

Reading

Guideline: Read the text numerous times for an overview and initial impressions.

After you have selected a Biblical passage to study, the first step in the Inductive Bible Study process is to **Fly Over: Reading the Text**. Before beginning in depth analysis we need a "bird's eye" view of the passage.

You've heard the expression "You can't see the forest for the trees". This can certainly be true of Bible study. Sometimes we're tempted to study a passage by jumping right into details:

- What does this word mean in Greek?
- Is this word passive or active?
- How many times does the word occur in the New Testament?

Examining such details is important, but **first we need to make some general observations**. The best way to get an overview of a passage is simply by reading and rereading it.

As you read the passage please read in these ways:

- **Prayerfully.** God is the ultimate author of the Bible. Ask Him for insight.
- **Repeatedly.** Don't just read the text once and assume you've completed this step. Read the text numerous times from various Bibles. By reading the passage in different translations you'll notice important words and thoughts and gain an understanding of them. Make sure to read very literal translations like the *English Standard Version*, *New American Standard Bible* or *New King James Version*. Also, read paraphrases

such as *The Message* or *The New Living Translation*. You'll also enjoy enhanced versions like *The Amplified Bible* or *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*. If you can, certainly read the Hebrew and Greek translations.

- **Contextually.** Read the passages surrounding the text you're studying for context. If possible, read the entire book. How does your text fit into the overall context?
- **Meditatively.** A Hebrew word for mediate means to "mutter". Talk to yourself as you read. Ask yourself the standard Who, What, When, Where, Why and How questions.
- **Intermittently.** Read the text numerous times until it is "in you". Then take a break. Go for a walk or jog mulling over the passage as you go. You'll be amazed at the insights that come.
- **Expectantly.** Read every Bible passage as if it were the first time you've seen it. Don't assume you know what the text means. Allow it to unfold before you.
- **Imaginatively.** Use your sanctified imagination as you read. Imagine you're the original author or readers of the text. Try to imagine their motives, feelings, setting, as they wrote / read. Remember, the Bible was given in the context of human history. Put yourself in their shoes as you read their writings.