

How to do a Chapter Summary Bible Study

Ask three questions:

1. What does it say?
2. What does that mean (specifically to me)?
3. What am I going to do about that?

Known as the Inductive Method, or Chapter Summary Method, it is a way to focus on specifics of what God wants to share with you personally, in terms of direction, things that He wants to perfect in you, and the like.

As you take the time to read the Scriptures, God will begin to reveal Himself to you through the words you read, and begin to speak to your heart and change your character. Reading the Bible is like eating a healthy, balanced meal every day. The following is an example of a Chapter Summary that I did several years ago:

First, read Romans 2: <http://nasb.scripturetext.com/romans/2.htm>

1. **What does it say?** This takes the form of a title with a key verse that supports it and a division of the chapter into paragraphs as follows:

Title: The choices we make - Key verses 28 and 29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Verses 1-10: The choice defined

Verses 11-16: Consequence of choice

Verses 17-29: Make right choices

2. **What does it mean to me?** This is more detail on what you saw in the chapter, with an emphasis on a main idea that God spoke to you through His word as you read it this time. (The neat thing here is that this never gets stale – every time I re-read Scripture, the Lord says something else to build on what He has shown before! It's amazing!) Here's my example:

This chapter very clearly lays out the ultimate choice faced by every person who lives. What kind of person will you be? This is determined by the choices we make. The first choice that faces us is: What do you do with Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is the central character of human history. How you identify him is your choice, but as with all choices, there are consequences to each. As one has said, He is either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord of all. If He is a liar, then there are a lot of very intelligent people that have been misled for a very long time. If he is a lunatic, same thing. In either case, you would be a fool to follow Him if either of these were true. But what if He is who He claims to be? The Bread of Life, the Son of Man, God come to be like us so we could be like Him? If you choose this last one, you have to make another choice - will you let Him be YOUR Lord? If so, there are great rewards. If not, there are great negative consequences. The choice is yours.

Once that decision is made, the question becomes: What kind of life will I lead? Verses 1-10 define what the actions of those choices are. (vv.8-10). Paul is addressing a couple of different categories here. First, he is addressing the worldly doers of deeds. Second, he is addressing what I would call hypocrites, spiritual teachers of God apparently, who say what is right, and then do the very things that they know are wrong. Without getting into detail on the specific stuff, suffice it to say we all fit into one of those very broad categories, perhaps even both. In other words, Paul's comments are addressed to us. Remember, this letter was written to the CHURCH, the believers in Rome.

Verses 11-16 lay out in some measure (as do the previous and the following verses) the consequences of both choices (v.16). Revelation 20:12:

12 And I saw the dead, the small and the great, stand before God. And books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

What this verse says is something that has become unpopular today, even among those who call themselves Christians. Scripture, which we Baptists (Yes, I attend a Baptist gathering these days) recognize as the very Word of God, clearly indicates in a number of places that God will judge the world. In fact, it says “judgement begins with the house of God.” That passage in Revelation I just quoted was dealing with the judgement after that. No one can avoid it! For some, that causes great fear or perhaps ridicule. However, I do not personally believe that when God tells us things like this that it is to threaten us, but rather so that we can change our paths and choices so we can be with Him for eternity.

The last paragraph is a call to right action. Verse 17, 18, etc. It is a call to examine the choices we make, and to change our direction - from the inside. Verses 28 and 29. As always, Paul is pointing out that the nature of our motivations is not physical, but spiritual in nature. Now you might be sitting here depressed about wrong choices you have been making. The great news, or your Gospel here, is that God is calling out to you so that you can enter into his benefit for you and not his judgement. Revelation 3:20:

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me.

This same Jesus that Paul met on the road to Damascus, when Paul was an enemy dedicated to the destruction of God’s people, that saved Paul from those wrong choices he was making, calls out to us right now! In context, that verse, one I might add that was instrumental in my own salvation, was actually written to the Church of Laodicea. It was a church much like our society today, not really haters of God, but certainly not on fire for Jesus Christ. He calls out, knocking at our heart’s door with this promise:

Revelation 3:21 - To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and have sat down with My Father in His throne.

Overcome what you ask? The natural habits and tendencies of our own heart to stray. The lukewarmness of our day to stand for Jesus and His love to all people, regardless of consequence.

3. **What am I going to do about it?** This part is a short statement of how you will apply what God has shown you in your life. This might be a thought that runs through the whole chapter, or it might be a single thing that stood out to you. Be practical! Nebulous applications will have nebulous results. Here is my example:

Let us be those who make right choices and follow Jesus to love everyone regardless of race, creed, colour, orientation, gender, or whatever artificial division one could choose to categorize the human race. Jesus died for everyone. How can we do less and call ourselves His followers?

(Unless otherwise stated, all scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Bible, 1995.)