

5 STEPS TO

Inductive Bible study

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Opening Prayer

2

Observation

What does the text say?

3

Interpretation

What does the text mean?

4

Application

How does this apply to us?

5

Closing Prayer



STEP 1 *Opening Prayer*

Before you begin, it is important to start in prayer. You choose someone to pray over your time or use the prayer provided below. You may also choose to pray the provided prayer together as a group to set the tone of group participation.

Heavenly Father,
We invite Your Holy Spirit to be with us as we study Your Word. Open our hearts and minds to see clearly what is written, helping us to make faithful observations.
Guide us in interpreting Your truth rightly,
and give us the wisdom to apply it to our lives,
shaping us to be more like Christ each day.

**In Jesus' name,
*Amen.***

STEP 2

Observation

What does the text say?"

You don't need to be a Bible scholar to do this - in fact, it's often helpful to set aside prior assumptions and let the passage speak for itself.

Focus on what it says on its own. Accurate interpretation begins with careful observation of what is written in the passage. If you are doing this as a group, give time for people to study the text and engage in these questions. Then ask about what they observed to discuss.

ASK: WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? HOW?

Who are the main characters?

Who is talking and to whom?

What is happening?

What are the major ideas or teachings?

When did it happen or take place?

Where does the passage take place?

Where will the event happen?

Why was this passage written?

Additional Questions

Do you have any questions about the text?

Are there any words that would change the meaning if they were left out?

Is something being compared, contrasted, emphasized, left out?

What do you notice or what does it make you think?

Are there any references to other places, people, or times?

Do you notice any repeating words or themes?

STEP 3 *Interpretation*

What does this text mean?"

Faithful application begins with faithful interpretation. We must understand what God was saying to the original audience before asking what He is saying to us today. Without a proper understanding of God's truth, we cannot align our lives with it. Always read verses in context, consider cross-references, and let Scripture interpret Scripture. While we begin with the text itself, we also read Scripture within the wider Church, learning from those who have faithfully interpreted it before us. The Holy Spirit guides our understanding, often through the wisdom of the Church across time. Helpful resources like study Bibles and commentaries can guide us as we interpret Scripture.

Understanding Context

Before we can interpret a passage for today, we must understand the context in which it was written. All of Scripture was written in real places, to real people, in real situations. We cannot faithfully apply Scripture until we understand what it meant to its original audience. You don't need to know all of this right away, just begin asking these kinds of questions.

- What is happening historically when this was written?
- What cultural details might shape how this passage is understood?
- Where is this taking place and does that matter?
- What kind of writing is this? (narrative, poetry, letter, etc)

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

Use these questions to help better understand what the text meant to its original audience.

- What type of literature is the passage?
- Who wrote it and who did they write it to?
- What does this passage tell us about God?
- What does this passage tell us about mankind?
- What is the main point of this passage for the original audience?

Helpful Tip: Compare Translations

- Does it help you understand it better?
- Does it change the meaning of the text?



If you would like to go deeper into study including more information on context, literary devices and structural relationships, they can be found starting on page 23.

STEP 4

Application

How does this apply to us?

Now it's time for application! God's Word is living and powerful. Once you've arrived at the correct interpretation of the text for the original audience, ask the Lord how He wants you to apply it to your life. Application is where God's Word moves from the page to your heart.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond to what you've learned.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS

- Are there promises to hold onto?
- Commands or warnings to take seriously?
- Can you apply it to a situation you are currently experiencing?
- Any sin to confess and turn from?
- Reasons to offer praise to God?
- How can I encourage others with this?

STEP 5

Closing Prayer

Take time to pray through what you've learned. Thank God for speaking to you and ask Him to help you walk in obedience.

You might write out your prayer or keep a journal of what God is teaching you.