

COMA

CONTEXT

- Answers the question: What is happening around what is said?
- The key to context is research.
- Any good bit of research begins with good resources. You need to understand the historical context. Read a good reference material on the author, audience, and occasion of the letter. This could come from a Bible dictionary or a good study Bible. Again, you are looking for information on the:
 - Author
 - Audience
 - Occasion of the letter
- In addition to the historical context, you will need to understand the literary context. To do this, you need to get the big picture. This bit of research needs to be done on your own by reading through the entire letter in one sitting. By doing this, you are creating a table of contents in your mind and formulating the main idea or ideas of the letter.
- Again, you are looking for:
 - Divisions of thoughts/arguments
 - General theme or themes

OBSERVATION

- Answers the question: What is the author saying?
- The key to observation and knowing what is said is re-reading. Re-read. Re-read. Re-read. This is the most crucial step and the step people are most likely to not spend enough time on! Read the passage again and again.
- As you re-read a passage, you will notice more and more. Slowly, you will begin to see things you did not before, and eventually you will move towards understanding and mastery of the passage. To help this process, as you reread, you can look for different things each time you re-read the passage. Here are some suggested things to look for as you re-read the passage:
 - Words you don't know the definition for (look them up)
 - Sentence structure
 - Repeated words or ideas
 - Cause/effect relationships (if/then, because, since, therefore, since/so)
 - Lists
 - Contrasts (but, contrast, conversely, instead, rather, yet, however, still, nevertheless)
 - Comparisons (like, as, similarly)
 - Promises
 - Commands

COMA

- What do I learn about God?
- What do I learn about Jesus?
- What do I learn about the Spirit?
- What do I learn about myself or mankind?

MEANING

- Answers the question: What exactly does what the author says mean?
- The key to knowing the meaning of passages is paragraphs. You have to think in paragraphs.
- Trace the argument of a given section, paragraph by paragraph, and in a sentence or two explain the point of each paragraph. But to really understand a passage you must not just understand the main idea of each paragraph, but also how its argument contributes to the argument of the book as a whole. So again to accomplish this you need to answer:
 - What is the author saying in this paragraph?
 - How does what he is saying in this paragraph contribute to the book as a whole?

APPLICATION

- Answers the question: How does what is said apply to my life?
- The key to knowing application is bridging context. How does what the author said to the original audience apply to life in my context today?
- If we consider the meaning of the passage, does it's context match ours today? If so we can apply the meaning of the passage directly. If not what is the principle behind the meaning? How can we apply that principle to our lives today?
- A helpful question to ask is, "What did I learn from the passage that I sense the Holy Spirit prodding me about?" This prodding or impressing could take the form of any of the following:
 - Laws, rules, or commands to obey
 - Ideals or principles to live by
 - Examples to imitate
 - Doctrines to live by
 - Promises to trust
 - Songs and prayers as examples to express to God
 - Sin to repent of
 - Conditions to meet
 - Verses to memorize
 - Warnings to note and avoid
 - Challenges to face
 - New paradigms to shape my life around