

Handling the Word

Lesson 3 - Observation: What Does the Text Say?

Conversation Notes

Today we are asking one simple question

What does the passage actually say?

Many of us read the Bible quickly and then move straight to, "What does this mean for me?" That is not a bad question, but it is not the best first question. Before we ask what a passage means or how it applies, we first slow down and notice what God has actually said.

Proverbs 18:13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Acts 17:10-12; Mark 4:35-41

A few things we are looking for today

- We learn to slow down and look carefully.
- We practice noticing people, places, actions, words, questions, and responses.
- We do not rush to application before we have listened to the passage.
- We remember that simple observations are still real Bible study.

Let's check in honestly

How did you go with the pre-reading for this session?

Was there anything from the passages that encouraged you, challenged you, or stood out to you?

When you read **Mark 4:35-41**, what were three simple things you noticed?

A kind reminder before we read

You do not need perfect answers. We are simply learning to slow down, notice what God has said, and respond honestly.

Observation is not about trying to sound impressive. It is about learning to pay careful attention to the words in front of us.

A simple Bible study principle

Proverbs 18:13

This verse reminds us that it is unwise to answer before we listen. That is true in conversations with people, and it is also helpful for Bible study. We do not want to answer a passage before we have listened carefully to it.

What warning does this verse give us?

How might this apply to reading the Bible too quickly?

What is observation?

Observation simply means noticing what is actually in the passage. It is asking careful questions and letting the text speak before we try to explain or apply it.

When we observe, we can look for:

- People - who is mentioned?
- Place - where is this happening?
- Problem - what is going on?
- Words - what words, phrases, or ideas stand out?
- Actions - what do people do? What does God do?
- Questions - what questions are being asked?
- Response - how do people respond?

Read and talk together

Nehemiah 8:1-8

This passage gives us a helpful picture of people hearing the Word and being helped to understand it.

What were the people doing with the Word of God?

What did the leaders help the people do?

Why do you think understanding matters?

A good example - the Bereans

Acts 17:10-12

The Bereans received the Word with readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Good Bible study means listening carefully, receiving the Word humbly, and checking everything by Scripture.

What do the Bereans teach us about listening to teaching and studying Scripture?

Main practice passage

Mark 4:35-41

Read the passage once to get the story. Read it again and notice the details. Read it a third time and look for repeated ideas, questions, and actions.

Mark 4:35-41 continued

What do you notice?

- Who is in the passage?
 - Where are they?
 - What problem happens?
 - What are the disciples doing?
 - What is Jesus doing?
 - What does Jesus say?
 - What changes after Jesus speaks?
 - What question do the disciples ask at the end?
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Observation tip - look for questions

Questions in a passage often help us see what matters. Mark 4:35-41 includes several questions.

Write down the questions you notice in the passage:

What do these questions show us about the disciples?

What do these questions show us about Jesus?

A simple observation tool

When you read a passage, you can use these simple prompts:

- People - who is involved?
- Place - where is this happening?
- Problem - what is going on?
- Words - what words, questions, or ideas stand out?
- Actions - what do people do? What does God do?
- Response - how do people respond?
- Surprise - is there anything unexpected?

Pulling it together

What part of observation feels most natural to you?

What part do you think you need to practice?

How might slowing down help you better understand the Bible?

Today's simple takeaway

Simple observations are enough.

The goal is to slow down, read carefully, and listen honestly before trying to explain or apply the passage.

This week - keep it simple

Read **Mark 4:35-41** three times during the week. Each time, answer just one question:

- First reading - what happens in the passage?
- Second reading - what do I notice about the disciples?
- Third reading - what do I notice about Jesus?

One thing I noticed this week was...

Prayer to finish

Lord, please teach me to slow down when I come to Your Word. Help me to notice what You have said, receive it humbly, and understand it faithfully. Amen.