

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

THE



OICA

METHODOLOGY  
OF BIBLE STUDY

CORRELATION

APPLICATION



# THE OICA METHODOLOGY OF BIBLE STUDY

Inductive bible study is a study in which the passage being studied is allowed to speak to us and we draw conclusions about what are being drawn from the passage. This type of study is called Exegesis, an extensive and critical interpretation of the bible. The word exegesis means to draw the meaning out of a given text. It is sometimes contrasted with eisegesis, which means to read one's own interpretation into a given text. In general, exegesis presumes an attempt to view the text objectively , while eisegesis is more subjective.

OICA is an acronym representing the four steps of an inductive Bible study:

1. Observation - What is being said
2. Interpretation - What is being meant
3. Correlation - Where else is it being said and/or explained
4. Application - What will I do about what is being said

## STEP 1

# OBSERVATION

Read the passage being studied several times in order to get a good feel for the details. Read it as though you are reading it for the first time and observe all the facts. Context is everything, the bible works as a whole, each word fits into a verse, each verse a chapter, each chapter a book, and each book a comprehensive whole. Take time through this stage as this is foundational to the overall impact of the study. Nothing will say or mean anything that the other 65 books don't support!

Ask the following questions of the passage:

1. Who is involved?
2. What are they doing?
3. Where are they? Where are they going?
4. When did this happen, what happened before, what will happen afterwards.
5. Why is this happening, what happened to lead up to this event?
6. Had this been foretold?

Some of these questions will lead to the next step of interpretation but that is not the goal during the observation step, what you are attempting here is to get a good understanding of the flow of the passage, its surrounding events, its characters – you are in short looking for every detail you can find.

## STEP 2

# INTERPRETATION

The bible was written for normal people to understand, not merely the super intelligent of those who claim an additional knowledge not generally given to all (as some cults believe). Remember: when the plain sense of the bibles makes common sense, seek no other sense, you might find nonsense. This means that we are not to modify the plain sense of the Bible when it contradicts our treasured beliefs but must instead modify even our treasured beliefs when the teaching of the Bible is against them. Christianity is not a faith for the intellectually challenged and our God is not a God who acts in a manner that is beyond our ability to understand, though He often acts in ways that are beyond our capacity to understand.

Regard the passage as though you are a detective, studying the passage for any clues that can help to answer the following questions:

1. What does this passage mean, what is being said? Attempt to discover the actual meaning of the passage.
2. What was the author trying to say to his original readers? How would the original readers have understood this passage?
3. What is the author trying to say to me? Keep in mind there is often a significant distance (historical, political, societal, cultural, geographical, covenantal, and positional) between ourselves and the original readers.
4. Why is this passage here? What is the theological significance?

Some general principles of interpretation are:

1. Interpret the bible by the bible, refer to parallel passages, noting differences and similarities
2. Research the words, recalling that even in English the meanings of various words will change over time. Remember that different words may be used to convey similar concepts. For example: acquaintance , friend, intimate friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.
3. Evaluate the use of grammar . Why were words put together as they have been? Would another idea have been conveyed if the grammar had been different?
4. Carefully consider the context of the verse, passage, paragraph, chapter and book.
5. Discover the author's intent in writing the passage. For example: Paul's letters generally conveyed an occasion for each letter.
6. Study the background of the book by use of biblical dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, etc.
7. Consider the author's themes in other writings. For example: Does Revelation have anything to offer to our study of the Gospel of John?
8. Evaluate how you would understand the writer if they were communicating directly with you.

## STEP 3

# CORRELATION

Correlation can actually be part of interpretation and is frequently done simultaneously. When you correlate, you are bringing up sections from other parts of the chapter, book, or entire Bible that help you to understand the section you are studying and are operating on the principle that the Bible is its own best interpreter.

An example of correlation would be to refer to parallel passages in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) during a study of the gospel of John. A concordance, cross reference system or study Bible (such as the Thompson Chain Reference Bible) will be especially valuable at this stage.

Other useful practices in correlation are: paraphrasing the passage, summarizing the passage, outlining the passage, and making charts that relate concepts and ideas in the passage to each other and to other passages dealing with similar ideas. Various of these devices will appear in some form or another in the following section on the Bible study methods. The internet has provided a great tool for not buying numerous books; use it but be very careful about whose words you're trusting. The internet has allowed everyone to be published and look like a scholar.

## STEP 4

# APPLICATION

Application begins during your study but should continue in your day-to-day living. Bible study without application becomes a stale, intellectual exercise that does not lead your life anywhere. Your spiritual growth will not occur by merely reading the Bible, its truths must be acted out. Take steps to measure your application, evaluate your progress and make the necessary changes in your application.

If you are unable to apply the passage, try asking yourself these questions:

1. Is there a command to obey?
2. Is there a good example for me to follow?
3. Is there a sin here for me to avoid?
4. Is there something here I want to thank God for?
5. Is there a promise I can call my own?
6. Is there a blessing I can enjoy?
7. Is there a failure from which I can learn?
8. Is there a victory for me to win?
9. Is there a new thought about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit? Satan? Man?
10. Is there a truth in this passage that has greatly affected me?

Remember during your study the words of Jesus:

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> “and the rain



descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” - Matthew 7:24-27

This is a clear warning to all who would learn the Bible that its teaching is for application into one's life in order that that life may be build upon the Solid Rock. It is important to allow change to occur as we read the Bible else we become like the man who built his house on the sand, we hear the words of God but fail to take heed of them and so our life is lost in the storm. Some of the study methods that follow will give you opportunity to note various applications and provide for you to be able to evaluate you application after a certain period of time.

The Israelites were commanded by God at Mount Sinai to meditate upon the scripture at every opportunity.

<sup>6</sup> “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. <sup>7</sup> “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. <sup>9</sup> “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. - Deuteronomy 6:6-9

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” - Colossians 3:16

Too often we avoid Scripture memory, thinking that it is too hard, that we are too old to be able to memorize Scripture, or that with all the resources around today we do not need to memorize the word of God. The verse quoted above from Deuteronomy does not exempt the aged from contemplation of the word of God, nor does it suggest that having a book handy is sufficient to obey the command. If you don't have a great memory (like me) get really good at knowing chapters in the bible where things are located... that way you don't need to know the exact verse and with a bible always with you, can find and recite what you're looking for!

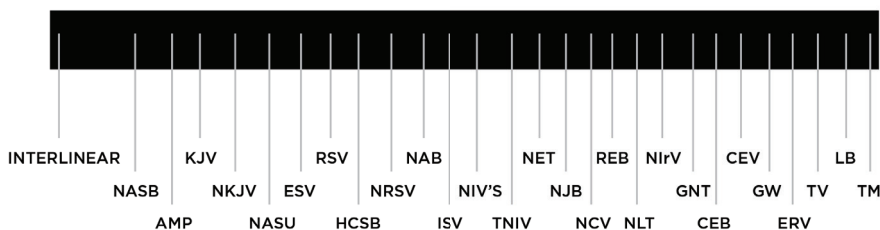


# BIBLES, APPS, & LINKS

YouVersion (app)  
Bible Gateway (biblegateway.com)  
Blue Letter Bible (blueletterbible.org)  
ESV Study Bible

## ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATION COMPARISON

WORD FOR WORD → ← THOUGHT FOR THOUGHT → PARAPHRASE



**NASB/NASU** / New American Standard Bible (11)

**AMP** / Amplified Bible (12)

**ESV** / English Standard Version (9.5)

**ERV** / Easy to Read Version (3.5)

**KJV** / King James Version (13)

**NKJV** / New King James Version (12)

**RSV** / Revised Standard Version (11)

**HCSB** / Holman Christian Standard Version (8)

**NRSV** / New Revised Standard (10.5)

**NAB** / New American Bible (7)

**NIV** / New International Version (8)

**NIV1** / NIV [UK only, 1996 edition] (8)

**NIV2011** / NIV Revision (8)

**CEB** / Common English Bible (7)

**TNIV** / Today's NIV (7.5)

**NJB** / New Jerusalem Bible (7.5)

**NCV** / New Century Version (5)

**REB (NEB)** / Revised English Bible (7)

**NLT** / New Living Translation (6.5)

**NIrV** / New International Reader's (3.5)

**GNT (GNB/TEV)** / Good News Translation (6)

**CEV** / Contemporary English (5)

**ISV** / International Standard Version (8.5)

**GW** / God's Word (4.5)

**LB** / Living Bible (8.5)

**TM** / The Message (4.5)

**NET** / NET Bible (7)

**TV** / The Voice (7)

