

How to Study Bible Books Chapter by Chapter

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Three basic steps in the thorough study of any book in the Bible are:

1. Surveying the book as a whole and writing a "preview" of it.
2. Analyzing the book more carefully, chapter by chapter.
3. Writing a concluding summary of the book and its meaning to you.

How to prepare a book preview

1. Read the book all the way through at least once, and preferably two or three times.
2. List what seem to you to be the major themes and highlights of the book. Write down any key words that are emphasized or frequently repeated.
3. Write a brief, tentative outline of the book, and choose a tentative title for it.
4. Summarize the book's historical background. Use information that you find in such reference books as Bible dictionaries and handbooks, and study Bibles. Who wrote the book? To whom was it written? When and where was it written? What was the author's apparent purpose for writing it? What do you know about the principal personalities mentioned in the book? What do you know about the cities and other geographical places mentioned?
5. Read the book once more.

How to analyze each chapter

1. Read through the chapter three or more times, perhaps in different Bible versions.
2. Briefly describe the content of the chapter. You could do this by making an outline, or writing a brief paraphrase of the chapter.
3. Meditate on each verse. (This is the true heart of your study.) Go slowly through the chapter verse by verse, thinking carefully about what you read. For each verse, write down your thoughts and observations, especially in these areas:
 - what the verse actually says;
 - questions that come to your mind;
 - possible answers for the questions you have;
 - cross-references—verses in other parts of Scripture that relate in some way to the verse you're thinking about;
 - other notes and comments, such as definitions illustrations, implications;
 - possible ways you can apply the truth of the verse to your own life.
4. List the theme of the chapter as a whole—the central issue or issues being discussed. Ask yourself, What is the author talking about? What is the basic subject of this chapter? Give the chapter a title.
5. Write down the major conclusions you have about the chapter, and how the teaching in it should affect you. List a specific, practical way you can apply the chapter's truth to your life.

How to prepare a book summary

1. Review what you wrote for your book preview.
2. Reread the book one to book, three times.
3. Look back over themes and chapter titles you listed in your analysis of each chapter. This should help you determine the general flow of the book.
4. Make an outline of the book.
5. Write a statement about the book's central teaching or eminent truths.
6. Look back over the conclusions you wrote for each chapter, and list some overall conclusions for the book as a whole and how the book's central teaching should affect you.

7. List a specific, practical way you want to apply the book's teaching to your life.

From *The Navigator Bible Studies Handbook* ([NavPress](#), 1979), and other sources.

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