

HOW TO DO A BOOK STUDY

1. Select the book to study.

2. Master the general contents of the book.

- a. Read the book through without stopping a dozen times in a single sitting.

3. Prepare an introduction to the book.

- a. Questions:
 - (1) Author(s).
 - (2) Recipient(s).
 - (3) Place.
 - (4) Time.
 - (5) Occasion.
 - (6) Purpose.
 - (7) Circumstances of author(s).
 - (8) Circumstances of recipient(s).
 - (9) Life and character of author.
 - (10) Leading ideas.
 - (11) Central truth.
 - (12) Characteristics of the book.
- b. Go through the book slowly, several times if necessary, and answer these questions.
- c. “The introduction one prepares for himself will be worth many times more to him than any that he can procure from others. The work itself is a rare education of the faculties of perception, comparison and reasoning.”¹

4. Develop a chart of the book.

- a. Identify the book’s basic structure, including sections and subsections. Do not identify sections smaller than paragraphs (unless the book is three chapters or less).
- b. Think up titles for sections and subsections representing the structure and content.
- c. Include: (1) the title of the book; (2) major themes or key words; (3) structural relationships; and (4) a statement of the message, purpose, or theme of the book.
- d. As visual representations, charts should be clear, colorful, and convincing.

5. Take up each verse in order and study it.

- a. Get the exact meaning of the verse.
- b. Analyse the verse. Ask, “What does this verse teach?”
 - (1) Do not put anything into your analysis that is not clearly in the verse.
 - (2) Find all that is in the verse.
 - (3) State what you do find just as accurately and exactly as possible.
- c. “It is related of the younger Prof. Agassiz that a young man came to him to study ichthyology. The Professor gave him a fish to study and told him to come back when he had mastered that fish and get another lesson. In time the young man came back and told Prof. A. what he had observed about the fish. When he had finished, to his

¹ R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible*.

surprise he was given the same fish again, and told to study it further. He came back again, having observed new facts, and, as he supposed, all the facts about the fish. But again he was given the same fish to study, and so it went on, lesson after lesson, until that student had been taught what his perceptive faculties were for, and also taught to do thorough work. In the same way ought we to study the Bible. We ought to come back to the same verse of the Bible again and again, until we have gotten, as far as it is possible to us, all that is in the verse.”²

6. Classify the results obtained by the verse by verse analysis.

7. Meditate upon the results obtained. Eat, digest, and assimilate.

8. Benefits.

- a. “When one has pursued this method of study for a time, his powers of observation will have been so quickened, that he will see at a glance what, at first, he only saw upon much study and reflection. This method of study will also train the logical powers, cultivating habits of order, system, and classification in one’s intellectual processes. The power of clear, concise and strong expression will also be developed. No other book affords the opportunity for intellectual development by its study, as is to be found in the Bible. No other book, and no other subject, will so abundantly repay close and deep study.”³

Bibliography

Torrey, R. A. *How to Study the Bible: The Methods and Fundamental Conditions of the Bible Study that Yield the Largest Results*. 1903.

² R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible*.

³ R. A. Torrey, *How to Study the Bible*.