

Omega Course:

Practical Church Planter Training

Manual One & Two

By

The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting

In cooperation with

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries

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Manual One**

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BIBLE STUDY
METHODS

1

LESSON

Introduction to the Inductive Bible Study Method

LETTING THE BIBLE TEACH US

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the inductive Bible study method, and explain why it is superior to other methods of Bible study.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the difference between deduction and induction.
- Be convinced that the inductive method is a better method than the “common” approach to studying the Word.
- Know the three stages of the inductive method.

☞ Main Points

- Deduction and induction move in opposite logical directions.
- The inductive method is the best method for learning something new from the Word.
- The steps of the inductive method are: Observation, Interpretation, Application.
- When the inductive method is not rushed, it provides a solid foundation for understanding the Bible.

☞ Appendix

1A How We Got the Bible

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the most important book ever written. It claims to be the very words of the almighty, infinite God, given to reveal Himself to finite man. The Bible is also the most important tool for the modern church planter or pastor. The “living and active” Word of God is able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Lord. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as a standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, tradition, and every other book. History, tradition and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God. Its teaching is always correct. Its prophecies always come to pass. Its words help us to win the lost and to resist the devil. The Bible is indispensable to our Christian life and ministry.

Since we believe that the Bible was given to us by God for our instruction, we need to approach it carefully and handle it accurately (2Ti 2:15). The divine nature of the Scriptures demands that we read it with the intent of *learning from it*, rather than *making it say what we want to hear*. How can we be sure we rightly understand the Word? The inductive Bible study method is designed to help every believer—whether layman or pastor—better understand the teaching of the Word of God. This lesson will introduce this simple and effective method, and following lessons will describe each step in more detail.

The inductive Bible study method is designed to help every believer—whether layman or pastor—better understand the Word of God.

I. INDUCTIVE VS. DEDUCTIVE

Deduction and induction are two kinds of logic or reasoning. Both deal with the general and the specific. They are both methods of arriving at a conclusion. However, they do so in exactly the opposite manner. Deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific, and inductive goes from the specific to the general. Both methods are used by Christians to study the Bible, but usually they are not aware of how each method affects their study and conclusions.

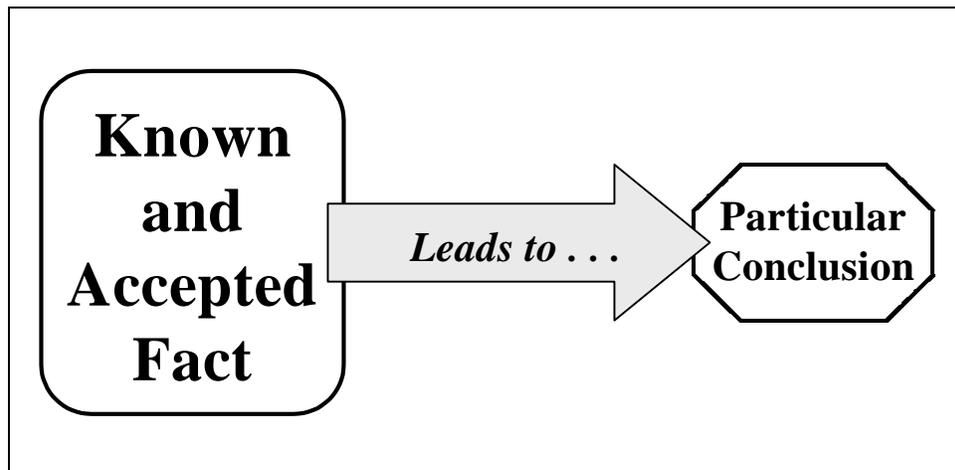
A. The Deductive Approach

Deductive reasoning is used by people in wide variety of professions. Deduction is a valuable skill, and many books have been written on the subject. The intent of this lesson is not to minimize the validity of deduction, but to suggest that it is an inferior method of Bible study.

1. *Deductive Reasoning*

In general, deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific. That is, it starts with a known and accepted idea or premise. That pre-existing understanding is then compared to a particular situation, and a conclusion is formed. The basis for this conclusion is the fact that the *general idea* is true, and that the specific situation *resembles it*. In other words, the *general idea* controls, or at least strongly influences the way we look at the particular situation. For example, since snow-covered steps are usually slippery, we will approach any set of snow-covered steps with caution—even if we have never slipped on that particular set of steps. Our general experience with snowy steps leads us to this logical and reasonable conclusion. Figure 1.1 shows the direction of deductive reasoning.

Figure 1.1 Deductive Reasoning



Deduction has a major weakness. If our general understanding is wrong, so will be our conclusion. For example, suppose a Russian hears someone talk about a doctor. In Russia, most doctors are women. Therefore, it would be logical for him to deduce that the doctor is a woman. Often, however, he will be wrong. There are also *male* doctors in Russia, and in some countries *most* doctors are men. In this case, the influence of our prior experience can often lead us in the wrong direction. We *assume* we know the answer, rather than continuing to look for other clues to the correct answer.

2. *Deductive Bible Study*

The deductive method can be used to study the Bible, but its weakness limits its usefulness. When we study the Bible, it is important to understand what *God is saying*, rather than to impose our understanding on the text. There are occasions when we cannot understand a difficult verse, and we rely on our general understanding of the Scriptures to deduce what it "*probably means*." However, this should be a "last resort." Our first step should be to pray, meditate on the verse, and continually reread it in order to try to understand what it wants to

say. If we quickly “give up” and assume it is “just like the other similar verses,” we may seriously distort the Word of God. For instance, ten of the eleven times the New Testament uses the word “yeast,” it refers to sin. It would therefore be reasonable and logical to assume that the eleventh time (Mt 13:33) also refers to sin. It would, however, be wrong. An examination of the context of Matthew 13:33 shows that in that verse, it refers to the Kingdom of God!

3. *The “Normal” Method*

Unfortunately, deduction is probably the most common method of Bible study. As a result, few learn very much from the Bible. Since they come to the Scripture with their *preconceived understanding of what it means*, they are not able to notice and learn from the details of a particular text.

Bible teachers often know what they want to say, and simply come to the Bible to find a verse that seems to support their understanding.

Bible teachers often know what they want to say beforehand, and simply come to the Bible to find a verse that seems to support their understanding. The Word of God is then used to prop up *our message*, rather than being allowed to communicate the ideas that *the Lord intended* for it to say.

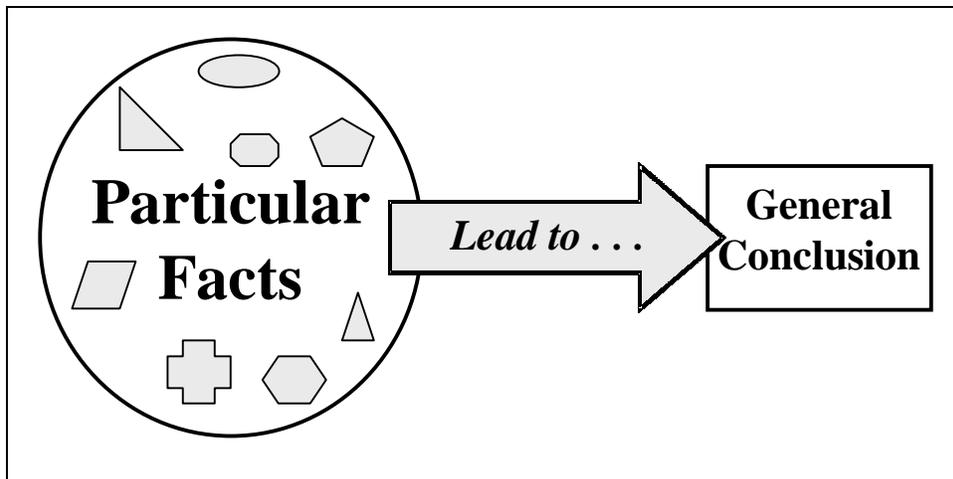
B. The Inductive Approach

The inductive method is in many ways the opposite of the deductive method. It examines the particulars of a situation, and then attempts to form a general principle from them. It is normally used in those situations where we do not have a general principle that seems to fit, and are therefore unable to use deduction.

1. *Inductive Reasoning*

Deduction is essentially the process of using our pre-existing knowledge. Induction, by contrast, is about *learning*. We assume that we do not yet know the answers, and examine the facts closely in order to try to understand *what they mean*. In this method, the emphasis is on the specific details and facts of the situation. Figure 1.2 shows the progression of the inductive method.

Figure 1.2 The Inductive Method



2. *Inductive Bible Study*

When we use the inductive method to study the Bible, we come to the Scripture as learners. We acknowledge to God and to ourselves that we do not yet know all the answers. Our purpose is to *gain understanding*. We come with a commitment to carefully examine the text, and allow the Lord to speak to us through it. The deductive method usually leads to a quick sermon—the inductive method leads to spiritual growth.

3. *A Better Method*

The inductive method is superior to the deductive method because it makes *the Scriptures* the authority, rather than our understanding. It is also better because it matches the process of understanding and applying biblical principles to our lives. As we study the Bible, we look at how God dealt with people in a particular situation, at a particular time, and in a particular culture. Our task is to take these facts and to form from them a biblical principle. We then translate that principle into our equivalent situation so that we can correctly apply it to our lives. The process of the inductive Bible study method is therefore:

- **Observation** of the facts in the Scriptural context.
- **Interpretation** to find the principle that the passage teaches.
- **Application** of the principle to equivalent situations in our lives.

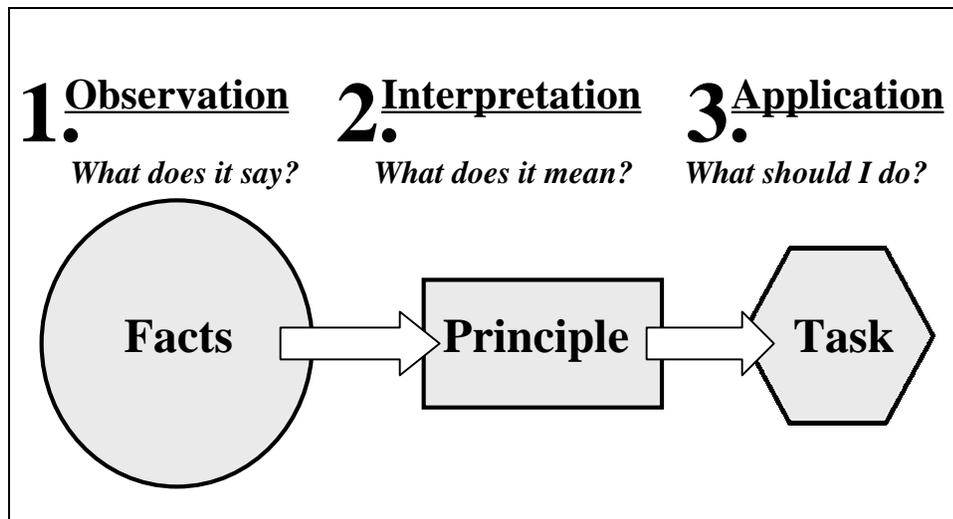
II. **STEPS OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY**

The three steps of the inductive Bible study method are each important. They build progressively on each other to lead us from the Bible text to a correct application to our lives. Essentially, the three steps ask three different questions about the text.

- What does it say? [Observation]
- What does it mean? [Interpretation]
- What should I do? [Application]

The relationship between each of these steps is shown in Figure 1.3. Notice the logical progression through the three steps, beginning with the Bible text and ending with application to our Christian life. If the steps are not completed in the proper order, the result is flawed.

Figure 1.3 The Three Steps



A. Observation – What Does It Say?

The first step of the inductive method is observation. It is also the most important step—in the same way a solid foundation is critical to the construction of a house. At this stage, we observe the text, looking for every detail we can find in it, and recording our observations. The key to this step is to ask an endless series of questions such as “Who?, What?, Why?, Where?, When?, etc.” These questions help us focus on *what the Bible says*, rather than bringing our ideas to it. We also look closely at the context of the verse, paragraph, chapter, and book to discover and understand the situation in which it was written. At this stage, it is very important *not to interpret or apply* the text. We must discover all the information first—in the next step (interpretation) we will look at what it means.

B. Interpretation – What Does It Mean?

The process of interpretation has two parts. The first part is to determine *what the passage was intended to say to the original audience*. The second part is to formulate *the message of the passage as a biblical principle* that can be applied to other similar situations.

This is a difficult stage, requiring serious and prayerful thought, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. At this point, we need to compare all our understanding of the original historical, geographical, political, cultural, and religious situation with the facts that we unearthed in the observation stage. Any facts that we have missed in the observation stage will hinder our work here. Now is also the time to compare this text with other similar passages to see if they can help us understand it—being careful that they do not distort the facts of the text we are studying. If the meaning of the passage is still unclear, it might be necessary to return to the observation stage and keep digging for more information.

C. Application – What Should I Do?

The final stage of the inductive method is application. At this point, we take the result of the interpretation stage and decide how the principle might apply in our situation. Since we have carefully looked at the original context, and know the details of it, we can look for similar contexts in our day.

The difficulty of this stage is to determine what situation today is really analogous to the original situation. We can only say “thus says the Lord” if we can demonstrate that this similarity exists. If our situation is truly the same as a biblical passage, then we can assume that the Lord expects us to apply the message to ourselves. In that case, the important task is to state *specifically* and *clearly* “what we should do.”

III. BUILDING A SOLID PYRAMID

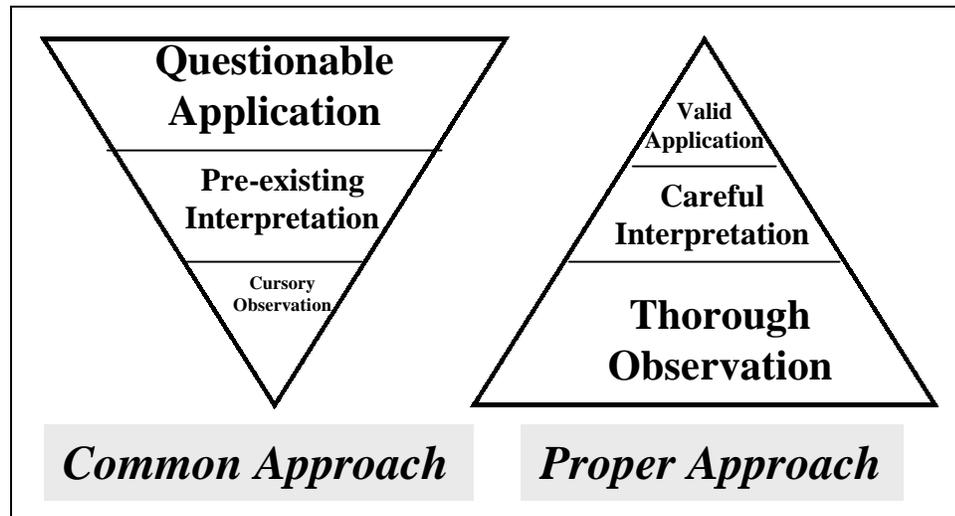
It is important not to skip any of the steps, or to change the order. It is impossible to correctly say what a passage means without first fully observing it, and futile to ask what we should do without knowing what the text means. Therefore, it is critical that we take the necessary time to use the inductive method properly.

A. Rushing the Process

The most common mistake in using the inductive method is to spend too little time on the observation phase. The person studying the Bible takes a quick glance at the passage and assumes that he or she knows what it says. This defeats the learning process. The result is an understanding of the passage that is exactly the same as it was when the process started. The Scripture has not been allowed to speak to us or to teach us. If we approach the Word of God in this way, our biblical understanding will stagnate. The Bible is living and active. We can never fully understand the depths of its teaching. There is always something more for any student of the Word to learn—if we will take the time and effort to understand it.

There is always more for any student of the Word to learn—if we will take the time and effort to understand it.

Figure 1.4 Good and Bad Foundations



Christian workers often rush the process because they are in a hurry to prepare a message for others. Or, they may be lazy. Either way, the result of this poor preparation is weak preaching, without the power of the Lord behind it. Skimping on the process can be compared to the inverted pyramid in the left side of Figure 1.4. A cursory observation is expanded into a quick interpretation, or a pre-existing interpretation is “hung” on a text that may or may not support it. Finally, a sermon or message is build upon this shaky foundation. Sadly, this may be the most common kind of teaching in churches today.

B. A Solid Foundation

The pyramid in the right side of Figure 1.4 demonstrates the proper use of the inductive method. Notice that observation is the largest section, followed by interpretation, and that application is the smallest. However, the application is solid and valid—being based on a thorough study of the Word.

The inductive method can be compared to mining for gold. First, tons of gold-bearing rocks are crushed into manageable pieces and washed (observation). Next, the crush rock is sifted to find the gold nuggets (interpretation). Finally, the gold nuggets are melted down and shaped into useable jewelry of other objects for the consumer (application). The process produces only a small amount of gold compared to the weight of the original rock. However, the result is of great value. In the same way, the result of studying the Word using the inductive method is worth all the effort required.

CONCLUSION

The inductive Bible study method is a superior method of studying the Word. It leads to a more accurate understanding of the Bible, and promotes true spiritual growth and learning. As such, it is the best method not only for pastors and preachers, but also for every Christian. We are all to be learning from the Scriptures. Every church planter should not only master this method, but should also teach it to every believer in his care.

The following lessons will describe in more detail exactly how to use each of the three steps of the inductive method. Time will also be provided to practice and become comfortable with each stage of the process. The effort required will be more than balanced by the resulting new understanding of the Word of the Living God.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What is the basic difference between deduction and induction?
- Why is the inductive method a superior method of studying the Bible, compared to the deductive method?
- What are the dangers of the “common” approach to Bible study and preaching?

ACTION PLAN

- When you next study the Bible, record how much time you spend on observation, interpretation, and application. On the basis of these times, evaluate whether you are using the inductive method, the deductive, or something in between.
- In preparation for the next lesson on observation, pick a sample short passage of Scripture to study (no more than a paragraph or so). Spend at least two hours prayerfully observing the passage and asking God to open your eyes to things that you have not yet seen. Record your observations. What did you learn?

BIBLE STUDY
METHODS

LESSON 2

Observing God's Word

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of "observation."

☞ Main Points

- Successful Bible study should be surrounded by prayer.
- Context is extremely important.
- There are six key questions to ask about any passage.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to prepare inductive Bible study observation questions.
- Be committed to study the Word of God diligently.

☞ Appendix

2A The Language of the Bible

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson is followed by a one-hour workshop that will focus on applying the principles of observation. This lesson includes sample observation questions for Jeremiah 1. You should emphasize the kinds of questions asked, because the trainees will be required to make up their own questions in the workshop lesson.

INTRODUCTION

All Christians need to be able to study the Bible for their own spiritual growth as well as for the growth of those under their spiritual care. God has given every believer the Holy Spirit to be his or her principal teacher. Let us never forget the importance of our dependence upon God's Spirit to teach us and to empower us to obey what we learn. With God's help, it is possible for every believer to understand the Bible, even if the only book we have is the Bible. In addition, God has given some people the special role of helping His people discover the truths of Scripture and apply them correctly to their lives. It is especially important that a church planter know how to help others discover God's truth through Bible study.

One of the best ways to systematically discover, understand, and apply God's truth is the inductive Bible study method. The inductive Bible study method leads to this process of discovery through three basic steps that are called "observation", "interpretation", and "application." The Holy Spirit teaches us, but God also expects us to study His Word diligently using all the resources He has put at our disposal. We should never choose between studying hard or depending on the Holy Spirit—both are important!

God expects us to study His Word diligently using all the resources He has put at our disposal.

This lesson focuses on the first step of inductive Bible study—observation. As the previous lesson stated, observation is like the base of a pyramid. If we do a thorough and careful job of observation, the resulting interpretation and application will be much more accurate. Our goal should be to understand *exactly* what God wants us to know and do, and therefore observation is a critical step in the process.

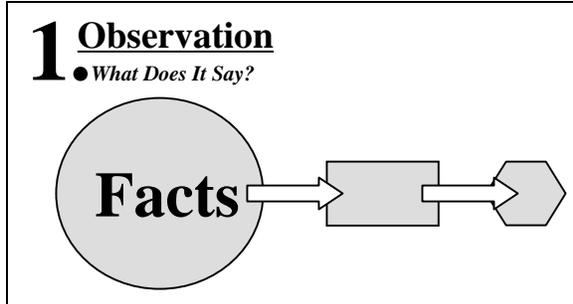
I. OBSERVATION—WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

Observation concerns the details and facts that are seen in a selected Bible passage. It answers the question "What does the text say?" It clearly shows the people, places, events, circumstances, objects, time, relationships, personal opinions, ideas, etc., which were in the writer's mind and the context when the text was written.

Students of secular classical literature have spent countless hours trying to decipher the meaning of great texts written by men. In many cases, this process has continued for hundreds or even thousands of years since the writing of the texts, with new understanding constantly emerging. Take a minute to think about some of the great classical authors of your country, and the search for the meaning of their writings.

If this effort is warranted, how much more we should strive to understand the living, active, bottomless Word of the Almighty God. To quickly read a Bible passage, and assume that we understand it completely is utterly foolish. There is always more to understand.

Figure 2.1



A. Prepare for Observation

Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we cannot approach it like any other book. There are several factors that will affect whether or not we understand it.

1. *Belief*

The Scripture says that a "man without the Spirit" cannot understand the things that come from God (1Co 2:14). Since only those who have repented of their sin and trusted Christ for salvation have the Holy Spirit, an unbeliever cannot fully comprehend the Bible. This does *not* mean that only believers may be involved in a Bible study. It *does* mean that when unbelievers are present, they are limited in what they will be able to understand. The Holy Spirit desires to show them the truths of sin, righteousness, and judgment from the Word, in order to lead them to salvation. Therefore, a Bible study for unbelievers should focus on the basic truths of the Gospel.

2. *Prayer*

Proper Bible study will always be surrounded by prayer. Before starting the study, we should pray and confess any sin or other obstacle that prevents us from learning from the Word. We should also pray for enlightenment (Ps 119:18; Eph 1:18). During our study, it is also helpful to pray for clarity whenever we see something that we do not understand. And finally, when we have finished the study, we should pray about how God would have us apply what we have learned to our own life and to the lives of others.

Proper Bible study will always be surrounded by prayer.

3. *Readiness to Obey*

James tells us that we must not only listen to the Word, but also obey it (Jas 1:22-25). Jesus also said that putting His words into practice was like building a house on a rock (Mt 7:24). Not obeying them, however, was like building on sand (Mt 7:26). In fact, Jesus seems to say that giving spiritual truth to those who are not willing to obey it is as foolish as giving pearls to pigs (Mt 7:6). God is very serious about how we respond to His Word. The more we know, the more severely we will be judged.

4. *Self-examination*

It is true that a pastor or church planter is responsible to teach the Word to others. We are told to “feed the sheep” (Jn 21:17). But this does not excuse him from first applying it to his own life. Every good cook samples the food as it cooks to determine whether or not it is ready to serve to others. At the very least, we should always look for application to ourselves, even when our goal is to preach to others. However, it is even more profitable if we also partake heartily of the meal, rather than just sample it.

We should always look for application to ourselves, even when our goal is to preach to others.

The student of the Scriptures should never feel that he or she has reached the point of understanding the Word fully—this is not possible. It is much better to be a “learner,” growing daily through study of the Word and prayer, than to masquerade as an “expert.” A teaching ministry will be more rich and rewarding if the teacher is sharing out of the abundance of truth that he or she is learning from the Lord on a daily basis.

5. *Willingness to Learn*

Approach the Scriptures with an open mind. Be willing to let God teach you what His Word really says. Always be willing to expose your personally held belief to the light of God's Word. Don't be afraid of changing your viewpoint if God's shows you the truth about an issue.

B. **Take Enough Time**

There are some proven principles for understanding the general focus of the passage. If the process is rushed, the result will be a shallow understanding of the text. It is important to exercise the patience and determination to keep working until the text is understood.

The first step is to **read the text over several times** to get an overall understanding of the passage. This takes time, but bears much fruit. There are many passages where it is easy to get bogged down in details unless you can discern the general theme through several readings. A good understanding of the passage's overall focus will help you to keep a proper balance and divide your time appropriately for the different parts under study.

C. **Look at the Context**

The term ‘context’ refers to the verses that surround the passage being studied. Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study, and yet it is often ignored. When we look at the context, we are seeking to understand what is the theme or subject of the book, chapter, and paragraph of the verses that we are studying. Looking at the context means examining.

- What do the preceding and following verses talk about?
- What is the theme of the paragraph?
- What is the theme of the chapter?
- What is the purpose and theme of the book?
- Is the passage in the Old or New Testament and what does this mean?

A good example of the importance of context is Philippians 4:19, where Paul promises that God will “meet all your needs.” Many understand this to be an unconditional promise to everyone. Many would recognize that since Philippians is written to believers, this promise is only for Christians. However, a more in-depth study of the context reveals that Philippians is a “thank-you letter” to the Philippian church for the gift they sent to Paul through Epaphroditus. The context of chapter four is specifically talking about this generous gift that they had sent to Paul out of their poverty. The context of verse 18 shows that God was pleased with this gift. Therefore, the context indicates that verse 19 is a promise to those who have sacrificed to financially support a missionary church planter (Paul) who was preaching the Gospel to the lost (in Rome, at that time).

Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study.

Some Bibles have notes before each book that explain what the particular book is about. These can be helpful. There are also other commentaries and books available that discuss the setting and background of a particular Bible book or chapter. However, it is better to limit the use of these resources until the interpretation stage. There is no substitute for reading the Scriptures yourself and allowing them to speak to you with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. During the observation stage, focus on what *you* see in the passage and the context. Take the time to listen to God before you move on to the commentary of men, even if they might be gifted teachers or authors.

Observing the context involves reading more than just the passage being studied—it includes the surrounding verses, chapter, or book. We step back and look at the passage from a distance before we move in for a closer look. Insights and notes about the context should be carefully recorded. They will be of major importance in the interpretation stage.

Step back and look at the passage from a distance before moving in for a closer look.

D. Examine the Structure

Having looked at the passage from a distance, it is now time to look more closely. Read the passage several times, looking for and recording any of the following details of the structure:

- Key words - Note any word or words that are repeated. Often this indicates the theme.
- Comparisons or contrasts - Is something the same as something else, or the opposite?
- Progression of an idea - Does one thing build upon another? Are they linked to other ideas like a chain?
- Verbs – Is there some kind of action? Is there a command we must obey?
- Conjunctions - Is something equal to something? Often the conjunction “but” appears in contrast, and the words “like” or “as” may indicate comparison.
- Illustrations - Visualize in your mind the thing or action that is being described.
- Kind of literature – A passage may be history, prophecy, allegory, didactic truth, logic, parable, or many other possibilities. Appendix 2A lists many more of these. Noting the type of literature in the passage will also affect the interpretation in the next stage, so it should be recorded carefully now.

E. Ask Questions: Who?, What?, Where?, When?, How?, and Why?

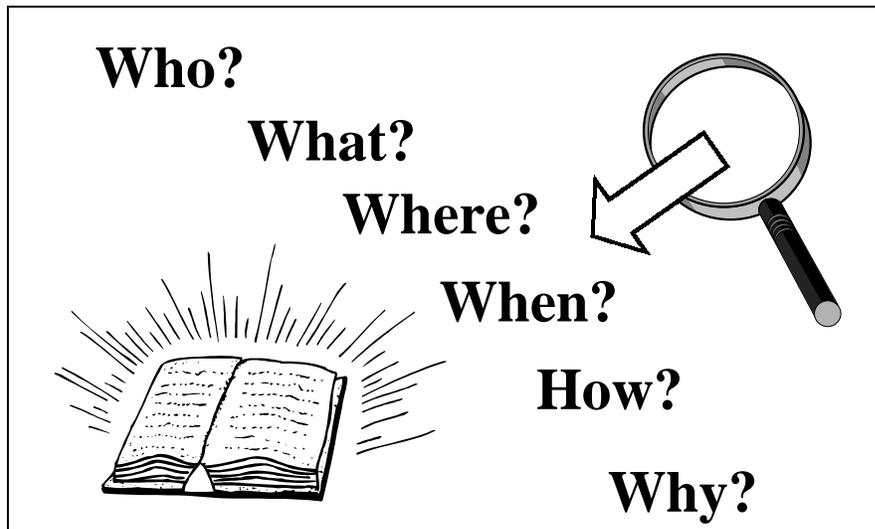
The best method of discovering the content and meaning of a passage of Scripture is to ask key questions about it, and record the answers. Figure 2.2 shows the six key questions that should be asked and answered. There are, of course, other possible questions, but these are the most important ones. Other questions tend to be variations of these six.

Ideally, you should ask every form of these questions that you can think of (the more the better). Sample variations of these questions are shown in the next section. As you ask questions, carefully record the questions and the answers on a sheet of paper. You will need to refer to them in the interpretation stage.

If you ask a question and cannot find the answer, note the question and come back to it at a later time. Do not disregard those questions. They may be important. Instead, pray about them, meditate on them, and ask God to show you the answers. Be prepared for this to take time and effort, but it will be worth it when you arrive at a clearer understanding of the passage. Only then will you be able to apply it with confidence in your own life, and teach “thus says the Lord . . .” to others.

If you cannot find the answer to a question, come back to it at a later time.

Figure 2.2 Key Observation Questions



II. SAMPLE OBSERVATION

We are going to use the six questions to see what we can discover about God's truth in an Old Testament passage about a young man called to serve God. As we study this passage, it will become very clear that he was being called to take a stand that was radically different from his contemporaries. No doubt some of you will be able to identify with the struggles this young man had to face as he responded to God's call. The passage is found in Jeremiah 1.

Open your Bible to that passage, pray for enlightenment, and then look for the answers to the following questions. Take special note of the *kinds of questions* that are asked. In your own study later, you will need to make up similar questions to ask of other passages as you study them. Write the answers next to each question.

A. Who?

- To **whom** is this part of Scripture attributed (verse 1)?
- **Who** are the persons mentioned in this passage (verses 1-2)?
- **Who** are the kings noted in verses 2-3?
- **Who** are the people God is summoning to bring disaster on the land (v.15)?
- Verses 18-19 list Jeremiah's main opposition. **Who** will these people be?
- (Other?)

B. What?

- **What** special event is noted at the beginning of verse 2?
- Is it possible to deduce **what** Jeremiah's role was from verse 2?
- If so, **what** was that role?
- According to verse 2, **what** event took place at the end of the reign of Zedekiah?
- **What** happened to Jeremiah in verse 3?
- **What** was the "word of the Lord" that came to him (verse 5)?
- **What** are the four specific actions attributed by God to Himself in verse 5?
- In verse 5, **what** was to be Jeremiah's role?
- **What** was the extent of Jeremiah's role? Limited to the nation of Israel, or much broader?

- **What** was Jeremiah's response in verse 6?
- **What** was God's response to Jeremiah in verses 7-8?
- **What** are the two imperatives God gives to Jeremiah in verses 7-8?
- **What** options does Jeremiah have according to verse 7?
- **What** is Jeremiah's emotion that God addresses in the first part of verse 8?
- **What** two reasons are given to Jeremiah for not being afraid (verse 8)?
- **What** does the Lord do to Jeremiah in verse 9?
- Verse 10 describes Jeremiah's task. **What** were the elements of that task?
- **What** is the progression noted in verse 10?
- **What** were the two things God showed Jeremiah in verses 11-16?
- **What** does verse 12 describe God doing?
- According to verses 14-16, **what** is about to happen to the people of God?
- **What** are the specific reasons God is bringing judgment on His people (v.16)?
- **What** are the instructions God gives to Jeremiah in verse 17?
- **What** commands have been repeated from earlier?
- **What** is the new promise (verse 17)?
- **What** will the people of verse 18 do to Jeremiah (verse 19)?
- **What** is the promise God gives Jeremiah for the battles ahead (verse 19)?
- (Other?)

C. Where?

- **Where** is the setting of this passage according to verse 1?
- **Where** is this located?
- **Where** will the people described in verse 15 come from?
- (Other?)

D. When?

- **When** is the time period described for the overall contents of this book?
- In verse 5, **when** did God know (choose) Jeremiah?
- In verse 5, **when** did God set Jeremiah apart for ministry?
- **When** did the action in verse 18 take place?
- (Other?)

E. Why?

- **Why** is God "watching" in verse 12?
- **Why** is God pronouncing judgment on His people (v.16)?
- (Other?)

F. How?

- **How** is Jeremiah described in verse 1?
- **How** is his father Hilkiyah described?
- **How** does Jeremiah address God in verse 6?
- **How** does Jeremiah respond to God's word in verse 6?
- **How** does God describe Jeremiah in verse 18?

Use the space provided below to list any other observations you made concerning Jeremiah 1:

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What does 'context' mean?
- What are the six key questions to ask a passage?
- When, during a Bible study, should we pray?

ACTION PLAN

If you did not have time to complete the observation of Jeremiah 1, do so before the next lesson. See if you can ask other appropriate questions of the same passage. Save these questions and answers for use in Lesson 4.

BIBLE STUDY
APPENDIX
2A

The Language of the Bible

When we study the Word of God, we are looking for its intended, literal meaning. We want to understand the message that the Lord desires to communicate through it. But it is important to realize that, like all great literature, the Bible writers often used figures of speech to communicate truth. In addition, they used many different kinds of literature in their writing. Studying the Bible accurately requires that we recognize these differences, and treat each passage according to the kinds of language and literature used.

I. KINDS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE BIBLE

A. Simile

A simile compares two dissimilar things, using words such as “like,” “as” or “than.” Psalm 1 compares the righteous man to a tree planted by streams of water. Both bear fruit and prosper.

B. Parable

A parable is a simile in a longer story form. Jesus helped the disciples understand His kingdom by telling a parable about workers who were paid equally though some had worked longer than others had. He begins with the words, “For the kingdom of heaven is *like* a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard...” (Mt 20:1).

C. Metaphor

A metaphor compares two dissimilar things without using obvious words such as “like” or “as.” In Jeremiah 1:18, the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall...”

D. Allegory

An allegory is a long metaphor. In Judges 9:7-15, Jotham tells a story about a worthless thorn bush being king over the other productive trees to describe a corrupt political leader.

E. Hyperbole

A hyperbole expresses something in extreme terms to make a point. When Jesus says that a judgmental person has a log in his eye and doesn’t know it, he is saying something that is physically impossible. His point, however, is that a person who is unaware of his own sins is totally unable to evaluate another person’s sins.

F. Sarcasm

Sarcasm criticizes by using undeserved or ridiculous praise. Paul criticizes the Corinthians’ pride by writing, “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings – and that without us!” (1Co 4:8).

Deciding when the biblical writers were using language figuratively or literally is serious work. It would be a grievous error to ignore one of God’s commands by claiming it to be figurative language. On the other hand, to say that every verse in the Bible should be interpreted literally leads to some perplexing problems. When the Lord referred to Jeremiah as “a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall...” He obviously wasn’t speaking in a literal sense (Jer 1:18). The same is true when the

Lord said he was appointing Jeremiah to “uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow...” (Jer 1:10).

How can we know the difference between literal and figurative language? You can ask some simple questions like these:

- Does the passage state that it is figurative? (“Listen to another parable...” Mt 21:33).
- Does the passage become absurd or impossible if it is interpreted literally? (“I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north... from the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land...” Jer 1:13-14).
- Does the passage describe God, who is Spirit, as if He had a physical body and other strictly human qualities? (“Then the Lord reached out His hand and touched my mouth...” Jer 1:9).

If the above questions don’t apply, then the verse can most probably be interpreted literally.

II. KINDS OF LITERATURE IN THE BIBLE

A. History

The Bible is full of historical accounts and biographies. For example, the book of Judges tells the history of Israel between the time of Joshua’s conquest of the land and King Saul’s reign. The book of Nehemiah is Nehemiah’s diary of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The Gospels are Jesus’ biographies and include His teachings. The book of Acts records the significant happenings in the early history of the Church.

B. Instruction

Throughout the Bible you will find guidelines, commands, principles, proverbs, doctrines and practical advice. The major part of the book of Leviticus contains detailed instructions for the Israelite priests. Proverbs gives advice on finances, relationships, and work. Paul’s letters to specific churches are full of both doctrine and practical guidelines for the Christian life.

C. Prophecy

Most prophetic literature is a written account of sermons originally preached to God’s people. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the larger prophetic books, are collections of sermons spanning the careers of these prophets. These books were not meant to be read from start to finish as a single unit. The secret to understanding these books is finding the beginning and ending of the individual sermons and reading from one sermon to the next. Nearly all the sermons dealt with the historic periods of the writers. Some of the sermons dealt with the future beyond the lifetimes of the prophets.

D. Poetry

In the poetic literature of the Bible every human emotion is expressed. Many biblical books contain poetry. The Psalms and the Song of Songs are entirely poetry and many of the prophetic books are predominately poetic.

E. Apocalypse

Some prophecy is written in a special kind of literature known as apocalyptic. The word apocalyptic means “unveiling” because it reveals events that will take place in the future. The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are good examples of this literature. Apocalyptic passages are highly symbolic and it is necessary to understand the symbolism in order to interpret the message. The central message in apocalyptic literature is the second coming of Christ and his ultimate victory over Satan. Typically, the whole of creation is involved in the coming events. (Compiled from Inch and Bullock, eds., 1981. *Literature and Meaning of Scripture*. Baker Book House.)

BIBLE STUDY
METHODS

4

LESSON

Interpreting God's Word

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of "interpretation."

☞ Main Points

- The importance of careful interpretation.
- Common errors in interpretation.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Know the basic principles for interpreting the Scriptures
- Be committed to study the Word of God diligently.

☞ Appendix

4A Bible Charts

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson is followed by a one-hour workshop to develop skills in interpretation of a passage.

INTRODUCTION

Apart from the Holy Spirit and prayer, the Bible is the most important resource we have as a church planter. The living and active Word of God is alone able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Kingdom of God. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as the only standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, or tradition of the Church. History, tradition, and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God.

It is important, therefore, for us to know how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." Our enemy Satan has spared no effort to undermine the Bible and its truth. Over the centuries, many different controversies have been created by a false understanding of what the Bible says. You don't want to be guilty of adding to or supporting those false understandings of God's Word.

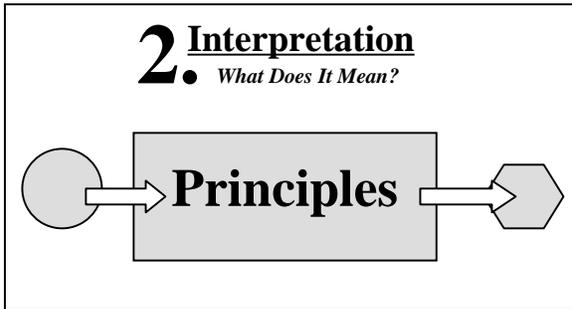
I. INTERPRETATION—THE SECOND STAGE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

Interpretation answers the question "What does the text *mean*?" This session presents some guidelines for discerning what the Scriptures are really saying. This is not intended to be a full treatment of this subject, only an introduction. We also want to take the same passage we have been dealing with in Jeremiah chapter 1 and apply these principles to gain a clearer understanding of that passage.

The interpretation stage follows the observation stage of inductive Bible study. This seems obvious, but all too often those who study the Bible rush ahead to this stage without doing a thorough job of observation. As a result, their interpretation is often faulty, since they do not have enough facts to accurately interpret the passage.

The stages of observation, interpretation, and application can be compared to the process of building a house. Observation would be the *collecting of the materials*. Interpretation is the stage where the owner actually *constructs the house* from the materials. Application is the stage where the owner moves into the house and *lives in it*. Every stage is equally important, and they are all interdependent. If the materials are lacking (observation), it will not be possible to complete the house. If the house is not constructed carefully (interpretation), living in the house will be dangerous. If no one lives in the house (application), then building it was a waste of time.

Figure 4.1



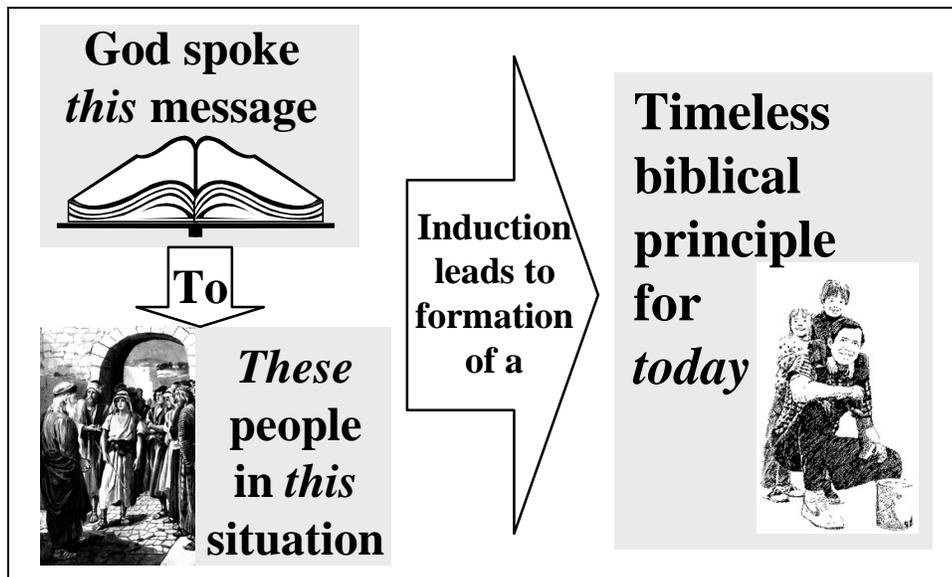
With this analogy in mind, it should be clear that interpretation should be done carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully. If at any point you find that you do not have enough facts to decipher the meaning of the passage, you should return to the observation stage and ask more questions. Actually, this is normal. Rarely do we note everything important in a passage, any more than a builder never runs out of material and has to get more.

Interpretation should be done carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

II. THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

When we interpret a passage of Scripture, we seek to clearly describe the original biblical situation, and to state the message that God communicated in that situation. We can then carefully and prayerfully assume that God would speak in a similar way to a similar situation—resulting in a general biblical principle.

Figure 4.2 Using Induction to Discover the Biblical Principle



Therefore, interpretation involves:

- Understanding the original, biblical situation and people
- Identifying the message communicated to those people at that time
- Formulating a principle that summarizes these facts, and which would apply to a similar situation in any era—especially today.

The principle that results from interpretation might be a warning, a promise, a challenge, etc. The important thing is to understand the original situation clearly enough that we can say “thus says the Lord” with confidence when we apply it to our own lives and the lives of others.

A. Sift through the Observation Facts to Find the Key Ones

Interpretation is more of an art than it is a science. That is, it is more than a matter of following certain rules—although rules and guidelines do exist. Practice, prayer, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading are necessary in order to develop the ability to sift through all the facts from the observation stage, identify the most important ones, and understand the main message of the passage.

B. Determine the Author's Main Point

When we refer to the author of the passage, we have in mind both the human writer, and also God who directed the writing. With the exception of some prophecies that the human writer did not understand, the writer's point and God's point should be the same.

In some cases, the main point may be clearly stated in the passage. Usually, however, it will be necessary to look for the clues and key observations. The context is normally the most important indicator of the topic or main point. Repeated word or phrases are also valuable clues. Each passage will be different, but you will be looking for the following information:

- What subject is the author writing about?
- What is he saying about that subject?

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize these two things in a concise sentence. This may take quite a few attempts before it is right. Continuing the analogy of building a house, this is like laying the foundation properly. The fuller description of the message of the passage will be built on this statement, as will the application.

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize the point of the passage in a concise sentence.
--

C. Determine the flow of thought in the passage

Once the main point of the author has been stated, the next step is to describe how he builds that point in the passage. What style does he use? Why? What method or what logic? Why did he choose this way of presenting it? It should be possible to note both the content of the passage, and also the attitude or emotion being communicated. Texts might be encouraging, sarcastic, angry, confronting, soothing, pleading, challenging, etc.

III. THE BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Although interpretation is essentially an art to be developed through practice, there are some basic rules that should be followed. The rules described below assume that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that God intends for us to read and understand it. Not everyone agrees with those assumptions, and this is the source of many of the religious disagreements in the world, as well as the source of many of the cults.

A. General Principles of Biblical Interpretation

1. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God.
2. The Bible is its own best interpreter, reflecting the character of God.
3. Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary to understand the Scripture.
4. You should interpret history, actions, attitudes, personal experience, etc., in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of these things.
5. The primary purpose of the Bible is not to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.

6. Every Christian has the right, the responsibility, and the privilege to investigate and interpret the Word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

B. Grammatical, Historical, and Theological Principles of Biblical Interpretation

1. You should interpret words according to their meaning in the historical and cultural context of the author. Always think about how the original hearers would have understood and reacted to the message.
2. It is important to understand the grammar of a passage before trying to understand the theological truth that it teaches.
3. Figurative language normally has one main point. Do not try to read too many things into that kind of passage. (See Appendix 2A "The Language of the Bible" for a description of different kinds of figurative language.)
4. You should be no clearer on a subject than the Scriptures are clear. Don't add you own thinking or church tradition to what the Bible says, for you or others could come to believe those thoughts are actually Scriptural.

C. Common Interpretation Errors to Avoid

Three common errors in interpretation happen because of the failure to remember key attributes of Scripture.

1. Springboard

This kind of error takes its name from the springboard that gymnasts use to help then jump higher. The springboard is not central to their performance—it only helps them get started. This error occurs when the interpreter already knows what he wants to say, and is not particularly interested in discovering the meaning of the text. He briefly looks at a passage and "jumps" from there to some other topic or teaching that he really wants to discuss. This insults the Lord, Who wrote the Word to communicate truth to us.

2. Allegory

This method is also very common, but just as unacceptable. It involves ignoring the clear meaning of Scripture and trying to find some hidden message. There are indeed some passages that are very difficult to understand. However, most passages make sense when we look carefully and the words and grammar. We should never look for "hidden meanings" when one is presented clearly. Even in the case of a difficult passage, it is better to admit that we don't understand it than to try to fabricate some kind of meaning that is hard to support.

We should never look for "hidden meanings" when one is presented clearly.

3. Ignoring Progressive Revelation

It is impossible to understand a passage if we forget the progressive nature of Scripture. God sometimes changes the way He deals with men. For instance, in the Old Testament, God required a series of literal animal sacrifices. However, these sacrifices were only temporary. When God's perfect Lamb died on Calvary, He fulfilled all the Old Testament requirements (Heb 9:12). No sacrifice of any kind is required in the New Testament. If someone were to sacrifice a lamb for his sin today, it would be an insult to Christ. Therefore, interpretation decisions must be made with care, and with the broader teaching of the Word in mind.

D. Use "Helps", But Use Them Carefully

There are many tools and helps that assist in the process of interpretation. These include commentaries, Bible handbooks, Bible notes, Bible cross-references, dictionaries, atlases, and many other books. As helpful as these are, they should not replace personal effort to understand the passage. They are meant to *help*, not to *do the work for you*. Use them as needed to understand things that are not clear to you. Be especially careful with Bible cross-references.

Often, they only refer to another verse that has the same word or phrase in it. The verse referred to may or may not have *anything* to do with the topic of the passage.

IV. SAMPLE INTERPRETATION

Refer back to your observation notes on Jeremiah 1, and work through the process of interpretation as time allows. Follow the format shown below.

A. Sift the Observations to Find the Key Facts

As I look at my observations on Jeremiah 1, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

B. State the Main Point

The subject of the chapter is:

The thing that Jeremiah is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

C. Describe the Flow of Thought

Jeremiah develops the main idea of the passage by:

D. Some "Meaning" Questions

As you work through the statements above, it might be helpful to consider the following questions about the *meaning* of the text. Perhaps you will think of other good, or even better, questions. These are offered to start you on the process.

Verse 5

- What does it mean that the Lord "knew" Jeremiah?
- What does it mean to be "set apart?"
- What are some implications of the statement "...before you were born I set you apart...?"

Verse 6

- Why might Jeremiah consider himself a "child?"
- Why do you suppose Jeremiah responded the way he did?

Verse 7

- How would you characterize a call from God by what you see in this verse?
- What does your answer to the preceding question say about God and His character?

Verse 8

- What do the Lord's words say about the response of the people to Jeremiah's future ministry?
- What motivation is there for Jeremiah to face the opposition?

Verse 9

- How did the Lord "put" His words into Jeremiah?

Verse 10

- What do you think the phrases "uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and plant" mean?
- What can you assume about the character of Jeremiah that would enable him to follow through with God's plan?

Verse 12

- What principle do you find in this verse concerning God's involvement in the ministry of those He has called?

Verse 16

- What does this verse show about the character of God, even when it comes to judging His own people?
- Was God justified in what He planned to do to the people? Why?

Verse 17

- What might have been part of Jeremiah's "getting ready"?
- Why do you think the Lord repeated again what he had already said before (verse 8)?

Verse 18

- What is the meaning and significance of the phrases "fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall?"
- Why would the people of verse 18 be so opposed to Jeremiah and his message?
- How does God fortify and prepare His people today to stand for Him?

Verse 19

- What does this verse show about God's character and commitment to those He calls?

E. The Biblical Principle

The final step in the process of interpretation is to attempt to state the meaning of the passage as a concise biblical principle. This statement should be very similar to the "Main Point" in section IV.B. above. However, the main point in section IV.B. related to the specific context of Jeremiah 1, more than 2500 years ago. The principle that you want to formulate now should be valid at any time, especially today.

The form of the principle would be something like: "In this kind of situation, we should..." or "When this happens, God will..." The exact wording of the principle for a particular passage will vary, of course. Also, the principle should be as specific as possible. This process is not easy, but it is important. And with God's help, it is possible.

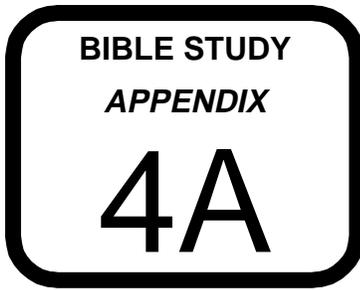
From my study of Jeremiah 1, I find the following timeless biblical principle (record):

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION.

- What are three common errors in interpretation?
- What question does interpretation answer?

ACTION PLAN

- Finish any remaining questions in this lesson that you have not yet completed.
- Begin to work through the interpretation process using Acts 17:1-10.



Bible Charts

On the following pages are two charts that may help be of help to you:

- Figure 4A.1 gives the big picture of God's eternal plan through the Old and New Testaments.
- Figure 4A.2 shows the historical periods of the Bible.

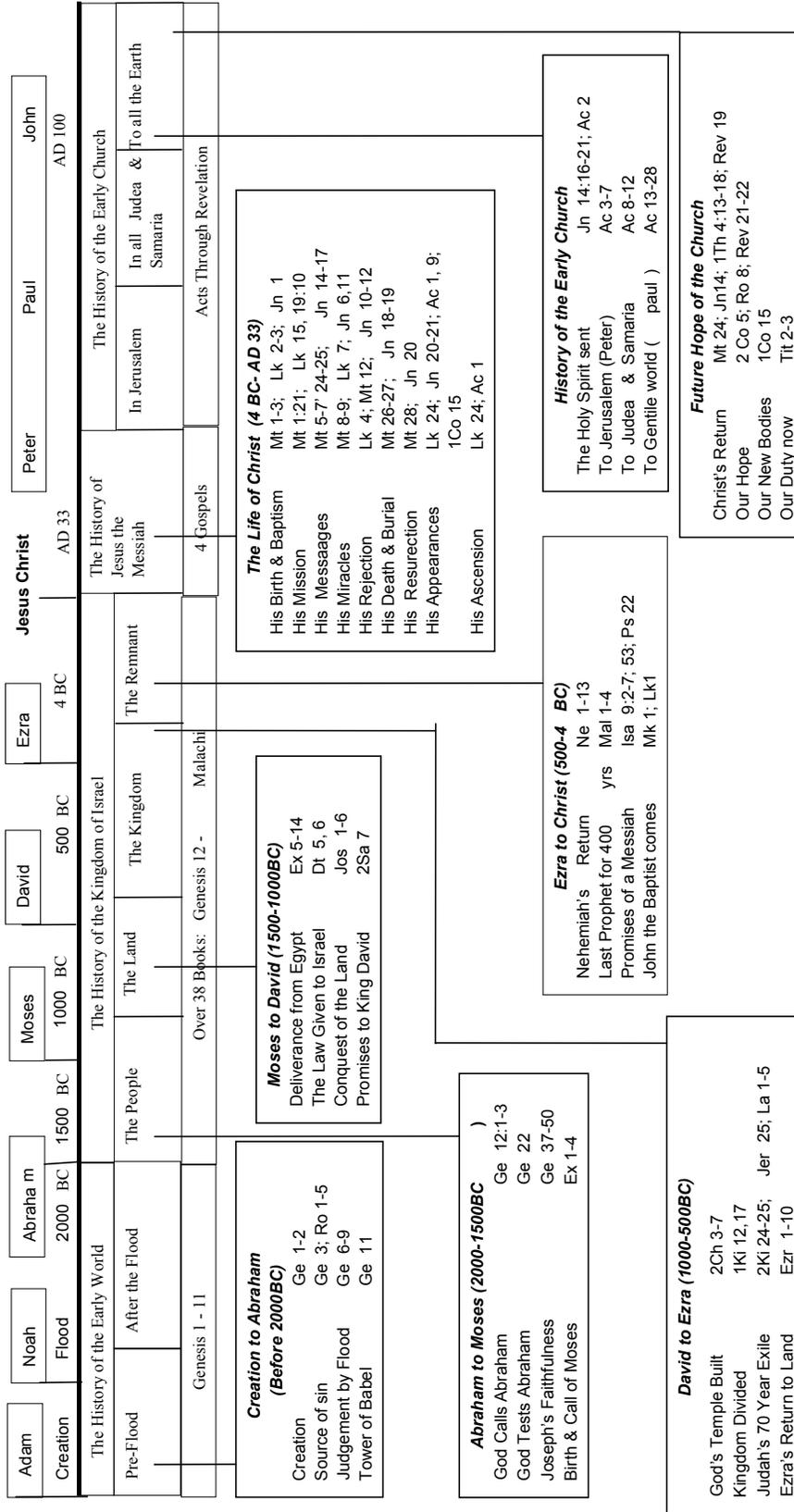
Figure 4A.1: Redemptive History of the World in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT)

The chart below is intended to give the BIG PICTURE of the Bible by showing that the Old and New Testaments are united in declaring God's eternal purpose. Beginning in Genesis, God created Man (male and female) to have a relationship with Him. When Man sinned, that relationship was broken. The account of how God began rebuilding that relationship begins in Genesis 3:15 and ends in Revelation 22. In fact, the Bible is primarily the history of God's redemptive plan.

OT	Creation: Ge 1, 2	Fall/Sin: Ge 3:1-14	Promise of a Redeemer: Ge 3:15, 21	Promise repeated to Abraham: Ge 12	Sacrificial System initiated under Law of Moses/Blood Atonement: Exodus	A chosen people to be His Witness throughout the World
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Man (Male & female) created in IMAGE of God 1:27 - to have relationship with God, 3:8 - to have relationship with each other, 2:24 - to reproduce, 1:28 - to rule over earth, 1:28 - to receive God's blessing, 1:28 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Image Marred - Relationship with God broken - Pain and suffering - Try to rule over each other - All under a curse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The "offspring" of the woman would strike the heel of the serpent. - God made garments of skin for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I will bless you - In you all nations of the earth will be blessed - God chose one nation to be His people & to make Him known throughout the earth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isa 53:7 - Ex 12:13 A lamb to be sacrificed for sin. (Picture of the Lamb of God that would take away sins of the world). - Leviticus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jos 2:8-14; 4:24 - 2Sa 7:25-26 - 1Ki 8:41-43 - Isa 43:10-12; 54:5; 55:4, 5; 59:20; 60:16 - Da 7:13-14 - Zec 13:1 - (plus many, many more)
NT	Jesus: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world	Gospels: Jesus the Redeemer Came	Acts: History of story of Redemption taken to ends of earth	A Redeemed people being transformed into image of Christ: "How should we Live?"	Revelation: Ultimate Redemption	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jn 1:29 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mt 1:21 - Jn 3:16, 17 - Lk 4:18, 19 - Lk 19:10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jerusalem 2 & 6:7 - Judea & Samaria 6:8 - 9:31 - Palestine & Syria 9:32 - 12:24 - Eastern part of Roman World 12:25-19:20 - To Rome 19:21-25:31 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ro 3:24; Ro 4:22-25; Ro 6:11-14; - Ro 8:29 - 2Co 3:18 - Eph 4:21-33 - Col 1:15-22 - 1Pe 5:1, 10 - 1Th 2:19 - Jude 24, 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Creation of) a New Heaven and New Earth (21:1) - Everything made new (21:5) - His servants will reign with Him (22:5) - Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14) 	

Figure 4A.2 Chronology of the Bible

This chart shows how the Bible is broken down into historical periods. Key figures in each of the periods are noted



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**BIBLE STUDY
METHODS**

5
LESSON

Interpretation Workshop

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to give trainees the opportunity to practice the interpretation stage of inductive Bible study.

☞ Main Points

- The goal of interpretation is to understand the author's intended meaning.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Begin to apply the principles of interpretation.
- Better understand the meaning of Acts 17:1-10a.

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Workshop: Divide the trainees into small groups of 3-4 people. Have all the groups work on the same passage recommended at the end of the first hour. Allow 15 minutes at the end of the workshop for the groups to discuss their understanding of the passage together.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

The passage we will use for our workshop is Acts 17:1-10a. The format for this workshop is as follows:

- We will divide into groups of 3-4 people.
- We will have 35 minutes to read the passage and work through the steps of interpretation as presented in Lesson 4.
- The last 15 minutes of the workshop we will regroup and share our understanding of the passage, and to choose key 'interpretation' questions.

GROUP WORK

As a result of Lesson 3, each trainee should already be very familiar with Acts 17:1-10a. You will need to refer back to your observations in that lesson in order to complete this lesson. In fact, it may be necessary to do additional observation of the passage if questions arise that you cannot answer.

Use the same process that you used to interpret Jeremiah 1 in Lesson 4.

A. Sift the Observations to Find the Key Facts

As I look at my observations on Acts 17:1-10a, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

Context of the passage:

Original audience:

Original situation:

Other facts and observations:

B. State the Main Point

The subject of the passage is:

The thing that Luke is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

C. Describe the Flow of Thought

Luke develops the main idea of the passage by:

D. “What Does It Mean” Questions

As you work through this passage as a group, record below key questions you asked about the meaning of the passage that helped you better understand *what the verses mean*.

[Circle the two most helpful questions that you would use if you were leading a group study of this passage.]

E. State the Biblical Principle

The timeless principle of this passage is:

SUMMARY

Use the space below to take notes when the groups come back together to discuss their understanding of the passage. Note how other groups agreed or differed from your understanding. Try to arrive at a consensus on the meaning of the passage.

Choose the two best ‘interpretation’ questions for a group study from among the ‘favorites’ of all the groups and record them below.

- 1.
- 2.

SOURCES

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.

BIBLE STUDY
METHODS
6
LESSON

Applying God's Word

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of 'application.'

☞ Main Points

- We need to obey the biblical principles we learn, or else the exercise is futile.
- Our situation must be equivalent to the biblical context for the application to be valid.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to apply principles learned from the Scriptures
- Know how to prepare inductive Bible study application questions.
- Begin to apply the application principles presented in this lesson.

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

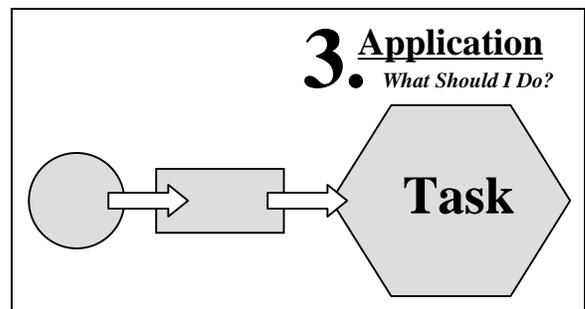
The focus in this lesson should be on practical applications that each person can make to his/her own life and ministry. Trainees should be encouraged to make these personal applications.

INTRODUCTION

For some reason, the hardest part of the Christian life is applying the truths of Scripture to everyday life. We might gain much knowledge and our faith might increase from our study of the Bible. However, unless we understand how to put into practice what we have learned, the study will not greatly profit us. In the preceding lessons, we have collected our materials (observation) and constructed them into a biblical principle (interpretation). Now it is time to live in the truth (application). Application specifically asks the question "what should I do?"

When we determine what we *should* do, we still need to **obey** what the Bible teaches. Jesus taught that His disciples should teach others "...to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). The Apostle Paul speaks of applying what has been learned this way, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1Co 11:1). The Apostle John writes that "we know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (1Jn 2:3). Also, we need to look for practical ways to **apply** the truths we learn as we study the Bible. The Apostle James writes, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (Jas 2:17).

Figure 6.1



In this lesson we want to return to the passage in Jeremiah chapter 1. We will study the text again, looking for biblical principles that we can apply to our lives. While the principles will apply to everyone, the practical applications may well vary from one person to another because our circumstances are all different.

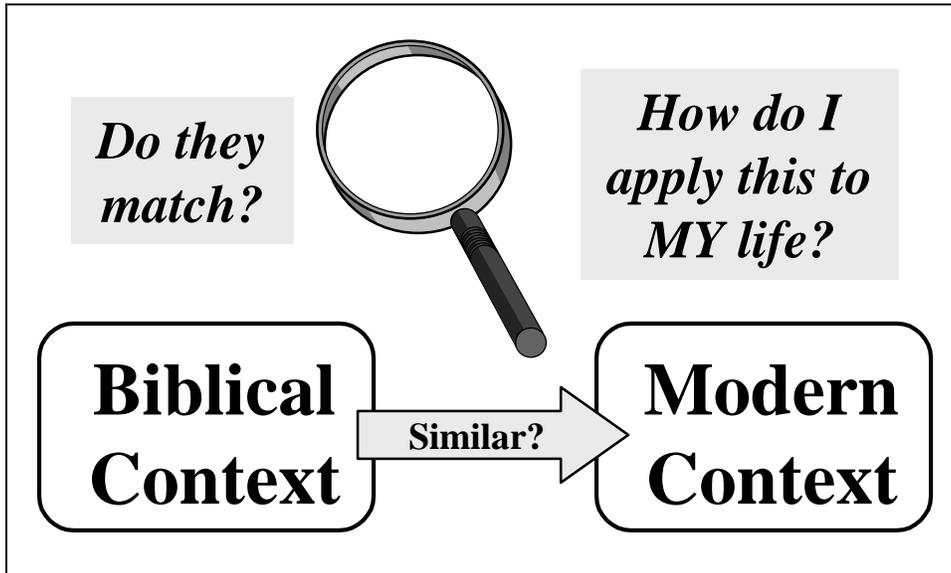
I. APPLICATION—THE THIRD STAGE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

There are two very important issues that must be addressed in the application stage. The first is the fact that application should always be made to oneself, rather than only to others. It does not matter whether the study is for the purpose of personal growth, or for teaching others. If we do not apply it to ourselves first, we become hypocrites. Whatever we teach to others should always flow out of what we have already learned and applied in our own life. Then we can teach others if the need arises.

The second important point is to make sure that *our context* is the same as the *original context*. We cannot, and must not apply a message given to biblical characters to our own lives unless our situation is equivalent. Therefore, much of the application stage consists of asking "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Application consists of asking "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Figure 6.2 Comparing the Contexts



II. PROCESS OF APPLICATION

Proper application starts with a logical and systematic consideration of the basic areas of our life and ministry that should be affected by the biblical principle that we have seen in the text. It is helpful to consider each topic, and then to ask ourselves probing, thought-provoking questions about what we should do in response to the message. As always, this process should be surrounded by prayer, and accompanied by a willingness to learn and grow in the Lord.

A. Application Topics

The ultimate goal of application is personal character development and greater ministry effectiveness. There are a number of areas or topics that we should consider when we try to apply the message of a passage personally. These topics include both our personal life and ministry. Some examples are listed here:

- Faith: What can I learn about personal faith?
- Attitudes: What attitudes are good or bad? What are their results? How can I change negative ones?
- Actions: What should I start doing? What should I stop doing?
- Sins: What sin(s) have been pointed out to me? How can I right things with God/others?

- Challenges: What challenges have been made clear to me in my personal life? In relationships with others? In my ministry?
- Promises: What promises can I claim as my own? Are there conditions? What are the implications for my life and ministry?
- Character: What are the godly character qualities that I need to develop in my life and ministry?

B. General Questions

Hendricks lists a number of helpful application questions that can be asked of any passage of Scripture. They are:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

C. Specific Questions

Having asked the general application questions of Jeremiah chapter 1, it is also helpful to look at each verse or section and ask more specific questions. As distinct from previous stages, however, these questions directly relate to *what you should do* as a result of the message. There are an endless number of these specific questions, since they are different for every passage. You are limited only by your creativity. The important thing is to open your heart to the Lord, and allow Him to show you what He wants to be different in your life.

Some sample questions are listed below. Feel free to add to them as you work through the passage.

Verse 5

- What does the teaching of this verse say personally to you about your personal relationship with God the Creator?
- What does this verse say to you personally about your call to ministry?
- If you do not have a clear sense of call, what is this verse saying to you?
- What does this verse say personally to you about God's will for your life?
- Do you know what God's will for your life is at this point?
- What impact does this verse have regarding your faith in God's sovereignty?
- Do you agree? Do you accept this concept without reservation?

Verse 6

- Do you identify with Jeremiah's hesitancy to respond to God's challenge?
- What have been your "excuses?"
- Are you still offering excuses? What should you do about them?

Verse 7

- What do you think personally about God's response to Jeremiah?
- How do you feel personally about the apparent lack of "flexibility" on Jeremiah's part to refuse God's call?

- There doesn't seem to be any room for Jeremiah to make his own decision. What do you feel personally about not having any real choice in the matter of a call by God? Should you have a choice?
- Does this verse create a problem for you in the area of man's free will and God's sovereignty?
- If this does create a problem, how will you respond?

Verse 8

- What does this verse mean to you personally?
- How will you apply this to your personal and ministry situation?

Verse 9

- Can you describe a situation in which God has "met" with you personally?

Verse 10

- What does this verse say to you personally about God's ultimate goal of your ministry?
- Can you see any similarity between Jeremiah's task and yours as a church planter?
- There were obstacles that Jeremiah had to face and overcome in order to reach the goal of building and planting anew. What are some of the obstacles you face as you reach toward that same goal of building up the kingdom of God by planting new churches?
- How do you feel about the prospect of being in a position where you might have to go against tradition and leaders who might oppose your church planting ideas?
- How would you deal with the obstacles and those who might oppose you?

Verse 12

- How do you see the principle of this verse applying to you personally?
- What does this verse do for your confidence as a church planter?

Verse 16

- How do you deal with the issue of "other gods" in your own life?
- What do you need to do to make sure that your allegiance is only to God and not to other "gods", i.e., materialism, nationalism, etc.?

Verse 17

- How do you rate your readiness at this point to be able to stand up for God against all opposition?
- What do you need to do personally to prepare yourself for your future ministry?
- What areas of your life need reinforcing spiritually?

Verse 18

- God fortified Jeremiah. How has God fortified you to stand for Him?
- What has God given to you to be with you in all circumstances?
- How does this make you feel about God and His provision for you and your ministry?

III. SUMMARY

The application I see for my life and ministry in Jeremiah 1 is:

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION

- Do you agree that it is always necessary to apply teaching to ourselves first of all? Why is that important?

- How does the 'context' influence the application of a passage?

ACTION PLAN

- If you have not had time to complete this lesson as a group, do so before the next workshop so that you will be familiar with the principles.

SOURCES

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.

BIBLE STUDY
METHODS

8

LESSON

Various Ways to Use Inductive Bible Studies

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage the use of inductive Bible study methods in various kinds of studies in addition to short passages.

☞ Main Points

- The purpose of *any* Bible study should be to determine what the Bible has to say, and this is best done through the inductive method.
- Types of study that can benefit from the inductive method include biographical studies, book studies, and theme studies.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Be convinced that the inductive method should be used in whatever kind of Bible study he or she is doing or leading.
- Know how to approach the study of a Bible character, book or theme from an inductive perspective.

☞ Appendix

8A Biographical Study on Barnabas

INTRODUCTION

The previous manual explained how the inductive method of Bible study focuses on discovering and applying the meaning of the Word of God. The emphasis is on the Scriptures rather than our prior understanding of the passage. Hopefully, it has already enhanced your study of the Word.

So far, we have only used the inductive method to look at short passages because of the brief time available during the lessons. However, the inductive study method can be used to study much larger portions of the Bible or to compare verses from different sections—as would be necessary in a theme or biographical study. In this lesson, we will discuss some of the guidelines for applying the inductive method to those other kinds of studies.

I. REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Before you apply the inductive Bible study method more broadly, you should look back through the Bible Study Methods section of the first manual.

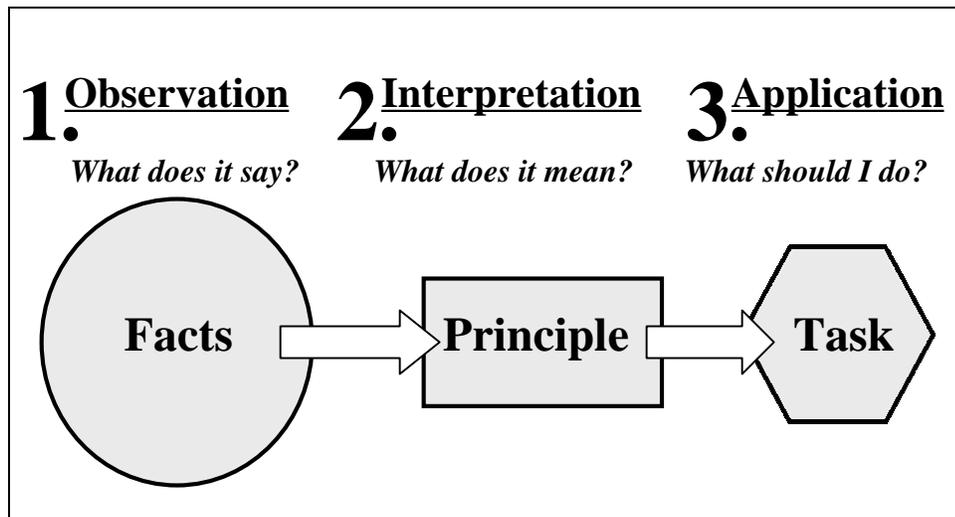
A. The Reason for the Inductive Method

The deductive method begins with a pre-existing understanding or fact that determines the meaning of the situation being studied. When we use this method to study the Bible, we end up trying to make a verse say *what we already understand* rather than learning from it. By contrast, when we use the inductive method in Bible study, we come to the passage *to learn* and allow the Word to speak to us.

B. The Steps of the Inductive Method

The three steps of the inductive method—observation, interpretation, and application—are shown in figure 8.1. The inductive method leads us through the process of asking what the Bible says, what it *means*, and what I should *do* about it. It begins by taking time to examine closely the content of the Scriptures, and ends with putting it into practice in my life and ministry.

Figure 8.1 The Three Steps



It is important to work through the steps *in order*, without jumping ahead. The process is like a pyramid, where it was necessary to build a large and strong foundation of observation before building our interpretation on it, and applying it to our lives.

C. The Emphasis of the Inductive Method

The inductive Bible study method can be used for many kinds of Bible studies, as we will see below. There are a number of general principles that are important, no matter what kind of study you are doing. These include:

- Ask Lots of Good Questions Such as *Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *When?*, *How?* and *Why?*
- Look for the Main Point
- Understand the Author's Purpose
- Allow for Progressive Revelation
- Understand the Context
- State the Biblical Principle
- Compare the Biblical and Modern Context
- Pray

Refer to the previous lessons for more information on these principles.

II. BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES

Biographical studies, or character studies, involve studying everything recorded about a particular person in the Bible. If this involves a great number of passages, it might be helpful to study a particular event or time frame in that character's life. For example, you might study Paul during his missionary journeys or David during his flight from King Saul. However, even in this situation, consider the entire life of the person, and how the chosen section fits into the whole.

A. Why Do a Biographical Study?

Everyone likes a story. It is easy to relate to the problems, challenges, temptations, joys, and victories of others when these are seen in story form. The Bible is full of both negative and positive examples seen in the stories of people's lives.

By studying the lives of biblical personages with their strengths and weaknesses, we can learn many lessons to help us conform to the image of Christ. Much of the Bible is concerned with God's working with individuals to restore this process. For example, from Abraham we learn about faith; from Joseph we learn how to face temptations; from Esther we learn about God's sovereign working; from Daniel we learn about prayer; from Jonah we learn what happens to a person trying to run away from God; from Paul we learn about missions. 1Co 10:11 is a key verse: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us." What other examples come to your mind?

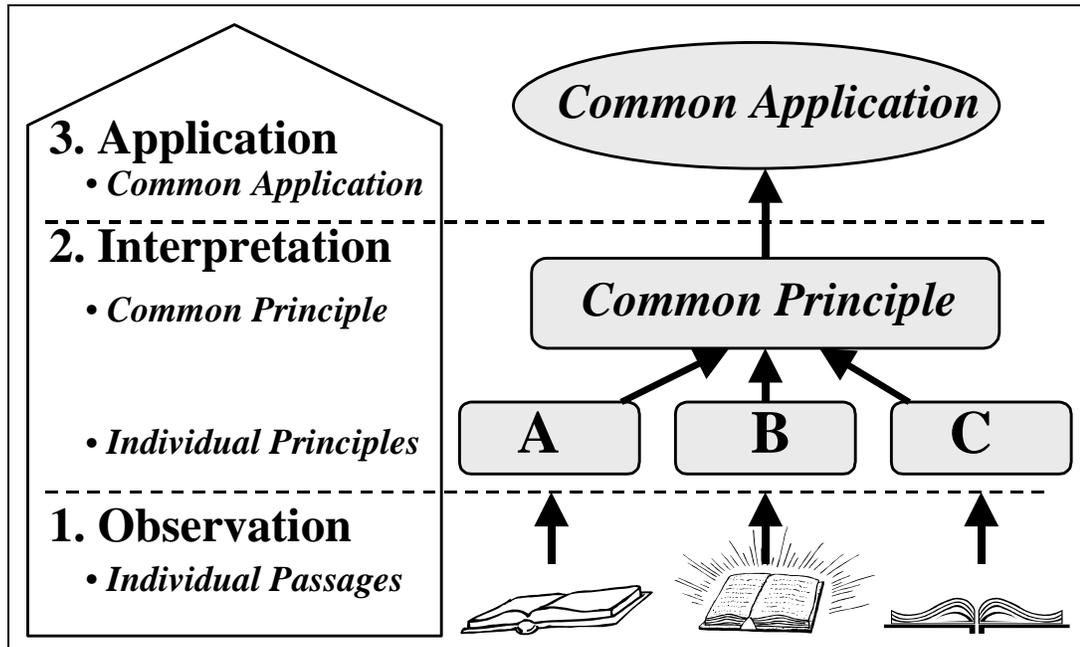
By studying the lives of biblical personages with their strengths and weaknesses, we can learn many lessons to help us conform to the image of Christ.

By using stories about the lives of biblical characters, church planters must be able to communicate many important truths to those they are seeking to evangelize and train. But in order to apply the Bible most accurately, it is necessary to understand what the Bible is teaching through a person's life. Good Bible study principles must be applied to biographical studies the same as to any types of Bible study.

B. How to Do a Biographical Study

Inductive biographical studies follow a similar pattern of observation, interpretation, and application as the individual texts do, with one significant exception. Figure 8.2 illustrates how *observation* is done on each passage. However, *interpretation* requires an extra step. First, the biblical principle for each passage is determined. Then, a *common principle* is formed from the individual principles. Finally, the *common application* that summarizes all the passages is formulated and put into practice. The sections below will expand these concepts.

Figure 8.2 Biographical Study



1. *Observation*

Observation involves thoroughly looking at all the relevant passages—one at a time. Each passage is teaching a particular truth in a specific context. You need to discover what that truth is for every passage before proceeding on to interpretation. Use the steps below as a guide:

- Select the Bible person you wish to study.
- Make a list of ALL biblical references to that person. If available, use a concordance or Bible dictionary.
- Arrange the verses in chronological order.
- Formulate and ask as many observation questions as possible (*Who?, What?, Where?, When?, How? and Why?*)
- Pay special attention to clues as to the character, personality, thoughts, or actions of the person you are studying. For instance:
 - What can we learn about his ancestry and family?
 - Is the meaning of his name significant? Was it changed? If so, what was the significance of that change, e.g. Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, etc.
 - When and where did he live? What do we know from other sources, both biblical and non-biblical, about life in his day?
 - What significant events occurred in his life: crises, accomplishments, call to a specific task, problems faced, etc.
 - Relationships: What was his relationship to God? How did he get along with others?
- Record and summarize your notes on each verse.

2. *Interpretation*

Interpretation is a two-part process when it involves more than one passage of Scripture—as is often the case in a biographical study. Each of the passages that you select to study has a specific purpose and teaching of its *own*. Because of the unity of Scripture, these purposes will never contradict, but they may be different. Usually, they add further information. Each of these purposes should be discovered and stated as a biblical principle, using the guidelines presented in earlier discussions of the inductive method.

Each of the passages that you select to study has a specific purpose and teaching of its <i>own</i> .

Once these principle for each individual passage have been stated, it is possible to finish the process of interpretation by combining them carefully and thoughtfully into one principle that sums up the contribution of each part. Suppose you chose to study a portion of the life of David. One passage taught that he was devoted to the Word. Another stressed his prayer life. A third emphasized his trust in God in times of trouble. An appropriate common principle might be, "We should be devoted to the Word and prayer as we trust God in difficult times." This principle summarizes the teaching of all three passages.

3. *Application*

Once your study of the character has defined a common biblical principle, you can compare your situation to his or hers and determine *what you should do*. That is, you will look for ways in which your context and that of the Bible character are similar, and respond according to the teaching that you have seen in the Word. As you do this step, you may want to review some of the passages when the Holy Spirit brings it to mind, and allow Him to teach you and guide you through the process.

There are many interpretation questions that you can ask to help discover the most important application for you. These include:

- How is my experience similar to his?

- Do I have the same strengths? Weaknesses?
- Why did God include this person in Scripture?
- What specific things does God want to teach me through the study of his or her life?

Note: An example of a biographical study on the life of Barnabas is found in Appendix 8A.

III. BOOK STUDIES

Most Bible scholars agree that the Bible has one common theme—although they debate how exactly to state it. Each book of the Bible develops that common theme by contributing something unique. A good example of this is seen in the Gospels. Four Gospel writers each wrote about the life of Christ. There are many similarities in the Gospels, and also many differences. Each is written from a unique perspective.

- Matthew – presents Christ as the Jewish Messiah (royal)
- Mark – presents Christ as the Servant (humble)
- Luke – presents Christ as the Son of Man (human)
- John – presents Christ as the Son of God (divine)

Each of these portraits of Christ are true, and yet, each is different. Each Gospel describes an important aspect of His person or character better than the others. The four Gospels work together to more fully describe the Lord. In the same way, all sixty-six books of the Bible work together to present the full message that God has for us. One book best describes His love, another His patience, another His wrath. One book emphasizes the lost condition of fallen man, while another describes our glorious salvation through Christ's atonement.

All sixty-six books of the Bible work together to present the full message that God has for us.

A. Why Do a Book Study?

Since all sixty-six books work together to present God's message to us, we need to carefully examine each book if we want to accurately understand its contribution to that message. There is also another benefit. When we understand the theme of each book, we know where to turn to quickly find answers to a particular problem. Does someone struggle with legalism? Turn to Galatians. Do we doubt our salvation? Read Romans. Do we question the deity of Christ? Read John. If we doubt the seriousness of sin, we should read Judges. Each book has a special emphasis and message.

B. How to Do a Book Study

A book study uses the same steps of the inductive method that we have been learning. Normally, a book study will require quite a bit of time to do it right. The benefits, however, will easily make it worth your time. A book study consists of four stages:

1. Read the Book Several Times

Many of the books of the Bible are simply short letters or messages. They were intended to be read from beginning to end without interruption. The best way to study them is to read them several times until you begin to notice the theme and repeated or stressed ideas. Some of the longer books (such as Isaiah and Jeremiah) were written over many years, but they are also addressed to one audience and will communicate more clearly if we read them in their entirety. Once is not enough—nor is simply looking at selections from the book. Take time to read it repeatedly before you attempt to interpret it.

Take time to read a book repeatedly before you attempt to interpret it.

2. Study the 'Setting' of the Book

There are a number of important factors that we will call the 'setting' of the book. You may find some of this information in the book itself or in notes in your Bible. Other questions will

require the use of commentaries, Bible handbooks, or other helps. As you start your study, limit your use of these helps to introductory facts about the book, and not at the commentator's dialog. Save that for later, once you have had time to let the Scriptures speak to you first. As you start your study, look for the following 'setting' facts:

- *Author* – If possible, decide who wrote the book, and then learn as much about that person as you can. Why did God choose him as the human author? What was his background and experience? What kind of person was he? Who was his family? When and how was he saved? How old was he? What was his profession? Answer as many other questions about him as you can.
- *Recipients* – To whom was the book written? What was their situation at that time? Why do you think the book was written? How was it delivered to them (preached, prophesied, hand-carried letter, etc.)? What was their relationship to God? To the human author? What was their political situation? Their religious situation?
- *Date* – When was the book written? What important events were happening in history at that time? Where does this book fit into God's progressive revelation to man? What was the time span of the writing of the book?
- *Literary Style* – What kind of writing is used (poetry, prophesy, historical, didactic, etc.)? See Bible Study Methods Appendix 2A: "The Language of the Bible" for more information on styles. How will this style affect your interpretation? How would it have affected the recipients?

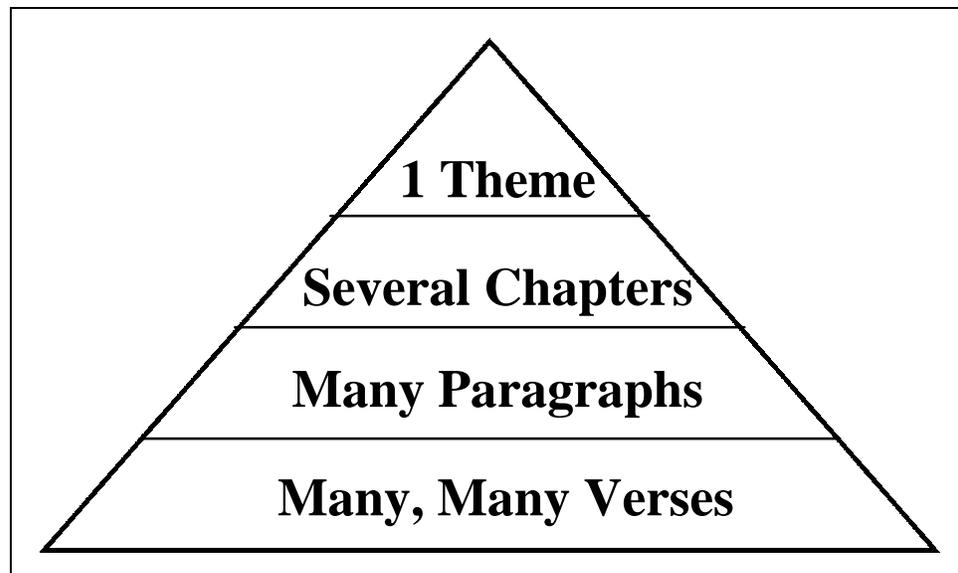
3. *Study the Content of the Book*

There are two main considerations in a book study. The first is the theme and the second is how that theme is developed. In other words, the author wanted to communicate a specific idea to us, and he did so in a particular way. Both are important.

a. *The Theme of the Book*

Now that you know many facts about the book, study the content of the book. The book will have one major theme that might or might not be easy to determine. For example, John states clearly the theme of his Gospel (Jn 20:31). So does Jude (Jude 3). Other writers are less clear.

Figure 8.3 Parts of a Book



b. The Development of the Theme

The content of the book will work together to communicate the theme of the book to the recipients (and to us). As you study and ask questions, note how the writer accomplishes that task. What kind of attitude does he express (authority, gentleness, love, anger, etc.)? What kind of language does he use—clear, sarcastic, eloquent, persuasive, etc.? Does he focus on the mind or the emotions? How? Why do you think he uses those approaches?

4. *Chart the Development of the Theme of the Book*

One helpful technique in a book study is to make a chart of the major themes, characters, places, etc. that are discussed in the book. Often a study Bible or commentary will include such charts. There are also other sources of these charts, such as Jensen (see Sources). However, you can also make your own. In fact, your study will be much more profitable if you attempt to chart the flow yourself before consulting another source. These charts need not be elaborate—they are meant to help you see the overall nature of the book. Figure 8.3 is a sample chart for the Book of Acts.

Figure 8.3 Chart of the Book of Acts

<i>The Book of Acts</i>						
Theme:	"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)					
Chapters:	1-7	8-12	13-28			
Places:	Jerusalem	Judea & Samaria	The Ends of the Earth			
Ministry to:	Jews	Jew & Gentile	Gentiles			
Key People:	Peter John Stephen	Peter Philip Saul/Paul Barnabas	Paul Barnabas Silas			
Key Events:	Ascension Pentecost	Eunich Cornelius	(13-14) 1st Missionary Journey	(15-18) 2nd Missionary Journey	(19-20) 3rd Missionary Journey	(21-28) Paul Goes to Rome
Principles:	Growth	Persecution	Missions			

5. *Apply the Theme of the Book to Your Situation*

At this point, you should have a good understanding of *what the book says* from your observation. You should also have determined the theme and its development—that is, *what the book means*. The final step is to think about *what you should do*. As in the previous lessons, this involves examining your own life and situation to see what similarities exist between it and the original context of the book. Questions you might want to ask yourself to help this process include:

- What in my life resembles the situation in the book?
- What in my life resembles the author of the book?
- How would I have addressed this situation?
- What particularly spoke to my heart as I read the book?

IV. THEME STUDIES

Often, we want to study a particular subject of topic. This kind of study is also referred to as a 'theme' study. The normal rules of inductive study still apply.

A. Why Do a Theme Study?

Many topics or truths are developed throughout the pages of the Bible. Many span both testaments. Book studies will show only a portion of these themes. For instance, teaching on prayer is everywhere in the Scriptures. The only way to adequately study it is to do a theme study.

B. How to Do a Theme Study

Once you have decided which theme you will study, you will want to work through the following steps:

- *Find the Related Verses* – Notes and cross-references in the margins of your Bible can help you find verses that relate to your theme. Find one verse that you know is relevant, and then begin to follow the links from verse to verse. However, a more thorough method is to use a concordance to look up *all* the verses that discuss your topic. Be careful, though—verses that have the same word do not necessarily relate to your topic.
- *Arrange the Verses in Order* – The theme you have chosen may be developed gradually through the Bible. Read the verses that were written earlier before the later ones. That way, you will discover the truth in the same way that God originally revealed it.
- *Study and Summarize Each Verse in Context* – Avoid being guilty of ripping a verse out of its context and trying to make it say what you want it to say. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you through it. Observe and interpret each verse carefully. Summarize what it is teaching about the theme.
- *Summarize the Teaching on the Theme* – After you have studied the individual verses and know what they say and mean, summarize their teaching into a clear statement that includes the contribution of each verse. This process is essentially the same as the method for a biographical study that is shown in figure 8.2. The main difference is that each passage concerns a theme instead of a person.
- *Apply the Truth* – Prayerfully and thoughtfully ask God to show you how this truth should change your life and ministry. You have "looked in the mirror"—now go out and do what you have learned (Jas 1:22-25).

Sample theme studies and key verses for them are listed for you in Bible Study Methods Appendix 10A: "Passages for Inductive Bible Study."

SUMMARY

The inductive Bible study method is helpful for many kinds of Bible study. It is so powerful because it reminds us at every step to let Scripture speak to us, instead of enforcing our understanding on it. Even when we study a book or multiple passages (as in a theme or biographical study) we need to be careful to study every verse in its context so that it can speak clearly to us.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION

- What is an advantage of doing a biographical study?
- What is the difference between the 'setting' and the 'content' of a book of the Bible?
- Why is it important to arrange verses for a biographical or theme study in chronological order?

ACTION PLAN

- Work through the biographical study on the life of Barnabas in Appendix 8A. Think through his role in the church planting process in Acts. What application do you see for your own life and ministry?
- Take the time to use the inductive method for a book study and for a theme study. Pick a smaller book or a more manageable theme for your first attempt. Evaluate the effectiveness of this method in helping you discover things you had not formerly seen in the Word.



Biographical Study on Barnabas

Use the inductive method of Bible study as you work through this biographical study on the life of Barnabas. As you have questions about the process, refer back to point II, "Biographical Studies" of Bible Study Methods Lesson 8: "Various Ways to Use Inductive Bible Studies."

I. STUDY THE RELEVANT PASSAGES

The verses where Barnabas is mentioned by name are listed for you. Read each verse or passage in the following list, and record your observations. Then summarize the passage. The first one has been done for you.

A. Acts 4:36,37

1. Observations:

- Was a Levite
- Was from Cyprus
- His given name was Joseph
- The Apostles nicknamed him "Barnabas"
- Son of Encouragement
- He sold his land to help fund the work of the church
- He presented his gift humbly ("at the apostles' feet")

2. Interpretation / Summary:

Barnabas was an 'encourager' by his very nature—even to the extent of giving of his possessions to encourage and enable other believers.

B. Acts 11:19-24

1. Observations

2. Interpretation / Summary

C. Acts 11:25-26

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

D. Acts 11:27-30

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

E. Acts 12:25

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

F. Acts 13:1-13;42-43

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

G. Acts 14:1-23

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

H. Acts 15:2-4, 12, 22, 25, 35-39

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

I. Colossians 4:10

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

J. Galatians 2:11-13

1. *Observations*

2. *Interpretation / Summary*

II. SUMMARIZE THE TEACHING

Now that you have looked at the individual passages, it is time to look at the results and summarize what the Bible teaches about Barnabas. As you do so, think through the following questions:

- What kind of background did Barnabas have?
- Why do you think the apostles gave Joseph the nickname "Barnabas?"
- What evidence do you see from these passages that Barnabas was an encourager?
- What is the significance of the order in which Paul and Barnabas (or Barnabas and Paul) are mentioned?
- How did Barnabas respond to the shift in leadership to Paul?
- How did he respond to conflicts? (Ac 15:1-4 and Ac 15:36-40)
- Why do you think he responded as he did in Gal 2:11-13?

Now write down a statement to summarize what you have learned about the life of Barnabas. Make sure that it includes all the key ideas that you have seen in each of the passages:

III. DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

A study of Scripture is of little value until we decide how we need to apply it to our lives. Think through the teaching of Barnabas' life as you consider the following questions:

- Have you had any "Barnabases" in your life? Who were they and how did they encourage you?
- Do you know of a Christian that needs encouragement? What can you do to encourage him/her?
- In Ac 9:26ff and 11:25-26, Barnabas risked his own reputation to encourage another. Are you willing to do the same for the sake of the Gospel?
- Barnabas moved aside and allowed Paul to assume the first place in leadership. Are you willing to train new leaders and allow them to assume leadership even if you must take a secondary position?
- What specific lessons has the Lord been teaching you as you studied the life of Barnabas?

Prayerfully consider how God would have you live differently as a result of this study. In the space below, write what you intend to do about it, and then ask the Lord to help you faithfully accomplish this:

**BIBLE STUDY
METHODS**

9

LESSON

Leading Inductive Bible Studies

LEADING OTHERS TO DISCOVERY

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain how to lead an inductive Bible study group in such a way that the members are able to discover the meaning and application of the Scriptures they study.

☞ Main Points

- Discovery is more powerful than "telling."
- Good questions facilitate discovery.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know the difference between "teaching" and "leading in discovery."
- Be able to create appropriate questions that lead to discovery.

☞ Appendix

9A Inductive Bible Study on Matthew 20:17-28

9B Inductive Bible Study on Luke 15:1-7

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Lesson 10,11 will be a 2-hour workshop to give the trainees practice leading an inductive Bible study. Trainees should have at least one evening to think about how to use the discussion techniques presented in this lesson before the workshop.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Inductive Bible study is first and foremost a method for personal growth of the Christian. However, it is also a very effective form of ministry to others. It can be used for evangelism, or for discipleship. This normally occurs in a group context.

An inductive Bible study group is a small group of people who come together for the purpose of studying the Bible. The members may or may not be believers—although, of course, the leader should be. Inductive Bible study is a good way for unbelievers to discover the message God has for them—that is, repent and trust Christ for salvation. If the members are unbelievers, the leader will want to choose a portion of Scripture for the study that explains the Gospel clearly. The Gospel of John, and especially chapter 3, is a very good example. If the members are believers, the topic can be anything that is of interest to them.

An inductive Bible study group is a small group of people who come together for the purpose of studying the Bible.

There are a number of differences between an inductive Bible study group and a sermon. Three of the most important of these differences are listed below.

A. The Authority is the Scriptures

In a sermon, the source of authority is all too often perceived as residing in the teacher. As a result, if the speaker is very capable, people listen to what *he* says, and may or may not realize that

message comes from God. In the opposite case, the message of the Word can be clouded or confused by a poor speaker. In both situations, a person stands between the hearers and the Word of the Lord.

Inductive Bible study, by contrast, allows each member of the group to focus on the Scriptures. The living and active Word of God is capable of touching the innermost being of a person, bringing conviction or comfort. Nothing stands between the Word and the hearer. No human interferes. The Holy Spirit applies the message directly to the heart of the reader.

Obviously, there is a time and a place for teaching. Sometimes it is helpful to listen to a teacher when people are not willing to read the Word for themselves, or when the teacher has particularly good insight in to a particular passage or subject. However, teaching should be balanced wherever and whenever possible by personal study of the Scriptures. Teaching should *add to* what we are learning on our own—it should never *replace it*.

Teaching should always be balanced by personal study of the Scriptures.

B. The Goal is Discovery

Educational theory has strongly and repeatedly proved that we learn and remember something best when we discover it for ourselves. Having someone tell us what fishing is like is far inferior to actually going fishing and experiencing it for ourselves. The same holds true for the truth of the Word. When we discover the truth in the pages of the Bible, we are more likely to understand it, believe it, and act on it than when someone preaches it to us. In order to enable this discovery, an inductive Bible study group should be small enough to allow for interaction among the members. Less than 10 people would be ideal, although some group leaders can stimulate interaction with even larger groups.

C. The Leader is a Facilitator

Since the best method of learning spiritual truth is to discover it ourselves, the leader of an inductive Bible study must help the members *discover* truth in the passage—not *tell* them. This is accomplished through the skillful use of questions. Questions are a way of directing the attention of the members to important facts in the passage, without actually telling them. It guides them, but allows them to discover. That is the goal.

The best method of learning spiritual truth is to discover it ourselves.

It should be obvious, therefore, that the questions you choose to ask the group are very important. There will not be time during a group study to ask all the questions the group can think of. Rather, the responsibility of the group leader is to study the passage ahead of time, and note which questions were most helpful for him or her. This includes all areas—observation, interpretation, and application. The number of questions needed depends on the length of time of the study session, but you will not need a lot since you will want to allow enough time to discuss the answers. Also, you should definitely allow the groups members to ask and answer their own questions—especially as they gain experience in the process.

II. PREPARATION FOR THE STUDY

Before the study, the group leader should plan the study carefully.

A. Study the Passage Yourself

It is important that the leader discover the central truth(s) and main application(s) of the passage. The leader should observe, interpret, and apply the passage on his own according to the inductive Bible study guidelines taught in Manual One.

B. Write Down the Purpose of the Study

The leader should decide the general direction for the small group Bible study to take. This direction should not be too specific. Remember that the Holy Spirit may teach the group in ways that you did not anticipate.

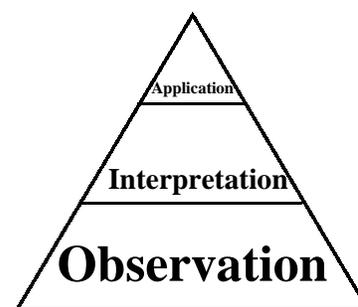
C. Prepare Questions on the Passage for the Group Which Cover All Three Parts of the Study

The leader should prepare to lead the group to **apply** sound **interpretation** based on careful **observation** by guiding the group through the same process of discovery that he has already taken. Thought-provoking questions should build on one another so that the discussion concentrates on the main purpose and application of the passage. The questions should not require simple "yes or no" answers. Rather, they should guide the group to search the verse for the facts, meaning, and application. If it takes a few minutes and several attempts to adequately answer a question, that is fine. The questions should help the members discover—not insult their intelligence.

The previous manual showed you how to prepare these three kinds of questions, and asked you to prepare a sample study. In all future studies that you lead, you should work through the same process. As you prepare, you will think of far too many questions to use in a group. After you have completed the study of the passage for yourself, you will need to sort through your questions to identify the most helpful or informative ones, and use only those in leading others in a study of the text.

Make sure to include several questions for each of the steps—observation, interpretation, and application. Remember the example of building a pyramid with a strong base. It is preferable to have more observation questions than interpretation questions, and even fewer application ones. This does not mean that application is less important—it is the *most* important thing. However, it will require a number of questions to lead the members of the study group to the point of discovering the one application that is most needed in their lives. Guiding people to discovery through skillful questioning is difficult, but rewarding.

Figure 9.1



D. Review the Questions

When the questions have been formulated, the leader should ask:

- Are my questions clear?
- Is each brief enough to be readily grasped?
- Do the questions make the group search the passage?
- Do the observation questions provide a solid basis on which to ask interpretive and application questions?
- Do the questions move the group through the whole passage?
- Do the application questions lead the group to specific actions?

E. Prepare an Introductory Question to Get the Members Excited about the Bible Study

The introductory question can focus on how this passage speaks to a particular situation with which the members identify. For example, 1 Peter was written to churches facing persecution. Studying of this book, you might ask: how do you act when you are persecuted for being a Christian? How did the people Peter was writing to react to persecution?

III. LEADING THE STUDY

A. The Study Should Be Started and Closed with Prayer

Studying the Bible is not just a mechanical process. It requires the help of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the truth that God wants to communicate to us. We should pray for enlightenment before we study, and then ask the Lord to help us apply what we learned after the study.

B. The Leader Should Be Prepared to Learn from the Group

Remember that the same Holy Spirit who speaks to the leader speaks to others. Others will have insights that the leader missed. If the leader is not prepared to learn, then he will appear to be an 'expert.' The presence of an 'expert' can kill honest discussion. In many cases, people will not want to share their opinions in the presence of an expert who may correct them.

The presence of an 'expert' can kill honest discussion.

C. The Leader Should Not Answer His Own Questions or Questions That Might Arise from Within the Group

The leader should avoid answering his own questions. It will limit group thinking. If the leader does answer his own questions, the questions begin to sound like test questions with correct answers. Many people will be reluctant to answer questions that they could get "wrong." When there is a lot of hesitation after a certain question, the leader should be alert to rephrase the question in case the group has difficulty understanding. Likewise, questions that arise from within the group should be reflected back to the group for their consideration. For example, "Sasha has a question about _____. What do you think about it?" Or, you can direct Sasha's questions to a particular person in the group: "Tanya, how would you answer Sasha's question?"

D. Do Not Be Afraid of Silence

The leader should allow sufficient time to answer the question. There may be a few moments of silence—which is perfectly all right. People need time to think. Silence is a group pressure that works on the behalf of the leader.

E. The Leader Should Not Always Be Satisfied With the First Answer Given

If the leader constantly accepts an answer and moves on to the next question, then the group can fall into a question/answer, question/answer pattern. It would be better for the group to have a discussion, not a quiz. By soliciting several responses to the question, a natural discussion is more likely. Also, the first answer given is often not the most complete or insightful. Sometimes there can be more than one answer. By taking time to discuss other answers, a more comprehensive understanding of the passage is gained.

F. Questions Not Answered By the Group May Be Left Unanswered

The leader should refrain from answering questions that the group has not been able to process. To do so would be to stifle individual and group thinking by providing the answer. Also, if we trust the Holy Spirit to be the real teacher, then we have to trust that an unanswered question is something that the group is not ready to handle at that moment. The unanswered question may hold their curiosity and bring them back the next week.

G. Incorrect or Partial Answers Should Be Corrected By the Scriptures and/or the Group, Not the Leader

There will be wrong answers and incorrect statements. The natural response is for the leader to correct and rebuke. But doing so can discourage group members from opening up. This will in turn kill open and honest discussion. Instead of correcting a wrong or partial answer, the leader can do one of the following:

- Ask the person answering to re-read the text, or refer them to another text.

- Ask the group whether it is in agreement with the answer or not.
- Ask group members for other related Scripture verses to support or correct the answer.

H. Keep the Discussion on the Main Theme of the Passage

Satan is a master at getting people to divert their attention from the main truth. The discussion of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (John 4) is a good example of an attempt to divert Christ from addressing the woman's real needs. It is likely that good questions, even important ones, will arise out of the discussion. If they are not related to the main theme, then the leader should say something like the following: "Sasha, that is a very interesting question. But since it is not really related to our theme tonight, we will save it until after the study to answer." Or, "Sasha, your question is very important. It deserves a whole study itself. We will plan a study later on. Tonight we want to focus on our theme of this passage."

I. Do Not Forget to Ask the Application Questions

The goal of the study is not just to gain knowledge about God's word, but to discover how to practically obey God's word. The leader should not be afraid to use rather direct questions that prompt people to action. Group members will not want to be like the man in James 1:22-24 who did not act on what he learned. The leader should help everyone be as specific as possible in application so he can look back after a week and see the progress he has made in the application of Scripture to his life.

J. Control the Participation of Those Who Talk Too Much or Too Little

Most small groups will have a couple persons anxious to answer every question, the majority who will answer occasionally, and a couple persons who have to be really encouraged to participate. For those who always answer, the leader needs to say something like this: "Sasha, we can always count on you for an answer. Let us hear what Tanya thinks about _____." For those who rarely participate, the leader can ask them to read the text or answer an observation question with an easy to see answer in the text. As confidence builds, they can be encouraged to participate in easy interpretation and application questions.

K. At the End of the Study, the Leader Can Summarize What the Group Has Learned and Expressed

The leader should avoid adding new information the group did not consider. Adding new information not only sets up the leader as the "expert," it also shows a lack of trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit to reveal what He wanted the group to discover. It is better to affirm what the group has learned and move on.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION

- Why is discovery necessary for Christian growth? Why is preaching alone not enough?
- What would constitute a good discussion question?

ACTION PLAN

- In the last manual, you were instructed to prepare a brief inductive Bible study on one of the following passages:

Acts 13:4-12 (Paphos)	Acts 17:10-15 (Berea)
Acts 13:13-52 (Antioch)	Acts 17:16-34 (Athens)
Acts 14:1-7 (Iconium)	Acts 17:16-34 (Athens)
Acts 14:8-20 (Lystra and Derbe)	Acts 18:1-17 (Corinth)
Acts 16:11-40 (Philippi)	