

Inductive Bible Study: Observation/Imagination/Interpretation/Application

1. **Prepare.** Before beginning your study of the Word, spend some time in prayer, asking God to teach you through His Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can make the Word come alive. See John 14:26, John 16:13.

“The spirit in which you come to the investigation of the Scriptures will determine the character of the assistant at your side. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. But if the Bible is opened with irreverence, with a feeling of self sufficiency, if the heart is filled with prejudice, Satan is beside you, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light.” (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 108)

“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.” (Testimonies vol. 5, pp. 704-705)

“The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension.” (Great Controversy pp. 600-601)

2. **Paraphrase.** read passage in several versions and take out a notebook and jot down initial thoughts. Cover only as much as you have time to digest thoroughly-even if it is only 6-8 verses. Read the passage through begin to grasp what the writer is saying. Then, write a brief paraphrase of the passage in your own words.

3. Imagination and Observation

Imagination: Picture the scene and write out what you see and feel.

Desire of Ages, p. 83

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the *imagination* grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 1

Let us in *imagination* go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons.

Observation: Write out any observations of the grammar, key words, phrases of any of the items below that apply.

Key words/phrases	Description
Cause and Effect	One event, concept, or action that causes another (key terms: therefore, so, then, as a result)
Climax	A progression of events or ideas that climb to a certain high point before descending.
Comparison	Two or more elements that are alike or similar (key terms: like, as, too, also)

Contrast	Two or more elements that are unlike or dissimilar (key terms: but yet)
Explanation or reason	The presentation of an idea or event followed by its interpretation
Interchange	When the action, conversation, or concept moves to another and then back again.
Introduction & summary	Opening or concluding remarks on a subject or situation
Pivot or hinge	A sudden change in the direction or flow of the context; a minor climax
Proportion	Emphasis indicated by the amount of space the writer devotes to a subject.
Purpose	A declaration of the author's intentions.
Question & answer	The use of questions or questions and answers
Repetition	Terms or phrases used two or more times
Specific to general, general to specific	Progression of thought from a single example to general principle, or vice versa

4. Interpretation – Write out the answer to the applicable questions below.

Who?	Who are the people in the text? What is said about the people? What does he say?
What	What are the events? What happens to the characters? What's wrong with this picture? Or What is the argument? What is the point?
Where?	Where are the people in this story
When? Where? Why? How?	
Macro questions:	How does the sanctuary model fit in this? What does this tell me about God's character?
Context question:	What does the immediate context suggest? What does the chapter context suggest? What does the book context suggest?
Cross references:	What are some other cross references that have a similar theme? What additional information do the cross reference suggest?
Ellen White	What does Ellen White say about this passage?
Commentaries	What do the commentaries say about this passage?

Write Theme:	What is the theme of the passage? (The Big Idea)
Write Main Principles	What are the main principles you learn from this text? (Timeless Truths)

5. Personal Application – What does it mean for my life?

S - Is there a Sin to confess?

P - Is there a Promise to claim?

A - Is there an Attitude to change?

C - Is there a Command to obey?

E - Is there an Example to follow?

P - Is there a Prayer to pray?

E - Is there an Error to avoid?

T - Is there a Truth to believe? Is there something I just need to believe God for?

S - Is there Something to thank God for?

6. For Sharing in Sermons or Devotionals: Write Sermon Idea

Write a simple sentence or brief paragraph of what the sermon is about.

What is the general concern and to whom am I preaching?

What is the specific need to which I'm preaching?

Is this a single message or a series?

The speaker must prepare himself for the task. He must not ramble all through the Bible but give a clear, connected discourse, showing that he understands the points he would make. (Evangelism, p. 181)

“Some minds are more like an old curiosity shop than anything else. Many odd bits and ends of truth have been picked up and stored away there; but they know not how to present them in a clear, connected manner. It is the relation that these ideas have to one another that gives them value. Every idea and statement should be as closely united as the links in a chain. When a minister throws out a mass of matter before the people for them to pick up and arrange in order, his labors are lost, for there are few who will do.” (Evangelism, 648, 649.)

John Peckham, Canonical Theology, p. 248-249

1. An Inductive Reading of the Entire Bible

A "deductive" Bible study begins from a point that the person is trying to make, and then uses a number of scripture verses and examples to support that conclusion.

An "inductive" Bible study, on the other hand begins with the raw text of scripture, and encourages participants to read the text and draw conclusions directly from the text itself says.

2. "Suspend presuppositions in those areas that might be reasonably expected to impinge upon the study in the attempt to let the text speak for itself rather than being forced into an alien mold."

3. "A commitment to self-examination, self-criticism, and willingness to follow the canonical data wherever it leads."

John Peckham

"Despite the intent to overcome them, however, preconceptions will remain...Consequently, the hermeneutical spiral is never complete..."