

# BIBLE STUDY METHODS

## The Chapter Summary<sup>1</sup>

The Chapter Summary method of Bible study helps you gain a general understanding of a chapter of the Bible. This is a popular method for those new to Bible study because chapters are usually fairly short, and it does not require intensive study. It can be quickly taught so a new Christian or to anyone who is interested in doing meaningful Bible study.

### 10 Easy Steps

**Step One: Chapter.** Select a chapter for study and read it through at least five times. You might want to read it in several different translations. As you are reading the chapter, begin looking for the following 10 specific things and write down your answers.

**Step Two: Caption.** Give the chapter a short, descriptive title. The shorter title the more likely you will remember it. Try to find the key word of the chapter and fit it into your title. For example, 1 Corinthians 13 could simply be titled “Love,” or Hebrews 11 might be “Heroes of the Faith.” A short, catchy title will help you remember the chapter’s content.

**Step Three: Contents.** Describe, summarize, paraphrase, outline, or make a list of the major points in a chapter. The method you choose will depend on the literary style of the chapter and on your own preference. Some people like to summarize, analytical people like to outline. Choose the method with which you feel most comfortable and one that is easy for you to do. Don’t try to interpret the chapter yet, just make observations on its content.

**Step Four: Chief People.** List the most important people in the chapter. Ask questions such as, Who are the main people in this chapter? Why are they included? What is significant about them? If the chapter contains pronouns (he, she, they, etc.), you may have to refer to the previous chapter to identify the people. Write down your reasons for choosing certain people.

**Step Five: Choice Verse.** Choose a verse that summarizes the whole chapter or one that speaks to you personally. In some chapters you may find a key verse that summarizes the writer’s argument; in other chapters there may not be a key verse. You may want to pick a verse from which you will be writing your application, a verse you believe God would have you apply to your life.

**Step Six: Key Word(s).** Write down the key word or words of the chapter. Many times the key word will be one that is used most frequently. In some cases—such as count in Romans 6—the key word may be the most important word but not the most used one. Also, remember that a chapter may have more than one key word.

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<sup>1</sup> This study is a slightly modified version from Rick Warren. (1995). The Chapter Summary. *Discipleship Journal*, 86: 18-19.

**Step Seven: Challenges.** List any difficulties you may have with the passage. Are there any statements you do not understand? Is there any problem or question you would like to study further? For instance, a certain word may catch your attention. Later you may want to do an in-depth word study on it. A question about a doctrinal matter might motivate you to do a topical study on that particular teaching.

**Step Eight: Christ Seen.** The entire Bible is a revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus used the Old Testament to reach His disciples about Himself. As you study each chapter, be alert for statements that tell you something about Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or God the Father. Ask yourself, What can I learn about the nature of Jesus from this chapter? What attributes of God in Christ are illustrated here? This step may be difficult to complete in some portions of the Bible, particularly in Old Testament narratives and in passages where symbolism is used.

**Step Nine: Central Lesson(s).** Write down the major principles, insights, and lessons you learned from this chapter. Ask yourself, Why does God want this passage in the Bible? What does He want to teach me from this chapter? What is the central thought the writer is trying to develop?

**Step Ten: Application.** Ask yourself two questions:

1. How do these truths apply to me personally?
2. What, specifically, am I going to do about them?

**Sample Study:**

1. **Chapter:** *Luke 15*
2. **Caption:** *"Lost and Found"*
3. **Contents:** *This chapter contains three parables. Vs. 3-7 The lost sheep; vs. 8-10 The lost coin; vs. 11-32 The lost son.*
4. **Chief People:** *The shepherd of the lost sheep, the woman with the lost coin, and the father of the lost son.*
5. **Choice Verse:** *v. 7 "I tell you that in the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."*
6. **Crucial Word(s):** *Lost (vs. 4,6,9,24,32). Found (vs. 5,6,9,24,32)*
7. **Challenges:** *What does this verse mean – "ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent"?*
8. **Christ Seen:** *1<sup>st</sup> Parable – Jesus the Good Shepherd searching for the lost sheep. 2<sup>nd</sup> Parable – the Holy Spirit, our rightful Owner, finding and restoring. 3<sup>rd</sup> Parable – God the Father waiting to welcome us home.*
9. **Central Lesson(s):** *Insights: The son went away saying, "Give me" (vs. 12). He returned saying, "Make me" (vs. 19). God cares for sinners and waits for them to return home.*

*Characteristics of the immature brother: anger (vs.26); childish (v.28); jealousy (v.29-30); wrong perspective (v.29-30), grumbling (v.29-30)*

**10. Application:** *In each of the three parables a concrete effort was made to recover what was lost. Many of my friends are lost without Christ. I need to develop specific witnessing plans for reaching them with the good news. I will start by praying for people in my life who are lost and building our relationship so that I can share Christ with them.*