



Session Two: Author, Recipient, Occasion, and Purpose

1. Three Keys to Good Study: Observation

1.1. "Observations **prompt** interpretative questions...interpretive questions develop *throughout* the process of observation, not simply after observation has been completed."¹

There is a sense in which we should try to keep the components of an inductive study separated—this helps us stay organized—but we also need to recognize the naturally-overlapping nature of an inductive study. As we observe what the text says, questions about *why it matters* should surface. This is why we want to jot down questions as we progress in this study. Doing so will help us entertain such questions at the proper time, while giving us the opportunity to enjoy the process of learning *what* the text says. Remember, the goal is to work up from the data toward interpretation and application. If we skip the time-consuming work of observation, we *might* get our application wrong.

1.2. Read **prayerfully**, **slowly** and **repetitively**.

"There is no substitute for carefully reading a letter multiple times as to reconstruct the historical situation behind its writing."²

1.3. Take note of **potential** cross-references.

As we read the text, taking note of various descriptors, it might be that our minds are drawn to associate other portions of Scripture. This is good! The cross-references might be valid. Jot them down. They will be useful when interpreting and applying the text.

¹ Richard Alan Fuhr Jr. and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 113.

² Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 426.

2. Author & Recipients

2.1. What does the text articulate about the author?

The author is the person who wrote the text. At this stage, the goal is to locate descriptors about the author's character and role.

2.2. What does the text communicate about the recipient(s)?

Recipients are those individuals who historically received the letter first. The aim is to locate descriptors about their character and needs.

3. Occasion & Purpose

3.1. What is the occasion of the text?

The occasion of a text refers to why it was written. In other words, what prompted the author to write the text? (At times there will be more than one occasion, though there will likely be one overarching theme that encapsulates all other sub-occasions.)

Example:

1 John 2:26 - *I write these things to you about those who are trying to **deceive** you.*

1 John 1:8 - *If we say we have no sin, we **deceive** ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Overarching Occasion/Theme: Deception (There is deceit among the people of God, both internally and externally.)

3.2. What is the text's purpose?

The purpose of a text concerns what the author is trying to accomplish in his recipient(s), and by way of implication what the Spirit desires to accomplish in us.

Note: There can be more than one purpose in a text.

Example:

1 John 1:4 - *And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

1 John 2:1 - *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.*

1 John 5:13 - *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.*

Note: In the case of Jude, doing a thorough job of observing what the text conveys about the author, recipients, occasion, and purpose will help us identify the majority of the indicatives and imperatives.

Note: Instead of writing out points of observation, some folks color code and highlight (or attribute symbols to) the components of an inductive study. Not a problem. I prefer to write things out, because it helps me internalize the content better.

JUDE (English Standard Version)

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, “In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.” It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Ongoing Questions/Themes: