

fundamentals
for
men
A HANDBOOK FOR HIM

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FUNDAMENTAL

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We are going to begin by learning how to read and study the Bible.

Since I have been a pastor and teacher for almost three decades, I believe the greatest gift you can give any man is the ability to read, study, and understand the Bible. Because the Bible is the most incredible discipleship tool we have. I believe if you can teach a man how to read, study, and understand the Bible, then he can, on his own, extract a lifetime of principles from it. Yet, I believe most Christian men have a hard time drawing truth from it and therefore don't turn to it when we need it most.

Goal

The goal in today's lesson is to share with you one of the oldest approaches to reading, studying, and understanding your Bible. Teachers and pastors have used it for hundreds of years. Our goal is to get you into the Bible this week, throughout this study, and hopefully for the rest of your life.

Pray

God, be with us today as men and as we approach your truth, and as we dig into spiritual principles for reading your Word. Give us discernment and sharp minds as we listen to you speak and act on what we learn. In Christ's name—Amen.

Opener Reflection Questions

- How often do you read the Bible?
- What is intimidating about reading the Bible?
- Do you feel like you understand the Bible more when you hear it taught?
Why or why not?



The Inductive Bible Study Method

I'm going to walk you through a simple bible study method that many refer to as the Inductive Bible Study Method.

The word inductive refers to a process we use to read and understand any form of literature; in this case we are talking about the Bible. This is because there are two common ways to read and reason. One is called inductive, and the other is called deductive.

Inductive Reasoning seeks to draw meaning out of specifics and then make a general conclusion. **Deductive Reasoning** aims to reach a conclusion and then prove the specifics. Men tend to read the Bible deductively, but this leads to us importing our ideas, opinions, and experiences into the Bible, which can lead to errors. However, if we can read the Bible inductively, drawing from the specifics of the text and letting it speak for itself, we will both remain faithful to God's intended meaning and discover the best application for life change. The Bible is a spiritual book with spiritual implications. As we read, we have to remember that we are the ones who are changed by God's unchanging Word.

So, let me walk you through the inductive process in three simple steps:

The first step is **Observation**.

Observation is the step that too many men fly past but shouldn't. Here we are looking at **what the text says**. This means we have to take time looking at the raw content. I find a section of scripture (typically a paragraph or two) and read it multiple times, observing what the text says (Note: not what it says to *me*, just what the text is saying). While I am reading, I am persistently scanning the text for the following six things while I am trying to figure out what the text says. I usually start by looking for some of the smallest details and then, along the way, discover the larger details.

First, I am looking at the **Words**. I know this seems basic, but when I look at the words, I am identifying the people, places, or things in the text. I am also noticing the central or repeated words that bring attention to the subject and theme.

Second, I am looking for **Characters**. Taking a small step back from the words, I want to make sure I am familiar with the people or characters in the text and the activity taking place around them.

Third, I'm looking at the **Grammar**. Another small step back, and I am starting to identify the subject, the verb, and the object of the text. I am trying to determine what words and characters take center stage. For example, I may occasionally notice the use of contrasts and comparisons that repeat. If so, these are emphasizing something I need to give attention to.

Fourth, I am looking at sentence **Structure**. I want to examine how sentences and paragraphs come together. I am looking for connecting phrases like the word "*therefore*." Words like *therefore* tell us to pay attention to previous statements, and that a resultant thought is coming.

Fifth, I want to be aware of the **Genre**. Yes, a little bit of a fancy word, but this means I need to note the type of literature I am reading. We always need to pay attention to the kind of text we're reading; whether it's poetry, prose, letter, narrative, or prophetic literature. This helps us to define the context of the greater story.

Sixth, and finally, I want to note the **Mood** of the text. Here I notice the tone of the text by paying attention to the actions and emotions of the writer and the audience to whom it was written.

I am always looking for these same six things. The more you practice looking for them, the more proficient you will be, which will lead you to see more in the text, which leads to better observations. I think this is precisely why people who read the Bible for years still discover more and more truth from a single section of scripture and thus have a more in-depth experience with God's Word. This is what makes fundamentals so great.

When I am leading others in a Bible study, I spend most of my time asking men what they observe in the text. I would suggest spending most of your time here. The key to making the very best observations is to avoid doing two things that disrupt the process. First, avoid asking the question, "What does this mean to me?" Which is a question of interpretation and not an observation. Second, avoid making comments that begin with "Here is what this means to me..." Which again is not an observation; it is called making an application. If you avoid these two pitfalls (which are the next steps) and spend more time making observations, and good ones, then your questions of interpretation will be answered, and your comments on the application will be stronger.



Step two: Interpretation.

Here we are trying to discern one thing, and that is what the text meant, not to us, but “What it meant to them.” Now it’s okay to ask any question of interpretation that we have been trying not to do in step one. This is an important question because the Bible was not written to us, even though it’s for us. Yep: it was not written to you at all. Forty different authors wrote it over a span of 2000 years, each book had an original audience. Now, this does not mean that the book does not have application for us today, but simply that we first must recognize the intent of writing to them in their day. The first audience of every book in the Bible is the people group to whom it was written. In the interpretation stage, we’re looking to find the author’s intended meaning to that audience. So, what I like to do here is think of myself as an investigative reporter: the good kind of reporter, one that asks reporter-style questions. Questions like, who, what, where, when, how, and why. Questions like this dig after the historical context, and most of them are answered from the observations we made in the last step. Once in a while, I may need a little bit of historical help. Therefore, sometimes I turn to a Study Bible to get a better understanding of the context. But what we are trying to do is discover the one main point the author is trying to drive home to his audience, and what we are trying to avoid is importing our cultural assumptions into the text, which can lead us to make the wrong interpretation, and thus incorrect application.

Finally, the third big step is Application.

Application is where I am trying to find how the interpretation connects to my everyday life. I am usually thinking about two questions. What challenges am I currently facing that the text addressed? What steps do I need to take based on observation and interpretation? I base the answers to these two questions on all I have discovered in my observations and interpretations.

I’ll tell you, I have used this process for years and find it be illuminating whether I am engaging in personal study, preparing for a sermon, or studying with a group of men. I memorize this process with the acronym O.I.A. which stands for Observation, Interpretation, and Application.

Trying It Out

Now we get to try it out. The following is a section of scripture for you here from Matthew's gospel and is entitled "The Wise & Foolish Builders." It's about six verses long and has some great content in it.

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Matthew 7:24-29

So now, I want you to take a few minutes trying the Inductive Bible Study Method on your own. Take your time and see what you discover.

Your Inductive Bible Study Notes

- Observations
- Interpretation
- Application

What I Found in the Text

While I could walk you through many **observations** in this text, I am going to assume that you found most, if not all, of them. There were several things to observe. I'm also going to assume that in your **interpretation**, you uncovered that this is a short parable that appears at the close of the greatest sermon ever preached; the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was preached by none other than Jesus Christ and written down later by Matthew, who



wrote it as a witness to Jesus' life. Knowing this helps us to make the application that Matthew, and the preacher in Matthew, Jesus, wants us to hear.

But, the question we all want the answer to is, "What does this text mean to me?"

You could probably draw several of applications from this text, but there is one that Jesus does not want us to miss. That is: God's man needs to both **hear** and **do** in response to God's truth.

I believe this is one of the many challenges that Christian men face. Do we prefer to hear the truth and do nothing, or do we hear the truth and do something? Notice the problem is not a problem with the truth or hearing the truth, but a problem with integrating our hearing with our doing. This is what Jesus calls being "founded on the rock."

Consider this: have you ever attended church and find yourself being spiritually convicted by a sin, a struggle, an issue, or a problem, and then do nothing about it? If you answered "yes," then you have been guilty of "building your house on the sand." This is hearing and doing nothing. We've all done this (including me).

Jesus illustrates beautifully using a construction metaphor, the stark contrast between a man who only hears and a man who hears and acts, a the fully integrated man. Jesus makes it clear that everyone hears. The difference is the man who acts.

Jesus accentuates this by adding in a storm, a storm that exposes how well a man has integrated his hearing with his doing. Believe me, there will be a storm in your life at some point. This storm, regardless of how good the man looks on the exterior, will reveal the man of God on the interior, because every man experiences a storm. Either you're going into one, you're currently in one, or you're coming out of one. But the storm is eminent, fellas. So, the call to action by Jesus is to be prepared for the storm by integrating all of your life with his Word—both your hearing and doing—and thus build on the foundation, and the on the right foundation.

Well, gentlemen, I think you have your application for the week in this single question.

Have you integrated the hearing of God's Word with doing God's Word, so when the storms of life expose you for who you are at the core, you will stand firm?



Reflection & Discussion Questions:

- What part of the Inductive Bible Study Method was the most challenging?
- Based on the teaching of Matthew 7:24-29:
 - What action do you need to take?
 - What issues do you need to address?
 - Who is someone you could turn to for advice?

Call to Action

- Memorize the Inductive Bible Study Method.
- Try the Inductive Method on the first five sections of Matthew 7 this week. (verses Matthew 7:1-6, 7-11, 12-14, 15-20, and 21-23)
- Each day find a single application that will integrate your hearing and doing. Write it down on a sticky note and act on the application all day.