

Welcome Friends!

We're so glad you've decided to join us for this study of Colossians. We've titled this series "Take Root/Bear Fruit" because the theme of Colossians is about experiencing the life that comes from Christ: really sinking roots into His forgiveness and grace and allowing Him to bear fruit in and through us. You could say it is a handbook for becoming a follower or disciple of Jesus. For that reason, we've also decided to use this opportunity to develop some of the habits of a disciple through our homework—specifically, personal time alone with God. This will be an **Inductive Bible Study** which basically means that through our homework we will be learning and practicing the skills we need to look into God's Word, accurately discern what it means, and live our lives accordingly. That, in a nutshell is what "Inductive Bible Study" is all about. You can think of it as a process in three stages:

### **Observe**

The first stage in the Inductive Process is Observation. Observers are those who SEE. At the Observe stage, we read a passage of scripture and ask the question, "What do I see?" We really focus on what the Bible says. You may find that you're brushing up and improving an old skill: Reading. Reading is essential to Bible Study. That sounds obvious, but many of us have had the experience of opening our Bibles, reading a few verses and realizing we didn't understand what we read—sound familiar? Your reading skills may be a little rusty, but they will improve quickly with a little practice. As you read the focus passage each week, engage not only your mind but your imagination in the process. Read even familiar passages as if you were seeing them for the first time, and as if they were written TO YOU (which they were!) It will improve your ability to Observe if you are mentally asking questions as you read. For example, you can ask, "Who, what, when, where, why?"

- Who is speaking, or writing? Who is listening, or reading? Who are the people in the story?
- What is happening? What objects are being described or used? What is the conflict? What is the problem? What is the occasion?
- When did this happen? What happened before, or after? What time of day is it? What time of year is it? What else was going on at the time?
- Where is the action taking place? (Inside, outside, on a mountain, by the sea, on a wall, in a city, in the country...) Can I find this place on a map?
- Why are these events happening? Why is the speaker saying what he is? Why is the writer writing? Why are the people sad? ...or happy? ...or angry?

Get the idea? Bombard your passage with questions. The more questions you ask, the more you will see. The more you see, the better you Observe!

### **Interpret**

In the movie, "Being There" Peter Sellers plays a simple-minded gardener who is mistaken for a philosopher. He walks through life making random comments of very little significance (to him), which are interpreted by the others in the story as weighty nuggets of deep meaning. Each person who encounters the gardener believes he is "teaching" whatever message the hearer wants. Some of us think of Bible Study that way. We read the Bible and believe we can understand it in any way that

feels good to us. We ask ourselves, "What does this mean—to me?" But that is NOT what is meant by "Interpretation" in Bible Study Method. The writers of Scripture (both the Divine Author and His human instruments) had a particular meaning in mind when they wrote. Interpretation involves asking, "What did the Author mean to communicate here?" The second stage of Bible Study, **Interpretation**, is simply drawing meaning from what we have observed.

### **Apply**

In the third stage of Inductive Bible Study we ask the question, "How does it work?" It's not enough to know what the Bible says, or even what it means. If it makes no practical difference in anyone's life we might as well study Geology or Basket-weaving. Application is really the main point of Bible Study. Each week, you'll be asked to consider what you will do with what you have seen in God's Word.

In case this sounds intimidating, don't worry! We'll be unpacking this process slowly, one step at a time. You'll probably discover that you're already doing a lot of it and never realized it. You'll be with friends who are learning along with you and encouraging you, and NO GRADES will be given!

Looking forward to this journey with you,

Cindy and Friends