

POUR Bible Study Method


*For I will pour out water to quench your thirst...
And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants... Isaiah 44:3*

The POUR Bible study method is the method I developed based on the Inductive Bible study (IBS) as I learned it in seminary. IBS uses the Bible as the primary source. Devotions tend to be story-based, using a short example from life to reinforce a short Scripture snippet. Bible studies often begin with the interpretation of the study's author, and that becomes the lens through which the Bible is read. Inductive Bible Study begins with the Bible, interpreting Scripture by Scripture, looking carefully at the full witness of Scripture.

Inductive Bible Study has four steps: Observation, Interpretation, Evaluation and Application. IBS in popular usage today only contains three steps: Observation, Interpretation and Application, omitting the third step. I'm not certain what, but I suspect it scares some people to talk about "evaluating" Scripture.

PASSAGE

1. Start with Scripture. Choose a passage and read it in a standard translation. Dynamic equivalent translations and paraphrases are good for devotional reading, but standard translations are better for study purpose. So, choose on as your primary text. Most tell you that they are a standard translation in the title: New Revised STANDARD Version, English STANDARD Version.




The danger with a familiar passage is that we assume we already know what it means. Resist this tendency. Look at it with new eyes.

2. Pray and ask God to open your heart to hear his voice, and for the Holy Spirit to guide you in your study. Read the passage several more times. Let the Holy Spirit pour it into your mind.

OBSERVATION

3. Now look closely at the passage and ask questions. One of the best ways to do this is to ask yourself questions.

- Questions of context: Who wrote it? To whom did the original author write it? Where does it appear in the witness of Scripture? At what point in the historical and religious timeline was it written?



Don't censor yourself. Ask all the questions. Don't assume you know the answers. Ask all the questions.

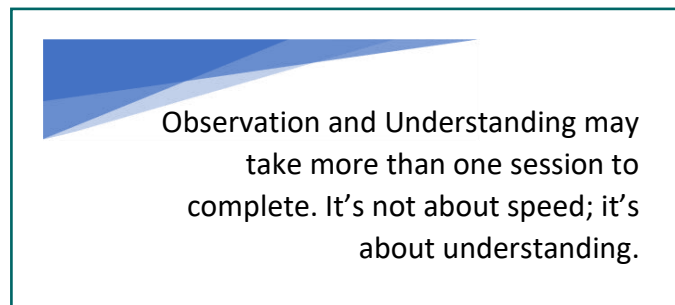
- Questions of writing: To which genre does the passage belong? Why would God have chosen this author to write this passage? What are the boundaries of the passage? [Remember that Scripture was not originally written with chapters and verses. Someone decided where those begin and end.] Is there a literary structure, such as repetition, to which we should pay attention, and to what end? Who are the characters? What are the events? Where does the action occur?
- Questions of language: What are the key words? What do they mean? Where else are they used? Does the language of this passage remind me of the language of any other passages? Do I understand the full sentence structure (objects of verbs, subjects of pronouns)?

UNDERSTANDING

I have combined Interpretation and Evaluation in this one step. The goal now is to answer the questions. You may wish to choose a few key questions from your list. Where is the Holy Spirit leading you in your study of this passage at this time? Circle that question(s)?

4. Now you turn to research materials. Bible encyclopedias and dictionaries, commentaries, and maps. Choose quality, reputable sources.

So, what is the difference between Interpretation and Evaluation? The short answer: Interpretation is understanding clearly what God was saying through the original author to the people of that day and time. Evaluation is understanding clearly what God is saying to the people of our day (to YOU and to followers of Jesus). Some instructions were intended only for that time and not ours (the sacrificial system, for instance).



RESPONSE

5. Only after we understand what God was saying to us today are we ready to respond. Now you must decide what you will do with what you have learned.
6. Conclude with prayer thanking God for revealing this to you and asking for courage to apply it in your life.

Like what you see here? Want to know more?
Then an Inductive Bible Study Masterclass is for you.

POUR Bible Study Worksheet

For I will pour out water to quench your thirst...and I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants... Isaiah 44:3

Passage: _____

Observation

What do I see? What questions can I ask?

Understanding

What are the answers to my questions?
What did I find in my research?

Response: How should I respond?