

# Dr. David Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Session 3, Accurate, Informed, Sensus Plenior Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Session 3, Accurate, Informed, Sensus Plenior, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture excerpt from Dr. David Bauer's "Inductive Bible Study" focuses on accurate biblical interpretation, emphasizing the importance of understanding the implied author's intent within the text's context. It argues against interpretations solely based on individual understanding and highlights the concept of *sensus plenior*, where a passage holds deeper meaning than originally intended. The lecture stresses the significance of considering the biblical book as the primary literary unit, analyzing its structure and historical context. Finally, it advocates for a balanced approach that integrates analytical breakdown of components with a synthetic understanding of the whole, connecting individual passages to the broader biblical narrative and theology.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Introductory Series → Inductive Bible Study).**



**Bauer\_IBS\_Session0  
3.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Session 3, Accurate, Informed, Sensus Plenior

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. David Bauer's lecture on Inductive Bible Study:

#### Briefing Document: Inductive Bible Study Methodology (Dr. David Bauer, Lecture 3)

##### Introduction:

This document summarizes the main points of Dr. David Bauer's lecture on Inductive Bible Study, specifically focusing on methodology, accuracy, the role of the author, *sensus plenior*, context, analysis, and synthesis. Bauer emphasizes a rigorous and informed approach to interpreting the Bible, stressing the importance of both the human and divine aspects of scripture.

##### Key Themes and Ideas:

##### 1. Accuracy in Interpretation:

- Bauer posits that accurate interpretation is possible and involves discerning the author's intended communication to the original audience. This assumes that there are good and bad interpretations, right and wrong understandings.
- He asserts, *"The closer we get to what the author intended to communicate to his original readers, the better that interpretation is."*
- He acknowledges a trend that disregards the author's intent, favoring reader-centric interpretations. However, Bauer contends that denying the author's voice contradicts the nature of the text and reading experience.

##### 1. The Implied Author vs. The Flesh-and-Blood Author:

- Bauer distinguishes between the "flesh-and-blood" author (e.g., Matthew, Mark, Paul) and the "implied author," which is the author we encounter through the text itself. *"The only author we have access to is the author who presents himself through what he has written."*
- The flesh-and-blood author is both larger and smaller than the implied author. Larger in that they know more than what is included in the text, and smaller in the sense that the text can communicate more than the author consciously intended.

- Bauer cites examples in the Gospels where the authors knew more about Jesus than what they included in their writing. He also quotes the end of John 20 to support this point.
- He emphasizes that *“an author always says more than he consciously intends to say.”* The meaning of passages are greater than the conscious intent of authors.
- He uses E.D. Hirsch’s hypothetical example of a class analyzing a poem to illustrate how the implied author's meaning can surpass the conscious intention of the flesh-and-blood poet.
- Despite the distinction, there’s a real connection between the intention of the flesh and blood author and the implied author unless the author is incompetent.

#### 1. ***Sensus Plenior* (Fuller Sense):**

- This concept, "the full or plentiful sense" of a passage, refers to a meaning beyond what the original author consciously intended.
- This concept is used to explain how New Testament writers sometimes apply Old Testament passages in ways that the original Old Testament authors could not have foreseen.
- Bauer cites Matthew 2:15 quoting Hosea 11:1 as an example. Hosea was speaking about the Exodus, but Matthew sees a fulfillment in Jesus' flight to Egypt. Hosea was saying more than he knew.
- This idea means interpretation is not dependent on absolute certainty of the author's conscious intent, but rather on a reasoned examination of the text.

#### 1. **The Human and Divine Authorship:**

- While Christians are primarily concerned with what God is saying, revelation occurs through human authors. *“God’s revelation is made precisely through human authors.”*
- The Bible doesn't claim to be written directly by God, but rather by human authors speaking from God. God's word is revealed through the mediation of human authors.
- Bauer emphasizes that *“we can most reliably encounter and grasp the divine mind by working through the human mind”*.

- He refers to 2 Peter 1:20-21 to support this point. Although the Holy Spirit moved them, men spoke from God. \*The most reliable way for God to reveal his Word is by taking seriously the human authors and their speech.

### 1. **The Importance of Being Informed:**

- Inductive study must be "informed" by relevant knowledge, including contextual, structural, historical and theological understanding.

### 1. **Contextual Knowledge: The Biblical Book as the Basic Literary Unit:**

- The basic literary unit of the Bible is the biblical book, not individual verses or passages. The Bible is not a single book, but a "*library of books*."
- The canonical process reinforces this book-centric approach. Canonical decisions were made regarding entire books, not portions of books.
- Each book has its own author, time and distinct message and should be allowed to speak on its own terms.
- Interpretation should not involve collapsing the messages of different books into one another. Each book has its own unique communication.
- "The whole biblical book is the literary context for any passage within it."
- Every passage relates to every other passage in a given book, creating a "textual world."

### 1. **Canonical Context:**

- He also notes the importance of Canonical context. The Bible's 66 books aren't in isolation but rather it is a "canonical assemblage".
- While considering individual books it is also important to read them in light of other books within the canonical assemblage.
- After establishing the meaning in its book context, it must be related to the rest of the Bible.
- Other passages may complete, fulfill, broaden, qualify or nuance what is said in our specific passage.
- Both literary book context and canonical context are necessary.

### 1. **Structural Knowledge:**

- Structure is essential for understanding meaning. "Things hook on to each other."
- Meaning is communicated through the relationship of words to words, sentences to sentences, paragraphs to paragraphs, etc.
- There's no such thing as pure content. All content comes through form, relationship and structure.
- Structure is how things are related to each other and understanding the structure helps us to understand the meaning.
- He uses the analogy of a house made of lumber and shingles which need to be assembled in a particular way to function as a house. Content requires structure.

### 1. **Historical Knowledge:**

- Historical background is crucial for interpretation. A literary product has a historical origin and context.
- Bauer argues that the literary and historical study of the Bible should not be separated, as they are intertwined.

### 1. **Theological Knowledge**

- Biblical books are primarily theological documents, focused on God.
- Interpretation involves serious theological reflection and penetration.

### 1. **Interpretive Possibilities:**

- It is important to recognize different possible interpretations of passages and be able to make arguments for one over the others.

### 1. **Analytical and Synthetic Approaches:**

- Analysis involves breaking down passages into components to identify the individual parts, while synthesis involves discerning the relationships and connections between those parts.
- You can understand each part, but it's equally important to synthesize the meaning of the parts. This includes asking how the passage contributes to the overall theology of the Bible.

### 1. **Application in Preaching:**

- Preaching should communicate the specific message of the chosen passage. It is important to indicate that a passage or theme is not the whole picture of what the Bible says.
- This can be communicated directly by mentioning other biblical treatments of the same topic, or indirectly through consistent teaching from all parts of Scripture, which builds a synthetic understanding in the listeners.
- He suggests that younger preachers consider using a lectionary, as it forces one to preach on passages from various parts of the canon.

**Conclusion:** Dr. Bauer's lecture emphasizes the importance of a rigorous inductive approach to Bible study. This approach involves careful attention to the author's intent, the relationship between human and divine authorship, the literary and canonical contexts, and the structural arrangement of texts. It calls for an informed, analytical, and synthetic engagement with the scriptures, ultimately aiming to understand God's revealed word more accurately and completely.

## 4. Study Guide: Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Session 3, Informed, Accurate, Sensus Plenior

### Inductive Bible Study: A Review

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What is the primary basis for determining an accurate interpretation of a biblical text, according to Bauer?
2. Explain the difference between the "flesh-and-blood author" and the "implied author," and why this distinction is important.
3. Define *sensus plenior* and give an example of it in the New Testament.
4. Why is it important to consider the book as the primary literary unit of the Bible when interpreting a text?
5. How does understanding the structure of a text contribute to our understanding of its meaning?
6. What is the relationship between the literary and historical study of the Bible, according to the lecture?
7. Why is theological reflection considered essential when studying biblical texts?
8. What is the importance of identifying various interpretations, and being able to argue for them, when studying scripture?
9. What is the distinction between *analysis* and *synthesis* in relation to the study of scripture?
10. How can a preacher communicate that the passage they are preaching is not the only message the Bible has on a given topic?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary basis for an accurate interpretation, according to Bauer, is appealing to the intention of the implied author—that is, understanding what the author meant to communicate to his original audience. The closer we get to the implied author's intent, the more accurate the interpretation.

2. The "flesh-and-blood author" is the actual person who wrote the text, while the "implied author" is the author as presented within the text itself. This distinction is important because we only have access to the implied author through the text, and the implied author often conveys more meaning than the flesh and blood author consciously intended.
3. *Sensus plenior* refers to the "fuller sense" of a passage, where the text contains meaning beyond what the original human author consciously intended. An example is Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1, which originally referred to the Exodus but is applied to Jesus' flight to Egypt in the New Testament.
4. Considering the book as the primary literary unit is important because each book has its own distinct message and literary context. This helps us avoid collapsing the messages of different books and ensures we understand each passage within its intended framework.
5. Understanding the structure of a text helps us to see how the elements are related to each other, which provides us a framework to understand how the author intended to communicate meaning. The structure allows us to see how elements combine and build upon one another.
6. According to the lecture, the literary and historical study of the Bible are not separate. Every literary work, every book, has a historical origin and a context, and so one cannot truly study literature without acknowledging history.
7. Theological reflection is essential because the primary purpose of every book of the Bible is to talk about and reveal God. Therefore, when interpreting the Bible, we should be reflecting on theological implications, and not just historical or literary concerns.
8. It is important to recognize different possible interpretations of a passage and to be able to provide arguments for our own interpretation over others. This ensures that our understanding is sound and well-considered rather than a mere, possibly uninformed, preference.
9. Analysis refers to the process of breaking a text into its components, identifying individual parts, and observing meaning in relation to the immediate context. Synthesis then is the process of connecting those individual parts together, discerning how they fit together to form a comprehensive picture of the author's meaning.



10. A preacher can communicate that their passage is not the only message the Bible has on a topic directly by reminding their congregation that the chosen passage is one of multiple possible ways to understand the theme and indirectly through a regular cycle of preaching the whole of the scriptures and by teaching the multiple possible treatments of the theme throughout the various books of the Bible.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question in essay format using examples from the source material and your own reflection.

1. Discuss the concept of "implied author" as presented in the lecture. How does this concept influence the way we approach biblical interpretation, and what are the implications for determining meaning?
2. Explain the role of context in interpreting the Bible, paying specific attention to the ideas of *book* context and *canonical* context. How should we balance these two kinds of context?
3. How does the lecture's discussion of structure impact the process of interpreting a text? Illustrate using examples how a close reading of the structure of a text can alter or improve understanding.
4. The lecture states that "All content comes to us through form, through relationship, through structure." Critically assess this claim in relation to biblical interpretation and the challenge of understanding meaning.
5. The lecture presents a model for biblical study based on a progression from accurate to informed to analytical and finally synthetic. How is this helpful in understanding the meaning of the text, and how can it be applied in practical terms?

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Accurate Interpretation:** Interpretation that aligns with the intention of the implied author as communicated through the text to the original audience.

**Analysis:** The process of breaking down a text into its components and identifying the meaning of each part in relation to the context.

**Authorial Intent:** The purpose and message the implied author intended to communicate through the text.

**Canonical Context:** Interpreting a passage in light of the entire biblical canon, recognizing the interconnectedness of the 66 books.

**Flesh-and-Blood Author:** The actual historical person who wrote the biblical text.

**Historical Context:** The background of the historical circumstances and environment in which a text was written.

**Implied Author:** The authorial persona or voice that is presented within the text itself, as opposed to the flesh-and-blood author.

**Inductive Bible Study:** A methodology that seeks to understand a text by paying attention to the text itself, rather than relying on preconceived ideas.

**Informed Interpretation:** Interpretation that is supported by relevant contextual, structural, and historical knowledge.

**Sensus Plenior:** The "fuller sense" of a text, which may include meanings that the original author was not fully conscious of when writing.

**Structure:** The way that various elements or parts of a text are related to each other to form a larger message.

**Synthesis:** The process of discerning how various individual parts of a text contribute to a coherent whole, discerning the relatedness of each of the parts to the whole message of a text.

## 5. FAQs on Bauer, Inductive Bible Study, Session 3, Informed, Accurate, Sensus Plenior, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Inductive Bible Study Methodology

- What is the basis for determining an accurate interpretation of a biblical text?**

An accurate interpretation is determined by how closely it aligns with the implied author's intended communication to the original readers. This approach emphasizes understanding what the author sought to convey, rather than imposing personal interpretations that ignore or bypass the authorial voice. While personal interpretations may hold meaning, they are not considered to be accurate in terms of the original intention. The fundamental reality of the reading experience is the sense of being addressed, that is, the sense of an author, and we must take that authorial voice seriously in our interpretations.
- What is the difference between the flesh-and-blood author and the implied author, and why is this distinction important?**

The flesh-and-blood author is the historical person who physically wrote the text. The implied author is the authorial presence as presented within the text itself, who can be inferred from the writing. This distinction is crucial because the flesh-and-blood author has a broader range of knowledge and beliefs than what's included in the text; conversely, the implied author's message can have meanings beyond the conscious intention of the flesh-and-blood author. The text can take on a life of its own, and this has implications for the richness of meaning we can find within it. We only have access to the implied author and not the flesh-and-blood author.
- What is "sensus plenior," and how does it relate to the intention of the author?**

"Sensus plenior" refers to the "fuller sense" or "plentiful sense" of a passage, meaning that the meaning of a passage can extend beyond the original flesh-and-blood author's conscious intent. While the implied author's intended meaning is paramount, "sensus plenior" recognizes that a text can hold deeper layers of meaning that may be discovered through its relation to the broader biblical canon, such as when New Testament writers interpret Old Testament texts in ways that go beyond the conscious intent of the Old Testament author.

- **Why is it important to consider the literary context of a biblical book when interpreting a passage?** The basic literary unit of the Bible is the biblical book, and the book is not so much a book as it is a library of books. The book is the literary context for all passages within it, as each biblical book is a cohesive literary unit with its own distinct message. Understanding how a specific passage functions within the book is essential for accurate interpretation. Reading one book into another uncritically or collapsing the message of one book into another should be avoided, and each book should be allowed to present its own message on its own terms. Every passage in a book relates directly or indirectly to every other passage in that book.
- **How do both literary and canonical contexts contribute to a complete interpretation of a passage?** Literary context focuses on interpreting passages in light of their function within the specific biblical book in which they're found. Canonical context considers how the meaning of a passage within its book context relates to the entire biblical canon. These contexts are complementary; understanding the distinct message of a book and how it relates to other books is important. The Bible is a canonical assemblage of 66 books that invite us to read them in light of one another. Therefore, we must both give attention to the distinctive message of a book and relate its meaning to the whole canon.
- **Why is structural knowledge crucial for understanding a biblical text?** Structural knowledge is critical because content comes to us through form and structure. Biblical texts are composed of individual elements (words, sentences, paragraphs, segments) that are related to one another, and it is through understanding how these elements are related that we grasp meaning. Without considering the structure, we're unable to discern the meaning of the individual parts. A book is made up of content (stuff) that is arranged in a specific way (structure) and we cannot understand the content without paying attention to the structure.
- **What other types of relevant knowledge are important for inductive bible study besides literary and structural knowledge?** Besides literary and structural knowledge, inductive bible study should also be informed by historical and theological knowledge. Understanding the historical background of a text (time, culture, circumstances) is important for interpretation. All texts are also theological in nature so theological reflection and penetration are also key to an inductive method. It is also important to know various interpretations and applicatory possibilities along with the arguments for and against each.

- **What is the importance of both analysis and synthesis in the process of inductive bible study?** Analysis involves breaking down texts into their component parts (words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) to examine them individually. Synthesis involves putting the parts back together to understand the relationships between them. Both are important. We must consider the meaning of the individual parts as well as synthesize the meaning of the parts to form a coherent understanding of the whole. We are also always to ask how a passage or truth relates and contributes to the theology of the bible as a whole.