

Beginner's Guide to Better Bible Study

Inductive Method

Why Inductive Bible Study?

One of the most helpful skills that a Christian will develop is the ability to study, understand, and apply the Bible. Perhaps the most helpful forms of Bible study that you will learn is INDUCTIVE (or Passage Analysis) method. For this method, the objective is to discover the primary intent of the Biblical author as he was inspired by God, discover the truths that he uses to explain and support those objectives, and finally to apply the central truth to your life.

Remember, that any form of Bible study is not something we do out of duty or obligation. Rather, we are trying to find out how God wants us to think and act. We want to know who God is and who we are in relation to Him. Prayerfully begin any study by submitting your thinking and your actions to God. Expect Him to give you insights that you already intent to apply. One helpful hint is for you to take ample time to do a thorough, thoughtful study rather than one that is rushed and frequently interrupted.

5 Principles of a Good Inductive Bible Study

1. Study the context.

- Pick a paragraph or chapter to study. **Do not** make any interpretations at this stage. Simply gather information much like a reporter. Stick to the "facts" and be specific. It may be necessary to consult some commentaries for better understanding of the text's historical facts and situations. Record each fact verse by verse. When writing be specific and make complete sentences. Take your time and be thorough and precise.
 - Who is the author, if known?
 - Where (or under what conditions) was the book written?
 - To whom was the book written? Who was the primary audience? Were they believers or unbelievers? What names are mentioned, if any? Who were they?
 - What type of book is it-History, Gospel, Law, Psalms, Letter, etc.?
 - What is the central event taking place?
 - Are there any customs, tools, etc. that are unique to that time, culture, religion, or event that will help aid in your understanding of the events?
 - Look at the entire book overall to know the theme, the relationship between the author's overall argument, instruction or objective of writing the passage.
- Again, you are not making conclusions here, but trying to get an overall context to better understand and correctly interpret the passage.

2. Find the central idea of the passage you are studying.

- God choose to give us His Word recorded in the form of literature, and thus it is like other literature in which a paragraph consists of a central idea that is supported illustrated, and amplified by the rest of the passage.
- Prayerfully read the passage through several times. Read it aloud and silently to get full meaning.
- Notice repeated words or phrases which may clue you to the theme.
- Write down in one, simple sentence what the main or central idea is of the passage. Again, be as accurate as you can be.

3. Observe how the details of the passage develop the central idea.
 - Using the information from step one and the sentence from step two, begin to list the other details of the passage and study them out.
 - Write a brief outline of the ideas and events.
 - List repeated key words or phrases and research their definitions.
 - Observe the tenses of the verbs (using reference materials will help you know what they tense is in the original Greek or Hebrew.)
 - Observe the adverbs and adjectives that are used.
 - Note any cause and effect statements (if...then).
 - Note any exhortation, commands, warnings, promises, etc.
 - Again, this state is as observation of what is there. Try to see the text for what it is and not make any interpretation of meaning yet. You are simply trying to observe that the author was led to say by God.
4. See how other Biblical passages deal with the central idea that you are studying.
 - The Bible is the best commentary on itself. By looking up related passages and carefully comparing the passages you will hopefully gain deeper understanding of the Truth.
 - Look up cross references for particular words or names.
 - Do a topical search.
 - Use a Bible concordance or online source to do cross searches.
 - Look up people's names mentioned in the passage.
5. Interpret what the passage means and how to apply it to you life.
 - The goal of Bible study is to know and understand God more, and for Him and His character to change *our* character.
 - Take everything you have done and begin to ask God to show you specifically what He would have you to do with what He teaches you.
 - Consider the implications of the Truths that you have studied. Then prayerfully consider how your attitudes and/or actions compare to those Truths.
 - Ask God to show you how He wants you to respond to the Truths. Share that application with someone and ask them to hold you accountable to do it.