

Principles for good Bible Study Using the Three-Question Format

Adapted from "Understanding the Bible," *Eerdmans Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1973.)

- I. What does the passage actually say? Five Areas of Investigation *Understand*
- 75%**
- A. Setting—When and where was the passage written?
 - B. Purpose—Why was it written?
 - C. Form—How, or in what form, was it written?
 - D. Context—What is the book, as a whole, about?
 - E. Words—What is the meaning of individual words?
- II. What does the passage mean? Four Areas of Investigation *Explain*
- 15%**
- A. What did the passage mean to its original reader?
 - B. What is the main point or teaching of the passage?
 - C. How does it compare with other, perhaps clearer, Bible passages?
 - D. If it was written to meet particular needs at the time, what is the general principle?
- III. What does the passage mean to me today? Five Areas of Investigation *Apply*
- 10%**
- A. What is an equivalent situation today to that of the original readers?
 - B. Does the passage have some specific teaching about God, humanity, the world, the church. . . ?
 - C. Is there an example to follow, or a warning, or a promise?
 - D. Is there any action to be taken in the light of the passage?
 - E. Does it lead to prayer or praise? Can we make the writer's words or expression of feeling our own?

Steps for Inductive Bible Study

Bill Vermillion (1990)

- I. Observation—Look at the text—What does it say?
 - A. Selected Items to Observe
 1. Repetition—words, phrases, concepts, tone/mood
 2. Comparison/Contrast—words, phrases, concepts, illustrations
 3. Grammar—subject, verb, object
 4. Arrangement—paragraphs/structure
 5. Context—what comes before and after the passage
 - B. Lists of Selected Observations
 1. Summaries
 2. Comparisons/Contrasts

- II. Interpretation—Ask and answer questions of observations; correlate with other scriptures. What does it mean?
 - A. Three Types of Questions
 1. Definitional Questions—What/Who is _____?
 2. Rationale Questions—Why is _____ used? Or How is _____ used?
 3. Implicational Questions—So what does it mean?
 - B. Two Principles of Correlation
 1. Scripture interprets Scripture
 2. *Sensus Plenior*—The Full sense of scripture.

- III. Application (This is to make sure I do my plan. It may be a person, a journal, etc.)
 - A. Truth of the Scripture. (Usually this is the answer to the implicational question.)
 - B. Need of my life. (What need does the Scripture truth bring to light?)
 - C. Plan of Action
 1. Specific
 2. Measurable
 - D. Check or Accountability