

Core Seminars—How to Study the Bible
Class 1: Inductive Bible Study, Part 1



“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”
(2 Timothy 2.15)

How To Study the Bible Schedule

Class 1: The Inductive Study Method Pt 1

Class 2: The Inductive Study Method Pt 2

Class 3: Studying the Old and New Testaments

Class 4: The Bible’s Genres

Class 5: Using Commentaries & Other Bible Study Tools

Class 6: Studying Difficult Passages and Familiar Passages

Further Questions?

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I. What is the Inductive Bible Study Method?
A. Deductive Study

B. Inductive Study

II. Observation

1. Observe as you write
2. It can help to print out your text
3. Observe patterns in the text (comparisons, contrasts, parallelism)
4. Mark linking words (and, but, etc.)
5. Write down quotations or allusions to other passages
6. Note mention of time or place

7. Mark terms of conclusion (therefore, thus, etc.)
8. Write down questions
9. Memorize

B. Interpretation:

1. Context rules
2. Let Scripture interpret Scripture
3. Never base convictions on an obscure passage
4. Interpret Scripture according to the author's intent
5. Look for the main message of the passage
6. Study the Old Testament in view of Jesus and the New Testament
7. Adopt the New Testament's attitude toward the Old Testament

Example: Nehemiah 1:1-3

¹The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ² that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³ And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

Agassiz was the founder of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology and a Harvard professor. The following account was written by one of his students, Samuel H. Scudder, under the title “Agassiz and the Fish, by a Student” (*American Poems*, 3rd ed. [Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1879], pp. 450-54).

Agassiz and the Fish
by a Student

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz, and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that while I wished to be well grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specially to insects.

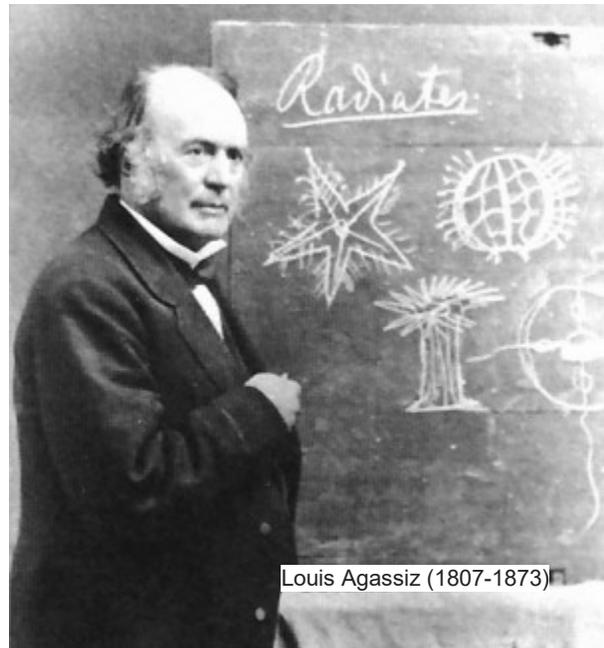
“When do you wish to begin?” he asked.

“Now,” I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic “Very well,” he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol.

“Take this fish,” he said, “and look at it; we call it a Haemulon; by and by I will ask what you have seen.”

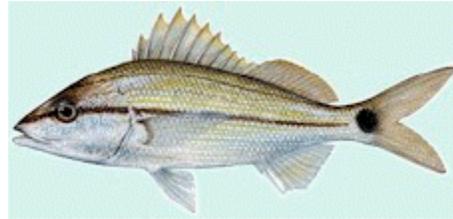
With that he left me. . . . I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. . . .



In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had, however, left the museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry all over. I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of a normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face—ghastly; from behind, beneath,

above, sideways, at a three-quarters view—just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour, I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish; it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.



The Tomtate, *Haemulon aurolineatum*.
Illustration by Diana Rome Peebles 1998.
Courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission, Division of
Marine Fisheries.

“That is right,” said he, “a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet and your bottle corked.”

With these encouraging words he added—

“Well, what is it like?”

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me; the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body. When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment:

“You have not looked very carefully; why,” he continued, more earnestly, “you haven’t seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again; look again!” And he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor’s criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and when, towards its close, the professor inquired,

“Do you see it yet?”

“No,” I replied. “I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before.”

“That is next best,” said he earnestly, “but I won’t hear you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning....”

For three long days, [Agassiz] placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. “Look, look, look,” was his repeated injunction.

This was the best entomological lesson I ever had—a lesson whose influence was extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part. . . .