

# INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

## INSTRUCTIONS

Inductive Bible study seeks to let the Bible speak for itself and encourage the student to ask questions that will lead him/her to the meaning of the text. The intention is to let the text be the source of the questions and the answers. Too often the student of the Bible brings answers to the text and reads meaning into the text. Inductive Bible study encourages an objective approach to the text by forcing the student to look to the text for the answers. There are three parts to inductive Bible study: Observation, Interpretation, and finally, Application.

### OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

**You cannot spend too much time in observation.** Discipline yourself to ask basic questions of observation before moving into interpretation.

The goal of observation is to discover what the passage in front of you says. Often, we move right past this stage because it seems elementary or because we assume we "observed" while we were reading the chapter. Yet, this is not always the case. Observation is the beginning point of discovery. Spend extended time observing and you will reap the benefits in your later study. Basically in "observation" we ask the questions: **Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?** Think of yourself as a detective and remember Joe Friday: "Just the facts, Ma'am, just the facts". Don't be afraid to search for the obvious.

I have read many commentators and frequently I asked, "how did he know that?" only to discover that he simply spent more time looking at the bare story. It wasn't knowledge of Greek, or history, or anything else, it was simple observation.

### INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE MEAN?

Interpretation is a vital step in Bible Study. This section attempts to answer the questions of meaning and definition. The goals of interpretation are to find meaning, significance, and explanations. Determining background and context, studying and defining words, looking up cross references, and identifying the characters will be helpful in interpretation.

### APPLICATION: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE MEAN TO ME/US?

Application is the most personal part of Bible study. For too many of us the Bible is a book with no meaning or impact personally. This is tragic. We are told to be "doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). In this section we ask the questions: What does this passage mean to me personally? What can I learn? What must I do? What must I stop doing? How does this change my life? How does this encourage me? How can I use this information to encourage or exhort others?

### ACTION PLAN

Finally, Bible study is greatly enhanced in community by sharing both discoveries and dedications. Sharing what we have learned both keeps us in check and encourages us to change and grow. Some days you might be the one who learns, other days the one who teaches. Some days you may be encouraged or the encourager. When you dare to share an application, ask others to help you frame an action plan or critique a plan you devised.