

INTRODUCTION

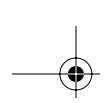
As with many passages of God's living Word, the title *Transforming Bible Study* has layers of meaning.

Bible study is transformational. Studying the Bible with an open, seeking attitude, guided by the Holy Spirit, not only gives knowledge, it deeply affects and changes not only an individual, but also groups, communities and cultures. The first two chapters of this book are about the power of God's Word to transform.

But the act of Bible study itself needs to be transformed. For the past twenty-four years I have been on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, an evangelical ministry among students that is active on about six hundred university campuses in the United States. InterVarsity is a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, a family of evangelical campus ministries at colleges and universities in more than 140 countries. InterVarsity has a long and proud history dating from the "Cambridge Seven" movement and revivals led by Dwight L. Moody in England in the late nineteenth century.

An important part of this heritage is a deep value of and emphasis on inductive Bible study. Inductive Bible study is to InterVarsity what the Big Mac is to McDonald's. It is one of InterVarsity's "signatures," what the organization is known for.





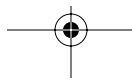
TRANSFORMING BIBLE STUDY

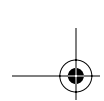
Inductive Bible study refers to studying the Bible “from the text out.” It requires that one start with a close study of what the text of a passage actually says, then derive meaning, application and relevance from the text rather than read one’s ideas or pre-conceptions into the text. Inductive study is vigorous, deep, serious Bible study, engaging the full faculties of the mind. But inductive Bible study is not simply an intellectual exercise. The Bible is God’s living Word, and studying the Bible involves the whole person—heart, emotions and soul, as well as the mind. The goal of inductive Bible study is not just to learn things about the Bible, or even find the main points of a text (although this is essential to inductive Bible study), but to hear from the living God and obey him.

InterVarsity has provided some wonderful methods of inductive Bible study to generations of students, to the church and to the world of missions. Barbara Boyd’s “Bible & Life” discipleship training program and Daily Discovery method of inductive Bible study, the late Paul Byer’s manuscript method and InterVarsity’s LifeGuides Bible study series have enriched thousands of students, laypeople, pastors and missionaries and helped them learn to love and study God’s Word.

Now it is a new era. The “Millennials” have risen up to take the place of Generation X, the Me Generation and the Baby Boomers. This new generation has a different view of life, different values and ways of learning. In addition, postmodernism and its cultural aspects (called *postmodernity*) have influenced the worldview and lifestyles of contemporary students, even Christian students (see chapter two).

Because of these factors that affect us all, the method of Bible study itself needs to be transformed. The Bible *is* truth and it does have meaning—and that meaning can be discovered





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through careful, deep, inductive study of the text. We need to develop new ways to approach Bible study that affirm the Bible's relational and experiential aspects just as much as its intellectual dimension, for the purpose of studying God's living Word is not only to discover truth but to hear from God, obey him and get to know him better. Experience, community and narrative need to become important dimensions of our approach to Bible study along with rigorous intellectual study.

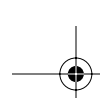
This book is a primer on inductive Bible study for a new generation. It derives from

- my experience teaching and training staff, laypeople and students around the world in Bible study for the past thirty-four years
- my research into the way this generation approaches the Bible
- the research, deliberations and recommendations of the InterVarsity Bible Study Task Force
- my collaboration with InterVarsity area director Lindsay Olesberg to develop a method of training eighteen hundred students to lead small group Bible studies at the Urbana 2000 Student Mission Convention

The purpose of the book is to show how to study the Bible in ways that engage the whole person and that are relevant to contemporary ways of thinking. While affirming the basic tenets of inductive thinking (observing and then deriving meaning from the observations), the book will attempt to weave new emphases such as experience, community, narrative and curiosity into the strong historical fabric of inductive Bible study. At the end of each chapter you'll find exercises you can do on your own or with your group to learn this method of study.

This book is written to help the new generation of Christians





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all over the world as they develop ways to transform Bible study so that it is powerful and relevant to their generation and future generations. We hope it will also be a help to laypeople, pastors and missionaries of any age.

The first chapter of the book will show the power of God's Word. Chapter two illustrates the importance and power of inductive Bible study. The next chapters describe in detail a method of inductive Bible study that is especially relevant today and give practical tips for implementing transforming Bible study. Chapter nine puts the method together and describes step by step how an individual can study a text of the Bible, discover its meaning and apply it to life. Chapter ten is a practical guide to leading a small group inductive Bible study.

This book is written for Christian believers who use a standard version of the Bible in their own language. Readers of this book do not have to know the original biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew to learn to study the Bible effectively. But they do need to love God's Word, seek to hear from God in his Word, and want to learn to study the Scriptures with power and depth so as to be transformed by God's Word.

