

## How to Study the Bible

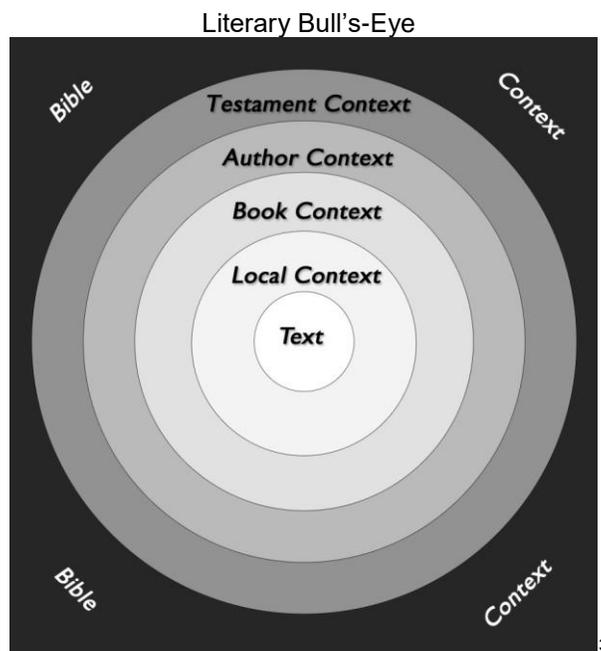
### Unit 1: Introduction – Lesson 3: Observation

#### Searching for Meaning

- **Question:** What are we looking for as we observe the text?
  - **Answer:** Meaning
- Who / what defines the meaning of a text?
  - Three Components of Communication<sup>1</sup>
    - Information itself (Code, Text, Words Spoken, etc)
    - Receiver of Information (Decoder, Reader, Hearer, etc)
    - Giver of information (Coder, Writer, Speaker, etc)
  - **Conclusion:** When we observe a passage of Scripture we are searching for the meaning behind what the original author intended to communicate to his original audience.<sup>2</sup>

#### Thinking Contextually

- In order to accurately observe, we must think contextually.
  - This entire class is devoted to observing the various contextual dimensions of any given passage of Scripture (Historical, Cultural, Theological, etc.), but literary context is a good place to begin practicing observation.



Note: No extra tools or books are required to practice this kind of observation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible, Playing by the Rules*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 5-29.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 30.

<sup>3</sup> William Klein, Craig Blomberg, Robert Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004) 214-229.

## Observing the Main Idea

- Observation begins with a quest to discover the main idea of a passage.
  - When reduced to its basic structure, an idea consists of two essential elements: a *subject* and a *complement*.<sup>4</sup>
  - **Subject:** What is being talked about.
    - **Example:** who, what, where, when, why
    - **Ask the question:** What is the author talking about?
  - **Complement:** What is being said about what is being talked about = idea.
    - **Example:** how to disciple in love, effective ways of witnessing, orderly worship.
    - **Ask the question:** What is the author saying about what he is talking about?
- **Example:**
  - Praise the Lord, all nations!  
Extol him, all you people!  
For his love is strong.  
His faithfulness is eternal.  
Psalm 117
  - **Subject:** Why should everyone praise the Lord?
    - (**Tip:** When identifying the subject, put in the form of a question. This will make it easier to identify the complement.)
  - **Complement:** ...because God's love is strong and because his faithfulness is eternal.
  - **Idea:** The Lord should be praised because his love is strong and because his faithfulness is eternal.

---

<sup>4</sup> Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001) 41.