The rule of context: context rules. Okay? Context rules. Put asterisks, everything, there. If we ignore the context of this book, we can twist this book to mean all kinds of different things. We've got to know the context, and there are really two contexts that we have to know, the diversity of context. First context we have to know is our context, our context, and the second context we have to know is their context, their context. So, I want us to think about the context we bring to the passage of Scripture, and the context that they bring to the passage of Scripture – two different contexts.

Consider our context...

Let's think about ours first. We've got to understand that when we come to the Bible, we bring a context to it. We've got – I'm going to divide it up here into pre-understandings and presuppositions. Here's what I mean by that.

Pre-understandings are all of our preconceived notions that we consciously or unconsciously bring to the text, and all of us bring preconceived notions to the table here, and they're

based on a lot of different things. One is our pride. Especially when we're studying a familiar text of Scripture, many times we bring an idea of what it means before we even start reading the words, and we've got this idea, "Well, I already know what this one means." Pride is this idea in Bible study where one knows what it means before listening to the text to tell you what it means, and we've got to avoid pride. So, we've got to come to the text humbly.

Second, our agenda. Sometimes we come to the text with a theological agenda, and, maybe, we have this theological slant. So, we come to a text, and we find in that text whatever supports our theological slant. Maybe you're a Calvinist, and you come say, "Well, I'm going to find predestination in this," or maybe you don't believe in predestination or something like that, and so you come and you twist Scriptures that talk about predestination. We bring our theological agenda, and we begin to skew the meaning of different texts. We've got two options. Number one, we can stand over the meaning of the text, or number two, we can kneel under the meaning of the text, True Bible study is the second, kneeling under the meaning of the text. We don't try to find Scriptures that fit our agenda. We let Scripture determine our agenda.

Next, our familiarity. Don't skip over a text just because it's familiar. I mentioned studying at Brook Hills in Luke 11, the Lord's Prayer there. That study, for me, as I was studying that passage of Scripture over those four weeks, we talked about prayer from Luke 11. It was four weeks where every week I was thinking, "Have I ever really studied this text before?" It was just coming alive in new ways, and God was – I was seeing things that I've never seen before in the text that are right there. It's not that I was uncovering something new. I was seeing what's been there that I had missed. It's almost like reading it for the first time. Our familiarity we bring.

Then, our culture. This is big. Our culture has an influence on how we read the Bible, our culture. Just a small example. You go to Matthew 5 through 7, Sermon on the Mount, and Jesus says,

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other, also. If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well...Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:39-40, 42)

We come to that, and we say, "Okay, I hear what he's saying, but let's be honest. Someone strikes you on the right cheek, and you keep turning the other cheek to them, they're going to run over you. So you, obviously, can't do that. Also, if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, and you let him have your cloak as well, they'd take everything that you have from you, so obviously, that's not what it means." Well, at that point, we've just imposed a very self-centered, American, materialistic culture that says, "I need to do what protects myself better than anything else." On a Scripture passage, it's intended to say exactly what it's saying.

We bring our culture, and we don't even realize it sometimes. Consciously or unconsciously, we bring it to there. Now, our culture involves a lot of things. It involves our language, words. We've got to realize that when some words were said in the first century, they meant different things than words – than how we use those words in the twenty-first century, and so, we need to know that the word meant there. That's part of what translation does, and why we need a good translation.

Customs, different customs we have. Different customs that were there. We bring our customs to the table, and stories about from our culture. Family. You look at family context in the United States and the family context in the Middle East, and the family context in the Middle East is thick. It's tribal, really, in many parts of the Middle East where everything is about family and protecting the honor of your family. Not so much the case in the increasingly American picture of family that we have, and that means that somebody studying the Bible from the Middle East and someone studying the Bible from America are going to bring two different contexts to any understanding about teaching on family. We have to be aware of that – our values, economics, politics, ethnicity, gender – gender, our views on gender according to our culture we bring to the table – religion, arts, images. We bring all these things to the table whenever we begin to interpret Scripture, and we don't set out to intentionally misread the Bible, but there's this subconscious world that we've got based on our culture, and many times our familiarity or our agendas or our pride that we bring to the table that we've got to be careful of.

Here's the deal, we can't be completely objective. We all bring subjectivity, to a certain extent, to a text of Scripture. Our goal, though, is to minimize subjectivity, minimize subjectivity. We want to eliminate as much of that subjectivity as possible. Those are our pre-understandings, but we don't want to – I don't even think we want to be completely objective, and here's why, based on our presuppositions.

There are some things we bring to the text that are good. We don't have a completely blank slate when we come to this text. We have faith in God when we come to this text. We have faith in Christ. We have a belief in the power of God, and we believe these certain things that do affect the way we look at the text, the fact that we believe the Bible is inspired, that this is the Word of God, by His Spirit. The Bible is reliable. The Bible is unified. We believe that this Bible doesn't contradict. This book doesn't contradict itself, and so we see how the Word doesn't contradict itself.

We believe the Bible is diverse, that there are all kinds of different ways that God's Word is communicated to us, and we believe the Bible is supernatural. What that means is, God is bigger than us, and there are some parts of the Bible that we don't completely understand, and we're okay with that. The Bible has tension and mystery to it. These are presuppositions that are actually a good thing to bring to the text. Finally, the fact that the Bible is purposeful, and the purpose of this book is to bring us into the image of Christ. The Bible has that purpose, so that's the context that we bring to the table.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net