Forging the Sword: Inductive Bible Study Manual

Digging into Scripture to find Transformation

A Theology of Inductive Bible Study
When we read the Bible, we tend to want to skip the small nitty gritty stuff and get straight to applying it. Before we apply we must acknowledge there are steps to follow through to apply it that can impact the rest of our understanding of the passage.

Movements during Inductive Bible Study
1) Observation: What does the passage say?
   - Establishes a foundational knowledge of what the text is saying.
2) Interpretation: What does the passage mean?
   - Seeks to understand the meaning of the text as if it was intended to convey by its original author to the original audience.
3) Application: How does the passage affect me? What can I do in order to be obedient to God through the meaning of this passage?
   - Evaluate how the text is best to be incorporated into one’s daily life.

Accurate interpretation and correct application rest on the accuracy of your observation.

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**OBSERVATION**
- Observation seeks to establish a foundational knowledge of what the text says and to discern what may warrant further study.

**Steps for Observation**
1) Ask who, what, when, where, why, and how questions.
2) Establish the context and background.
3) Consider the implication of the grammatical structure and connotation of words.
4) Mark key words and phrases.
5) Make a list.
6) Look for comparisons and contrasts.
7) Identify words, ideas, or phrases that you don’t understand.
8) Focus on terms of conclusion.

**OBSERVATION – Literary features to give additional attention**

1) Repetition
2) Escalation
3) Comparison and Contrast
4) Association
5) Question and Answer
6) Conjunctions
7) Conditional Clauses
8) Illustration
9) Quotation
10) Irony
INTERPRETATION

- Interpretation seeks to understand the meaning of the text as it was intended to convey by the original author to the original audience (exegetical level).

Steps for Interpretation
1) Allow the passage to speak for itself without reading into the possible meaning of the passage through the lens of your own views or experiences.
2) Initially, read and interpret the Bible literally when sensible.
3) Use the 9 kinds of context (see below) to better understand the passage.
4) If there’s something you don’t know or need further explanation, consult other resources.
5) Identify figures of speech and parables in their context.
6) Try to identify the timeless principle of the passage.

Context determines the meaning of words, phrases, and literary units.

Does my interpretation of the passage, particularly the timeless principle, agree with the occasion and setting of the book it comes from?

INTERPRETATION – Contextual Triad (see Appendix for details)
1) Theological Context
   - Covenantal context
   - Thematic context
   - Revelation-Historical context
2) Historical Context
   - Geopolitical context
   - Cultural context
   - Situational context
3) Literary Context
   - Surrounding context
   - Canonical context
   - Literary genre or subgenre context

INTERPRETATION – Interpretive Questions
1) Questions of Content: Seek to understand the substance of the text and the significance of its content.
2) Questions of Relationship: Probe the relationship of words, phrases, and concepts within and between literary units.
3) Questions of Intention: Search out the author’s intentions.
4) Questions of Implication: Explore the implications and ramifications of interpretation.
APPLICATION

- Application not only puts knowledge into practice, but also evaluates how a text is best incorporated into one’s life requiring nuance and discernment.

Steps for Application

1) Discover how the original author intended his original audience to apply the text.
2) Distinguish between “knowing” texts and “doing” texts.
3) Distill the underlying principles within the texts.
4) Determine the appropriate boundaries of what the text can and cannot mean for today.
5) Develop potential scenarios in which the text can be applied.
6) Develop a tangible action plan where others can keep you accountable to follow through on your commitment.

No matter how much you know about God’s Word, if you don’t apply what you learn, Scripture will never benefit your life.

When knowing, feeling, and doing comes together in application, the work of the Holy Spirit’s transformation can occur.

APPLICATION – Confusing Difference and Application

- Difference: Identifying Scriptural Transformation
  - Determining where the text connects with real life, especially when counting the cost of obedience or disobedience.
  - How is the text challenging me to transform my life to be more like Christ?
    - How does the meaning of the passage apply to me?
    - What truths am I to embrace, believe, or order my life around?
    - What changes should I make in my beliefs when I’m at school, at home, or at Lighthouse?

- Application: Living out Scriptural Transformation
  - Committing to actionable next steps in your daily life.
  - What can I do in order to be obedient to God through the meaning of the passage?
INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY MANUAL: APPENDIX
OBSERVATION – Sensible Principles for Thinking through Scripture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literal Principle</td>
<td>Take the words of the Bible at face value. Avoid reading into the text what is not there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Principle</td>
<td>Always strive to understand the text within the confines of its historical, literary, and theological context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>One-Meaning Principle</td>
<td>There will normally only be one correct interpretation of a text, although there may be multiple applications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exegetical Principle</td>
<td>The meaning of any biblical text must be drawn from the text rather than be ascribed or given to the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic Principle</td>
<td>The original languages of the Bible always take precedence over any given translation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Principle</td>
<td>Later revelation may clarify, complete, or supersede earlier revelation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harmony Principle</td>
<td>A given portion of the Bible can have only that meaning which harmonizes with the doctrine of the Bible as a whole. There will be continuity between books of the Bible.</td>
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OBSERVATION – Differences between Deductive and Inductive Reasoning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deduction</th>
<th>Induction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumption based</td>
<td>Evidence based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves from universals to particulars</td>
<td>Moves from particulars to universals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begins with absolute premises and derives certain conclusions</td>
<td>Pieces the data together to derive meaning</td>
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OBSERVATION – Pay additional attention to Literary Features (Detailed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Feature</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Biblical Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>When a word, phrase, or concept is used in more than once in a passage.</td>
<td>Jonah 4:1; Romans 11:28-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escalation</td>
<td>When a line of argument builds towards a climax.</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; Amos 6:17; Romans 8:31-39;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparison and Contrast</td>
<td>When words, phrases, Concepts, or figures are juxtaposed against something else as a means of further explanation.</td>
<td>Joshua 2-7; Proverbs 1-9; John 5; Romans 14:1-15:6; Galatians 5:16-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>When words, phrases, or motifs relate to one another in association.</td>
<td>Spiritual Gifts/Love Passages: Romans 12:6-8 and Eph. 4:11-12; Romans 12:9-20 and Ephesians 4:13-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question and Answer</td>
<td>When questions are used to frame an argument.</td>
<td>Luke 18:18; Romans 6:1-2a; Gal. 3:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>Words that direct the flow of a discourse.</td>
<td>Ephesians 4:17; Titus 4:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Clauses</td>
<td>Clauses that contain a statement of condition.</td>
<td>Gal 1:10; Col. 3:1; 1 John 2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td>An example of some kind which point serves to clarify a point.</td>
<td>Phil. 2:1-11; 2 Tim. 2:3-7; James 2:14-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Echoes, allusions, and quotations of previous material, most notably, the Old Testament in the New.</td>
<td>Phil. 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 2 Tim 2:11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony</td>
<td>A figure of speech in which words Express opposite meaning from what is intended, or plot outcomes are the opposite of what is expected.</td>
<td>Esther; Job; John 3:4; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Galatians 6:2</td>
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OBSERVATION – Gaps in Understanding the Bible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical Challenges</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time Gap</td>
<td>The events depicted in Scripture occurred in a historical context far removed from the 21st century.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geographical Gap</td>
<td>The events recorded in the Bible took place in lands far removed from that of most Bible students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Gap</td>
<td>The cultures reflected in the Bible are drastically different than our own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary Challenges</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Gap</td>
<td>The languages of the Bible are far different than English. The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew with small segments in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Koine (common) Greek.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Gap</td>
<td>There are many genres and subgenres utilized by the biblical authors. To properly handle the text, we have to learn to navigate the diverse literary genres represented in Scripture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theological Challenges</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural Gap</td>
<td>The Bible presents supernatural realities and miraculous events, things not normally experienced in the natural world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Gap</td>
<td>The Bible is God's self-revelation in his Word and must be read with the expectation that it communicates truth to humankind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation Gap</td>
<td>Even once we bridge the gaps to interpretation, we still must transfer the message from interpretation to application. This is often a greater challenge than interpretation, but absolutely necessary.</td>
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OBSERVATION – Six kinds of Nonroutine terms

1) *Contextually Crucial Terms*: Words and phrases that in a particular context convey the primary argument or meaning of a passage.

2) *Theologically Profound Terms*: Words and phrases that infer theological significance.

3) *Historically Particular Terms*: Culturally, geographically, or historically particular terms that may not be understood outside of the world of the Bible.

4) *Exegetically/Textually Uncertain Terms*: Words that are exegetically or textually uncertain in the context.

5) *Figurative Terms*: Words and phrases that convey figures of speech.

6) *Symbolic Terms*: Words and phrases that convey symbolic significance in a given context.
INTERPRETATION – Contextual Triad

1) Theological Context
   - Covenantal context: The consideration of the theological covenants that regulate God’s relationship to his people throughout salvation history. Covenantal context provides the theological grounding that often explains God’s relationship to his people.
   - Thematic context: The theological themes that carry throughout passages of a book or even transcending across books of the Bible. The consideration of thematic context provides appropriate limitations on the extent to which Scripture can interpret Scripture.
   - Revelation-Historical context: The consideration of reading Scripture to determine at what point in revelation history a text is located (For example, even though Abraham knew less about God’s complete plan of salvation than Paul did it does not negate Abraham’s less complete knowledge of God’s plan of salvation). The Revelation-Historical context reveals God’s interaction with his people. Considering the revelation-historical context of a passage in Scripture requires employing the progressive principle (God didn’t reveal his Word to humanity all at once, nor has he set forth the same conditions for humankind throughout history. Therefore, some of his later may supersede former stipulations, as later information may complete or clarify what was given earlier. A progression in Scripture doesn’t imply that a contradiction is present.).

2) Historical Context
   - Geopolitical context: Involves the historical, political, and geographical setting of the events reflected within a given portion of Scripture.
   - Cultural context: Within the 66 books of the Bible, multiple cultures are reflected. Considering the customs and manners of biblical cultures, including their religious conventions and expectations. All biblical authors assume cultural awareness that modern readers simply don’t possess.
   - Situational context: Pertains to the context of the author, audience, and the events surrounding the writing or development of the biblical text. Understanding the circumstances behind an event will often provide necessary insight for understanding the event itself.

3) Literary Context
   - Surrounding context: Words and phrases have the capacity to convey multiple meanings (nuanced or obvious), and ultimately it’s the surrounding context that determines the meaning of those words and phrases. In any writing, thoughts are expressed in association rather than isolation.
   - Canonical context: The unique contributions and relationships between books arranged within the Bible to make up 66 books to make one book we call “the Bible.”
   - Literary genre or subgenre context: The functional and structural traits inherent within the genre of the text must be considered as a facet of reading contextually.
INTERPRETATION – Ten Suggestions for Asking the Right Questions of the Text
1) Allow your observations to be a springboard for your interpretive questions.
2) When asking interpretive questions, don’t limit yourself to general issue of content.
3) Simple questions of who, why, where, what, and how may be a good starting point, but the serious student will ask more detailed questions that are particular to the text at hand.
4) Interpretive questions should be both broad (questions of intent and purpose) and narrow (questions pertaining to word meaning).
5) An interpretive question can and often should speculate regarding possible answers, and speculative questions ought to be a hallmark of any inquiry that probes deep into the text.
6) Allow your knowledge of biblical and theological issues to influence you in the question-asking process.
7) Remember, the process of asking interpretive questions will begin with observation but may be further enhanced and expanded during the interpretive process.
8) Some questions aren’t interpretive questions at all but rather pertain to application (what the text means to us today) rather than interpretation (what the text meant to the original readers).
9) Questions shouldn’t be asked simply for the sake of asking questions! A commandment didn’t come off of the mountain proclaiming, “Thou must ask interpretive questions!”
10) Finally, remember that asking interpretive questions is simply that – asking questions – and one shouldn’t feel compelled to answer interpretive questions prematurely.

APPLICATION – Helpful Questions to ask when Applying
1. What does the passage teach?
   - Is it general or specific?
   - Does it only apply to specific people? To a cultural problem of the day? To a certain time in history?
   - Has it been superseded by a broader teaching?
2. Does this section of Scripture expose any error in your beliefs or in your behavior?
   - Are there any commandments that you have not obeyed?
   - Are there any wrong attitudes or motives in your life that the Scriptures bring to light?
3. What is God’s instruction to you as His child?
   - Are there any new truths to be believed?
   - Are there any new commandments to be acted upon?
   - Are there any new insights to pursue?
   - Are there any promises to embrace?
APPLICATION – Digging Deeper with Application
- S – Is there a **SIN** for me to avoid?
- P – Is there a **PROMISE** for me to claim?
- E – Is there an **EXAMPLE** for me to follow?
- C – Is there a **COMMAND** for me to obey?
- K – How can this passage increase my **KNOWLEDGE** of God?

APPLICATION – Examples of Difference and Application
- Difference: I want to have more intentional spiritual conversations with my friends at school.
- Application: I will find one friend this week at school and ask about their family’s faith background.

APPLICATION – When applying Scripture, be aware of the following.
1. Applying cultural standards rather than biblical standards.
2. Attempting to strengthen a legitimate truth by using Scripture incorrectly.
3. Applying Scripture out of prejudice from past training or teaching.

APPLICATION – Why think, feel, and do?: Pitfalls of applying when not ready

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you apply before knowing…</td>
<td>you become legalistic, following rules you don’t understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you apply before conviction…</td>
<td>you become hypocritical, following rules for the wrong reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you apply without commitment…</td>
<td>you experience roller coaster Christianity, following values lacking consistency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources**

*Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology* – Fuhr and Köstenberger (2016)
