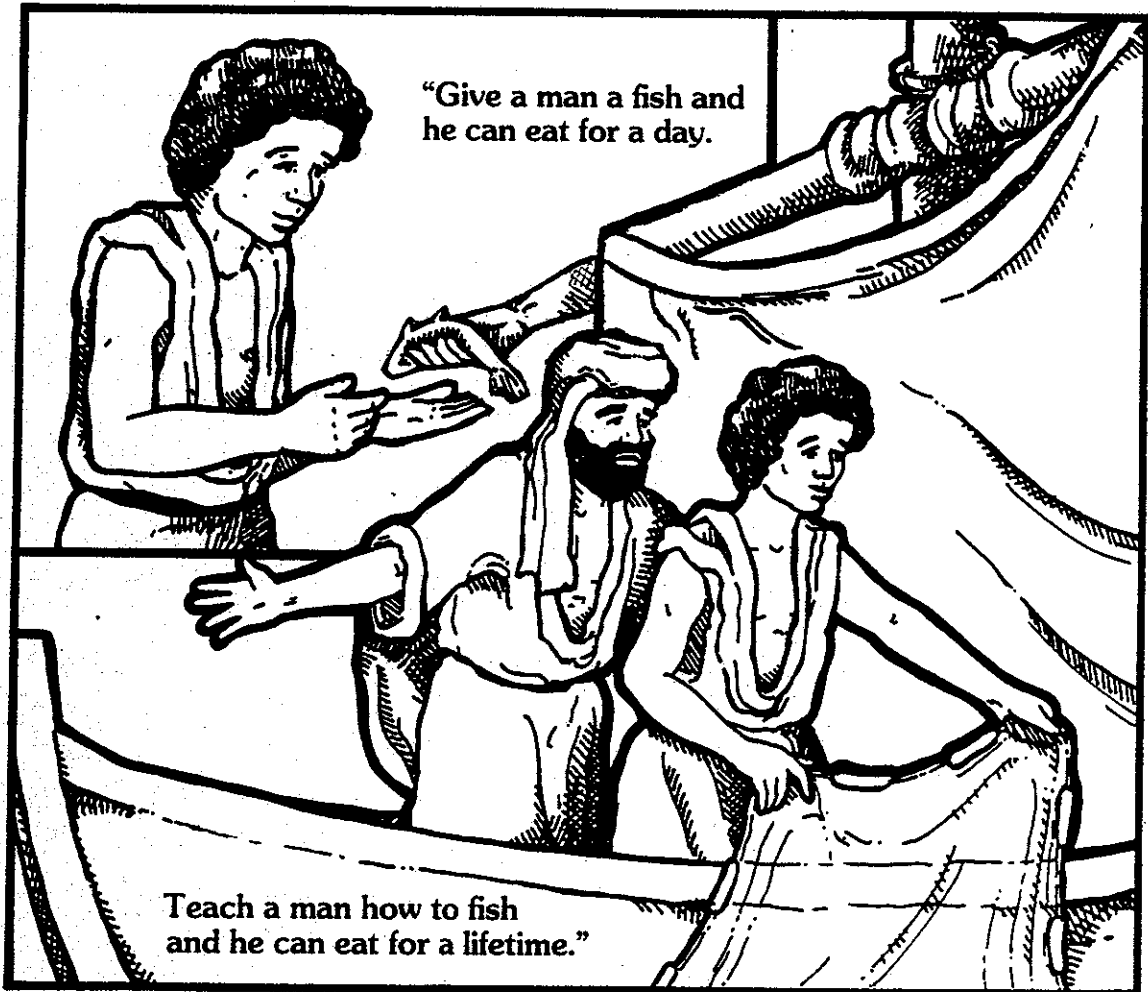


# Inductive Bible Study



**Your presence at this seminar** indicates your interest in learning better how to fish for yourself... how to eat for a lifetime.

*Inductive Bible study* will give you the mindset and skills to feed yourself from Scripture. During the day we will explore the significance of each key word:

**Inductive**

**Bible**

**Study**

# To begin with...

...plan on learning a whole lot about studying Scripture today.  
At day's end we will give you the answers to the following questions.  
You will amaze yourself at how much you have learned...!

Directions: Place a **T** for true, a **F** for false and a **?** if you don't know next to each statement as it finishes the sentence:

"The *inductive Bible study* approach. . . ."

- \_\_\_ 1) uses cross references freely to help in interpretation.
- \_\_\_ 2) takes seriously a passage's historical background.
- \_\_\_ 3) emphasises a topical study approach to Scripture.
- \_\_\_ 4) puts more emphasis on interpretation than application.
- \_\_\_ 5) incorporates the frequent use of Bible commentaries.
- \_\_\_ 6) focuses almost solely on the passage under study.
- \_\_\_ 7) discourages educated guesses as to what a passage means.
- \_\_\_ 8) teaches that most passages have only one main point.
- \_\_\_ 9) says that all observations are important for understanding.
- \_\_\_ 10) disregards a passage's secondary points.
- \_\_\_ 11) teaches that most passages have only one application.
- \_\_\_ 12) encourages the use of more than one translation for reference.
- \_\_\_ 13) puts people on the same level in terms of Bible knowledge.
- \_\_\_ 14) says that simple reading is never enough for understanding.
- \_\_\_ 15) sometimes necessitates use of a Bible dictionary.
- \_\_\_ 16) emphasizes identifying with the characters of the passage.
- \_\_\_ 17) is similar to the discovery process of a detective.
- \_\_\_ 18) views Bible interpretation as unique in the study of literature.
- \_\_\_ 19) disregards personal needs when interpreting a passage.
- \_\_\_ 20) proceeds by the process of questioning the passage.

# The Bible

## Account in U.S. Newspaper

FRANKFURT, West Germany - Thousands of West Germans spent the first night of their summer vacation stranded in cars as a huge wave of southbound tourists created traffic jams up to 48 miles long, police said Saturday. The massive exodus for the beaches in southern Europe coincided with the beginning of school vacation in North-Rhine Westphalia, the most populous West German state.

## Account in Mark's Gospel

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let them speak because they knew who he was.

(Mark 1:32-34)

**In the above accounts what are some things that are different? . . .**

about the **authors**:

about their **readers**:

about their **culture**:

about their **location & time**:

about their **message**:

. . . So the Bible can be a challenge to understand. But even with all its differences from modern literature, it has at least one thing going for it: inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Though written by over forty human authors to a particular people, of a particular culture, in a particular place and at a particular time, nevertheless the Bible is a message relevant to all peoples, cultures, places and times.

Why? Because as Paul told Timothy:

**"All Scripture is God-breathed  
and  
useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness  
so that  
the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

**(2 Timothy 3:16-17)**

The universality of the biblical message brings us all into its scope. The same Spirit who . . .

was present in the original event

maintained the oral tradition

inspired the original writers

preserved the written manuscripts

oversaw the Bible's translation back into the common languages,

now

works alongside us as we study and apply its message.

**As we begin to wrestle with God's Word, we soon find ourselves wrestling with God himself.**

Beside the testimony of Scripture itself, there are a number of other reasons to believe the Bible is uniquely and divinely inspired. If you are not completely convinced of this fact, we would be happy to point you to some helpful books on this subject.

But more than anything, we would encourage you to read, study and apply the Bible. There is no argument more convincing than personal contact with the source itself.

# Being Inductive

## NOTES:





# Southwestern Bell Yellow Pages

Fingertip Facts®  
and  
Valuable Gold Pages  
Coupons Inside

Greater Dallas  
Area Code 214  
December 1987-88



## The Art of Seeing

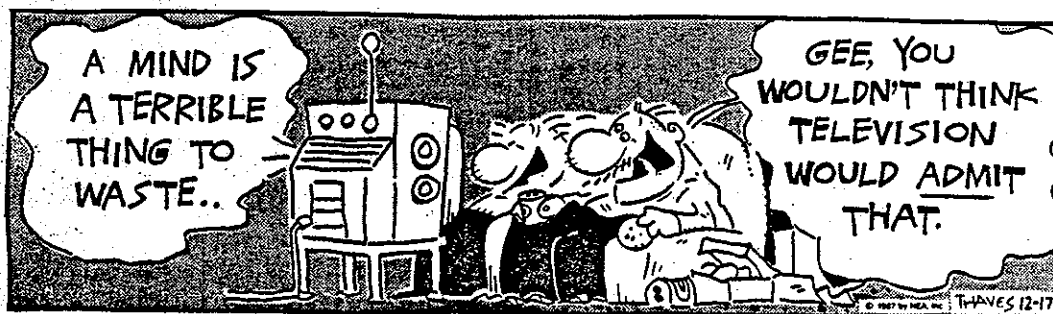
Observation is the art of seeing. Like a detective, the person who observes Scripture needs a basic problem-solving mentality. This mentality includes the following tools:

**Concentration:** The more intensely you look, the more you will see. So many important observations go unnoticed because of our lack of disciplined thinking or desire to prematurely move on to interpretation. Look, look and when you are finished looking, look again.

**Impartiality:** Come to the passage fresh. Forget your preconceived ideas and theological persuasions. If this was the first time you had read this passage, what would strike you about it?

**Imagination:** Much of Scripture appeals to the imagination and to the emotions. This is particularly true of biblical narrative and poetry. Try to become personally involved with the characters and the action.

**Discernment:** Not all observations are of equal worth. The power of discernment helps us to focus our attention on those observations which will lead in the direction of rich interpretation.



So you are ready to observe, but where do you start?

... Well, before you go on, take with you one more crucial ingredient:

a humble and prayerful attitude. . .

*Open my eyes that I may see  
wonderful things in your law.*

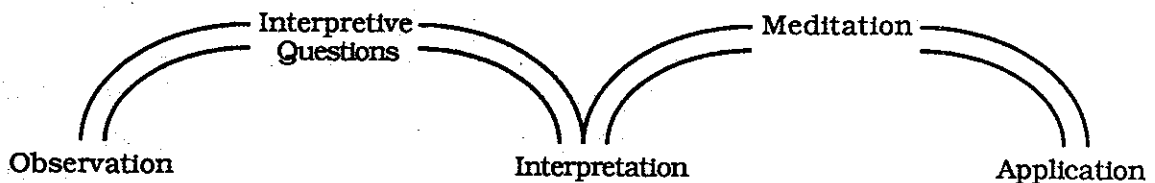
Psalm 119:18

# How to Study

When we read anything, be it a newspaper story, novel, automobile manual or the Bible we seek to comprehend the author's original message. The goal for Bible study, however, goes one step further. For if the biblical authors recorded the unique intent of God for people, then by its very nature the Bible requires a response from us. Bible study, therefore, involves the two-part process of *comprehending* the author's message and *applying* that message to our life.



These two parts of the study process can be broken down further into three steps connected by two bridges.



## **OBSERVATION:** The literary styles

As we read the Bible we find a great diversity of literary styles. Jesus, for example, often taught through parables while Paul used discourse. An understanding of these styles will help us comprehend the message communicated within them. The styles fall into two categories: *indirect story forms* or *direct teaching forms*.\*

Indirect story forms, found in *narrative, parable* and *apocalyptic* passages, allow the author to stand in the background. Instead of coming right out and saying "you should believe this or do that," he teaches indirectly through the reaction of story characters to each other, events and circumstances. When studying story forms train yourself to *look for the most important interaction(s)* in the event described.

Direct teaching forms, found in *discourse, poetry* and *wisdom* passages, teaches through *main statements*. The author may state a direct command: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph. 4:26); a passive command: "Let us love one another" (1 John 4:7); an indirect appeal: "Love is patient" (1 Cor. 13:4) or even a factual statement: "The Lord is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). The author's main statements are then supported by evidence and illustrations -- *secondary statements*. When studying direct teaching forms train yourself to *look for the main statement(s)* in the train of thought.

\*The Bible Study Roadshow, Part I focuses on narrative passages. The Part II seminar highlights the different styles of Scripture and focuses on discourse passages.



**OBSERVATION:** The approach

Begin by reading and even rereading the passage to be studied to gain some general impressions. If necessary, give a tentative title to each scene or section. Then proceed by asking the "W questions."

Who is involved? When did it happen? Where did it take place?

These questions help you see the setting or context of the event. The *who* includes the characters involved along with their descriptions. If you are studying one of Paul's letters, the *who* would even include the readers since it is their problems that Paul is addressing.

The *when* includes historical references and cultural features. Use a *Bible Dictionary* to look up key historical and cultural references since these details may add significant meaning.

The *where* involves the location of the event. Use the maps in the back of your Bible or a *Bible Atlas* to look up geographical references. In many cases where a passage comes in terms of its literary context also adds a significant dimension to its meaning.

**Digging Deeper**

What happened? How did it happen?

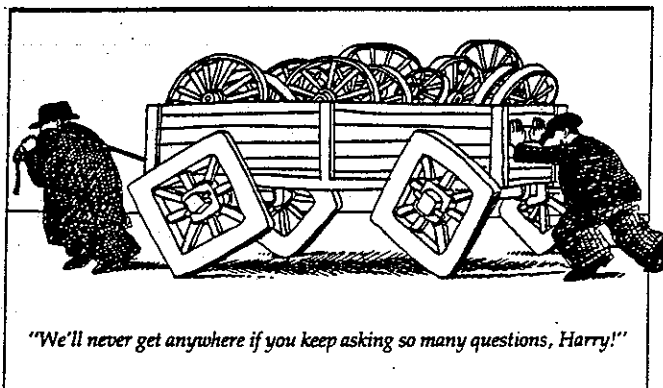
The *what* and *how* questions help you focus on the main interaction (if you are studying story forms) or the main statement (if you are studying teaching forms). Asking these questions involves identifying "the parts" of the story or teaching and determining how they fit together.

**The parts**      **The relationship of the parts to each other**

WORDS: Cite key words (theological terms, verbs, etc.) which need further clarification or definition.

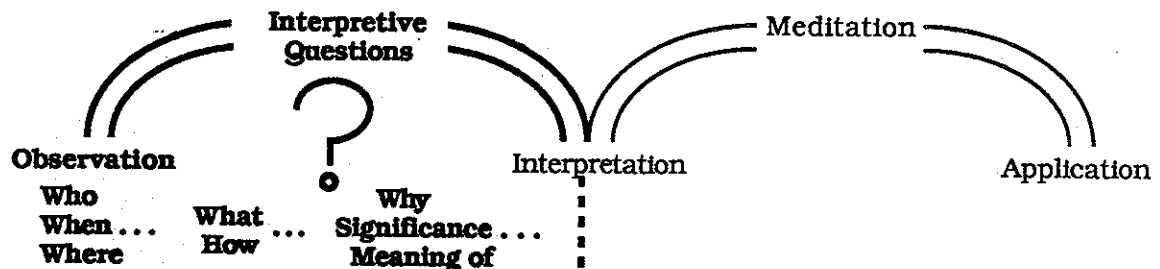
SENTENCES: Identify connective words (therefore, if/then, because, etc.) that reveal how one sentence supports or is supported by the next.

PARAGRAPHS: Determine the laws of composition (contrast, progression, climax, etc.) which provide the framework of the story or teaching.



## INTERPRETATIVE QUESTIONS: The first bridge step

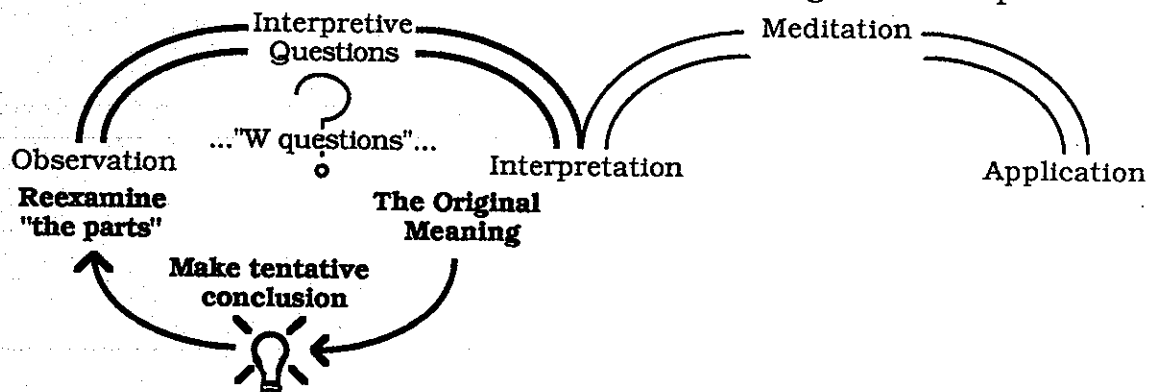
Think of studying the Bible like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. You have observed some of the pieces -- who, when, where, what and how ("the parts"). Now fit them together into a coherent picture ("the whole") by asking the last "W question," *Why*. The *why* questions raise lots of interpretative issues: Why did Peter do/say...? What is the significance of/meaning of/relation between...?



When piecing together a puzzle you might ask: Is this blue piece a part of the river or of the sky? How does it best fit into the picture? The key here is simply this: ask, ask, and when you're finished asking, ask again! As you begin to find answers, you are entering the process of discovery that makes Bible study so enjoyable.

There is one notable problem in the jigsaw analogy. Unlike a jigsaw puzzle, when you study a passage of Scripture there is no picture on the front of the box. Consequently, as you see the puzzle pieces of a biblical passage fitting together, be ready for a "light blub experience." In other words, somewhere along the line your mind will be triggered as to what the whole picture (the meaning of the passage) looks like. Your first inclination may be correct but hold it with some skepticism -- as a *tentative conclusion*.

You may tentatively conclude, for instance, that the puzzle scene pictures a gentle, winding stream. But is this initial thought a complete reflection of all the significant pieces? Look again at the puzzle with that picture in mind. Now you notice a rather turbulent waterfall in the background of the picture. Your reexamination of the picture, or in our case, the biblical passage, has led to a slightly corrected understanding from your initial conclusion. The following diagram outlines the *tentative conclusion process* of finding the main point.



**INTERPRETATION:** The original meaning

After a number of reexaminations of the parts based on your tentative conclusions, you are in position to make a final (most probable) conclusion about the author's original message. You should then complete the sentence: *The author's main point in this passage is. . . .*

Finding the main point can be likened to exploring a special cave which has a huge diamond embedded in the wall at its end. Upon entering the cave you notice the walls seem to sparkle. As you move down the tunnel you spot a number of small sapphires, emeralds and rubies. Naturally you stop periodically and examine some of the stones, removing them for your own possession. But you keep moving down the tunnel, searching for the diamond.

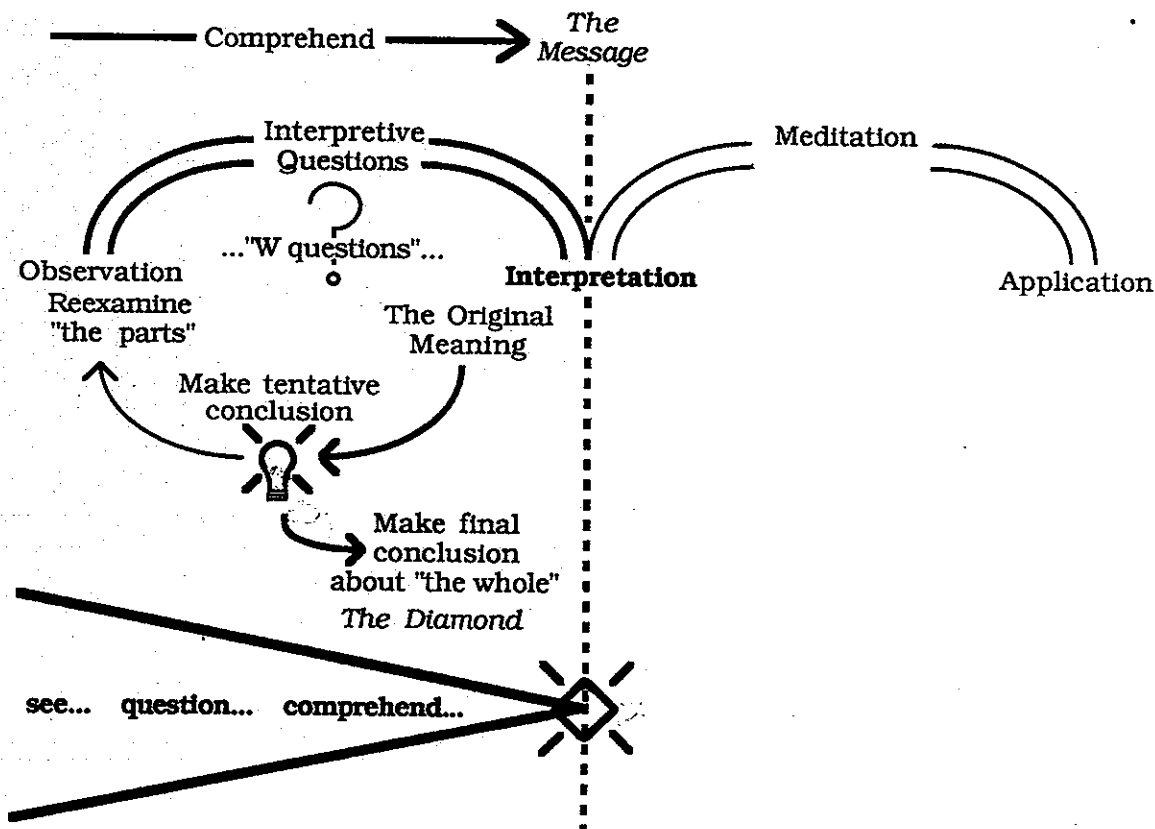
The smaller gems are important but not prized. These are the secondary points an author makes along the way. Stop, examine and even take some of these gems but don't neglect your ultimate goal -- finding the passage's main point -- *the diamond* at the tunnel's end.

Whereas an *observation* states a visible and explicit fact of the passage (or what is omitted from being said)...

an *interpretation* is not found in the text but based on (induced from) observations....

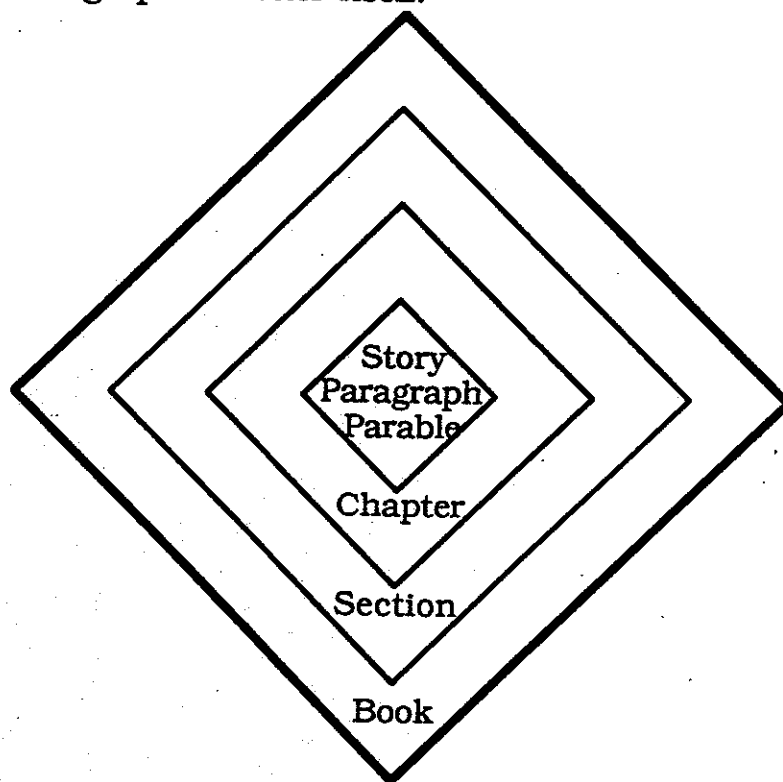
*Interpretative questions* thus compel the reader to give an explanation of what the observation means (its interpretation).

We began with a broad set of facts to *observe*, used *interpretative questions* in the sifting process of comprehension and now end at our destination with a single *interpretation* as the diagram below indicates.



The *diamond* is the meaning of a passage. Distinguishing where one diamond stops and another begins can at times present a challenge. As a general rule each narrative story (or series of complimentary narrative stories), each paragraph (or series of complimentary paragraphs) and each parable contains one main point -- *one diamond*. This fact simply reflects how authors organize their thoughts.

The *diamond* constitutes the smallest unit of coherent thought. The *diamond* within a story, paragraph or parable will usually be encased by a larger thought unit, the *chapter diamond*, which is encased by a still larger *section diamond*, encased by the largest diamond of them all -- the book, gospel or letter itself.



At times your theological persuasions may "take a beating" in the light of serious Scripture study. Be prepared for that! At other times you may miss what was obvious to the original readers and come away confused as to the author's point. That's okay too. But be assured the author has a point he is trying to communicate and is making every effort to help his readers understand that point. So make a stab -- subject to revision -- at what you think his point is.

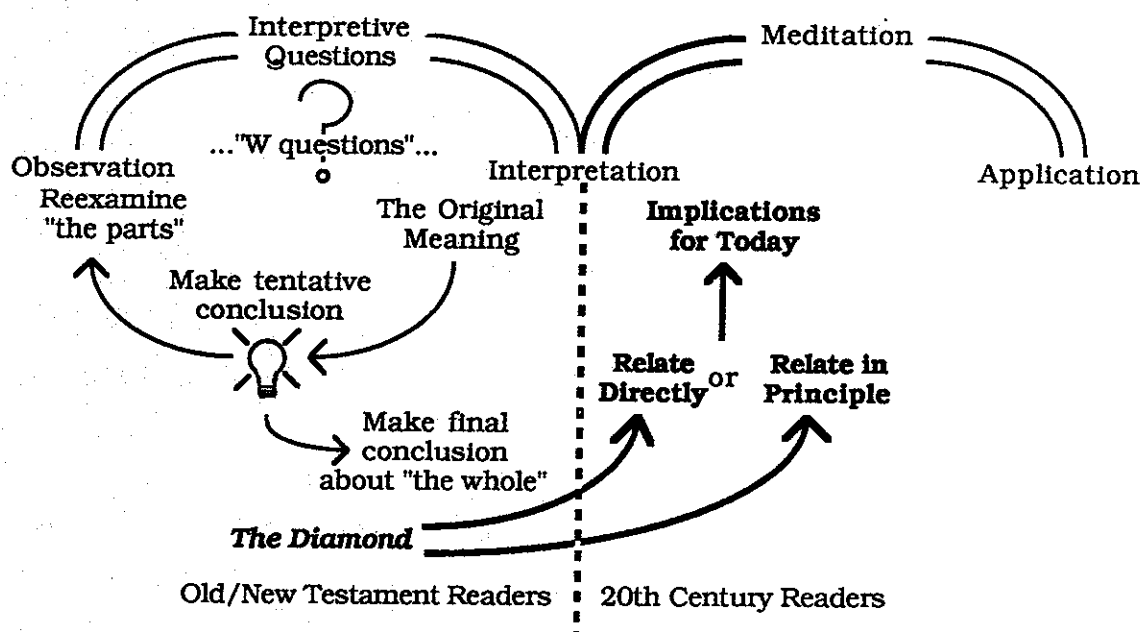


## INTERPRETATION: Implications for today

Having found the *diamond*, you have discovered what the passage *meant when it was written*. Now you are ready to think through what it *means in today's world*. But to do so you must cross a challenging line from the passage's original Old or New Testament context to its modern 20th century one. You are reading "over the shoulder" of someone else and need to be aware that the message was initially addressed to their unique problems and concerns.

Many passages relate directly to us: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Others are situation or cultural bound and may relate in principle: "Brothers pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss" (1 Thess. 5:25-26). How you distinguish between the two (or the shades in between) is not always easy and requires care. Common sense questions will help:

- What in the passage relates only to its original readers?
- What in the passage relates directly to its modern readers?
- What (if anything) in the passage conveys an underlying principle to its modern readers?



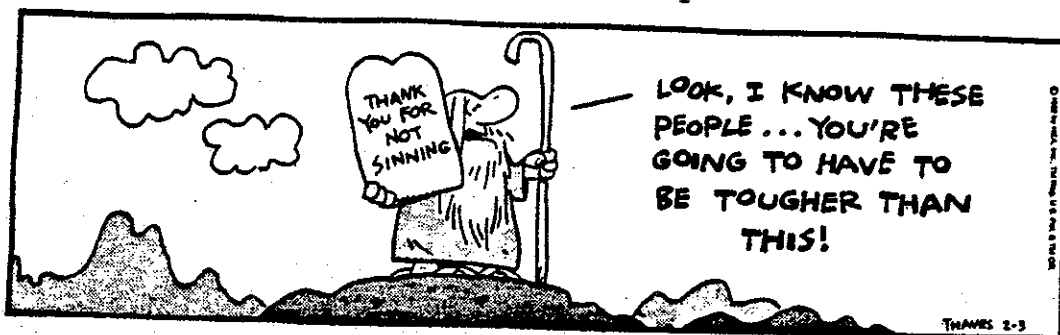
Scriptural *implications* from a passage are more general than applications: How could people, in general, apply this? Sermons often end with this broad perspective. Applications, on the other hand, become much more personal and specific: How could I personally apply this? Before you get too specific, however, start by considering the passage's more general implications: What does the text imply about the depth of God's love, the Church's task in world missions, our society's view of evil, a Christian's response to suffering, etc.



## APPLICATION

The real goal of studying Scripture is growing in our relationship with the Lord. But an opposite effect can actually take place if our study becomes simply an intellectual exercise. The absence of serious application opens the door to spiritual danger not unlike what happened to the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They diligently studied Scripture but had "hardened their hearts" to its message. Better to not have studied Scripture at all than to study it without our lives on the line.

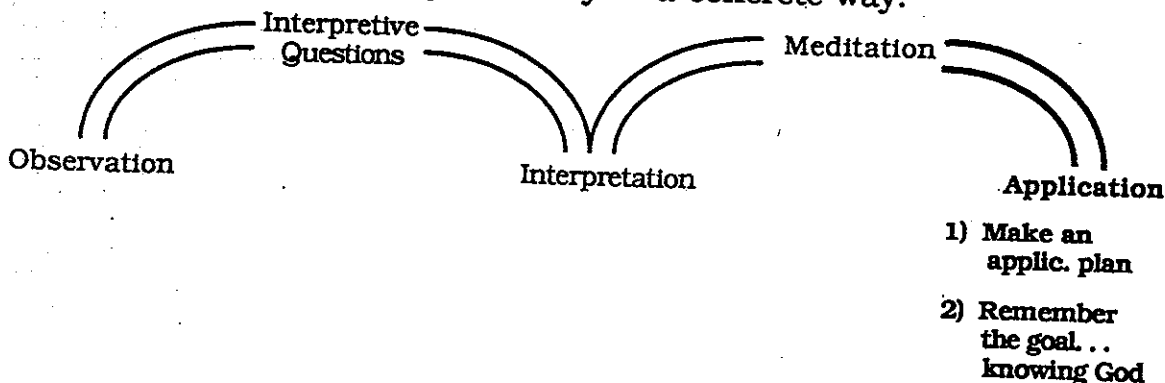
One of the biggest enemies to applying Scripture is vagueness. Applications like "I need to be more hospitable" will not likely lead to observable action. How would I know a week later if I had really responded to God's Word by being "more hospitable?"



Better to draw up an *application plan* that is specific and observable. To specify your application, begin with the phrase, "By God's help, I will. . . ." Do not say "I need to. . ." or "I should. . . ." Be definite and observable: **HOW, WHEN, WHERE** and **WITH WHOM** do you plan to carry out your plan. "By God's help I will express hospitality to a friend by fixing him dinner next Tuesday." Later, then, you can evaluate how well you were able to carry out your plan.

In drawing up an application plan do not make more than one or two applications that require action or you will be overwhelmed with things to do. Remember, too, deciding to pray constitutes a specific application. And that is a great place to start!

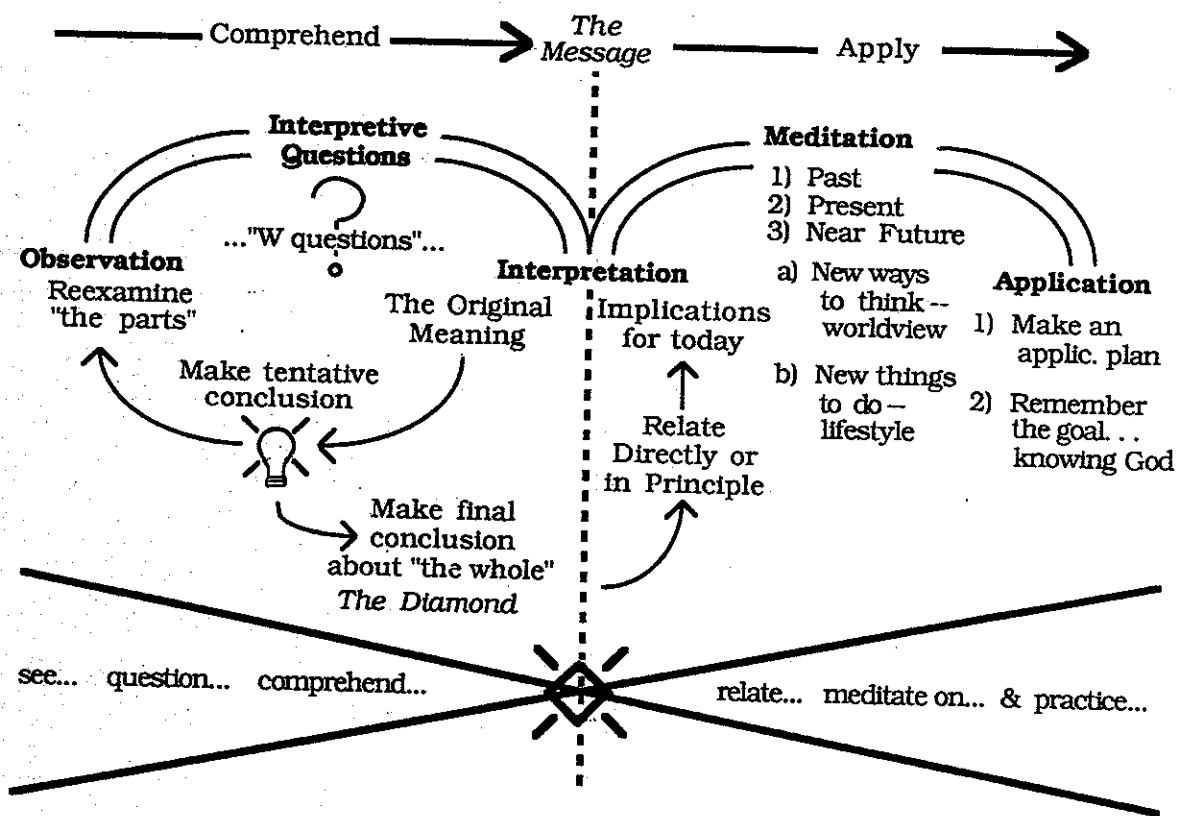
Your plan is not meant to become the eleventh commandment or foster guilt if you fail to carry it out. Avoid the Pharisees' trap: being more concerned with rules -- including an application plan! -- based on Scripture rather than a relationship with God based on Scripture. Instead your plan is meant to provide you with an exciting opportunity of following through with your study in a concrete way.



**SUMMARY: Observation, Interpretation & Application**

The diagram below visualizes the three steps and two bridges of inductive Bible study. Upon reading a passage you begin on the left with a great amount of facts to observe. Those facts are sifted for meaning with a series of "W questions." When the "light comes on" as to the point of the passage, test that tentative conclusion until you are reasonably certain about the passage's interpretation -- its "diamond."

Now your study comes to the crossroads and enters into the 20th century. One basic interpretation opens up to a myriad of potential implications and applications based on the passage's main point. You then conclude your study with personal reflection as to how the passage should affect your own faith and life. All that is left is actually carrying through on your application!



The written Word of God, when effectively studied and applied, opens up transforming dimensions of life in God's kingdom. As we step out onto this new landscape, we do so at the invitation of the living Word of God, even Jesus Christ himself. He will be our guide on this grand adventure.



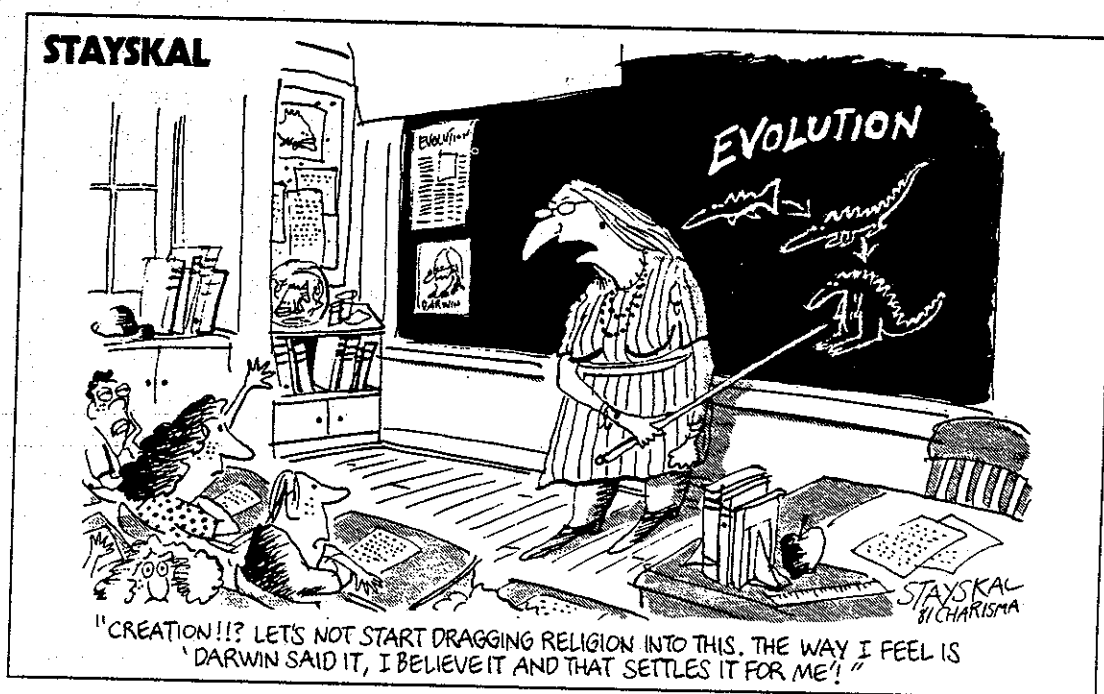
# Using the OIA Study Format

*"Pale ink is better than the most retentive mind."*

Not only is our memory weak, but the ability to be organized and concrete often eludes our best mental efforts. Consequently some kind of format for keeping Bible study notes can be of gracious service to us. Many formats work well. The one we propose naturally incorporates the step-by-step process of observation, interpretation and application (OIA).

The *OIA study sheet* should facilitate your attempt to take notes as you study a given passage of Scripture. The front of the sheet is set up for observation and the back side for interpretation and application.

The outlines on the following pages break down the OIA process into specific steps. *These outlines are not to be followed rigidly. Rather they provide a helpful resource of questions and a starting point for your study.*



## I. OBSERVATION

### A. The basic structure: Investigate the author's argument / sequence of events

1. WHO is involved?
  - a. What references/titles/names are used for God/Jesus?
  - b. Are supernatural beings mentioned? How are they described?
  - d. Who are the main human characters? How are they described?
2. WHEN did the event occur?  
(Also place under *Historical/Cultural Background*)
  - a. Note *time words*, *historical references* and *cultural features*.
  - b. If possible identify the original reader's circumstances, problems or questions which made this teaching necessary.
3. WHERE did the event take place?  
(Also place under *Literary Context*)
  - a. Note *location words* and use a map to locate the event. Note how many miles it is from the event previously mentioned.
  - b. Identify the literary context of the event or idea.
4. WHAT is happening?  
(Also place under *Grammatical Definitions*)
  - a. *Verbs* are the "action words." Note their tense and compare.
  - b. *Connectives* such as: and, yet, but, because, therefore, if/then denote the progression of thought or events.
  - c. *Repetition*, *comparison* or *contrast* of phrases or ideas can reveal the point the author or speaker seeks to make.
  - d. What commands or promises are either given or implied?
  - e. What important statements, warnings or questions are given?
  - f. Define unknown words or unclear terms and phrases via the context and/or a Bible dictionary or commentary.
5. HOW did the event happen?
  - a. What sequence/stage/effects are described?
  - b. Note: the author may interpret the event or ideas himself.

### B. Identify with reactions of the characters or the issues faced by the original readers

1. Imagine the experience of the persons involved -- what would they see? smell? hear? think? feel?
2. With whom do you identify the most -- how are your problems similar or different? How would you react? What questions would you have?

## II. INTERPRETATION

### A. Raise interpretive questions

1. Question your initial "W question" observations. Some examples:
  - a. WHO: What is the significance of the title...? description? the way Peter reacted? What does this tell us about him?
  - b. WHEN: What meaning does the timing/historical situation/cultural environment bring to this event?
  - c. WHERE: What significance is the location to this teaching/event? its sequence to the location of the previous event?
  - d. WHAT: Why does the author seem to focus on this event? Why are these words, phrases, ideas compared/contrasted?
  - e. HOW: How is the progression of the story/author's argument important to the overall meaning?
2. Develop more indepth questions triggered by initial observations:
  - a. WHY... did Jesus use this illustration here. . . .
  - b. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE / MEANING OF. . . the title. . .
  - c. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN. . . verse 5 and 7. . . .
  - e. Any question an observation triggers may lead to helpful insight.

### B. Interpret the original meaning

*What did the passage mean when it was originally written?*

1. Answer your interpretative questions
  - a. Paraphrase important commands, promises, warnings, etc.
  - b. Carefully consider the context and historical background
  - c. Study through other translations
  - d. Consult a commentary *after* other means are exhausted
2. Come up with a tentative conclusion as to the author's main point and look again at the passage with this in mind.
3. Identify the author's main point -- "the diamond."
4. Consider legitimate *secondary points*.

### C. Relate implications for today (Place under *Application* column)

*What significance does the passage's meaning have in today's world?*

1. What in the passage relates only to its original readers?  
*Criteria:* The message is directed to the original readers' specific situation or tied to their cultural context in a way that does not readily apply outside of that situation or context.
2. What in the passage relates directly to its modern readers?  
*Criteria:* The message is universally applicable regardless of one's situation or culture.
3. What (if anything) in the passage conveys an underlying principle to its modern readers?  
*Criteria:* The message conveys a general principle which can be applied to a genuinely comparable life-situation with the original readers.

**A. Meditate on the passage**

1. Reflect on the passage via the past, present and near future:
  - a. *Past*: How has God worked in this area of my life?
  - b. *Present*: How could I implement this into my life?
  - c. *Near Future*: How will I implement this during this day/week in the way I respond to God, to people and/or circumstances?
  
2. Reflect on new ways to THINK and BELIEVE (worldview):
 

*What is the main thing I should know from this passage?*

  - a. Is there a new or stimulating thought concerning. . . ?
  - b. Is there something that redirects a previously held belief?
  - c. Is there a promise to claim? What conditions am I to fulfill?
  - d. Is there something for which to thank God or rejoice in?
  
3. Reflect on new things to DO (lifestyle):
 

*What is the main thing I should consider doing from this passage?*

  - a. *Priorities*: What difference does the Lord want to make in the way I use my time, abilities and my money?
  - b. *Attitudes*: Which of my attitudes does the Lord want to change?
  - c. *Relationships*: What difference does the Lord want to make in my relationship with himself, my spouse, other Christians, employer, employees, non-Christians, my own self, etc?
    - Is there someone with whom I need to make restitution?
    - Is there some way I need to love or encourage this person?
    - Is there a matter about which I need to challenge him/her?
  - d. *Lifestyle*: In what ways does the Lord seek to change my life?
    - Is there a command to obey or an indirect appeal to heed?
    - Is there a sin to avoid or a warning to consider?
    - Is there an example of godliness or way of life to copy?
    - Is there new direction for an area of my life?

**B. Make an application plan**

1. Establish an *application plan* which is specific and measurable:
  - a. Use the phrase, "By God's help I will. . . ."
  - b. HOW, WHEN, WHERE and WITH WHOM do you plan to do this?
  - c. Limit yourself to one thing to do so as not to be overwhelmed.
  - d. Remember you can include prayer as an application.
  - e. Explore your feelings/attitudes as you consider the application.
  - f. Evaluate later how well you were able to carry through.
  
2. Remember the goals of an *application plan*
  - a. Not new rules for the Christian life but a renewed relationship with the Lord!
  - b. Not an occasion to experience guilt but a concrete means of responding to God's Word!