



HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

I. THE INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

- A. **Overview** - The Inductive Bible Study method is a time tested method of systematically studying a passage. This method is built on three components: Observation, Interpretation, and Application. These three components can easily be remembered using the acronym OIL - Observation, Interpretation, and “Live It Out.”
- B. **Observation** - Carefully observe the passage you are reading. What do you “see” in the passage? You will want to write down what you notice. Read the passage several times looking for new observations. Ask questions of the text. There are different components that you may see:
1. Terms - What do the words used by the author mean in context?
 2. Structure - Look at the grammatical and literary structure.
 3. Literary form - Is the passage prophetic, poetry, narrative, etc.
 4. Atmosphere - What is the mood or environment of the passage? What was the author feeling? What is happening in the passage?
- C. **Interpretation** - Ask questions of the text and look for answers in the text itself. In this step you are focused on the correct meaning of the text. Correct observation (step 1) is critical to proper interpretation.
1. Make sure you stay within the major theme of the text and the book.
 2. Make sure you take into account culture and the time period the passage was written in.
 3. Check cross-references to see what they add to a passage.
 4. Refer to more than one translation.
 5. You may want to include sound, conservative commentaries at this point to aid your study of the text.
- D. **Application or “Live it Out”** - Consider the implications of the text.
1. How does it apply to you? How does it apply to others?
 2. What are the specific points of obedience or correction in the text?
 3. What doctrines, or specific points of belief, are in the text?



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II. OTHER HELPFUL TOOLS FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE

- A. **Use a Reading Plan** – Using a reading plan will help you consistently read through the Scripture and hold you accountable to daily time in the Scripture. There are many reading plans available, so you can choose one that meets your needs. The Robert Murray McCheyne’s Reading Plan is an example of a classic reading plan. Many reading plans are available online at Bible study sites such as youversion.com.
- B. **Use a Bible Handbook** – As you begin a new book of the Bible in your reading, consult a Bible Handbook such as Halley’s Bible Handbook or Unger’s Bible Dictionary. These are classic references that will give you information and context for the book that you are reading. This will help you understand the book as you begin reading it. For a more in-depth summary of each book, David Pawson’s *Unlocking the Bible* is an excellent resource.
- C. **Journal** – As you read, journal thoughts and ideas that come to your mind. When a verse stands out begin writing what the Holy Spirit is speaking to you. You will find that intentionally writing down these thoughts will help you remember them and give the Holy Spirit more time to develop more fully what He is saying to you.
- D. **Highlight** – As you read, highlight sections that stand out to you. Consider highlighting using a color scheme where certain colors represent specific types of verses such as commands to obey, promises, Biblical prayers, etc. By highlighting with different colors you will begin noticing specific aspects of the Scripture you are reading. In addition to highlighting, write small notes in the margin of the Bible when a verse touches you.
- E. **Outline Books of the Bible** – As you read develop your own personal outlines of the book that you are reading. Developing an outline will help you recognize the main emphasis of the book as well as how the different chapters of the book fit together.
- F. **Meditate on the Scripture as you Read** – As you read, meditate and pray-read portions of the Scripture that speak to your heart. You can learn more about this on the “How to Meditate on the Word” document available at <http://luke18project.com/resources>.