

INDUCTIVE STUDY: Learning to Master the Word

I. SELECT A PASSAGE

(Usually 3-10 verses dealing with the same topic) Why do you want to study this passage?

II. OBSERVE THE PASSAGE BY ASKING QUESTIONS

Who is writing, and to whom?

Where does this take place?

When does this take place?

Why does the speaker or author say/write what he does? What problems were the recipients facing?

How does the passage fit in with the context?

What are the commands?

What are the promises or cause/effect relationships?

What are the repeated words or ideas?

What do I learn about God?

What do I learn about Jesus?

What do I learn about the Holy Spirit?

What do I learn about me or mankind?

Note any additional observations from the passage. This may include contrasts, lists, comparisons, etc.

III. WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA OF THE PASSAGE – THE THEME? (This can usually be identified in repeated words or ideas, or commands. Sometimes there will be one command with several motivations.) In one phrase sum up the main thought of the passage.

IV. IDENTIFY THE SPECIFIC TEACHINGS OF THE PASSAGE (Do this step in writing.)

These teachings form principles of your life and ministry. A principle is defined as *a timeless lesson in the way God works, or in living or thinking God's way*. To develop each principle you can EXPLAIN it, ILLUSTRATE it, and APPLY it.

EXPLAIN: What would say if one of your disciples or a friend asked you what this passage meant?¹

ILLUSTRATION: Illustrations are stories or examples that help us understand the principle. They can be from personal experience, history, or may be from the Bible.

APPLICATION: This is key. If we don't apply Biblical truth, then why study it? (James 1:21-15; Matt. 7:24-27) Ask the question, "What am I going to do differently now that I know this teaching?" It is through applying the word that it changes our lives. Application happens through intent. God enlightens us from the word, we enact the applications by our wills through our choices, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to carry them out. The goal of all application is to glorify God by becoming more like Jesus.

"It is hard to lead others if you cannot state your thoughts clearly and forcefully. Leaders like Paul aim to persuade men, not coerce them (2 Cor. 5:11). Leaders who are spiritual do not muster a following with hot air or waves or words but rather with crisp, solid, compelling sentences. The apostle Paul aimed, like all good leaders, at clarity in what he said. According to Colossians 4:4 he asked the people to pray for him, "that I might make it clear, as I ought to speak." It is astonishing and lamentable how many people today cannot speak in complete sentences. The result is that a great fog surrounds their thought. Neither they nor their listeners know exactly what they are talking about. A haze settles over the discussion and you walk away wondering what it was all about. If no one rises above the muddle-headedness and verbal chaos of 'You know . . . I mean . . . Just really', there will not be any leadership."

John Piper,
"The Marks of a Spiritual Leader"

¹ Here are some steps for interpreting difficult passages:

- 1) What are the meanings of the key words?
- 2) What does the immediate context suggest? (verses before and after)
- 3) What does the broader context suggest?
- 4) What do other cross references suggest?
- 5) What is the cultural meaning?
- 6) What do commentaries suggest?