

# ENTRUSTING TRUTH



## Book Overview

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### What this is not

As, possibly more, important than what this is, may be what this is not. This study<sup>1</sup> is not intended to be an attempt to get it “right” – this is an overview. The focus is like the first step of the chapter analysis, to get a bird’s eye view of the book. Secondly, to see how the message of the book fits into the overall flow of the Bible. We are striving to see the contribution each book of the Bible makes in relationship to the overall purpose of the Bible and our knowledge of God (i.e., see parts in relationship to the whole).

### Study Concepts

1. Forest for trees – This is an overview. Do not get bogged down in details. To paraphrase Dave Jewitt, “If you are analytic, get over that for this study.” You are trying to get the big picture here.
2. See it from on high – about 50,000 feet. Read fast. Skim. Resist the pull to really dive into one verse.
3. "Un" – detail (don't get bogged down in the details) – are you getting the message yet? We are not interested in verb tenses or parts of speech. How does the book as a whole hang together? What are the big chunks.
4. Not looking for “right understanding” looking for familiarization – This may be the hardest one. You are trying to get familiar with the book. You are trying to get to the point that at the end of the study you could think your way through the content of the book in big chunks.

### Study Format

Read through this study completely before you start. It will give you a sense of where you are going with the study.

1. Skim the Book three times at one sitting each. You already know this but these books were written without chapter and verses. The epistles were letters. For the most part each book of the Bible was

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<sup>1</sup> The study method is a modified synthetic overview of a book this has come from several sources. First, a Bible study that was led by Harry Steck in 1973; second, a series of tapes by Howard Hendricks used by Terry Cook in a Bible study at the University of Alabama in 1975. The idea of using this in an overview of the New Testament came from a Summer Training Program led by Larry Whitehouse in 1978. The final form and notion of using this as an overview of the Bible with one’s sons came from a request by my son, John, two years ago. Finally, the idea of sharing this with men in a seminar came from conversations with Brent Lollis, Nathan Baxter, and Dave Jewitt. So if you do the math this has taken 37 years to develop.

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intended to be read in one sitting. Most of the epistles can be read in less than an hour. Some much more quickly than that. Resist the pull to slow down. As stated above you are trying to familiarize yourself with the book. Think of it this way. When you are reading through a book if you do not understand the overall argument, you are trying to figure it out as you read the parts. The purpose of skimming and this overview is to get a handle on the flow of the book so that when you do come back for analysis you understand better the context of the sections you are analyzing.

As you skim through the book it helps to be looking for specific information. If you have a study Bible that has an introduction to the book please do not read it at this point. Work through this yourself first. Then compare your answers to the introduction.

1.1. Reading one – Again read this fast. A book like 2 Peter should not take more than 15 – 20 minutes to skim. As you skim through the book the first time look for:

1.1.1. The historical background of the book:

1.1.1.1. By whom written – For most of the New Testament this is obvious. But look for specific verses that reveal this to you.

1.1.1.2. To whom written – For the epistles this is also somewhat easy, one can usually tell by the title or the content. In the Old Testament this can be a bit trickier. If you have a concordance look for names that show up in the text. Where those names appear in other books may give you a clue to whom the book was written.

1.1.1.3. When and where written – For Paul’s epistles reviewing the three missionary journeys can guide you on when and where he was when he wrote the letters. The recipients of Paul’s letters are fairly obvious. For the other books look at the content for clues.

1.1.1. What are the recurring words and phrases? You may get tired of my saying look for repetition before you get through this book. However, it is a great way to find the main point the author is making. It is a little like the teachers you used to have that would stomp their feet in the front of class to let you know that something was going to be on the test.

1.1.2. What are the recurring themes? This is beyond repetition of words or phrases. It deal with ideas that may be presented in different ways in the Book. The importance of the transmission of the Gospel in 1 and 2 Timothy is an example of that. Repetition of words sometimes will reveal this for you. In the Timothys if you look for the word “entrust” it will lead you to the transmission of the Gospel.

Set your study aside for a day or so to allow your subconscious to work on it.

1.1. Reading two – Still you are skimming the book. This time you are looking for:

1.1.1. Your impressions of the author’s style: Fast-moving, dramatic, casual, flowing, heavy teaching, narrative, etc. – Write down your impressions in a couple of sentences.

1.1.2. Atmosphere of the book: How do you feel after you read it - challenged, blessed, motivated, etc? Write this down in a couple of sentences as well.

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- 1.1.3. Key Passages – Record passages that stand out for you as you are skimming the book. Passages that make you want to slow down. Or passages that especially speak to what is going on in your life. Also look for passages that seem to capture the central ideas of the book.
- 1.1.4. Divisions/Tentative Outline – The last thing you want to do on this reading is to look for how you may want to divide the book. The idea here is to enable yourself to think through the book. What are the chunks that seem to fit best together? Make a note of the start and end verses and the main thought each division. You will validate this in the next reading.

Again set this aside for a day or two and then come back to the book. Alright, I know that I have said in other places in the book to soak yourself in the text. It is OK to skim the book more than once per section.

- 1.2. Reading three – You will skim the book one more time. This time through you are looking for:
  - 1.2.1. Main theme – Capture what you think the main theme of the book is in five words or less. What verses or themes led you to that conclusion?
  - 1.2.2. How the theme is developed – How does the author develop his argument? Is it logical, does he use examples, narrative, does he refer to other works? What are the main literary devices he uses to get his point across?
  - 1.2.3. Finalize your divisions/outline – In reading two, you identified tentative divisions and an outline. This time through read with those in mind and see if you still think that that is the way you would divide the book.
2. Do a simple outline or chart of the book, give a unique title to the book, and select the key verse or passage. I am visual I like to do charts rather than out lines. Appendix # has a guide on how to do a simple chart.
3. Application – Make a written application of the book to your own life. This is really important. Our Father did not give us His word to make us smarter. He gave it to us to know Him through applying it. It is neither enough nor the objective of any study to become a Bible trivia expert. In John 5, Jesus, talking to the leaders of the Jews says, John 5:39, 40, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” These people had the first five books of the Bible memorized. Jesus says they do not know Him, they do not know the Father, they do not have the Love of God in them, and they are not seeking the glory of God. So, it appears that knowledge of the Bible is not enough.

In contrast in Ezra 7:10 we read, “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Note the sequence here: he set his heart, to study, practice, and then teach. He practiced, applied the Word of God to his life first. Then he taught.

In the New Testament the same thought is echoed in James 1:22 we see, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” It is the expectation that our interaction with the Word of God will change us.

The following questions and suggestions are listed to assist you in making a practical application.

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- 3.1. What is the truth of the book?
- 3.2. How does this truth relate to me?
  - 3.2.1. What is already a part of my thinking?
  - 3.2.2. What is new to me?
  - 3.2.3. What requires a change of thought?
  - 3.2.4. What is already a part of my action?
  - 3.2.5. What can be immediately applied to my behavior?
  - 3.2.6. What am I doing that is wrong?
  - 3.2.7. What Action must I take now?
  - 3.2.8. What will I need from this that will help me in the future?
- 3.3. When deciding upon a course of action:
  - 3.3.1. Keep it simple.
  - 3.3.2. Make it practical.
  - 3.3.3. Set a time limit.
  - 3.3.4. Plan a check-up and reward.
- 3.4. Optional – These are questions that you may want to dive into if you have time. Sometimes we use these for discussion around breakfast when we are discussing a book.
  - 3.4.1. Develop in basic statement or outline form the answer to the following question: What does this book uniquely emphasize about Jesus Christ? (His Person and Work – or what would we not understand about God and/or the Christian Life if we did not have this book?)
  - 3.4.2. What intrigues you about this book? What would you like to come back to look at in more depth?
  - 3.4.3. For what would you come back to this book to get answers?
  - 3.4.4. What one or two main topics of Christian living are uniquely emphasized in this book? What is the lesson on that topic?
  - 3.4.5. Look up key people in a concordance and/or a dictionary. What is their role in the book?
  - 3.4.6. Look up areas and cities mentioned in a Bible atlas or dictionary. What is their importance to the message of the book?
  - 3.4.7. Look for and try to define any problems addressed in the book.

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## Chart Instructions

1. On the chart draw lines vertically to show your divisions for the book. If you have four divisions you would draw lines to create four divisions as shown below.

Jonah Book Title – <b>NOT</b>			
Section Title	Section Title	Section Title	Section Title
Start verse – end			
Short description of what happens in this section	Short description of what happens in this section	Short description of what happens in this section	Short description of what happens in this section

Key Verse:

Application

Themes:

2. Put the verses for your divisions on the second line of blocks created by the lines. (Start verse – end verse above)
3. Put a short description of the passage in the big box.
4. Put a title that captures your understanding of each section at the top of each section. The titles should be short and memorable. (Section Title above)
5. Title the book – Jonah does not count. Make it something that you will remember that captures what you understand the book is about; be creative. Five words or less. (NOT JONAH above)