



DIVING DEEPER INTO THE BIBLE

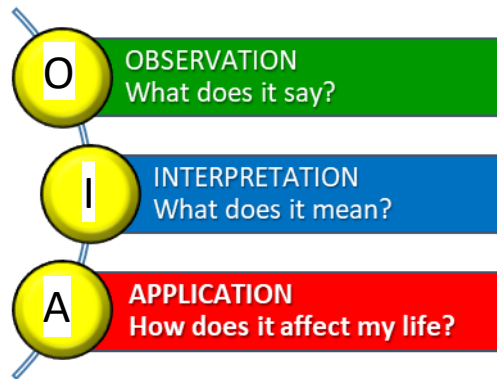
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Part 3: Diving Deeper with the O-I-A Method

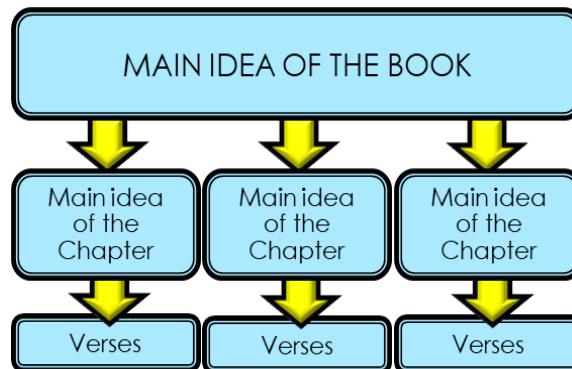
Getting the most out of God's Word can be accomplished using an effective three-step method summarized as follows.¹



STEP 1: OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Get the big picture first

Before studying any Bible text, make sure that you have an overview of the entire Bible book. Get the main idea first, then drill down to the details.



Ask questions

Next, bombard the selected text with questions. Curiosity will automatically drive you deeper into the Bible text. Most of the time, you will discover that the answers to your questions are already in the Bible. These questions will be addressed during the interpretation stage.

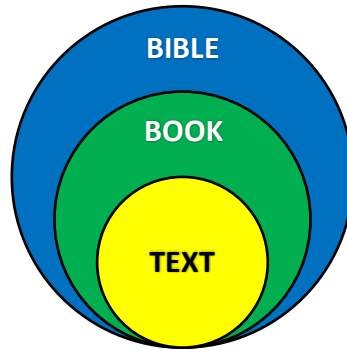
Look for clues

- Look for things that are _____. See Acts 4:12.
- Look for things that are _____. See Ephesians 4:4-6.
- Look for things that are _____. See Psalm 50:15.
- Look for things that are _____. See 2 Corinthians 8:9.
- Look for _____.

STEP 2: INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

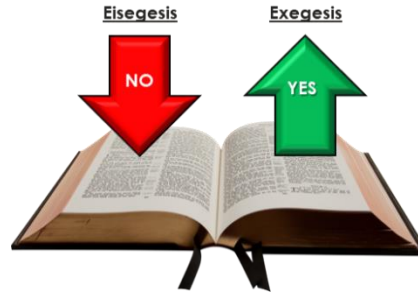
After carefully completing the observation stage, begin the interpretation stage using the following six "Cs" which conveniently incorporate the previous rules of interpretation.

- Content: Based on the content of the selected text, ask yourself, "What is the author's main idea?" For example, what is the main idea in John 15:1-8?
- Context: Context is to find understood at three levels: 1) The context of the whole Bible, 2) the context of the book, and 3) the context of the immediate text.
- Comparison: Compare Scripture with Scripture by comparing the main idea of this text to other related texts in the Bible. (Hint: Look for cross-references in your Bible margins).
- Culture: Ask yourself, "Does my interpreted main idea of the text fit into the cultural background of the text?" (Hint: Use a Bible handbook to understand the cultural background). What bearing does the cultural background have on the text?
- Consultation: Consult with other secondary sources in order to find answers to the questions you listed during the observation stage. In what ways do the answers to your questions add more meaning to the text?
- Central Principle: Finally, look for the central principle, or the main idea that can be transmitted from culture to culture. This is sometimes called the "transferable principle." Ask yourself, "What is the author talking about?" For example, the central principle for John 15:1-8 may be written as: "Apart from Christ—we cannot be spiritually productive."



Practice exegesis, avoid eisegesis

- Exegesis is reading the author's meaning out of the text. Practice this.
- Eisegesis is reading *into* the text what you want it to say. Avoid this.



Is It descriptive or prescriptive language?

- Descriptive language writing indicates what _____. For example, the book of Exodus is mostly descriptive. It describes the Israelites enslaved in Egypt and how God rescues them out of Pharaoh's hand and brings them to Mt. Sinai.
- Prescriptive language is instructive. It prescribes _____. For example, the Ten Commandments are prescriptive because they "prescribe" certain behaviors.

Is It figurative or literal language?

- Figurative language refers to words or phrases that are meaningful, _____. For example: "That news hit me like a ton of bricks."
- Literal language is used to mean _____. For example: "It was raining a lot, so I rode the bus."

Is it a conditional phrase?

- Does it have _____ wording? For example: "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven and heal their Land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

STEP 3: APPLICATION: HOW DOES IT AFFECT MY LIFE?

Finally, you want to ask yourself, "How does the Bible text affect my life?" Studying the Bible to satisfy one's intellectual curiosity is not enough. It must produce a change in your life. It must have relevancy.

Ten Application Questions

To help you think about applying the central principle to your life, try answering the following ten questions:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

- Is there an attitude to change?

You Need “Soak Time” (Psalm 119:15)

Sometimes, seeing how to apply the Bible takes time and it may not jump out at you right away. Discovering the application takes “soak time,” time to reflect, pray, and meditate. In our modern hurried culture, this can often be difficult, but it is necessary for a solid Bible study.



TRY IT YOURSELF

Read 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1, then practice the O-I-A Method as follows:

Observation (What does it say?)

- Verses 2-4. What encouraging words does Paul give to these Christians?
- Verse 5. In what unique way does the gospel come?
- Verse 6. As a result, what did the Thessalonians do?
- Verses 7-8. What was the result of their imitating Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Jesus Christ?
- Verses 9-10. What did the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia report about the Thessalonian Christians?

Interpretation (What does it mean?)

- Does this chapter illustrate how we are to encourage other believers also? If so, how can we encourage others the way Paul did?
- What are the implications of the words "always" and "continually" in verse 2?
- If all believers can receive encouragement from reading the Bible, why is it necessary for us to encourage others as Paul did?
- How can verse 5 encourage you when you share the gospel with others?
- What does it mean to "imitate the Lord"? (Verse 6)
- What principles can you gain from this chapter?

Application (How does it affect my life?)

Briefly describe how the passage might affect your life by listing any actions you'd like to take.

End Note

¹ Portions of this lesson are taken from "Living by the Book," by Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks (Moody Publishers, 1991, 2007).