

English Transcript

How to Study the Bible

Lesson 5: Divide the Book into Sections and Chart the Book

Welcome back to How to Study the Bible. We will be continuing with Lesson 5 and the next step in our process of studying any book of the Bible. We have already completed the first three steps.

1. Select a book to study
2. Master the general content of the book
3. Prepare an Introduction of the book

In this lesson we will provide instructions for step 4: Divide the book into sections and create a chart for the book. This step will build upon the work you have already completed in steps 2 and 3 of this process.

In this step you will be asked to review 1 John one more time and mark the major divisions throughout the book. Do not limit yourself to the chapter and section headings that may be added to your Bible. These are often good section titles, but they are not inspired by God.

You should look for natural grouping of ideas and thoughts that have been expressed in the words of Scripture. The natural paragraph breaks in most translations of the Bible will be helpful in creating these larger sections of thought in the book as well as provide insight for sub-points within a section.

I have provided an example of a book chart on page 22 in your handout for Paul's letter to the Ephesians. As you review this sample chart, please understand that there is not one correct way to chart a book. Your observations from Step 2 in this process along with noting the paragraph divisions in the book will provide most of what you will need to create the outline for your chart. There is a column for each chapter.

Your first draft of your chart can start with identifying the sections in each chapter showing the verses for each section. You will want to provide a short phrase or sentence in your own words to summarize each section. You may also add sub-points within each section.

Let's look briefly at the Ephesians chart on page 22. The column for chapter one is on the far left of the page. In this example, there are 3 sections in Chapter one.

- 1:1-2 – Greeting; Grace and Peace!
- 1:3-14 – Every spiritual blessing in Christ through the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- 1:15-23 – Prayer to know God better. You can also see the four sub-points that I included for this section.

As you prepare to develop your chart for 1 John, you may want to read through Ephesians while looking at the chart on page 22 to get a feel for how the chart is intended to provide a high-level outline or summary of the book.

You should review your notes from Step 2 where you recorded your observations after each your readings through 1 John as well as the Introduction that you wrote in Step 3. You will find that you have the beginnings of an outline for 1 John from this prior work. If you have not done so already, review 1 John one more time and note the paragraph divisions throughout the 5 chapters of the book.

The summary statements or short sentences you assign to each section can be refined as you continue your study. You will see on page 23 in your handout, a more refined outline for the book of Ephesians. This might become the outline for a sermon series or a weekly Bible study through this book.

After you have reviewed the example for Ephesians as well as your notes from Steps 2 and 3, you may begin learning activity #3. You will find a blank chart in your handout on page 31. You may also use a blank sheet of paper if that works better for you. My chart for 1 John is included on page 47 of the Appendix.

You may pause the audio recording now and begin learning activity #3 as you develop your chart for 1 John. Do not allow my work in the appendix or any other outline from a commentary to influence how the Holy Spirit will guide you in this process. There is no single correct way to chart a book. The key is that your chart is an accurate summary of the book, and it is helpful for you to teach, preach and communicate the key meanings and relevant applications from 1 John.

When we teach this course in a classroom setting, many of the learning exercises focus on the just first or second chapter of 1 John to provide the students with an example they can use to complete their study of the rest of the book. Due to the lack of time in the class, many students often do not complete their book chart during this activity. They might complete their chart for chapters 1 and 2 and then finish the chart later when they study the book on their own. You have the luxury of time since you are completing this course as self-study.

When you complete your chart, restart the audio for some summary thoughts related to this step of the study process.

Complete Learning Activity #3.

Welcome back! How did you do with this activity?

I wish I could see your chart. Remember, there are a few more steps in this process that will provide you with deeper insights into 1 John. Your initial chart will most likely evolve with further study. I hope you have seen how much your initial observations from Step 2 have helped to guide you to develop an outline for this book.

I am convinced that just reading a book 6-10 times and writing down what you remember in each chapter will give you the foundation for a solid overview of any book of the Bible. Your chart does not need match my chart, but as I review my chart for 1 John, there will be similar themes and even similar sections with what you have developed.

You may find several common points such as the following:

1. There are at least three repeated themes related to tests for genuine faith and fellowship in Christ: beliefs/truths related to who Jesus is, growing love for God and others, and growing obedience and turning away from sin.
2. These themes are repeated 3-4 times throughout 1 John.
3. There are at least four major sections depending on how you divided them. In each section, the themes of belief, love and obedience are repeated.
 - 1:1 – 2:17
 - 2:18 – 3:24
 - 4:1-21
 - 5:1-21
4. Fellowship in Christ is an important point.
5. The incarnation of Christ is key – Jesus came in the flesh; He is God and Man.
6. The reality of false teachers and knowing how to identify them is important.
7. There are four purpose statements included through the five chapters.
 - 1:4 Joy in shared fellowship with Christ and each other will overflow.
 - 2:1-2 Desire not to sin and be secure in your relationship with Christ because He is our Advocate.
 - 2:26 Be on guard for false teachers.
 - 5:13 Know with confidence that we possess eternal life in Christ.

As I highlight a few points from my 1 John chart found on page 47 in your handout, you may notice similar things that you have written or summarized using slightly different words or phrases.

My first section started in chapter 1:1 through chapter 2:17. I call this Cycle #1 of Genuine Fellowship.

- 1:1 through 2:2 deals with what I call the Doctrine or Truth Test for genuine fellowship and faith in Christ.
- This section includes a biblical view of Christ and a biblical view of sin.
- Chapter 2:2-17 includes a biblical view of sin followed by a biblical view of love.
- Each cycle of genuine fellowship seems to touch on the truth of who Jesus is, love, and obedience.
- I call these the Doctrine Test, The Social Test and the Moral Test.

The next major section runs from chapter 2:18 through chapter 3:24. This is cycle #2 of Genuine Fellowship.

- 2:18-27 deals with the Doctrine Test and specifics related to the “anti-Christ” or false teachers.
- 2:28-3:24 deals a second time with the Social and Moral Tests.
- A true believer will progressively be purifying themselves from sin by God’s grace.
- Requirements for a righteous walk and a life or walk of love are described.

The third cycle of Genuine Fellowship includes all of chapter 4.

- 4:1-6 returns to the Doctrine Test and the importance of sound doctrine.
- 4:7-21 returns a third time to the Social and Moral Tests focused on God’s character of love and what God requires of His children regarding to love.
- There is a clear connection between love and obedience as the evidence of true saving faith.

I labeled chapter 5 of 1 John as Cycle #4 of Genuine Fellowship.

- 5:1-5 provides a concise summary of belief in Christ, love for God and others, and obedience, as the proof of love and faith.
- Once again, we see the trilogy of the Doctrine, Social, and Moral Tests of Genuine Fellowship.
- 5:6-12 is a closing summary focused on truth and belief and the testimony of true faith.
- 5:13-21 concludes this short letter with certainties or assurances for the person who has genuine fellowship with God through faith in Christ.
- There are assurances of eternal life, answered prayer, and victory over sin and Satan.

As I completed my chart and looked back on my initial observations recorded from reading through 1 John 10 multiple times, I noticed that the Holy Spirit helped me to see these key themes early in the study process. Steps 3 and 4 of this process helped me to synthesize all of this information and begin to make it my own through the process of creating sections for the book

and writing out summary statements for each section.

As we continue with Steps 5-7 of this process, we will move from Observation and further into Interpretation. Now that we have a high-level understanding of the structure of 1 John, we will begin to study verse-by-verse within each section. That will be the focus of Lesson 6 when we continue.