

Basic Chapter Study Instructions for Historical Books

Basic Instructions to use with each Chapter

Questions or comments? Please contact Tim & Melinda Inman

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This document contains the simple steps used to complete an entire chapter study of an historical book of the Bible, such as Acts or Genesis. These are the basic steps repeated for each chapter, from laying the groundwork to the steps needed before completing interpretation. This document is designed to be used alone as the only material used for each chapter study.

The Inductive Method

Observation

What does the text say?

Overview

Establish Context by determining Historical Background

Where does it fit in the Bible timeline?

Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?

Make simple lists of people, places, and events mentioned in the text

Make simple lists of key words that are used throughout large portions of the entire book

Determine Book and Chapter Themes

Mark questions to return to later for future study

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Chapter Studies

Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?

Make more thorough lists of people, places and events

Make more thorough lists of Key Words in chapter or section

Ignore chapter divisions when the theme is carried forward

Mark Contrasts, Comparisons, Expressions of Time, Terms of Conclusion

Beginning of Interpretation: Tie this all together by examining text verse by verse

Outline or complete Structural Analysis to break down difficult text

Examine meanings of Key Words as you study verse by verse

Meditate on text to determine paragraph themes

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Interpretation

What does the text mean in correct context?

What principles do I see that tie to other sections of scripture?

Complete Cross References of those passages of scripture

Complete examination of Key Words: meaning, tense, voice

Notice and examine meaning of verbs & descriptive adjectives

Note commands and warnings

Consult commentaries after completing your own study

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Application

Based on correct interpretation of the text:

What must I do?

How can I apply this truth to my life?

How does this affect me?

How does this better knowledge of God change me?

Meditate on scripture and Memorize important, applicable passages of scripture

Chapter Study

In studying a history book such as Genesis or Acts an Overview is generally not completed, though a read-through of the entire book is, of course, very beneficial. Geographic locations, people, and words which indicate time are always significant. Any way in which the Lord deals with these people, locations, or in time are also significant. Within a chapter, teaching, instruction or words spoken by the Lord are handled in the same way as an epistle or doctrinal teaching. Repeat the steps in this document for each chapter or section. The questions raised during this step become the focal point of the next stage of your study: Interpretation

First steps:

_____ **Mark Key Words for this chapter**

Mark any of these words you see in the text with unique markings for each one:

God

Jesus

Holy Spirit

Author

Recipients

Other people

Geographic locations

Key/Significant Words which are significant for understanding this specific chapter or a specific paragraph

_____ **Make lists of all you observe about each Key Word**

In your notebook make a thorough list of everything you observe about each of these key words, along with the verse reference. This reveals content more clearly to you. Some lists can be noted by numbering right into the text, such as lists of qualities or attributes.

_____ **Mark Grammatical Phrases**

Note these with marks in the text, or lists in your notebook. Note the sections being contrasted, compared, concluded, or summarized with an arrow or notation connecting these texts to the marked term.

- Mark **words of contrast** (but, however, nevertheless, or, neither, nor, not only, etc.) with a lightning bolt mark above the word (or any mark you choose). What things does the author say are the different? What is being contrasted? Write in the margin of your working copy what is being contrasted.
- Mark **words of comparison** (like, likewise, also, in addition, as, in the same way, furthermore, etc.) with an = sign (or any mark you choose). What things are similar? What is the same? Mark in the margin of your working copy what is being compared.

- Draw a little clock face (or another mark you choose) above words showing **expressions of time** (then, when, after, until, at that time, the next day, etc.). **These are especially important to note within historical books.** Why are these words or phrases important?
- Mark with an “x” words that show **conclusions or an end result** (therefore, so that, for this reason, in order that, because, since, consequently, etc.) and draw arrows to the ideas being concluded. Ask yourself, “What is the “therefore” there for?” What is the author trying to show or prove?
- Mark **commands** in a way which draws the eye, such as highlighting, in order to remember to ponder on these for application to your own life.
- As you moved through the chapter, verse by verse, what was revealed about the passage? **Write down anything you discover that you hadn’t seen in the text before.**

_____ **Outline the text if you find outlining helps you understand.** Grammatical markings may be more easily understood if you outline the chapter or complete a discourse or structural analysis at this point. This is especially helpful for any teaching or instruction within the history book. Complete this step if it helps you.

Once this basic chapter study work is done go ahead and begin the next steps .

Next Steps to complete:

Work through the chapter **verse by verse** studying the text carefully and thoroughly. **Question the text:** ask **who, what, when, where, why,** and **how** of each passage in order to help you comprehend content. Examine key words and time indicators, determine the meaning of each verse and paragraph, look up cross references, ponder and meditate on the passages as you study, then assign paragraph themes as you move through the entire chapter verse by verse.

_____ **Work through these steps of Interpretation for each chapter:**

Word Studies: The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, some Aramaic. The New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek. Use an exhaustive concordance for a basic definition, or a lexicon or bible dictionary for expanded definitions. In sections of scripture with extensive quotations from other parts of scripture, in order to understand the quote in context, each passage should be examined carefully in its original context, so you will do more cross reference study when numerous passages are quoted.

Look up significant words in the Concordance or Lexicon and complete Cross references as necessary as you go through the chapter verse by verse.

How to use a Concordance:

Look up the word in the front section of the concordance

Look for the reference where that specific word was used

Look for the number on the right, each number corresponds to a Greek/Hebrew word

Turn to the appropriate dictionary in the back of the concordance (Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament)

Look up the number for the definition

The words in *italic* are the definition. Write this definition down by your essential word

How to Find a Cross References: Using the concordance, compare references in the Bible which use any word(s), or quoted passages of scripture, that you determined needed further study.

To find these look in the concordance at the list of all the references given for the same word. Find the same Greek or Hebrew reference number that is given for the Greek or Hebrew word you are examining.

Choose to examine several verses or all the verses that use the same number.

Look up these other verses that use the same Greek or Hebrew word.

When the same word is studied in more than one account it is understood more fully. When a quoted passage is studied in context, it brings a fuller meaning to the text you are studying.

- ❖ When looking for cross references to Old Testament passages given in New Testament passages, consult the margins of your own bible. This will save time if you do not want to use the above detailed method for finding the source of the quoted passages.
- ❖ Double-checking cross references for historical events is important in order to learn the “whole story”. You will always find more details about the event in other places it is discussed in the Bible. Always check cross references of key words which identify significant events.

_____ **Identify themes within a chapter**

As you work through verse by verse ponder on the meaning you have found from questioning the text, and completing the word studies and the cross reference examination. As you complete your meditations on each section or paragraph of the chapter you should be able to identify the theme of each paragraph or section.

_____ **Write the theme of each paragraph or section in the margin of your Bible or your working copy of the text.**

If you like to outline note these themes in your notebook or on your computer as your paragraph headings. You can also do a word-for-word outline of the chapter under each paragraph title if you like. Experiment with outlines to help you see what helps you understand content best.

Don't consult a commentary until you are at this point in your study. Use the commentary to verify your own findings and to double-check what you have discovered. If you consult commentaries before beginning they will influence your own study.

Application: As the Holy Spirit convicts, apply what you've learned to your life. Let God's Word change you.

Memorization of key verses: As you study through each chapter, choose two or three key verses and work on memorizing them each week.

Meditate on the truths you have learned in God's Word as you go throughout the day. Let God's Word become a part of your daily life by constantly meditating on it.

Application ideas from Rick Warren, *Dynamic Bible Study Methods* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1981): Application is where we apply what we learned to our own lives. If we only study God's word without applying it, then we will be no better off than the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day. Write out your application so that you do not forget it. Do not make general statement, but be as specific as possible. The application must be something that you need to do. It may be helpful to establish a timeline, set a deadline, and/or ask a trusted friend or family member to hold you accountable.

Is there any . . .

1. **Sin to confess?** Do I need to ask anyone for forgiveness, including God, and make any restitution?
2. **Promise to claim?** Is the promise universal? Do I meet the conditions to claim the promise for myself?
3. **Attitude to change?** What negative attitudes do I need to change?
4. **Command to obey?** Am I willing to obey no matter what?
5. **Example to follow?** Is the example a positive one that I need to follow or a negative one to avoid?
6. **Prayer to pray?** Is there anything I need to pray back to God?
7. **Error to avoid?** Is there any problem that I need to be aware of?
8. **Truth to believe?** Do I need to change my thinking in any areas, such as in biblical doctrine?
9. **Something to praise God for?** Do I lack thankfulness? What can I thank God for?