

Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Lecture 12, Detailed Analysis of Matthew 6:25-33

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This is Dr. David Bower in his teaching on Inductive Bible Study. This is session 12, Detailed Analysis, Matthew 6:25-33, Outline of Passage, Contextual Connections and Logical Labels.

Okay, we want to go ahead and look at the second alternative for focused observation on individual passages.

We mentioned the first possibility, which is detailed observation. The second possibility is a detailed analysis or a thought flow, which really involves an outline of the passage. It's a matter of outlining the passage and noting especially contextual connections, structural relationships and logical labels.

That's the best way I can describe it. An outline of the passage that emphasizes contextual connections, structural relationships, logical labels or logical headings, and the like. It's helpful, I think, to begin by making, if we do a detailed analysis, begin by making observations regarding the relationship of the passage that we're observing to its immediate context.

On a scratch piece of paper, note the general structure of the passage. You can do something like a survey of the passage, noting main units, subunits, and major structural relationships, but then go to the first main unit identified and locate its main divisions and subdivisions and break each subdivision down into increasingly smaller, more specific components. In the process, suggest and assign appropriate logical labels, identify structural relationships, and note contextual connections.

Follow the same process with each of the other main units you identified and note the major unifying theme of the passage as well as the sub-themes and observe how the sub-themes contribute to and expand or support the main theme. And I would note major interpretive questions that occur to you as a result of your detailed analysis. Now, this is especially helpful when you're working with longer passages because it's very difficult, of course, to do a detailed, say a detailed observation such as we did with James 1, 5 through 8 on a whole segment.

That takes a lot of time. And so, you're able really to do a detailed analysis, which is a more selective kind of observation on a longer passage. Also, it's helpful, especially in discursive material, in logical argumentation, because it does involve tracing the thought, tracing the flow of thought, which, of course, is absolutely essential and central to discursive material.

Now, I think the best way to describe really detailed analysis is not by talking about it in the abstract but actually by doing a detailed analysis of a passage. And here I want to direct your attention to Matthew chapter 6, verses 25 through 33. Matthew 6, 25 through 33.

Well, just remind ourselves what we have here. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they? And which of you, by being anxious, can add one cubit to a span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Now, again, this is basically an outline of the passage, so we begin by noting the overall structure of the passage, the main units of the passage. As you stand back and look at the passage as a whole, you'll note that the paragraph here begins and ends with exhortation.

Verse 25: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body what you shall put on. And then in verses 31 through 33, Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be yours as well.

So, we note here then that he begins with the initial command and ends with final commands. Begins with initial command and ends with final commands. And that in the intervening material, he begins with the final command and ends with the final command.

You actually have the reasons why the command of verse 25 and the commands of verse 31 should be obeyed. So, you have command, which really involves, well, they have command, and you have reasons why this command should be obeyed. I'll write that a little clearer here.

Reasons why the command should be obeyed, and then the final command. Now, you know that when you have a command followed by reasons why the command should be obeyed, which then is followed by further commands, you have movement from effect to cause to effect. This involves hortatory substantiality, and then you have substantiation.

The reason why you ought to do this is because of this. And I say you ought, and because of this, therefore you ought to do this. So, this substantiates, this substantiates the command in verse 35, verse 25, and this causes the final commands in verses 31 through 33.

Now, we also note that in the command, in verse 25, he speaks about two realms, as it were, or two spheres. Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Notice, life, eat, drink, body, wear.

You have the same things, the same two spheres in verses 31 through 33. Therefore, do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, or what shall we wear. You'll note here then, too, in verses, the intervening verses, verses 26 through 30, which give the reasons why these commands should be obeyed, that he actually expands upon each of the spheres that he mentions in a more general way in the exhortations of verse 25 and verses 31 through 33.

The general reference to life, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, is expanded in verse 26. Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And the reference to the body, what you shall put on, is expanded in verses 28 through 30.

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? So, what you have here, then, is not only a movement from effect to cause back to effect but also from general to particular to general. He introduces in a general way this business about anxiety regarding life, what you shall eat and drink, and then he expands upon that in verse 26.

He mentions in a general way anxiety here in verse 25, anxiety regarding the body, what you shall wear, and he expands upon that aspect in verses 28 through 30. Now so here then we have the general outline, don't we, of the passage. Let's go ahead and note how verse 25 itself breaks down.

Therefore, I tell you, which, by the way, is an introductory statement, but we'll pass over that for the time being, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, which you shall put on, is not life more than food and the body more than clothing. The thing to do here is to do something like a survey of the verse. How does the verse break down? Where is a major break within the verse, and what structural relationship is operative in the verse as a whole? Well, you note that we actually have two sentences here, so it's natural to think that the major break will come between sentence one and sentence two.

Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, which you shall put on, and then you have the second sentence, which is actually in the form of a rhetorical question. It's a question, but it's not a real question. That is to say, it's not a question that Jesus is seeking an answer to, but it's a declaration in question form.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? You can actually restate it this way. Life is more than food, isn't it? And the body is more than clothing, isn't it? So, clearly then, those are the two parts of verse 25. It begins quite clearly, and by the way, the first sentence is in the form of a command.

It's in the form of an exhortation. It's in the imperative. Do not be anxious about your life.

So, he begins then really with the exhortation in verse 25a. Exhortation, command, verse 25a here, and then the statement in verse 25b being indicative, we have a strong suspicion that it may substantiate the exhortation in verse 25a. They may be saying something like this: the reason why I say that you should not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on, is because life is more than food and the body is more than clothing.

So, we'll at least suggest that you may have then in verse 25b the reason why this exhortation should be obeyed here in verse 25a, which, of course, would involve hortatory substantiation. Now, let's break down the exhortation a bit. We've already noted that you have really two spheres here, the sphere of life and the sphere of body.

Do not be anxious about your life, which he then goes ahead and specifies even further, what you shall eat and what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on, what you shall wear. Now, let's pause and reflect on this a bit. Note that you have two spheres here, that the sphere of life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, involves ingestion, ingestion.

That is to say, what you put into the body, inside the body. It is internal to the body, this is a logical observation, whereas what you wear involves what you put on

outside the body, that is external to the body. Both internal needs and external bodily needs, which will, and of course that is complete, that is holistic, that is all inclusive.

Internal to the body, external to the body, internal needs, external needs. In other words, inclusive scope, all needs, inclusive. Now, as I say, verse 25 may, being in the indicative, substantiate verse 25a, and this is structured really according to, again, you have those same two spheres, according to the recurrence of contrast.

Is not life more than food? When you have more than one, that involves a contrast of extent. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? So, he says, life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Again, in each case, what you have is a contrast of extent.

Life is different from food in that it is more than food. The body is different from clothing in that it is more than clothing. Now, we have to be careful, of course, not to get involved in premature interpretation at this stage, but in terms of making sense of the substantiation here, especially in light of what he goes ahead to say with regard to God and God's provision, the point that he may be making here is that the God who created life is more than able to provide food for the life that he has created.

In other words, it was a rather big deal for God to create life, and the God who was able to create life out of non-life will have no difficulty at all and will be fully capable of providing food for the life that he has created. It involves real ability but also perhaps will. If God took the bother to create life, that suggests that he is committed, he will be committed, he will be willing, he is more than willing to provide food for the life that he has made, food to sustain the life that he has made.

Again, with regard to the body, it was rather a big deal for God to create the body, and the God who was able to create the body will have no problem providing clothing for the body that he has created. And again, if God took the bother to create the body, that suggests that he will be committed to caring for the body that he has created. Now, one more word with regard to this verb here, and verbs are often, particularly if they are other than the form of the verb to be, other verbs are usually worthy of observation.

The verb here is, do not be anxious, which clearly is of course a negative command, that is to say, a prohibition, do not be anxious. Now, I'm working with the Greek here, and there are two ways of expressing prohibition in Greek. One is may, which is the negative in Greek, may with the present imperative, which usually means stop being anxious.

The other is may with the aorist subjunctive, which means don't even begin being anxious. But what you have here is may with the present imperative, and it could be translated: stop being anxious. It really assumes or presumes a kind of mode of anxiety: stop being anxious.

Now, we go ahead then and look at the particular cause. What we have is, I say, are the particular causes here in verses 26 through 30. The particular causes are particularization, generalization, substantiation, and causation.

And he begins with life, which of course is found in verse 26. And let's look at how this is presented. Again, we stand back and try to get a sense of the structure of the whole.

Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Now again, you want to kind of do a survey of this.

And again, you note that you have two sentences. The first has to do with birds. The second has to do with you.

Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? So what do you have, of course, you have to ask yourself, what is the relationship between you, between the birds of the air and you? And when he says, are you not of more value, again, that suggests the notion of contrast of extent, greater value than the birds, different from the birds in that you have greater value than the birds.

So basically, he says he wants to do is to create a contrast between birds of the air versus you. Now, what does he say with regard to birds of the air here? Well, although they do not sow, they do not reap, they do not gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. That word yet suggests contrasts, a kind of mild contrast, a kind of concession.

Although, what he's indicating here is that he's drawing a contrast between what they do not do and what they get. Although they do not sow, they do not reap, they do not gather into barns, yet he says, there you have the contrast, yet he says, your heavenly Father feeds them. By way of contrast, he says, with regard to the birds of the air, you are more valuable than they.

Now, really, it's important here to make a logical observation in terms of what is obviously the point that he's making. The point that he's making is implied. Clearly, the point that he is making is, and this is, as I say, an implied point.

Therefore, he's saying, your heavenly Father will surely do as much for you. Surely do as much for you. Are you not more valuable than they? This is really what's called the argumentum a fortiori, the argument from the lesser to the greater.

If this is true, which it manifestly is, therefore, how much more from lesser to the greater? How much more? How much more certainly will he do as much for you? Now, of course, in verse 28, he has what you might almost refer to as a parenthetical statement, and that is a principle that anxiety is futile. This is another substantiation, another way in which another substantiation of this command here, do not be anxious. And this really is an appeal, as it were, to reasonableness.

As I say, and by the way, this assumes that anxiety is distressful. So, he's saying it makes no sense at all to engage in a distressful activity when it has no positive consequence. Now, he goes ahead in verses 28 through 30 and talks about and develops this notion of clothing.

This is, as I say, 28 through 30. This was 27. And you have a parallel construction here.

Here, it's the lilies of the field that are contrasted with you. Look at the lilies of the field, he says, although, again, what they do not do, they do not toil or spin. Yet, he says, in contrast, a kind of concession, they surpass Solomon.

Even one of them, he says, surpasses Solomon in array, in glory of array. Here, you have the notion, really, of glory being brought into it. Over against you, once again, where he says, if God clothes this temporary fleeting grass, here you have a conditional statement if God clothes, which He certainly does, this grass, which today is alive and tomorrow is cast into the oven, temporary fleeting, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Now, let me just mention here, with regard to this address, you of little faith, we need to ask ourselves in terms of contextual connection, what is the relationship between little faith, oligopistos in Greek, and between little faith and anxiety? And almost certainly, it involves a kind of substantiation.

That is to say, anxiety is a result of little faith or weak faith. Now, a couple of things to observe here. Note that he talks about birds of the air.

So here, he's talking about animals. Here, he talks about plants. He says, look at the lilies of the field.

The realm of animal, the realm of plant, birds of the air, field, the earth. So, the heavens and the earth. Notice how this complements.

By the way, we might also note that sowing, reaping, and gathering is male work, whereas toiling and spinning is female work. But what he's indicating really here is that this care for God, God's care of his creation, is total and complete. It's not restricted just to animals, but it includes plants.

It's not restricted to the heavens, but also to the earth. This kind of thing. And also, note that what he talks about here in verse 26 is, as we might say, basic sustenance.

He feeds them. But when he goes ahead and talks about the lilies of the field, he's talking really about extravagance. Here, he brings in the notion of beauty and even of glory, of extravagance.

So, God's care for his creation is not restricted simply to basic sustenance, but he's extravagant in providing for his creation even more than creation needs. Now, of course, this then leads to the final commands that we have here. And you'll notice, again, if you look at the whole of verses 31 through 33, you actually have two exhortations here.

You have the negative exhortation in verse 31; therefore, do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink? So, it begins with a negative exhortation. Do not be anxious. Now, this, of course, ties in with the prohibition in verse 25.

We mentioned that there are two ways of expressing, in Greek, two ways of expressing prohibition. One is may with the present imperative, which means stop doing something. The other is may with the error subjunctive, which means don't even start.

That he uses may with the present imperative here, stop. Interestingly enough, you have the other way of expressing prohibition here in verse 31. Here, you have may with the subjunctive; don't even think of being anxious.

Do not even begin to be anxious. About what he says, do not be anxious, saying, and here, notice what you have here is direct discourse, saying, what shall we eat, drink, or wear? This is important, I think because this involves what is often referred to as internal dialogue. What we say to ourselves or within our minds, don't eat, saying, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? This may be very significant because this is, of course, the way worry functions.

Worry has to do with and is generated by this internal dialogue. We talk ourselves into worry. By the way, this also involves addressing ourselves rather than addressing God.

Now, in verse 33, we have the complement of this, the positive command. You have a negative command here and a negative command here. What you should not do, notice how the paragraph ends, perhaps climatically, with what you should do, the positive command.

The positive command involves both—it really involves an exhortation and a promise. The exhortation is to seek first God's kingdom and then the manner of seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness. And then the promise is that as you do this and as a result of doing this, all these things will be added to you.

Now, with regard to this exhortation, this business of seeking first, notice, well, let me just say before we get into this, between the negative command here in verse 31 and the positive command in verse 33, we have, again, the reason why both of these should be obeyed. Sandwiched in here is the reason why both of these should be obeyed, and this involves a contrast between Gentiles and you. The Gentiles, he says, seek all these things, but your heavenly father, in other words, you have a heavenly father in a sense that they don't. Your heavenly father knows that you need all these things.

Now, of course, we mentioned in verse 25b that he indicates that God, who created life and created the body, has both the ability to provide food and clothing for the body and also a willingness to provide food and clothing. Here, he says that God has knowledge of your needs. So, he's able, he's willing, and he's aware.

But with regard to, notice, too, that you have this very subtle shift from anxiety to seeking, and that raises the question, what exactly is the relation between being anxious and seeking, this kind of thing? But I would also note here, and by the way, when you have this in verse 33, the exhortation promise involves historical causation: seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness will result in all these things being added to you, but linked with this is substantiation, that is to say, you ought to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness because the result of that is that all these things will be added to you. There is a question here about what is involved in this business of seeking first God's kingdom and his righteousness. We ought to observe that.

Whether this first, it clearly, of course, involves priority, but the question is whether it is absolute or relative priority. In other words, if it's priority, he would be saying, seek first and only God's kingdom and his righteousness, and as a result of these things will be added unto you. If it's a relative priority, yeah, seek all sorts of things, but you ought to give priority to the various things that you seek in God's kingdom.

So, whether we seek only God's kingdom or seek, we realize that life involves seeking all sorts of things, but there should be a hierarchy of seeking, and the chief place of seeking should be God's kingdom. So, I think you see here then that on the basis of

this, you get an idea as to what the main point is of this whole paragraph, how he develops the main point here in terms of the sub-themes, how, in other words, the sub-themes relate to the main theme. Also, how the details fit within the broad program of this paragraph, and this, of course, can lead quite clearly to interpretation.

All right. Well, that, I think, is a good place to pause. When we come back, we will look at the process of interpretation.

We've talked about observation, including raising questions out of our observations. We want to talk a bit about the process of actually answering those questions that arise out of our observation and that process really is interpretation.

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