

Get a clear picture.

- ✦ Read the Bible passage several times. Don't try to pull out lots of details yet; just read to get an overall picture of what it's about. If possible, read it from more than one translation.
- ✦ Now look closer for details. Gather information like a detective would, asking who, what, when, where, how questions. Follow along with the writer as he tells the story. Look for clues that tell you when and where the story is taking place, who is mentioned and what part they play? What events happened before and after? How do the characters respond to their situation? Always keep the passage in context with the authors original meaning.
- ✦ Look up the definition of any word that is unclear or stands out to you. Words or phrases that are repeated are important clues to help you understand what the writer wants to convey. A standard dictionary will be helpful; a Word Study dictionary will be even more useful for this.

Extra details help round out the picture.

- ✦ Can you gather more details to the story in another portion of the Bible? Looking up the cross-references (Treasury of Scripture Knowledge) off of the original Greek or Hebrew word shows how the word is used in other places of the Bible to understand it more fully.
- ✦ Bible maps, handbooks and encyclopedias can help you understand places, people and customs. IVP Bible Background commentary, ISBE (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) are excellent resources. They can be accessed on most Bible Programs.

Bring the story to life.

- ✦ Imagine the people, places and events you read about. **Don't use your imagination to produce facts—but use it to bring those biblical facts to life.** Remember that though times and cultures change, human nature remains the same. Imagination helps us to walk in someone else's shoes.

Some practical suggestions to keep your observation notes organized and easy to use.

- ✦ Give a brief descriptive title to each section of the Bible passage you study.
- ✦ Use the “working-text” in the printed lesson to jot down notes, questions and definitions. Jot down where you found it for the benefit of the group.
- ✦ Develop your own personal study system (highlighting, symbols, marking). Use whatever you find helpful, but don't spend more time on the system than you do on study.