

HOW TO USE THE INDUCTIVE STUDY APPROACH



If you know there is more to the Word of God than you have discovered so far...

- ☞ If you sense there must be concrete answers to the complexities of life...
- ☞ If you want a bedrock faith that keeps you from being tossed around by conflicting philosophies in the world and the church...
- ☞ If you want to be able to face the uncertainties of the future without fear...

...then *The New Inductive Study Bible* is designed for you.

God's eternal, infallible Word is your guidebook for all of life, and inductive study gives you the key to understanding that guide.

Inductive study, a method that brings you directly to the Word of God apart from another's understanding or interpretation of the text, involves three skills: *observation, interpretation, and application*.

OBSERVATION **Observation** teaches you to see precisely what the passage says. It is the basis for accurate interpretation and correct application. Observation answers the question: What does the passage say?

INTERPRETATION **Interpretation** answers the question: What does the passage mean?

APPLICATION **Application** answers the question: What does it mean to me personally? What truths can I put into practice? What changes

should I make in my life?

When you know what God says, what He means, and how to put His truths into practice, you will be equipped for every circumstance of life. Ultimately, the goal of personal Bible study is a transformed life and a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.

The following ten steps provide the basis for inductive study. As you take these steps, observation, interpretation, and application will sometimes happen simultaneously. God can give you insight at any point in your study, so be sensitive to His leading. When words or passages make an impression on you, stop for a moment and meditate on what God has shown you. Record your personal notes and insights in the margin so that you can remember what you've learned.

One of the most valuable aspects of the *NISB* is its wide-margin format, which has been specifically designed to enable you to easily keep a record of what God personally reveals to you from His Word. Although some are hesitant to mark in their Bibles, this interactive Bible has been designed with marking in mind. God wants you to know, understand, and remember His Word, and one of the most profitable ways to do this is to interact with the text through marking and writing.

As you study the Bible chapter by chapter and book by book, you will grow in your ability to comprehend the whole counsel of God. In the future, you will be able to refer to your notes again and again as you study portions of Scripture and grow in your knowledge of Him.

OBSERVATION

Discover What It Says!

STEP ONE

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

Prayer is often the missing element in Bible study. You are about to learn the most effective method of Bible study there is. Yet apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, that's all it will be—a method. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth, who takes the things of God and reveals them to us. Always ask God to teach you as you open the Scriptures.

STEP TWO

ASK THE “5 W’S AND AN H”

As you study any passage of Scripture, any book of the Bible, train yourself to constantly ask: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* These questions are the building blocks of precise observation, which is essential for accurate interpretation. Many times Scripture is misinterpreted because the context isn't carefully observed. Asking these questions will help you to stay in the context of the passage.

When we rush into interpretation without laying the vital foundation of observation, our understanding becomes colored by our presuppositions—what we think, what we feel, or what other people have said. We must be careful not to distort the Scriptures to our own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

Accurate answers to the following questions will help assure correct interpretation.

Who is speaking? Who is this about?

Who are the main characters? For example, look at the sample passage from 1 Peter 5 (see page NISB-19). In this chapter, “I” is speaking. Verse 1 tells us that “I” is a fellow elder, a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory to follow. From reading this and previous chapters (the context), you recognize that the “I” is Peter, the author of this epistle. You’ll want to mark the author in a special color (such as blue) to help you with your study.

And, **to whom is he speaking?** Verse 1 refers to “the elders,” verse 5 to “you younger men,” and verse 6 to “yourselves” (the recipients of the epistle). You’ll find it helpful to mark the recipients in another color.

What is the subject or event covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the event, or the teaching from the text? What instructions are given? In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter instructs the elders to shepherd the flock and exercise oversight.

When do or will the events occur? When did or will something happen to a particular person, people, or nation? When is a key question in determining the progression of events. In 1 Peter 5:4, we learn that “when the Chief Shepherd appears,” the elders will receive their “unfading crown of glory.” Mark references to time (such as “when”) with a clock ⌚.

Where did or will this happen? Where was it said? In 1 Peter 5, the only reference to a place is in verse 13, where there is a greeting from “she who is in Babylon.” Mark geographical locations by double-underlining them in green.

Why is something being said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why

at this time? Why this person? First Peter 5:12 explains why and how Peter wrote this epistle, establishing the book's purpose: to exhort and testify that this is the true grace of God, that they may stand firm in it.

How will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated? In 1 Peter 5:2, note *how* the elders are to exercise oversight: voluntarily and eagerly, according to the will of God.

Every time you study a passage of the Bible, you should keep the "5 W's and an H" in mind. Don't be concerned if you can't find the answer to each question every time. Remember, there are many types of literature in the Bible and not all the questions will apply. As you ask *what, when, who, where, why, and how*, make notes in the margin of your Bible. Meditate on the truths God reveals to you. Think how they apply to you. This will keep your study from becoming an intellectual pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

STEP THREE

MARK KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

A key word is one that is essential to the text. It might be a noun, a descriptive word, or an action that plays a part in conveying the author's message. A key word or phrase is one which, when removed, leaves the passage devoid of meaning. Often key words and phrases are repeated in order to convey the author's point or purpose for writing. They may be repeated throughout a chapter, a segment of a book, or the book as a whole. For example, notice that some form of the word *suffering* is used three times in 1 Peter 5.

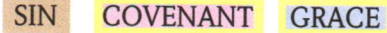
As you mark key words, ask the same *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions of them as you did of the passage as a whole. For example, *Who* suffers? *What* caused the suffering? etc.

Key words can be marked in several ways:

☞ *Through the use of symbols.*



☞ *Through the use of colors.* Colored pencils and multicolored ballpoint pens with fine tips work best.



☞ *Through a combination of colors and symbols.*



Always mark each key word the same way every time you observe it. Then, in future study, the visual impact of your marks will help you track key subjects and quickly identify significant truths throughout Scripture. To be sure that you are consistent, list key words, symbols, and color codes on an index card and use it as a bookmark in your Bible.

Be sure to mark pronouns (*I, you, he, she, it, we, our*, and so on) and synonyms (words that have the same meaning in the context) the same way you mark the words to which they refer. For example, a synonym for the devil in 1 Peter 5:8 is *adversary*. The pronoun *him* in verse 9 also refers to the devil. Notice how marking the synonym *adversary* for the devil gives additional insight into his nature.

STEP FOUR

LOOK FOR LISTS

Making lists can be one of the most enlightening things you do as you study a section of Scripture. Lists reveal truths and highlight important concepts. The best way to discover lists in the text is to observe how a key word is described, note what is said about someone or something, or group related thoughts or instructions together. (Develop lists on a separate piece of paper, then if you want, record the significant lists in the margin of your Bible.)

THE INDUCTIVE MARKING APPROACH

1 PETER 5 ∞ SAMPLE A

IN THE EPISTLES, MARK EVERY REFERENCE TO THE AUTHOR IN ONE COLOR, AND EVERY REFERENCE TO THE RECIPIENTS IN ANOTHER

IDENTIFY SIMPLE LISTS

Chapter 5 Theme

5^aTherefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your^b fellow elder and^c witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a^d partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

2 shepherd^a the flock of God among you, exercising oversight^b not under compulsion, but voluntarily^c according to the will of God; and^d not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3^enor yet as^a lording it over¹ those allotted to your charge, but² proving to be^b examples to the flock.

4 And when the Chief^a Shepherd appears, you will receive the^b unfading¹ crown of glory.

5^aYou younger men, likewise, ^bbe subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with^c humility toward one another, for^d God IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

6 Therefore^a humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

7 casting all your^a anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

8^aBe of sober spirit, ^bbe on the alert. Your adversary, ^cthe devil, prowls around like a roaring^d lion, seeking someone to devour.

9^{1a}But resist him, ^bfirm in your faith, knowing that ^cthe same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your² brethren who are in the world.

10 After you have suffered^a for a little while, the^b God of all grace, who^c called you to His^d eternal glory in Christ, will Himself^e perfect, ^fconfirm, strengthen and establish you.

11^aTo Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Through^a Silvanus, our faithful brother¹ (for so I regard him), ^bI have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is^c the true grace of God. ^dStand firm in it!

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, ^aMark.

14^aGreet one another with a kiss of love.

^bPeace be to you all who are in Christ.

MARK KEY WORDS AND SYNONYMS, SUCH AS GOD, CHRIST, DEVIL, SUFFERING

DOUBLE-UNDERLINE IN GREEN ALL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS

Suffering:
1. Christ Suffered.
2. Brethren are suffering.
3. You will suffer.
4. But God perfects, strengthens, and establishes those who suffer!

MAKE TOPICAL LISTS FROM KEY WORDS — COMPILER IN THE MARGIN

1 Peter 5:2, 3, for example, contains a *simple list* instructing the elders how to shepherd their flock. You can number simple lists within the text for easy reference.

Topical lists capture a truth, quality, or characteristic of a specific subject throughout a passage. One way to discover a topical list is to follow a key word through a chapter and note what the text says about the word each time it is used. (You may want to develop your lists on a worksheet before transferring them to the margin of your *NISB*.) See sample A for how a list could be made for the key word *suffering*.

As you write your observations on suffering, you will begin to have a better and broader understanding of God’s thoughts on this subject. You will learn that:

- ☞ Christ suffered
- ☞ the brethren in the world are suffering
- ☞ the recipients of the letter may also endure suffering

You will also discover that God:

- ☞ perfects
- ☞ strengthens
- ☞ confirms
- ☞ establishes those who suffer

The application value of lists such as these is immeasurable. The next time you endure suffering, you will be able to recall more quickly that:

- ☞ Christ suffered
- ☞ others are suffering
- ☞ ultimately God will use suffering to strengthen your own life

Discovering truths that apply to your daily life is what makes lists such an important part of the inductive method.

STEP FIVE

WATCH FOR CONTRASTS AND COMPARISONS

Contrasts and comparisons use highly descriptive language to drive home significant truths and vital lessons. The word pictures

they paint make it easier to remember what you’ve learned.

A *contrast* is a comparison of things that are different or opposite, such as light/darkness or proud/humble. The word *but* often signifies a contrast is being made. You may want to note contrasts in the text or the margin of your Bible.

A *comparison* points out similarities and is often indicated by the use of words such as *like*, *as*, and *as it were*. For example, Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8: “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around *like* a roaring lion.” You may want to highlight comparisons in a distinctive way so you will recognize them quickly when you return to the passage in the future.

STEP SIX

NOTE EXPRESSIONS OF TIME

The relationship of events in time often sheds light on the true meaning of the text. The timing of something can be observed in exact statements such as “on the tenth day of the eleventh month” or “at the feast of Booths.” These phrases can be indicated in the margin by drawing a simple clock ⌚ in a specific color, such as green.

Time is also indicated by words such as *until*, *then*, *when*, and *after*. These words show the relationship of one statement or event to another. Marking them will help you see the sequence of events and lead to accurate interpretation of Scripture.

STEP SEVEN

IDENTIFY TERMS OF CONCLUSION

Terms of conclusion usually follow an important sequence of thought and include words such as *wherefore*, *therefore*, *for this reason*, and *finally*. As the saying goes, when you see a *therefore* (or any term of conclusion),

THE INDUCTIVE MARKING APPROACH

1 PETER 5  SAMPLE B

IDENTIFY TERMS OF CONCLUSION

DEVELOP CHAPTER THEMES

Chapter 5 Theme *Be Humble & Sober; Resist & Stand Firm*

5^aTherefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your*^b fellow elder and ^cwitness of the sufferings of *Christ*, and a ^dpartaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

2 shepherd ^athe flock of *God* among you, exercising oversight ^bnot under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and ^cnot for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

3 nor yet as ^alording it over ^lthose allotted to your charge, but ²proving to be ^bexamples to the flock.

4 And when the *Chief Shepherd* appears, you will receive the ^bunfading ^lcrown of glory.

5 ^aYou younger men, likewise, ^bbe subject to *your* elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with ^chumility toward one another, for ^dGod is opposed to the proud, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

6 Therefore ^ahumble yourselves under the mighty hand of *God*, that ^bHe may exalt you at the proper time,

7 casting all your ^aanxiety on *Him*, because ^bHe cares for you.

8 ^aBe of sober spirit, ^bbe on the alert. Your adversary, ^cthe devil, prowls around like a ^droaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

9 ^laBut resist him, ^bfirm in *your* faith, knowing that ^cthe same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your ²brethren who are in the world.

10 After you have suffered ^afor a little while, the ^bGod of all grace, who ^ccalled you to His ^deternal glory in Christ, will Himself ^eperfect, ^fconfirm, strengthen and establish you.

11 ^aTo Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Through ^aSilvanus, our faithful brother ^l(for so I regard *him*), ^bI have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is ^cthe true grace of God. ^dStand firm in it!

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son, ^aMark.

14 ^aGreet one another with a kiss of love.

^bPeace be to you all who are in Christ.

MARK CONTRASTS

proud / humble
↓ ↓
is opposed / is given grace

MARK PRONOUNS

NOTE COMPARISONS



MARK SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSIONS OF TIME WITH A CLOCK

LFL
Satan may bring suffering but it has an end. God will use it for my good.

DISCOVER LESSONS FOR LIFE

note what it is there for. You should be able to look through the preceding verses and summarize the message. For example, 1 Peter 5:6 says, “Therefore humble yourselves...” If you will look, you will discover that you should humble yourself under the hand of God because God “is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

STEP EIGHT

DEVELOP CHAPTER THEMES

The theme of a chapter will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that section of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by reviewing the key words and lists you developed. Try to express the theme as briefly as possible, using words found in the text.

Chapter 5 Theme *Be Humble & Sober*

5^aTherefore, I exhort the elders among you, as elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, also of the glory that is to be revealed,
 2 shepherd^athe flock of God among you, exercising authority not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according

For example, possible themes for 1 Peter 5 might be *Exhortations to Elders, Younger Men, and the Suffering*, or *God Gives Grace to the Humble*. The point of observation is to answer the question: What does the passage say? The theme summarizes the answer. If needed, record the themes in pencil so you can adjust them as your study deepens.

STEP NINE

DISCOVER LESSONS FOR LIFE

In the process of observing the text and seeing how God instructed people and dealt with various individuals, the Holy Spirit will bring to your attention truths that God wants you to be aware of and live by in your own life. These “Lessons for Life” can be noted in the margin under the abbreviation “LFL,” or you may wish to create a distinctive symbol to mark your Lessons for Life throughout your *NISB*.

Recording these will add a “devotional” element to your Bible and serve as a good reminder (or legacy) of what God has spoken to your heart when you or others read it.

STEP TEN

COMPLETE THE AT A GLANCE CHART

The AT A GLANCE chart, found at the end of every book in the *NISB*, provides a compact visual summary of the book that you can return to again and again for easy reference. See the sample AT A GLANCE charts on the following pages.

☞ **Record the author of the book.** If the author is not mentioned by name, read the introduction for that book. If the author is not mentioned in either place, leave this space blank.

☞ **Record the date the book was written.** If the date of writing is known, it will be mentioned in the introduction that precedes each book.

☞ **Record the key words.** If the key words are not already listed on the AT A GLANCE chart, you will find them listed in the THINGS TO DO section at the beginning of each book. Mark these as you will mark them in the Bible text.

In order to notice subjects which run throughout the entire Bible, there are some key words or phrases you will want to consistently mark in a distinctive manner. Write these on a card, color-code them in the way you intend to mark them throughout your Bible, and use the card as a bookmark.

A sample list of key words to mark (already colored) appears on page *NISB*-26.

☞ **Copy the chapter themes** that you recorded at the beginning of each chapter. Because chapter divisions were added much later than the Bible was originally written, they do not always fall naturally in the text. Occasionally you will find a chapter with more than one theme. If this is true, record both themes.

THE AT A GLANCE CHARTS

1 PETER  SAMPLE C


1 PETER AT A GLANCE

Theme of 1 Peter: *Suffering and Glory*

SEGMENT
DIVISIONS

	CHAPTER THEMES	
1	<i>Trials Prove Your Faith - Be Holy</i>	<p>Author: <i>Peter</i></p> <p>Date: <i>63 or 64 A.D.</i></p> <p>Purpose: <i>To exhort to stand firm in true grace (5:12)</i></p> <p>Key Words: suffering, trials (and all synonyms) grace glory salvation any reference to Jesus' future revelation love Holy Spirit called chosen holy</p>
2	<i>You're Chosen: Follow Christ's Example - Submit</i>	
3		
4		
5		

Complete the AT A GLANCE charts throughout the Bible as you discover book and chapter themes

 **Look for and record segment divisions.** See if any of the chapters can be grouped under a common theme or a common event. This is called a *segment division*. Segment divisions help you see the framework of a book.

The number and types of segment divisions will vary. A book might be divided according to dates, geographical locations, reigns of kings, major characters or events, topics, or doctrines.

When you gain a broad view of a book through its segment divisions, it is easier to understand its content and purpose. The AT A GLANCE chart for the Gospel of John (sample D) shows a number of ways this book could be divided. For example, on the last line under “Segment Divisions,” you will notice “Structure of Book.” This shows you how John presents his material to achieve his purpose for writing this gospel.

 **Record the purpose of the book.**

Discerning the author’s purpose for writing and then keeping this purpose in mind while you study the text will help you handle the Word of God accurately. Unless the author specifically states his purpose for writing, as in 1 Peter 5:12 and John 20:31, you will have to discover it by other means:

1. Look for the main subjects covered in the book. These can often be recognized as you study the key repeated words.

2. Watch for any problems that are addressed. It may be that the author’s purpose in writing was to deal with these problems.
3. Note exhortations and warnings that are given. These may be the reason for the book.
4. Observe what the author did *not* cover in his writing. When you know what the author covered and what was left unsaid, you are better able to narrow down the real purpose of the book.

Generally the instructions at the beginning of each book in your *NISB* will help you understand how that book might be divided.

 **Record the main theme of the book.**

Once you have listed the theme for each chapter, evaluated the author’s purpose for writing, and observed the content of the book chapter by chapter and segment by segment, you will be prepared to determine the theme of the book. What one statement best describes the book as a whole?



Once you have completed the ten steps of observation, you are ready to move into interpretation and application.

THE AT A GLANCE CHARTS

GOSPEL OF JOHN SAMPLE D

JOHN AT A GLANCE

Theme of John: Eternal life through Jesus Christ, Son of God

SEGMENT DIVISIONS

structure of Book	written	signs and miracles	MINISTRY	CHAPTER THEMES
Introduces Jesus as Christ, Son of God	That you may believe Jesus is the Christ, Son of God	wider to write	TO ISRAEL	1 Prologue - The Word John the Baptist / calling disciples
				2 wedding Cana / cleansing temple
3 born again				
4 woman at well / royal official				
5 father / son				
6 bread / feeding 5,000				
7 feast of tabernacles / thirst-drink				
8 adulterous woman / truth sets free				
9 blind man				
10 sheep / shepherd				
11 raising Lazarus				
gives signs that prove Jesus is Christ, Son of God	That you may have life	Heals noble man Heals lame man Heals blind man Raisers Lazarus from dead	TO DISCIPLES	12 dinner at Bethany / King on donkey
				13 last supper / washing-disciples
				14 Father's house / hearts be troubled
				15 abide / vine and branches
				16 Holy Spirit / another helper
				17 Lord's prayer / high-priestly prayer
Decision time	Hour has come	Heals noble man Heals blind man Raisers Lazarus from dead	TO ALL MANKIND	18 arrest and trial
				19 crucifixion
				20 resurrection
Life that belongs to those who believe God	That you may have life	Heals noble man Heals blind man Raisers Lazarus from dead	TO DISCIPLES	21 do you love Me?
				Purpose of life, love and follow

Author:

John

Date:

about A.D. 85

Purpose:

that his readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and thus have eternal life

Key Words:
(including synonyms)

signs / miracles
believe
life
judge
judgment
witness
sin
true, truth
king
kingdom
love
works
commandments
fruit
abide
ask
truth, truly, true
devil (Satan, ruler of this world)

A SYSTEM FOR MARKING KEY WORDS INCLUDING SYNONYMS AND PRONOUNS THROUGHOUT YOUR BIBLE

Color-coding key words with various color combinations is very helpful, as using too many symbols can clutter the text.

In an epistle, color *the author* in one color, e.g. blue and *the recipient(s)* another; e.g. orange.

As you mark, choose certain colors to represent various things. For example, blue could be your color for Israel, then anything connected with Israel would always have blue in the color combination; yellow your color for

God; anything connected with redemption could be red, and so on.

When you mark a key word such as *circumcised*, mark the negative variation, *uncircumcised*, with a line through it like this:

Mark references to time with a green clock like this:

Double-underline in green all geographical locations like this:

¹
God
Jesus Christ

Spirit
(Holy Spirit)

holy
(unholy)

die
(death)

bless

curse

covenant

circumcised

devil
(serpent, evil spirits, mediums)

sin
(iniquity, transgression)

Israel
(the man, nation, people)

land
(Israel's land given by God)

tabernacle
(tent of meeting, temple, house)

remnant

nations

law
(commandments)

atonement

righteous
(unrighteous)

sign

redeem
(redemption, redeemer)

blood

day of the Lord
(“that day” if a synonym)

the coming of the Lord
(His coming)

wrath

suffer
(affliction, trial, tribulation)

cry

listen
(hear)

love (God's love)

pray

believe
(faith, truth)

repent

gospel

eternal life

grace

kingdom
(God's or man's)

¹We do not always mark God or Jesus Christ, as sometimes it clutters the text too much.

INTERPRETATION

Discover What It Means!

While observation leads to an accurate understanding of what the Word of God *says*, interpretation goes a step further and helps you understand what it *means*. When you accurately interpret the Word of God, you will be able to confidently put its truths into practice in your daily life.

Like many other people, you may have been taught a system of beliefs before you ever studied God's Word for yourself. Or you may have formed opinions of what the Bible teaches before you carefully examined the Scriptures. As you learn to handle God's Word accurately, you will be able to discern if what you believe is in agreement with Scripture. If this is your desire and you come to the Word of God with a teachable spirit, God will lead you and guide you into all truth.

As you seek to interpret the Bible accurately, the following guidelines will be helpful.

1. Remember that context rules.

The word *context* means "that which goes with the text." To understand the context you must be familiar with the Word of God. If you lay the solid foundation of observation, you will be prepared to consider each verse in the light of:

- ☞ the surrounding verses
- ☞ the book in which it is found
- ☞ the entire Word of God

As you study, ask yourself: Is my interpretation of a particular section of Scripture consistent with the theme, purpose, and structure of the book in which it is found? Is

it consistent with other Scripture about the same subject, or is there a glaring difference? Am I considering the historic and cultural context of what is being said? Never take a Scripture out of its context to make it say what you want it to say. Discover what the author is saying; don't add to his meaning.

2. Always seek the full counsel of the Word of God.

When you know God's Word thoroughly, you will not accept a teaching simply because someone has used one or two isolated verses to support it. Those verses may have been taken out of context, or other important passages might have been overlooked or ignored that would have led to a different understanding. As you read the Bible regularly and extensively, and as you become more familiar with the whole counsel of God's Word, you will be able to discern whether a teaching is biblical or not.

Saturate yourself in the Word of God; it is your safeguard against wrong doctrine.

3. Remember that Scripture will never contradict Scripture.

The best interpretation of Scripture is Scripture. Remember, all Scripture is inspired by God; it is God-breathed. Therefore, Scripture will never contradict itself.

The Bible contains all the truth

you will ever need for any situation in life. Sometimes, however, you may find it difficult to reconcile two seemingly contradictory truths taught in Scripture. An example of this would be the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. When two or more truths that are clearly taught in the Word seem to be in conflict, remember that we as humans have finite minds. Don't take a teaching to an extreme that God doesn't. Simply humble your heart in faith and believe what God says, even if you can't fully understand or reconcile it at the moment.

4. Don't base your convictions on an obscure passage of Scripture.

An obscure passage is one in which the meaning is not easily understood. Because these passages are difficult to understand even when proper principles of interpretation are used, they should not be used as a basis for establishing doctrine.

5. Interpret Scripture literally.

The Bible is not a book of mysticism. God spoke to us that we might know truth. Therefore, take the Word of God at face value—in its natural, normal sense. Look first for the clear teaching of Scripture, not a hidden meaning. Understand

and recognize figures of speech and interpret them accordingly (see Bible Study Helps, p. 2103).

Consider what is being said in the light of its literary style. For example, you will find more similes and metaphors in poetical and prophetic literature than in historical or biographical books. Interpret portions of Scripture according to their literary style.

Some literary styles in the Bible are:

- ☞ Historical—Acts
- ☞ Prophetic—Revelation
- ☞ Biographical—Luke
- ☞ Didactic (teaching)—Romans
- ☞ Poetic—Psalms
- ☞ Epistle (letter)—2 Timothy
- ☞ Proverbial—Proverbs

6. Look for the single meaning of the passage.

Always try to understand what the author had in mind when you interpret a portion of the Bible. Don't twist verses to support a meaning that is not clearly taught. Unless the author of a particular book indicates that there is another meaning to what he says, let the passage speak for itself.

APPLICATION

Discover How It Works!

No matter how much you know *about* God's Word, if you don't apply what you learn, Scripture will never benefit your life. To be a hearer of the Word and not a doer is to deceive yourself (James 1:22-25). This is why application is so vital. Observation and interpretation are the "hearing" of God's Word. With *application*, you will be transformed into Christ's image. Application is the embracing of the truth, the "doing" of God's Word. It is this process which allows God to work in your life.

Second Timothy 3:16, 17 says: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Here is the key to application: Apply Scripture in the light of its teaching, reproof, correction, and instructions on life.

Teaching (doctrine) is what the Word of God says on any particular subject. That teaching, whatever the subject, is always true. Therefore, everything that God says in His Bible about any given subject is absolute truth.

The first step in application is to find out what the Word of God says on any particular subject through accurate observation and correct interpretation of the text. Once you understand what the Word of God teaches, you are then obligated before God to accept that truth and to live by it. When you have adjusted any false concepts or teaching you may have believed, and embraced the truth revealed in God's Word, then you have *applied* what you have learned.

Reproof exposes areas in your thinking and behavior that do not align with God's Word. Reproof is finding out where you have thought wrongly or have not been doing what God says is right. The application of reproof is to accept it and agree with God, acknowledging where you are wrong in thought or in behavior. This is how you are set free from unbelief, from sin.

Correction is the next step in application, and often the most difficult. Many times we can see what is wrong, but we are reluctant to take the necessary steps to correct it. God has not left you without help or without answers in this step of correcting what is wrong. Sometimes the answers are difficult to find, but they are always there, and any child of God who wants to please his or her Father, and asks for help, will be shown by the Spirit of God how to do so.

Many times correction comes by simply confessing and forsaking what is wrong. Other times, God gives very definite steps to take. An example of this is in Matthew 18:15-17, in which God tells us how to approach a brother when he sins. When you apply correction to your actions and attitudes, God will work in you to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Joy will follow obedience.

Training in righteousness: Although God's Word is profitable for reproof and correction, the Bible was also given to us as a handbook for living. As we spend time studying His Word, God equips us through:

- ∞ teachings
- ∞ commands
- ∞ promises

- ☞ exhortations
- ☞ warnings
- ☞ and the lives of biblical characters and insights into God's character and dealings with man

Scripture has everything you need to meet any and all situations of life, so that you "may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The most effective application takes place as you go before the Lord and talk with Him about those things that you have read, studied, seen, and heard.

INSIGHTS ON APPLYING SCRIPTURE

In applying Scripture to your life, the following questions may be helpful:

1. **What does the passage teach?** Is it general or specific? Does it apply only to specific people? To a cultural problem of the day? To a certain time in history? Has it been superseded by a broader teaching? For example, in the Old Testament, Jews were not allowed to eat certain foods or to wear a certain combination of materials. Are those prohibitions applicable to Christians today?

2. **Does this section of Scripture expose any error in my beliefs or in my behavior?** Are there any commandments that I have not obeyed? Are there any wrong attitudes or motives in my life that the Scriptures bring to light?

3. **What is God's instruction to me 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 I am to pursue? Are there any promises I am to embrace?

4. **When applying Scripture, beware of the following:**

- ☞ Applying cultural standards rather than biblical standards
- ☞ Attempting to strengthen a legitimate truth by using a Scripture incorrectly
- ☞ Applying Scripture out of prejudice from past training or teaching

One of the apostle Paul's concerns for Timothy, his son in the faith, was that Timothy learn to handle God's Word in a way that would please the Lord (2 Timothy 2:15). Someday we too will want to give a good account of our stewardship of God's Word. Did we handle it accurately? Were we gentle and reasonable about our faith, giving honor to those whom God has called to lead us, while at the same time searching Scripture ourselves to understand its truths? Did we allow God's living and active Word to change our lives?

Observation, interpretation, and application lead to *transformation*. This is the goal of our study of the Word of God. Through it we are changed from glory to glory into the image of Jesus.

GETTING STARTED



With this basic understanding of the inductive process, you are ready to begin a lifetime of personal Bible study. Prayerfully choose one of the Bible's 66 books, and then begin your study.

As you begin, quickly read through the THINGS TO DO section for an overview, but don't let the instructions overwhelm you. Taken one by one, chapter by chapter, and book by book, they become very manageable.

The THINGS TO THINK ABOUT section encourages you to get alone with God to consider how the truths of the book apply to you.

Old Testament historical and prophetic books have a HISTORICAL CHART usually located just before the first chapter to help you see where the book fits historically and chronologically. And many of the books in the New Testament contain an OBSERVATIONS CHART on which to record information you are instructed to look for in the THINGS TO DO section.

Finally, each book of the Bible ends with an AT A GLANCE chart, as discussed earlier.

For added insights on particular topics relevant to your personal Bible study, you will find a BIBLE STUDY HELPS section at the end of the Bible. This section includes an overview of major events in Israel's history, a concordance, and color maps to provide a geographical frame of reference for your study of God's Word.

Also, in the index on pages 2117-2122, you will find very useful lists of all the maps, charts, and study helps in this Bible, along with their accompanying page numbers. You may find it helpful to remember that this index is right before the concordance in the back of the Bible.

As you study the Bible inductively, you will get to know God in a deep, exciting, and enlightening way—and “the people who know their God will display strength and take action” (Daniel 11:32b).