

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Training the Eye to See

OVERVIEW

Inductive Bible Study builds upon Observation, Interpretation, and Application. The study seeks to answer three questions:

1. **What do I see? (Observation)** – This is always the most challenging portion of Bible study, which most people give only cursory attention to (unfortunately). The key to doing Bible study is “training the eye to see.” Seeing correctly helps you Interpret correctly and so on. There are four basic things to look for:

- **Terms** – Terms have specific meaning based on their context.
- **Structure** – Look for Grammatical and Literary structure. Grammatical helps us see important info like subject, object, and main verbs. Literary structure reveals clues through recognition of things like questions and answers; cause and effect; etc.
- **Literary form** – are we looking at poetry, narrative, history, or prophecy.
- **Atmosphere** – reveals feeling, mood, tone and environment – what it is like to be in the author’s shoes.

2. **What does it mean? (Interpretation)** – What are the implications of what I just observed? Three things will help discover the meaning of the passage.

- Bombard the text with questions.
- Look for the answers (which will most often come out of the observation process).
- Integrate the parts and put them together. Put all the details together into a meaningful whole.

3. **How does it work? (Application)** – Two things to look for in this process:

- How does it work for me?
- How does it work for others?

INTRODUCTION

There are untold riches awaiting our discovery in the Word of God, but how does one discover them? First of all, you must realize that spiritual truths are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 clearly teaches that comprehension of the things of God does not come through man's senses but that God reveals them to us by His Spirit. Natural men-men who have never received the Lord Jesus Christ do not accept the things of God, neither do they understand them. Therefore, fundamental to all Bible study is the indwelling presence of God by His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our teacher (John 16:13-15; 1 John 2:27).

Secondly, however, we must remember that God's Word teaches us that we must diligently search out this wisdom. It is not "lightly" revealed. You will find it most profitable to take a moment and prayerfully read Proverbs 2:1-7. If Timothy 2:15 states that you are to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth" (NASV). How does one handle accurately the Word of God? To handle it accurately, first we must know what it says, then we must discern what it means and then and only then can we rightly apply it to life.

The systematic *inductive* approach to the study of God's Word is the most profitable. Our method is basically an inductive one. Inductive Bible study begins with a study of the Word of God itself, rather than books or commentaries about the Bible.

OUR APPROACH IN STUDYING A BOOK IS:

1. To become acquainted with the book through observation
2. To get an overview of the book by constructing a Horizontal Book Chart (this can be done in a Simple form or a Detailed form). We call this *Charting*.
3. To discover the setting and occasion of the book (included in the Charting format provided)
4. To do an Observation Worksheet on each chapter or sub-chapter.
5. To do accurate Interpretation of what the author is saying
6. To make personal Application

To glean the riches of God's truth requires uninterrupted study time. You must commit yourself to be diligent and steadfast in your study.

PROCEDURE FOR COMPLETING THE OVERVIEW

- I. Ask God, by His Spirit, to lead you into all truth, to open your eyes that you may behold wondrous things out of His Word.
- II. Read and re-read the book to be studied. The more you read the book, the better you will know the book. As you read, keep asking the Holy Spirit to give you "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." There is no substitute for reading and prayerfully meditating on the Word of God. A good idea here is to read the book in multiple translations.
- III. On your first reading of the book:
 - A. Read it in one sitting without stopping to analyze the book.
 - B. When you finish, make notes of your first impressions of the book.
- III. As you repeatedly read through the book, *train your eyes to look for the following:*
 - A. Repetition of key words and phrases
 1. A key word is an important or essential word in the text. It might be a noun, a descriptive word or an action word that plays a key part in conveying what the author wants to say.
 2. Examples of some key words in 1 John (based on KJV) are:
 - a. "Know": used 28 times and evenly distributed throughout the book.
 - b. "Sin": used 28 times throughout the book, but heaviest concentration is in chapter three.
 - c. "Love": used 46 times, 27 of which are found in chapter four.
 4. Examples of some key phrases in 1 John.
 - a. "Born of him" or the synonymous term "begotten of him" is used 9 times in the book, 5 of which are found in chapter five.
 - b. "Write unto you" is used approximately 12 times.

C. Contrasting words and phrases

1. Much truth can be illustrated by contrast, showing opposites, or differences. When you see a contrast, note the characteristics, if any, used to describe the things contrasted.
2. Examples of 1 John (KJV)
 - a. Darkness/light-1 John 1:5-7
 - b. Children of God/children of the devil-1 John 3:10
 - c. Love/hate-1 John 2:9-10

D. Lists of words, phrases, or related thoughts

1. Lists are series of things. A list might be contained within one verse, several verses, or spread throughout a paragraph, chapter, or book.
2. Examples from 1 John (KJV)
 - a. "Lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." 1 John 2:16
 - b. A broad list would be to take the repeated phrase, "born of God" or "begotten of him" from 1 John 5 and list the characteristics of one born of God as shown in the fifth chapter.

C. Changes in subject or thought

1. The Bible is not just a compilation of "verses" which are totally independent of one another, totally unrelated. Verses are manmade divisions of God's Word. God's Word is an expression of truth—truth of a broad number of subjects. Therefore, it is important for us to note the relationship of one verse to another, or to note when the thought or subject changes.
2. An example of change in thought or subject in 1 John.
 - a. In chapter one, John deals with fellowship, mentioning the word four times-but never using it again throughout the book. In 1:8-2:2 he changes the subject and talks about sin (note sin is used 8 times in 5 verses).
 - b. In a short book, the changes in subject may not be as distinct or as many as in a book like I Corinthians where Paul deals with many subjects.

C. Terms of conclusion such as "*wherefore*"; "*therefore*"; or "*finally*"

1. There is a *saying*—"find out what *the therefore is there for*."
2. An example of terms of conclusion is found in 1 Cor. 15:58. Why does Paul tell us "*therefore, be steadfast, immovable*" at the end of this chapter on the resurrection?

C. Words of comparison, such as "*like*", "*as*," or "*as it were*"

1. Terms of comparison are used to point out similarities or likenesses and many times amplify our understanding or comprehension of a thing, person or place.
2. Sometimes it will show you not only the comparison, but the way it is similar. Note Matt. 24:38, "*as in those days (comparison) ... they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage.*" This verse not only gives the comparison but also shows how they compare, what the similarities are.
3. Examples of terms of comparison

- a. The book of Revelation has many such terms—note Rev. 9:3. . . "*as the scorpions on earth have power.*"
- b. Look at Rev. 4:3—"*he... was like a jasper stone.*" It is showing a similarity rather than saying Christ is a jasper stone.

IV. As you read, train your mind to ask the "Five W's and an H."

- A. WHO: wrote it? to whom? about whom? to whom is he speaking?
- B. WHAT: are the main events? are the major ideas? are the major doctrines? is he talking about? is his purpose in saying that?
- C. WHEN: was it written? did this event take place? will it happen? did he say it?
- D. WHERE: was this done? was this said? will it happen?
- E. WHY: was this written? was this mentioned? was it not mentioned? was so much or 'so little space devoted to this particular event or teaching? this reference?
- F. HOW: is it done? well? is this truth illustrated?

HOW TO DO A HORIZONTAL BOOK CHART

PURPOSE

It is absolutely essential that you get the overview of a book before you begin to analyze it chapter by chapter so that you can see the relationship of the parts to the whole. This is accomplished through a Horizontal Book Chart (called *Charting*). Therefore, doing a Horizontal Book Chart will serve two purposes. First, it will give you an overview of the book as a whole. The overview is obtained by titling each chapter of the book in such a way that the title summarizes the main teaching of each chapter. Secondly, a Horizontal Book Chart will help you analyze the structure of the book you are studying. (See sample charts on the CMF Training Bible Study web page under "Further Study".)

STRUCTURE: The structure of the book is discerned by seeing the different divisions of the book. These divisions are called segment divisions and will show you how the author lays out his writing.

SEGMENT DIVISIONS: Segment divisions will require time and practice. Usually, you will see a general or broad division of a book after doing the overview. For instance, in Romans, chapters 1-11 are doctrinal; chapters 12-16 are practical. This is a segment division. You will find yourself discovering more possible segment divisions of a book after you have studied the book for awhile. So then, the segment division part of your Horizontal Book Chart will be developed more freely as you become more familiar with a book. Segment divisions will frequently but not always fall between chapters in a book.

V. After you have read the book several times, write out the answers to following questions:

- A. Who is the author of this book? Many times to understand a book, you need to understand the background of the one who wrote the book. At what period of his life was the book written? What were the circumstances in his life when he undertook his writing? Finding the answers to these questions many times will shed a whole new light on your understanding of a book, or may even make the difference between correct and incorrect interpretation. How do you find the answers to these questions and how do you determine their value in understanding a book? The best place to find out who wrote the book is a Bible Handbook or Bible Dictionary.
- B. To whom was this book written (audience)? The best place to find out who wrote the book is also a Bible Handbook or Bible Dictionary

- C. What is the historical setting surrounding the writing of the book and/or events in occurring in the book? As you do the preliminary reading of the book you are studying, record in your notebook any references to geographical locations, historical events, persons, or customs. These will give you clues to the historical setting of the book. If historical events are mentioned, this will give you a clue as to when the book was written unless it is a prophetic book. The date of writing is usually discussed in your commentaries in the introduction to the book. Otherwise, historical events will usually be studied as you do interpretation.
- D. What type of literature is it? It might be one of the following or a combination:
 - 1. Historical—e.g. Acts
 - 2. Biographical—e.g. Luke
 - 3. Poetical—e.g. Psalms
 - 4. Prophetic—e.g. Revelation
 - 5. Philosophical—e.g. Proverbs
 - 6. Letter—e.g. II Timothy
- E. What is the overall purpose of the book, from what you can observe thus far?
- F. What is the style or atmosphere of the book? Atmosphere is the feeling the author produces through his words or the recording of certain events. The atmosphere may be one of love, hate, joy, expectancy, peace, turmoil, distress, etc.
- G. What key words are repeated in the book?
- H. What is the main theme or themes of the book?
- I. Are there any other additional noteworthy personalities in addition to the author and they audience?
- J. Is there any relevant geography associate with the book? If geographical locations are mentioned, then turn to the back of your Bible and look up these places on a map.

One final word before we begin Charting. Seeing how the parts of the whole book relate to one another is vital to your understanding of individual verses within the book, as well as to the overall meaning. Not seeing the proper relationship of the parts to the whole is many times what causes perverted or wrong doctrine. Remember Scripture cannot contradict itself.

Now then, let's begin ... step by step. How excited you'll be at all you are going to learn as you patiently develop these new skills!

PROCEDURE

- I. Overview
 - A. Use a scrap piece of paper and organize it as shown for either **Simple Charting** or **Detailed Charting**.

Example of Simple Charting	
DIVISION	TITLE

Example of Detailed Charting		
TITLE	DIVISION	DESCRIPTION

- B. Read through the book looking for natural divisions or breaks in thought in what is written. Frequently, these will occur at chapter divisions, but not always. As you read each chapter, look for repeated words and phrases that would give you a general idea of its main or predominant theme for each division.
- C. For Simple Charting, develop a Title for each division based upon the content within each division (see the 2 Thes charting example to see **Simple Charting**). Use these simple rules for titling:
1. Make title short but descriptive.
 2. A title should contain at least one key word from the division, if possible. It is better to use words from the text rather than a paraphrase.
 3. A title should be distinctive from all other division titles.
- A. If you desire to do Detailed Charting, write down a description of what is discussion within each division (see the 1 John charting example to see **Detailed Charting**).
- B. When you finish writing down the description in your own words, then take each division description and title it according to the rules above. Write this title in the left hand margin next to its division number.

Example of Simple Charting	
DIVISION	TITLE
2 Thes 1:1-2	Greeting
2 The 1:3-5	Grateful about their lives
2 Thes 1:6-10	God's judgment is right
2 Thes 1:11-12	Prayers for the Thessalonian church
2 Thes 2:1-2	Be steadfast
2 Thes 2:3-12	What is yet to occur
Etc	Etc

Example of Detailed Charting		
TITLE	DIVISION	DESCRIPTION
Proclaimed personal testimonies written down	1 John 1:1-4	That which witnessed by us, we proclaim to you. The eternal life is proclaimed to you. Our fellowship with the Father and Son. Proclaim to make joy complete.
Christ's Message: Walk in the Light	1 John 1:5-7	Our message we heard: In Christ, no darkness. If in Him, must walk in the Light and thereby have fellowship, and Jesus' blood purifies us.
Christ's Message: Must confess sinfulness	1 John 1:8-10	To claim to be free of sin deceives self. In contrast, must confess sinfulness.

If in Him, Then Jesus intercedes for us	1 John 2:1-2	If we sin, Jesus speaks in our defense to the Father. Not only for us but for the world.
Obedience is evidence of our joining Christ	1 John 2:3-6	If we join Him, then we must obey Him. We cannot say we love Christ and not obey Him.
Obedience has always been required	1 John 2:7-8	Obedience is not new but has always been God's requirement. This is seen new in Christ.
Obedience exemplified by loving our brother	1 John 2:9-11	Obedience is seen in loving our brother. If unwilling to obey Christ by not loving our brother, then not in Christ.
Etc	Etc	Etc

F. When you finish titling all your divisions, make a chart like the Horizontal Book Chart and fill in your chapter titles. (see either the 2 Thes (Simple Charting) or 1 John (Detailed Charting) by going to the CMF Training Bible Study web page, under the section "Further Study")

II. Segment Divisions

B. Look at your Horizontal Book Chart with its division titles and see if these divisions can be grouped together in any way. Perhaps they can be grouped together in any of the following ways:

1. Doctrinal and practical
2. According to time (this would be seen especially in a historical or biographical book).
3. According to place—where different events of the book take place geographically.
4. According to topic or outline: different subjects or teachings the author may cover. For example in Corinthians, Paul covers the topic of spiritual gifts in I Cor. 12-14, then in I Cor. 15 he deals with the resurrection.

- A. The number and type of segment divisions will vary according to the type of literature you are studying and according to the size of the book.
- B. Now, record these divisions or "breakdowns" of the book on a horizontal line under the chapter divisions that they cover. You may end up with multiple rows of segment divisions going from smaller groupings to larger groups. Again, see the examples provided on the CMF Training Bible Study page under "Further Study."
- C. Remember, this particular part of the Horizontal Book Chart will be easier for you as you do it more and more. *Don't bog down or become discouraged in trying to discern segment divisions. This will come with experience, and you will find it most rewarding.*

OUTLINE

The final task for the Horizontal Book Chart is to develop an outline. You can do this many ways but 2 are suggested.

- A. First, you can use Segment Divisions to build your outline using your large Segment Divisions for your major topics (I, II, III,...). Then use your smaller Segment Divisions for minor topics (A., B., C., and 1., 2., 3., etc.).
- B. The other option is to use a Bible Handbook or Bible Dictionary's outline as a comparison to how you broke down the book in your Charting and Segment Divisions. This can be a source of good discussion for your Bible Study forum. You may find that you disagree with how Bible Handbooks and Bible Dictionaries divide the Book. That's great. That means you are beginning to own the passage for YOURSELF.