

HOW TO INDUCTIVELY STUDY THE BIBLE

As we grow in faith, it's important that we learn to dig into the Word of God for ourselves and not depend solely on the instruction of others. Consider the challenge from the writer of Hebrews:

“Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:13-14)

One of the best ways to get to the “solid food” of the Word is through inductive Bible study. The inductive method makes observations on a passage of Scripture and then draws conclusions based on those observations. Commonly, this method is defined by three parts: observation, interpretation, and application.

SEVEN STEPS OF INDUCTIVE STUDY:

1. Background

First, do a basic background study on the book: Who is the author? Why was it written? Learn the historical background, dates, key people, and so on. Some Bibles have summaries at the beginning of each book provide some of this information. A Bible dictionary or commentary can also be helpful.

2. Personal Paraphrase

Write out each verse or section of verses in your own words. This will help you understand each verse in wording that makes more sense to you.

Example using 1 Timothy 1:1:

Original Verse: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope...”

Personal Paraphrase: Paul, a proclaimer of Jesus, obeying the instructions of God who is the One who saves us, and of Jesus Christ who is our hope...

3. Questions and Answers

Write down questions you have about the passage and any terms that are unfamiliar or confusing to you. And then go find the answers and write those down.

Example using 1 Timothy 1:1:

Q: What does the word “apostle” mean? What does it mean to be one?

A: The Greek word Apostolos comes from the verb apostello, which means “to send forth.” So, an apostle is someone who is sent forth, in this case by Jesus to spread His message.

4. Cross References

Make a note of any similar or related passages that come to mind while exploring this passage. Consult a concordance, study guide, or footnotes to help collect related passages.

Example using 1 Timothy 1:1:

Apostle - 2 Corinthians 1:1

God my Savior - Luke 1:47, Titus 1:3

Christ our hope - Colossians 1:27

5. Insights

As you are studying, if an observation or insight occurs to you relating to any part of the passage or its background, be sure to write it down.

After completing your own analysis, consult a Bible commentary for additional insights. Seeking out other Jesus-followers' insights about the passage can provide a broader, more solid understanding of the passage than you might be able to come to on your own. But don't go to commentaries first, start by making your own observations.

Example using 1 Timothy 1:1:

Paul was commanded by God to be an apostle; it wasn't something he decided to do on his own.

6. Personal Application

Take all that you've learned up to this point and think through how you're going to personally apply this verse to your life.

Example using 1 Timothy 1:1:

Just like Paul, I need to recognize that I am tasked with being Jesus' ambassador, authorized and sent out with a divine message. I can only be effective in my mission if I am aware of my status as a divinely appointed witness.

7. Title and Summarize

After completing your analysis of the verse(s), assign it a title and write a few sentences of summary. This will help solidify the message in your mind.
