

# 6 - Application

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## *"How should I respond?"*

In the Observation and Interpretation, we are studying the text, but in Application the text will study us. The purpose of studying the Bible is not merely gaining more knowledge. Remember, the main aim of studying God's word is for *transformation of life*. Take seriously what God reveals to us.

### -- Principles

Look into the Bible's teaching and pick up principles or truths. What principles from this passage that are applicable in our situation today? They may be general truths.  
e.g. Something for you to believe, to praise, to repent, about the God we believe in, who this God is, His attributes and what He did.

### -- Personal

Now, look into our life or bring our life to this passage, what does the Lord seem to be saying to me? Allow what you have just discovered from the Scripture to check or intervene your life.

### -- Plan

If there is something I am convicted about, what is my action plan to deal with it? The plan should be personal, honest and realistic. Avoid making general statement and rough ideas. Draw up a path of action that you will take. It may include immediate, short term and long term plan.

### -- Goal

Think about the ultimate reason for the plan you have just set. Find out the goal of your plan. You can use the questions below as a guide to think.

"What do I want out of this process?"

"What needs in my life must be addressed?"

"Are there relationships that need to be healed, cultivated or altered?"

"Are there attitudes need to be changed or reinforced?"

"Are there habits to break or establish?"



*"Knowing more of the Word of God is not to make you a smarter sinner but to make you like the Savior; it is not to fill your head with a collection of biblical facts but to transform your life."*

*Application...*

*Principles...*

- ☺ I can come to Jesus with all of my need, In Him I can find peace and affirmation for He does not condemn us.

*Personal...*

- ☺ I have been keeping my needs to my own struggles: the fears and inner disturbances, hoping to find freedom by myself. But now He assured me I can come to Him with my needs, and He can I grant me peace and affirmation. He is able to set me free.

*Plan and Action...*

- ☺ Each time when I am fearful and losing peace, I will come before Him by quietening myself down, listening and accepting His comfort and assurance for me.

*Goal...*

- ☺ To grow in boldness in approaching Jesus.
- ☺ To be set free from my inner struggles of fear and disturbances.

Try an Exercise on Mark 11:27-12:12

*Applications...*

*Principles...*

*Personal...*

*Plans and Actions ...*

*Goals...*

We can apply truths/principles found to:

(i) *Identical Situations*

Situations faced by the original readers that are identical to our own

e.g. "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have"  
Heb 13:5

(ii) *Comparable Situations*

Situations which have common key elements which are comparable.

Identify the key elements which are common

e.g. 1 Pet. 2:18 "Slaves, submit yourselves to your master with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh."

Principles stated in v13-14 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority"

Key element = Submission for the Lord's sake, those in authority.

(iii) *Different Situations*

Situations which are 'different' but have at least some comparable key element where you may apply a very general principle.

e.g. Gal. 4:9-11 "But now that you know God - or rather are known by God - how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."

Original situation -- keeping special days - a practice to gain God's favour, slave to religious traditions/rituals

General principle - Live as sons of God not slaves, acceptance through grace not keeping religious practices

Key elements = certain practices, which can enslave us, earning God's acceptance.



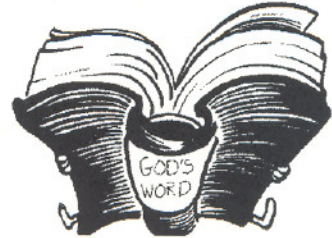
*"The goal of application is to develop within ourselves the heart and mind of God. To train ourselves to think and respond to every situation the way God himself would."*

# 7 - Studying Epistles

Yes, *inductive* Bible study can be done for any kind of literary form in the Bible. In this chapter we look at the Epistles. These New Testament letters were written to young churches and the leaders of the first generation of Christians. They had problems and tensions similar to ours today.

## FORM OF ANCIENT LETTERS

- 1) Name of the writer
- 2) Name of the recipient
- 3) Greetings
- 4) Prayer wish and thanksgiving
- 5) Body
- 6) Final greeting and farewell



**NB :** These ancient letters need not necessarily have all the above components, or they need not follow the sequence above.

## STUDYING EPISTLES INDUCTIVELY

### Observation

#### BIG PICTURE :

##### 1) Overview Questions :

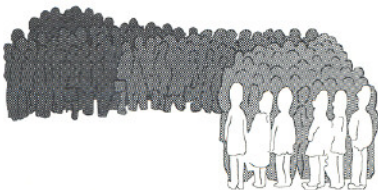
It is essential that you read the whole letter through in one sitting (if possible) in order to be able to identify with the contents of the letter. That is also how we normally read letters sent to us (instead of reading it piece-meal). From there, identify :

- a) Literary form - Epistle :
- b) Theme :
- c) Movements / Sub-themes :

##### 2) Historical Context

Find out the letter's historical background - where was the writer, and the recipients; how did their church begin; what was the occasion for the letter, events, or people referred to.

Usually, Acts is a resource in finding out about the beginnings of a particular church. A Bible dictionary, commentary, handbooks, or study Bible can also be useful resources in providing this information.



The first 3, of the 7 FFQ come under this category for Epistles. So, as the questions :

|          |                                                                               |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| .. WHO   | <i>is the writer?<br/>are the recipients?<br/>What is their relationship?</i> |
| .. WHERE | <i>are they respectively?</i>                                                 |
| .. WHEN  | <i>was this written?<br/>- chronologically<br/>- relatively</i>               |

### **DETAILS : Literary Context**

Letters are actually a relationship of IDEAS . We thus need to see every word, idea and paragraph as family members related to each other. They are written for a particular occasion, to counter a particular problem or issue as the writer seeks to persuade his readers to change their behavior or beliefs.

The rest of the 7 FFQ come under this category :

|         |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| .. WHAT | <i>is the writer persuading them to believe and to do?</i>                                                                                                                                   |
| .. HOW  | <i>does he argue his case?<br/>- logic?<br/>- reasons?<br/>- illustrations?<br/>- precedents?<br/>- common sense?<br/>- experience?<br/>- personal appeal?</i>                               |
| .. WHY  | <i>is he anxious to persuade them? Is there<br/>- danger to their faith?<br/>- danger to the church?<br/>- danger to personal relationships?<br/>- danger to their witness to the world?</i> |
| .. SO   | <i>what will be the results if they follow his instructions?<br/>If they do not?</i>                                                                                                         |

### **Ask! Think! Link!**

While you are asking the 7 FFQ, at the same time also ASK! THINK! LINK! Ask as many questions of the text, think about the implications of your observations, and then link your observations.

### **Interpretation**

In this portion of O - I - A too, there is a difference from studying a narrative passage. You do not need to interpret separately. In doing the **literary context**, you have already begun to interpret. Thus the questions - *what?*, *how?*, *why?*, and *so?* are also questions used for interpreting the passage.

### **Application**

Applying the Bible still poses you with the 3 P's. What are the

- .. *Principles* that generally seem to be relevant to you or the Body of Christ?
- .. *Personal* issues that God seems to be speaking to you about?
- .. *Plan* of action that you would like to take in responding to God and His Word?

### **STUDYING A WHOLE BOOK (EPISTLE)**

It is a very exciting experience studying a whole book by itself. This is because we are studying the Word in it's natural unit - the 66 books of the Bible are "whole" separate entities within the overall Book. It is indeed a different experience from just studying short passages within a particular Epistle (we will be doing that too in this chapter). Your life will never be the same again!

- \* We will be trying out an exercise on the book of *Ephesians* shortly. But before that we shall have a look at the tables that we shall use in studying a whole Epistle (please refer to the next page).



## USING TABLE IN STUDYING AN ENTIRE EPISTLES

### I) Table For The Overview Of The Entire Book

Segment Divisions

|             |  |  | Theme | Chapter THEMES |
|-------------|--|--|-------|----------------|
| Theme :     |  |  |       | 1)             |
| Author :    |  |  |       | 2)             |
| Date :      |  |  |       | 3)             |
| Purpose :   |  |  |       | 4)             |
| Key Words : |  |  |       | 5)             |
|             |  |  |       | 6)             |

### II) Table For Doing O - I - A For Epistles

- o Chapter \_\_\_\_\_
- o Theme :
- o Movements (denote from what verse to what verse and give a subtheme) :

| OBSERVATION |                   | INTERPRETATION | APPLICATION |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 7 FFQ       | Ask! Think! Link! |                |             |
|             |                   |                |             |

We will be using these *tables* in the following exercise on the book of Ephesians. While we give an overview of the chapter break down, we will only study chapter 1 thoroughly, using the O - I - A.

LET US TRY AN EXERCISE TOGETHER

Read the whole book of Ephesians at one go. Just get the feel of the letter. If you could summarize the whole book, what *theme* would you give it? Briefly as you go through each chapter, give also a tentative *chapter theme*. See if you can identify the *author* as well as the *recipients* of this letter. From its overall content, what do you think is the *reason* the writer is communicating with his recipients. Identify also *key words* that seem to be prominent in this letter.

- 1) Work on your Overview Table first.
- 2) Next, study chapter 1 using the O - I - A Table (passage on the next page).

We will work through this exercise together with you. Try it on your own first!

Answers

Theme : *"The Richness Of Our Calling"*

Author : *Paul (Eph 1 : 1)*  
*- Where was he? In chains.*

Time of writing : *~ AD 60 - 61*  
*Though there are differing views about where Paul was when he wrote this letter (which would then affect our interpretation of the timing), there are current writers who think that he might have been in prison in Rome.*

Purpose for writing : *Some Bible tools seem to suggest that Ephesians was a circular letter written by Paul for a feww of the churches in the region. There seems to be these four main concerns :*

- *To teach Christian foundations to the believers*
- *To encourage unity and equality*
- *To encourage the believers to live exemplary lives*
- *To encourage right relationships*
- *To encourage believers not to live as spiritual paupers*

Key Words : .. *In Christ*  
.. *Mystery*  
.. *Calling*  
.. *Spirit (Holy Spirit)*

Segment Divisions

|  |                           | Chapter THEMES at a glance          | Revised chapter THEMES |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
|  | UNDERSTANDING OUR CALLING | 1) The HOPE Of Our Calling          |                        |
|  |                           | 2) Re-CREATED & Re-FORMED In Christ |                        |
|  |                           | 3) The Multi-Faceted Purpose of God |                        |
|  | LIVING OUT OUR CALLING    | 4) Oozing Out Christ                |                        |
|  |                           | 5) Imitating God's Love             |                        |
|  |                           | 6) Being Watchful                   |                        |

This is the Ephesians passage we are working on. Feel free to mark and highlight key words, as well as repeated words. Colour pencils or highlighters will come in handy here. Try and find movements in the passage where Paul moves from one area of focus to another. Draw a line across the passage to denote the different paragraphs. Your paragraphing can help you differentiate one focus from another. Feel free also to write in the side-margins. You can note the 7FFQ in this portion, as well as the Ask! Think! Link! We have done our own markings in this manuscript, in order to work alongside you.

## Ephesians 1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus : <sup>2</sup>Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup>And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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, <sup>12</sup>in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>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, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory. <sup>15</sup>For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup>I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup>I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, <sup>20</sup>which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the age to come. <sup>22</sup>And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Blessings

Rich Inheritance in Christ

- 2 chosen to be holy & blameless
- 3 predestined to be adopted as sons
- 4 His grace bestowed on us
- 5 redemption
- 6 made known to us the mystery
- 7 chosen to be for the praise of his glory
- 8 sealed with the Holy Spirit

Prayer for Understanding

# ANSWERS FOR EPHESIANS 1

**Theme of the chapter :** "THE HOPE OF OUR CALLING"

- Movements :**
- Blessings (v1 - v2)
  - Rich Inheritance In Christ (v3 - v14)
  - Prayer For Understanding (v15 - v23)

(\* Because of lack of space, I have broken up the table into 2 parts :)

| OBSERVATION |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7           | F F Q                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ASK, THINK, LINK                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| WHO?        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul (an apostle)</li> <li>- Saints (faithful in Christ)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. apostle (v1) - one who has seen God                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on God's mission</li> <li>- by God's will</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| WHERE?      | Paul is in prison, and the saints are in Ephesus                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. saints (v1) - those set apart;                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- holy and blameless</li> <li>- faithful</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| WHEN?       | AD 60 - 61                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. adoption (v5) - as sons, with equal rights                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in order to inherit</li> <li>- being given second chance in life</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| WHAT?       | Explaining their rich inheritance in Christ, that they may understand the full depth of this calling, to be IN CHRIST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. mystery (v9) - that Christ will unite all things under His headship</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| HOW?        | <p>By expounding about what it means to be in Christ :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CHOSEN to be holy &amp; blameless</li> <li>- ADOPTED as sons</li> <li>- BESTOWED grace</li> <li>- REDEMPTION, forgiveness</li> <li>- Made known the MYSTERY that everything is under Christ</li> <li>- INHERITANCE</li> <li>- SEALED with the Holy Spirit</li> <li>- WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING</li> </ul> <p>By praying for them to KNOW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the hope of His calling</li> <li>- the riches of their inheritance</li> <li>- His power</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. Spirit (v17) - Holy Spirit</li> <li>.. Heavenly realms - spiritual realm</li> <li>.. v9 - 14 PRE-PLANNED to unite all things under One head; chosen according to His plan; that we will be to the praise of His glory</li> <li>.. v11-12, 14 TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY - Jews, &amp; Paul and also the Ephesians</li> <li>.. v18 know the HOPE OF HIS CALLING                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- riches of His glorious inheritance;</li> <li>- His incomparably great power for us who believe</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| WHY?        | So that they'll know exactly what they have in Christ, and will live for the praise of His glory                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| SO?         | They will have a rich life and not live as SPIRITUAL PAUPERS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| INTERPRETATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | APPLICATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>We are called to be to the PRAISE OF HIS GLORY - living as inheritors of all the SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS - complete, not lacking a thing. CHOSEN according to HIS PLAN, according to His glorious grace, to live under Christ's Lordship.</p> <p>Called to live in HOPE because of His inheritance as well as His great power on our side</p> | <p>PRINCIPLES :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- every spiritual blessing is our</li> <li>- chosen and called in LOVE &amp; GRACE</li> <li>- Live in HOPE &amp; POWER</li> <li>- Live for His GLORY</li> </ul> <p>PERSONAL :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> </ul> |



## FURTHER EXERCISE

Read the passage given below from Titus 3 : 1-11. This time we are not reading the whole book, but you can still read through the book of Titus to get information about the reason for it's being written. You can feel free to mark your text, the movements, and highlight key words. Give a theme for this passage, as well as sub-themes for each movement or paragraph you section off.

### Titus 3:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Remind the people, to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, <sup>2</sup>to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. <sup>3</sup>At one time we too were foolish, isobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. <sup>4</sup>But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup>he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. <sup>8</sup>This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. <sup>9</sup>But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the laws because these are unprofitable and useless. <sup>10</sup>Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that have nothing to do with him. <sup>11</sup>You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

| OBSERVATION |                   | INTERPRETATION | APPLICATION |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 7 FFQ       | Ask! Think! Link! |                |             |
| Who?        |                   |                |             |
| Where?      |                   |                |             |
| When?       |                   |                |             |
| What?       |                   |                |             |
| How?        |                   |                |             |
| Why?        |                   |                |             |
| So?         |                   |                |             |

## 8 - Studying Poetry (with a focus on Psalms)

Studying poetry using the inductive approach is yet another life-transforming experience. Psalms, and poetry in other portions of Scripture express *feelings* and are rich with emotions as well as reflections on God. Yet, reading poetry needs to be done differently than when we look at stories (narratives) or teaching passages (Epistles, etc.). Poetry needs to be read with *imagination* and *identification* with the poet.

In this chapter we will focusing on *Psalms* because they are a specific entity of poetry with their own special group of different psalms as well as their own structures.

### THE SEVEN GENRES (TYPES) OF PSALMS

#### 1) Hymn

*These Psalms are especially used in individual or collective worship. They center on the praise of God - and they are without particular reference to past miseries or to recent joyful accomplishments.*

#### 2) Lament

*These are the largest groups of Psalms expressing both individual and corporate laments. They express difficult times and experiences that the people went through.*

#### 3) Thanksgiving

*In expressing their joy to God for joyous experiences - for His faithfulness, protection, deliverance, etc. - these Psalms were written.*

#### 4) Confidence

*These Psalms express their confidence in God and the fact that He may be trusted. Even in times of despair exhortations are given to have confidence in God.*

#### 5) Remembrance

*The focus of these Psalms are a reflection upon God's saving works in the history of the Israelites. A special focus usually is the deliverance from bondage in Egypt.*

#### 6) Wisdom

*These Psalms focus on the merits of wisdom and living the wise life.*

#### 7) Kingship

*These Psalms contain praise of God's choice the Davidic lineage, which also hint at the messianic ministry of Christ who was from that lineage. The royal Psalms include thanksgiving and prayers for the king and the nation of Israel.*

## THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF A PSALM

While each different type of Psalm has its own structure - generally it helps to look out for this main structure :

- o *Introduction : THEME of the Psalm*
- o *BODY of the Psalm*
- o *Conclusion (in the last one or two verses)*



## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PSALMS

As poetry, the Psalms are actually a Hebrew art form. They are made of artistic arrangement of thoughts, imagery, insights, and many other rich gems. Keep looking out for these :

- o **Personal nature.** *The writer shares his experiences to teach us spiritual truths. They are devotional in nature.*
- o **Pictures.** *They use imagery - word pictures. Using familiar objects, physical activities and experiences, he expresses abstract truth.*
- o **Progression of stanzas.** *Just like any other poetry, each paragraph focuses on a particular main thought. Together they build up the **THEME** which is usually stated in the first or second line of the Psalm.*
- o **Parallelism.** *Hebrew poetry is rhythmic. It rhymes not in sound like English poetry, but the rhythm is a rhythm of thought. It is a pattern in which two halves of a verse complement each other in various ways. There are different kinds of parallelisms :*

- a) **synonymous** - the second line / thought repeats the thought of the first.  
(eg. Job 23:8-9)
- b) **antithetical** - the second line / thought contrasts with the first.  
(eg. Prov 15:1)
- c) **synthetic** - the second line / thought repeats part of the first, and then adds something more to it.  
(Isa 11 : 2)
- d) **symbolic** - one line / thought illustrates the other one with a picture of comparison.  
(Ps 42 : 1)
- e) **climatic** - there is a third line which concludes in a climax of thought.  
(Ps 29: 1-2)

## STUDYING A PSALM INDUCTIVELY

One main clue to remember in studying the Psalms is to *think FEELINGS*. Focus on the feelings the poet is expressing.

So, how does the O - I - A work for studying the Psalms?

BIG PICTURE first

### Observation

#### 1) Getting the **BIG PICTURE**

- a) Read through the Psalm by putting yourself in the Psalmist shoes.
- b) Try and identify if you can from the Psalm itself, the first 3 of the 7FFQ which will help you place the Psalm in a **historical context**.
  - .. WHO - was the author?
  - .. WHERE - where was he writing from?
  - .. WHEN - when did this take place?
- c) If (b) was not possible, after your study, you can use either a **Commentary** or a **Study Bible** to get such information.

DETAILS next!

### Observation & Interpretation

#### 2) Getting the **DETAILS**

- a) Note the words / phrases which mark the Psalm's personal nature.
- b) Put an asterisk or underline each picture / imagery you see.
- c) Name the parallelism in each verse (you can make the notation in the side margins).
  - .. Synonymous
  - .. Contrast
  - .. Synthetic
  - .. Climatic
  - .. Symbolic
- d) Identify the movements of thought or expression in the Psalm by separating each paragraph with a long line drawn across. Give a **SHORT TITLE** to each section.
- e) What is the **THEME** of this Psalm?
- f) Now you will find that you have covered two more of the 7FFQ. Continue on with the sixth question.
  - .. WHAT? - theme
  - .. HOW? - by the movements in the paragraphs
  - .. WHY? - the reason for this Psalm from the psalmist.

**NB :** We do not cover the seventh question, when doing Psalms. This is because the nature of Psalms is **TESTIMONY**. Thus, there is no consequences to any action taken.

# LET US TRY AN EXERCISE TOGETHER

The text for Psalm 32 is given. Read the Psalm and then work along with us :

## Psalms 32 : "The BLESSINGS of the RIGHTEOUS"

"The blessings of being forgiven"

1 Blessed is he  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered. > synonymous (forgiveness)

2 Blessed is the man  
whose sin the Lord does not count against him  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

3 When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long. > synthetic (a result of keeping quiet)

4 For day and night  
your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer. > symbolic / synthetic (referring to God's wrath and judgement upon him)  
Selah

5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess  
my transgressions to the LORD"—  
and you forgave  
the guilt of my sin. Selah

6 Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you  
while you may be found;  
surely when the mighty waters rise,  
they will not reach him. > symbolic / synthetic (to emphasise security in the Lord)

7 you are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance. > synthetic (emphasising security in the Lord)  
Selah

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you and watch over you.

9 Do not be like the horse or the mule,  
which have no understanding  
but must be controlled by bit and bridle  
or they will not come to you. > symbolic (to show stubbornness)

10 Many are the woes of the wicked,  
but the LORD's unfailing love  
surrounds the man who trusts in him.

11 Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous;  
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

"Seeking refuge in the Lord"

"Responding to God's counsel"

"The righteous rejoice in God's unfailing love"

## Psalm 32 : .... A worked through exercise

### ○ The BIG PICTURE :

|        |                                                                        |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WHO?   | David (information given in the heading)                               |
| WHERE? | We do not really know                                                  |
| WHEN?  | After having committed some sin, confessing and receiving forgiveness. |

### ○ OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

|               |                                                                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| WHAT? / THEME | "The Blessings Of The Righteous"                                               |
| HOW?          | As David expresses the extent of his mental agony and his progressive release. |
| WHY?          | The psalmist wanted to testify and give thanks for God's work in his life.     |

#### Elements Of A Thanksgiving Psalm

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Distress
- 3) Appeal
- 4) Deliverance
- 5) Testimony



### ○ APPLICATION

- 1) Am I hiding any guilt or sin from God?
- 2) When I committed sin, how did I feel? Why?
- 3) Do I allow God to instruct me? If no, why?



\* Think also about a plan of action if you discovered that there is something God speaking to you about.

## TRY AN EXERCISE

Now, try studying Psalm 121 on your own. Read the passage and try to identify with the Psalmist's feelings.

Study the Psalm according to the O - I - A way we have shown you. You can use colours to mark your manuscript below. Do not forget to do the **application**, which consists of the 3 P's - **principles, personal, and plan**.

**Psalm 121** (Theme : )

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills —  
where does my help come from?
- 2 My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot slip —  
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The LORD watches over you —  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- 6 the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.
- 7 The LORD will keep you from all harm —  
he will watch over your life;
- 8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore.

### BIG PICTURE

WHO?

WHERE?

WHEN?

### OBSERVATION & INTRODUCTION

WHAT? / THEME

HOW?

WHY?



### APPLICATION

## 9 - Interpreting Figures Of Speech

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We are all familiar with **figures of speech**. Every culture is rich with their own figures of speech - whereby we use the *picture language* to communicate our thoughts and ideas. We are also aware, that it is indeed ridiculous to interpret figures of speech literally. For example :

*"The Lord is my rock, my fortress"*

- Ps 18 : 2

No one would think of making the ridiculous assumption that God is indeed a literal "rock". Instead, we try to identify what a rock means to the writer. He is probably talking about something that is solid, immovable, dependable, protective. Yes, God is all these things!

The Bible contains **figures of speech** in different books, whenever the writer feels that such a way of communicating is best. Most of it is found in poetry or prophecies, but you will come across them elsewhere too. Thus, when we come across such language, we need to take care in not translating it literally.

So, how then do we interpret them? It would help if we knew the different kinds of **figures of speech** and for what purpose they are used.

- 1) **Anthropomorphism** - the attribution of human features or action to God.

*"But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you."*  
(Luke 11:20 NIV)

- 2) **Apostrophe** - addressing a thing as if it were a person, or an absent or imaginary person as if he were present."

*"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"* (1 Cor 15 : 55 NIV)

- 3) **Euphemism** - The use of a less offensive expression to indicate a more offensive one.

*"Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves."* (Gal 5:12 RSV)

- 4) **Hyperbole** - An exaggeration to convey more than is literally meant.

*"I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you."* (2 Cor 11:8 NIV)

- 5) **Hypocatastasis** - A comparison in which likeness is implied rather than stated directly.

*"Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."* (Lk 12:1 NIV)

- 6) **Idiom** - An expression peculiar to a particular people.

*"He [Samson] said, 'I'm going to my wife's room.'" (Judges 15 : 1 NIV)*

- 7) **Irony** - expressing meaning (eg. ridicule) by use of language which if used literally would express an opposite or different meaning.

"Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings - and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! (1 Cor 4:8 NIV)

- 8) **Merism** - A substitution of two contrasting or opposite parts for the whole.

"You know when I sit and when I rise; ...." (Ps 139 : 2 NIV)

- 9) **Metaphor** - a comparison in which one thing represents another.

"You are the light of the world" (Matt 5:14 NIV)

- 10) **Metonymy** - a way of speaking in which the writer substitutes cause for effect or the sign for the thing signified.

"I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me," declares the Lord." (Amos 4:6 NIV)

- 11) **Parable** - a short story with familiar people / activities, having one main idea.

(2 Sam 12 : 1 - 10; Mark 4 : 1-20)

- 12) **Paradox** - A statement that seems absurd, self-contradictory, or contrary to logical thought.

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." (Matt 16:25 NIV)

- 13) **Personification** - Ascribing human characteristics or actions to inanimate objects or animals.

"The moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed; ...." (Isa 24:23 NIV)

- 14) **Rhetorical question** - a question that requires no answer, but it forces one to mentally consider its implications.

".. in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Ps 56:11 NIV)

- 15) **Simile** - the writer compares two unlike things, linking them together with 'as' or 'like'.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way." (Isa 53 : 6 NIV)

- 16) **Synecdoche** - a way of speaking in which the writer substitutes an important part for the whole.

"Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.'" (Matt 16:17)

## RULES FOR INTERPRETING

- o *Start by taking everything literally.*
- o *If a literal interpretation poses a problem, ... ask yourself at that point, if the writer is using a figure of speech.*
- o *If it is figurative language, decide which figure it, using the definition given in the previous two pages.*
- o *Interpret it as a figure, and see if the problem is solved.*

## PRACTICE FOR YOURSELF

You can further familiarize yourself with *figures of speech* by looking back at all the exercises done thus far, and see if you can identify any of them in these passages.

Happy trying.



GET INTO  
**GOD'S WORD**