

Find out how to use the

3 Elements of the Inductive Bible Study Method



3 Elements of Inductive Study

Do you desire to dig deep in the Word of God but not quite sure how? Have you heard of the Inductive Bible Study Method (IBSM)? I have been using this method for over ten years now and absolutely love it! This post will teach you the three elements of inductive study. You, too, can study deep using the Inductive Study Method! Before we read the details, do you have your coffee in hand? You won't need your Bible at this point...

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There are three steps for digging deep into the Word. They are:

1. Observation
2. Interpretation
3. Application

Prayer

All Bible Study should begin with prayer, no matter what method you are using. This is key to successfully learning the Word and hearing from God. Ask Holy Spirit to open your eyes of understanding so you may hear what the Spirit is saying to you. The Spirit is our Comforter, Counsellor and Teacher. Let Him teach you as you open the Word to study.

1. Observation

The first element of inductive study starts with a careful **Observation** of details that we would otherwise miss.

Observation will teach us who the author is and who the author is writing to, especially when it is one of the General Letters in the New Testament.

Sometimes that is obvious within the first 5 verses or so while other times we are not told explicitly who the author is. For non-epistles, the Author may not be so obvious and further digging will be required to determine.

With the inductive study method, when we observe, we usually employ six questions known as the 5 W's and H. That is, *who-what-where-when-why* and *how*.

Who-What-Where-When-Why-How

Who is

- the author writing to?
- mentioned in the passage/chapter/book?
- doing something?
- not doing something?

What is

- the reason(s) for writing?
- happening or going to happen?
- the author cautioning or warning them about?

Where

- are the recipients?
- is the event(s) going to happen?
- was it said?

When

- will the event(s) happen?
- did or will something happen to a particular person or place?

Why

- will this event happen?
- did the author say this?
- this particular person?
- is this person singled out?

How

- will this event happen?
- is it to be done or completed?
- did the author explain the event?



As you consciously ask yourself these questions, you will notice the little details that are so easily overlooked. Pay attention to these details and make note of them as your understanding of the Word has begun. Don't be in a hurry to rush through this process, take your time to see what is there. Observing the answers to these questions as based on the Word itself will lead to the correct interpretation.

NOTE: While this may seem overwhelming to you, take this in small chunks. Concentrate on the 5W's and H first, before moving on to the next piece. You don't want to stress out over this, so small steps are advisable and soon this will become second nature to you.

Geographic Locations

Another aspect of observation is concerning geography. Have you ever read a passage and wondered where it is taking place? You may have to read back further to find that geographic location.

If the passage you are studying indicates any geographic locations, mark these distinctly. In my Bible, I can spot geographic locations by the double green underline under the *city, mountain, valley, nation, or planet, ie earth.*

When studying in the Old Testament, this is helpful to note as both the books of Kings, there is mention of the Northern Kingdom, the South Kingdom, nations and various locales. I underline them plus when trying to keep the Kings and their kingdoms matched, I use NK (Northern Kingdom) with the correct king.

Keywords and Key Phrases

If you were to look through my Bible, you would see markings and symbols throughout. These are keywords that stand out in that particular book or passage.

Keywords may be a little hard to determine but if you remember that they are essential to the text, you should be able to spot them. Try this, if you remove the word you are thinking is key, does the whole meaning become empty of meaning?

A keyword or key phrase is important to the text. If you were to remove that keyword or phrase from the passage, the text will become meaningless. When the author wants you to pay attention to something, he will repeat it to emphasize its importance. The repetition may be in one chapter or spaced throughout the book.

As you mark keywords, ask yourself the 5 W questions. An example of a keyword could be "sackcloth". Ask yourself, Who is wearing sackcloth? Why is that person wearing sackcloth? When will they start to wear the sackcloth? What is sackcloth, anyway?

You can mark the keywords and phrases by using the *Master Keyword List* that is found in the [Private Library](#) on my blog. This list of common keywords becomes your master list for each time you find new keywords. You only need one copy of this list as it will last you a long time.

In addition, the *Private Library* has a sample keyword list to illustrate symbols and markings that you may want to use or to give you ideas for designing your own symbols. This sample keyword list is by Kari King Dent.

Source: [Kari King Dent](#)

Spotting those Lists

Lists play an important role as they often reveal truths for steps to take in completing an action. Some lists are simple while others can be longer and a little more involved. Write your lists in a notebook or on worksheets in addition to numbering them in the text, or, if your Bible has a wide margin, make your list there.

Some lists are more topical and spread throughout the book. When following a keyword through the book, observe what is being said about that keyword. Make note of it in your notebook or if you have space in the margin of your Bible, you can condense it there.

Elements of Time

Noticing when events happened or are going to happen, helps to keep the passage in focus according to time. Elements of time are spotted by the use of certain words, *until*, *after*, *when*, and *then*.

It will be helpful to use the symbol of a clock in a specific colour so you can spot these expressions at a glance. I use a green Micron pen for my clock.

Some of the obvious words are *in the year of*, *at the feast of*, or *during the reign of*. Place your symbol in the margin to find them quickly or over the word/phrase.

Contrasts and Comparisons

Contrasts, such as, *light/darkness*, or *children of God/children of the devil*, are often used to emphasize a truth and its use makes it easier to remember what that truth is.

Comparisons are noted by words such as *like*, *as*, *as it were*. Mark the comparisons distinctly so you recognize it as a comparison versus a keyword.

Terms of Conclusion

As my former Pastor used to say, terms of conclusion such as *therefore* are “there for a reason.” Other terms are *since*, *finally*, *wherefore*, and *for this reason*. At this point, you can summarize the message in the preceding verses.

Source: Precepts Ministries, [Discover What Scripture Says](#). This is a great source showing pictures of each section, above.

2. Interpretation

Based on what you learned while observing the text, you are ready to interpret the meaning. To interpret wisely you need to remember that context rules.

The meaning of *context* is “that which goes with the text.” This means to keep in mind the surrounding verses as well as the book itself and the whole Word of God.

Ask yourself if your interpretation is consistent with the purpose and theme of the book. Is it consistent with other passages? One thing you do not want to do is make the Word of God say whatever you want it to say by taking it out of context.

Another quote from my former Pastor is “the best interpretation of Scripture is Scripture.” The Bible contains all the truth you need and it is God-breathed and inspired. You can trust it, depend on it and as you saturate yourself in it, it will become a part of you so that you will recognize truth from partial truth and wrong doctrine.

Source: Precepts Ministries, [Interpret Scripture Accurately](#)

3. Application with Transformation

The third element of the inductive study method is the application of what has been learned.

If we want to be *doers of the Word* as James said in chapter 1 v 22, then, we need to apply what we learned. Through the application, we allow God to change us to be more like His Son.

Not all Scripture passages can be applied today. There are a few things to keep in mind such as the time period. **Cultural standards** should not be applied today but you can apply the **biblical standards**.

We need to be aware of not using Scripture erroneously to strengthen something we believe in. In this case, we need to submit to God and change our thinking to believe the Scriptures, not the other way around.

Sometimes God is showing us something new in His Word that we hadn't seen before. Or maybe He is correcting a faulty belief we have. These are situations for us to correctly apply the Word of Truth.

The three elements of inductive study, **Observation, Interpretation, and Application** will have little value to us if we do not become **transformed** by what we have learned.

Paul taught us that it is *by the renewing of our mind that we are transformed*. Let the Word transform you as you study it inductively!

That's a Wrap-Up

So, we have learned the elements of inductive study which are

- Observation
- Interpretation
- Application with Transformation

The longest process will be observing all there is to see and read in the text. When it comes to interpreting what you learned, you'll be making that interpretation pretty quickly. Remember though, to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

I hope this has been of benefit to you and that you are looking to go deeper in your studies. This certainly will be that challenge for you as you learn this process. Are you up for it? You'll be glad you did as your understanding of the Word will grow deeper and stronger.

If you are looking for a study group of like-minded women, why not consider joining the [*Deeper in God Bible Studies*](#) group over on Facebook? Not only do we have regular Bible Studies but we also participate in writing out whole books of the Bible! Imagine that?! Come on over to find out more...click the red link above to join!

Do you want the digital copy of the three elements to inductive study? You can download it [here](#).

Do you have any questions? Please leave a comment, letting me know what you think about this. I'm waiting to hear from you!

Blessings,

Cindy

Sources:

- Walk With the Word, http://walkwiththeword.org/Program/06_Inductive.html
- Precept Ministries International, <https://www.precept.org/>