

Guidelines for Inductive Bible Study: Six Essential Principles

Women of the Word • Saturday, January 10, 2026 • Brad Klassen

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God
as a workman who does not need to be ashamed,
accurately handling the word of truth.”

(1) A Command (v. 15a)

(2) A Comparison (v. 15b)

(3) A Course (v. 15c)

1. Submit to Scripture’s authority and seek divine enablement.

Principle: _____ affects interpretation. The effectiveness of your study of the Bible will depend upon whether you approach it in a manner consistent with its nature.

2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Isaiah 66:2

“Illumination” is the Spirit’s ministry within the believer of developing *understanding, certainty, desire, and obedience* with respect to the meaning of the biblical text.

Psalm 119:18, 125

2. Suspend preunderstandings and search for the writer’s intent.

Principle: It is the biblical writer whom God has used to reveal His intent; it is this writer’s understanding which must be clearly heard. Your desire must be to sit at his feet—the man who writes on behalf of God—and listen, not speak.

“Preunderstandings” are already-formed _____ about what the text means; they can be correct or incorrect.

3. Respect the context and read the language naturally.

Principle: The more you interpret apart from _____ context, the more you will interpret according to *your* context—according to your *convenience*.

“Context” refers to the world into which a text is woven; all biblical texts are *woven* into historical and literary contexts.

4. Pursue one definite meaning for each text.

Principle: Faithful study of the biblical text aims at one meaning based on the language and context of the text. Just because a text can be twisted doesn't mean it is right to twist it.

The common question today: "What does this text mean *to you*?" The right question: "What does this text mean *for everyone*?"

While there can be _____ *applications* of a text to everyday life, there is still just _____ *meaning*—the *original one*!

5. Read in the light of antecedent revelation.

Principle: The way we interpret Scripture should reflect the way in which Scripture was _____.

John 16:12–13; Hebrews 1:1–2

"Progressive" or "cumulative revelation"—as God revealed His special revelation over time, the breadth of topics and the depth of knowledge of each topic *increased*.

6. Validate your interpretation by objective sources.

Principle: The Word of God is objective and _____ in meaning. Interpretations cannot be asserted as true based simply on one's own personal authority. External affirmation is necessary because there are no infallible interpreters.

Acts 17:11; Ephesians 4:11–16

Recommended Resources

Nate Pickowicz, *How to Eat Your Bible*.

Richard Mayhue, *How to Study the Bible*.

Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks, *Living by the Book*.