

C3 Equip - Inductive Bible Study

Begin with prayer. We need the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit to receive and understand God's Word. Seek the Lord for his help in doing so, and to bring the Word to life in your own heart

Observe (What does it say?)

Read the passage! Pay careful attention to all the details. Like a good detective, don't take anything for granted. As you read and reread, ask the following questions of the passage:

- **Who?** Who are the people or groups mentioned in the text?
- **What?** What are the actions or events taking place? What objects figure into the story?
- **Why?** Why is a figure or group acting in a certain way? Can you discern motives? (It's important to stick with what Scripture actually says rather than jump to conclusions.)
- **Where?** Are places mentioned? Is there a change of scene from one location to another?
- **When?** Are there any clues related to the year or time period? Can you determine the time of day or day of the week? Are there any seasonal festivals mentioned?
- **How?** Look for words that indicate how something is happening. Does the text indicate something miraculous took place? (Don't assume—stick with what can be read plainly.)

Read the passage several times. Record your observations.

- Take note of **important** words and words you don't understand. Don't forget the conjunctions and prepositions. These reveal connections.
- Make special note of **lists**: words or phrases that are **repeated** exactly or in different ways. These are huge indicators of importance.
- Mark terms of **conclusion or transition** that indicate important ideas

Interpret (What does it mean?)

Now that we've soaked up what the passage actually says, focus on what it *means*. Essentially, we're attempting to discover what the author was trying to communicate to his original audience.

Context

- Work from the inside out. How does the **word** fit within the **verse**; the verse within the **passage**; the passage within the **chapter**; the chapter within the **book**, the book within the **whole** counsel of God?
- **Cross reference** the text with other biblical texts (look in Bible margins!)
- What is the historical and cultural **background** of this passage?
- Who's the *human* **author** of this passage? What was the purpose? Occasion? Audience?
- What is the **genre** of literature? Is it poetry or narrative? Prophecy or epistle?

Reminders

- Always seek the full counsel of God's Word. Interpret obscure things in light of the clear teachings of scripture on the word/topic. Scripture will never contradict itself.
- Read scripture literally
 - Take it at its face value whenever possible
 - Consider it in light of its *literary genre* (ex: poetry will use metaphors and hyperbole)

- Recognize **progressive revelation**: God reveals more about His redemptive plan as scripture unfolds. The interpretive lens of Christ and the Apostles should be ours as well.
- Try to answer these questions on your own before consulting “the professionals,” and *then* fill in the gaps with a good study Bible or commentary.
- Read in several English translations. The commonalities and differences between translations will help you notice points of agreement and disagreement between Bible scholars as to the plain meaning of a verse.
- Be sure you’re not twisting Scripture to accommodate your own preconceptions.
- Look for echoes of the gospel in your passage. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all Scripture, and He leads the whole story to its culmination in the gospel of Christ
- Don’t twist Scripture to accommodate your own preconceptions.

To attempt to **summarize the meaning** and main thrust of the passage

- State the main point of the passage in one sentence
- “What question does this passage exist to answer?” Is it a *who, what, when, where, why, or how* question?
- Ex: Luke 19:1-9... *What* did Jesus come to do? The text tells us... “to seek and save the lost”
- Ex: Acts 1:8?

Apply (How do we live it out?)

Remember James 1:23-24. We must be *doers*; not just *hearers*. For our final step, we **must** see how to *obey* Christ in what he has shown us in His word.

Steps: *“Is there a...*

- Sin to forsake, repent of and confess?
- Promise of God to claim?
- Example or commandment to follow?
- Stumbling block to avoid?

Reminders

- Our goal must always be to apply the Word, *through our relationship with Jesus*
- Application must come from a place of heart change, or prayer for heart change, based on what you learned from God’s word
- Application happens soaked in the grace and freedom of the **GOSPEL**, remembering that whatever we need to *do*, Christ *has done* perfectly, on our behalf. Praise God!
- This means we are free to *try diligently*, and to *work hard* at applying God’s truth!
- Faithful application points to and results in God’s glory, not our own

Resource Suggestions

The Gospel Coalition + Bethlehem Seminary: *Mining God’s Word*

Precept Ministries: *Inductive Bible Study*

Desiring God: *Look at the Book*