

*The Epistle
of
1st John*

*An Inductive Book Study
For The Serious Bible Student
RSV*



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Institute For In-depth Bible Study
Whole Book Study Method

1. Read Book Through 10 Times
Continue to read daily
2. Introduction
Author, Readers, Content, Time, Location, etc.
3. Book overall structure Titles
Chapter titles
Paragraph titles
Main themes - Diagram
4. Paragraph 'Thought Blocks'
Flip bks - Six Serving Men
Observational questions
Structural Diagram
Observational Charts & questions
5. Observational Summaries - Precise
6. Evaluation- Interpretation
Assessment & Answer Questions
7. Application
Local & Universal
8. Biblical Theology Development - Topical
9. Correlation
10. Epistolary Methodology

Core Operational Study Foundations

God's Eternal Purpose

Our Interpretive Lens

Assessment of the Purposed Methodolgy

Introduction:

*The washing of water by the Word
(Eph 5:26)*

We are embarking upon a glorious adventure. There can be nothing more awesome and tremendous for a human soul than to come into a conscious experience with the Living God. And the Lord has opened the door for us to turn that initial experience into a wondrous life of constant personal fellowship with Him in His Rest.

God has provided His written word and given us His Holy Spirit to accomplish this awesome work of grace. As the Holy Spirit teaches us, we will share God's thoughts, come to know His mind, see as He sees, and hear as He hears. Our minds will learn by the Holy Spirit what God has thought and what He thinks. We will have our being washed as it were by the water of the Word. God's own thoughts will remake our minds, renew them and structure them according to His design. We will follow with heart and mind how God presents His entire Truth to us in His word 'building concept upon concept' fully dependent upon the Holy Spirit and His personal revelation.

Although this takes discipline, prayer and study we will with great joy dig deep into the unsearchable riches of Christ and discover with the greatest confidence the 'eternal purpose' of complete reconciliation God has accomplished for us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Bible study course is undertaken in several steps. We need to do each one thoroughly and competently before we proceed to the next step. The wonderful benefit of studying one book at a time in-depth is that not only do we discover God's great and personal truths but we build a tremendous spiritual foundation and can stand upon it with confidence.

Step 1: Becoming immersed in the Epistle

The Epistle of 1st John:

Our 1 John study will proceed systematically through the study steps one at a time. Over the years I have used Robert Traina's "Methodical Bible Study" that I have enhanced by carefully incorporating elements from R.A. Torrey's "How To Study The Bible For Greatest Profit", Irving Jensen's "Independent Bible Study" and O. Wald's "The Joy of Discovery". I have further modified it in my own personal practical application to study method and have formulated it into several Bible study steps for an in-depth approach to individual Bible book study. It is a focused and disciplined study that requires personal motivation but I know that you will be tremendously blessed by what you learn from the Bible, our wonderful Teacher - the Holy Spirit, and from yourself.

Our in-depth study method certainly does not exclude other devotional reading and studying but it makes the primary study of one Epistle at a time central. From this foundation we build our understanding and personal theology into a confident and strong spiritual house: concept by concept.

Our first task is to gain an overview. The first step in this is accomplished by developing a living understanding of the content, words, phrases, thought patterns and all the elements contained in the Epistle. We do this by pouring our life into it: by reading the Epistle 10 times through. (without stopping to study, ask questions, or refer to other books, etc.) We read it completely through and then read it again and again until we have done it 10 times. Again, the purpose is to have our mind become very comfortable with the content and familiar with each chapter. We want to get to know what is said in a given section and then what to expect in the next. With this general light reading we get to know the Epistle as you would a map and all its locations.

So, your initial arduous assignment is to read the Epistle of 1st John thru 10 times without stopping. Do this at one sitting, but if you fail, try this again another day until you have accomplished all 10 readings without stopping. (Nobody said it would be easy in our shallow age of short attention spans)

Step 2: Introducing ourselves to the author and readers of the Epistle

Introduction to the Epistle

The Second Step in Effective Bible Book Study

We find ourselves surrounded today by many useful and excellent helps to Bible study. These, for most of us, are readily available and easily put to instant use when we approach the study of the Scriptures. These tools have a proper place and time to be utilized in our study and when used correctly as a complement and as sounding boards they can prove to be very beneficial. Now is not the time.

One of the general goals throughout our study is to develop our own confidence in our ability to become a good and reliable interpreter of the Word of God and to know personally what the Holy Spirit has said. Using outside sources to broaden what we have learned, verify questionable aspects and clarify material in areas that we lack, implemented after we have done all our own work, allows them to be the most valuable.

The second step in our study is to write our own introduction to the book. Without any outside aids we will observe and record all the relevant material we need for our introduction. It is guaranteed, we will not only be challenged but that we will also be quite surprised at all the information the Biblical text has to give us in this regards. When we are done with our own introduction we then can compare with an outside source.

Why an Introduction?

The Bible is the most exciting of all books. It is the only book that opens up to us an opportunity to read and study the actual thoughts of God. Each of the Books of the Bible has been a book of a historical time, of people, places, events, and teachings long ago. Not one of these things in this list occurred in our time or are personally known by us but by the book itself and the teacher of the book, the Holy Spirit. We need to discover what the writer of the book had to say and what he meant by his words and thoughts. Here is where we start to dig!

By using only the written Bible text and no outside helps we will seek to discover the following items and write down all the information we can pertaining to each. Use the questions suggested and feel free to create your own.

Who was the writer?

The name of the writer is not as important as any and all items from the book that can help us get to know the person of the writer. What is the character of the writer? What are the feelings and concerns of the writer? Try and imagine the writer's state of mind and circumstances. What was the writer experiencing at the time of writing the book? What type of person was the writer and what made up his character? Was the writer an educated person? Was the writer a deep thinker or a simple person?

Method: Surface read and as you do write down what you find pertaining to the author. Surface read through the book from beginning to end several times grabbing and noting the information you find.

What is the historical context of the book?

When was the book written? Where was the book written? Are there any indications within the book of an historical nature? Are there any statements or thoughts presented that indicate a time in history, a place in history or a circumstance in history? If there is an historical element does it have importance for the author?

What was the writer's reason or purpose in writing the book?

Does the author state clearly the reason for writing the book? How is the purpose for writing the book presented? Brought out? Why did the author write the book? Is there an occasion for the writing of the book? What was in the mind of the author when the book was written?

Who were the intended readers of the book?

Does the book tell us anything about the readers of the book? What were their circumstances? Does the book tell us anything about the historical context of the readers? What were they like in character, person or other areas? Did the readers know the author? If so, how or by what means? Try to imagine being with the readers at the time when they first received the book. What would that be like? By the things the author says and the direction or advice that the author gives can you draw any conclusions as to the problems, characteristics or situation of the readers?

What are the main characteristics of the book?

What is the epistle about? What is its main theme? What is the atmosphere of the book?
What would be a good summary statement of the content?

What are the central topics of the epistle? What are the main truths expressed?

Make note of the most important words of the book. Note the things that are compared. Note the things that are contrasted. Note the things that are repeated. Are there reasons why these logical relationships exist in the book? Does the author's thought build and progress? Does the author's thought present a climax? If a progress or climax what is it built upon and how does the author build it?

How is the epistle structured?

Are there content and subject divisions in the epistle, if so where do they occur? Give a single phrase title to any divisions you make note of. If there are any warning sections describe what they are about and give them a title.

What do I feel the Holy Spirit is emphasizing to me at this point in my study of the book?

List them out and note if I feel that the Holy Spirit is telling me anything in specific.

At this point how do I see this book fitting in with the other books of the New Testament?

Does there seem to be a unique reason why the Holy Spirit has it in the Bible? If so, what is it as far as you can tell right now?

Are there any presuppositions that I am bringing to the study of this book?

List out any ideas or thoughts that you may have regarding the content of this book that may dictate how you might interpret the content. Do you have any doctrines or theological structure that will keep you from an open mind as you study the book? If the Holy Spirit showed you a new truth regarding your Christian life and how you live it is there any reason why you will not follow Him in that regard? Are there personal cautions that you use when reading the book that forces you to a given conclusion?