

English Transcript

How to Study the Bible

Lesson 3: How to Study a Book of the Bible

Welcome back to Lesson 3 of How to Study the Bible. We will continue on page 19 in your handout.

Beginning with this lesson and continuing through the end of the course, you will be given instructions for a simple approach to study any book of the Bible, and any chapter or passage of the Bible as well. I will provide you with instructions for each hands-on activity. You will be asked to pause the recording and take as much time as needed to complete each activity. When you complete an activity, return to the audio recording for a summary discussion related to the activity you were working on.

If you simply listen to the audio without completing the activity, you will not receive the full benefit from this course.

Now it is time to learn how to study the Word of God on your own. You will begin by gaining an overview of the book you are going to study. For this study we are going to talk about studying an entire book of the Bible. The principles we share can be used for all 66 books of the Bible. By learning how to study one book of the Bible you will learn how to study all the books of the Bible!

Before teaching, preaching or even studying the details of any book of the Bible, it is critical for the Bible student to gain an overview of the entire book. The temptation for most is to read what someone else has to say about the Book we are going to study. However, we are suggesting that you avoid what others have learned and investigate the Bible for yourself. *Do you want to fish for yourself, or do you want someone to fish for you?*

All you will need is your Bible, a pencil or pen, paper, an open heart and mind, and time.

There are a number of methods for studying the Bible. There are topical and word studies, biographical character studies, studies of the types of Christ, chronological studies, etc.

The method of study that is the most thorough, most time consuming, and the one that yields the greatest and most permanent results is the study of the Bible, one book at a time. We will highlight the primary steps in this process and then you will have an opportunity to apply this process to our study of 1 John.

Over the next few lessons, you will be guided through a 7-step process for studying any book of the Bible. I will first list the steps for you and then we will begin the process, taking one step at a time.

The seven steps are:

1. Select a book to study
2. Master the Book's content
3. Prepare an Introduction/Overview of the Book
4. Divide the Book into Sections and Create Book Chart

5. Study each Verse within a Section in order
6. Classify your Results
7. Reflect Upon and Apply Your Learnings

Let's begin!

1. Select a Book to Study

For your first few studies on your own, it is wise to select shorter books. Select a book that is rich in teaching to illustrate the advantages of the method we will share. This is why we have selected 1 John, since it is not a difficult book to read, yet it is one of the “richest” books in the Bible. You will be challenged by the content of teaching of this short book of the Bible. 1 John is only 5 chapters. The Apostle John writes in a very conversational and pastoral manner. The one challenge for 1 John is that the book does not follow a simple chapter by chapter outline. You will need to make observations to pick up on the repetitive pattern that John uses to ultimately support his purpose statement(s) in this book.

How about that, you can already cross off the first step in the Bible Study process since we have selected the book to study. Let's move to step 2.

2. Master the Book's General Content

This second step in the process is very simple. It consists of reading the book from beginning to end without stopping, and then reading it again, and then reading it again. Since you are not limited by time, I recommend that you read 1 John from chapter 1 through chapter 5 at least six times.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are about to read. Then read the entire book from beginning to end. This will take about 15-20 minutes. You will not remember everything, but you will begin to pick up some key thoughts. As you are reading you will be tempted to stop and investigate new words and key thoughts. Resist this urge and push through to read the entire book in one sitting. It also helps to read the book out loud a few times.

After reading it though once, close your Bible and write down what you remember. You may use a notebook to record your observations. For this course, use pages 27-28 to write down what you remember. You find it helpful to maintain a list of observations grouped by chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Repeat this process a second time. After reading the book, close your Bible and add to your list by chapter of what you remember. You will repeat this process at least six times. The more times you repeat this process, the greater you will begin to master the content and primary themes in the book.

The third and fourth time you may choose to read a chapter at a time and stop after each chapter to write down what you remember.

You will be amazed at the understanding you will gain simply by praying and then reading and re-reading a book of the Bible multiple times. There is no magic formula for the number of times you read the book that you are studying. However, the more times you read your book, the better your understanding will be. Plan to read your book at least 6-10 times before you begin to study it in detail. This critical step will aid you tremendously in your study.

After reading through your book 6-10 times and writing down what you recall, what you have written will be better than anything you read in a commentary. Why? Because you will have fished for yourself and discovered the main ideas of the book for yourself.

The Bible is basically 66 letters from God to us. In each letter God communicates key ideas through the human authors who were led by the Holy Spirit to write each book of the Bible.

As limited, finite human beings, we are grateful that God has revealed His authoritative Word to us in the 66 books of the Bible. Our lifelong assignment is to discover the intent or purpose of all 66 books of the Bible. This begins with your personal study of one book at a time. By reading it through from beginning to end 6-10 times, then recording what you recall.

The beauty of this kind of study is that there are no books to purchase, no seminars to attend, no internet is needed, and no money is spent. You just need a Bible, a pen, paper, and time. Next, we will learn how to synthesize or collect all we have learned from our reading into one chart.

ACTIVITY #1

Turn to 1 John for the book we will all study in this course.

Pray and ask God for insight into your reading.

Read through 1 John in one sitting. (15 minutes, 5 chapters, only 105 verses)

After reading 1 John in one sitting, write down what you remember on pages 27-28 of this workbook. If you are not sure what kinds of things to write down, you may look at my personal notes for this activity that are included in the Appendix on pages 41-44.

Repeat this process at least 3-6 more times.

When I teach this with a group, we are limited by time. The participants may only be able to read 1 John 2 times. Yet, even with two readings, the value of this step is understood. If you commit to reading 1 John 6-10 times following this process, you will be amazed at what you recall and understand after 10 readings.

Here are some other tips as you prepare for the first activity.

- First and Second readings: Mark paragraphs divisions, underline words/phrases that appear prominent; What is the tone of the letter? What is the main point?
- Third and Fourth readings: Assign descriptive words or phrases to each paragraph, look for any patterns, for example: contrasts, “know” used 30x, false teaching is a key topic, use of words and phrases like light vs darkness, love, sin, obedience, believe, etc.

Pause the audio recording now and complete activity #1. When you have completed this activity, continue listening to the recording for a summary of what has been learned in this step.

Welcome back to Lesson 3 and the step in the bible study process where you master the content of the Book.

How did you do?

How many times did you read 1 John?

Do you feel like you have an overall sense of the main points that the apostle John wrote about?

Look at your notes on pages 27-28.

Do you have observations written down for each of the five chapters?

What verses have you already started to memorize?

My notes from this process are included in the Appendix on pages 41-44.

These notes were developed and expanded after 9-10 readings through 1 John.

After the first few readings, I wrote down key words and phrases.

Next, I started to begin to notice different sections or paragraph breaks.

With each successive reading, my understanding of 1 John grew.

I also began to memorize key verses and themes.

Follow along in your notes as I summarize some key thoughts from my notes. The objective at this point is not to review every observation from reading through the book, but rather to highlight some key observations that will be helpful in future steps. My notes were developed from 10 readings of 1 John. My notes after the first reading were less structured. With each additional reading though, my notes became richer. All of these notes came from reading and then writing down what I remembered. Eventually, I reviewed 1 John chapter by chapter to include paragraph breaks showing the verses that make up each paragraph or body of thought.

Allow me to highlight some of my notes and you follow along with your notes.

Chapter 1:1-4 (just 2 sentences in Greek)

Paragraph: 1:1-4

Message "from the beginning"; Gen 1 and John 1

Author was eyewitness, he saw, heard and touched Jesus (mentioned two times)

Jesus is the Word of Life (Logos vs Zoe)

They proclaimed the truth of eternal life (key verb)

Truth about who Jesus is

Jesus was with the Father and appeared in the flesh

Emphasis on fellowship

Fellowship (Koinonia) with other believers and fellowship with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ

Result is joy for all believers (1st purpose statement in 1:4, "We are writing these things ...")

Chapter 1:5-10

Paragraphs: 1:5-7, 8-10

Message from the beginning

Heard from him and proclaim to you (he was a witness)

God is Light = no darkness at all, pure, holy

Repetition of saying/claiming one thing but acting in different way

If we claim fellowship with God but walk in darkness we lie and don't have fellowship with him

But if we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and Jesus' blood purifies us from all sin

If we claim we are without sin, the truth is not in us

If we confess our sins, we are continually forgiven and cleansed

If we claim we are without sin, we say Jesus is a liar

Chapter 2:1-2

Paragraph: 2:1-2

"My little children"

Written so that you don't sin (2nd purpose statement in 2:1. "I am writing these things ...")

But if you do sin, we have and advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, Atoning Sacrifice for our sin and of the whole world (John 3:16, John 4)

Chapter 2:3-6

Paragraph: 2:3-6

Theme of Obedience

We can know that we know him if we keep his commands

If we say we know him but disobey him, we don't really know him

But, if we obey his Word, love for God is in you

If you say you know God, you must walk/live like Jesus (obedience)

Chapter 2:7-14

Paragraphs 2:7-11, 12-14

"Dear friends"

Theme of love vs hate

Old command that was from the beginning

New command you have heard and seen in Jesus (John 13:34-35)

If you claim to be in the light but hate your brother, you are still in the darkness (2 times); darkness has blinded you

Anyone who loves, lives/abides in the light

Love

"Children" – your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name, and you know the Father

"Fathers" – you know the Father (2 times)

"Young men" – overcome the evil one (2 times), you are strong

Chapter 2:15-17

Paragraph: 2:15-17

If you love the world, you don't have love for the Father

Sin: lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh and pride of life come from the world

Those who obey (do the Father's will) live forever

Chapter 2:18-27

Paragraphs: 2:18-20, 21-23, 24-25, 26-27

"Dear children"

Last hour

Theme of Doctrine/Truth vs error (second time)

Antichrist is coming, many antichrists have already come

We know: they depart from the fellowship of believers, they deny Jesus is the Christ, deny the Father and the Son

Those who acknowledge the Son also acknowledge the Father (Purpose Statement #3 in 2:26-27, "I write these things ...")

Believers have an anointing from God (Holy Spirit, 1 Cor 3)

Remain/Abide, you possess eternal life (John 15)

They deceive the faithful but your anointing from the Holy Spirit will keep you in the truth

Chapter 2:28-3:3

Paragraphs: 2:28-29, 3:1-3

Remain/continue/abide in him, when he appears we will not be ashamed at his coming (again)

Focus on Sonship

You know he is righteous, you know everyone who does what is right is born of God (John 3)

What great love from the Father – we are his children

We are his children now!

We don't fully know what we will become, but we will be like him when he appears

This hope purifies us in him (like he is pure)

Chapter 3:4-10

Paragraphs: 3:4-6, 7-10

Sin = Law Breaker

You know ... Christ appeared to take away our sin

Christ is sinless

Return to theme of obedience (second time)

If you are in Christ, you will not continue a life of sin

If you do continue to sin, you are not in him

Don't be led astray, live rightly in him

If you live an evil life, you are of the devil

Jesus appeared to destroy the devil's work

No one born of God continues in sin

If you do right = of Christ; If you do evil = of the devil

Chapter 3:11-24

Paragraphs: 3:11-18, 19-24

Message from the beginning ... Love one another (Lev 19)

Return to focus on love (second time)

Not like Cain vs Abel (murder, evil, unrighteous)

If world hates you, you know him, passed from death to life

If you hate, you are not in Christ

This is how we know what love is: Jesus laid down his life for us ... We should lay down our lives

Love must be active, not just words and speech but action and truth

We know we belong to the truth ... if our hearts don't condemn us (Romans 8:1)

3:23-24 is summary ... We keep his commands ...

Believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ

Love others

Obey (keep his commands and remain in him – John 15)

We know we are in him by the Spirit he gave us (John 14-16)

Chapter 4:1-3

Paragraphs: 4:1-6

"Dear friends"

Return to focus on Doctrine/Truth (third time)

False teachers/spirits

From God? Acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh (incarnation)

Antichrist is coming and antichrists have already come

Chapter 4:4-6

You have overcome them

Holy Spirit in you is greater than the world

They are from the world and the world listens to their teaching

We are from God and those who are from God will listen to our teaching

We know the Spirit of Truth vs the spirit of falsehood

Chapter 4:7-21

Paragraphs: 4:7-12, 13-16, 17-21

Return to focus on love and obedience (third time)

Love comes from God, God is love!

Examples of God's love: He sent his Son, so we could live through him, he loves us first, he is the atoning sacrifice for sin

We should love/live the same way

We know him through his Spirit

Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world (John 3:16, John 4)

If you acknowledge Jesus is the Son, you live in God and God in you

God is Love (4:16)

We have confidence to face the judgment, no fear, love others

Chapter 5:1-5

Paragraphs: 5:1-3, 4-5

Victory in Christ

Fourth time coming back to Doctrine/Truth, Love and Obedience

Believe Jesus is the Christ = you are born of God

Love the Father = love his children also

ObeY his commands (not a burden)

Born of God = overcome the world (through faith) ... only for those who believe Jesus is the Son of God

Chapter 5:6-12

Paragraphs: 5:6-8, 9-12

God's testimony about Christ

Water, blood and Spirit

God's testimony is greater than the human testimony

If you believe in the Son of God, you accept this testimony, reject the testimony – no life

This is the testimony (5:11-12)

Chapter 5:13-21

Paragraph: 5:13, 14-17, 18-21

Assurances/Certainties through Christ

Know you have eternal life (5:13) (Purpose Statement #4, 5:13, "I write these things ...")

Answered prayer (5:14-17)

Victory over sin and Satan (5:18-21)

Born of God = don't continue with life of sin

Kept safe in Christ

We are children of God, the world is under control of Satan

We know Son of God has come (incarnation/resurrection), we know we have understanding, we know him who is the true God and Eternal Life

Last statement: Keep yourself from idols (don't be led astray ... continue/remain/abide in Christ)

Please take note that these are just observations.

In this step of the process, we are focused on what we see in the text. This is part of the Observation step.

We have not moved yet to Interpretation or what does the text mean.

Already though, after reading the book 6-10 times, you will be on your way to developing a high-level understanding of the main themes of this book.

You might try summarizing 1 John chapter by chapter by simply talking your way through the book based on what you have already learned. This will help you prepare for the next step in the process.

When we continue in Lesson 4, we will introduce Step 3: Prepare an Introduction/Overview of the Book.