

LOOSE-LEAF OBSERVATION METHOD

Observation is the beginning to effective Bible study. The longer we spend in this space the easier the rest of the process becomes. Yet, observation is often the first part readers of the Bible dismiss. Why? Answering this question starts with our understanding of what the Bible is. It is first and foremost a divinely written word about THE Word, Jesus. It's not about us. Step one, then, is revering the Bible. The God of the universe, creator and sustainer, author and perfecter, has chosen to reveal himself to us through written word, so that we may know him and follow him.

The Bible tells of God's redemptive work in the lives of his people—in other words, the gospel. All sixty-six books written by a particular person to a specific audience for a certain reason. It is our job, and joy, to seek out what the context meant to the ancient reader and then apply it to the modern. This involves being a student of the Word, and it starts with learning how to slow down and attentively read.

In our fast-food, over-consumed culture we are eager to rush our time in Scripture with the mindset of what does it mean for my life, and completely miss the Lord's intent. Correct application comes only first through correct observation and interpretation. The Bible is not about us. The Bible is about Jesus. And as we "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)" we are renewed and transformed into the likeness of whom we pursue.

The Bible Study Workbook will serve you at its best when you learn to observe intently. Let's be eager students, but eager to rightly handle the Word of God.

What you will learn in the BSW training is something called "The Loose Leaf Method"—a simple, methodical way to observe the text at hand. The following information breaks down the method.

OBSERVATION: "WHAT DOES IT SAY?" IF IT IS AN INDISPUTABLE FACT OR YOU CAN POINT TO IT, IT IS AN OBSERVATION.

Step One: Copy the text of desired study into a word document. Widen the margins, double space the text, and print.

Step Two: Mirror the following tactics—*the goal is to observe, not to answer.

1. Color One:

Box: any word or phrase you would like to define and/or understand further.

Circle: any word or phrase that is transitional (therefore, so, but, for, etc.) and/or follows the flow of thought (pay close attention to the subject and audience).

Underline: any general observations; words that seem pertinent or significant to the author, recipients, or historical/cultural context.

- 2. Color Two: mark-up, underline, etc. anything pertaining to who God is or what he has done; pay close attention to the functions of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit).
- 3. Color Three: mark-up, underline, etc. anything pertaining to the Christian life/faithful living.

Step Three: After drawing out the details of the text, ask questions. In the wide margins lay out any and all questions about the text you may have based on the observations you just made. Resist the urge to answer these right away. If interpretation is done correctly, almost if not all of your questions should be answered. These initial questions are to remain as a guide and help you critically think about what you're seeing.

Observing the text means to slow down and respect the original authors' intentional writing. One meaning exists for each text (authorial intent), but varied applications can be present. As students, disciples, followers, let us create a rhythm of spending restful, meditative time knowing our God, so that we may faithfully live for him.