

Inductive Bible Study

Definition:

In an *Inductive* study, the student begins by examining specific facts and ends with a general conclusion (individual parts → whole). In Inductive Bible Study, one **observes** individual facts in a passage, determines the **meaning** of a passage, and responds with a personal **application** for our lives. Inductive Bible Study is an excellent tool for *personally discovering* truths in God's Word and *applying* them to our lives!

Observe: What does the passage say?

The purpose of observation is to explore the basic facts of the book or passage. If studying a whole book, the Observation stage deals with first getting an overview of the book (helicopter view) and then observing smaller segments within book (hikes).

- Always begin by **praying** and asking the Holy Spirit, our Teacher, to teach us!
- **Overview: Read & re-read** the whole book in one sitting and get the “*helicopter*” view.
 - **Identify type of literature:** historical, biographical, poetic, proverbial, epistle.
 - **Observe the facts:** *Who is speaking? Who is he writing to? What is happening? Where is this taking place? When?*
 - **Mark key words.** A key word is a word the author uses frequently. God, Jesus, & the Holy Spirit are always key words. Key words reveal subjects. Subjects reveal the theme.
 - **Identify the theme** of the book and **chapter themes.** Make a **preliminary outline** of book. Divide passages into sections and write a title for each section.
 - **Develop a tentative At a Glance Chart:** includes the 5 W's, key words, book theme, chapter themes.
- **Details:** After making observations on the book as a whole, observe each chapter in **smaller sections** (taking “*hikes*” where you can examine things in greater detail).
 - **Context rules!** When you observe a smaller passage, always ensure that you are keeping the surrounding context in mind.
 - **More facts:** Does the smaller section answer any W's or H that you might've missed earlier?
 - **Mark key words.** . **Write a list of what you learn about each key word.**
 - **Look for ways author organizes his ideas** to communicate message:
 - Is there a *comparison* or *contrast*?
 - Does he use a *figure of speech*?
 - Is there a *cause/effect relationship*?
 - Is there an *expression of time*?
 - Is there *repetition*?

Interpret: What does the passage mean?

Our purpose in Interpretation is to determine what the writer intended to say to his original audience. In Observation, we started with making an overview of the whole book and then “tore” book apart, making factual observations on each passage while keeping the context in mind. In Interpretation, we focus on putting the puzzle pieces together again to determine the main idea of paragraphs, chapters and book.

- Do **word studies** for significant or key words. (This is another lesson!)
- After studying each paragraph (within a chapter), **summarize the passage**: write a title or sentence stating the **main idea**. Think of how the passage fits into the book as a whole.
- Consider how paragraphs relate to each other to form an orderly progression of thought within the passage.
- Revisit your **Outline** and refine it.
- Get some **background information** if necessary: OT references, Bible dictionary.
- **Basic Principles**:
 - Context Rules!! Always study in context: look at preceding/succeeding verses. *“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense...”*
 - Interpret Scripture literally.
 - Best interpretation is other Scripture. Look up cross-references.
 - Scripture will never contradict Scripture.
 - Don’t base doctrine on an obscure passage.
 - Ask, *“What did the author mean?”*
 - Check conclusions with dependable commentaries.

Apply: How can I apply this truth to my life?

God’s goal for us is that we become like Christ! Our goal in Application is to understand how a passage relates to our lives today and how we can practically respond to it. Aim at making applications personal and concrete (“I” statements).

- Helpful Hints:
 - Is there a *Sin* to forsake?
 - Is there a *Promise* to believe?
 - Is there an *Example* to follow?
 - Is there a *Command* to obey?
 - Is there an *Action* to obey?
- Write down a practical application!
- Respond to the Lord by **praying** the passage back to Him. Pray it for yourself and family and whomever the Lord brings to mind! Thank the Holy Spirit for teaching you!

Recommended Reading:

How to Study Your Bible by Kay Arthur.