

# INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY METHOD

Pastor Xavier Ries

Many throughout the ages have had their own opinions and conclusions about the Scriptures as they have examined the content of the Bible through man's wisdom rather than through the wisdom of God thereby arriving at erroneous and unbiblical ideas.

It is not with the demonstration of man's wisdom, but as Paul says with the power of the Holy Spirit.  
*1 Corinthians. 2:4*

The task of studying the Scriptures is commanded by God, but whenever God requires something He always provides the means by which to fulfill it through our new divine nature and the Holy Spirit.

There are many verses that not only exhort us to know God's Word, but also command us to study the Scriptures.

*Joshua 1:8, Jeremiah 23:28-29, Psalm 119:9-11, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:14-16, Hebrews 4:12.*

*\* These by no means are exhaustive but they will do.*

The believer is called a disciple of Jesus which really means a learner or pupil.

The inductive study method is the most valuable and accurate way of studying the scriptures to arrive at the genuine interpretation of the day it was written to. This method focuses on three main areas:

**I. Context**

**II. Historical Background**

**III. Language**

# I

## Context

---

The context is vital to insure the original intent and purpose of the writer of the day it was written.

**A. Today many teachers and preachers do violence to the Scriptures.**

1. They come up with some of the most erroneous interpretations because they have ignored this basic principle of context.
2. The result is that they destroy the original intent and meaning of the text.
  - They interpret it subjectively.
  - They interpret it by spiritualizing it.

**B. Text out of it's context is nothing but a pretext!**

1. There are various types of sermons such as biographical, textual, topical and propositional.
2. But there is only one way to do inductive study which will prepare the expositor for his sermon material, whatever type is chosen.

*This is the first area of inductive method!*



## Historical Background

---

The historical background is also very important to insure what is being taught or required is relevant to our day.

**A. A good example would be the command to the women to wear veils to honor their husbands at Corinth. *1 Corinthians. 11:13***

1. The city had a temple to Aphrodite and the temple prostitutes would be unveiled showing that they had no covering over their lives, in other words no husband and were in fact temple prostitutes.
  
2. The command of Paul to the women is to not use their liberty in Christ lest two things take place; they be mistaken for temple prostitutes and dishonor their husbands by identifying with the permissive women of the city.
  - This is what we might call “cultural relativity”, the literal command is not obligated nor does it apply to our present day.
  - But we can apply the principle of honoring and obeying husbands as the heads of the homes and glorifying God in ones conduct by staying away from all appearance of evil.
  
3. The Bible transcends the culture regarding morals and ethics, not the reverse.
  - If the Bible teaches sexual purity, it is an absolute for all ages.
  - If the Bible teaches lying is wrong, it is for all ages.



**B.** We must be careful not to compromise or substitute the word of God for human teachings in order to justify or rationalize a sinful lifestyle.

1. By Psychology.

2. By Anthropology.

3. By Sociology.

4. By situational ethics.

5. By value clarification.

6. By any other humanistic teaching that contradicts or opposes the word of God, trying to justify or your culpability of a sinful lifestyle.

*This is the second area of inductive method!*



# Language

---

The original language is key to understand the meaning as well as the sense of the sentence, be it Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek.

**A.** Word studies must be done not in isolation but in conjunction with the passage, context and their relation to the other words that structure the sentence or section, lest a wrong meaning is given to a word because the same word can be used in different ways.

1. This simple three step process is call “general Hermeneutics” which means interpretation or to explain, at times called “grammatico-historical exegesis”.
2. There is special Hermeneutics which does not replace the former but adds other rules to help come to the original meaning, this would be true of Poetry and Prophecy.

**B.** Whenever a person begins to approach a book, a chapter or a section, the central theme or subject must be grasped and this comes only by reading it over and over again until the central theme stands out as the sun illuminating the rest of the material.

1. The Gospel of John central theme is ‘Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you may have life in His name.’—*John. 20:31*
2. The theme of Romans is ‘the righteousness of God revealed for the salvation of man by grace and faith.’—*Romans. 1:16-17*

*This is the third area of inductive method!*

**Now these are the three necessary steps for inductive method**

**I. Observation**

**II. Interpretation**

**III. Application**

# I

## The First Step

---

The first step is called “Observation”, which reveal what the text says.

- A.** The first step of observation is to record the obvious observation, what is being told in the sentences.
1. Do not think any information is unimportant or too obvious.
  2. Only what is found in the text is biblical truth, distinct from human speculation or interjection of one’s views or understanding.
  3. The observations should not be limited or confined to one reading!
- B.** The second step is to record the various themes found in the passage.
1. The deity of Christ.
  2. Faith.
  3. Sanctification.
  4. Prayer, etc.
- C.** The third step is to record the natural divisions in the section, chapter or book.
1. Do not accept the divisions of your Bible as correct as if they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are not.
  2. After spending time with your text you may come to the same division or divisions but you are now convinced by your own study.

*\* This necessary process will provide you with all the information about the book or passage that can be known about the text, that is why it is called “inductive”.*

*This is the first step!*

## II

# The Second Step

---

The second step is called “interpretation”, which focuses on the general Hermeneutics, context, history and language, discovering what it means.

*\* The goal of the step of concentration or interpretation is that the basic observations begin to be identified in relationship to each other and the entire text, in order to reveal what it meant to the original recipients. The German term is “Sitz im Leben” which means “life situation”, what it means to the people to who it was written.*

**A.** Outline the book, chapter or section in order to reveal the progressive movement and relationship of the sections and between the major and minor points.

1. A simple outline.
2. A more detailed outline.
3. A full and complete outline.

**B.** List the key words and pivotal terms that appear to be emphatic or the major focus of the verse or passage.

1. Words that are repeated more than once.
2. Words that stand out, or give importance in the text.

**C.** List key phrases that stand out or are repeated.

1. They can be mentioned one or more times.
2. They determine and are key for the correct interpretation, the phrase “Your people” indicates Israel in *Daniel 9:24*

**D.** List key verse or verses.

1. Each book has such verses.
2. Each chapter has such verses.



**E. Identify theological themes and mark their relationship to each other and the passage.**

1. In relation to the section.
2. In relation to each passage.
3. In relation to the whole of the book.

**F. Ask questions of your text.**

1. What?
2. When?
3. Where?
4. Who?
5. Why?
6. How?

**G. Use parallel passages.**

1. To support.
2. To supplement.
3. To complement.
4. To clear up.
5. To interpret.
  - But never develop your parallel passage as a substitute for your original passage, stick to your text!
  - Another thing to understand is that the scriptures interpret the scriptures with the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.  
*1 Corinthians. 2:13*

*\* In the context Paul is contrasting the natural mind of man that is blind to the things of God and the spiritual mind of the believer, who is able to receive the things of the Spirit.*



**H. Use concordances, Lexicons, dictionaries, encyclopedias, word studies and commentaries, or computer help, etc.**

1. These helps should not be used at this point.
2. The expositor at this point has a good knowledge of the passage, chapter and book to evaluate and decide the value of the commentary, not simply accept what is said.

**I. Identify the genre, the type of literature.**

1. Is it narrative?
2. Is it poetry?
3. Is it history?
4. Is it law?
5. Is it prophecy?
  - The process of “observation” and “concentration” has allowed you to know what the passage says and what it means!
  - This is the task of every expositor, to discover the intended meaning for the people of that day, and only then should you make application for today!

*This is the second step!*



## The Third Step

---

The third step is called “Application”, which centers on the practical and relevant truth to be lived out as a Christian in today’s world in relation to the meaning of the text, how it applies to me in daily living!

- A.** The expositor makes application of the theology being taught in the passage to instruct the believer in the faith.
  - 1. Regeneration.
  - 2. Sanctification.
  - 3. Illumination.
  - 4. Glorification.
  
- B.** The expositor makes once again application to the believers personal life obedience, how the text applies to his or hers everyday life.
  - 1. The practice of having a prayer life.
  - 2. The practice of reading the word.
  - 3. The need of being involved in the body, the church.
  - 4. The exercise of the gifts of the Spirit in a decent manner and order.
  
- C.** The expositor declares the application to the responsibility the community of faith has towards the lost society.
  - 1. The church’s responsibility to be light.
  - 2. The church is to be the salt.
  - 3. The church to be a fisher of men and women.

*\* Please realize that not all these points or elements are taught in every sermon but the expositor has to allow God to direct him as to the specific theme and purpose behind the sermon text, giving only that which will be in line with the theme, to communicate the meaning and application!*

*This is the third step!*

## **Conclusion**

**There are three areas of focus in the inductive method.**

- I. Context
- II. Historical background
- III. Language

**There are three steps involved in the inductive method.**

- I. Observation
- II. Interpretation
- III. Application

These basic steps will enable you to better understand the Scriptures, but be ware of thinking that mere intellectual abilities and mechanical steps can unveil the truths of God!

You must PRAY before you begin your study and remain in an attitude of prayer as you study, in order to show God your dependency on Him and to ensure your fruitful study of spiritual truth!

Copyright © 2007 by Pastor Xavier Ries  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published by  
Calvary Chapel Pasadena  
2200 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107

**ALL SCRIPTURES TAKEN FROM**  
The New King James Version®  
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.  
Used by permission All rights reserved.