

# Inductive Bible Study

## A. Purpose

Be diligent (an ever present command) to present yourself approved to God (not man) as a workman (not a lazy man) who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately (a present life style) the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is (present life style) for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. (Hebrews 5:13-14)

## B. Approach

1. Observation: What does it say?
2. Interpretation: What does it mean in immediate context?
3. Application: What does it mean to me today?

**Inductive Bible Study**, a method that is basically an objective and impartable approach to Scripture because it demands that the student put any section of the Word under the discipline of three basic steps that move from a general overview to particulars. Then and only then can he draw his conclusions from those particulars.

**Inductive Bible Study** is designed to bring joy to the digger. It is one thing to hear about a friend who found gold, it is quite another thing to discover gold yourself. The general subject is gold, the particulars come as one asks certain questions—where, when, how who, what, why? After this process one can intelligently, objectively, and confidently discern the correct direction to take under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

By the **observation** (What do I see?), **interpretation** (What does it mean in its immediate context?), and **application** (What does it mean to me today?) principles, a student who is dependent on the Lord can soon become, through practice, an independent “miner” of biblical truth.

However, it is important to be aware of two errors that beset a student of the Word: on the one hand he takes everything second hand from others, or he refuses to take anything from others. We are a body—tied together under the headship of Christ. So Christ has given us a system of checks and balances that enables the student to check his findings against other brother’s and sister’s findings. He learns the difference between “fool’s gold” and the real thing by sharing his findings and allowing them to be evaluated by the Word, the Spirit, and the family.

## C. Method

### 1. Select a Unit of Study

The unit may be a verse, paragraph, chapter or several chapters, but it should be one cohesive unit of thought. Normally, a paragraph is a good place to begin.

### 2. Determine the background to Your Study:

- a) Author: Who wrote the book, or letter?
- b) Date: When did the author write it?
- c) Destination: To whom was the author writing?  
Did he know them personally?  
Were they Jews or Gentiles?

- d) Occasion:       What caused the author to write to these people?  
                          What was happening at that time?  
                          What were the needs of the recipients?
- e) Purpose:         What did the author hope to get across to the recipients? Did he want to evangelize, convict, warn, instruct, remind, encourage?

**3. Read and Re-read the Selected Unit**

- a) Observe what the text is saying
- b) Ask questions of the text—who, what, where, when, why
- c) Isolate the main idea of the text (study the whole, then the parts, then the whole)
- d) Outline the major breaks in the text
- e) Write down questions that you don't understand

**4. Observe the Literary Context of the Selected Unit—(immediate context)**

- a) Look at paragraphs before and after your unit of study, even chapters
- b) Note the use of conjunctions—"therefore", "but"
- c) Understand the flow of thought intended by the author

**5. Make a Careful Grammatical Analysis of the Passage—(pull passage apart)**

- a) Observe words
  - 1) Define words—use dictionaries and other tools
  - 2) Note the order or sequence of words
  - 3) Note repeated words
- b) Observe grammar and syntax
  - 1) Parts of speech—nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.
  - 2) Pronouns—determine who or what they refer to
  - 3) Verbs—watch tenses (past, present, future) and participles("-ing" words)
  - 4) Definite or indefinite articles—"a" or "the"
  - 5) Conjunctions—how does the passage fit together
  - 6) Relationship—result, cause, purpose, conclusion, explanation (for), comparison, condition

**6. Interpret the Passage (put the passage back together)**

- a) Explain the passage, taking all parts into account
- b) To be valid, your interpretation must satisfy the following:
  - 1) Does it conform to normal communication patterns? (literal is norm)
  - 2) Does it involve a coherent, unified flow of thought?
  - 3) Does it correspond (as best you can tell) to exactly what the author intended to convey?
  - 4) Does it adequately account for every word in the text?
  - 5) Does it correspond to the rest of Scripture?

**7. Summarize the Passage**

- a) Modify and complete your outline with more detail—don't try to force the text into an artificial structure
- b) Write out timeless principles
  - 1) Definition—A sentence statement that gives a timeless universal truth, a generalization about the nature of man, the nature of God, or the nature of life
  - 2) This forces us to extract truth from a passage in an absolute, always applicable form.

**8. Apply the Truth in a Personal and Specific Way**

- a) Ask yourself the questions: Is there
  - a sin for me to avoid?
  - a warning to heed?
  - an example to follow?
  - a truth to believe?
  - a promise to claim?
  - a command to obey?
  - an encouragement to enjoy?
- b) Ask God to build these things into your life.

**D. Attitude**

- 1) Be willing to work—study on paper
- 2) Be willing to let God's word change you
- 3) Pray before, after, and throughout your study
- 4) Keep an open mind to God's Word

My son, if you will receive my sayings,  
 And treasure my commandments within you  
 Make your ear attentive to wisdom,  
 Incline your heart to understanding;  
 For if you cry for discernment,  
 Lift your voice for understanding;  
 If you seek her as silver,  
 And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
 Then you will discern the fear of the LORD,  
 And discover the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:1-5