

How to do an inductive Bible study

compiled by Gini Crawford (www.becauseofGod.com)

revised slightly by Tom Crawford (www.Godisevident.com)

(note - we have borrowed from things we learned through Precept Ministries training)

Following is an overview on how to do an inductive Bible study. This is given as a source of information. Many of these steps will be used in your study of Daniel.

Step 1 – Overview the book being studied. Doing an overview is like looking at a map of a place before making a trip there to explore it further. An overview of a book helps you to discover the overall **context** of the author's message in that book. Context allows you to understand the background of the Bible passage you are studying and helps you **interpret the passage from that knowledge**. As you are studying, ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance. He is our Teacher. (John 14:26). **To do a book overview, we observe the book as a whole.** A good tool for doing an overview is an **inexpensive Bible** or a **print-out of the entire book** or passage you are studying that you are not afraid to mark up. It is a worksheet. To do an overview, do the following:

- **Read the book as a whole** (in one sitting if possible). Sometimes you may want to read it more than once. Observe what is obvious! Does anything start popping out at you? (*For Daniel – you can break this up into 2 sittings: Daniel 1-6 and Daniel 7-12.*)
- **Observe how the book fits into the Bible as a whole.** (Old Testament vs New Testament, type of literature (biography, history, poetry, proverbial, letter from/to someone, prophecy, or some combination of literatures), approximate time the book was written and/or when its events happened, etc.) (*Daniel is a combination of historical and prophetic.*)
- **Look for obvious names (people) and events in the book.** (*In Daniel – key people are God, the future Messiah (Jesus), Daniel, Daniel's friends, Kings, various angels, and the little horn (anti-Christ).*)
- **Look for the obvious setting of the book.** You will find this by asking yourself who, what, where, when, why, and how questions. Examples: Who is the author? Who are the recipients? Who is this person or are these people? What does he tell about himself? What are his circumstances? Where is he (geography, location)? Why is he there? When in his life is he writing? What is happening in the book (is there war, persecution, famine, poverty, etc.)? Where and when is this book taking place?
- **Look for obvious key words and phrases (including synonyms).** A key word or phrase is often repeated. It helps unlock the meaning of the text. God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the author and recipients are always key words. Other key words and phrases become obvious as you read and study. (Colored pens/pencils, small pictures or symbols, etc., are helpful in marking key words and phrases.)

- **Look for obvious themes (book theme, chapter themes, section and division themes).** Key words/phrases can give clues to the theme of a book, chapter, section, division, etc. Themes can be written in your Bible or on the book print-out. Sometimes you may have a chart of the book in which to write it. (Note - use pencil initially since you may want to refine your theme at some point.)
- **Look for the obvious purpose of the book.** You will find the purpose by asking the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions: Why is he writing this book? Why are they doing this? Why is this being said to them? What does the author talk about the most? What are the people to do? (Again you may want to use pencil in recording this since you may want to refine it later.)
- **Look for an obvious *key verse* in the book and in each chapter that best covers the theme of the book and chapter.**
- **Look for obvious segment divisions** or groups of verses or chapters that deal with the same subject, doctrine, person, place, or event. Some of these become more obvious as you continue your study of the book.

Step 2 – Study the book in-depth. Now that you have a good overview of the book, you can now start to dig deeper into what the book is teaching. To do this, go through the book again, this time taking time to look at individual divisions, chapters, and even verses. To do an in-depth study, do the following as you study each chapter or section:

- **Look for more key words and phrases.** Sometimes it is helpful to look up key words and grammar in the Greek or Hebrew. (There are many tools available – you don't have to be an expert in Biblical languages. **Caution** – you are not an expert!)
- **Look for contrasts in the chapter or section.** Contrasts are an evaluation of things that are opposite within the context of the passage. They are sometimes connected by words like *but, however, nevertheless*. (example – Rev 3:17 rich vs poor, etc.)
- **Look for comparisons in the chapter or section.** Comparisons refer to things which are similar. Many times they are connected by words like *like* or *as*. (example – Psalm 1 ... like a tree ...)
- **Look for expressions of time.** Look for words like *then, when, after this, until*, and *obvious time references (day, week, year)*. These give sequence of events. (*These are particularly important in Daniel!*)
- **Look for terms of conclusion and results.** Look for words like *therefore, for, so that, and for this reason*. These indicate that a conclusion or summary is being made or that a result is being stated. (example – Romans 12:1 therefore.)
- **Look for progressions (cause/effect relationships).** (example – James 1:14-15 the progression of sin.)
- **Look for obvious references to doctrines.** (examples – Trinity, God, the Holy Spirit, deity of Christ, humanity of Christ, salvation, grace, 2nd coming, creation, the Church, justification, sanctification, reconciliation, substitution,

adoption, election, resurrections, God's sovereignty, man's free will, Satan and demons, hell, angels, heaven, prayer, faith, law, offerings, sacrifices, man, etc.)

- **Re-examine your chapter themes.** How could it be stated better? Look for paragraph themes.
- **Re-examine your theme and purpose of the book.** How could they be stated better?

Key principles to remember:

- **When interpreting a passage stick to the obvious as much as possible.** If you deviate from the obvious, what are your reasons? Are they scriptural? The more you need to twist things from the literal or obvious meaning, the greater chance you have of being wrong. (*Daniel has both literal and figurative sections – which are which?*)
- **When struggling with a passage go from the obvious to the unobvious.** If you are struggling with a particular passage or verse, back out and look at the passage from the whole context (Bible as a whole, book as a whole, chapter as a whole, etc.)

Step 3 – What do others say about this book or passage. Once you have studied a book or possibly a chapter or section in a book, you can look and see what others say about the book or passage. **(This includes notes in your study Bible!)** The one exception to looking at these things **LAST** is that they can be helpful in looking at historical and geographical context of a book as you are getting started.