

## Simple Book Surveys

We create book surveys to see the whole of a book all at once. Metaphorically, we want to overlook the forest, not the individual trees. Book surveys are usually done at two different times. The first time is before studying a book in small portions. The second time is after studying a book in small portions. The purpose of the first survey is to get a general idea of the entire passage's context. The purpose of the second survey is to try to master the book and to see it from many different vantage points. Follow the steps below for the initial and final surveys. Where there are differences in the two surveys they are noted.

### Head:

Step 1: Briskly read the book in one sitting. Write nothing, just read and take it in.

Step 2: Read the book a second time at a normal pace. Once finished, record as many observations as you can. Go back to the text only to note references for your observations. If this is your final survey, try to note the most important parts of the book and its key points. You've been looking at individual trees, now try to look at the entire forest again.

Step 3: Write an outline or build a horizontal book chart. Make it short and concise without losing the forest view. An example of an outline and a book chart from The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) follows. This survey is what you might expect to get from an initial book survey:

- I. Character (5.1-12)
- II. Call (5.13-17)
- III. Commands (5.18-48)
- IV. Conduct (6.1-18)
- V. Commitment (6.19-7.29)

Main Theme	<b>Identity</b>		<b>Activity</b>		
Topic	Character	Call	Commands	Conduct	Commitment
Reference	5.1-12	5.13-17	5.18-48	6.1-18	6.19-7.29

If it is your final survey, go back through your individual outlines of the passages within the book. Try to put them all together now and build layers of outline and understanding of the book. Here is an example of a finished chart from a study of the Sermon on the Mount. Study it and notice the different layers of understanding across the passage. Also notice how some of the book divisions shifted in the disciples understanding from chart to chart:

Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5.1-7.28								
Kingdom Manifesto <sup>1</sup>								
5.1								7.29
Kingdom Character	Kingdom Commands			Kingdom Conduct		Kingdom Commitment		
	5.13	5.17	5.21	6.1	6.19	7.13	7.21	
Contrition	Calling	Completing the Old	Contrasting Old and New	Practice	Priority	Production	Consecration	
Attitude	Salt		Anger	Giving	Money	Direction	Relationship	
Circumstance	Light		Lust	Prayer	Food, Drink, Clothes	Productivity	Obedience	
			Infidelity	Fasting	Relationships			
			Commitment		Dependence			
			Revenge					
			Hatred					
(5.17) Do not think that I have come to <u>abolish</u> the Law or the Prophets...				... <i>do to others what you would have them do to you</i> , for this <u>sums up</u> the Law and the Prophets (7.12)				

<sup>1</sup>a public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives, as one issued by a government, sovereign or organization.

Essential to building an in depth chart like this is looking back through the outlines you have made in your study of all the smaller passages. After doing all the work of staring at the trees, you have an excellent opportunity to grasp the breadth and depth of the book in the same moment. Don't miss this opportunity!

You will find many thorough and precise book surveys from scholarly sources. Ignore them. The real value is going through the process of developing your own survey of the book. If you must, only look at external sources after you have completed your own final survey.

Step 4: Now record some general and broad information about the book. You will need to turn to external sources to answer these questions. Do so only after exhausting the bible. If this is your final survey, only add to this if you uncovered some more relevant information from your study of smaller portions of scripture:

- Author and Recipients
- Date the book was written
- Geographical setting
- Historical background: biblical and secular

### **Heart:**

Step 5:

Now that you have immersed yourself in staring at the forest, step back and ask a few more questions about the book. If this is your final survey, review the tone and emotions from the individual portions of the scripture and summarize the overall feel of the book. Meditate on all the individual feelings that you had from passage to passage and try to identify the residual and overall feeling.

- What is the overall atmosphere of the book
- How does the author feel?
- How do the recipients feel?
- How does it make you feel?

### **Hands:**

Step 6: Identify the main things the Holy Spirit has been bringing to mind as you surveyed the book. Write an application using SOS:

Say-What did God say to you from the survey?

Obey-What does God want you to obey?

Share-What do you need to share with someone else?

If this is your final survey, review what God has been saying to your from passage to passage as you studied. Have you obeyed everything that God has told you to do? Have you responded to Him properly throughout the process? What is the final message the Lord would leave you with from this book? How will you obey Him? What will you share with others?