



## SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING RESOURCES

### Resource Sheet 1: Sample timetable for writers' workshop

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6
7.30-8.15		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8.15-9.00		Bible reflection in community	Bible reflection in community	Bible reflection in community	Bible reflection in community	Bible reflection in community
9-10.30		<b>Session 1:</b> <i>The Bible and us.</i>	<b>Session 6:</b> <i>Developing our writing skills</i>	<b>Session 11:</b> <i>The challenge of excellence</i>	<b>Session 16:</b> <i>Reading and evaluating our work</i>	Departure
10.30-11		Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break	Coffee break	
11.00-12.00		<b>Session 2:</b> <i>The world in which we write.</i>	<b>Session 7:</b> <i>Developing interpretation skills 2</i>	<b>Session 12:</b> <i>Writing our notes (1)</i>	<b>Session 17:</b> <i>Reading and evaluating our work</i>	
12.00-13.00		<b>Session 3:</b> <i>Listening to the Word, listening to the world.</i>	<b>Session 8:</b> <i>Facing the blank page or screen.</i>	<b>Session 13:</b> <i>Writing our notes (2)</i>	<b>Session 18:</b> <i>Reading and evaluating our work</i>	
13.00-14.30		Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	Lunch break	
14.30-16.30		<b>Session 4:</b> <i>Word and world: practical work</i>	<b>Session 9:</b> <i>Starting to write; preliminary work 1</i>	<b>Session 14:</b> <i>Writing our notes (3)</i>	<b>Session 19:</b> <i>Reading and evaluating our work</i>	
16.30-17.00	Arrival and settle in	Tea break	Tea break	Tea break	Tea break	
17.00-18.30		<b>Session 5:</b> <i>Developing interpretation skills 1</i>	<b>Session 10:</b> <i>Starting to write; preliminary work 2</i>	<b>Session 15:</b> <i>Writing our notes (4)</i>	<b>Session 20:</b> <i>'Round-up' session, highlighting most important aspects etc</i>	
18.30-19.30	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper	
20.00-21.00	Hello and welcome!	Games, testimony, evening prayer	Tutorial time, evening prayer	Tutorial time, evening prayer	Testimonies and prayer for one another	



## SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING RESOURCES

### Resource Sheet 2 SU Key documents relating to Bible Ministries

The Scripture Union family throughout the world has made the following statements about the Bible and the way in which it is to be approached.

**SU's STATEMENT of BELIEF** includes 'The Scriptures: we believe that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are God-breathed, since their writers spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; hence they are fully trustworthy in all that they affirm, and are our highest authority for faith and life.'

**SU's WORKING PRINCIPLES** include 'We seek to exercise the ministries God has given us, us in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and in reliance on the Holy Spirit. We therefore aim to follow biblical principles in all that we do, and to emphasise the vital importance of prayer.'

**Bible Ministries:** In encouraging people to meet God through the Bible, we emphasise the significance of the Bible as a whole.

- a. We encourage people to read it / listen to it so that they come to repentance, faith, obedience to God and worship.
- b. We prepare systematic programs and materials for children, young people and adults, appropriate to their age and situation.
- c. We are committed to Bible engagement which is thoughtful, prayerful and regular, and which enables the reader / listener to respond to the message of the whole Bible rather than to isolated passages.
- d. We are concerned to interpret the text in a way that enables people, in their contemporary situations, to hear for themselves the message of the Bible from its original context.



**SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES  
TRAINING RESOURCES  
Resource Sheet 3**

**EXPERIENCING THE BIBLE – WHAT'S IT  
LIKE FOR YOU?**



**1. In what way or ways do you experience the Bible at present?**

**2. What have been your best times with the Bible, and can you identify what made them good?**



**3. What have been your most difficult / unhappy times with the Bible and  
can you identify what made them bad?**



**SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES  
TRAINING RESOURCES  
Resource Sheet 4**

**THE TWO WORLDS, OR CONTEXTS, IN WHICH WE WORK**

<b>The world of the Bible writer</b>	<b>The world of our readers</b>

**Points of contact / overlap/ common ground / dynamic equivalents**

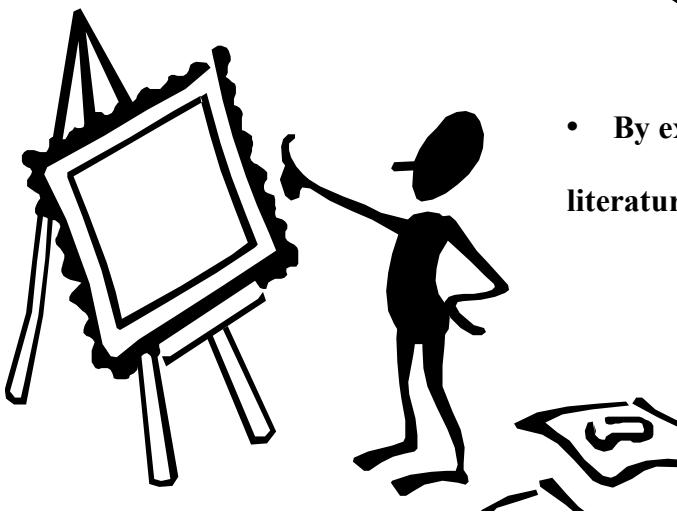
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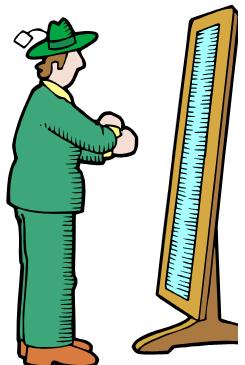
SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING  
RESOURCES  
Resource Sheet 5

DISCOVERING THE BIBLE...

- By doing our best to look through the window of the Bible writer and his / her world: author-centred interpretation



- By exploring the Bible text like a picture, noticing the writer's artistic skills and what kind of literature we are reading: text-centred interpretation



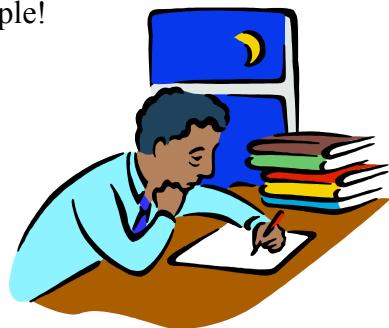
- By looking into the Bible like a mirror in which we discover ourselves, today: reader-centred interpretation (individual or community)



## SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING RESOURCES Resource Sheet 6

### EIGHT GUIDELINES FOR GOOD WRITING

1. Prefer the concrete to the abstract; try to write in ways that help people to 'see' what you are writing about.
2. Never use a boring metaphor or simile – try to surprise people!
3. Choose short words rather than long ones.
4. Cut out unnecessary words, especially adjectives.
5. Prefer active constructions to passive ones.
6. Avoid jargon – especially religious jargon!
7. Use simple sentences, rather than sentences with many dependent clauses.
8. Break any of these rules if this will make your writing more interesting!



### HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY AND SAY IT CLEARLY!

Remember that when you write, you are like an artist who chooses a subject, colours and composition. As a writer, you choose a theme, words and the order of ideas. Words are your colours! Think carefully about every word you use.

Remember that God's Spirit is a creative Spirit, who loves beauty and order (see Exodus 31:2,3).



## SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING RESOURCES Resource Sheet 7

### SCRIPTURE UNION: STATEMENT OF HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

*Scripture Union has adopted the following hermeneutical principles for use by editors, writers and all who handle the Bible on behalf of the movement.*

*Rather than being seen as options on a menu, these principles are to be taken a whole; and taken together, are to govern our approach every time we come to Scripture. The emphasis placed on each one may vary on different occasions, but all should be informing our thinking, at least implicitly.*

**We believe that the Bible should be interpreted:**

- a. **Prayerfully**, in humility and in dependence on the Holy Spirit. We come to Scripture acknowledging that only the Holy Spirit can open our blind eyes and illumine our dark hearts to what God is saying. As God's empowering presence, the Spirit will lead people to engage with the text and to face God's challenge in the here and now. The recognition that the Holy Spirit brings a sense of immediacy will draw us into an understanding, not just of the original meaning of the text, but also of its contemporary prophetic significance.
- b. **Corporately** rather than simply individualistically. We are the body of Christ. We stand in a line of historical interpretation that we respect, and from which we learn. As we engage with Scripture together, greater understanding emerges, fellowship is deepened and appropriation encouraged.
- c. **As a whole**. We are committed to the whole of Scripture, to allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, and to promote the understanding of the broad sweep of God's dealings with humanity from creation to new creation. In doing this we affirm that the Bible is a metanarrative; that is, it tells a story which gives meaning to all of life, and by which all of life must be judged. In terms of this metanarrative, we will emphasise interpretation both as propositional and as a response to this metanarrative, and help people to enter imaginatively into the biblical story, seeking always to lead them to live under its authority.
- d. **Contextually - as it was written**. The Bible contains different literary forms (genres) and the way God communicates often differs from one to another. Therefore interpretation includes recognizing and respecting the genre of each passage. The passage is then to be interpreted according to the author's intention and in terms of its historical and canonical context. To the criticism that, however desirable this may be, it is unattainable, we assert that, while exhaustive knowledge of these things may be impossible, adequate knowledge is not. *(Continued on next page.)*

**(Resource Sheet 7 continued)**

- e. **Contextually - as it is encountered.** Our presuppositions, culture, gender, age, and personal history - in short, all that is going on in our lives and communities - always colour our encounter with Scripture. Every encounter is an interpretation. Nevertheless we can know and experience scriptural truth; and while our communities exercise a significant influence on our understanding of Scripture, they are not ultimately a binding force. We need constantly to bring our understanding of Scripture back to Scripture. At the same time we need to listen to the interpretation of Scripture of others who belong to different contexts, so that our understanding may be enriched and our blind spots corrected.
- f. **Contextually - as it is lived out.** Encountering God through his Word will have an impact on our lives, encouraging us in worship, mission, and holiness. As we commit ourselves to obeying God's Word, our experience will help us to understand the Bible better, and deepen our faith in, and our fellowship with, God.
- g. **Christologically.** Jesus Christ (his birth and life on earth, his death and resurrection, his ascension and second coming) is God's key Word in his dealings with human beings; and he, therefore, is the focus of God's revelation in the Bible. Our basic aim states that meeting God through the Bible and prayer will lead to personal faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit leads us into the truth, always testifying to and glorifying Jesus. In the light of these things, in engaging with the Bible, we should consider how a passage ultimately relates to Jesus Christ.
- h. **Relationally:** a meeting with God. We do not read the Bible simply to collect information about God. Rather, through the stories, promises, commands, warnings and examples, we begin to understand God, meet with him and know him personally. To attempt to interpret Scripture and yet somehow to stop short of enjoying that relationship of love, is to miss the entire purpose for which God, whose nature is love, has revealed himself in the Bible. God is a relational God, his character is to build and sustain relationships. So all our interpretation of Scripture is to be rooted in the two dimensions of our relatedness to God as his children, and of the web of human relationships around us.

*Fundamentally, engaging with the Bible is about a relationship with God, and this can only be achieved by dependence on the Holy Spirit.*



**SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES  
TRAINING RESOURCES  
Resource Sheet 8**

**SCRIPTURE UNION'S APPROACH TO INTERPRETING THE BIBLE**

**This version that avoids technical language** was prepared by the SUI Bible Ministries Coordinator in 2004.

The following principles are not options on a menu, but are to be taken as a whole, governing our approach every time we come to Scripture. The emphasis placed on each one may vary on different occasions, but all should be informing our thinking, at least implicitly.

**We believe that the Bible should be interpreted:**

- i. **Prayerfully:** Only the Holy Spirit can open our blind eyes and light up our dark hearts to what God is saying. The Holy Spirit will lead us to engage with the Bible text and to listen to God here, today, helping us to understand and live out the Bible's message in practical ways.
- j. **Corporately / in community:** We are the body of Christ. We can learn from those who have read and lived by the Bible in previous generations. Our understanding today is enriched by listening to the insights of other people and by studying together. God gives special gifts and skills to some people that enable them to interpret the Bible especially clearly and the whole church can benefit from them.
- k. **As a whole:** The whole of the Bible is God's inspired Word to his people. We are therefore committed to taking seriously the whole of Scripture, and to allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. We want people to see the broad sweep of God's dealings with humanity, from creation to new creation, and to see this as the story that gives meaning to all of life, and by which all of life must be judged. We try to help people to enter imaginatively into the biblical story, always seeking to lead them to live under its authority. We also want them to understand the meaning of the individual statements of Scripture such as 'God is love' in 1 John 4:8.
- l. **As it was written:** The Bible contains different kinds of literature (poetry, letters, narratives, proverbs etc). The way God communicates often differs from one to another. So good interpretation of the Bible includes recognizing and respecting the type of literature we are reading. We also seek, as far as we can, to interpret a passage according to the author's intention and in terms of its place in history.

(Continued on the next page.)

**(Resource Sheet 8 continued)**

- m. As we encounter it:** The people that we are and the things that are going on in our lives and communities always colour and influence the way we read the Bible. We try to be aware of this and constantly to bring our understanding of Scripture back to be checked again by Scripture.
- n. As it is lived out:** Meeting God through his Word will have an impact on our lives, encouraging us to worship, to mission, and to live lives that reflect God's values. As we commit ourselves to responding to God's Word, our experience will help us to understand the Bible better, and deepen our faith in God, and our fellowship with him.
- o. Looking for Christ:** Jesus Christ (his birth and life on earth, his death and resurrection, his ascension and second coming) is God's key Word in his dealings with human beings. He is the focus of God's revelation in the Bible. Our basic aim states that meeting God through the Bible and prayer will lead to personal faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit leads us into the truth, always testifying to and glorifying Jesus. We should consider how any Bible passage ultimately relates to Jesus Christ.
- p. Relationally:** We do not read the Bible simply to collect information about God. Rather, through the stories, promises, commands, warnings and examples, we begin to understand God, meet with him and know him personally. To try to interpret Scripture without seeking to enjoy that relationship of love is to miss the entire purpose for which God has revealed himself in the Bible. All our interpretation of Scripture is to be rooted in our relationship with God as his children, and our relationships with others around us.

*Fundamentally, engaging with the Bible is about a relationship with God, and this can only come about as we learn dependence on the Holy Spirit.*



## SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING

### RESOURCES

#### Resource Sheet 9

**A checklist to see if we are putting into practice good principles of Bible interpretation.**

REVIEW QUESTION	COMMENTS	X or <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Has this material been prepared in a context of prayer and dependence on God? How do you evaluate this?</b>		
<b>Does this material encourage readers/ users in a prayerful lifestyle?</b>		
<b>Is it clear that the writer knows the people she/he is writing for, their concerns and interests, what their world is like, what pressures they experience, what they enjoy? Are they aware what factors might make their audience ignore or over-emphasise aspects of the Bible's teaching?</b>		
<b>Does the writer bring her/his own experience into this material in appropriate ways? To what extent is this done helpfully and honestly in relation to the biblical material?</b>		
<b>Has the writer taken account of the kind of Bible literature he/she is dealing with? Is there any difference of approach if the Bible material changes from, say, the poetry of the Psalms to OT narrative or an NT letter?</b>		
<b>Has the SU writer / preacher /trainer taken seriously the aims and background and audience of the Bible writer and built convincing bridges between the Bible world and today's world?</b>		
<b>Are difficulties in the Bible passage explained helpfully, or at least acknowledged and readers encouraged to seek help from a commentary or a leader?</b>		
<b>Is the SU writer helping his/her readers/ users to build up a big picture of how the Bible fits together and makes sense?</b>		
<b>Does the SU writer/ trainer help people to understand clearly what God's Word <i>then</i> can mean <i>now, today</i>?</b>		
<b>Does this material clearly help to develop a relationship between the users and God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?</b>		



SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES  
TRAINING RESOURCES  
Resource Sheet 10

HOW TO FACE THE BLANK PAGE OR THE COMPUTER  
SCREEN: THE ‘COFFEE FILTER’ MODEL

**Brainstorm** ideas about the Bible passage:

- Notice how the passage first impacts on you.
- Observe the details of the passage – develop a ‘holy curiosity’ about the Bible, ask many questions.
- Interpret the Bible passage – what did it mean then?
- Respond to the Bible passage – try to ‘enter into’ it.
- Appropriate the Bible passage – what does it mean for us today and now?

Now **filter out** 1 or 2 key ideas that you want to develop in your comment and note them in this space (remember, this is a matter of praying and meditating deeply).

Now **plan** your comment according to your SU national or regional ‘Writers’ Guidelines’:

Have something to say and say it clearly!

Introduction  
Paragraph 1  
Paragraph 2  
Conclusion

Now **go on to write** the whole comment.



## SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING RESOURCES Resource Sheet 11

### Guidelines to help us evaluate our Bible guides

#### 1. Are our guides accessible and easy to read?

##### *(a) Style*

We should use simple, clear, non-abstract language. Avoid anything boring, artificial, disjointed, trite or predictable. Steer clear of religious jargon and clichés. Write with enthusiasm and clear empathy with readers. Be personal in an appropriate way. Use examples, anecdotes, illustrations, but make them brief and to the point.



##### *(b) Grammar*

Take care over punctuation. It's a great help to editors if writers take time to revise their work. Clear writing usually expresses clear thinking.

##### *(c) Focus*

Each daily comment should concentrate on one or two main ideas and not try to cover all the themes in a Bible passage. Our readers are looking for help to 'appropriate' the Bible's message into their lives. BUT in some parts of the Bible such appropriation will only be worked out over 2 or 3 readings. Don't force messages from the text.

#### 2. Do our notes have some depth to them?

##### *(a) Thought-provoking*

People who read our Bible guides are generally looking for comments that will lead them deeper into God's Word and into relationship with him. So don't just paraphrase the Bible text! Seek to open up some information or insight that helps the reader see how this text relates to his/her life today and builds confidence in the Bible as a word to live by today.



Our best notes always encourage the reader to make his/her own discoveries in the Bible, to want to re-read the passage and reflect further.

##### *(b) Theological quality*

Our comments seek to be wise in their recognition of different theological viewpoints, to help readers to understand passages that cause argument or are difficult to grasp, and to equip readers to think and live biblically.

##### *(c) Interpretation / hermeneutics*

We seek to interpret the text in a truly contemporary, practical way, which speaks into our context today. Our interpretation should demonstrate the best of hermeneutical methods – for example, clearly taking into account the context of the passage, the type of Bible literature etc.

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**(Resource Sheet 11 continued)**

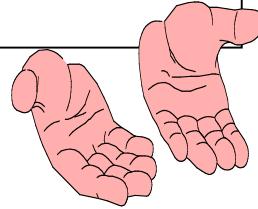
**(d) Exposition of the Bible text**

Real engagement with the text should be a key strength of our notes. The text of the note should draw the reader back constantly to the text of the Bible, but always going beyond mere information to help readers to enter experientially into the text.

**3. Our Bible guides and the life of the Spirit**

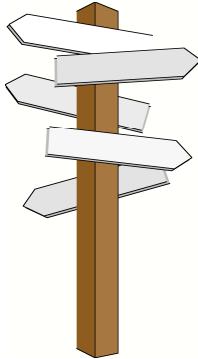
**(a) Devotional quality**

A key aim of our notes is to help people to listen to the Lord through his Word. Comments that ‘release’ the ancient word so that it becomes a word for today also lift the spirit in a refreshing way. In the past we have been criticised for writing notes that were too cerebral or dull. When we set out to write, let us always seek the help of the Holy Spirit; we want to be channels of the Spirit’s life, energy and creativity to our readers.



**(b) Pastoral aspects**

We need to take care to be sensitive about those themes that may cause our readers pain or sadness. Let’s seek to use inclusive language and to avoid any superior or patronising tone. We should write with human warmth, not condemning, but offering the hope of new beginnings with the Lord. We should include ourselves in any challenge we make to our readers.



**4. Incarnating the Word – ‘appropriation’**

**(a) Relevance**

Our work as writers is to help our readers to ‘enter into’ the Bible text, to participate in it. Let’s seek to write reflections and ask questions that will help readers to identify with some character in the Bible passage, some attitude, dilemma or decision. Try to avoid doing all the ‘appropriation’ yourself; it’s much better if the reader can discover for him/herself where s/he finds him/herself in this story/discussion/psalm etc. Avoid questions which have closed answers (yes/no) or which discourage people (‘Do you get on well with your family?’). Let’s enter into the world of our readers with more sensitivity!

**(b) God’s Word for us today**

What we write should have a strong ‘flavour of today’, even when we are writing a long time ahead of the print deadline. Let’s refer to events of our society, our part of the world. Sometimes we can refer to films or novels that have impacted on our society. Let’s grasp hold of interesting local details and not always speak in general or abstract terms!

If the materials we write are used in a wide cultural context, we need to find examples, illustrations and applications that will speak to a majority of our readers.



## **SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES TRAINING RESOURCES**

### **Resource Sheet 12 Developing a ‘holy curiosity’ about the Bible**

When we come to a Bible passage (whether we are writing comments for the SU Bible guides, or a Bible study outline for school groups or camps, or preparing a sermon), we need to explore it in depth so as to help our readers or listeners or users also to explore it and make new discoveries for their lives. We need to develop a ‘holy curiosity’ about the Bible, as we:

- Read the passage several times, perhaps in different translations.
- Explore the passage thoroughly with the help of questions like these (write down below all the different kinds of questions that help us to explore a Bible passage):

- Pray and meditate deeply on all this information and detail, asking God to show you what aspect(s) of the Bible passage he wants you to help others to discover and explore in the note or study or sermon. This process of prayer and meditation takes time. DON’T HURRY IT!



**SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES  
TRAINING  
Resource Sheet 13**

**PREPARING THE GROUND: QUESTIONS THAT CAN HELP US GET  
INSIDE THE BIBLE TEXT**

**1. What kind of literature is this?**

- Law
- Narrative, story
- Prophecy
- Poetry
- Wisdom
- Gospel
- Letter
- Apocalyptic literature

**2. Can we discover who is the writer and what is the situation?**

**3. What is the situation of the writer's audience – those who read or listened to this text?**

**4. What is the intention of the writer?**

- To inform
- To challenge
- To encourage
- To comfort
- To warn
- To stimulate thought
- To expand people's imagination

**5. What other details do we need to check?**

- Historical background
- Customs, beliefs, contemporary culture
- The meaning of certain words
- Grammar, syntax, structure

**6. How does this passage relate to its context?**

- Is it complete in itself?
- Is it part of an argument that is developing?
- What is its place within the structure of the whole book or even of the whole Bible?

**7. Are there other parts of the Bible that we need to think about as we consider what this passage means?**

- Parallel passages, quotations, references, use of images?

**8. What is the most obvious meaning of the passage?**

**9. How does my own situation (beliefs, theological background, denomination, life experiences, emotional state) influence how I understand this passage?**

**10. Who are we writing for or speaking to as we write Bible guides or preach etc?**

- What things interest them or trouble them?
- How do these factors predispose them to ignore or to give too much emphasis to certain aspects of this text?

**(Resource Sheet 13 continued.)**

**11. What is the Lord saying through this text to us, to me?**

How does he challenge our blind spots, our prejudices?

How does he draw our attention to the truths that are important for our situation?

How does he encourage us in our areas of need?

Where do we find ourselves in this passage? With whom do we identify here?



**SCRIPTURE UNION INTERNATIONAL BIBLE MINISTRIES  
– TRAINING RESOURCES  
Resource Sheet 14**

**‘ENHANCEMENTS’ TO INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY**

1. The passion of the teacher or writer for Jesus and his Word is the key.
2. We seek both the truth of the passage and to experience the Lord in his Word.
3. We are dealing with a living Word, not a dead letter. God’s Word, as God himself, often offers surprises and challenges our traditional cultural assumptions.
4. ‘Reliving’ or entering the text emotionally is an important method of observation.
5. There must be a balance between the intellectual/analytical and the experiential/contemplative in Bible study.
6. Forming good questions about the text is a key to interpretation.
7. Studying/reflecting in community is vital.
8. Teachers need also to be learners, and see the learners as teachers.
9. The experience of the reader/listener needs to be woven into the study as it goes along.
10. The narrative nature of Scripture needs to be emphasised.
11. Inductive Bible study helps us to find main points, but they need to be held with humility and openness to further light.
12. Reflection on the Bible is an art, and needs to engage our creative and sensing side.
13. Inductive Bible study / reflection is about discovery.

*These notes were developed by IVCF in the USA.*