

Inductive Bible Study

Inductive Bible study is a Bible study method that seeks to interpret and draw out the intended meaning of a text using the three steps of **Observation, Interpretation** and **Application**. In inductive study, we are using information in the passage to come to a conclusion about the passage rather than coming to the passage with our own preconceived notions, cultural bias or ideas of what we think a particular book of the Bible says.

Why is Inductive Bible Study Helpful?

Closing the Distance Gaps!

The Bible is an ancient book written to people who lived long before us. The Bible is for us and it's truths are for every generation, but **we weren't the Bible's original audience and we have to take that into consideration!** There is some significant distance between us, the Bible's authors and the people it was originally written to. **Inductive Bible Study helps us to close this distance and to study the Bible in context.**

Language Distance

The Bible was written in three ancient languages: **Hebrew, Aramaic and Koine Greek**. The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew (with some Aramaic) and the New Testament was written in Koine Greek. It can be helpful to be familiar with basic Lexical books/tools (a general dictionary of a language) such as a Hebrew or Greek Lexicon. We can sometimes gain deeper meaning by looking up words in the ancient languages.

Cultural Distance

In Bible times, there were customs, norms of life and ways of living that are very foreign to our culture now. Taking time to become familiar with the Biblical word can help us better understand how the original audience understood the scriptures which gives us a fuller grasp of the intended meaning. **Example: Having some cultural knowledge about how shepherds protected their sheep in an ancient sheepfold brings a richer meaning to what Jesus says in John 10 about being The Good Shepherd who guards and lays down His life for His sheep.**

Geographical Distance

Many believers today are unfamiliar with the geographical landscape in which the Bible took place. In some cases, understanding geography can inform a greater depth of understanding of the passage. **Example: When Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, he says that a man was going "down" from Jerusalem to Jericho. The route of the Jericho road was full of rocky terrain which made it a useful place for robbers to operate and the road descended down 3,200 feet from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jesus audience would have understood exactly what He was describing to them and why their would have been robbers along that particular road.**

Observation: What Does it Say?

- This step is our initial interaction with the text/passage. We are simply seeing and discovering what is there. Read the passage multiple times, listen to it via the audio Bible. Repetitive reading is key! Begin with prayer and pray through it as you read.
- This is a foundational step that helps to set us up to draw out the intended meaning and significance for our lives. No need to rush, take as much time as you can to do this step well!

Questions to Ask Before You Begin Reading!



Who is the author of this book of the Bible?

Who is the audience of this book of the Bible, who are the original hearers?

When was it written? What are the events surrounding this book or passage?

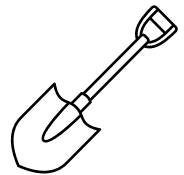
Why was it written? Did the author state an intended purpose in the text?

What Bible Genre does this book fall into? Is it Prophecy, Historical Narrative, etc?



Digging for Treasure

Look Hard and Gather the Facts!



Investigative Questions To Ask As You Read

WHO ?

Who is speaking? To whom is he speaking to?

WHAT?

What is the subject of the text? What is the situation of the text? What is the conflict and what is the solution?

WHEN?

What is the specified era of the text?
When are these events taking place?

WHERE?

Where are the events of this text located? Where are the original recipients located? Where is the author located?

WHY?

What is the specified era of the text?
When are these events taking place?

HOW?

What is the specified era of the text?
When are these events taking place?

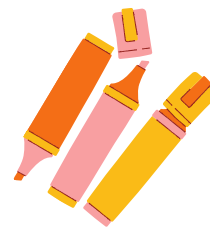


Observation: What Does it Say?

How to Do Good Observation

First things first, PRAY! Pray as the Psalmist prayed in Psalm 119:18
“Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things from your law.

- Begin with repetitive reading or repetitive listening to the audio Bible. Read the passage or the book through as many times as you can. Get very familiar with the text and read it in a few different Bible translations.
- Mark repeated words or phrases that you see
- Notice any “Hinge words” or transitions words like then, therefore, but, since, so etc.
- Sequence of events
- Identify the main characters
- Notate the key actions that are happening in the passage
- Make note of any cause and effect or compare and contrast you see happening in the text
- Notate any themes you see arising
- Write down questions that are coming to your mind as you read and let your curiosity build!
- Get to a place of comprehension where you can outline, paraphrase and summarize the key points of the passage.



Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

After we've taken time to do good observation of the details and facts of the text, we move to interpretation. In this step, we want to get to the meaning. We aren't yet attempting to apply it to our lives but we are taking the time to understand what the author intended to convey to the original audience.

What is the passage all about? We are using our observations and the context of the passage to help us derive meaning. We want to derive as much meaning about the passage from the passage itself.

Examples of Questions to Ask and Think Through in This Step:

- What did the author or the person speaking mean by what he said?
- Why is that important?
- How might the original audience or those being spoken to have received these words?
- Why would they have received it that way?
- Is there any information that is geographical, historical or cultural that can help me get a deeper understanding?

Digging for Treasure
Helpful Tools for Interpretation!



Cross References

Cross references identify commonalities between different parts of the Bible whether that be themes, words, events or people. These can be found in the margin or in the footnotes of your Bible. If you're having a hard time understanding what you're reading, look at cross references to try and help your understanding.

Simple Word Studies

See a recurring word or a word in the text that stands out as very significant? Take a moment to look up the original Hebrew or Greek word and get the definition in an online Lexicon to get a deeper meaning. Next, check other places in scripture where that word is used. All of this can deepen the meaning you're able to draw out of the passage you're reading.

Tracing a Theme in the Bible

Are there any emerging themes in the book or passage? Search a Bible concordance for other verses with that same word, theme or idea. Trace the theme across the Biblical Metanarrative (Big Story). **Example:** Theme of Shepherd across the Bible

Commentaries

Commentaries should be the last place we go to after we've done our best at interpretation using the Bible itself. There's nothing like learning first-hand from the Holy Spirit so don't rush to soon to commentaries. After doing your own interpretation work, checking a couple of trusted commentaries on the passage can be helpful.

Before you hear it with your ears, hear it with theirs. Before you can understand it today, understand it back then."

- Jen Wilkin "Women of the Word"

Application: How Should It Change Me? What is My Response?

In the application step, we are seeking to understand the significance of Bible truths to our current, present-day life. Thorough observation and careful interpretation help us to do this step well.

Before you begin this step, **pray and ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you. As you walk through some of the questions below, ask Him for the answers.**

Questions to Help with Application

- What does this passage teach me about God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?
- How does seeing this aspect of God's nature, heart or character change my view of myself? How does it change my view of Him?
- How do these truths bring me rest and comfort?
- Is there any sin I'm being convicted of in light of these truths?
- Is there any correction, rebuke or warning I need to heed from these scriptures?
- Is there an exhortation I need to receive?
- Is there a command, a promise, a principle that I need to heed and be aware of?
- What should I do in response to these truths?

*Keep a God and Jesus-Centered Perspective!
Application should always be something that conforms us to
the image of Christ!*

Basic Bible Study Tools Glossary:

Concordance - A Bible concordance lists every word in a Bible translation alphabetically and a reference for every place each word is found in the Bible. If you're looking for a particular word, type the word in and the concordance will show you all the verses where that word is found.

Lexicon - This is a language dictionary. You can use a Lexicon to look up the original Hebrew or Greek words and their definitions.

Bible Dictionary - Use a Bible dictionary to look up definitions and proper names for Biblical words with verse references.

Other Bible Study Resources:

Bible Atlas

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary

Blue Letter Bible (Online resource)

Strongs Exhaustive Concordance (Online resource)

BibleHub (Online resource)

BibleStudyTools.com (Online resource)

Olive Tree Bible App

Logos Bible App

Videos on Inductive Bible Study:

Observation



Interpretation



Application



How to Read the Bible Series - BibleProject:



Recommended Reading:

Real Life Theology Series - God's Word