

The Bible

TIMELESS TRUTH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: WEEK 4

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Before getting into the details of individual verses, read the whole section (paragraph, chapter, or book) quickly through to get a sense of the big idea. What are the key themes of this section? What major words are repeated or emphasized? How would you summarize this section in a short title?

OBSERVATION: WHAT DO I SEE?

We can't hope to understand a passage or apply it to our lives until we carefully note what it says. So spend some time in each verse noting everything you see. Particularly look for:

1. **Key words** that are important theologically or thematically, including words that are repeated.
2. **Verbs** – these are crucial to understanding the authors main idea.
3. **Connecting words** such as “and, likewise, if, but, for, therefore, so that” – these are crucial to understanding the author’s flow of thought.
4. **The 5 W’s and an H** – note who is doing the action, what they’re doing, whom it is benefiting or harming, and when, why, and how they did it.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The goal of interpretation is to determine what the original author was saying to the original recipients of the book or letter. Start by peppering the passage with lots of What and Why questions such as:

What is the...

- ...meaning of a word?
- ...significance of a word or phrase?
- ...implication of a statement?
- ...relationship between words, phrases, or passages?

Why did the author...

- ...choose this word or phrase?
- ...not say ?
- ...connect these ideas?
- ...put this idea before that idea?
- ...include this idea at all?

Once you've asked your questions, find answers by:

1. **Using the context** | Follow the author’s flow of thought throughout the chapter and book.
2. **Defining key words** | Use an English dictionary or Bible dictionary.
3. **Studying cross-references** | Look up the references provided in your Bible’s margins or in a concordance.

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4. Wrestling with the text | Carefully think through the options and decide on the best interpretation; consult other people or commentaries to gain additional insights.

APPLICATION: HOW DOES IT WORK?

Now that you have an idea what the passage meant to the original audience, it's time to apply its truths to your own life. This requires three steps:

1. Determine one or more timeless principles from the passage. These are succinct statements of truth that still apply to you today. Choose one principle to apply this week.
2. Reflect on your own obedience to this principle. When do you do well? When do you struggle to live this out?
3. Create a concrete plan of action. Take one area of your life where you are struggling to live this principle out and commit to make changes towards greater obedience this week. Be specific – what exactly will you do differently this week than last? Who will you ask to hold you accountable?