

Week 2: Bible Study Methods Study Guide

Week Two: Interpretation

(1) Read and discuss An Overview of Bible Translations.

An Overview of Bible Translations

Word-for-Word Translations

This type of translation emphasizes accuracy in translation typically on a word to word basis. Consequently, these translations are generally good choices for accurate inductive Bible study technique. Several important examples are:

The **King James Version** (KJV) is the first version of Scripture authorized by the Protestant church and commissioned by England's King James I.

The American Standard Version, also known as the Standard American Edition, Revised Version, is a revised version of the KJV. It was completed in 1885 and newly edited by the American Revision Committee in 1901.

The New American Standard is written in a formal style, but is more readable than the KJV. It is highly respected as the most literal English translation of the Bible.

The New International Version offers a balance between a word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation and is considered by many as a highly accurate and smooth-reading version of the Bible in modern English.

The **New King James** is a modern language update of the original KJV. It retains much of the traditional interpretation and sentence structure of the KJV.

The **Revised Standard Version** is a revision of the KJV, the Revised Version, and American Standard Version. It is word-for-word using modern American language.

Thought-for-Thought (Paraphrased) Translations

This type of translation emphasizes readability over accuracy in translation. Consequently these are not usually good choices for accurate inductive Bible study.

The **Good News Translation** was first published in 1976 by the American Bible Society in a "common language." The simple, everyday language makes it especially popular for children and those learning English. Other examples of thought-for-thought translations are the **Philips**, **The Message**, and **The Way**.

(2) Open e-Sword or www.biblos.com to Ephesians Chapter 1. Read verses 3 to 6. Review homework assignment to record observations for verses 1 to 4.

(3) Using Ephesians 1:1-4, complete Step 2 of the Inductive Bible Study Method. Record interpretations in Column 2 of the attached worksheet.

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Inductive Bible Study - A Systematic Approach – Step 2

II. Interpretation: “what does it mean?”

a. **Observation** compared to **interpretation**

OBSERVATION	INTERPRETATION
Probe	Mull over observations
Discover	Digest
Detect	Decide
Explore	Explain
Penetrate	Percolate

b. How to interpret

i. Answer the question

ii. Stepwise process of interpretation

1. *Define the individual word or phrase*

Does the Greek word aid interpretation? E.g., “apostolos” in Ephesians 1:1 is a general term in secular Greek but does “apostle of Jesus Christ” give a specific Biblical meaning? Further examination (e.g., ISBE) might lead to the conclusion it signifies the office of one of the 12 apostles of Christ.

2. *Review the entire verse and context of the surrounding verses*

If the Greek word does not help the interpretation, examine the entire verse or its immediate context. E.g., Ephesians 1:3 ‘blessing’ is not clear by the Greek word. However, the following verses (Ephesians 1: 4-14) indicate that the blessing is the description of salvation in this section.

3. *Consider the broader context of Scripture*

If neither the word nor section help the interpretation, expanded Scripture is needed (more fully explained in Step 4).

iii. Interpretative aids

1. Primary aids

a. e-Sword

i. Thayer’s Greek definitions and Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance provide convenient Greek definitions, often with different emphasis

ii. Bible dictionaries (e.g., ISBE and Fausett) provide information to answer macro questions such as an outline and background information about the book.

Caution: while dictionaries are good for facts, they are inconsistent for theological questions because they are multi-authored with variable standards for authorship

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b. www.biblos.com

- i. Navigate to the Biblos URL. Enter the reference (e.g., Ephesians 1:1) into the search bar at the top of the page.



Select "KJS" from the horizontal list of Bibles.



Position your cursor over any word in the verse to find the Strong's definition:



Click the resource list in the upper right hand side to access a dropdown for selecting a Bible outline or Thayer's Greek definition.

On the Biblos home page you can select a Bible dictionary and concordance under "Bible study tools" mid page.



2. Secondary aids
- Historical perspective: consider if trusted theologians agree with your interpretation
 - Commentaries: consider the author's theological background. Attempt interpretation on your own first; many commentaries avoid difficult passages.
 - Internet search engines: consider the theological background of the URLs produced from search results; high probability of false information.

(4) Homework: Complete Step 2 of the Inductive Bible Study Method on Ephesians 1:1-4. Continue to record observations and interpretations in the applicable columns of the worksheet for Ephesians 1:5-8.