**Studying the Bible Breakout Session**

Opening Question: What are the biggest challenges you find in studying the Bible?

***We are all interpreters, and this means we can correctly interpret the Bible***

There is a 3 phase process that is helpful to understand and apply any passage of the Bible. The three steps are **1) Observation, 2) Interpretation, and 3) Application.** This 3-phrase process can be found in more detail in the following resources:

* *Living By The Book by Howard Hendricks*
* [www.danielakin.com](http://www.danielakin.com) – search “hermeneutics”
* “Look at the Book” by John Piper - <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs>

We will look at the first two steps, Observation and Interpretation. Read Phil. 2:1-11 twice and answer the following questions on the back of this page, or a journal.

**Observation: What does the text say?**

Here, we are making as many observations of the text as possible. We will want to observe certain things like:

* Genre
* Author
* Audience
* Words, phrases, or sentences
* Key verses
* Surrounding context

1. Who is the author and the audience of Philippians?

2. What is the surrounding context of Philippians 2 (Hint: Read Philippians 1:27-30)? Is there any connections between these two passages?

**3. What are the major themes of the book? (This is a question you would answer with access to a good study Bible, or after reading through the entirety of Philippians yourself.)**

4. What are important words in this passage?

5. What is the genre? (For ex: Letter, narrative, poetry, etc.)

6. What seems to be a major idea being communicated in this passage?

7. Do other passages of Scripture in Philippians, or elsewhere in the Bible, help me to better understand this passage?

8. What does this passage teach you about God and Jesus?

9. What does this passage teach you about humanity?

**Interpretation: What does the text mean?**

Here, we are determining the meaning of a passage based upon the observations made. In every text of Scripture, the author is communicating a meaning, and our goal as readers of the Bible is to find out that meaning.

***Principle of Authorial Intent***

Based off the observations that were made, what is the main idea of this passage? Write out what you believe the main idea to be in 2-3 sentences.

**Application: How does this text change my life?**

In order to make appropriate application from our reading from the Bible, it needs to be rooted in the meaning and context of that passage. Once we determine the meaning of a text, we can make proper application for our lives.

For example, someone may read Matthew 5:27-30 and be confused by some of what Jesus says. What does it mean when Jesus says **“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lost one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.” (Matt. 5:29-30)**

Is Jesus teaching that we should literally cut off parts of our bodies when we struggle with sin? Let’s hope not, and that would be very bad application of this passage. Jesus is using hyperbole here, and when we understand that along with the greater context of Matthew 5 and the Sermon on the Mount we learn the meaning of these words. One purpose of Jesus’ statement here is to teach us, through hyperbole, to take sin seriously and to be aggressive in fleeing it. Understanding a passage correctly allows us to make right and appropriate application.

When we walk through the steps of observation and interpretation and we discover the meaning of a specific text, it will help us to make the right application to our lives. What are some possible questions to ask of a text when making good application?

1. What truths do I need to rest in?

2. What truths do I need to find motivation from?

3. What commands do I need to obey? How can I practically obey them in my life?

4. In what areas do I need to change?

5. What sins do I need to confess and flee?

6. How does this passage inform the way I ought to love God and others?

7. Are there any examples to imitate?

Take some time to review the observations you made in our previous exercise, and what you determined the meaning of this passage to be.

• What are the applications that can be made from Phil. 2:1-11?

• What kind of struggles would this text provide help for?

**Keep the gospel central:**

When we read the Bible, we want to reach all passages in light of the grand story of redemption in Christ. Whether it is the Old Testament or the New Testament, the Bible is an unfolding story of God and His kingdom intersecting the fallen state of our world. Scripture reveals the gospel, the good news of God providing righteousness, redemption, and restoration from sin and its effects through Jesus the Messiah and His sinless life, atoning death on the cross for sinners, resurrection from the dead, ascension in heaven, present intercession, and future return. In order to read the Bible correctly, and experience daily the blessings of knowing and following Christ, we must keep the gospel central.

* What themes are in this text that are fulfilled in Christ (ex: sacrifice, atonement, covenant, kingdom, King, Shepherd, etc). We see the author of Hebrews making connections like this for us.
* Are there prophecies that point us to Christ?
* How does Jesus embody the story of the character I am reading about? (Ex: Moses)
* Many times, the New Testament writers make the connections for us.
* How does this book of the Bible, and text within the book, fit in with the grand story of redemption?

**Other Recommended Resources:**

* 40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible by Robert Plummer
* A Good Study Bible
* Good Commentary Series
  + Christ-Centered Exposition Series
  + The New International Commentary on the New Testament
  + Preaching the Word Series
  + The Gospel Coalition Commentary Series (Free on website)
  + Olive Tree Study App
  + Logos Bible Software

**Philippians 2:1-11**

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.