

## INDUCTIVE STUDY WORKSHEET

*"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.  
However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth;  
for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears  
He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.  
He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."  
John 16:12-14*

This worksheet is designed as a reminder of the steps and questions involved in the Observation, Interpretation, Application skills of the Inductive Bible study. They do not need to be followed exactly, and every question does not need to be answered. It is just meant to be a guideline.

These are the simple questions that we will be investigating as we go through the passage:

Observation—What does the passage say?

Interpretation—What does the passage mean?

Application—What does the passage mean to me?

Eventually we will be able to study without these helps.

So how do we begin?

First, we need to set aside time each day to study God's word. God speaks through His living and active word by the Holy Spirit directly to our minds and hearts. We want and need that.

Next, we need to eliminate all distractions as we study: cell phones, TV, radio, computer, or anything else that demands your attention.

And last, we need to pray that God would open our eyes to the truth of His word, and continue that prayer throughout our study time.

*"God's mind is revealed in Scripture, but we can see nothing  
without the spectacles of the Holy Ghost."  
Puritan Thomas Manton*

*Open my eyes, that I may see  
Wondrous things from Your law.  
Psalm 119:18*

Why is it good to study this way?

*"It is only when truth is **discovered** that it is **appropriated**.  
When a man is simply told the truth, it remains external to him,  
and he can quite easily forget it. When he is led to discover the truth himself  
it becomes an integral part of him, and he never forgets."  
William Barclay*

Let's get started!

Read the entire passage several times without interruption. If possible, read it in different translations. At this point you are not reading for details but the overall picture. Remember, inductive Bible study draws its conclusions from the text, not our assumptions.

Read carefully and actively not passively. Get involved and engaged with what you are reading, but don't stop to look up words or try to figure out verses that you don't understand.

### **Observation Skill**

As you read be asking yourself, "What do I see in this passage, and what does it say?"

Begin to make notes of what you find.

To help answer these questions, here are some of the things you should look for:

Details, details, details!

Who wrote it?

When and for whom was it written?

What is the context?

Read the verses before and after the passage.

Read the whole chapter.

What subjects are being discussed?

What does it say before and after this passage?

What is the activity or event taking place?

Where is the activity or event taking place?

When is it happening?

What is the cultural or historical background of this passage?

Reference books and study helps are useful tools in the observation phase. Some of these tools are a regular or Bible dictionary, a Bible handbook and/or encyclopedia, a concordance, a Bible atlas, and maps. Many of these can be found online on sites such as the Blue Letter Bible (<https://www.blueletterbible.org>). Also, reading related Scriptures may help you to answer some of these questions or to find more details about your passage.

*"The only way to cut a diamond is by a diamond: diamond dust must be used if the gem is to be cut.*

*In like manner, the best way to understand Scripture is by Scripture itself. One of the best commentaries in the world is that which is "wholly biblical." Students of the Word, I pray you, study the Bible by the Bible; cut the diamond with the diamond; use the light of God in God's light:*

*'In Thy light shall we see light.'"*

*Charles Spurgeon*

Look for key words and/or words or phrases that are repeated.

Look for a topic that is repeated.

Look for figures of speech.

Look up words that you don't understand.

Investigate words like:

1. For/because (explanation),
2. So that/that (purpose or result)
3. Therefore/for this reason (conclusion or summary is being made)
4. But (contrast)

These words force us to look for context and slow down.

Watch for contrasts and comparisons.

Look for Literary Form:

1. Narrative
2. Discourse
3. Poetry/Wisdom
4. Prophetic

Listen to the tone of the writer's voice. Are his words urgent, commanding, encouraging?  
Again, make notes of what you find.

Be careful to not read into the passage what is not there, or assume you already know what it means before you start reading.

Always read as though it is the first time you've read this passage.

The more time you spend in observation, the easier it will be to go to the next phase of interpreting the passage and the more accurate your interpretation will be. If there is no observation there can be no interpretation.

### **Interpretation Skill**

This is the question you will be asking while using this skill: "What does this passage mean?"  
What is the significance of the details you discovered in the observation phase?"

The interpretation skill is the bridge between the observation and application.

The goal of this step is to decide on the single meaning of the passage when it was originally written.

Each passage of Scripture has only one meaning but may have several applications.

What is the purpose of this passage?

Why is it in the Bible?

How did the original author intend the words to be understood?

Discover what the author is saying, and don't add to his meaning.

Is your interpretation consistent with the rest of this chapter and book?

Is it consistent with other Scriptures about the same subject?

Are you considering the historic and cultural context?

Are you taking the Scripture out of its context to make it say what you want it to say?

Remember, context is king when it comes to interpretation.

Are you interpreting your Scripture passage literally?

Is there a spiritual lesson?

1. A command to obey?
2. A promise to claim?
3. A warning to heed?
4. An example to follow or avoid?
5. What does it teach us about God? What does it say about man?

Can you state that spiritual lesson/passage meaning in a single sentence?

*"These are interpretive dangers. Be wary of incomplete interpretation. Don't leave out what God included. Be careful to avoid exaggerated interpretation. Don't add in what God left out. Be especially careful about inaccurate interpretation."*

*Mark Anderson*

And now to the final step involved in Inductive Bible Study.

### **Application Skill**

The questions you will be asking while using this skill are: "What does this mean to me or how do I respond or how does the truth of this passage apply to my life?"

*"In Bible study, application is putting truth you've discovered (through observation and interpretation) to use in your life with the ultimate goal of transformation or life change."*

*Bruce Hurt*

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Is this a new lesson or does it just reinforce one I've already heard?

Does it challenge me to do something?

Is there an attitude to correct?

Has the Lord spoken to me about this before or is it a new lesson?

Is there a truth to believe?

Is there a person to forgive or a sin to confess?

Is there a promise to claim?

What steps will I take to make the changes required?

*"As we search the Scriptures, we must allow them to search us, to sit in judgment upon our character and conduct."*

*Jerry Bridges*

*"One step forward in obedience is worth years of study about it."*

*Oswald Chambers*

*"Heart appropriation, not merely head apprehension, is the true goal of Bible study.*

*Only in this way can believers grow spiritually. Spiritual maturity, in which we become more like Christ, comes not just from knowing more about the Bible.*

*It comes from knowing more about the Bible and applying it to our spiritual needs."*

*Dr. Roy Zuck*

Remember, like any skill, inductive Bible study takes time and practice to do it well and feel comfortable with it. It is SO important that we don't get discouraged, but that we persevere. Anyway, Bible study is all about the Holy Spirit not about us or our ability to go through the steps and come up with the right answers. Jesus promised that He will "guide us into all truth." We will stand on and believe that promise as we persevere.

**LEAN INTO JESUS!**

*This worksheet has been compiled from writings on the subject of Inductive Bible Study by Leah Case, Mark Anderson, Kay Arthur, Bruce Hurt, LaRosa Johnson and others.*