

Core Seminar

How To Study the Bible

Class 3: The Inductive Bible Study Method, Part 2

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*“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”* (James 1:22-24)

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*Teaching point:*

* Save question time for the end - where people can do the application.
* Work through the manuscript studiously and swiftly, in order to get to the practical stuff

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Introduction

Last week we began learning the inductive method of Bible study. “Inductive” simply means that we’re working from the bottom up - we setting out to study at the level of an individual passage.

Do you remember the three steps in inductive study?

Observation, Interpretation, and Application

Can anyone share something they learned last week about observation?

Did anyone put it to work this week in your own personal study?

Any examples of what you got from a text of Scripture because of your new powers of observation?

Can anyone share something they learned last week about interpretation?

What’s our goal in interpretation?

[to understand what the text meant for its original audience]

This morning we head on to our third step: application. And we’ll spend most of our time today putting these three steps together to study a passage from Philippians.

Application

Application is incredibly important. We may *think* that if we observe and interpret well we’ve studied well. But unless we apply what we see to our lives, we’re not actually accomplishing anything of value.

A great verse to remind you of the value of application is found on the very first page of your handout. James 1:22-24

I’m guessing that most of us don’t spend time studying the Bible with the express purpose of *not* applying it to our lives.

What are some of the things that keep us from applying Scripture?

Or applying it well?

* Not understanding it well (need steps 1 and 2 first)
* Not enough time to think hard about how it connects to our lives (or too tired, too distracted, etc.)
* Unwillingness to consider sin in our lives. We see the Bible’s job as affirming us rather than changing us.
* We only ever apply Scripture individually rather than doing it *with* someone who may see things in our lives that we don’t.
* We’re not very introspective (or honest about ourselves) so we have a hard time seeing what we’re really like.

Our job for the next few minutes is to think about how we *can* apply Scripture well. Let’s start with some questions for application—and then we’ll look at some guidelines for application.

First the questions. Here are some questions you can ask yourself as you study a passage in the Bible to help apply it to your life.

1. Does it point out *sin* in my life?
2. What *assumptions* does it have that I don’t share?
3. Is there a *command* to obey?
4. Is there an *encouragement*?
5. Is there a *promise for me*?
6. Does it teach me something about God?
7. Does it teach me something about *myself?*
8. What evidence for my *faith* does it give me?
9. What will I *do* differently today?
10. How can I model/share/teach this truth to encourage *others*?
11. What application is their for us as a *family* or as a *church*?

Questions?

OK. I also promised some guidelines to help us apply Scripture well. Here they are:

1. Pray first. I mentioned this already, but I’ll mention it again. “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.” That is what we are apart from God’s grace. We need to pray for spiritual sight to see truth in his word. Psalm 119:18 is a great prayer when you open up God’s word. “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”
2. Give yourself enough time to think. Sometimes in the morning the kids are screaming and you didn’t sleep much and you can grab just a few minutes in God’s word and in prayer. That’s fine! But plan at least normally to have enough time to let God’s word really weigh on your heart.
3. Write. For many of us, we think best as we write. Write down what you’re thinking as you’re thinking it.
4. Talk. With someone else. I hope that what you’re thinking about in your study of God’s word is a regular topic of conversation with your spouse, your kids, and your Christian friends. Invite them to help you apply God’s word to your life.
5. Listen. Sometimes after you’ve spent time in the text on your own, it can be good to listen to what someone else has thought about it. Sermons are normally best for this. You can download sermons from our church website or other places you trust online. Or you can buy printed sermons by pastors you trust. Another good source is a passage-by-passage devotional book like *Morning and Evening* by C.H. Spurgeon or *For the Love of God* by D.A. Carson.

What are some things you’ve found most helpful to apply Scripture to your life?

Example

OK. With all that said, let’s take the rest of our time together to study a passage from Philippians. You’ll see it on your handout.

[Some notes for you are below]

* Pray!
* Read the passage
* Context (go quickly!) – will go over more in depth in section 3 of the class
  + Genre? - a letter
  + Author? – The Apostle Paul
  + Audience? – The church at Philippi – town in Macedonia (current day Greece)
    - We see the formation of this church in Acts 16 and Paul visits them again on his 3rd missionary journey in Acts 20
  + Part thank you, part exhortation/warning, and part hopeful plans
  + Locate our passage within the letter
    - What’s already been said in chapter 2?
      * Christ humbled himself and so we too should humble ourselves – 2.5

Observation – 5 Ws – What you see? Where do you see it?

* Who are the main people in this passage?
  + Paul - triangle, Philippians – square, Timothy - circle, Epaphroditus – circle with squiggly line
  + “everyone” v. 21? – some render it “they” – perhaps - selfish ambition preachers - 1.15-16 or opponents – v. 28
* What is going on in our passage? (Think about the circumstances)
  + Paul wants to send Timothy to the Philippians (19)
    - Paul commends him (20)
  + Paul is sending Epaphroditus back (25)
  + Paul wants to visit (24) – in chapters 1 and 2 he seems confident he will be freed
  + Epaphroditus was sick but is now better (26)
  + What is going on at the end of v. 23 – “as soon as I see how things go with me”?
* When are these things taking place?
  + After the church had been established
  + After Epaphroditus visits Paul
* Where are these people according to the text?
  + Paul is still in jail (23)
  + Timothy is with Paul
  + Epaphroditus seems to be the messenger in transit
* Why does Paul write this section of the letter? What are his motivations, his purposes? Why all of this sending and going? – with the Why question we start to creep into interpretation.
  + He wants to hear how the Philippians are doing through Timothy which will bring him cheer (19).
  + He commends Timothy to the Philippians
    - He cares (20)
    - He is trustworthy (22) in contrast to others (21)
  + He loves them and longs to see them (24)
  + To thank and commend Epaphroditus (25)
  + To explain that Epaphroditus is ok - he got sick, but he’s ok now (27)
  + Paul and Epaphroditus are distressed and anxious (26, 28)

Interpretation

Anything tricky? Maybe verse 21 (See Phil 1:15 for context)

Application

(You’re essentially doing Wed night Bible Study here)

What can we learn from this passage?

Notice the care and concern for each other.

Notice the generosity.