



EXERCISING YOUR MIND IN Study

February 24–25, 2007

Focal Passage

Psalm 126

Focal Teaching

Learning to study the Bible inductively involves three steps: **Observation, Interpretation, and Application.**

Preparing to Teach

- Bring several common object to class—pieces of fruit, a plant, a painting, a photograph.
- Print copies of the Inductive Bible study worksheet or reproduce it on a white board or poster.
- Find definitions for “song of ascent,” “Zion,” “Negev,” and “sheaves.” You may find these in a Bible dictionary, a commentary on the Psalm, or on the internet.
- Print small card size pieces of paper with the SPACE Questions on them for participants to keep in their Bibles.

Suggestions for the Lesson

Introducing the Lesson (5–7min.)

- Place the object you brought to class with you in the center of the group. Ask the class to quietly observe it for a minute or two. Ask them to make ten observations about the object. Tell them not to be afraid of observing the obvious (the leaves are green). Then ask for ten more observations. Then ten more. See how far you can go until nothing else can be observed.
- Now invite them to ask ten questions about the object, even if they think they know the answer. Then ten more. And ten more.
- Explain how this process is the first step in some of the most fruitful kind of Bible study they can learn to do. The first step is **OBSERVATION**. Write that on the board. Make note that two other steps are involved in the process—**INTERPRETATION**, and **APPLICATION**. Write them on the board also.

Reviewing and Exploring the Biblical Material (30 min.)

- Explain that today you will be using a method of personal Bible study together to explore Psalm 126, which is one of the Psalms they read this past week in the *BodyLanguage* Journal.
- The first step in inductive Bible study is **OBSERVATION**. Invite the group make observations and ask questions about Psalm 126 in the same way they did with the object earlier. Beginning with the superscription, “A Song of Ascents,” take the psalm verse by verse and make as many observations as possible, asking as many questions as possible. Do not stop to answer any of the questions, just raise them. You may write your observations and questions on the board, or ask participants to write them on their worksheets. Record observations in the second column and questions in the



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third. Explain that you are looking for observations about word meanings, imagery, and the relationship between ideas and words. No observation is too obvious or mundane.

- When the observations are as complete as possible, move into the second step of inductive Bible study—INTERPRETATION. This is where you attempt to find answers to the questions you have raised, and organize the main ideas in the passage. You may find answers to your factual questions in a Bible dictionary, commentary, or on the internet. Some of your questions will require extra thought or group discussion. Lead the group to answer their questions and to identify what they believe to be the main idea in the passage. What would they regard as the supporting ideas? Summarize your conclusions.

- Now move into the third step of inductive Bible study, which is APPLICATION. Explain how this part of the study process leads us to take what we have learned and put it into our lives. One easy way to work on application is to learn and use the SPACE questions.

S – Do I discover in this passage a SIN to confess?

P – Do I find in this passage a PROMISE to claim?

A – Do I see in these verses an ACTION to avoid?

C – Do I recognize in this passage a COMMAND to obey?

E – Do I observe in this passage an EXAMPLE to follow?

- If you have printed cards with these questions on them, distribute them to class members to keep in their Bibles.

Concluding the Lesson (5–7min.)

- Ask class members to think through ways they might use this method of inductive Bible study in their own lives. Encourage members to develop a plan to include study as one of the key spiritual disciplines in their lives.

For further information:

- Oletta Wald, *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study* (Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis, MN, 2002). This is a basic “how-to” book on doing inductive Bible study, using the book of James as an example.
- Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI, 1980). This is a deeper-level handbook on inductive Bible study.
- Search for “inductive Bible study” with your favorite internet search engine. You’ll find plenty of sites with good suggestions.

