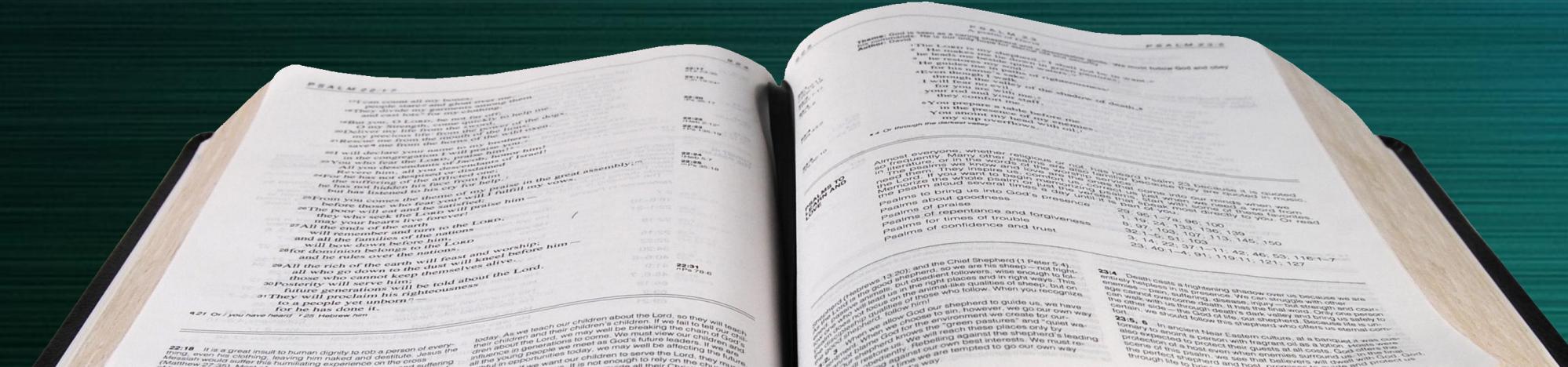
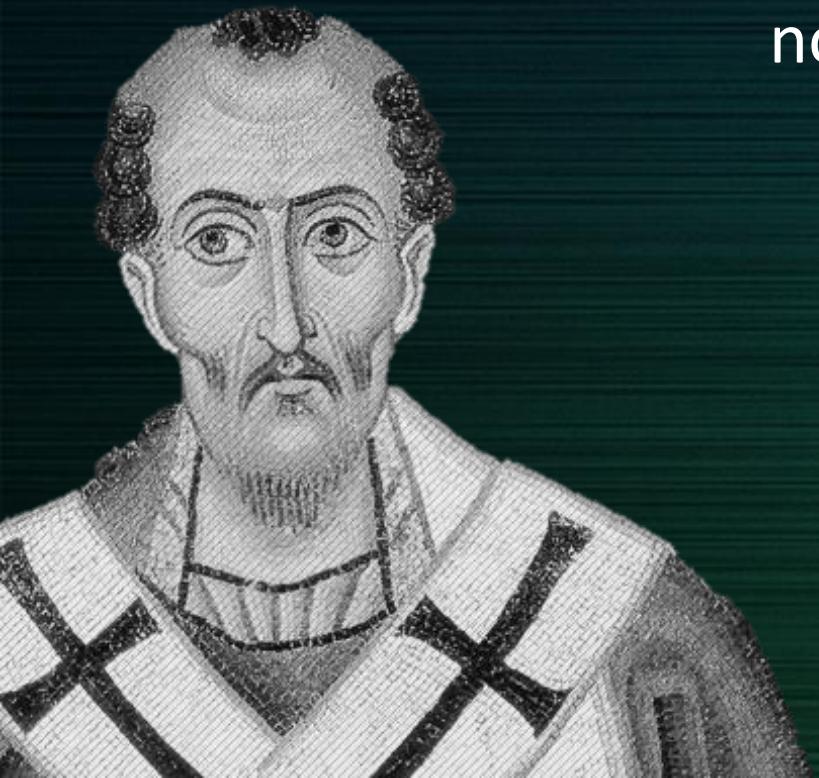


Helps for Inductive Bible Study

Four Practical Steps for Making Observations



A black and white portrait of St. John Chrysostom, an Eastern Orthodox saint and theologian. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a simple, light-colored robe with a dark, cross-shaped monastic belt. He has a serious, contemplative expression, with a slight furrow in his brow. His hair is dark and curly, and he has a small, dark beard and mustache. The style of the portrait is characteristic of Byzantine religious iconography, with a focus on the subject's spiritual character.

“While relaxing at home, both before eating and after eating . . . take the Scriptures in your hands and gain benefit from them and provide spiritual nourishment for your soul. You see, as the body has need of material nourishment, likewise, too, the soul needs daily reminders and spiritual nourishment so that it may be strengthened

. . . A divine book in our hands, let each of us invite our neighbors to join us and refresh our minds and theirs with the divine words.”

—John Chrysostom (347–407),
Homilies on Genesis 1-17

FOUR STAGES FOR BIBLE STUDY

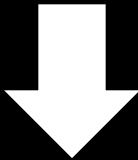
STAGE 1 – Surveying the Text’s Context



STAGE 2 – Observing the Text’s Content



STAGE 3 – Interpreting the Text’s Meaning



STAGE 4 – Applying the Text’s Message

FOUR STEPS FOR MAKING OBSERVATIONS

1. Read the Text

2. Query the Author

3. Compare the Translations

4. Examine the Particulars

What is “observation”?

- **Observation** can be defined as “the act of taking notice.”
- “The process of observation should generally resemble the absorbing process of the sponge when it is exposed to a liquid” (Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, 48). 
- The primary objective of this stage is to answer the question, “**What does the text say?**”
- The personal prerequisites for this stage include: (a) *the will to observe*; (b) *a passion for precision*; and (c) *a pledge to persistence*.

1. Read the text.

PRINCIPLE: Good observation begins with a thorough acquaintance with the text, and a thorough acquaintance requires good reading.

- One cannot interpret soundly until he knows what the text before him actually says.
- Reading is needed both to inform (*what is there*) and to correct (*what is not there*).
- There is a direct correlation between how well a student *reads* and how well he *observes*.

THE FIVE LAWS OF READING

Read Prayerfully

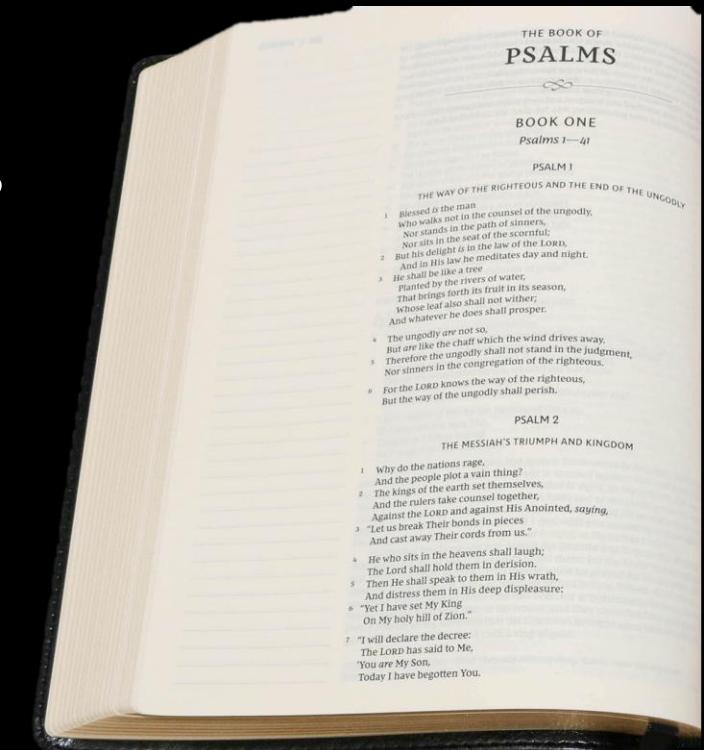
Read Inquisitively

Read Repeatedly

Read Progressively

Read Patiently

- Studying specific texts of the Bible should be done alongside the habit of general Bible reading.
 - **PLAN A (breadth):** Be reading the Bible for the big picture—for an awareness of the general storyline.
 - **PLAN B (depth):** Take opportunities to study individual texts deeply, preferably in sequence through a whole book.
- Find a Bible that is printed on good paper and that has lots of space for marking and notetaking. *Marking the text while reading increases awareness.*
- Listen to an audio version of the text or read the text out loud. *Hearing the text while reading increases awareness.*



2. Query the author.

PRINCIPLE: To increase awareness, the student should generate a leading question for each sentence of the text, creating a kind of *Q & A dialogue* with the writer.

- One of the greatest threats to sound observation is the “illusion of mastery”—the opinion that “I already know this.”
- The Q & A approach challenges this illusion, compelling the student to read more carefully and inquisitively by requiring him to generate questions appropriate to the text’s content.



- 1) Create a two-columned chart, with the column on the left designated for the “leading question,” and the column on the right for each sentence of the text.

Leading Question	Answer (Romans 8:1)
<i>What is the status before God of those who are “in Christ”?</i>	Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- 2) Paste the sentence of the text in the right column; it serves as the biblical author’s “answer.”
- 3) Generate a question that appropriately *leads into* the answer.
- 4) Each subsequent question must take into account the previous “answer” given, and lead into the next “answer.”

QUERYING THE TEXT – PSALM 1

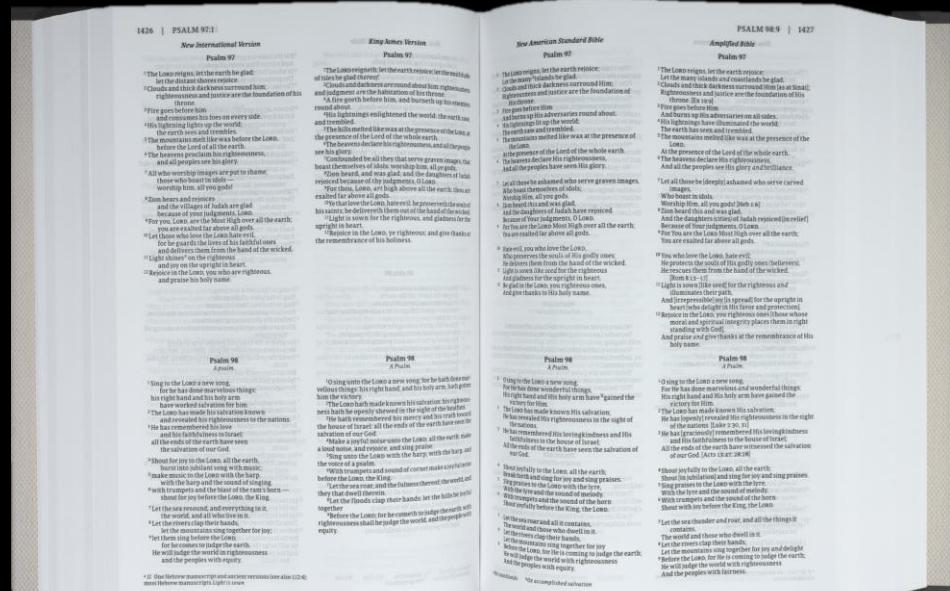
Leading Question	Answer
<p><i>Who is the one whom I can truly identify as “blessed”?</i></p>	<p>How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!</p>
<p><i>If this “blessed” man has no regard for the wicked, in what, then, does he place his delight?</i></p>	<p>But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.</p>
<p><i>What will this “blessed” man be like, and what does the future hold for him?</i></p>	<p>He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.</p>

Leading Question	Answer
<p><i>What will this “blessed” man be like, and what does the future hold for him?</i></p>	<p>He will be like a tree <i>firmly</i> planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.</p>
<p><i>But do not the wicked also prosper, and if not, what happens to them?</i></p>	<p>The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.</p>
<p><i>What future, then, lies ahead for the wicked?</i></p>	<p>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.</p>
<p><i>Why are the futures of both groups so different?</i></p>	<p>For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.</p>

3. Compare the translations.

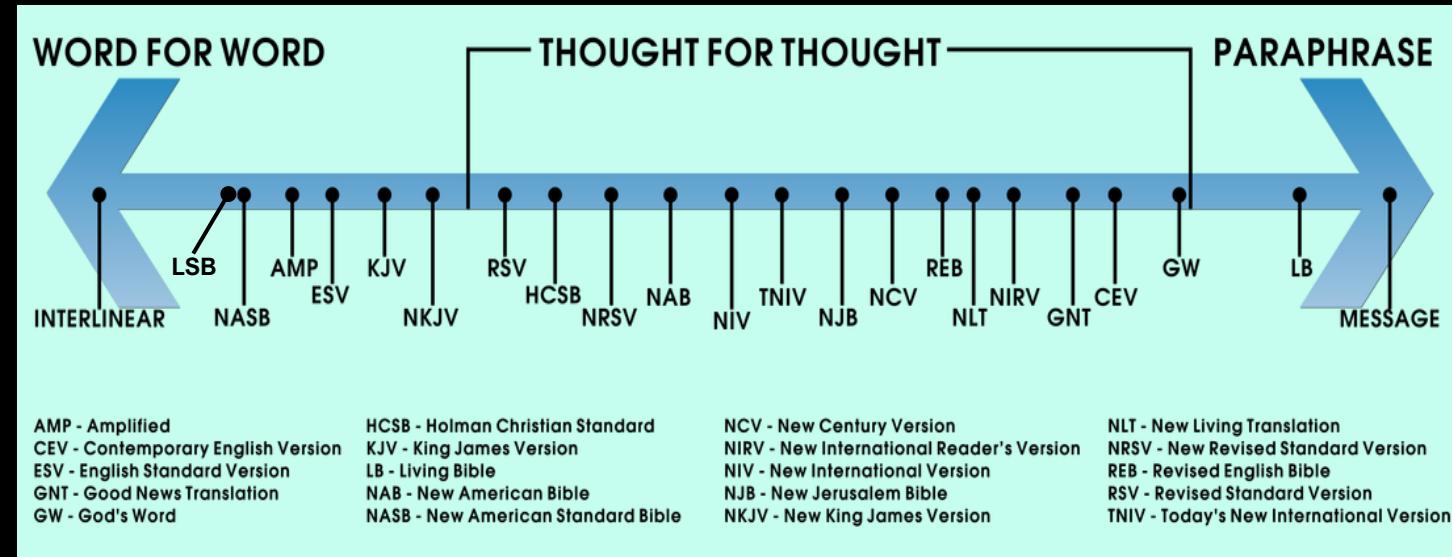
PRINCIPLE: To recognize both the simple and complex details in the text, the student should compare the text in several reputable translations.

- No other language in the history of man has as many translations as English—both good and bad.
- Comparing the text in several reputable translations is especially helpful for those who cannot read the text in its original language.



A *Parallel Bible* showing the NIV, KJV, NASB, and Amplified Bible translations in parallel columns.

- The translation used as the standard should be *word-for-word* translation like the NASB or the LSB; two or three other translations should be chosen for comparison.



- Commonalities in the translations show details in the text which translators find easy to translate and less susceptible to interpretive disagreement.
- Differences among the translations show details which translators find challenging to translate; these are the details which require special study in the commentaries.

1) Create a chart, with the standard translation in the left column and the other selected translations listed to the right.

NASB	ESV	CSB	NIV
Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.	There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.	Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,	Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
↔	↔	↔	↔
↔	↔	↔	↔
↔	↔	↔	↔
↔	↔	↔	↔

2) Insert a single verse of text in each row, under the appropriate translation.

3) Arrange the display in such a way that each line of text corresponds in each of the translations.

COMPARING THE TRANSLATIONS – ROMANS 8:26

NASB	ESV	CSB	NIV
<p>In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for <i>us</i> with groanings too deep for words;</p>	<p>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.</p>	<p>In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings</p>	<p>In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. <input type="checkbox"/> We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.</p>

COMPARING THE TRANSLATIONS – ROMANS 8:27

NASB	ESV	CSB	NIV
and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.	And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.	And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God	And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

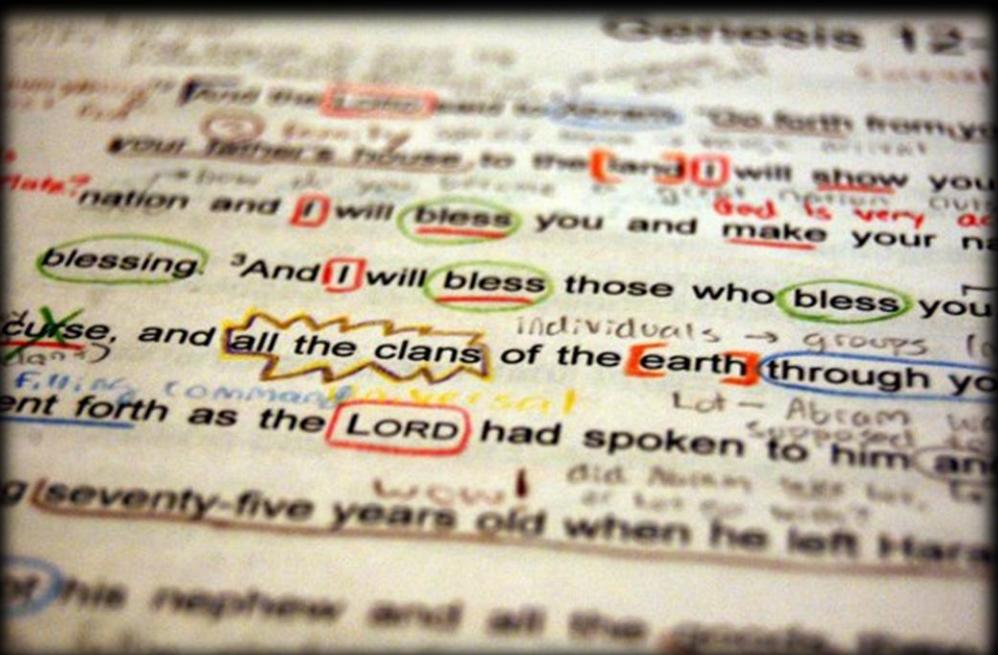
4. Examine the particulars.

PRINCIPLE: To observe the text well requires consideration of every detail. As is true for the effective investigator, no detail of the biblical text can be considered inconsequential.

- **Matthew 5:18** – “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”
- The curiosity of a meticulous investigator is crucial.
- Aim for the most “hands-on” approach as possible.

WHO?
WHAT?
WHERE?
WHEN?
WHY?
HOW?

- 1) Write/print the text out on paper to allow you to underline, draw arrows, circle key words, and add notes.
- 2) Use different color pens or highlighters to mark certain patterns.
- 3) Devise a personal system for marking consistently the same kinds of things (main verbs, prepositional phrases, pronouns, etc.).
- 4) Record your key observations and questions for further study.



Conjunction
expressing logical
consequence
(see preceding context)

EXAMINING THE PARTICULARS – ROMANS 8:1

Therefore there **is now** no condemnation

for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Introduces the scope of this new reality/status

The scope is limited to a particular group

Present tense verb – an on-going reality/status

A new reality; opposed to “then” (when?)

Key word! Define!!

Denotes sphere

Key person! Note order of title and name. Paul's key focus—“in Christ”

Pulling It All Together

FOUR STRATEGIES FOR OBSERVING THE TEXT

1. Read the Text

2. Query the Author

3. Compare the Translations

4. Examine the Particulars

- Implementing these four strategies will not only acquaint the student with the text's content, it will also provide the student with the material needed as fuel for the next stage of the process: *interpretation*.