

# Inductive Bible Study

X Diocesan Leadership Conference

Bible Study Track

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# Inductive Bible Study

- It is a type of study that forces the “student” to let the scripture speak for itself.
- Using what the scripture has presented, come to a conclusion. This is in contrast to already having your conclusion, and finding it in scripture.
- There are many types of inductive bible study “formulas.” This is just one of them.

# Three Steps

- Observation
- Interpretation
- Application

And my addition:

- Christotelic Identification

# Observation

Observation is basically asking the question, “What does this text say?”

Ask questions regarding the text:

- Who – Who is the author of the book? Who is being addressed? Who are the major and minor characters?
- Where – Where do the events occur? Are there any references to towns? Use a map to help. If reading a letter, where is it being addressed?
- When – When did the events described take place? If no date or time, when was it relative to another event? When was the letter written?
- What – What events are taking place in the text? What events are central to the text? What is the mood of the text?
- Why – Does the passage give indication to the purpose of its writing?
- How – How is it written? Is it poetry, wisdom literature, parable, letter, etc.? Does it use metaphors, symbols, etc.?

# Interpretation

Interpretation asks the question, “What does this text mean?” The bible study tools mentioned earlier can help in answering that question.

- Were there any words you did not understand? Define them.
- Were there mention of events, persons, etc. that you did not recognize? Research them.
- Did the text use any figurative language? Symbols? Metaphors? Translate them.
- Were major ideas presented? Find the meaning of them.

# Application

Application asks the question, “What does this text mean to me?”

- Who was the original audience? What was their life setting? Relate it to your own.
- If the original setting is not applicable to yourself, identify the underlying principle in the text. Use that principle in applying it to your own life setting.
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid or to confess?
- Is there a reason for thanksgiving or praise?
- What does this text teach about God and his relationship with us?

# Christotelic Identification

Because scripture points to Christ (Luke 24), it would be fruitful for us to also see how Christ is revealed in the text.

- This is not always easy to do.
- Ask yourself from the text, does this speak of Christ? Is this something Christ fulfills? Is this something Christ does for us? Is this something Christ would pray?
- If all we do is study and find some instructions on how to live absent of Christ, it is just legalism and moralism. It is not redemptive in focus like scripture is intended to be.

# Dangers

- Proof-texting – Because inductive bible study focuses primarily on one text, there is the danger of drawing conclusions without using the whole of scripture.
  - For example: If you do a study on James without understanding the Pauline epistles, you could say faith and works are needed to be justified.
  - If you were to do a study of a Pauline epistle text on justification, you would say faith alone is needed to be justified.
  - Using the whole of scripture, you can resolve that tension by understanding James' use of justification and Paul's.
  - Theoretically, if you did a proper interpretation of James, you could avoid such a tension and not come to the conclusion that faith and works are needed to be justified. But without understanding the whole of scripture, you would never know.

# Dangers cont.

- Avoiding other interpretations
  - The purpose of inductive bible study is for the student to let the text speak for itself and not impose other teachings onto the text.
  - But it would be wise to compare your conclusions derived from the text to that of other authorities (more than one) in commentaries or study guides.
  - Do not waste centuries of biblical scholarship in exchange for your few days of study.

# Be open to correction

- Do not “close” your studies when you are done with a text.
- Some time in the future, you may come to more insight that will change your original interpretation of the text.