



CONTEXT

Each week, in this section, we will briefly review what has been previously taught. Since we are just starting out in Ephesians, we don't have anything to review.



OBSERVATION

Introduction

The discussion-study guide for this Ephesians sermon series will follow the inductive Bible study method (observation, interpretation, and application), with a couple steps added (consultation and adoration).

The Process of Observation

During this first step of observation we are not asking, "What does this passage mean?" Nor are we asking, "How can I apply this passage to my life?" All we're doing is reading the text and noting things that stand out and things we observe.

An Illustration

If a crime scene investigator walks into a crime scene and immediately makes an interpretation (the dead person in the pool must have been drowned by the lifeguard since they were the only ones in the pool room), he's probably going to make a poor application (accusing the wrong person). Therefore, he must first make many observations and collect data (the back door is slightly open, the lifeguard isn't wet, etc.). In order to make an accurate application, you must make an accurate interpretation. In order to make an accurate interpretation, you must make accurate observations.

Practicum

If you would like an idea of how this first step of observation works, read Hebrews 3:7-11, followed by the four observations made below.

- [7] Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,
"Today, if you hear his voice,
- [8] do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
- [9] where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
- [10] Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;

EPHESIANS

from DEATH to LIFE

they have not known my ways.’
[11] As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

1. V.7 says, “As the Holy Spirit SAYS...” and then the author goes on to quote a verse from the Old Testament. Since the author is quoting the Old Testament, shouldn’t he have said, “As the Holy Spirit SAID”? It’s interesting that the author puts it in the present tense: “The Holy Spirit SAYS.”
2. V.8 says, “Do not harden your hearts as in THE rebellion.” He must be talking about some specific incident since he calls it THE rebellion. I wonder what incident he’s referring to?
3. V.9 says the Israelites SAW God’s works for forty years. This wasn’t something they read about in their Bibles. This is something they actually SAW and experienced. Nevertheless, they still rebelled!
4. V.11 says, “They shall not enter MY rest.” That’s interesting. The blessing God offers us belongs to Him. He says it’s HIS rest.

Tips for Making Observations

1. Look at verb tenses.
2. Note any repeated words or phrases.
3. Write down all your questions of the text you’re studying.
4. Ask: WHO is writing this? WHO is he writing to? WHEN did these events take place? WHERE is this?
5. Identify figures of speech.
6. Note transitional words like “therefore,” “but,” or “in order that.”
7. Read the text repeatedly.
8. Read the text prayerfully: “Lord, open my eyes that I might see wonderful things in your law.” (Psalm 119:18)

Ephesians 1:1-2

Making observations this week won’t be easy. There are only two verses. Plus, you’ve just heard a sermon on those two verses! Try your best anyway. Maybe it would be helpful to look at how Paul introduces himself in his other epistles, like Colossians, Philippians, and Galatians. Record any questions or observations you have of Ephesians 1:1-2 below:



INTERPRETATION

Now that we've made observations, we can move on to interpretation.

Question 1: Why do you think it's necessary for Paul to call himself "an apostle... by the will of God?" Is that boasting?

Question 2: Concerning v.2, why do you think the title "Father" almost exclusively goes with "God" and the title "Lord" almost exclusively goes with "Jesus Christ?"



CONSULTATION

Modern-day Christian evangelicals have been taught a privatized version of the Christian faith. You often hear "You must make Jesus your *personal* Lord and savior" or "Do you have a *personal* relationship with Jesus Christ?" Much of this is good. For too long, most people just thought that being a part of a Christian community or a Christian nation made you a Christian. A personal emphasis of the Christian faith was needed. But this personal aspect of the faith had an unintended negative affect on our approach to the Bible. *While it's true that a Christian can learn to interpret the Bible for him or herself, it is not true that I am all that I need to interpret the Bible.* I also need my brothers and sisters in Christ. Interpretation must involve 1.) Christians throughout Church history - how did they understand this passage? 2.) those who've already studied the text at an in-depth level (scholars, pastors, etc.), and 3.) my Christian friends and family members.

Remember, in the book of Acts, what the Ethiopian Eunuch (who was struggling to make sense of the book of Isaiah) said to the apostle Philip? He said, "How can I understand what I'm reading, *unless someone guides me?*" Interesting. God *miraculously* transported Philip, in a "beam-me-up Scotty" manner, to the eunuch, but he didn't miraculously just give the eunuch the right interpretation of Isaiah apart from any help! God could have! But he didn't. I think there's a lesson in that, and it's this: we need other Christians to rightly interpret the Bible! I have a really good friend of mine who refuses to consult commentaries when he prepares to teach. "All I need is the Holy Spirit!" he says. Ironically, he's always asking me what I think of different Bible verses he's studying. I want to scream: "Why are you asking me what this passage means if all you need is the Holy Spirit?!"

We won't do it for this week, but in the ensuing study guides in this "Consultation"

section, we will have a few quotes and comments from other believers about the passage we've just studied. We will humble ourselves and learn from others. Pastors need commentators. Commentators needed professors at one point. Those professors read books from dead Christians like Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther and John Calvin. And those men learned from others - their mothers, their fathers, their teachers, church fathers, etc.

Main point: we need one another for an accurate understanding of Scripture. In this section we will be providing quotes and notes from commentaries, Bible study tools, dead Christians, Chapel pastors, etc. to ensure our own interpretation is accurate, as we learn to interpret Scripture communally and not just privately.



APPLICATION

Question 1: Similar to what Paul does in v.1, do you ever think it's appropriate for a Christian leader/pastor to pull the "God has made me a leader in this church and put me here for a reason" card? Discuss.

Question 2: Discuss the ways "God as *Father*" affects our lives as believers? Discuss the ways "Jesus as *Lord*" should affect our lives?

Question 3: Discuss anything from this study, or especially the sermon, that applies to your life that has impacted you.



ADORATION

This section is in here because without it, our Bible study has failed. Some Christians emphasize the role of interpretation: "We must learn to accurately interpret Scripture!" And they are right! *But the goal isn't just information.* Some Christians emphasize the role of application: "What does it matter if we study the Bible, but it doesn't change us?" And they are absolutely right! But the goal isn't just changing our behavior. Pharisees changed their behavior. The goal is adoration. The goal is worship! The goal of studying Scripture is to be in awe, in our hearts, of our God. It's that same sensation you get when you watch an Olympian athlete do the impossible, or when you see someone do something else you greatly admire. The goal is to be awestruck and spellbound leading to a genuine reverence and a deeper love for God. This doesn't have to be an overly emotional experience.

EPHESIANS

from DEATH to LIFE

It might have just been a moment of profound realization about God's character or work. And so with each discussion-study guide of the Ephesians series, ask yourself: "What was I amazed at? Did something I studied capture me and cause my heart to love the Lord more?"