

Inductive Bible Study



Compiled by Amy Stevens



Inductive Bible Study
©2000 Amy Stevens

2013 Revised Edition

All Rights Reserved.
Titus Project International
A ministry of Youth With A Mission
www.titusproject.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

intl@titusproject.com

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version, a trademark of Good News Publishers. The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version* (ESV) is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. All rights reserved.

Acknowledgement:

Much of the material in this booklet originates from the “Basics of Bible Study”, a handout used in Youth With A Mission’s School of Biblical Studies, founded by Dr. Ron and Judy Smith.

The material has been adapted to fit the needs of a broader church audience. I pray you will be greatly blessed as you dig deeper in your study of God’s Word and may His truth transform your life!

Amy Stevens
Sept 2000

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

No matter what you think about the Bible right now in this instance or what your past experience with Bible Study has been, stop for a minute and think about what the Bible actually is: *the Word of God*. Did that sink in? The Bible is the recorded word of the All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Transcendent Creator of the Universe – God! It is the primary means by which He speaks to us!

In Mt. 28:19-20, Jesus gives us the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all I have commanded you...” (emphases added).

If we are going to do what Jesus has commissioned us to do, if we are going to make disciples, if we are going to teach them what Christ commanded... then shouldn't we need to *know* and *understand* Jesus' teachings and commands for ourselves?

Why did God give us the Bible?

To teach us about Himself.

To teach us about ourselves and the world we live in.

To empower us to live godly lives.

To facilitate a relationship with God.

To bring glory to Himself.

To equip us for our God-given mission of fulfilling the Great Commission:

Evangelizing and then bringing others to maturity.

To nourish us in our daily walk with Him.

To give us guidance, wisdom, and spiritual insight.

To produce faith in us.

To help us stand strong when we face life's difficulties or temptations.

Read and Reflect

Psalms 119

John 8:31-32

Romans 10:17

2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17

Hebrews 4:12

1 Peter 2:2

2 Peter 1:3

Reasons we don't study the Bible

We rely on others to do the work for us.

We feel inadequate or unqualified to study and understand for ourselves.

Lack of time.

Laziness, selfishness, and/or apathy.

We feel it's boring.

We don't know how.

Curious Questions

1. How often do you currently read your Bible? For how long?
2. Have you read through the whole Bible? If not, which books have you read?
3. What are your favorite books to read?
4. What do you like most about the Bible?
5. What do you like least about the Bible?
6. List some words you would use to describe the Bible.
7. What is your current approach to Bible reading? (Do you follow a plan? Do you "flip and find"? Do you use the closed-eye "point and plop" method?)

Reflection Questions

1. Examine your current attitude toward the Bible. What motivates you to read and study? What keeps you from reading and studying?
2. Take a minute to think through why God gave us the Bible. How should these things affect our view of Bible study?
3. What is your current attitude towards the Bible? Are you set in your beliefs? Do you have any arrogance toward Bible study or others? Are you humble and teachable? Do you truly desire your life to be molded and changed by the Word?
4. How has studying the Bible thus far in your life changed you? Are you more prideful, argumentative, judgmental? Are you more godly, more like Christ?
5. Meditate on 1 Peter 2:1-2. What would your life look like if you desired the Word of God as Peter challenges us to?
6. What are the biggest things that hinder you right now from reading and studying the Bible?
7. What approaches have you previously used in studying the Bible? What was the most effective? What has been ineffective?
8. What does it look like to take joy in reading the Bible? Have you ever experienced this? Regularly? If so, what is it like? If not, why do you think you don't enjoy reading the Bible?
9. Read through Psalm 119. What stands out to you? What encourages you? What challenges you?

APPROACHES TO BIBLE STUDY

Two Methods

Deductive	Inductive
One comes to the text with a thesis and then seeks out passages to support that thesis.	One sets aside preconceived ideas and thoroughly examines the text, laying a groundwork of observations.
One has already drawn conclusions (to a certain extent) before reading the passage in context.	Conclusions are drawn from what one has observed, giving respect to the literary and historical context.

Two Practices

Eisegesis	Exegesis
<i>Literally means "to lead into".</i>	<i>Literally means "to lead out of".</i>
One is dictating to the Scriptures, reading his own ideas into the text, and even twisting Scripture when necessary, to make it mean whatever he/she wants it to mean.	One is letting the Scriptures speak for themselves.
Subjective, mishandling of text.	Objective, careful handling of text.
Concerned only with making a point.	Concerned with discovering the true meaning of the text.
Seeks to force the Bible to agree with oneself.	Allows the text to speak for itself.
Process: 1. Imagination: What idea do I want to present? 2. Exploration: What Scripture seems to fit with my idea? 3. Application: What does my idea mean?	Process: 1. Observation: What does the text say? 2. Interpretation: What does it mean (with respect to the literary and historical context)? 3. Application: How does this passage affect my life today?

Two Heart Attitudes

Hard	Humble
One is unwilling to yield. Opinions and beliefs are set, one's mind is made up and nothing will change it.	One is teachable. Opinions and beliefs are molded as one continues to search out the Scriptures.

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Study Tools

- Bible or blank text
- Notebook to record your notes and insights
- Colored pens or pencils
- Bible Dictionary ¹
- Bible Maps ²

Overview:

3 Steps:	1.	2.	3.
	Observation:	Interpretation:	Application:
Discover:	What does it say?	What does it mean?	How does it apply to me?
Motto:	Look, Look, Look	Why, Why, Why?	Do, Do, Do
Activity:	Read, Reread	Research, Reflect	Reply, Respond
Prayer:	Lord, help me see it.	Lord, help me understand it.	Lord, help me live it.

Maintain a Prayerful Attitude

The Holy Spirit is our teacher; ask Him to reveal God's truth to you. Pray for a teachable heart throughout your studies, and let God's Word shape your beliefs and actions.

John 14:26

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

John 16:13-14

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Ps 119:34

Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

¹ Suggestions: *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* or *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*.

Online Study Helps: www.biblegateway.com/, www.studylight.org/, biblehub.com/

² www.biblemap.org, www.bible-history.com/maps/

OBSERVATION

What does the text say?

Observation is the first and foundational step of the Inductive Method.

Observation is **not** determining what the text means, it is simply just looking to see what it says.

Observation helps us to become familiar with the text before we move on to interpreting it.



The motto of Observation is:
*Look, Look, Look,
Until looking becomes seeing.*

Context & Big Picture

Before we start taking a detailed look at the text, it is important to first get the big picture and understand the context of the book or passage.

- If studying a book, read through the whole book in one sitting.
- If studying a particular passage, look at the surrounding context.
- Write out the main idea or big picture.
- Write a simple outline.



Observing & Examining the Text

Doing observation is like being a detective. During this step you will look for and gather all the clues you can find in the text. Your goal is to find the facts.

Just like a detective needs to be thorough in his examination before solving a case, we also need to be thorough in laying the groundwork of Observation before moving on to Interpretation. This step is foundational – without careful observation, we can be led into misinterpretation and misapplication.



Because observation is so foundational, it is vital that we develop good observation skills. The following list of questions will aid us in examining the text.

Read with purpose, and remember: The more we look, the more we will see!

Observation Questions

Color Code:	List of Observations to look for:		
	1.	Repeated Words, Phrases, Ideas, Themes	Look for words, phrases, ideas, and themes that are repeated throughout the book. These will show you the big picture and main emphasis of the book and also the things the author is concerned about.
	2.	Key Words	Key words are those words whose meanings are essential to understanding a passage. Key words are often also repeated.
	3.	Trinity	Look for references to God, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Can include pronouns. How are they described (observe God's Character). What and to whom is God speaking? How and when is God acting?
	4.	Who	Look for main characters, people groups. Observe pronouns. Also look for Character Descriptions.
	5.	When	Look for time elements or specific dates given. Observe verb tenses: past, present, future. <i>Indicator words: then, after, when, until, before, in that day, etc.</i>
	6.	Where	Look for geographical locations – cities, regions, countries. Find them on a map. Observe general locations such as heaven, earth, etc. Observe direction: north, east, south, west.
	7.	Contrasts	Look for things that are opposite. Also look for broader contrasts such as ideas, characters, actions, etc. <i>Indicator words: but, rather, instead, however, although, yet, etc.</i>
	8.	Comparisons	Look for things that are alike or similar, or being compared to one another (such as one is better than the other, or is being compared to how it should be). <i>Indicator words: like, as, likewise, so, so also, more, less, better, etc.</i>
	9.	Commands	Look for instructions, advice, or warnings. Who is giving the command? Who is it directed to?
	10.	Conditional Statements	Look for cause and effect, or action followed by result. Observe things that are conditional upon another happening. <i>Indicator words: If...then..., Unless..., etc.</i>
	11.	Connectives	Look for words that join statements or ideas together. Connectives show a reason, result, or conclusion. <i>Indicator words: for, therefore, because, so, so that, that, in order that, to, nevertheless, thus, etc.</i>

	12.	Promises or Predictions	Look for promises and predictions – ask to whom are they made? Are there any conditions?
	13.	Atmosphere, Mood, Emotion	Observe the author’s emotions or the general feeling of a book or passage. Includes things like: joy, sorrow, thanksgiving, despair, surprise, anger, love, etc.
	14.	Figures of Speech	Note when the author uses figurative language. Identify the type of figure being used. ³
	15.	Lists	Look for 3 or more items that fall together under a certain category. Is there a progression in the list?
	16.	Illustrations	Observe illustrations the author uses: quotes, metaphors/analogies, personal experience, everyday life situations, past history, etc.
	17.	Emphasis	Observe words that add extra emphasis to what the author is saying. Note emphatic statements or amount of space the author devotes to something. <i>Indicator words: truly, behold, indeed, I tell you, I Paul..., etc.</i>
	18.	Question / Answer	Who asking the question and to whom? Is there an answer? Is it rhetorical?
	19.	Progression	Look for progression of events, progression of thought, author’s logic, etc. What is the climax? Is there a pivot or turning point? Observe the following progressions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General → Specific • Question → Answer • Statement → Illustration • Teaching → Application • Problem → Solution • Need → Remedy Compare Beginning/End.
	20.	Structure	How is the book structured or organized? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical (places) • Chronological (time & events) • Biographical (people) • Topical (ideas, themes) • Logical (ideas, progression of thought) • Epistolary (letter) • Anthology (collection)

³ See “Figures of Speech”, p.20, for help in identifying and interpreting.

INTERPRETATION

What does it mean to the Original Audience?



Each book of the Bible had a specific author and audience.

Interpretation is **not** asking what it means to us today, but what it meant to the original hearers or readers.

It involves understanding the author's concerns as well as the situation of his audience. You will need to study and research the historical background. Travel back in time. The more you can find out about the situation, questions, struggles, and concerns of the original audience, the better you will be able to interpret.

Basic Required Research

A. Author & Audience

1. Who wrote the book?
2. To whom was the book written?
3. When was the book written?
4. Where was the book written from?

B. Historical Context

New Testament

1. What is the historical setting of the original audience?
 - a. Culture?
 - b. Religious situation / background?
 - c. Political, geographical context?
2. Who makes up the church? When was the church founded?
3. What is happening in the church at this time? What are the Strengths? Weaknesses? Problems? Struggles? Questions?

Old Testament Narrative

1. What is God doing in Israel's history at this time?
2. What is the religious, social, and political situation at this time?

C. Literary Style ⁴

What type(s) of literature is the book composed of?

D. Big Picture Survey

1. What is the main idea of the book?
2. What is the major reason the book was written?



⁴ See pg. 23, "Types of Literature" for help.

Interpretation builds upon the foundation of Observation.

Based on your observations, begin asking questions:

- Why is this said?
- What does this mean?
- What does this imply?
- Why is this significant?



These questions form the bridge between Observation and Interpretation.



Interpretation Questions

1.	Author’s Concerns, Convictions	<p>Bombard the text with WHY questions! Why questions probe the text and dig for meaning more than any other question.</p> <p>Start with an observation you have made, then ask an interpretation question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated Word, Phrase, Idea ⇒ <i>Why repeated?</i> • Key Words ⇒ <i>Why key? What mean?</i> • Who ⇒ <i>Why mentioned?</i> ⇒ <i>How significant?</i> • Contrasts, Comparisons ⇒ <i>Implication? Significance?</i> • Commands ⇒ <i>Why given? Implication?</i>
2.	Original Audience’s Concerns, Questions, Struggles, Problems, Strengths, Weaknesses	
3.	Ask: WHY...?	
4.	Ask: What does this mean?	
5.	Ask: What does this imply?	
6.	Ask: What is the significance?	

Note: When researching historical background and interpreting the text, always start with internal evidence – first find whatever you can straight from the passage or book you are studying. Next, look to the rest of the Bible. Give Scripture references when possible. You may then use external sources – reference books, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, Bible atlases, etc. to gather extra evidence and insight. When consulting commentaries, dialogue with them. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Give credit to all sources used.

APPLICATION

How do the timeless truths apply today?

Application is the “so what” of Bible study. After observing and interpreting, we should ask ourselves, “So what?” What am I going to believe as a result of what I have learned? How will I live out and practice Biblical truth in day-to-day life?

Transformed by Truth

Application is the goal of Bible study. As God teaches us His Word, we want Him to work in our hearts and minds. The study of Scripture should result in changed lives.

The Scriptures were not given for our information but for our transformation.
D.L Moody

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.



James 1:22-25

²² *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*



The ultimate goal of Bible study is not for us to do something to the Bible, but for the Bible to do something to us. God’s Word should change us, mature us, equip us, and lead us to live godly lives that make the truth of God attractive to the world around us.

God’s Word is powerful – let it be living and active in our lives!



By this point you have read and re-read the passage or book you have been studying. You have researched and spent time reflecting on the meaning. It is now time to respond.

The following questions will help you apply God’s truth to your life. Please spend quality time praying and asking God how He would have you respond.

Application Questions

<i>Core Questions:</i>	
1. What are the basic timeless truths in this book or passage? 2. How do these truths apply to my life? Be specific. 3. What specific steps or actions do I need to take in order to carry this application out?	
<i>Related to:</i>	<i>Prayerfully consider:</i>
God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this passage show about God’s character and purposes? • What am I to believe? Do I need to change anything I previously believed? How does my view of God need to change in light of what I have learned? • What have I learned about my relationship with God? How would my relationship with God be different if I fully believed what this passage says about Him?
Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have I learned about myself? What impact does this have on my life? • Which characters do I most identify with? Why? What can I learn from that character’s life? Does he/she provide an example to follow or avoid? What were his/her responses to God? • How does this passage challenge me to repent, trust, or act? • Are there any events in the passage that coincide with my current situation or walk with God? What can I learn from the event(s)?
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have I learned about others? My relationship to them? Is there anything I need to change in how I relate to others? • Are there any relational problems addressed in this passage? How do I identify, or in which of my relationships is that problem present? • How does this passage call me to treat people differently?
Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this passage reveal about God’s purposes in the world? • How is God inviting me to participate with Him in what He is doing?

BRIDGING THE APPLICATION BARRIERS

In seeking to practically apply God's Word to our lives, how exactly do we go about it? How do we make the jump from the Original Audience (2000+ years ago) to the 21st century? Below are some helpful application principles that will aid us in applying Biblical truths and practices to our lives today.

1. Understand the Original Situation

God's Word is Timely

God spoke to specific situations, problems, and questions. Throughout Scripture, God becomes personally involved in people's lives, speaking directly to their needs in ways that are appropriate to their situations. This is good because we are given examples which are concrete rather than abstract. However, the concrete nature of Scripture also creates problems. Our situations, problems, and questions are not always directly related to those of the Bible. Therefore, God's Word to the Original Audience does not always seem immediately relevant to us.

Timely, yet Timeless

Just as God spoke to the Original Audience, so He still speaks to us throughout the pages of Scripture. Our job is to find out how to apply those passages that seem outdated and irrelevant, those which are so timely they seem to have lost their timeless dimension, and discover a universal dimension in the problems they faced and the solution God gave them.

Crossing the Barriers

Time Barrier: We often lack important information regarding the historical context into which the Bible was written. Unless we have some understanding of the historical background, we may read what the author is saying, but have no idea as to why the author said it and what relevance it has for us today.

Cultural Barrier: Bible events took place in many different cultures. Many customs and beliefs we read about may seem strange to us since they are so far removed from the 21st Century. It is important to understand the culture that passages of Scripture were written into in order to evaluate its meaning for us today.

Geographical Barrier: As we learn about biblical geography, many Bible passages take on new meaning. A good Bible atlas or Bible dictionary can also supply valuable information about unfamiliar places.

2. Determine the Timeless Truths

Are the issues being addressed timely or timeless? Are they local or universal?

- A **“timely instruction”** is an expression, practice, or command that can be understood only within a certain cultural, historical, or geographical context.



These apply **locally** to a particular culture, at a particular time in history, in a particular location.

- A **“timeless truth”** is one of God’s principles that stands true regardless of differing times and cultures.



These apply **universally** to all cultures, at all times, in every location.

Practice Exercise

Following is a list of commands and practices that appear in the Bible. Your task is to determine which ones are universal, applying at all times in all places, and which are merely local, needed at one particular time in one particular to address a given situation. Think about each one, then mark a “U” beside those that are universal, and a “P” beside those that are particular. (Some may not be so easy.)

Old Testament

1. Remember the Sabbath (Ex 20:8)
2. No person shall eat blood (Lv 17:12)
3. You shall not wear a garment made of two kinds of fabric (Lv 19:19)
4. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (Dt 19:21)
5. You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Lv 19:18)

What principles did you use to determine whether these are local or universal?

New Testament

1. Greet one another with a holy kiss (Ro 16:16)
2. Eat what is set before you asking no questions (1 Co 10:27)
3. Observe the Lord’s Supper (1Co 11:24)
4. Be circumcised (Ac 15:50)
5. Anoint the sick with oil (Ja 5:14-15)
6. Remember the poor (Ga 2:10)
7. Sell lands and houses when one becomes a Christian (Ac 4:32-37)
8. Permit no woman to teach men (1 Ti 2:12)
9. Wash each other’s feet (Jn 13:14)
10. Beware of dogs (Php 3:2)

What principles did you use to determine whether these are local or universal?

Old Testament Commands

Did you know that the OT contains over 600 commands? Correctly or incorrectly, many often assume that some OT commandments no longer apply to us, while on the other hand, we feel certain that others are valid for today.

Although we are no longer under the Old Covenant, we need to remember that the laws of the Old Covenant reflect God's character. Therefore, the principles behind these laws are still valid, even though some specific expressions of the laws may be obsolete.

Guidelines for Applying OT commands:

1. Is the command restated in the NT?
2. Is the command revoked in the NT?
3. What is the principle behind the OT command?

New Testament Commands

Much of the NT's teaching can be applied directly to us today, but sometimes a biblical teaching is directed so specifically to the culture of the ancient world, that another culture cannot understand it. As previously stated, we need to evaluate whether specific statements are cultural and temporary, or timeless; spanning across all ages. We should understand that every cultural expression in the Bible is the result of some timeless principle. And even though a cultural expression cannot be carried over directly to another culture, the timeless truth behind it can. Just because it is cultural does not mean it can be ignored.

Applying Biblical Examples

There are many excellent examples in the Bible. The difficulty however, is knowing which examples we are to follow and which we should avoid. Information the author gives us about the example will determine our application. (Be careful not to make examples out of those the author did not intend to function as examples. Often, especially in the historical narratives, the author is just telling the story like it is, stating history - not intending that we should follow everything these people did.)

Explicit Examples: The author tells clearly whether a person or group is good or bad.

Implicit Examples: There are no clear statements about whether the actions of the example are right or wrong, but the author gives implied approval or disapproval of what is done.

Other types of examples: When Biblical examples contain neither an explicit or implicit evaluation of a person's actions, we need to rely on truths or principles taught elsewhere in Scripture. The Biblical authors expect us to have at least a basic knowledge of God's Word. In the OT, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with the Law. In the NT, we are expected to know something about Christian theology and ethics. The authors expect us to know enough to draw our own conclusions.

Applying Biblical Promises

Because we are no longer under the Old Covenant, we cannot assume that promises of that covenant directly apply to us. In fact, most of them do not. Such promises are usually associated with the blessings God promised the people of Israel if they obeyed His Law. Before applying a Biblical promise, we must identify the original person or group to whom the promise was given and understand the historical context or conditions, so that we do not misapply what we read.

Categories of promises directly intended for us:

1. Promises that are universal in scope
2. Promises given to the church
3. Promises given to other groups to which we belong

Conditional or Unconditional

Once we conclude that a promise applies to us, we must also ask whether its fulfillment is dependent in any way on our actions or attitudes.

Promises vs. Principles

A principle is not the same as a promise. A principle is usually based on who God is - and God never changes. But a promise is based on what God has said He would or would not do. Both the conditions and the recipients of His promise have sometimes changed greatly from the Old to the New Covenant.

Promises vs. Proverbs

In spite of appearance, most proverbs are not promises. They are wise sayings or principles that are generally true of life. Those who follow the advice given in Proverbs will have wisdom for dealing with the practical areas of life.

3. Apply These Truths to Your Life. Be Specific.

When passages of Scripture don't seem immediately relevant, ask yourself what is the universal principle behind the specific expression. Take these timeless truths, contextualize them, make them relevant for today, and apply them to your life! 😊

HOW TO STUDY THROUGH A BOOK



Pray. The Holy Spirit is your teacher.

Think for yourself. Don't rely on other people.

Let the text speak for itself.

Conclusions come from what you have observed.

Read through the book.

Read through the entire book aloud, in one sitting.

Context & Big Picture.

Write down the main idea or big picture of the book. Write out the main idea of each paragraph in a concise phrase. Write an outline for the book. Consider the type of literature.

Observe the text.

Go through the Observation Questions. Observe all those that are relevant to the text. *Remember: It is essential to lay a thorough foundation in Observation if you are going to have good Interpretation and Application.*

Historical Background.

Study the historical context. Travel back in time. Find out as much as you can about the Original Audience. The more you can find out about the situation of the Original Audience, the better able you will be to interpret.

Interpret the text.

Bombard the text with WHY questions!

Start with an Observation you have made, and ask an Interpretation Question:

- Repeated Word, Phrase, Idea ⇒ *Why repeated?*
- Key Words ⇒ *Why key? What do they mean?*
- Who ⇒ *Why is this person or group mentioned?*
- Contrasts, Comparisons ⇒ *What is the significance? Why is the contrast or comparison made?*
- Commands ⇒ *Why given? What do they imply?*

Apply what you have learned.

Spend time reflecting and meditating on what you have learned. Ask God to speak into your life. Ask God to change you through His Word. Go through the Application Questions and apply the truths you have learned personally in your life.

25-DAY STUDY GUIDE ⁵

This guide is designed to help you study through an entire book of the Bible in one month. The goal is to spend 30 minutes each day on this study, 6 days a week. (If you spend more or less time, it will take shorter or longer to complete. Regardless of how much time you choose, it is good to have Bible study every day.) Some days will be easy, others more difficult, but stick with it and you will be richly blessed!

Materials Needed:

- Bible (preferably one that you can mark up)
- Notebook or folder to record and collect your findings
- Colored pens, pencils (optional)

Note: As you study, refer back to the Obs/Int/App questions found on pp.9-14 for further help.

Before you begin:

Choose a book of the Bible that you want to study for one month. For beginners, it is best to choose a book that you can read through in 20 minutes or less (1-6 chapters). Pray, and ask God to bless your time of study.

Day 1

- Write down what you already know about the book you are going to study.
- Read through the entire book aloud, in one sitting. This helps you see the big picture.

Day 2

- Read through the whole book again and write down the **MAIN IDEA** or **BIG PICTURE** of the book.

Day 3

- Read through the book again, and observe **REPEATED** words, phrases, ideas, or themes. Write these down in your notebook.

Day 4

- Observe **WHO**. Write down all the people or groups mentioned. Who are these people? Why are they important? Write down what the text says about them. Are they mentioned anywhere else in Scripture? Look up the main characters in a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia. Write down any additional important information.
- Think about these people. Can you relate to any of them? Write down anything God shows you.

⁵ Adapted from Ron Smith, "Thirty Minutes of Bible Study Each Day".

Day 5

- Observe **WHERE**. Write down the places mentioned. Find them on a map. Note distance between locations. Look up main cities or countries mentioned in a Bible Dictionary. Write down what additional insights these places give to your study of the book.

Day 6

- Observe **WHAT**. What events are taking place? Note if there is one primary event or a series or several woven together. If so, ask how these events are related to each other. What topics are being discussed? Write down your answers and insights.
- Observe **WHEN**. When are these events taking place? What happened in the past? What is going on currently? What are future events?

Day 7

- Observe **CONTRASTS** and **COMPARISONS**. Begin thinking about their significance. Write down your thoughts.

Day 8

- Observe **COMMANDS** and **CONDITIONS**. Begin thinking about their significance. Write down your thoughts.

Day 9

- Choose 2-3 **other observation questions** you have not noted or examined in the text yet. Look for these things and write down your findings and insights.

Day 10

- If the book is 6 chapters or less, **write a short summary** of each paragraph. Try your best to summarize in 4-8 words, using words from the text. If the book is longer than 6 chapters, write a brief chapter summary.
- Review the book summary (big picture) you wrote on Day 2. Make any revisions you feel are necessary based upon further insights you've now gained.

Day 11

- Write down any words or phrases **you don't understand**. Use the following to help you discover the meaning:
 - Look up the word in a dictionary of your native language.
 - How is the word or phrase used in this book? How does the main idea of the book or context shed light on the meaning?
 - Read these verses in another translation.
 - Check the original Greek or Hebrew.
 - Consult a word-study reference guide.

Do you now understand this word and/or passage better?

Day 12

- Note **PROGRESSION** and **STRUCTURE**. Develop a simple outline for the book.

Day 13

- Consider the **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**. Begin working through the *Basic Required Research* questions (p.11).

Day 14

- Continue with **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**. Finish working through the *Basic Required Research* questions (see Day 13).

Day 15

- Consider the **TYPE OF LITERATURE**. First, determine whether the passage is prose or poetry. Is the language mainly literal or figurative or a mixture of both? Identify the literary style(s) (see pp.23-24), and write down things you need to keep in mind as you move into interpretation.

Day 16

- Begin working through the text, **interpreting** what you have observed. Work through the book systematically, starting at the beginning. Write down a few key observations you have noted, and then ask why, meaning, significance, and implication questions, based on your observations. (See p.12 for help)

Day 17

- Continue working through the text from above.

Day 18

- Continue working through the text from above.

Day 19

- Continue working through the text from above.

Day 20

- Continue working through the text from above.

Day 21

- Wrestle with any **difficult passages** you have come across. Read the passage several times. Read it in another translation. Meditate on the passage. Bombard the passage with WHY questions and try to answer them. Consider the context and meaning of surrounding verses. How does this passage fit into the overall message of the book? Do other parts of Scripture shed light on this passage? Write down your conclusion and ask yourself if this is a reasonable interpretation. Does it consider the historical background? Is it consistent with the rest of Scripture? Consult a commentary and dialogue with what you find.

Day 22

- See **Application**, p.14. Write out and answer the “Core Questions”.

Day 23

- See **Application**, p.14. Write out and answer the questions related to “God”.

Day 24

- See **Application**, p.14. Write out and answer the questions related to “Self”.

Day 25

- See **Application**, p.14. Write out and answer the questions related to “Others” and “Mission”.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

A figure of speech is a word, statement, or expression that is used in a figurative rather than literal sense so as to produce fresh, vivid, or poetic effects.

ALLEGORY: *An extended metaphor that has the form of a story.*

Gal 4.21-31 Hagar & Sarah...

Ezk 24.3-5 Jerusalem → pot

ANALOGY: *A rather full comparison showing several points of similarity between unlike things.*

Jn 15.1-9 Vine and branches

Eph 5.21-33 The body & the church

ANTHROPOMORPHISM: *The practice of describing God in human terms as if he has hands, feet, a face, etc.*

Ex 15.8 "...blast of thy nostrils"

Jn 10.29 "...no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand."

APOSTROPHE: *Addressing or speaking to things, abstract ideas or imaginary objects.*

1Ki 13.2 "O altar, altar..."

Jer 22.29 "O land, land, land..."

1Co 15.55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

EUPHEMISM: *The use of an indirect or vague expression for a more blunt or direct one. A cultured or less offensive way to state something. Euphemisms are used to indirectly discuss such topics as bodily functions, anatomy, reproduction, death, etc.*

Jn 11.11 "Lazarus has fallen asleep"

Jdg 3.24 "...he is covering his feet in the upper chamber"

Gen 4.1 "Adam lay with his wife Eve and she became pregnant..."

HYPERBOLE: *Exaggeration, not with the intent to deceive, but to emphasize and intensify an impression. An exaggeration to make or reinforce a point.*

Mt 5.29 "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away..."

Mt 23.24 "You blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel"

IDIOM: *An expression belonging to a particular language or people that cannot be understood by the individual meaning of the terms.*

Ac 26.14 "It hurts you to kick against the goads"

Ac 2.46 "breaking bread"

1Ki 18.46 "gird up your loins"

IRONY & SARCASM: *Irony: Stating one thing, but implying something different or meaning the exact opposite. When used to taunt and ridicule, irony is called **Sarcasm**.*

Jdg 10.14 "Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your distress."

1Co 4.8 "Already you are filled! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!..."

LITOTES: *The use of understatement. A phrase that understates or lessens one thing in order to magnify another. The opposite of hyperbole, often used as irony.*

Ac 21.39 "Paul answered, 'I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city...'"

Ac 14.28 "remained no little time with the disciples"

METAPHOR: *An implied comparison between two objects without the use of like, as or so. Asserts that one thing is another.*

Mt 5.13 "You are the salt of the earth"

Jn 10.9 "I am the door"

METONYMY: *The substitution of one term for another - usually a closely associated term.*

Lk 16.29 "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them."

Ro 3.30 "Circumcision" for "Jews"

PERSONIFICATION: *The attribution of life or human qualities to inanimate objects. The representation of an object as if it were a person.*

Lv 18.25 "Land vomited out its inhabitants"

Pr 1.20-21 "Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice..."

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS: *Questions posed for which the author doesn't expect or wait for an answer.*

Hab 2.18 "What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies?"

Mt 7.16 "Are grapes gathered from thorns?"

Ecc 2.24-25 "...This I saw also is from the hand of God; for apart from him, who can eat or who can have enjoyment?"

SIMILE: *A direct comparison of two things that are essentially different. Characterized by use of: like, as, so.*

Mt 23.27 “Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs...”

Rev 1.14 “His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like burning fire”

SYMBOL: *Something that stands for another meaning in addition to its ordinary meaning.* It is usually a visual image that represents an invisible concept. In interpreting symbols one is not free to impose his own interpretation but he must discover the author’s intention by taking into consideration: the culture, principles of interpretation, the overall message of the book, and in many cases the author’s own specific definition.

Rev 1.12,20 – 7 lampstands → 7 churches; 7 stars → angels of 7 churches

SYNECDOCHE: *Part of something is mentioned, but the whole is meant.*

Ja 4.8b “Cleanse your hands”

Pr 10.6 “Blessing are on the head of the righteous”

EPONYMY: *a sub-division of synecdoche in which in individual stands for the whole nation.*

- **Hs 11.2** “Ephraim has encompassed me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit...”

MERISMUS: *a combination of parts of the whole to express totality.*

- **Ps 72.8** “May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!”

TYPE: *A type prefigures something or someone to come.* A prefiguring symbol such as an OT event (or person) prefiguring an event (or person) in the NT. It is best to have the type explicitly mentioned in the NT.

1Co 5.7 – OT passover lamb typified Christ, the sacrificial lamb.

TYPES OF LITERATURE

<p>Apocalyptic: Dramatic expression of the message using vivid or bizarre images and symbolism. Main message is about hope and victory for believers, destruction of the wicked, final judgment, the Messianic Age and Age to Come. <i>How to study: Read for impact rather than details. Note the contrast between believers and unbelievers. Who is being judged? Why? What is the hope of believers? How is the gospel expressed through symbolism?</i></p>	<p>Revelation <i>Parts of</i> Isaiah Ezekiel Daniel Zechariah</p>
<p>Epistle or Letter: Personal letters from the apostles to their churches. Often deal with concerns, questions, false teaching, or situations that needed immediate attention. Bring correction and sound doctrinal teaching to the church. <i>How to study: Understand the historical issues and situation being addressed. Distinguish universal application from the particulars being addressed to that situation.</i></p>	<p><i>Paul's letters</i> Hebrews James 1-2 Peter 1-2-3 John Jude (Revelation)</p>
<p>Law: OT Law involved a covenant between God and His people: God promised to bless His people if they would follow and obey Him. The OT contains over 600 commandments that Israel was to keep, allowing them to remain in relationship with Holy God, as well as demonstrate their love and faithfulness to Him. <i>How to study: Understand the universal principles at the heart of the specific laws given. What do these laws teach us about the character and holiness of God? How does God want us to treat others and live as “set apart” in our world today? How does the law show us our own sin and point us to our need for a Savior?</i></p>	<p>Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy</p>
<p>Narrative: The Bible contains more narrative than any other type of literature. Narrative means “story”. Biblical narrative is the true account of certain events, people, and nations (esp. Israel) throughout history. The purpose of narrative is to bring glory to God by showing how God is at work among His people and throughout history. The whole Bible is the grand narrative of God’s universal plan of redemption. <i>How to study: Follow the key characters; what can you learn from their lives? Pay attention to God’s character and how He is working in and throughout history.</i></p>	<p>Genesis-Esther <i>4 Gospels</i> Matthew Mark Luke John Acts</p>
<p>Parable: Short punchy stories that catch their audience and teach a central point. Key to note is that parables are <i>not</i> allegories. <i>How to study: Identify the points of reference (key people, elements) and the</i></p>	<p><i>Found mainly in the Gospels and some OT Narrative</i></p>

<p>audience to whom it was spoken, notice the unexpected turn in the story, and identify the key or central point. Do not pick parables apart or assign meaning to every detail.</p>	
<p>Poetry: Expression of thought using verse rather than prose. Language is highly emotional and figurative. Hebrew poetry is organized according to parallelism (correspondence in thought between one line and another following) rather than rhyme or meter. <i>How to study: Read with emotion, envision the picture being painted, summarize the main point.</i></p>	<p>Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs Lamentations OT Prophets</p>
<p>Prophecy: Many tend to think prophecy = prediction. Although OT prophecy contains elements of prediction, the main message of the prophets was to tell Israel of their sin and call God’s people back to the covenant. Most of what you read in the prophets will fall under three categories: sin, judgment, or restoration. <i>How to study: Keep the big picture in mind: ask yourself if the passage is talking about Israel’s sin, coming judgment, or the hope of restoration. Notice warnings and promises. Who are the warnings to? Who are the promises to? Be careful not to read the physical restoration passages as personal promises to you.</i></p>	<p>Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi</p>
<p>Proverb: short witty saying containing practical advice about life. Proverbs teach basic life values. <i>How to study: Observe the contrasts between a life of wisdom or folly. Ask: what is the wisdom being communicated here? Note that proverbs express general life truths – they are not meant to be taken as personal promises or guarantees.</i></p>	<p>Proverbs</p>
<p>Wisdom: By definition, wisdom is the ability to make godly life choices. Wisdom literature, then, contains reflections from life experience that enable and encourage the reader to make godly choices and decisions. <i>How to study: Wisdom literature needs to be read as a whole. Isolating passages (esp. Job, Ecc.) can lead to bad theology and application. The goal of wisdom literature is to teach us to fear God and help us become more godly. Reflect on the wisdom to be gained.</i></p>	<p>Job Psalms (some) Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs</p>

DIFFERENT WAYS TO READ THE BIBLE

For those who get bored with routine, following are some suggestions to help keep your Bible reading alive and meaningful:

Suggestions for Bible Intake:

- Follow a reading plan
 - Keep accountable with a close friend or group of friends
- Listen to the Bible
- Watch presentations/movies made about the Bible
- Write out the Bible
- Read in another translation
- Read with friends
- Read dramatically
- Act it out
- Meditate on verses/passages
- Pray through verses/passages

Read with Purpose:

As you read, pay special attention to the following:

Big picture / purpose, heartbeat of book	→ God's heart
God's character	→ God's heart
Themes	
Structure	
Observations (go through whole list, or most relevant)	
Historical background	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author's concerns 	→ Author's heart
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader's concerns, questions, struggles... 	→ Reader's heart
Personal application	→ My heart
Application for general audience/bible-study group	→ Changed hearts

Bibliography:

- Arthur, Kay and David, Pete DeLacy. *The New How to Study Your Bible*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2010.
- Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina. *Inductive Bible Study*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- "Bible, Interpretation of, or Hermeneutics." *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Ed. Herbert Lockyer. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.
- Chan, Francis and David Platt. "How to Study the Bible". *Multiply Movement*. <multiplymovement.com> (2012.12.16)
- Deane, Andy. *Learn to Study the Bible*. Xulon Press, 2009.
- Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.
- Hendricks, Howard G. and William D. *Living By The Book*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991.
- Kuhatschek, Jack. *Taking the Guesswork out of Applying the Bible*. InterVarsity Press, 1990.
- Olesberg, Lindsay. *The Bible Study Handbook*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Sire, James W. *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980.
- Smith, Ron. *I Don't Read My Bible Enough*. Independently Published: www.ronsmithbooks.com, 2004.
- Smith, Ron and Judy. "Basics of Bible Study". Handout from YWAM's *School of Biblical Studies*.
- Sproul, R.C. *Knowing Scripture*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977.
- Veerman, Dave. *How to Apply the Bible*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993.
- Vos, Howard F. *Effective Bible Study: A Guide to Sixteen Methods*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956.
- Wald, Oletta. *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.