

DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW THROUGH INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

One of the reasons many young people don't know what they believe or why they believe it is because they've never really studied God's Word for themselves. Why? The answer could be as simple as "I don't know where to begin" or "I don't know how to study it for myself" or even "Every time I read my Bible, I don't really get anything out of it." If any of these thoughts sound like something you might say, then the following information is exactly what you need. We'd like to suggest that you learn to love God more and know God better through inductive Bible study.

WHAT IS INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY?

Inductive Bible study is the type of Bible study in which the Bible is the PRIMARY SOURCE – meaning the Bible is the *first* place you go when you begin your study. In other words, you don't go to Bible commentaries, your pastor or Sunday School teacher, your friends or family, or videos. You go *first* to the Bible to see what it says. If you really want to get to know God and how to understand what you believe and why you believe it, doesn't it make absolute sense to go to the source?

Inductive Bible study has three components: observation, interpretation, and application.

Observation: What does the passage say? (Read it, then read it again). When observing a passage of Scripture, utilize the following six questions:

Who? What? When?
Where? Why? How?

These questions will enable you to get more detail out of the passage so that you can determine better how to interpret and then apply what God desires to teach you.

Interpretation: What does it mean? What is God trying to communicate through this passage?

Application: How should I respond to this passage? Does it require action on my part?

What does God want me to do with what I've learned from this passage?

When you begin an inductive Bible study, there are some important steps to follow during the Observation phase.

Step 1

Read the context of the passage usually within the realm of the book of the Bible in which it is contained or within the scope of the topic you are covering within that book.

Examples:

Chapter Study: New Testament books should be read for an overview before studying individual chapters.

Topical Study within a book: Creation and the foundation of the world—Read Genesis chapters 1-11 for a broad overview before getting into the verse by verse study.

Step 2

Go back through the same Scriptures much more deliberately and methodically to really digest what God has to say to you from the passage.

As you begin your more detailed study, you will be incorporating the "observation" phase of study. In addition to using the six questions referred to above, you will also be looking for KEY WORDS and PHRASES. Whenever something is repeated in a passage, it is a key word or phrase.

Examples: wisdom (Proverbs 2); O Lord (Psalms 140); it was good (Genesis 1); sin (Romans 5)

When you discover a key word or phrase, mark it in some way (underline, box, circle, highlight a particular color, etc.). Mark related words the same way, e.g., law, testimony, statute, word, etc. Verbs can also be noted to show emphasis on particular actions.

Example: Psalm 1—walk, stand, sit, meditate

Step 3

Incorporate study of the original Hebrew (OT) and Greek (NT). This is where a good study help is appropriate. A Strong's Concordance is a great resource for looking up a particular key word, and finding the original form and meaning as well as other Scripture references that use the same word. That leads into Step 4.

Step 4

Cross-reference the key words in other biblical passages. This step enables you to see what the context of God's Word has to say about the key word you found in your passage of study.

Steps 1–4 provide the necessary focus needed to truly observe what is contained in a passage of Scripture. Once these have been completed, you are ready to interpret the passage and pray for God to show you how to apply what you have learned.

****Note:** Beginning with Lesson 4, we will follow the format of inductive study for the “Get into the Word” part of the lesson.



Once we know what a portion of Scripture means, we are responsible for putting it into practice in our own lives. This, of course, is the goal of Bible study—to be transformed by the Word of God, developing a deeper more intimate relationship with God Himself.

It is of utmost importance that our observation is correct because our interpretation and then application will rest on it. Often these things will happen simultaneously as God gives you insight. When something you are studying makes an impression on you, stop and allow God to speak to you.

OBSERVATION

1. Pray, asking God to teach you (John 16:13–15).
2. Find out the context. This is very important to accurate interpretation. Example: sharp—a pointed object; a musical term; a thin keen edge; quick witted; biting cold; stylishly dressed. The context of each of these determines the meaning.
3. Look for the obvious facts about people, places, events—often these will be repeated making them easy to see. This provides a framework for the text.
4. Be objective. Let Scripture speak for itself. Don't try to make it say what you've always thought it said. Ask God to make His truth obvious to you and then adjust your life accordingly.

5. Read, asking questions of the text.
 - Who? Who wrote it?
 - Who did he write it to?
 - Who are the main characters?
 - What? What are the main events?
 - What is the meaning of the message?
 - What are these people like?
 - What is his purpose in saying this?
 - When? When was it written?
 - When did this event happen?
 - When will this take place?
 - When did he do or say this?
 - Where? Where was this done?
 - Where was this written?
 - Where will it happen?
 - Why? Why was this written (Why did God want me to know this?)
 - Why did the author say so much, or so little about this?
 - Why should they do such and such?
 - How? How did it happen?
 - How did they do it?
 - How do I do that?

Record your answers in a notebook. You will be amazed at how much you learn that you did not realize was there.

It will be helpful if you use a Bible that you are willing to mark in.

WATCH FOR KEY WORDS

Marking key words consistently throughout the text will help you quickly identify common themes. Colored pencils and a four-color pen work great together. You can use the pen to make little symbols that relate to the key words. For example, any time you see the word “Jesus,” or a pronoun of it, you could mark it with a red ink cross. Key words always answer the questions who, what, when, where, why, or how. They are most often the words that are repeated. Names of key people in the story and their pronouns are key words. God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit or any words that mean the same, including pronouns, are also always key as we are seeking to discover more about God.

LESSON 3 OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

HERE'S THE CHALLENGE

You will need notebook paper, a pen or pencil, your Bible, a concordance, and a Bible dictionary or access to www.crosswalk.com.

1. Choose a verse or short chapter to try out the Inductive Bible Study Method with.
2. On your paper write the verse or passage you have chosen. Underneath that, write *Observation*. On the next line begin filling in information that coincides with the Observation information included at the end of Lesson 3. Take your time with this part and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart as you seek to find the meaning of this reference.
3. Skip a line or two after your Observation notes and write *Interpretation*. On the next line begin writing what the passage means based upon the instructions about the Inductive Bible Study Method at the end of Lesson 3.
4. Finally, skip a line or two after your Interpretation notes and write *Application*. How are you going to put these verses into practice? How will they make a difference in your life? What actions do they prompt you to take? Again, ask the Lord to show you how these verses can be applied in your life and write down what comes to mind.
5. Be sure to thank the Lord for His Word and ask Him for guidance and strength as you strive to live it out for His glory.

John 8:31–32

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him,
“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.
And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”