

BIB105 Biblical Hermeneutics

Unit 2b Observation: Sentences

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Hey, welcome back. Great to be with you again and looking forward to being able to learn together again as we learn how to study God's word. If you remember last week, or last lesson, actually, we had a chance to look at the interpretive journey and just an overview of the process. We looked at the five steps that you want to use and the questions that you ask as you approach a passage in Scripture. We looked at the example of Joshua 1:1-9 and we walked through those five steps together. So hopefully, it was beneficial for you, and looking forward to learning some more today as we get into some more observational tools. And we're going to start with the basics of sentences and how to approach the building block here of meaning when it comes to understanding God's word. So let's get rolling.

This is serious reading. Anytime you approach God's word, you want to make sure you have the right attitude. But have the attitude as if you're reading a love letter because really God's word is his love letter to us. This is him revealing his heart to us. It is the best way to understand his mind, his heart, his love, his compassion, and every aspect of his being. And much like when you were younger, if you had a chance to get a love letter from someone that you cared about, probably you read that more than once and you were very focused on the process of reading that and probably even tucked it away in a drawer to save it for later. So that's the same kind of mentality we need to have as it relates to studying God's word. So let's have that as we move forward here.

So first thing to look for when you're observing a sentence, look at repetition of words. Back in ancient times, when scribes were copying Scripture, they didn't have highlighters. They didn't use emboldened fonts or underline or italics to try to emphasize different words. It would just take them too long in the process of handwriting every single letter. And so what they did was they would repeat words. The authors would repeat words to show points of emphasis and to show that "Hey, this is an idea or a concept that is really important. I want you to remember this." So we'd have a chance to practice with a couple of passages. The first passage we're going to look at is from 1 John 2:15-17, and we're going to look at some of the words that are repeated and see what we can learn from there. And then the second passage we're going to look at is from 2 Corinthians 1, and we're going to look at the ideas of comfort and then suffering and trouble, and what can we learn by these terms?

And so let's take a look at the 1 John 2 passage first of all. So let's read this together. It's from the New International Version. "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."

All right. So what are some of the words you see there that are repeated and what can we learn from that? Well, I have listed down below, at least the ones that I observed, and of course, we're just going through this quickly. You could spend a little more time on this on your own. But some of the repeated words, we have the word "love." We have the word "world." We have lust and Father. Those are the ones that really stood out to me as far as important to this passage. And so what can we learn from some of these words that are repeated? Well, we do see that our love can be divided toward different things, both good and bad. In 1Jo 2:15, you love the world, loving the world, and then love of the Father. So there's a contrast in comparing our love for the world and the things of this world and our love for God. Also, we see the word "world" which seems to represent the opposite of what God wants us to do. And we know Jesus kind of emphasizes in the Sermon on the Mount, he said you cannot serve

two masters. You will love God or love material things. You can't have both. And so that's definitely being reinforced here by the apostle John.

The word "lust" comes up. And it's like a strong desire for pleasing my flesh, for the things that I see, that I want, or my own ego, my own pride. We see that these can be very powerful influences in how we think and our behavior, and so it goes against our love for God. And so we got to lump that in together under the umbrella of the worldly things. And also "Father." God is shown as a caring father who wants what is best for us, and so we can have these things if we follow him, of course. And that's clearly communicated in 1Jo 2:17. But whoever does the will of God lives forever. So those are some of the keywords and just some of the simple lessons we can learn through words that are repeated because John was definitely trying to communicate in contrast things of God and things of this world.

So let's move on to the next passage which is 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. And this also is in the New International Version. Let's read this together. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort."

And so we look at the word "comfort" and "suffering" and "trouble." And how many times are they used? So the word "comfort" is used nine times in this particular passage. And then suffering and trouble, actually, in 2Co 1:6, there's a seventh occasion in which that term is used at the end of 2Co 1:6, which I also included the term "distressed" in those. And so I have those highlighted in the yellow highlighter of the comfort, and then the blue is the sufferings and trouble and distressed. So what can we learn by these words being repeatedly used together? Well, God will give us exactly what we need in times of difficulty. I think it's interesting that he starts with the idea of compassion and comfort, and then he ends with comfort. So comfort is on the bookends. You may have trouble and suffering in the middle, but everything is going to end in comfort. And then whether that be in eternity or here on earth, but along with comfort, he promises us compassion. You see that in 2Co 1:3, "the Father of compassion." Salvation is another term that's used and we see that in 2Co 1:6. "It is for your comfort and salvation." Endurance, another term in 2Co 1:6. And then hope in 2Co 1:7. "Our hope for you is firm."

So these are some other things that come with the comfort that God will provide for us. And this does not mean, by any way, comfortable living. That's, I think, a very different thing as it relates to material wealth. Please don't confuse the two. This is talking about that of the heart, comfort of the heart and of the mind and the soul, and ultimately our eternal comfort that lies ahead of us. So, some pretty cool lessons there just from some words that are repeated. And so, hopefully, that gives you a little better understanding of what we're looking for there as it relates to the words that are repeated.

So the second thing to look for are contrasts, and these are items, ideas, or individuals that are contrasted with each other, that are different, that are maybe opposite. And so an example we look at here is from Proverbs 14:31. What are the contrasts that we see in this verse? And so the verse says, "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God." So we do see that how we treat those in need, either with contempt, contrasted with kindness, is

not only noticed by God, but it reveals our heart attitude toward him. And so this is a good example of contrast. We also saw that in the 2 Corinthians passage we just looked at with comfort and trouble. And so contrast is an excellent tool used quite often throughout Scripture, being able to teach principles and help us understand meaning of a passage.

The third thing we're going to look for is the opposite of contrast which is comparisons. So the focus on items, ideas, and individuals that are similar. So in the next few slides, we're going to look at a couple of examples of some comparisons in Scripture and what can we learn from those? Proverbs 25:26 is one example. And we're going to see the image there of an ancient well. The author compares a person to a well or spring. And what does that mean, and what can we learn from it? And then we're going to look at James 3:3-6, which is a pretty popular passage as it relates to the tongue and it's compared to three different things. And is it good? Is it bad? What can we learn from that?

So let's take a look at Proverbs 25:26 first. "Like a muddied spring or a polluted well are the righteous who give way to the wicked." All right. So how does the author compare a person to a well or a spring? Well, it seems to imply that the righteous are to be sources of life and purity to the world. But when they start to compromise with evil, when they give way to the wicked, then they will have no more use. And Jesus affirms this in the Sermon on the Mount as well when he talks about if the salt has lost its saltiness, its flavor, then what good is it other than to be tossed out into the street and trampled under the foot of man? And have you ever seen this occur in your own life or in the life of other believers that stood for what was right and true, but then, because of pressure maybe from culture or from family or his friends, caved in to evil and to sin? And maybe he was caving in to their own fleshly desires. And so when that happens, there's definitely consequences as it relates to your testimony and the impact that it has on other people. So just a very simple proverb but you see how the comparison is very strong in the message.

And then the other passage we're going to look at here. And again, I pulled out the highlighter for this one. James 3:3-6. "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."

So we love James. He was no-nonsense, just very straightforward, very strong in his words. There's no gray. It was very black and white and very clear with James, which is why I think this book is popular with so many. So I'm going to say my observations here. Well, first of all, the tongue is compared to three different things. We see in verse 3 that it's compared to a bit that's in a horse's mouth. Second, in verse 4, we see that it's compared to a rudder, a small rudder of a ship. And then third, it's a small spark or a fire (verses 5 and 6). So what can we learn from these comparisons? The tongue is a very small piece of our body. It really is not very big compared to some of the other parts of our body, but it has a huge impact on those around us. And that can be both positive and negative. On the negative, we see clearly in verses 5 and 6 that it's something so small, can burn down a whole forest. And it can have a devastating effect on people around us on how we use our words. But then also, on a positive side, it can have great influence on people in a positive way. Like a ship or a horse or an animal, so powerful, but yet such a small thing can be controlled and steered. So our tongue and our words are so important,

and this four-verse section makes it very clear just through some simple comparisons that everybody can understand.

Number four is lists, and these are when you have a set of two or more, actually more than two, things, ideas, individuals that are all kind of put together. And one of the classic examples is that of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5. You see the next picture there on the left. Can you imagine having a tree with all that kind of fruit? Oh, that would be awesome. So let's look at the list that are in this passage and we're going to compare and contrast. So use points two and three that we just went over and get some of the spiritual lessons from it. So let's see here in Galatians 5:19-23. And I used the New Living Translation. I try to give you a couple of different versions throughout this course just to get you acclimated to different ways that some of these translations communicate.

So, Gal 5:19. "When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!"

And personally, as I was preparing for this lesson, that idea of people aren't going to have laws, countries aren't going to have laws against people showing love or peace or patience or kindness toward others. That's a country that would be a very dark country if you lived in one of those that you aren't allowed to do those positive things of the spirit. But let's take the list here that I noted by the apostle Paul to the Galatians. So one of those, desires of the sin nature, and it's quite a list. I'm not going to read through the whole thing. We just read the passage. And then we see the fruit of the Spirit on the other side. So what are some of the observations we can make? Well, notice how all the fruits are in direct contrast to the desires of the sin nature. And notice that there isn't really any middle ground. You either exhibit self-control, for example, you exhibit self-control in the moment or you don't. You either show patience in the moment or you don't. So every decision that we have throughout the day is a choice between the flesh and the Spirit. And so, obviously, as Christ's followers, we want to be moving more toward living on the right side of this chart here and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit.

Next thing to look for is cause and effect. But what is cause and effect? Cause and effect is something creating a reaction or causing something else or someone else to action. It's an active idea, concept. It's not static at all. It's causing something else to move or react. And so the example we're going to look at here is in John 3:16, a passage you should be very familiar with. We're going to look at just a couple of the cause and effects in this one. So, John 3:16. Use the New American Standard Bible for this one. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

So what are some of the cause and effects that we see here? Well, God and his love for us is the first cause. I think that's important to note that God is the first cause as it relates to salvation, not us. He is the first cause. And the effect of his love for us and seeing our need for salvation is that he sent his son to the earth to help deal with the said problem. And so for our part, if we believe in him and this plan he gave us, then we will have eternal life. So there's some causes and effects that occur here in this passage that are revolutionary. And if you want to take some time on your own, take a look at some of the other

passages that relate to our salvation and look at some of the cause and effects that are repeated there as well in Romans 3:6, Romans 10, and Ephesians 2.

Some other things to look for are figures of speech. And these are words that are used in a sense other than the literal normal sense. So the example I'm going to give here, just maybe it will help clarify things. Psalm 119:105. So what are the figures of speech that are used in this passage? And I think you're very familiar with it. "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path." So if you do a little digging on ancient lamps, and there's an example of one there from this time period of the Old Testament, just enough light was cast to see one or two steps ahead at night. So if you have this coupled with our faith and put it in a spiritual context, God's word doesn't show us the full journey ahead. It's a lamp. It's not a major spotlight that's going to show us everything, but it does give us enough to keep moving forward, particularly in times of struggle and times of darkness. So some really cool spiritual lessons just from this very simple metaphor of a lamp and talking about light in our path.

Some other things to look for. I'm just going to put these through in a quick list here. We have conjunctions. Getting a little more grammatical here, but these are words that link ideas together. So for example, and, for, but, therefore, since, because. Those are examples of conjunctions. And so when you see that, you want to look at what was before and after the literary context, if you will, to see what is being contrasted or compared. The eighth thing is verbs. These are words that communicate the action of the sentence. Very important when you're observing a passage to understand, what are these verbs for and how do they relate to the context? And then lastly, pronouns. These words identify the antecedent. I know that's kind of a big word, but... So the words "our" or "us." Our heritage or your word. That gives a little clarification as it relates to the noun that's around it. So that's what a pronoun is. Again, these are getting into a little more of the nitty-gritty of grammar, but like I said before, if you're going to be a good student of God's word, you're going to have to dig in a little bit as it relates to some of the rules of grammar.

So that wraps things up here, just some of the basics as it relates to observing sentences. I kind of gave you a lot of material, so feel free to review this again if you didn't get it the first time because next we're going to be going from sentences and going to paragraphs. So build on the sentences and then get into paragraphs which is a larger section of sentences put together, and we'll see how we can relate all these principles into the next lesson.