

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 3: STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD – PART 2

The Word of God and prayer are the two important tools available to a Christian that would keep him strengthened in his walk in the Lord. Reading the Word of God must lead to studying the Word of God and meditating on the Word of God. In the previous portion, we had examined the questions who, why, what, and when in the Observation stage through the example of the passage from Romans 12:1-2. Once we gather all this information from the first stage, we are then ready to proceed to the next two stages of our Bible study.

In the first part of the series- Studying the Word of God- we discussed in detail what Inductive Bible Study is all about and looked at the Observation stage. In this part we are going to look at Interpretation and Application stages in the Inductive Bible Study.

The Word of God and prayer are two important tools available to a Christian that would keep him strengthened in his walk in the Lord. Reading the Word of God must lead to studying the Word of God and meditating on the Word of God.

The three stages of Inductive Study are Observation, Interpretation, and Application.

The main purpose of the interpretation stage is to find out what meaning of the passage.

Remember; what we are trying to find out is what the author meant when he wrote those verses of scripture.

Inductive Bible Study is the method of study used when one wants to know what the original meaning of the text was. It uses other Scriptures and context to give meaning, and it carefully examines the text through questions. The first stage is observing what the text has to say.

Let's look at the second stage together. The main purpose of this interpretation stage is that we find out what the meaning of the passage is. Remember, what we are trying to find out is what the author meant when he wrote those scripture verses. To do that, there are three main steps we need to take.

The first thing we need to do in the interpretation stage is to ask questions about the passage, as to why it is there and what we think the author meant by that passage.

Let us take the same scriptural passage that we used in the previous lesson to examine the observation stage. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2 ESV)

In this passage, Paul is asking the believers in Rome to live a holy life which is acceptable to the Lord so that they can present their bodies as a living sacrifice. In short, living a holy life is actually an act of worship to the Lord. This passage also tells us how we can discover God's will which is why we renew our minds and do not conform ourselves to the world.

In order to understand more, we need to move to step two of the interpretation stage. In this, we take the help of other connected verses to this passage to see whether we can get more understanding to what Paul is saying. Some relevant verses to the scripture we are studying are found in Romans 11:13-36. Here Paul mentions how the children of Israel have rejected the gospel and how now, through Jesus Christ, grace has been extended to the Gentiles. Thus when we read Romans 12:1, we understand why Paul starts with "I appeal to you therefore". This entire chapter talks about how we ought to behave and conduct ourselves as Christians in this world.

We have now looked at the first two steps of interpretation where the first step is to find out what the writer is trying to convey to his

audience and the second step is to use other scriptures to get a clearer interpretation of the passage.

Now let us examine the third and final step which is to list out any principles that we can derive from the passage. With reference to Rom.12:1-2, some of the principles we can draw from these verses are:

1. To completely be focused on God, and to act in ways that are pleasing to Him;
2. To not get carried away by what everyone else is doing in this world;
3. To constantly renew our minds so that we may fulfil God's will.

Now that we have completed the three steps in the Interpretation stage, we can move to the Application stage of the inductive Bible study.

This is the crucial stage where we collect the principles we have learned so far and see how we can apply them into our lives. For example, the first principle that we found in the Interpretation stage is 'to completely be focused on God and act in ways that are pleasing to Him.' How can we apply this principle in our lives? Firstly, we need to look at our thoughts and see if they would be pleasing to the Lord, and, secondly, we need to examine our actions and see if they are in accordance with God's will. Lastly, we need to be conscious of what we speak because there is life and death in our tongue. Along with these, our decisions and plans should be based upon the word of God and according to His will.

The Application Stage is the crucial stage where we collect the principles we have learned so far and see how we can apply them into our lives.

IN REVIEW

- The second stage of Inductive Bible study is called Interpretation. It is divided into three steps.
 - The first step is to find out what the author is trying to tell the audience.
 - The second step is to look at the verses surrounding the passage to see if these can shed more light on the passage.
 - The third step is to derive principles from the meaning we have found.
- After completing these three steps, we move on to the third stage of Inductive Bible Study called Application. In this stage, we apply all the principles that we found to our own lives.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Have you tried the Inductive Bible Study Method? How has it helped in your walk with the Lord?
- Which area in your life is the Lord asking you to change based on your Bible study?
- What are the other principles you can find in Romans 12 using the Inductive Bible Study Method?

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