

Discovering the Treasures of God's Word

How to Study the Bible Inductively



Copyright © Entrust (formerly BEE International) January 2011.
P.O. Box 25520, Colorado Springs, CO 80936-5520, USA
www.entrust4.org

All rights reserved, including translations.

The text of *Discovering the Treasures of God's Word* may be quoted and/or reproduced up to 1,000 words without written permission from Entrust. Please contact Entrust (info@entrust4.org) for permission to quote, store, reproduce, translate or transmit larger portions.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked New Living Translation are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright ©1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Course Introduction.....	7
Lesson 1: Introduction to the Inductive Method	15
Introduction.....	16
Definition of the Inductive Method	16
Purpose of the Inductive Method.....	17
Basic Elements of the Inductive Method.....	19
Stages of the Inductive Method	24
Conclusion	27
Lesson 2: Do an Overview	31
Introduction.....	33
Read	33
Reflect.....	37
A Practical Example from 2 Timothy.....	38
A Practical Example from the Book of Jonah	40
Conclusion	43
Lesson 3: Observe the Structure: Create a Structural Layout.....	47
Introduction.....	48
Creating a Structural Layout.....	49
Conclusion	66
Lesson 4: Observe the Structure: Find Structural Relationships	69
Introduction.....	70
List of Structural Relationships	70
Definitions and Examples.....	71
Structural Relationships in Jonah 3.....	79
Conclusion	81

Lesson 5: Observe the Content	83
Introduction.....	84
Who.....	84
Where.....	86
When.....	88
What.....	91
How.....	93
Why.....	95
Conclusion	97
Lesson 6: Interpret: Use Questions and Principles of Interpretation.....	99
Introduction.....	100
Three Basic Questions of Interpretation	101
Four Basic Principles of Interpretation	106
Conclusion	111
Lesson 7: Interpret: Find the Exegetical Idea.....	113
Introduction.....	114
Four Basic Principles of Interpretation: Interpret Contextually	115
Other Principles of Interpretation	121
Formulate the Exegetical Idea	123
Conclusion	127
Lesson 8: Apply	129
Introduction.....	130
Recognize Hindrances to Application	131
Formulate the Universal Idea.....	132
Apply the Universal Idea	139
Conclusion	144
Lesson 9: Synthesize	147
Introduction.....	148
Microsynthesis	149
Macrosynthesis	153
Lesson Conclusion	157
Course Conclusion.....	158
Course Exam.....	158

Appendix A: Structural Layout of Philippians 2:1-11	161
Appendix B: Advanced Instruction for Creating a Structural Layout	165
Appendix C: The Use of Braces for Compound Items	171
Appendix D	175
D-1 – Jonah: Step 1	175
D-2 – Jonah: Step 2	179
D-3 – Jonah: Step 3	183
D-4 – Jonah: Step 4	191
Appendix E	201
E-1 – How to Interpret Letters	201
E-2 – How to Interpret Narrative	203
E-3 – How to Interpret Parables	205
E-4 – How to Interpret Poetry	207
E-5 – How to Interpret Wisdom Literature	211
E-6 – How to Interpret Prophecy	215
E-7 – How to Interpret Old Testament Law	217
Appendix F: Common Figures of Speech	219
Appendix G: Supplementary Principles of Interpretation	223
Appendix H: The Inductive Method – A Short Form	227
Appendix I: Bible Maps	229
Answers to Assignments	233

Course Introduction

Ali Hafed owned an immense farm with orchards, vineyards, fields, and animals. He was rich and happy. A wise man came to visit him and stayed a number of days. One evening he told Ali Hafed that the secret to true riches was diamonds. He who has diamonds is rich. He who does not have diamonds is not rich. Ali Hafed did not have diamonds. In that very moment his happiness disappeared. That evening he went to bed a poor man. He could no longer live without diamonds. Soon he sold his farm, placed his family in rented quarters, and left in search of a diamond mine. He traveled throughout the entire world of that time and consumed all his money without ever finding his diamonds. Broken, discouraged, and without hope, he cast himself into the Atlantic Ocean. He committed suicide.

One day the man who had bought Ali Hafed's farm took his camel to a brook to give him a drink. As the camel was drinking, the new owner observed something shining in the water. He reached into the water and retrieved a black rock with an eye of light that reflected all the colors of the rainbow. It was a diamond! And it was only the first! This man had discovered the Golconda Mine, one of the largest diamond mines in the history of mankind. From that moment, each shovel that dug into the earth came out with diamonds.¹

What Ali Hafed was looking for was right beside him all along. He only needed to discover the riches that were his and enjoy them.

The royal crowns of England contain diamonds from the Golconda Mine. At the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, the Bible was placed in her hands and the following words were spoken: "We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords."²

Greater than all the wealth of the Golconda is our wealth in the Bible. This course, *Discovering the Treasures of God's Word*, is for those who want to live according to their wealth in the Bible. It is about how to discover our wealth and how to rejoice in it. Therefore, the course offers certain tools, together with a method by which we can "dig" in our mine of unfathomable riches which is called the Bible.

You can use various methods to study the Bible. Many of these are very good. But the question is: Which is the best method? Which method allows you to glean the essence of the Word of God in the most effective manner? The weight of evidence

points toward the Inductive Method. Therefore, in this course you will study and learn the Inductive Method.

Course Description

This course has been designed to present the Inductive Method in a clear and concise fashion. Nonessential material has been omitted. Wording has been kept intentionally simple. But this in no way means that a quick reading of the course or even a clear understanding of principles presented in it means that one has learned the Inductive Method. As with any skill, gaining facility in this method requires time, effort, and involvement. So be prepared to work in this course.

You will need to be engaged to the fullest possible extent with the reading, the questions, and the exercises. Your work, however, will be richly rewarded. The greater your involvement in the process, the better you will learn the method. The better you learn the method, the better you will know the Bible. The better you know and live the Bible, the more you will experience your spiritual wealth in Christ through His Word.

This course contains nine consecutive lessons, each building on the one before. These include necessary explanations and practical illustrations from studies in the book of Jonah. For your Assignments you will be studying 2 Timothy.

Your group leader has the freedom, however, to choose and to use other passages or books of the Bible.

Contributions to Developing Character

The Bible is not just a book for learning about history, wisdom, prophecy, the church, and theology. More importantly, it is a book of transformation. Knowledge of the Bible is necessary but not enough. We must have the ability to understand the Bible message in its context in order to be able to apply it, thus allowing it to transform our lives.

As with the acquisition of any skill, a person needs to learn how to read, understand, and apply the truths of the Bible. Without application, the Bible is merely a compendium of truths confined inside the pages of a book. But when applied, it promises to change our character and our lives.

Discovering the Treasures of God's Word has as its purpose instruction in learning how to read, understand, and apply the Bible for yourself. While learning from others, through whom the Holy Spirit has spoken, is important, it is vital that you be able to read, learn, and apply the Bible for yourself. When that is done, godly character will be the result.

Contributions to Acquiring Ministry Skills

In the same way that the truths of the Bible are to be applied to our lives, these same truths are to be shared with others. This course focuses on the ministry skills of preaching and teaching. Without the Bible and an accurate understanding of it, the believer has nothing to preach or teach. This course equips you to understand the Bible accurately so that when you preach or teach, you can preach and teach accurately.

Preaching and teaching are very close in what they do. Preaching, on the one hand, is usually thought of as an organized message that is given to a group of people gathered for worship. Teaching, on the other hand, can be through casual conversation, a small Bible study group, or in a classroom of five hundred people. Sometimes it is an organized lecture and sometimes it is largely discussion. In all of these cases the truth must still be that which is taught. When you finish this course, you will know how to discover the truth of Scripture that needs to be preached and taught to others.

Contributions to Developing Relationships

The Bible ultimately has to do with relationships—our relationship with God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, family, friends, and even with people we might consider to be our enemies. When the truths of Scripture are known and understood, the natural outgrowth and application of those truths should lead to improved relationships with people in all spheres of our life. It takes an accurate understanding of the Bible to know why we should have good relationships, what is involved in having good relationships, and how we can develop them. Through the skills learned in this course, you will be able to glean from the Bible principles that will help you establish and develop good relationships.

Course Tasks

During this course you will study material that will motivate, equip, and challenge you to accomplish the following course tasks. These tasks will help you demonstrate that you have an essential grasp of the objectives of this course.

1. Present³ to a group of two or more people the basic principles of inductive Bible study based on what was learned in this course. Prior to the presentation, you will submit to the course facilitator an outline of your presentation. After the presentation, present to the facilitator a brief report on the presentation.
2. Do a complete study of the book of Philemon, using the principles of inductive Bible study you learned in this course. Submit the study in written form to the course facilitator for evaluation. Included in the study should be at

least a structural layout of the book and indications of how the Inductive Method helped you arrive at certain key decisions or interpretations.

3. Lead⁴ a group of two or more people in a discussion that interrelates truths and applications found in Philemon.

Course Objectives

When you have completed this course, you will be able to:

1. Experience growing enthusiasm for the Word of God—its study, its application, and its communication to others.
2. Do a complete inductive study, using the method taught in this course.
3. Present to others the Inductive Method of Bible study.
4. Describe ways in which you have seen growth in your Christian character through application of the truths learned in this course.
5. Perform the course tasks, which will help prepare you to achieve the competences of preaching and teaching.

Course Outline

Lesson 1 Introduction to the Inductive Method

Lesson 2 Do an Overview

Lesson 3 Observe the Structure: Create a Structural Layout

Lesson 4 Observe the Structure: Find Structural Relationships

Lesson 5 Observe the Content

Lesson 6 Interpret: Use Questions and Principles of Interpretation

Lesson 7 Interpret: Find the Exegetical Idea

Lesson 8 Apply

Lesson 9 Synthesize

Contributions to the Total Curriculum

Learning how to read, understand, and apply the Bible is fundamental to everything else in the Christian life. **You cannot even be sure your Christian life** is moving in the right direction without an accurate understanding of Scripture. And how can you **teach, preach, or disciple someone if you yourself are unsure of what the Bible says?** Everything in the Christian life, and every course in this curriculum **is based on an accurate understanding of the Bible.**

Student Instructions

In order to benefit most from your study of this material, you should plan to work through the lessons in the order they are presented. In other words, you are encouraged to work through the course systematically rather than choosing a topic in the middle of the course as a place to begin.

Before you begin Lesson 1, acquire a standard-size notebook. This will become your *Life and Ministry Notebook* (referred to as your “LMN”) for recording a variety of insights for your own life and for ministering to others. First, you will reserve a section of your LMN for written responses to Assignments and other questions in the lessons. Second, you will record first-time discoveries, transforming truths, and transferable truths under appropriately identified sections in your LMN.

- **First-time discoveries** include new insights, helpful information, and ideas for life and ministry. For example, one key insight from studying the Inductive Method might be this: “The context is critically important; always study the text in its context.”
- **Transforming truths** are those biblical truths, complete with Scripture references, for personal application. An example of a transforming truth is: “The Bible is God’s Word, the greatest treasure in the world. I am going to begin to treat it that way by studying and seeking to apply it daily” (1 Thess 2:13). Often, those truths that most transform you are precisely those that are also most transferable to others.
- **Transferable truths** refer to truths to share with others and passages to present to others. For example, a striking transferable truth from Psalm 1 is this: “If we really love God’s Word, then we will spend time in it. For the one who delights in the Word of God also meditates on it according to verse 2.” This is an important truth, not only to practice ourselves but also to pass on to other Christians.

You should allow yourself a minimum of two to three hours of study time to complete each lesson. This will include doing the required reading and completing the Assignments and Personal Reflections. Because you will eventually want to help others learn the Inductive Method, you may want to record in your LMN how many hours you needed to complete each lesson. In addition, you may wish to note any questions or problems encountered as you work through the course.

Course Design

The course objectives listed above summarize the most important things you will learn as you work through the lessons. Study these objectives carefully and refer to them periodically so as to gauge your mastery of the Inductive Method.

Since most individuals taking this course are extremely busy people, we have designed each lesson with clearly defined steps for easy reference. Also, if you study the Course Objectives and Lesson Objectives, you will know from the start on which topics to spend the most time.

Lesson Design

Several standard components are built into each lesson to facilitate your study and develop your skills and character. They are explained below so that you may recognize and use them to full advantage:

1. **Lesson Objectives** are provided to help you identify the most crucial parts of each lesson. They guide you in the effective use of your study time and will be used by your group leader for class discussion.
2. **Lesson Outlines** provide an overview of the sections of each lesson. In this way you can anticipate the flow and sequence of the various topics to be covered before you begin your study.
3. **Repetition and review** are woven into the course to help you learn new concepts.
4. **Assignments** offer you the opportunity to interact with the material being covered and to practice new concepts and procedures. Whenever you see this icon, stop and record what is required in your LMN. You may then compare what you have written to what you find in the answer section at the end of each lesson.
5. **Personal Reflections** stimulate you to think more deeply about material covered and about life and ministry. Please do not neglect these occasions. Whenever you see this icon, please respond to the Personal Reflections. Although optional, it may be worthwhile to record them in your LMN.
6. **Adorations** arise from the lesson content related to the Person and work of God. They facilitate your taking time to reflect about God, to thank Him and to praise Him. Whenever you see this icon, pause from your study to respond to God.
7. **Appendices** offer resources and useful reference materials that may be of benefit to you both in the course and in your continuing study of God's Word. These are placed at the end of the workbook.

Materials Needed

To work through this course, you will need **a Bible** without study notes, a copy of **this workbook**, and your **LMN** for all written work. Unless otherwise noted, all the

Scripture references and Scripture quotations in this workbook are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Icons



Assignment: a question or study that focuses on course content. Written responses are required and are to be recorded in the student's notebook



Personal Reflection: an instruction to reflect on scriptural truths or character traits or both as they relate to one's walk with God. The focus is on personal application. A written response may be requested.



Adoration: an instruction to worship the Lord with reference to course content. The focus is on God. No written response is required.

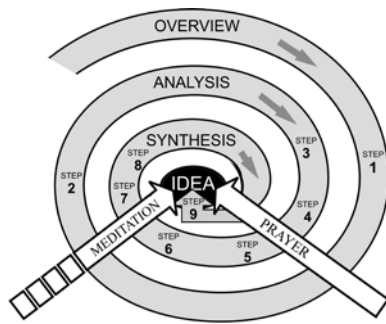
ENDNOTES

¹ A summary of the story in Russell H. Conwell, *Acres of Diamonds* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1915; reprint, Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1960), 10-14.

² *The Form and Order of Service that is to be performed and the Ceremonies that are to be observed in the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, on Tuesday, the second day of June, 1953* [online version]; available from <http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/coronation/cor1953b.html>; Internet; accessed June 3, 2010.

³ Wherever “present,” “make a presentation,” or “give a presentation” occurs, it represents any kind of intentional presentation of an organized body of information to at least one person. The kind of presentation will depend on the experience of the student.

⁴ Wherever “lead” or “lead a discussion” occurs, it focuses on interaction with at least one person on a particular topic that is already known to the group. It may or may not include the giving of a presentation by the student, such as an introductory lesson or message.



1 LESSON

Introduction to the Inductive Method

Jerry still remembers how he learned to drive a car. It proved to be extremely difficult at the beginning. Just getting behind the steering wheel made him extremely nervous. He had to practice often. Now after decades of driving, however, everything seems virtually automatic. What seemed so very hard at the beginning has become second nature and remarkably easy.

So it is with using the Inductive Method in studying the Bible.

If you have never studied the Bible according to the Inductive Method, it will seem hard to you at first. Do not worry. This is normal. For those who continue to do the Assignments and who persevere with the method, it will become easier and easier. It will even become a pleasure. Be assured that the results will be worth every bit of investment and effort.

Lesson 1 introduces you to certain basic elements of the Inductive Method and provides you with the overall framework for the entire method.

Lesson Outline

- Introduction
- Definition of the Inductive Method
- Purpose of the Inductive Method
- Basic Elements of the Inductive Method
 - The Idea
 - Prayer
 - Meditation
- Stages of the Inductive Method
 - Overview
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
- Conclusion

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define the Inductive Method.
2. Explain the purpose and significance of the Inductive Method to others.
3. Describe the importance of the three basic elements in the Inductive Method.
4. Explain the three stages and the nine steps of the Inductive Method to others.

Introduction

The Inductive Method differs from other methods, especially a deductive approach to Scriptures. In a deductive approach you think, first, of a particular theme, and then you find a passage¹ which you think (or hope) contains this theme. Only then do you “study” the passage, but usually with a tendency to force your theme and ideas into the text, whether they fit or not.

For example, you want to preach about Christ’s love for His church. You have heard somewhere that the Song of Solomon deals with this theme. So, you read and study this book with your preconceived ideas, and you tend to find Christ and His church on every page, even if they do not appear there.

Through the Inductive Method you study the units of the Bible without preconceived notions in order to determine what they say, not what you want them to say. It will help, then, if we define the Inductive Method.

Definition of the Inductive Method

The Inductive Method is a method by which a person studies units of the Bible in order to determine their true content, meaning, and application. Please notice that virtually every word of the definition carries significance:

- It is **a** method. This means that the Inductive Method is not the only method. There are others. Considerable evidence exists, however, to demonstrate that it is the most effective method for discovering what God has truly communicated in the Bible.
- It is a **method**. Thus, it involves a logical procedure. The Inductive Method makes use of a particular plan with a particular order and particular steps.
- It is a method of **study**. Although you read, you do more. You study seriously. You dig deeply as you search out the truths of Scripture.

- It is a study of **units of the Bible**. The focus of study will be the primary units of thought: **books** and **passages**.² Verses are units of study for understanding passages. Paragraphs, chapters, and sections are units of study for understanding books.
- It is a study...to determine the **true content**. You do not want to find just anything. Through the Inductive Method you set out to find what is truly in the text.
 - true **content**: what you see, what you observe.
 - true **meaning**: significance, what it means.
 - true **application**: what you are to do and how you do it.

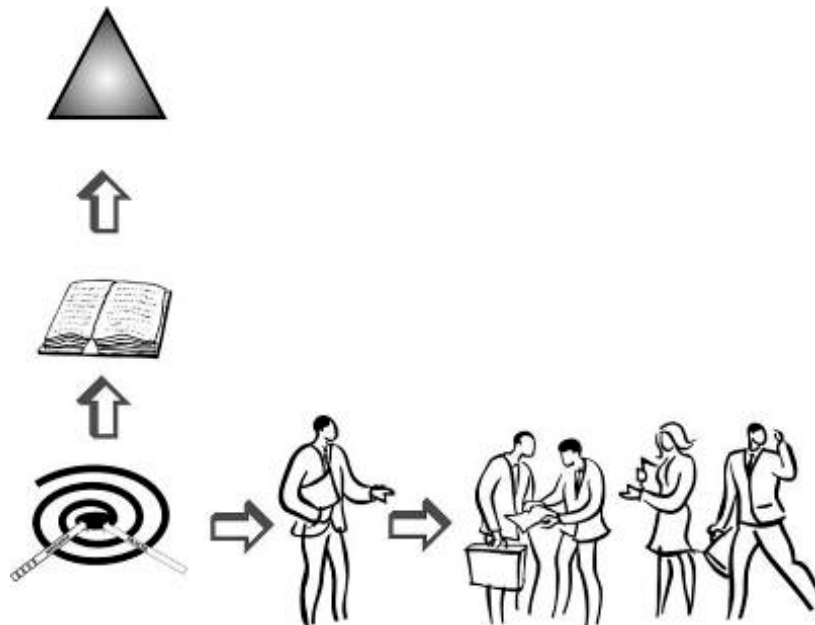
Wise King Solomon once said, “When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction” (Prov 24:32). When you use the Inductive Method, you also will look (Observation). You will reflect in order to understand what you observe (Interpretation). And you will learn practical instruction (Application).



In your LMN identify the distinctives of the Inductive Method of Bible study, and note ways it is different from other methods of Bible study with which you are familiar.

Purpose of the Inductive Method

The purpose for using the Inductive Method is to know the Word of God, and through the Word of God to know God Himself in order to live and to serve under the authority of His Word.



If you look carefully at our purpose statement, you will understand that it actually reflects **two purposes** with **two** consequent **results**. The ultimate purpose of the method is to know God. The principal path to knowing Him is His Word. Therefore, the purpose in the Inductive Method is to know the Word of God that you might thereby know God. Yes, you study the Bible, but you do not stop with the Bible. Rather, you understand that through the Bible you reach God. This purpose is worthy of a lifetime of dedication because eternal life, which you have in Christ, means knowing Him (Jn 17:3).

No one can say that he or she fully knows God. Now we know only in part (1 Cor 13:12), but we are called to fill ourselves with the knowledge of God's will and to grow in the knowledge of His will (Col 1:9-10). The Inductive Method helps greatly in this.

Some aspects of this diagram are full of significance. The target spiral represents the process of the Inductive Method itself. You will see that God and His Word are above the method, and therefore, above you. When you correctly apply the Inductive Method, you submit to God and His Word. Ultimately, you do not desire to master God's Word but to be mastered by His Word. In the Inductive Method the student of the Bible is **not** the authority. The Bible is the authority. Thereby, God remains the authority. This method lets God be God and lets His Word be His Word.

If the purposes are valuable, then the results are valuable: an impact in your life and in your ministry. In the first place, you will be changed. In the second place, others will be touched and changed through you. When God and His Word work in a person, life is always changed (Jer 17:7-8; Ps 1:2-3). First, the life of the one coming into direct contact with God through His Word; then others through that changed person.

The Inductive Method helps you to live and to serve in the best possible manner: first, to **live** under the authority of God's Word, reflecting the character of God; second, to **serve** under the authority of His Word, a colaborer with Him (1 Cor 3:9).



Briefly explain the purpose and significance of inductive Bible study as it affects your relationship to God and to others. Be prepared to share your response with someone else.

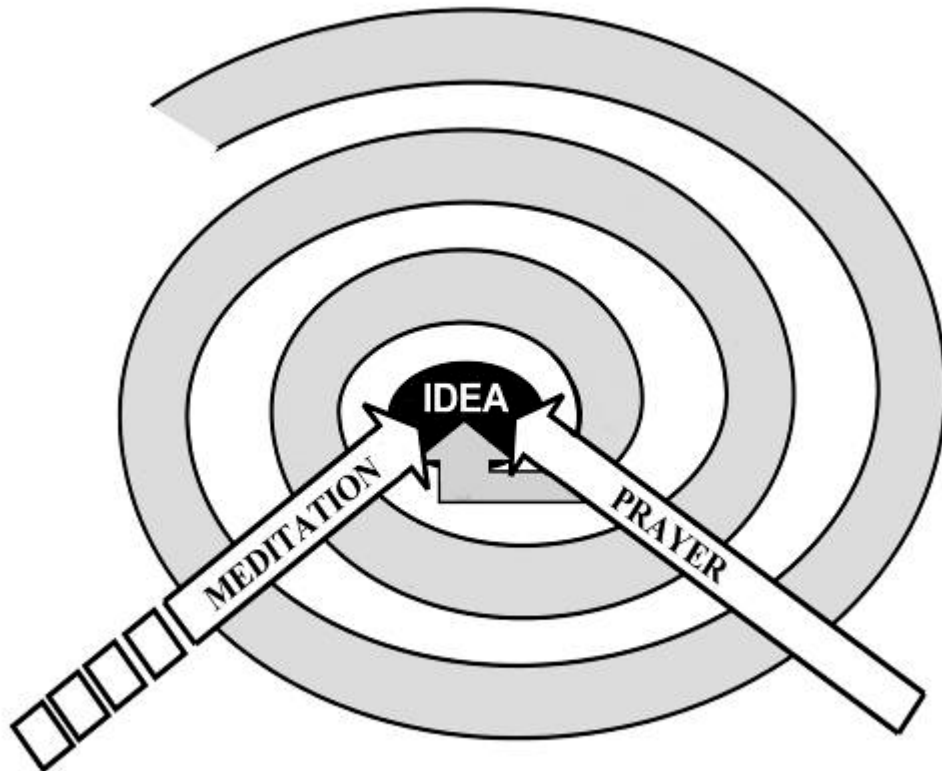


Assuming this diagram accurately reflects a believer's relationship with God and with others, how would you describe your relationship with the Lord and His Word? Likewise, how would you describe your effectiveness in taking what you have learned from the Bible and affecting the lives of others—at home, at church, at work, and in the

community? What steps will you take to improve your effectiveness in one of those settings?

Basic Elements of the Inductive Method

The three basic elements in the Inductive Method are the Idea, Prayer, and Meditation. Explore these elements.



The Idea

The **Idea** is what you are aiming for throughout the entire process of your inductive study. For this reason the spiral, representing the method, has “The **Idea**” in its center.

The **Idea** of a unit of Scripture, in grammatical terms, is a single sentence which summarizes that particular unit. The **Idea** has two component parts: the **subject** and the **complement**. The subject is the answer to the question: What is the author talking about? And the complement is the answer to the question: What does he say about what he is talking about? Or expressed differently, What does he say about his subject?

The subject and its complement form a single sentence named “**the Idea of the unit.**” The **Idea** is the essence of your study. It summarizes your study. Should you preach a sermon based on a particular book or passage, the **Idea** is your message in miniature. Determining the **subject** and **complement** of a passage and developing the **Idea** will form the basis for your sermons.

Normally, we communicate complete thoughts or ideas when writing or speaking to others. When you look at Scripture, you observe that biblical authors likewise communicated ideas. But the work of finding the intended **Idea** is not always as easy as it may appear at first glance. On occasion it is not very complicated, but most of the time you need considerable work. Only a thorough, inductive study of the unit will assure you that you have indeed found the **Idea** (and not something less, something more, or something else). But the work is definitely worth it. The **Ideas** of Scripture can change your mind, and a mind changed after the pattern of God's will leads to a changed life.

The Lord Jesus communicated **Ideas** in the Sermon on the Mount. A summary analysis of Matthew 5-7 affirms this. If you read these three chapters several times, you observe when and where our Lord's subjects and thoughts changed. Look at two passages from this discourse of our Lord. Also use the two questions that help you determine the subject, the complement, and, consequently, the **Idea** of a unit.

Think about Matthew 5:33-37:

Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, “YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.” But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, “Yes, yes” or “No, no”; and anything beyond these is of evil.³

In this case we can say that the author of these words is **Matthew** (the human writer of the book), the **Holy Spirit** (He who inspired the entire Bible), and **Jesus** (the speaker). What is the author talking about here? Responding hastily, we might say that he is talking about oaths. Looking more carefully at the passage, however, we observe that he is talking about the words of a believer. This then is the author's subject.

What does the author say about the words of a believer? In essence, he says that they must be true. Uniting the subject and the complement, you obtain the following as the **Idea** of Matthew 5:33-37: “All the words of a believer must be true”—an **Idea** that is, at one and the same time, both simple and powerful.



Look at another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:16-18:

Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

1. What is the **subject** of the passage? In other words, what is the author talking about? In your LMN complete the following sentence: The author of Matthew 6:16-18 is talking about _____.
2. What then is the **complement** of the passage? In other words, what does the author say about his subject? Again, write out your answer: The author says _____.
3. Finally, record your subject and your complement together in a single sentence that summarizes the passage—the **Idea** of the passage.

Prayer

Prayer is the second basic element in the Inductive Method. Yes, you must remember that the Bible is a human book. Real people using human language wrote it in the form of human literature. But the Bible is also a divine book. It is the Word of God, the book breathed out by God and recorded by men who were led of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). When you study the Bible, you must recognize your dependence on the Holy Spirit of God, the One who is the ultimate Author. You must pray for illumination, for openness of heart, for perseverance in study, and for submission to His Word. You must never separate study of the Bible from prayer. Rather, you must pray as you study, and you must pray with the Word of God in mind.



Ideally, you should pray **before, during, and after** your study. Give several reasons why you think this is so important.



1. Can you recall a time you studied the Bible without a proper connection with God through prayer? If you have had such times, how did you feel about the process? How did it compare to times when you prayed as you studied a passage?

2. What do the following verses say about your need for dependence on prayer?

- Jeremiah 33:3
- Matthew 7:7-8

Write these verses in the “Transforming Truths” section of your LMN. Be sure to add helpful comments for future reference and use.

Meditation

Our third basic element in the Inductive Method is Meditation. With the closing of the canon of Scripture, God has spoken once for all through His Word. The Bible is His unique revelation. You need to listen to what He has said. This is **Meditation: listening to God in His Word**. He has spoken, and you are listening, really listening to what He has said. There is a big difference between “informational reading” and “transformational reading.” Here, with Meditation, you read slowly, meditatively, for transformation.

More explicitly, Meditation is a matter of reflecting on Scripture, all the while thinking, asking questions, and praying, and always with a view toward Application. Like Prayer, the dynamic of Meditation permeates the process of your inductive study. Throughout your study you practice all the basic elements of Meditation: you reflect, you think, you ponder, you ask questions, you pray, you aim toward Application. Thus, you listen to Him who has left you His written revelation.



1. Hearing, reading, studying, and memorizing Scripture are means of getting God's Word into your mind. Meditation is the nurturing process that links God's Truth to your heart, to change it and thereby change your life. Along with Prayer, it is a key for cultivating intimacy with God.
 - a. What has been your experience with meditating on the Word of God?
 - b. Do you take time daily to meditate, or do you meditate less often?
 - c. How has meditation influenced or changed you? your life?
2. Read Psalm 19:7-14. How are these verses an encouragement for you to meditate on Scripture? Record your thoughts and insights in the “Transforming Truths” section of your LMN.

The three basic elements of the Inductive Method are to be employed simultaneously, not sequentially. You do all three—seek the **Idea**, pray, and meditate—**together**. If even only one of the three elements is lacking, your study is severely handicapped. It will be like taking one of the legs off a three-legged stool.

- If you seek the **Idea** and pray, **yet without meditating**, your best prayerful efforts will fail. You will lack essential insights from the Word.
- If you seek the **Idea** and meditate, **yet without praying**, you will fail. You will lack the divine dynamic.
- If you pray and meditate, **yet without aiming for the Idea**, you will fail. You will lack orientation and direction.



Now write a few sentences in your LMN explaining the importance of using all three of the basic elements to achieve a balanced study.



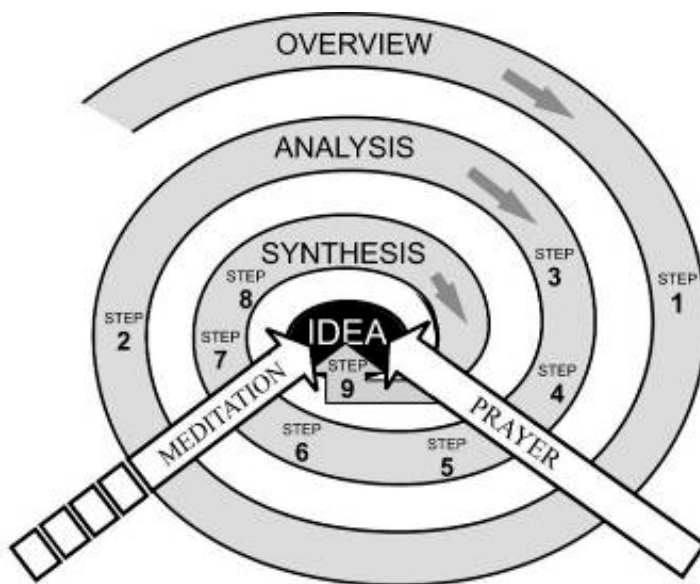
1. Set aside half an hour in a quiet place and spend it with the Lord in a single passage of the Bible. You may want to take a fresh look at a familiar or favorite passage. Or you may want to explore a less familiar passage. Spend your time **meditating** on the passage, **praying** through the passage, and seeking to understand the **Idea** of the passage. Ask many questions, both of the text and of the Lord. Pray for understanding and application.
2. Record in your LMN your best understanding of the passage's **Idea** and any new discoveries, transforming truths, or transferable truths.



God reveals Himself through His Word. He may well have revealed to you fresh insights about Himself and His work through Assignment 4 and Personal Reflection 2 above. Pause now to praise and to thank Him for what He has shown you about Himself.

Stages of the Inductive Method

You have already seen the relationship of the elements of the **Idea**, Prayer, and Meditation. As you explore the stages and steps of the Inductive Method, which is a process, a diagram may help you see how the Inductive Method works.



The Inductive Process

OVERVIEW

- Step 1: Read
- Step 2: Reflect

ANALYSIS

- Step 3: Observe the Structure
- Step 4: Observe the Content

Step 5: Interpret

- Step 6: Formulate the Exegetical Idea
- Step 7: Formulate the Universal Idea
- Step 8: Apply

SYNTHESIS

- Step 9: Evaluate and Summarize

In the context of the Inductive Method you have three basic stages. These are **Overview**, **Analysis**, and **Synthesis**.

Overview

In the first stage, **Overview**, you occupy yourself with a book of the Bible. In this stage you limit yourself to only certain aspects of study. You do the following:

Read. You read the particular book for familiarization, for its context, for key terms, and for divisions.

Reflect. You think and reflect in order to find the author's purpose (why he wrote what he wrote) as well as the unit's **Idea**.

The elements discovered in this stage will be for you like direction signs which help you in your continued study and which offer you an overview of the unit studied.

Analysis

The second stage of the Inductive Method is by far the largest. Six of the method's nine steps fall within this stage. It contains three "substages": **Observation**, **Interpretation**, and **Application**.

Observation. What is the author saying? Your purpose in Observation is to identify the content of the passage, such as persons, places, events, actions, teachings, times, and characteristics.

Interpretation. What is the meaning of what the author says? In Interpretation you try to concentrate on the significance of the passage. You try to determine what the message meant to its original hearers.

Application. What must I now do? In Application you must determine what you will do with the truths discovered in the Bible. How will you respond? You must allow your life to be affected by the Word of God.

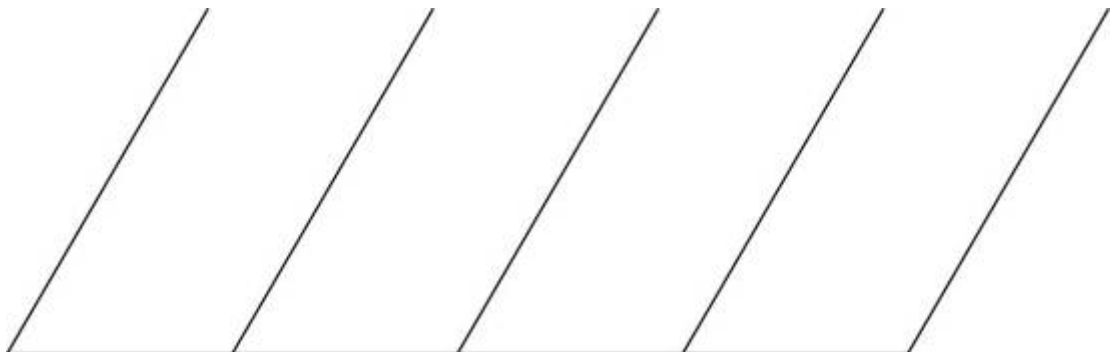
Each of these substages in Analysis contains two steps:

Substages	Steps
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the structure • Observe the content
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret • Formulate the exegetical Idea
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate the universal Idea • Apply

Synthesis

Synthesis, the third and final stage of this method of study, offers you the possibility to evaluate and summarize the study you have done. In this stage you review all your work up to the present. Final modifications may be made.

You then compose summaries, or syntheses, of the book or passage studied. The **macrosynthesis for a book** of the Bible is a **horizontal chart**. For example, the blank chart for the book of Jonah, with its four chapters, would look like this:



The **macrosynthesis for a passage** is an **outline**. A suitable outline form would look like this:

- A. _____
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - 3. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

If the macrosynthesis is a horizontal chart or an **outline**, the microsynthesis is the **Idea**. It does not matter if the unit in view is a book or a passage; the microsynthesis for both is the **Idea**.

Consider that the Bible contains the entire, written revelation of God. It is **complete** and nothing more needs to be added. What is recorded for you in the Scriptures is everything He intended for you to know. Furthermore, it is **consistent**; nothing in it is unneeded “filler.” God did not waste words. The Bible is full of treasures waiting to be discovered!

The Inductive Method contains all the tools you need to dig for the treasures within God’s Word. Tools mean work, but having the right tools and knowing how to use them make the work more effective. Therefore, when you take time to learn how to use the right tools in the right way, it is a worthwhile investment of your time and energy.



Many Christians have never been exposed to the Inductive Method. They have read and studied the Bible but have struggled with understanding what God is really saying. Reflect over your own Christian experience and respond to the following in your LMN:

1. What has been your usual method of studying the Bible?
2. Identify several passages of Scripture that have been difficult for you to understand.
3. Which Bible books do you tend to avoid because you do not understand them?
4. What parts or steps of the Inductive Method are new to you?



Review what you have learned about the three stages and the nine steps of the Inductive Method by sharing them with another person or a small group. Try to incorporate the Course Outline from the Course Introduction or the spiral illustration from this lesson as you explain what you have learned. Write a brief report of the experience in your LMN.



The Scriptures are full of treasures waiting to be found. The diamonds Ali Hafed was looking for were right beside him all along. He only needed to discover the riches that were his and enjoy them.

1. Review the Stages listed above because they identify the necessary tools and a logical method for investigation and discovery of the riches in God's Word.
2. The Inductive Method provides a thorough and systematic process for studying the Scripture. From what you know about the method so far, what are your feelings or concerns about learning this process? What do you see as the benefits of learning this method?
3. How might the Inductive Method help you find "diamonds" in God's Word that you had not seen there before?
4. Complete this sentence: "I want to learn the Inductive Method because...."



As you reflect on your desire to know God and His Word better, take a few minutes now to thank Him for His wonderful Word and this opportunity to learn a way to study it. Then ask God to help you persevere in your quest to master these tools of the Inductive Method.

Conclusion

You have observed that the Inductive Method is a process of studying units of the Bible in order to find their true content, meaning, and Application. You use it to get to know the Word of God, and through the Word to know God Himself in order to live and to serve under the authority of His Word. In fact, we believe that the Inductive Method is distinct from all other methods by virtue of the way it honors the Lord and His Word.

This method has three basic elements: the **Idea**, Prayer, and Meditation. Furthermore, it has three stages: Overview, Analysis, and Synthesis. Within these stages are nine steps:

1. Read
2. Reflect
3. Observe the structure
4. Observe the content
5. Interpret
6. Formulate the exegetical **Idea**
7. Formulate the universal **Idea**
8. Apply
9. Evaluate and Summarize

In the lessons that follow, you will proceed through the stages and deal in detail with each step, explaining and then illustrating it. We will try to facilitate the development of your skills in the Inductive Method for your own benefit and for the benefit of those whom you serve. Therefore, you will begin with the first stage, **Overview**.

ENDNOTES

¹ The term “passage” is used in this course as a general reference to a portion of Scripture of varying length, usually from a verse to a chapter. Otherwise, specific divisions, such as paragraph and chapter, will be used.

² As a reminder, see endnote 1.

³ The English Bible that Entrust uses (NASB) in its courses uses small-capital font in the New Testament when it quotes from the Old Testament. Small capitals or full capitals are never used by Entrust for emphasis in quotations. Entrust uses **bold** font for emphasis.