

Ephesians 3:1 - 13

Study Instructions

Observation & Interpretation:

What does it mean?

Application: Now what do I do about it?

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This document contains the simple steps used to complete an entire paragraph/section study. These are the basic steps repeated for each paragraph/section study, from laying the groundwork to the steps needed before completing interpretation. Application ideas are included. If any suggested study idea is not helpful, skip it and roll on to the next idea on the list.

The Inductive Method

Observation

What does the text say?

Overview

Establish Context by determining Historical Background

Where does it fit in the Bible timeline?

Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How?

Make simple lists of people, places, and events mentioned in the text

Make simple lists of key words that are used throughout large portions of the entire book

Determine Book and Chapter Themes

Mark questions to return to later for future study

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Chapter Studies

Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How?

Make more thorough lists of people, places and events

Make more thorough lists of Key Words in chapter or section

Ignore chapter divisions when the theme is carried forward

Mark Contrasts, Comparisons, Expressions of Time, Terms of Conclusion

Beginning of Interpretation: Tie this all together by examining text verse by verse

Outline or complete Structural Analysis to break down difficult text

Examine meanings of Key Words as you study verse by verse

Meditate on text to determine paragraph themes

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Interpretation

What does the text mean in correct context?

What principles do I see that tie to other sections of scripture?

Complete Cross References of those passages of scripture

Complete examination of Key Words: meaning, tense, voice

Notice and examine meaning of verbs & descriptive adjectives

Note commands and warnings

Consult commentaries after completing your own study

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Application

Based on correct interpretation of the text:

What must I do?

How can I apply this truth to my life?

How does this affect me?

How does this better knowledge of God change me?

Meditate on scripture and Memorize important, applicable passages of scripture

Step Two – Chapter or Section Study

We are studying through Ephesians by Section/Paragraph in order to find and understand the “Big Idea” and apply it to our lives. Thorough observation leads to interpretation in this step of our study. This is when you ask the question, “**What does it mean?**” After understanding the meaning the next question is, “**What do I do about it?**”

The importance of careful, thorough Observation continues:

“The more time you spend in **observation**, the less time you will need to spend in interpretation, and the more accurate will be your results. The less time you spend in observation, the more time you will need to spend in interpretation, and the less accurate will be your results.”¹

Definitions:

- **Chapter:** the divisions in your bible added to aid in finding text locations – these divisions were not in the original manuscripts
- **Section:** a group of verses within the book which all deal with the same “big idea” or theme. Sometimes a section is referred to as the “paragraph” scholastically.
- **Paragraph:** the smaller divisions of sentences within each section which deal with a small portion of the “big idea” of that particular section.

First steps to repeat for Ephesians 3: 1 - 13—

Read and study prayerfully each day. “Prayer is really a key to effective Bible study. **Learn to pray before, during, and after** your reading of the Scriptures. Prayer is especially crucial when you come to a place in your study where you are stuck and confused.”²

Mark Key Words

As you read through the book and completed the Overview you will have noted that there are key, significant words specific to each chapter or section. A key word or phrase is one that is crucial to what the author is communicating and unlocks the meaning of the text. In this material, **key word suggestions for Ephesians 3: 1 - 13 are given below.**

Mark any of these words you see in the text with unique markings for each one:

Always observe and/or mark these words:

God
Jesus
Holy Spirit

¹ Howard G. & William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 43.

² Howard G. & William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 100.

Author (filling in the list done during the Overview with more detail)
Recipients (filling in the Overview list with more detail)
Other people (filling in the Overview list with more detail)³
Key/Significant Words observed and marked during Overview (notice these since they're already marked due to their significance in the entire book)

REMEMBER: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit are key words in every section

Other Key Word suggestions for Ephesians 3: 1 – 13, Return and make a list of all you've learned in Chapters 1 & 2 about the mystery/the true Israel/ the church and all Christ did to bring it about. Notice again everything pertaining to "Gentiles" and "Israel" and the use of the word "church" (look again at 1:22 and the description of the church in 2:11-22, look ahead to 5:22-33). Then, in this section notice all words marked during the Overview; "mystery" and all terms describing it and defining it; "administration" (same Greek word as "put into effect" in 1:10); "grace"; observe all that is "made known/revealed/made plain" in contrast to what was "not made known/kept hidden"

If any suggested study idea is not useful to you, skip it and roll on to the next idea.

_____ Make a list of all you observe about each Key Word

In your notebook make a **thorough list** of everything you observe about each of the key words for each section, along with the verse reference. **Question the text** in order to slow you down to observe the important facts surrounding each key word or phrase. Ask: **who, what, when, where, why** and **how**. This reveals content more clearly to you. Some lists can be noted by numbering right into the text, such as lists of qualities or attributes.

_____ Greek Grammar Help

Mark these grammatically significant words which occur in the original Greek manuscript if you find this helps you with the step of Interpretation:

For Ephesians 3: 1 – 13,

Words that are continual or habitual in the Greek (~): v.4 - "reading," "will be able," v.6 - "are," v. 12 - "with freedom," v. 13 - "ask," "not to be discouraged," "are"

Actions completed in the past which has an ongoing or continual result (→): v. 9 - "kept hidden"

³ In history books such as Genesis and Acts every person, every geographic location, and every term that shows time is a key word. The actions of the Godhead regarding these people and locations and any words attributed to the Lord are significant as well. Segments of historical books which contain teaching or instruction are handled like epistles which contain doctrinal teaching. Significant words, such as are described in the above list, are marked within the teaching section, and all of the steps of investigation described in this handout are then used for that section.

_____ **Mark Grammatical Phrases**

Note these with marks in the text, or make lists in your notebook. This helps you see how the main ideas of the section tie together, are contrasted, or are connected to the previous section.

- Mark **words of contrast** (but, however, nevertheless, or, neither, nor, not only, etc.) with a lightning bolt mark above the word (or any mark you choose). What things does the author say are the different? What is being contrasted? Write in the margin of your working copy what is being contrasted.
- Mark **words of comparison** (like, likewise, also, in addition, as, in the same way, furthermore, etc.) with an = sign (or any mark you choose). What things are similar? What is the same? Mark in the margin of your working copy what is being compared.
- Draw a little clock face (or another mark you choose) above words showing **expressions of time** (then, when, after, until, at that time, etc.). Why are these words or phrases important?
- Mark with an “x” words that show **conclusions or an end result** (therefore, so that, for this reason, in order that, because, since, consequently, etc.) and draw arrows to the ideas being concluded. Ask yourself, “What is the “therefore” there for?” What is the author trying to show or prove?
- Mark **commands** in a way which draws the eye, such as highlighting, in order to remember to ponder on these for application to your own life.
- As you moved through the chapter, verse by verse, what was revealed about the passage? **Write down anything you discover that you hadn’t seen in the text before.**

_____ **Outline the text if you find this helps you understand.** Grammatical markings

may be more easily understood and completed if you outline or break down the text structurally. Complete this step if it helps you. Here is Acts 1:8 (NIV) broken down structurally.

Example of breaking down a verse structurally:

- But you will receive power
 - when the Holy Spirit
 - comes on you;
- and you will be My witnesses
 - in Jerusalem,
 - and in all Judea
 - and Samaria,
 - and to the ends of the earth.

A traditional type of outline, as suggested in the Overview, may also be helpful as well. **Do whatever you can to slow down and observe the text thoroughly**, breaking it down in any way that helps you understand.

The Next Steps to complete for this paragraph or section:

What do I do next?

Work through the section **verse by verse** studying the text carefully and thoroughly, dividing your study time according to the study schedule. **Question the text:** ask **who, what, when, where, why,** and **how** of each passage in order to help you comprehend content.

“If you want to understand a biblical text, you’ve got to bombard it with questions. The Bible is never embarrassed to be asked questions. That doesn’t mean it will answer all of them. But you still need to ask to determine if they can be answered. Obviously, if you’re going to ask questions, you’ve also got to look for the answers. Where will you find them? In the text. Observation will give you the basic building blocks out of which you will construct the meaning of a passage. The answers to your questions will come directly from your observation process.”⁴

Observe and question the text, examine key words, determine the meaning of each verse and paragraph, look up cross references, ponder and meditate on the passages as you study, then assign paragraph themes as you move through the entire chapter verse by verse.

Basic steps of Interpretation:

_____ Work through these steps of Interpretation, but save final Interpretation until you have finished studying the entire book.

Complete Word Studies: The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, some Aramaic. The New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek. Use an exhaustive concordance for a basic definition, or a lexicon or bible dictionary for expanded definitions. In sections of scripture with extensive quotations from other parts of scripture, in order to understand the quote in context, each passage should be examined carefully in its original context, so you will do more cross reference study when numerous passages are quoted.

Look up significant words in the Concordance or Lexicon and complete Cross references as necessary as you go through the chapter verse by verse.

How to use a Concordance:

1. Look up the word in the front section of the concordance
2. Look for the verse reference where that specific word was used
3. Look for the number on the right, each number corresponds to a Greek/Hebrew word
4. Turn to the appropriate dictionary in the back of the concordance (Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament)

⁴ Howard G. & William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 43.

5. Look up the number for the definition
6. The words in italic are the definition. Write down the Greek words transliteration (in English alphabet) and write the definition down by your key, essential word.

How to Find a Cross References: Using the concordance, compare references in the Bible which use any word(s), or quoted passages of scripture, that you determined needed further study.

To find these look in the concordance at the list of all the references given for the same word. Find the same Greek or Hebrew reference number that is given for the Greek or Hebrew word you are examining.

Choose to examine several verses or all the verses that use the same number.

Look up these other verses that use the same Greek or Hebrew word.

When the same word is studied in more than one account it is understood more fully. When a quoted passage is studied in context, it brings a fuller meaning to the text you are studying.

- ❖ When looking for cross references to Old Testament passages given in New Testament passages, consult the margins of your own bible, or use the study material for each individual chapter. This will save time if you do not want to use the above detailed method for finding the source of the quoted OT passages.

Cross References you may find helpful for Ephesians 3: 1 – 13, (the mystery) Romans 9 – 11; Hebrews 11; 1 Cor. 2:6-10; Col. 1:24-27; Isaiah 42:6-9, 49:5,6,22

Now integrate all this information: put it all back together

_____ **Identify the theme or “Big Idea”**

As you work through the section verse by verse ponder on the meaning or interpretation you have discovered from observing the text, questioning the text, completing the word studies, and completing any cross reference examination. You should now be able to construct a title or theme or statement which summarizes the “big idea” of each paragraph or section.

_____ **Write the theme of this paragraph or section in the margin of your Bible or on the line provided in your working copy of the text.**

Put the main ideas into your own words. As you see themes and key words that run throughout the chapter or section, tie these ideas together as you work from paragraph to paragraph within the section. Summarize all your work in your own words for each smaller

paragraph, and then each chapter or section. If you like to outline make these themes your paragraph headings. Experiment with outlines to help you see what helps you understand content best.

Don't consult a commentary until you are at this point in your study. Use the commentary to verify your own findings and to double-check what you have discovered. If you consult commentaries before beginning they will influence your own study.

Application: How does this work in my life? How can this change my life?

As the Holy Spirit convicts you, apply what you've learned to your life. **Let God's Word change you—it is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword.**

Memorization of key verses: As you study through each chapter, choose two or three key verses and work on memorizing them each week.

Meditate on the truths you have learned in God's Word as you go throughout the day. Let God's Word become a part of your daily life by constantly meditating on it.

Live it: Begin to implement the specific instructions which the Holy Spirit has moved you to observe and notice as areas of growth necessary for your own life. The below steps may help.

Understanding Christ-Centered Application⁵

Why do our lives fail to reflect the truth of the Bible?

What is the Bible supposed to do?

1. Show us where we fall short—leading to repentance
 - a. Repentance is not self-centered sorrow that leads us away from God.
 - b. Repentance is God-centered sorrow that leads us toward God.
2. Help us to believe the truth and run to God—leading to Christ-likeness
 - a. Christ-likeness will never be accomplished through our own efforts.
 - b. Christ-likeness will be accomplished only through the power of the Spirit.
 - c. Christ-likeness comes by knowing Jesus, trusting Him and obeying Him.

What is good application?

Good application is not about...

- knowing the right things to do
- simply resolving to try harder

Good application...

- is a response to the Spirit's work through the Word
- is related to the author's intent in writing the passage
- leads people to treasure Jesus Christ above everything else

⁵ Nate Ardle, Campus Crusade for Christ, University of Michigan, 2007, nate.ardle@uscm.org.

Practicing Christ-Centered Application

Fallen Condition Focus

The Fallen Condition realizes that...

- Knowing what a passage says (subject) does not help us know why it is said (purpose).
- The purpose of every passage is to complete us (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- We are incomplete because of our (1) own sinfulness and (2) the world's brokenness (pain, sickness, things breaking down, etc.).
- A passage will always point us to a need that only God can meet.

To determine the Fallen Condition ask:

- What false beliefs does this passage expose?
- How does this passage challenge me to think differently about God?
- Why do I have a hard time living out the truths of this passage?
- What kind of person do I need to be to live out the truths in this passage?
- What sin in my life does this passage expose?
- What is the foundational sin beneath my surface level disobedience? ("The sin beneath the sin")
- How does our broken world affect me living according to this passage?

Christ Solution

For every fallen condition there is a solution that point ultimately to Jesus Christ.

The Christ Solution realizes...

- God is using the whole of scripture to reveal His plans to redeem humanity
- Our own efforts cannot solve the problems of our fallen condition
- The solution to our sin is the work of and the power of the Spirit.
- The solution to the world's brokenness is the promise of restoration by Christ.

To determine the Christ Solution ask:

- How does the work and power of Christ address this fallen condition?
- Does this passage point to freedom from the penalty of sin through the cross?
- Does this passage point to freedom from the power of sin through the Spirit?
- How does this passage reveal my dependence on God?
- What do I need to believe about God's character, His promises or His provision to live out the truths of this passage?
- In light of how I have answered the previous questions, how is God leading me to respond to Him through this passage?

For Christ-Centered Application ask yourself:

What is the Fallen Condition? What is the Christ Solution? How will you respond?