

Core Classes

Unit 1: Foundations

Class 2: How to Read the Bible

Week 3: The Observation Process

Steps in The Observation Process

ADDENDUM 1

Observe the Flow and Structure of the Passage

Biblical Examples of Structural Patterns in Scripture

1. Comparison and Contrast

Passage: Psalm 1

This is one of the clearest examples in the Bible:

- righteous vs. wicked
- tree vs. chaff
- stability vs. destruction

This passage is almost entirely built on contrast.

2. Cause and Effect

Passage: Galatians 6:7–8

“Whatever one sows, that will he also reap...”

- Cause: what you sow
- Effect: what you reap

It’s simple, direct, and unmistakable.

3. Problem and Solution

Passage: Ephesians 2:1–10

- Problem: dead in sin (vv. 1–3)
- Solution: God makes alive (vv. 4–10)

This is one of the clearest theological problem-solution structures in Scripture.

4. Question and Answer

Passage: Romans 6:1–2

- Question: “Shall we continue in sin...?”
- Answer: “By no means!”

Paul frequently uses this rhetorical method, and this is a very clear example.

5. Command and Reason

Passage: Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind... forgiving one another, **as God in Christ forgave you.**”

- Command: be kind and forgiving
- Reason: because God forgave you

6. General Statement Followed by Explanation

Passage: Hebrews 11:1–3

- General statement: definition of faith (v. 1)
- Explanation: examples begin immediately (vv. 2–3)

This shows how a concept is introduced and then clarified.

7. Explanation Followed by Illustration

Passage: James 2:14–17

- Explanation: faith without works is dead
- Illustration: a brother or sister in need

James is especially strong in this pattern.

8. Progression or Sequence

Passage: 2 Peter 1:5–7

A clear chain:

- faith → virtue → knowledge → self-control → perseverance → godliness → brotherly affection → love

This is one of the clearest step-by-step progressions in Scripture.

9. Climax or Emphasis

Passage: Romans 8:31–39

The passage builds:

- accusation → justification → intercession → assurance

And climaxes in:

“Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God...”

A powerful example of rhetorical buildup.

10. Quotation or Appeal to Another Text

Passage: Matthew 4:1–11

Jesus repeatedly affirms:

“It is written...”

Each response is an appeal to Scripture (Deuteronomy).

Alternative Examples

- **Comparison/Contrast:** Proverbs 10:1–5
- **Cause/Effect:** Proverbs 22:6
- **Problem/Solution:** Romans 7–8 (larger section)
- **Question/Answer:** Malachi 1 (repeated pattern)
- **Command/Reason:** Colossians 3:1–2
- **Illustration:** Luke 15 (parables)
- **Progression:** Psalm 1 (also works here)
- **Climax:** Philippians 2:5–11
- **Quotation:** Acts 2 (Peter quoting Joel)

ADDENDUM 2

Pay Attention to the Grammar of the Text

Verbs

1. Statement (Indicative)

Example: Romans 5:8

“God **shows** his love for us...”

Explanation:

This is not telling you what to do—it is declaring **what is true**.

Teaching point:

Statements form the **foundation of doctrine**.

2. Command (Imperative)

Example: Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind to one another...”

Explanation:

This is not describing—it is **directing behavior**.

Teaching point:

Commands call for **obedience**, not just understanding.

3. Possibility / Condition

Example: 1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins...”

Explanation:

This introduces a **condition**:

- something that may or may not happen

- with a result that follows

Teaching point:

Conditions often structure the logic of a passage.

4. Promise

Example: John 6:37

“...whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

Explanation:

This expresses **certainty about what Christ will do**.

Teaching point:

Promises give **assurance**, not commands.

Modifiers: How Small Words Clarify Big Meaning

1. What Kind? (Adjectives)

Modifiers often tell us **what kind of thing** is being described.

Example: John 10:11

“I am the **good** shepherd.”

Explanation:

Jesus does not just say “I am the shepherd,” but “**the good shepherd**.”

That adjective matters:

- It distinguishes Him from false or careless shepherds
- It emphasizes His character and role

Without the modifier, the meaning becomes flatter and less precise.

2. How? (Adverbs / Descriptive Phrases)

Modifiers often tell us **how something is done**.

Example: Colossians 3:23

“Whatever you do, work **heartily**, as for the Lord...”

Explanation:

The command is not just “work,” but **how** to work:

- sincerely
- fully
- with effort and devotion

The modifier “heartily” shapes the kind of obedience being required.

3. When? (Time Modifiers)

Some modifiers tell us **when something happens**.

Example: Psalm 1:2

“...on his law he meditates **day and night.**”

Explanation:

This does not mean occasional reflection, but:

- continual meditation
- a pattern of life

The time modifier deepens the meaning significantly.

4. Where? (Location Modifiers)

Modifiers can tell us **where something takes place.**

Example: Ephesians 1:3

“...blessed us **in Christ...**”

Explanation:

This phrase is crucial:

- It defines the location or sphere of blessing
- It shows that these blessings are not general, but specifically tied to union with Christ

Without this modifier, the theological meaning would be unclear.

5. To What Degree? (Intensity Modifiers)

Modifiers often tell us **how much** or **to what extent.**

Example: Matthew 22:37

“You shall love the Lord your God with **all** your heart...”

Explanation:

The word “**all**” intensifies the command:

- not partial love
- not occasional devotion
- but total commitment

This modifier raises the standard of the command.