

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Reading Scripture Itself

Psalm 119:130 (NIV)

*The **unfolding** of your words gives **light**; it gives understanding to the simple.*

John 6:63 (ESV)

*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are **spirit and life**.*

Therefore We Pray:

Psalm 119:

32 *I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.*

33 *Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end.*

34 *Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.*

35 *Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.*

We Come to the Scriptures:

Prayerfully – ask the Holy Spirit to lead You in truth and meet you in the Word.

Humbly – remember who God has revealed himself to be in the **whole** of Scripture and how His Spirit speaks through the living Word of God. Be open to listen and be taught and changed.

Carefully – take time to look slowly the big picture, the context, the overview or flow of the story, argument or teaching, look at every phase and each word.

This is about how we read the Bible well for ourselves. It is also the foundation to any preparation for teaching.

- We need to take time to read Scripture and take notes, pray and think about the passage itself, asking the Holy Spirit to lead **before** we look for what someone else is saying about it.
- The way we prepare and read the Bible together should not only teach that study, but equip the group to read the Bible well **for themselves** and feed on the Word constantly.
- Look at where the passage comes in the chapter, the bigger section of the book, and the book. Read through a book of the Bible (not only individual verses or passages).
- Take note of the “genre” – is it historical narrative, parable, prophecy, poetry, letters, teaching? Being aware of this will make a difference to how you approach each passage.

Helpful Principles for Looking at Any Passage:

- Read the passage slowly, more than once, read it out loud.
- Read in more than one translation, include something different to what you normally read– more literal translations - NRSV, ESV.
- Use *Bible Gateway* on the internet – choose translations, even put them side by side.
- Find out where it comes in Salvation History, the big story. (How do the New Testament and Old Testament relate?)
- If you are looking at several passages in a thematic study, look at what has just come before and what comes after to find the context of the passage.
- Work from the big picture down to the small details.
- Don't miss the obvious. Notice who is speaking, who is listening and who is responding. What does God say or do? What does He show of His heart? Look at what is actually happening or what is being said. Often we focus on what we want to hear, what we have heard (teaching) and experienced before or get into complicated detail and miss the simple facts – e.g. if demons fall begging at Jesus' feet, they are afraid of Him and He has authority over darkness and evil.
- Write Scripture down – you read things carefully as you write, you see patterns, remember more.
- You can write key words from another translation, use colors to highlight or underline, note different people speaking, circle repeated words, verbs, or descriptions.
- Look for any parables, comparisons (as _____ so _____), contrasts (life and death, God's way and the world's way) or "word pictures" (God as a shield, a bird hiding us under his wings, a refuge, warrior, living water, light etc.).
- Look for the names of God and descriptions of God. Look at the verbs used for His character and actions.
- Look at the "word pictures", verbs and descriptions of our hearts, our attitudes, words and actions.
- If there are quotations from the Old Testament, look them up.
- Sometimes you might want to write out the steps of what happens in a narrative to understand it clearly.
- If you are reading narrative (true story, an account of something that happened) here are some good questions to pray on. Ask the Lord: *Where am I in this? Who else is in this picture? What else is represented here? Keep asking the Lord: "Where am I struggling to believe and trust You are who You reveal Yourself to be in this passage? Where am I living as though You do not have the character, desires, heart for me, and the power shown here for me? Where do I need to believe this for others?"*

- Write out any questions you have as you are reading (to pray about and look up in resources later).
- Write Scripture down – you read things carefully as you write, you see patterns and remember more.
- Separate the phrases, rather than writing whole paragraphs or even whole verses. Eg:

Acts 2

3 *They saw*

*what seemed to be tongues of fire
that separated and came to rest
on each of them.*

4 *All of them were filled
with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other tongues
as the Spirit enabled them.*

John 14

18 *I will not leave you as orphans;
I will come to you.*

19 *Before long, the world will not see me
anymore, but you will see me.
Because I live,
you also will live.*

20 *On that day you will realize
that I am in my Father,
and you are in me,
and I am in you.*

Look for any parables, comparisons (as...so...) or word pictures.

Romans 6

8 *Now if we died with Christ,
we believe
that we will also live with him.*

9 *For we know that since
Christ was raised from the dead,
he cannot die again;
death no longer has mastery over him.*

10 *The death he died,
he died to sin
once for all;
but the life he lives,
he lives to God.*

11 *In the same way,
count yourselves dead to sin
but alive to God
in Christ Jesus.*

Resources:

To be aware of the big story, the whole sweep of Scripture, it is good to look at a chronology – this will show how things fit together.

THE STORY by Max Lucado and Randy Freeze

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE: THE WAY JESUS AND THE APOSTLES TOLD IT” (Kindle Edition) by Richard Bustraan

THE CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY BIBLE (Thomas Nelson)

THE ONE YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE (Tyndale)

IVP NT BACKGROUND COMMENTARY by Craig Keener

IVP OLD TESTAMENT by John Walton

NEW TESTAMENT THEMES - IVP

LION BIBLE HANDBOOK (good on the order and context of each book of the Bible and some basic notes on culture and geography)

BIBLE GATEWAY.COM – Free commentaries to view. Choose a passage then look at “study this” on the right side-bar. Click “commentaries,” then scroll down. Especially recommended commentaries: IVP NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY and NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY

GOOGLE – Be careful to look at who is writing but you can often type in a word or an event or

places and find free resources and explanations, maps and images– e.g. Sacrifice of Atonement, Ark of the covenant, Red sea, Passover Lamb, Temple of Israel, Holy of Holies, redeem, etc.

Reading and Praying any Scripture

1. **What does the passage say?**

- What has just happened and what is happening now?
- Where are they?
- Who is there?
- Who is speaking, listening or responding?
- What do they say? How do they respond?
- What are they **not** doing or saying?
- What does Jesus or God say here?
- Is there a parable, a comparison or a word picture?

2. **What does the passage mean?**

- **What does it say about God?**
 - His character
 - His heart
 - His power
 - His love
 - How He works?
 - Look at the narrative, names, descriptions and verbs.
 - Father, Son, Holy Spirit
- **What does it say about people?**
 - Our hearts?
 - Our response to God?
 - Our relationships?
 - Our attitudes to others?
 - The world's way?
 - What does it mean to be His?
 - What the nouns or verbs used for people?
 - Is there a command?
 - What is the challenge?
 - Is there a promise?
 - What is the encouragement?

3. **What does it mean to me?**

- How does this touch me or speak into my heart, my relationship with God, my life or my circumstances today?
- Where do I struggle to accept this for me or for others?
- What truth do I need to receive or believe more deeply? How does the Holy Spirit want to work like this in my life?
- What would it look like for me to live this truth?

4. **How can I pray this passage?** (*Ask for the Holy Spirit help me to receive this.*)

- What is the praise?
- Forgive me for what I have been and what I have not done?
- Change my heart?

- Draw me closer?
- Lead me to believe all of who You are?
- Show me what this means for my life?
- Pray this for others?