

LEADER NOTES FOR A TOPICAL STUDY

LAKEFIELD MINISTRIES

This section is not required reading to complete this type of study. This section is for reference only. It is here to help study leaders and those who may not have a lot experience reading or studying the bible.

What is a Topical Study?

A Topical Study is the study of a specific topic.

Learning to do a Topical Study is exciting. Once you have learned to complete a Topical Study, you are able to study anything you are interested in, anything that relates to your life or something you are going through.

2 Timothy 3:16 & 17 – *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

You have come a long way!

By this time you should have completed a book Study, a Verse Analysis, and a Character Study. You should also have completed the mini-lessons covering Bible history, Bible translation, interpretation, and application. You will build on what you have learned so far to do a Topical Study.

It helps to collaborate – team up!

Working with someone else can be a big help in doing a Topical Study.

- 1) It is especially helpful in identifying key words that relate to the topic you want to study. For example, if someone wants to study something like salvation, it may not be obvious to identify the word “save” or “saved” as words to include in the key word search. If you choose to study a topic like “trials”, you may want to include key words like tribulation(s), or persecution. Another person may be able to think of key words that you weren’t able to.
- 2) Collaborating can also help identify passages that may relate to your topic that do not necessarily contain a key word. In the example of a topical study on “trials” or tough times, the story of Joseph, the son of Israel, in Exodus chapter 37 is very relevant. The passages on Joseph may not have been an obvious choice through the use of key words, but working with someone else may have helped identify Joseph’s story as something to include in the study.
- 3) Another benefit of collaboration comes as you list questions and begin to look for answers in The Bible. The dialog can help ensure you are considering all perspectives to your topic.

Proverbs 27:17 - “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9 – “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.”

- 4) Be sure you always encourage one another to go right to the Bible, “chapter and verse” as we say. Go to “The Source”. What God says is always authoritative. Apply what you learned from doing a Book Study and a Verse Analysis. Be sure it is what God says, not what somebody says God is saying.
- 5) You can collaborate with a friend who is sincerely interested in studying The Bible, ask your pastor, Sunday School teacher, or small group leader in your church for help. If you are new to studying the Bible and do not know a local pastor or friend who is familiar with the Bible, feel free to contact us at Lakefield Ministries. We would be glad to help you!

A Word About Doctrine

Doctrine is a word that you may run into as you study your Bible and engage in conversations with others. Doctrine is the result of extensive and comprehensive topical study. It helps to understand the definition of the word, “doctrine”.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines doctrine as;

- 1 archaic :teaching, instruction
- 2a : something that is taught
 - b : a principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief :dogma
- Catholic doctrine
 - c *law* : a principle of law established through past decisions
 - d : a statement of fundamental government policy especially in international relations
- the Truman Doctrine
 - e : a military principle or set of strategies

As you complete topical studies you will begin understanding the “doctrines” of the Bible. The more you study the greater will be your understanding. Just for fun, you may want to do a topical study on “doctrine(s)”. See what you learn!

Steps in a Topical Study

(Step 1) Select a topic

Pick any topic you like. You may want to collaborate with someone to help you define the topic you are interested in studying.

(Step 2) List key words that relate to the topic

Work with your study leader or perhaps a pastor, small group leader or Sunday School teacher at your church. If you do not attend a local church or know someone who can help you, give us a call at Lakefield Ministries. We would be glad to help!

(Step 3) List verses relating to the topic.

Use an online Bible search tool or a Bible Concordance.

We recommend the Blue Letter Bible online (www.blueletterbible.com)

The Blue Letter Bible is absolutely free.

- No advertising or marketing pop-ups
- Great online word search capabilities
- The most popular English translations are available
- You can create an account and set up preferences for Bible translation and display features
- Bible reference materials are available including concordances, Bible dictionaries, and written and audio commentaries.
- Apps available for smart phones, I pads, and Tablets

(Step 4) Read the verses noting key verses as you go

Read the surrounding passages as well to gain some of the context of the verses. Key verses will become apparent. List them for more in depth study.

(Step 5) Complete a Verse Analysis on key verses

Follow the steps for completing a Verse Analysis on the key verses you selected. Apply the discipline you learned. Be sure to expand the context as far forward and back of the verses you are studying to get the big picture. Apply what you learned when you completed a Book Study. Know (1) who wrote the passage, (2) who they were writing to, and (3) the circumstances surrounding the passage.

(Step 6) What does God say (and not say) about the topic?

It can help to simply brainstorm a list of your thoughts as you read. Do your thoughts align with scripture?

(Step 7) List questions and problems related to the topic and what God has to say about it

Questions are very important. They help you identify what you do not know. Your questions will lead you to a more comprehensive study of the topic.

“Problems” may be what appear to be a conflict or inconsistency in what God is saying. It may be something that does not seem to make sense, seems to be inconsistent with the idea of a loving God, or something that ‘just doesn’t feel right’.

List the problems out with your questions. Use these to fuel future study. Remember the words of Jesus, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

(Step 8) Summarize your study including what you learned and how it might apply to your life

Do your best. Do not worry about being “right”. Just write out what you believe is true. As you learn more and complete more studies, you can add to this topic or start all over.

One approach is to start with an outline. Here are some things you may wish to include;

- I. Topic**
- II. Key themes**
- III. What you found out about the topic that is true**
- IV. What you found out about the topic that is not true**
- V. Conclusions**
- VI. Application to my life**
- VII. Questions & problems for future study**

You may wish to create your own outline. There is no right or wrong way to this. Make it work for you.

A Final Tip

Keep it simple. Do not worry about being a perfectionist.

Do not worry about writing a perfect book outline or manuscript of what you learned. Write down what comes easy to you. You can always go back and add more at a later time. The study guide is a tool to help you learn, not an exam for you to pass or fail. If God speaks to you through His Word, you win! Studying the Bible is not an academic exercise. Studying the Bible, God’s Word, is the pursuit of a relationship with God, the one true God, the Creator of the universe.