

THE INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

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The word inductive means to collect meaning from making observations. What we're attempting to do when we read the Bible inductively is to draw meaning the correct way. This simple three-step process is the most trusted way to do that. To start it's best to pick a section of scripture, usually a paragraph or section, from a narrative in the Bible like one of the Gospels in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). After you have selected a text, follow these three steps.

#1 OBSERVATION

In this step, we're attempting to discover what the text says. Yep, we're just reading the text and nothing more. Spend more time than you think noticing the following list of things. Be an investigator and look deeper into the text than you think. Start with the small details and work your way out.

WORDS: Examine the words in the sentences. Notice key, unusual, and repeated words.

CHARACTERS: Notice the people in the text, those references by the text, and those writing and telling the story of the text. Give attention to their actions, statements, and responses.

GRAMMAR: Identify the key subject, verb, and object of each sentence. Look any contrasts and comparisons used to make or emphasize a central point.

STRUCTURE: Examine how sentences and paragraphs come together, paying particular attention to transitions and connecting terms like "therefore."

GENRE: Identify the type of literature – poetry, prose, prophetic, letter, or narrative in style.

MOOD: Notice the tone of the text by paying attention to the characters and the writer's actions or emotions.

#2 INTERPRETATION

In this step, we are attempting to discover what the text meant to the original audience. Since each book of the Bible had an initial audience, we have to remember it was written to them first, therefore context matters when trying to understand a scripture's meaning. Here is how we find this meaning.

ASK QUESTIONS: Ask reporter style questions from the observations you've already made. Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

WATCH ASSUMPTIONS: While looking for interpretations to these questions, keep in mind your cultural assumptions and biases. These will prevent you from finding their meaning.

DISCOVER THE MAIN POINT: Determine the author's main point. Even though a text will contain numerous possibilities, usually there is one point the author, and thus the story is trying to make. Identify this first, and other subpoints will follow.

#3 APPLICATION

Finally, in this step, we discover what the text means to us today. An application must be made last. If we do it first, we have resorted to deductive reasoning, not inductive reasoning. And deducing, or making a guess and then proving it, usually leads to an incorrect application of the text. After step observing and interpreting the answer should be obvious.

MY ACTIONABLES: Determine now what actions you need to take based on the observations and interpretations above.

MY RELATIONSHIPS: Determine how these observations and interpretations impact my relationships with God and others.

MY POTENTIAL: Determine if they were applied to your life, how the application would change your worldview (how you think), actions (what you do), and identity (who you are).