

# Using the Inductive Bible Study Method for Personal and Group Study

*“Then something happened, something that has changed and transformed my life to the present day. For the first time I discovered the Bible.”*

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer – German theologian and martyr

## Section I: Why study God’s Word?

1. To receive direction.

*“Your Word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.”* –Psalm 119:105

2. For personal encouragement.

*“...Your promises to me are my hope. They give me strength in all my troubles; how they refresh and revive me!”* –Psalm 119:49-50

3. To prevent spiritual drift.

*“We must pay more careful attention to what we’ve heard, so that we do not drift away.”* –Hebrews 2:1

4. For life-transformation.

*“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”* –Proverbs 23:7

## Section II: The inductive Bible study method

The IBSM uses the Bible as the primary source of information.

The IBSM requires slowing down long enough to see what the Bible is saying. The whole process can be accomplished by asking three types of questions.

- |                          |                               |       |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. <u>Observation</u>    | = What does the passage say?  | Read  |
| 2. <u>Interpretation</u> | = What does the passage mean? | Think |
| 3. <u>Application</u>    | = What am I to do?            | Live  |

## **Steps for Observation – What does the passage say?**

Step 1. Begin with prayer.

Step 2. Identify the context.

- Context = that which goes with the text.
- Context = surrounding verses / chapter / book
- Identifying context is foundational for accurate interpretation and correct application.

Step 3. Look for the obvious.

- Look for obvious facts, details, or ideas.
- Illustration: Jigsaw Puzzle – which pieces do you look for first?
- Become a Bible detective = Use the “5 W’s and H” questions.

### Observation questions

- Who is the audience, author, or main characters?
- What are the main events? What is the topic or instruction?
- When was it written? When did this take place or when will it occur?
- Where did this event take place?
- Why was this written? Why did he say that, go there, or respond that way?
- How is this to be done or how did that happen?

Let’s practice: Read Jonah 2:1-10 then answer the questions

- Who: Jonah / God / great fish
- What: Jonah is in the belly of a great fish / Jonah is in despair and prays that God will save him / God hears Jonah / the fish vomits Jonah onto dry land
- When: After God told Jonah to go preach in Ninevah / Jonah ran away (chapt. 1)
- Where: From inside the fish / Nineveh
- Why: Jonah is in despair / Jonah disobeyed God / ran away / sailors threw him into the sea
- How: Jonah is not doing well / Jonah is begging

## **Rules of Interpretation – What does the passage mean?**

In every passage of Scripture there is a lesson to be learned or timeless truth to be understood. Interpretation asks the question, “What lesson is God trying to teach through his Word.”

Rule 1. Begin with prayer.

Rule 2. Remember the context rules.

- Every verse must be considered in light of...
  - ...the surrounding verses and chapters
  - ...the book in which it is found
  - ...the entire Word of God

Rule 3. Identify key words (words used multiple times), topic, or theme.

Rule 4. Seek the full teaching of God’s Word for every topic.

- For example, John 15:7 says, “...ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” Does that mean that we can ask anything from God and He will deliver? No! The Bible has much more to teach about prayer than one verse.

Rule 5. Interpret Scripture with Scripture.

- The clear interprets the unclear.
- That which is said multiple times interprets that which is said only once.
- The New interprets the Old.

Rule 6. Follow the literal sense.

- Go with the obvious meaning rather than a “hidden” message.

Rule 7. Look for the author’s intended meaning.

Rule 8. Check your conclusions using reliable study aids.

- Concordance – cross-references / parallel passages
- Bible Dictionary – word definitions and meanings
- Commentaries – input from professional students of God’s Word
- Bible foot-notes – include all of the above

### Interpretation questions

- What is the full context (paragraph, chapter, and book)?
- What are the key words, phrases, or themes?
- What was the author's purpose and intent?
- What do other verses say on this topic (cross-references / parallel passages)?
- What is the timeless truth?

### Let's practice: Jonah 2:1-10

- What are the key words or themes?
  - prayed / called / help
  - grave / deep / banished / waves / waters / pit / salvation
- What is / are the timeless truths to be learned?
  - God answers prayer / God is gracious / Salvation comes from God
  - Disobedience leads to consequences / We can get back on the right track

### **Tips for Application** – What am I to do?

Tip 1. Discover what God's Word says.

Tip 2. Accept God's truth.

- The Bible is full of God's teachings (doctrines). Once we understand God's Word it is our responsibility to accept the truth and work it into daily living.

Tip 3. Be specific.

- Application must be personal and measurable to each individual's life.

Tip 4. Practice what you know.

- Spiritual maturity is not measured by how much of God's truth we know, but by how of God's truth we live.

### Application questions

- How does the meaning of the passage apply to me?
- What truth(s) am I to embrace, believe, or order my life by?
- What changes should I make in my belief, in my life?

### Let's practice: Jonah 2:1-10

- How can I practice what I've learned in my daily life?
  - Pray for help with... insert specific problem ...from God.
  - Repent from... insert specific sin issue ...and follow God's plan.

## **Section III: Leading an inductive Bible study as a Group**

Using this method of study not only will bring your personal daily Bible reading to life, but your group will be learning to read their Bibles on their own.

Below are some tips to follow when using the IBSM as a group.

1. Choose a book from the Bible to study
2. Try reading one chapter each week (longer chapters can be divided).
3. Start by asking the group to find as much historical information about the book as they can and bring it to the first session.
4. Give everyone in the group blank study worksheets prior to starting chapter 1.
5. As a group, walk through each chapter paragraph by paragraph

Before the meeting

- a. Complete the worksheets before arriving. Any questions you have about the text will probably come up during the meeting from others.
- b. Divide the chapter into segments (verses or paragraphs that tie together).
- c. Bring extra blank worksheets, extra Bibles, and extra pens to group.

During the meeting

- d. Start by summarizing what you have already covered (go over author, audience, big themes).
- e. Ask one person to read through the entire chapter while the group follows (make sure you have extra Bibles if needed).
- f. Next, reread the chapter encouraging different people to read one “segment” at a time (verses or paragraphs that tie together). This time through you will stop and discuss what you have read.
- g. Stop and ask the group primarily observation questions (the “5 W’s and H”). You can use the headings on the worksheets as questions; “Who are the key people? What are the key events? Were there any problems? What were the people instructed to do?”
- h. Give group members time to fill-in the worksheets as you go.
- i. Look up cross-references / parallel passages as needed.
- j. Point out key words and themes along the way.
- k. Continue to summarize the big themes as you walk through the chapter.
- l. Start and stop on time! This method takes a little longer. You will need to work hard at staying on course. Leave 15 minutes for the three application questions and at least 15 minutes for group prayer.
- m. Pass out more worksheets for the following week.

**EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE - EXAMPLE**

Below is an example of what your worksheet might look like. Walk through the chapter / passage on your own or with a group listing all key information. Spend the final 10-15 minutes answering the questions at the bottom of the page.

<b>Book: Luke</b>		<b>Chapter: 3</b>	
<b>Key People</b>	<b>Key Events / Words / Themes</b>	<b>Key Issues / Problems</b>	<b>Key Exhortation / Instructions</b>
vs. 1 Government officials, Tiberius Caesar, etc.			
vs. 2 John	The word of God came to John, he preached / baptized		
vs. 7 multitudes		Multitudes were depending on their heritage to get them to heaven	Don't rely on your heritage, prove your faith with good works.
vs. 12 tax-gatherers	They asked, how do we prove our Faith?		Collect no more than what you have been ordered.
vs. 14 soldiers	They asked, how do we prove our Faith?		Don't take money, don't accuse falsely, be content with salary.
vs. 19-20 Herod and Herodias	John is taken prisoner after offending Herodias	John is locked in prison	
vs. 21 Jesus	Jesus was baptized		God speaks from heaven saying, "Thou art My beloved Son."
vs. 23-38 genealogy	Jesus genealogy traced to Adam		

**What verse(s) / concept(s) / fact(s) / key idea(s) really stood out to me in today's reading?**

-That the salvation of the Israel nation was not tied to heritage (being born from the line of Abraham). Through Abraham the Israelites became God's chosen people. But John said, "Bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance."

**What do I hear God teaching me from today's reading?**

-Just because I've accepted Christ and am in church each week doesn't mean I am living out my faith. There is a connection between my faith and how I live. I must bear good fruit becoming more like Christ in heart and action.

**What am I going to do?**

-Show my faith through my actions; donate goodies and pack boxes being sent to soldiers in Iraq.

