



Every Day
with Jesus

EXPLORING THE *Bible*

A tool for personal or group Bible study

There are a number of ways to study the Bible. This study supplement sets out a plan for what is called the Inductive Bible Study Method. It is simple but highly effective. The word 'inductive' describes a logical process that moves us from learning and understanding facts to drawing conclusions about them. Sometimes the term 'inductive reasoning' is used which, simply stated, is drawing conclusions from the facts. It is discovery based on careful consideration,

and the goal here is to understand better particular passages of Scripture. What you will need for this inductive study is your Bible, a notebook and a few basic reference books, such as a Bible handbook and concordance. You may not be able to complete this study plan at one sitting. It's important to take it at your own pace. The Bible underlines several benefits from taking time to study it. These can become a powerful motivation for us to follow through with inductive Bible study.

MOTIVATIONAL CHART

Read each scripture, write out a summary statement of a few words and jot down the key word of the verse.

| Scripture | Summary statement | Key word |
|----------------|-------------------|----------|
| Josh. 1:8 | | |
| Psa. 119:9-11 | | |
| Psa. 119:105 | | |
| Prov. 4:20-23 | | |
| Jer. 15:16 | | |
| John 17:17 | | |
| Rom. 10:17 | | |
| Eph. 5:26 | | |
| Eph. 6:17 | | |
| 1 Pet. 1:23-25 | | |
| 1 Pet. 2:2 | | |

Keep this as your motivational encourager. It will help you apply yourself to inductive Bible study.

INDUCTIVE APPROACH

The inductive approach has three significant components for exploring the understanding and meaning of a biblical passage: observation, interpretation and application.



OBSERVATION:

What do I see? What known facts are contained in this passage?

INTERPRETATION:

What does it mean considering these facts? What clear conclusions can be drawn?

APPLICATION:

What does it mean for me? How does it relate to the issues of life?

Recognise that inductive study takes dedication and time. You will therefore need to think through how much time you can set aside in addition to your daily devotional time. There are several possibilities. You could join with a group one evening, or put a particular time aside, or spend 15 minutes a day responding to some of the questions.

I have selected three passages: Ephesians 1, Luke 15 and Psalm 42. You can select one of these to work with through the following exercises, or select one of your own choice. First of all, read through all the sections to get a feel of the process, then come back to the first section, and as you answer the questions you can tick the appropriate box.



OBSERVATION - WHAT DO I SEE?

When we approach a passage of Scripture we need to grasp its content. In order to obtain the best understanding it is helpful to move through three stages. Always remember that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Before reading your selected passage, spend a few moments in prayer asking for the Holy Spirit's help and guidance.



INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We can grasp the facts, but unless we come to understand their meaning and purpose we will not fully benefit from our personal Bible study. Interpretation brings meaning to the facts. There are three important elements in interpretation:

1. Look at the passage in its entirety

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- Read the passage through three to five times at one sitting
- Write down five initial impressions
- Write down five actual facts contained in the passage
- Write down five things the passage is saying to its readers
- Ask the 'who, what, where, when' questions

2. Try to understand the framework of the passage

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- What is the central message or are there several messages?
- What is the pattern of thought and logical development?
- Is there repetition, emphasis or a recurrence of the same phrase?
- What are the contrasts or comparisons?
- What are the explanations and illustrations?
- What is the summary and what are the questions asked or answered?

3. Explore the details of the passage

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- What items of interest stand out?
- What elements need further exploration and clarification?
- What are the key words to understand?
- What are the key places and people to find out about?
- Is there a cross-reference to add further perspective?
- Ask the 'who, what, where, when' questions again

1. Revelation - What is God saying in the passage?

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- What is God revealing about Himself?
- What is God revealing about the human condition?
- What is God revealing about His purposes?
- What is God revealing about His people?
- What is God revealing about His Son Jesus?

2. Inspiration - How has the Holy Spirit inspired the author?

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- What has the Holy Spirit put in the heart of the author?
- How has the Holy Spirit used His passion, pain and perspective?
- How has the Holy Spirit envisioned the writer?
- How has the Holy Spirit used the writer's life experience?
- How has the Holy Spirit related the written message to the readers' need?

3. Illumination - Opening my eyes to the truth contained in the passage

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- What other scriptures focus on this truth? (ie comparison)
- Examine the truth in its historical, conceptual and literal setting (ie context)
- What explanation are any word pictures giving? (ie confirmation)
- Use other resources to cross-check, eg concordance, Bible dictionary, Old Testament-New Testament word study book (ie consultation)
- What is the clear message of the passage? (ie conclusion)



APPLICATION - HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

Having moved through the process of observation and understood the meaning of the passage through interpretation, we need to act upon what we have learned. There are three areas to consider:

1. Personally - What does it mean for me?

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- Sins to forsake
- Promises to claim
- Principles to apply
- Examples to follow
- Commands to obey
- Stumbling-blocks to avoid

2. Relationally - What does it mean for my relationships?

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- How can I demonstrate it to those with whom I have contact?
- How can I apply it in the church context?
- What does it mean in my family relationships?
- How can I work it out in the context of my employment?
- Does it indicate I need to put something right in a relationship?

3. Universally - What does it mean for a lost and dying world?

Eph. 1 Luke 15 Psa. 42

- How does it help me to fulfil the great commission?
- How does it help me to demonstrate the gospel?
- What does it mean for my personal witness?
- How does it apply to reaching out to those who don't know Christ?
- How can I apply it to reveal the love of Christ?

Having completed your inductive Bible study programme, the final stage is meditation.



MEDITATION

From the passage you have been studying take a particular verse that has struck you and begin to meditate on it. I am selecting as an example one from Ephesians 1:

'... that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints ...' (Eph 1:18)

1. Select your own verse

2. Memorise your verse

- Read the verse to yourself slowly several times, out loud if you can
- Write out the words several times until you can do so from memory
- Underline key words, then repeat the verse emphasising the key words
- Rewrite your selected verse underlining the key words

3. Use your imagination

As you allow the verse to take hold in your mind, let it spark your imagination. Remember Jesus taught with word pictures - parables.

Example: Ephesians 1:18

Hope: a certain hope, not a lost cause - picture someone being rescued from the ocean

Called you: personally chosen - picture a king calling a commoner into his presence

Riches: abundant supply - picture a gold mine, an oil-well, a diamond mine

Inheritance: a predetermined provision - picture a down-and-out discovering he is the beneficiary of a large legacy.

4. Does a biblical picture come to mind?^

The Bible is full of stories and accounts that illustrate aspects of biblical truth. Find one and read through it again.

Example: Is there a story that relates someone finding hope by being called into the king's presence to discover they have become rich because of someone else's provision? Turn to 2 Samuel 9 - the story of King David making Mephibosheth one of his sons and restoring to him the lands of his grandfather.

What biblical story relates to your selected verse?

5. Allow the thoughts to go in and out of your consciousness at different times of the day

6. Use the verse as an opportunity to talk with God

Example: O Lord, I am so grateful that You have given me hope and assurance, that You've called me by name and provided for me the riches of Your grace. Help me today to draw upon You and be a blessing to others.

Remember, biblical meditation is the practice of holding a phrase or verse of Scripture in our thoughts, pondering it and viewing it from every angle of the imagination. Allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to you its hidden truths, thus bringing life and vitality to your soul.