

1. Observation

2. Interpretation

3. Application

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I. THE INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

The INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD has been used for many years and has proven to be very effective. The inductive method attempts to discover the facts of a text through careful OBSERVATION and then draw some INTERPRETATION of these facts to understand what the writer meant. The third step is to make APPLICATIONS first in a general way and move to more personal application. This inductive method is known, in short, sometimes as the OIA Method.

To have effective Bible study one must have a method (ie., an orderly procedure). It is the intent of this course to develop an inductive method of study as it is applied to Biblical analysis. Although the inductive method of study will accomplish many things, in our study of the Scripture the student will still have to become disciplined in the method and also realize that at times other methods must be employed.

The inductive method is a SCIENTIFIC approach to the study of the Scripture: (1) It begins with what you see. (2) It follows with an interpretation of what you see. (3) It then demands an application.

The inductive method is ANALYTICAL. The student must examine the smallest details down to the punctuation. The structure of the literature becomes of paramount importance. We must learn where paragraphs, sentences, and topics begin and end.

The inductive method is RE-CREATIVE. This implies a rediscovery of what the authors intended to say. Realizing what the

authors meant for the people to understand when hearing it for the first time.

II. THE INDUCTIVE APPROACH TO THE BIBLE

1. OBSERVATION - "What do I see?"

Observation moves from the general to the specific, investigating the facts in a passage. Good observations are the key to good inductive Bible study. If this step is not done with great care the rest of study will be weak. REMEMBER that we are only interested in what the text says, not what we think.

A. Observe the entire passage. (getting an overview)

1. Read the text carefully. You should read the text until it becomes so familiar that parts of it are committed to memory.

a. Howard G. and William D. Hendricks in "Living By The Book" emphasize the need to develop good reading skills. The following are ten strategies to first-rate reading.

1. READ THOUGHTFULLY
2. READ REPEATEDLY
3. READ PATIENTLY
4. READ SELECTIVELY
5. READ PRAYERFULLY

6. READ IMAGINATIVELY
7. READ MEDITATIVELY
8. READ PURPOSEFULLY
9. READ ACCUSATIVELY
10. READ TELESCOPICALLY

2. Record your first impressions.

3. Record the major facts. (who, what, where, when, and why)

B. Observe the structure of the passage. (finding the structure)

1. Make a basic outline of the text.

2. Mark the primary elements of the text.

C. Observe the details of the passage. (looking at the major facts) Ask questions about the text.

1. Who? Who are the characters mentioned in the text and, if possible to ascertain, what is their relationship to each other?

2. What? What are the key truths or happenings?

3. Where? The geography and location of the events in the passage are important.

4. When? The time sequence of the events. Also, if the time in reference to world history can be identified this will be helpful.

2. INTERPRETATION - "What does it mean?"

-Interpretation is the science of discovering the author's original meaning as he wrote the Scriptures

under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

A. The questions asked in order to accurately interpret the passage are important. Further research questions are asked concerning:

1. Who? The characters.
2. What? The key truths or happenings.
3. Where? The geography and location of the events.
4. When? The time sequence of the events.
5. Why? The purpose of the text.
 - a. The reader's need
 - b. The writer's message

B. The answers for interpretation questions are:

1. Recording an answer to the general questions previously asked- who, what, where, when, and why.
2. Looking at other aspects of the passage.
 - a. Study the content of the passage. What is in the passage itself without regard to the rest of the text.
 - b. Examine the context of the passage. What has taken place before and after this passage in regards to the overall text.
 1. Remember there are different types of context that we must be concerned with. These may not be of a concern at our first analysis of the text. Some of these are:

- a. Literary

- b. Historical
- c. Cultural
- d. Geographical
- e. Theological

c. Compare with other Scripture.

d. Consulting resource books, ie, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, lexicons, etc., is the last step in interpretation.

3. The drawing of a conclusion is now needed at this point.

C. SUMMARY OF THIS SECTION:

Finding the elements in a passage or book is difficult. It is an exercise that requires careful study and prayer. Bear in mind that you will be drawing conclusions based on all that you've studied before. The more text you study inductively the greater your field of interpretation becomes.

3. APPLICATION - "How should I respond?"

Application involves two steps: (1) How the truths discovered should affect our behavior; and (2) Putting those same truths into practice in our daily lives.

A. Examine yourself.

1. Look for application in the light of your own personal life.

B. Relate the passage to your life.

1. Summarize truths that seem to apply to you.

2. Decide if they have some timely and lasting value.

3. Look for ways that the text applies to your daily life and to the lives of others.

C. Meditate on the passage.

1. Pick out the passage or verse that speaks to your heart and would have a real lasting benefit to you and to others.

2. Memorize the significant verses.

D. Practice what you have learned.

1. Write down several points of interest that can be put into practice in your daily life.

2. EPISTLE OUTLINE EXAMPLE

BOOK OF TITUS

	(Verses)	(Comments)
I. INTRODUCTION	vss. 1:1-4	Paul writing to Titus
II. SUMMARIZING STATEMENT	vs. 1:5	(Two-fold) To set in order the ministry in churches; to appoint elders.
III. MAIN TEACHING	vss. 1:6-3:14	Appointing elders and setting church order
Three main ideas:		
A. vss. 1:6-16		Elders qualifications and work
B. vss. 2:1-3:11		Christian duties in the church and sound doctrine
C. vss. 3:12-14		Personal concerns
IV. CLOSING	vs. 3:15	

3. OUTLINING POETIC, PARABLES, AND PROPHETIC FORMS

A. The second outline form can be used for any book in the Bible. You simply go through the text and look for the ideas being presented. (Remember that only epistles have a special format of introduction, summarizing statement, main teaching and closing. Most of your Bible texts do not need this format, so you can use this outline form.) Read over the text carefully, looking for ideas.

B. Try to find the main theme.

IV. CHARTING

Once you have outlined the text, you are ready to break the text apart further by charting. Charting is used to look very carefully at the text through our OBSERVATION-INTERPRETATION-APPLICATION (OIA) system. The following is an example to show you how this works.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-6

always state the obvious

* OBSERVATION (O) (State facts of text)	INTERPRETATION (I) (Explain meaning here)	APPLICATION (A) (Make general and specific application)
--	--	--

1) Idea. Vss. 1-2
These verses are the introduction to book.

Vs. 1 Paul & Timothy

Bond
Servant of Jesus Christ

All
To saints in Christ Jesus

Vs. 2 Grace and peace

From God the Father & Christ

2) Idea. Vss. 3-6.
These are summarizing verses telling the purpose of the letter.

Vs. 4 Prayer with joy

REV8.1a

Almost all epistles have an introduction.

Paul is the writer of this text, but includes Timothy's name.

Paul recognizes that he is alive to serve Jesus Christ.

Paul is writing to believers. A saint is not a statue but someone born again.

Terms used for greeting one another and are trademarks of Paul's letters.

Paul has great joy not because of his circumstances but because of the work of Christ in his life.

No application needed yet. *yes there is*

I/we want to be a servant of Jesus Christ. *by choice*

I am a saint because of Jesus in my life.

I have the grace and peace of God in my life. I do not have to live in fear. His grace and peace mark my life.

I can have joy regardless of my circumstances because Christ is at work in me.

4 COR VS 7

V. HEBREW POETRY

I. This section begins the study of the figurative language portions of the Scripture. Remember that the language of the Bible is ordinary human language; therefore, we must interpret it by using a few simple guidelines.

A. Always look for the simple straightforward meaning of the language first.

B. Identify the type of literature. (ie., poetry, etc.)

C. Look for the intended single meaning of the text as when it was first written.

II. Figurative language is found extensively in Hebrew poetry. The Hebrew poet also uses parallelism as a means of communicating words and pictures to the reader and to express thoughts otherwise hidden. The study of parallelism is needed to gain meaning and insight into Hebrew poetry.

Remember that a lot of the Old Testament is written in poetry. Sometimes we think that only the Psalms are in poetry but we must not forget that many books are. For example we see that Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and many of the major and minor prophets are also in poetry.

A. Hebrew poetry is filled with figurative language; therefore, we must learn to recognize it and understand the meaning of this non-literal language.

Paraphrase
ms 9 Job 12:6
Hub 123 Psalm 73:3-14

B. The Hebrew poet uses a correspondence in thought between one line and the following line, or between one section and the following section. This is called parallelism.

C. Hebrew poetry uses a lot of repetition. Knowing this will help a great deal in understanding the text.

III. There are three basic kinds of parallel thought in Hebrew poetry.

A. Synonymous Parallelism - An idea is expressed a second or third time. This takes a little practice to see but it will come easily the more you read Hebrew poetry.
(Alike in meaning or significance.)

Example: Prov. 1:20, 22, 28, 30-31

Idea: Importance of Wisdom

B. Synthetic Parallelism - Additions are made to the original concept.

Example: Psalm 1:1-2

C. Antithetic Parallelism - One idea contrasts with another.

Example: "The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable; but the mouth of fools spouts folly."

Prov. 15:2.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY CHART

FORMS	STORY FORMS (NARRATIVE)	INSTRUCTIONAL & EXHORTIVE FORMS (EPISTLES)	POETIC, PARABLES, PROPHETIC REVELATION FORMS
Examples	Historical account of events, such as: Gospels, Acts, Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, Exodus, etc. and records of Old Testament Kings.	Logical development of a subject Paul's letters-- Galatians, Ephesians, etc. The writings of Peter, John, James and some accounts of Jesus' teachings.	The arrangement of ideas into patterns. They use symbols and analogies to express the idea, such as: Psalms, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Parables of Jesus, etc.
Main Features of the Forms.	People, places, events and emotions.	Ideas, words, verbs, subjects, objects and arrangements of the passages.	Look for symbolism, parallels, analogies etc.
Basic tools for observing the passage	<p><u>Ask:</u> Who? What? When? Where? How?</p> <p>Retell the event.</p> <p>Find the relationship between characters</p> <p>Try to feel the emotions.</p> <p>Place yourself in the shoes of each character.</p> <p>What do <u>you</u>... See? Feel? Think?</p>	<p>Outline the development of ideas in the passage.</p> <p>Note repeated words.</p> <p>Look for: Comparisons Contrasts Transition words such as: Therefore In order that Because For Since But</p>	<p>Hebrew poets used parallelism, one idea said two different ways.</p> <p>A Proverb is a type of statement where human behavior is stated as a simile or a metaphor. <u>Ex.</u> Proverbs 5:3.</p> <p>A Parable is an art form. Jesus used to deliberately hide the truth from those who didn't want to hear.</p> <p>Prophetic revelation tells divinely inspired revelations of future and present events.</p>

BASIC TOOLS:

**for
INTERPRE-
TATION**

TOOLS FOR INTERPRETATION ARE THE SAME FOR ALL THREE FORMS.

It is an attempt to determine what the passage meant to the people who originally heard it.

1. What does the author mean to make him write this way?

see?
feel?
think?
2. Why does he write this?
3. What would it mean to the people who heard it in Biblical time and culture?
4. There are some tools that are good for instructional and exhortive forms.
 - a. What is the reason for the idea?
 - b. Why did the author use it?
 - c. Could he have used another word?
 - d. What does the idea mean?
 - e. What is the relationship of this idea to the events preceding.
 - f. Context is most important.

BASIC TOOLS:

**for
APPLICATION**

TOOLS FOR APPLICATION ARE THE SAME FOR ALL FORMS.

1. Appeal to Holy Spirit for teaching. I Cor. 2:9-16
2. Apply the main point to your life, like:
Is there an example I should follow?
sin I should forsake?
error I should avoid?
promise I should claim?
command I should obey?
3. So what?
What do I plan to do about it?
What difference will this make in my life?
What specific plans can I make" Be specific--give practical examples.
What will I do?
How will I do it?

VII. PROPHECY

I. Prophecy can be found in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible is a prophetic book. We must also realize that any revelation from God can be considered prophecy.

1. There are two kinds of prophecy used throughout the Bible.

A. Predictive - foretelling the future

B. Didactic - dealing with moral, ethical or theological truths.

II. It is not uncommon to have both predictive and didactic prophecies together.

1. Zechariah 1:1-6, is didactic, but the following vision (vss 1:7-21) is predictive, 1:7-21. Most of Zechariah 7 is didactic but the preceding and following materials are predictive.

2. These are some guidelines for dealing with predictive prophecy.

A. Literal Language. Always interpret the passage in its most simple direct and ordinary meaning unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise. Predictive passages should be taken as literal unless there are strong reasons to look at them in some figurative sense. Always begin by looking at the simple, straightforward meaning.

1. For example, Amos 9:13-15. There is no indication that the passage is to be taken figuratively. We must begin with the assumption that a prediction is to be understood literally.

B. Figurative language. A great deal of prophecy is indeed figurative and we must learn to distinguish between literal and figurative. Learn to identify figurative passages by following the ordinary rules of language in making distinctions between literal and non-literal.

1. Some language is obviously figurative because it would be absurd to understand it literally.

a. Joel 2:31, moon turns to blood; Isaiah 11:1, a branch growing out of a human being;

b. Zechariah 4:7, mountain being removed.

2. Some language is used as an illustration or picture language and is identified in the text itself.

a. Daniel: lion with wings, a leopard with four wings, etc.

3. In figurative language the goal is to discern what the figure points to because the thing figured is to have a literal fulfillment in history.

a. Examples: Daniel 7:17, the four great beasts signified four kings who would arise from the earth; Christ's prediction of temple, "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," John 2:19; verse 21 explains that he was speaking of the temple of His body.

C. Prophecy includes past, present and future. Often it does not follow a sequential pattern. It will jump from one idea to another or from one time period to another.

VIII. FORMULATING INDUCTIVE QUESTIONS

When you are learning to write inductive questions, you are learning a skill. Like other skills it develops with practice. The first big step is doing a thorough and methodical study of the passage. Through your questions a study group will find what you found. Surface study will yield surface questions and discussion; thorough study will yield questions which involve the group with the strong truths of the passage, so they are moved to God and His ways. This kind of result is well worth the time and effort of careful study.

1. Study with yourself in mind first: "What does God want to teach me?" Then with others in mind: "What can we gain for our lives as we study together?"
2. When you finish studying, look over your chart and mark points of special significance that you want to be sure to include.
3. Formulating questions.

Your questions should lead the group into the main stream of thought in the passage so they will discover the major points and apply them to their lives. It is important to remember what type of group you are working with, ie. new converts, more mature, young, older, etc. The group won't need to go through the detailed analysis you did; your questions will assume for them certain basics of structure, etc., which you dug out in preparation study.

- a. Start with "survey" questions which will get them acquainted with the whole passage. (Who is involved?, Where are they?, What are they doing? When...?, etc.)
- b. Then, by your questions, lead them in a sequence through the passage from the beginning to the end. You may want to lead them to study section by section, and as they move along to see connections between paragraphs also.
- c. You will want to ask OBSERVATION (fact) Questions,
INTERPRETATION (meaning) Questions
APPLICATION (action) Questions.

1. OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

Get the group to observe what's there.

By various means lead them to see who, what, where, when.

They may describe some people or scenes.

Help them get "into" the scene themselves, reliving an event or conversation, or putting themselves in the place of people in the text.

2. INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

Get the group to ask "WHY"?
Get them to find key verses and phrases.
Help them to see the reasons behind some of the
structure.

3. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Get the group to think about life changing
principles.

IX. TEST YOUR QUESTIONS

1. Answer your questions, and try to think how they will sound to the group, and how they may respond to them.
2. Look at the questions with these criteria in mind:
 - a. Is each one clear? If not reword it.
 - b. Is it brief enough to be grasped readily? If not, break it up into parts.
 - c. Do the questions make the group search the text?
 - d. Are they suitable for people who have not studied in advance?
 - e. Do the factual questions provide a solid basis on which to ask interpretive and application questions?
 - f. Do the questions move the group through the whole passage?...In good sequence?
 - g. Is each question challenging?
 - h. Does each one contribute to a grasp of the main teaching of the passage?
Which questions can be omitted if time runs out?
 - i. Will the group be led to find and state main points?
 - j. Is there provision for summarizing when necessary? And at the close?
 - k. When all the questions have been answered, have people understood the main teaching of the passage and been encouraged to act on it?
3. Use the questions with a group and pace yourself: notice which questions are handled quickly, and which provoke longer discussion. Analyze the reactions of the group to the questions. Are they puzzled, slow, stimulated? Do they answer as you thought they would? Which questions stimulated the most interest? Why?
4. After you have used the questions, rework them to improve them. Then plan to use them with another group.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR HELP

1. Be sure to look in the book Leading Bible Discussions. Chapter 6 offers excellent help in studying a passage; chapter 7 has detailed ideas and examples of good questions.
2. Look at a printed discussion guide, and see how the questions are formulated and used. Analyze the questions in Young Christians in a Hostile World, Look at Life with the Apostle Peter or Studies in Leadership: Philipians.

X. SMALL GROUP DYNAMICS

What Should I Know About Group Dynamics?

It is very critical for every group leader to understand about group dynamics. Often groups will meet and start with great excitement, but soon they fail. Why does this happen? There can be many reasons, such as an insensitive leader, personality clashes within the group, or no realistic plan. If a group fails, there is always a reason, but it does not have to happen if attention is given to a few basic principles of group dynamics. Some groups function without ever hearing about these things, but the reason they survive is because they are practicing correct principles of group dynamics unknowingly.

What Are These Dynamics?

Groups will function on two basic levels, OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE. Unless these two are complementing each other, the leader will have trouble.

The OBJECTIVE side of the group is defined by the task at hand, the Bible study, the prayer meeting, the board meeting, choir, etc.

The SUBJECTIVE side relates to the inter-group relationships, as well as each individual person's feelings as part of the group. Groups are made up of people that have emotions, prejudices, needs and private goals. Every person in the group will ask themselves silently, "What is my position in this group? Will people accept my views? How can I get this group to see I'm brilliant, kind, and spiritual. What must I do to make me worthy of respect?" Until a person finds answers to these questions, they're not really free to get on with the task (Bible study, prayer, etc.). "Will you accept me if I come across as different?"

The second level, the subjective side is where the real problems occur, and we need to pay close attention to it. You will understand what I mean if you have noticed how some groups never accomplish anything. They start out with Isaiah 1, but only get through the first two verses, or they plan a service, but a half hour later have only decided to invite the regular worship leader. Instead of getting on with the task, members will argue, joke around, everyone talks at once or no one talks at all! Therefore, the group must pay attention to both objective and subjective sides. Groups who concentrate blindly on the task are in great danger. Sooner or later, the group relationship will frustrate the accomplishment of the objective goal.

As leaders, we need to learn how to deal with group tensions and difficulties. Learn to quickly detect problems on the subjective level. Try to sense the feelings, because they are rarely shared verbally in a group. People will not say, "I am bored with this Bible study," rather, they stop participating, slump into a chair or stare out the window.

They will be communicating in some way other than words. Be assured, a sleeper is saying something! Even words can contradict our feelings. I can be angry, with a red face, and insist that I am not angry. People communicate in all sorts of ways, so we must learn to become sensitive to the meanings of the unspoken communications.

Perhaps the surest way to know what is going on in the group is to ask yourself a question; "What am I feeling right now? If I am upset, irritated or defensive, then something is wrong. If the problem is apparent, then bring it out into the open and deal with it. "I sense some of you are upset. Would you like to talk about it?" Once the subjective feelings are expressed, it can become a positive experience to the group and not destructive. It is not uncommon for the most profitable times in a group to take place when attention is shifted away from the objective (Bible study, etc.) to the subjective.

There was a young lady who was an active member in a small group Bible study. She freely shared in each meeting. One day she came and sat silently through half the study. The leader noticed her silence and stopped the study to find out what was wrong with her. The young lady burst into tears and shared how her mother was seriously ill. The group immediately joined in prayer for the mother and ministered to the lady. The group changed from an academic study to a caring, loving group. Out of such situations which seem potentially disruptive we learn deeply valuable lessons about ourselves, relationships, conflict, love, forgiveness and honesty. In other words, we learn in experience the meaning of the words we have often spoke about from Scripture.

Patterns Of Interaction

People act in certain predictable ways when in groups. It is important to understand how this works. Some of the ways they act are helpful and others hinder. Here are the types;

- 1) **OVERTALKATIVE** - always has something to say about everything.
- 2) **SHY PERSON** - rarely will say anything.
- 3) **OBSERVER** - will watch everything, but will not participate.
- 4) **COMIC** - always has something funny to say.
- 5) **SIDE-TRACKER** - well-informed member who brings in irrelevant or non-essential contributions.
- 6) **ARGUMENTATIVE** - a person with strong opinions who does not easily give up his ideas.
- 7) **HIDDEN AGENDA** - person who has something else on their mind, but does not express it.

How Does A Leader Deal With The Different Types of People?

OVERTALKATIVE - Take this person aside and talk with him personally without confronting or embarrassing him. "Paul, I need your help with our group in getting them to talk more. I really appreciate your ideas you share, but help me get the rest of the group involved. When I ask a

question, do not try to be the first to answer it. Let's encourage the others to join in and share their thoughts."

SHY PERSONS - Address a direct question to the person by name that is not too difficult or too easy. This will often begin to get them involved. Make positive comments about their answer like, "That's a good observation" or "good insight!"

OBSERVER - Try to draw this person in with a direct question. Sometimes people observe because they are not sure if the group will accept them. Draw them in with gentleness and acceptance.

COMIC - This person can be very helpful to a group to ease tensions and get people more relaxed. Yet sometimes the humor is poorly timed. If this becomes a problem, take the person aside and express your appreciation for their gift of humor, but, help them to see they must be sensitive with the use of it.

SIDE-TRACKER - This kind of person can be a real problem to a group if he is not skillfully dealt with. Learn to bring this person back to the text and topic. A comment such as; "That's an interesting topic, maybe we can talk more about it another time." Without giving the person any time to respond, lead the group back into the text with another question.

ARGUMENTATIVE - If the person is a continual problem, then take him aside and talk to him. Value his ideas but stress the importance of allowing other group members to express differing opinions without him feeling it necessary to continually challenge them through argument. If the leader allows this person to continue the group will stop sharing because of fear of being challenged.

If this person starts an argument, or any two members have a disagreement that develops into an argument, it is important that the leader take control of the situation. Recognize the value of both ideas, and share that others also have strong opinions about these issues. Tell them to hold their argument and go on with the study.

HIDDEN AGENDA - If you sense this person is hindering the study then it is important to deal with it, but before you take any action pray silently for the person. Sometimes this is all that needs to be done. If it needs to be dealt with, then a statement and a question can be helpful, such as; "June, you are very quiet tonight. Is something wrong?", or "You seem to be very far away tonight, is there something we can pray for you about?"

Group Atmosphere

The atmosphere of any group is very important. If people feel warmth, love and acceptance, then it will be a healthy group. With the right atmosphere the group will probably not face severe problems or disruptive behavior.

Each person in the group must feel acceptance and a non-judgmental attitude before they will be free to participate. Problems often enter in when an individual considers himself to have "arrived" spiritually, or have special insight into God's will which few others share. When this happens, we cannot help but stand in judgment of others. When we begin to see ourselves as we really are (sinful, fallen people who are nevertheless loved by God), then we not only begin to drop our judgmental natures, but we can also become honest.

XI. HOW TO START AND LEAD A BIBLE STUDY

Starting up a Bible study can be a very enriching experience for the leader and the participants. If this is a new adventure for you, it may be wise to start small and build slowly. Have just a few studies at first, like one every week for a month. This will enable you to learn as you go and continue improving. If you start a long series, people may lose interest and quit coming before you have developed sufficiently and this leads to discouragement.

Who Should I Invite?

Before anyone is invited, the leader must spend time in prayer. There must be the conviction that God is preparing some people who are hungry for His Word. The truth of the matter is, He has been preparing some people even before you thought of having a study! As you pray He will bring certain people across your path that you know should be invited. Start with just a few people, two or three is all you need. As you develop, the group can grow, but it is important to start small.

How Much Time Is Needed?

It has been found by many Bible study leaders, that anything which goes over one hour is too long. Some participants will lose interest and begin to drop out if the study is consistently too long. Choose a time to meet that is good for everyone, and keep to a comfortable time-table. Sometimes you will go longer, but be sensitive to the group.

How Do I Prepare For The Study?

Good Bible studies never "just happen" by accident; they are carefully prepared. First, we must allow God to speak to our hearts as we study. Let His Word sink deep inside and minister to you. Second, we must give ourselves enough time for study. Time which is uninterrupted will yield serious study. Setting a block of time aside regularly will greatly help. One to two hours can be a good amount of time to work with, or possibly, set the whole morning aside. With sufficient time in study, it will enable you to feel comfortable with the text and to read them effectively. If you rush through your study time, the study will probably lack the impact God intends for it. When the leader prepares thoroughly, he opens oneself to be really gripped by God's truth. When this happens to you, it opens up the strong possibility for it to happen to your group.

After reading the text several times, begin breaking it apart by outlining the ideas. Look where a paragraph begins and ends in your Bible. Ask yourself if this is a complete thought, or is it carried on in the next paragraph. What is the idea here? After outlining the text, then go through and begin charting all your observations, then the interpretations and applications. Once this is accomplished, you are now ready to formulate questions. Ask questions that pull the main idea out

of each section of the text. Your questions must flow in the same manner as the text is written. Remember we are studying through a text in methodical, systematic way.

How Do I Lead The Study?

Once you have developed the questions from the text, you are ready to lead your group in the study. Remember, never answer your own questions. If the group does not understand the question, then rephrase it. Always draw the group back to the text for the answers. Here are some GUIDELINES to encourage healthy discussion. It is good to go over these with the group so there is clear direction for the study. These can include:

- 1) Approach the Scriptures as you would a textbook, one that we open to learn from.
- 2) As much as possible, let the text speak for itself.
- 3) Expect the text, rather than the leader, to answer questions that will come up.
- 4) Try to stay in the passage under consideration. There are occasions where background information is needed, but learn to work with the immediate context.
- 5) Stay on the point of discussion. It is too easy to take a detour and miss the point.
- 6) It is important for each person to contribute for the group's learning. Those who can talk more freely need to be sensitive to the more quiet person and provide opportunity for them to contribute.

When new people enter the group, it may be helpful to review the guidelines again.

In asking questions, it is good to give the group time to find the information in the text. Sometimes there will seem to be a long period of silence after a question. Be careful not to rush, because they will be searching the text for an answer. Many questions will anticipate more than one response, so feel free to wait for more response. After the first response, you can encourage additional comments by saying, "That's helpful or good insight, does anyone see anything else?" Discussion may be slow the first few times you meet, but it will improve as everyone gets acquainted and accustomed to discussing together. For some, it may be the first time they ever discussed the Bible in this manner.

Do not worry if some contributions are somewhat strange or different. Remember, God is working and the leader is not responsible to straighten out everyone's ideas. Your responsibility is to get everyone in the Word and let the Word straighten them out! Some people have a tendency to be problem-raisers. Ask them to hold their question until after the discussion when you can talk to them personally. Be sure to talk to them later.

Sometimes, during the course of discussion, a participant will unexpectedly respond to a question you have not asked yet. In that case, just skip it when it comes up or refer to what they said earlier.

There are times when a discussion gets very involved, and you suddenly realize everyone is off the subject and the time is gone. We want good discussions, but we also want to allow God to speak through the passage. If we get only half the passage, we may get only half the point. Learn to bring the group "back" when they get off the subject, and move on to the next question.

In the beginning, after each of your studies, you can strengthen your leadership by going over the evaluation questions for leaders that has been provided in this material.

God can work through a Bible study which has only a few people in it, or in a larger group. However, experience shows that when a group grows beyond 7 or 8 discussion will not be as fruitful and something is lost. If your goal is to have open, honest discussions in God's Word, it is best to keep the group small. If it goes beyond a good size for a small group, then consider dividing the group and teach someone else to lead it.

Small groups can be a real key to church growth, both spiritually and physically.

XII. SOME EVALUATION QUESTIONS FOR BIBLE STUDY LEADERS TO CONSIDER

You may want to go through this guide on your own, or invite another Christian in your study group to consider it with you.

Before you begin, why not thank God for specific answers to prayer in the study you just led. No matter how you think the study went, you can thank Him that He can use His Word significantly with each person who was there.

Your Preparation

1. Do you think you took adequate time for it?
2. Were you able to get a firm hold in the main teachings, and let them get hold of you?
3. Your preparation in prayer: Do you want to make any changes in this as you get ready for the next study?

Your Attitude

1. Did you expect God to work in the study?
2. Were you able to show interest in individuals so they know that they are welcome, and so that someone with a question or problem would want to talk with you?
3. Were you willing to learn from the others in the group?

The Atmosphere of the group

1. Was it informal and natural?
2. In general, did people seem free to contribute?
3. In what ways were you able to support them and encourage their participation?

The Timing

1. If you were to lead a study in this passage again, would you change the pace of it?
2. Then consider:
 - a. Do you think people understood the guidelines for discussion?
 - b. Did they dig into the text to get answers?
 - c. Did you generally refrain from answering questions yourself? (But did you share now and then, as a member of the group?)
 - d. Did you re-phrase questions when this was needed?
 - e. Were you able to encourage more than one reply to most questions?
 - f. Is there anything you'd like to ask the Lord to do in individuals which would help participation?
 - g. Is there someone you might help with participation by talking personally with him? How can you do this wisely and kindly?

The Purpose of The Study

1. Did the discussion point up major ideas in the passage? Were these spelled out so people could take them into their thinking and actions?
2. Were leading ideas tied together at the close to give a sense of the whole?
3. Are you satisfied that the study reached its goal -- did some people seem to be taking hold of the truths for themselves?

APPENDIX

MARK 6:45-52

- 45 And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away.
- 46 And after bidding them farewell, He departed to the mountain to pray.
- 47 And when it was evening, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land.
- 48 And seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.
- 49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out;
- 50 for they all saw Him and were frightened. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."
- 51 And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished,
- 52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

(NAS)

all scripture demands a response