

# How to Do Inductive Bible Study

Studying Individually or Corporately

Pray! That God would meet you in his living Word.  
Read the passage as if you were reading it for the first time.

1. **Observe Carefully** – Get the story straight (What is the author saying?)  
Use the colored pencils to mark words, phrases, concepts, connections, themes.

Journalism Questions	Connections/Relationships (see handout with the pictures)	Entering the Story
Who? What? Where? When? How?	Repetition Similarity Contrast Cause and Effect General to Particular Particular to General	Become a character in the story  What do you see, smell, hear, taste?  What are you feeling and experiencing?

What kind of literature is this?

Narrative – Dialog – Poetry – Letter (“Epistle”) – Gospel – Law – Prophecy  
There may be more than one kind of literature in a passage.

Mark all logical connectors (therefore, because, since, for, so that, but, etc.)

Mark units of thought in the text (change in location, time, theme, thought, action, characters, speaker). Make logical thought breaks and title each section.

Especially note things about Jesus, what he says and does.

Note the unexpected or unusual in the text.

If you are studying a New Testament passage, are there any Old Testament (OT) references or allusions? Look them up! Read the whole passage, not just the specific verse or phrase. Why did the author reference this particular OT passage?

Is there anything in the passage that raises a question for you? Anything that intrigues, perplexes, or troubles you? Write it down!

## 2. **Interpret** – Understanding (What does the author mean?)

Look back at the connections that you made as you observed. What are the main connections that run throughout the passage? What are the main threads?

Read the passage again and see if you can find more questions to ask the text.

- Go back to some of the things that troubled or intrigued you and formulate a good question about them.
- Look at the grammatical connections you found and formulate questions about them. Why does the author repeat this word? Why is this contrast here? What themes or meanings do these connections point to? What meaning is the author bringing out with each of the main connections? Try writing questions that start with “Why” or “What is the significance of...”

Refine your questions.

- Example of an ok question – “Why does Jesus say, ‘The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel?’”
- Example of a good question – “What exactly is it about the Kingdom of God being at hand that should lead people to repent and believe in the Gospel?”

Focus in on the most significant questions, those which arise directly from the text, cover large portions of the text, and help bring out the core meaning.

Formulate answers to the most significant questions.

1. Look first in the text itself. Read it over again carefully with your questions in mind. Often the text answers its own questions.
2. Look at the context, what comes immediately before and after this passage.
3. Look in a Bible dictionary or regular dictionary to define words, phrases, and concepts you don't understand. Look at a map to understand physical context.
4. If you are studying a New Testament passage, look again at the Old Testament references and allusions that you found when you were observing.

Ask yourself the “big question” about this passage – What did the author intend to communicate to the original readers? What seems to be the main point or the core teaching of this passage? Why is this passage here?

Write the main truth in an overall, integrative sentence. Build a case for your answer.

## 3. **Apply** – Connect to your own life (How does this passage speak to your story?)

- How do you sense that God is speaking to you through this passage?
- What part of your life is connected to the core teaching of this text?
- How are you experiencing what a character in the story is living out?
- Is there a promise to trust, a command to obey, or an example to follow or avoid?
- Are you sensing any deeper insights into God or your experience with God?
- What specific actions are you going to take in response to what God is saying to you?
- If you are studying in a group, what action will you take together, in response to what God is saying to your community?