

TRINITY BIBLE INSTITUTE
SCHOOL OF SUCCESS
HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE: PART II
THE NEW TESTAMENT

STUDENT NAME _____ DATE _____

- A. Introduction: The Bible is made up of sixty six individual books, yet it has one theme. The overall theme of the Bible is God's desire for a family and the great lengths to which He went to obtain one through Jesus Christ.
1. Because all sixty six books in the Bible are connected by that one theme, if you are going to seriously study the Bible, you must read the whole Bible through several times to become familiar with it and to gain an overview of it.
 2. Therefore, the number one key to studying the Bible is reading the Bible.
 - a. If you are going to effectively study the Bible, you must develop and follow a systematic reading program for yourself.
 1. Begin with the New Testament. Save the Old Testament for later after you have become familiar with the New Testament.
 2. Beginning with Matthew, read the New Testament through as quickly as possible several times. Save Revelation for later.
 - b. Your number one goal in reading is to become familiar with the Bible. Understanding comes with familiarity.
 3. How you read the Bible is as important as what you read.
 - a. Many approach the Bible with the idea -- what does it mean to me? That is wrong.
 1. It doesn't matter what it means to you or to me. What matters is -- what does it say? What would it mean if I did not exist?
 2. The Bible does not have "many different interpretations". There is one meaning, and our goal should be to determine what the Holy Spirit meant when the words were written. II Pet 1:20
 - b. We must learn to read in context. By context, we mean that everything in the Bible was written by someone to someone about something.
 1. In order to accurately interpret a verse, you must determine those three things.
 2. You must learn to think in terms of how every verse is connected to all the rest of the verses on that page as well as to the rest of the Bible. John 8:32
- B. Once you begin to systematically read the New Testament, the next key to effectively studying the Bible is to learn the structure of the Bible.
1. The Bible has two major divisions -- The Old Testament and the New Testament.
 - a. The Old Testament is primarily the story of God's dealings with Israel (the Jews), the people through whom Christ came.
 - b. The New Testament records the life of Jesus from His birth to His ascension to heaven, as well as the work of His disciple after He went back to heaven and sent them out to preach the gospel.
 2. Since we are working on reading the New Testament, we want to first deal with the structure of the New Testament.
 - a. The New Testament contains twenty seven books written by nine authors.
 - b. When we say the New Testament has nine authors, remember, the Holy Spirit gave them the words they wrote. The Bible is a book from God. II Tim 3:16

3. In the New Testament there are two kinds of books: historical books and epistles (letters).
 - a. The historical books include the four gospels -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John -- and the Book of Acts.
 1. The gospels contain historical information about Jesus from His birth to His ascension.
 2. The Book of Acts contains historical information about the early church as the disciples of Christ went out to preach the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.
 3. Together, these books cover a period of time less than one hundred years.
 - b. The twenty two epistles are letters written by a number of people -- Paul, James, Peter, John, Jude.
 1. The epistles were written to specific churches established as the disciples preached the gospel, as well as to specific individuals who lived at that time.
 2. The epistles deal mainly with Christian doctrine (what Christians believe) and behavior (how Christians act).

- C. The four gospels give an historical account of Jesus from His birth to His ascension to heaven. The gospels are biographical, but they are different than standard biographies.
 1. The gospels contain few details of Jesus' early life. However, great attention is paid to the last week of His life.
 - a. Not all the gospels cover the same events. Some events are repeated in all four gospels. The order of the events sometimes varies from gospel to gospel.
 - b. When the gospels are "harmonized" (put together with all the events recorded in order, nothing repeated, and nothing left out), only about fifty days of Jesus' three year ministry are covered.
 - c. The purpose of the gospels is not to present a biography as such, but to present the person and the work of Jesus -- who He is and what He did.
 2. A commonly asked question about the gospels is: Why are there four of them telling basically the same story and repeating many of the same events?
 - a. Although they complement each other, each gospel has a different and distinct perspective.
 - b. Each gospel emphasizes a different aspect of Jesus' person and work, and each gospel was written for a different audience.
 3. The gospel of Matthew was written by Matthew (also known as Levi), a Jew, to a Jewish audience.
 - a. It was written to convince Jews that Jesus was and is the promised Messiah (Savior) of the Old Testament. Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah (the Christ) in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
 - b. He begins with a genealogy which traces Jesus back to Abraham (the father of the Jews) and which shows Jesus to be a direct descendent of King David, giving Him a legal claim to the throne of Israel.
 - c. There are more quotes from the Old Testament in Matthew than in any other gospel (almost 130), and the phrase "that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled" is used nine times, but not once in the other gospels.
 4. The gospel of Mark was written by Mark in Rome primarily for a Gentile (non-Jewish) Roman Christian audience.
 - a. Mark doesn't quote much from the Old Testament. There is no genealogy of Christ or reference to Jewish law and customs or fulfilled prophecy like we see in Matthew.
 - b. Mark presents Jesus as the servant who came to serve and to give His life as a ransom. Almost forty percent of the gospel is devoted to the last eight days of Jesus' life, emphasizing His death and resurrection.
 - c. It is the shortest and simplest gospel, and it emphasizes action rather than detailed teaching.

- d. The word suddenly or straightway appears more in this gospel than in the rest of the New Testament books combined.
5. The gospel of Luke was written by Luke, a Greek (Hellenistic) Gentile. He wrote the gospel primarily for an audience with a Greek mindset. The Roman empire was heavily influenced by Greek culture.
 - a. Luke presents Jesus as the perfect Son of Man, emphasizing His humanity and compassion. He presents Jesus not just as the Jewish Messiah, but as the Savior of the whole world.
 - b. Luke's genealogy traces Jesus back to Adam showing the universal nature of His mission.
 - c. Where the first man Adam failed, Jesus, the Last Adam, the perfect Man, triumphed.
 - d. Luke wrote about the faith of women and children, Gentiles, and outcasts from Jewish society to show the universality of Jesus. He is the Savior of all -- young, old, rich, poor, Jew, Gentile.
 6. John's gospel was written to a universal audience (Jew and Gentile) to convince them that Jesus was and is the Son of God.
 - a. John's gospel has a different tone than the other three gospels which are known as the Synoptic (seen together) gospels.
 - b. John focuses on the mystery of the person of Christ (His deity, His incarnation), His relationship with the Father, and the importance of faith in Christ.
 - c. John emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God and as God Himself. Jesus calls Himself "I Am" a number of times in this gospel.
- D. The Book of Acts is the historical account of the disciples who responded to the Great Commission and began to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ after He returned to heaven.
1. It begins with the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost and highlights the growth of the Church.
 - a. It shows the development of the Church from being mainly a Jewish body to becoming mainly a Gentile body.
 - b. Acts emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit as He worked with the disciples as they preached the gospel.
 2. Acts is the historical link between the gospels and the epistles. The epistles are letters written to churches established during much the time frame covered by the Book of Acts.
- E. The writers of the epistles wrote these letters to instruct and encourage Christians of that day.
1. The epistles are specifically written to Christians. That is why we emphasize reading them so much.
 2. There are two groups of epistles -- the Pauline epistles and the general epistles.
 3. The Pauline epistles were written by the apostle Paul to specific churches and individual people.
 - a. His epistles are named for the church or person to whom the letter was written.
 - b. His epistles include: Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
 4. The general epistles were written by various authors and are named for the authors -- James, I and II Peter, I, II, III John, Jude.
 - a. Most of these epistles were written to the Church in general or to groups of churches. James 1:1-- To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.
 - b. There is some dispute over who wrote Hebrews, so it is named for the people to whom it was written, Hebrew Christians.
 - c. Revelation was written by John the Apostle. But the name comes from a Greek word from which we get the word Apocalypse. It refers to an unveiling of God's secret purposes. The epistle specifically deals with the unveiling of God's purposes in the Second Coming of Christ.

- F. Now, let's deal with combining regular systematic reading of the New Testament with learning the structure of the New Testament.
1. As you read the Bible, it can be very helpful to use a good Bible survey book along with your reading.
 - a. A Bible survey book does exactly what the name says. It surveys the Bible, showing how the individual parts fit together.
 1. Surveys contain background information -- who wrote what and when and to whom they wrote, the historical setting, the geographical setting, etc.
 2. Most contain maps, charts, timelines, etc. which will further help you understand the structure of the Bible as you read.
 - b. Here are some good survey books. All can be ordered at Christian bookstores or through Christian Book Distributors.
 1. WHAT THE BIBLE IS ALL ABOUT by Henrietta C. Mears.
 2. NELSON'S COMPLETE BOOK OF BIBLE MAPS AND CHARTS by Thomas Nelson Publishers.
 3. 30 DAYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE by Max Anders.
 2. How do you utilize these survey books?
 - a. Example: Read the survey book chapter on Romans. Then read the epistle to the Romans through. As you read, look for things pointed out in the survey chapter.
 - b. When you finish Romans, reread the survey chapter and see if you saw in Romans what the survey book said was there.
 - c. Remember, the survey book, helpful as it is, is not the Bible.
 3. The more you read through the New Testament, the more familiar you will become with it. Understanding comes out of familiarity.
 - a. Continue your daily reading pattern of twenty to thirty minutes a day.
 - b. But, as time permits, perhaps on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, try to read an entire book or epistle through in one setting.
 - c. Try reading the same book or epistle through several times before you move on to something else.
 - d. All of these practices will help you become familiar with the New Testament.
 4. As you read, you will begin to see patterns and themes -- ideas which occur over and over again. And, seeing the context of individual verses will become easier.
- G. Conclusion: Once again, we have not said all there is to say. But, we've gained more understanding about how to approach the Bible.
1. The Bible must be approached systematically. That is why you must read it through. That is why survey books are helpful study tools.
 2. You can probably see why Bible study doesn't work for a lot of people. They attempt to study individual verses with little success. But, the Bible becomes clearer to us as we focus first on the whole and then later on the individual parts.