

LESSON 9 Topical Method of Study

A topical Bible study is a study that deals with a specific subject in the Bible. The main topic or subject of the Bible is *redemption through the blood of Christ!* The Old Testament explains how God related Himself to our fallen human race through Israel. Israel's sacrifices, feasts, and offerings all pictured, in one way or another, Christ the Savior to come. He came when the time was right. The New Testament is the record of His coming. It tells of the events that followed His coming and those which will follow as time moves on. Other Bible topics support and explain the main topic.

You learned in Lesson 8 that people are topics in biographical study. But there are other topics besides people in the Bible. In Scripture you can read about music, occupations, customs, plants, animals, politics, geography, right rules for living, and many, many other topics that are both interesting and valuable to study. Learning the procedure for a topical Bible study will help you gain a better understanding of the Bible.

lesson outline

Introduction to Topical Study
Examples of Topical Studies
 Nature Topic: the Sparrow
 Theological Topic: God's Nature
 Ideas for Further Study
Procedure for the Topical Method
 Step 1: List Occurrences
 Step 2: Classify into Categories
 Step 3: Examine Context
 Step 4: Summarize Each Category
 Step 5: Compare Summary Statements
 Step 6: Summarize Entire Outline
Topical Study of Ephesians

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

1. Describe the relationship between visible things and invisible qualities in topical Bible study.
2. Describe “things” and “qualities” as topics for Bible study and give examples of each of the two categories.
3. List and explain the six steps in making a topical study.
4. Make a topical outline from Ephesians 4, 5, and 6, using the topic: “Acceptable Words.”

learning activities

1. Read the opening section, outlines, and objectives.
2. Learn the meanings of key words that are new to you.
3. Read the lesson development and respond by following the instructions in each question as you come to it.
4. Many of the answers will require more space than can be allowed in your textbook; you will need your own notebook for all except the very short answers.

5. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson and check your answers.

key words

accountable
erroneous

occurrences
preconceived

random

lesson development

TOPICAL METHOD OF STUDY

Objective 1. *Describe the relationship between visible things and invisible qualities in topical Bible study.*

Our list of Bible topics in the first part of this lesson included both the *visible* and the *invisible*. We find in Romans 1:20 a relationship between them which is valuable to topical Bible study: “Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made. So those people have no excuse at all!” This Scripture explains that God created the very nature that surrounds us, with the intent that we could learn about Him through our observation of it. God planned Israel’s location in Palestine (Deuteronomy 1:8). He planned its building materials (stones that would last for centuries to witness to the truth of His word). He planned its natural resources, the lay of its land, and even its climate. All these things have been used by God to illustrate truth in His power and nature.

The early and latter rains which water the crops of Palestine are the autumn rains (early) and spring rains (latter). These rains are used as significant illustrations in Scripture. (See Proverbs 16:15, Zechariah 10:1, James 5:7.) Any topic that is treated or mentioned in the Bible is a possible topic for you to study. This would include not only such things as *clothing*, *housing*, *foods*, etc. but also *words*; that is, how certain key words are used in Scripture. Your study would include themes such as *faith*, *prayer*, *the second coming of Christ*, and topics

concerning Christian living. The study you will be making in the last section of this lesson, in the book of Ephesians, is of the last type. It is a study on an important aspect of Christian living: *acceptable words*.

Application

1 Write **T** in the blank space before the statements that are true and **F** before false statements.

- ... **a** God has created nature in a haphazard or unplanned way.
- ... **b** There is no relationship between God's eternal truth and what can be seen in nature.
- ... **c** God purposely created nature in such a way that it would illustrate both His power and His divine nature.
- ... **d** The homeland for the people of Israel was chosen in a random way.
- ... **e** God particularly planned and selected Palestine as the homeland for His people Israel.
- ... **f** James 5:7 uses the autumn and spring rain of Palestine to illustrate the value of patience.



There will be great differences in the amount of information available about various topics in the Bible. For some, there may be a wealth of information in just a chapter or a passage. For others, it may be necessary to glean information from many books in both Testaments to get the fullest possible meaning from the study. The more comprehensive your study, the longer it will take. I have heard of a man who is doing his own study of the Holy Spirit, using all of the Bible. This kind of study would be done using steps similar to those you will learn to use in this lesson. The study will probably take the man several years or a lifetime to do, depending on how detailed he makes it. So, the length of a topical study will depend on the amount

of information to be found and the amount of time you wish to spend on it.

Application

- 2** Circle the letters before the correct completions to this sentence: The length of a topical study will depend on
- a)** the length of the book where the topic is mentioned.
 - b)** the amount of information to be found on the topic.
 - c)** the amount of time the student spends studying the topic.
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A long, complete study is made much easier if you have access to a Bible concordance or a Bible dictionary. Bible software is also available to speed up searches. In these concordances and dictionaries, words and topics mentioned in the Bible are listed in alphabetical order along with their Scripture references. These helps allow you to save time in finding all the places where a topic is mentioned. If such books are ever available to you, you will want to make use of them. However, topical studies can be done without such helps.

In fact, it is better in shorter topical studies to do your own reading and searching for occurrences of the topic you wish to investigate. This is true because in doing your own reading, you will not only find **DIRECT** references to the topics, but **INDIRECT** references as well. *Direct references* are those which actually contain the specific word or phrase you are looking for. *Indirect references* are those which refer to the theme or general idea of your topic. These indirect references are important for a more complete understanding of your topic.

Application

3 Write *direct* after the definition of a direct reference, and *indirect* after the definition of an indirect reference.

a A reference which alludes to the theme or general idea of the topic

b A reference which contains the specific word or phrase you are looking for

4 Circle the letters before the correct statements.

a) You have to have other reference books to do a topical Bible study.

b) Reference books such as a Bible concordance or a Bible dictionary can be helpful when doing a topical Bible study but are not necessary.

c) In a topical Bible study, you will look only for the places where the topic is mentioned directly.

d) In a topical Bible study, you will look for all the places where the topic is mentioned directly or indirectly.



EXAMPLES OF TOPICAL STUDIES

Objective 2. Describe “things” and “qualities” as topics for Bible study and give examples of each of the two categories.

Nature Topic: the Sparrow

You saw, in your reading of Romans 1:20, that God uses nature to teach lessons to the human family. The lowly sparrow, or sparrow-like bird, which is so common around houses and gardens in many places of the world, is used a number of times in Scripture to illustrate truth.

Scholars tell us that the word sparrow is a translation of the Hebrew *tzippor*, which seems to have been a general term for all small birds or sparrow-like species. If you had time to

investigate, you would find this word used more than forty times in the Old Testament—not always translated *sparrow*. Sometimes it appears as *bird* or *fowl*. A corresponding Greek word occurs twice in the New Testament. These small birds are used in Scripture to illustrate how very much God cares for His children. Consider Matthew 10:29-31:

For only a penny you can buy two sparrows,
yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without
your Father's consent. As for you, even the
hairs of your head have all been counted. So do
not be afraid; you are worth much more than
many sparrows!

God *is* interested in sparrows. They are part of His creation. How vitally important it is for every child of God to have complete confidence and trust in the care of the Heavenly Father!

The Psalmist uses the little bird as an illustration of sorrow and loneliness. He writes, "I am like a lonely bird on a housetop" (Psalm 102:7). These small birds are known for their congregating in groups, noisy and chattering. To illustrate the intensity of his grief, the writer has contrasted the normal surrounding of these birds to that of the one alone on the housetop.

Theological Topic: God's Nature

The following is an outline of a topical study, similar to the kind of outline you will be making in your notebook for the study in Ephesians. *At this point, just read the outline and look up the verses that are mentioned as you read.* Notice the observations that are made for each reference. Notice the summary statement at the end. (All the references are from the book of Habakkuk.)

*Topic: The Nature of God***REFERENCE OBSERVATION**

- 1:2 Habakkuk cries to the Lord, but the Lord does not answer. Since God is righteous, what does failure to answer imply? *That God answers when ready and only then.*
- 1:5-6 God is working; God is raising up Babylonians. What does this imply with regard to Habakkuk's complaint? *That God has been in the process of answering even before Habakkuk's cry.*
- 1:12 God is from the Beginning. God is holy, eternal. He is Habakkuk's protector.
- 1:13 God's eyes are too holy to look at evil. God cannot stand the sight of people doing wrong.
- 2:1 Habakkuk expects an answer from the Lord. What does this imply? *That God is accountable.*
- 2:13-14 The Lord must be the ultimate end of all effort. Knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth.
- 2:20 The Lord is in His holy temple. He is worthy of reverence.
- 3:3 God is holy and full of splendor.
- 3:5-6 The Lord is powerful.
- 3:13, 18 The Lord is concerned about salvation of people.
- 3:19 The Lord is strong.

Summary: By nature God is personal, eternal, holy, and righteous. He is supreme in power, fair in judgment, and patient in His administration of justice, and He is the Savior.

Ideas for Further Study

In the two subsections of the lesson that you have just read, you have examples of two kinds of topical study. As you can see they are quite different, yet both deal with a specific

topic. The first example, the short study on the *sparrow*, is representative of the many topics of interest that can be found in the area of nature. Plants, animals and minerals are sometimes used in the Bible as *illustrations* and sometimes as *symbols*. These terms can sometimes be used interchangeably, but we will point out differences of usage between them that will help you to better understand the Bible.

An *illustration* of a truth pictures that truth in a way which makes it easier to understand. The *mustard plant* is an example of such an illustration. Because the mustard plant is known for growing an unusually large plant from a very small seed, Jesus used it to illustrate truth about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:31-32) and faith (Matthew 17:20). A *symbol* is something that stands for something else. A symbol has one or more qualities that remind you of the object it stands for. For example, in Daniel 2 the “head of gold” was revealed to be a symbol of King Nebuchadnezzar himself (v. 38). In Daniel 8:1-8, a ram and a goat were used as symbols of kingdoms and kings who were to come.

When studying topics of this type, you will use the same steps that are outlined in the next section of the lesson. In addition, you will especially note the qualities of the topic which made it appropriate to use as either an *illustration* of truth, a *symbol*, or something else.

Application

5 Consider the following topics. Read the reference given for each one. Write either *illustration* or *symbol* in the blank following each example.

- a** The ant (Proverbs 6:6-8)
 - b** The Lamb (Revelation 6:1, 3, 5, 7)
 - c** Locusts (Nahum 3:15)
 - d** The bear (Daniel 7:5, 17)
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In addition to those already mentioned in this lesson, some possible topics from nature might include light, water, grain, herbs (such as cumin, Matthew 23:23) and many others.

The second example of a topical study that you have read, *The Nature of God*, deals with a topic that is a *quality* rather than a *thing*. Additional qualities that can be investigated are hope, love, faith, forgiveness, repentance, and eternal life.

Application

- 6** Circle the letters before the correct statements.
- a)** Topics taken from nature are often used in the Bible as illustrations or symbols.
 - b)** Topics that are *qualities* rather than *things* are often used in the Bible as illustrations or symbols.
 - c)** Bible topics for possible study are quite limited.
 - d)** Bible topics for possible study are many and varied.
- 7** List four or five possible topics that you can think of for study that have not been mentioned so far in this lesson.

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PROCEDURE FOR THE TOPICAL METHOD

Objective 3. *List and explain the six steps in making a topical study.*

Step 1: List Occurrences

In this step you will make a textual outline similar to the one you made in the preceding lesson for biographical study. It will have to be made every time you do a topical study. You must choose a topic. You then select a book or passage of Scripture (or several passages) in which you have found some material related to the topic you have chosen. You read the Scripture with a pencil and paper at hand. Your paper should be divided into two sections, as you noted in the outline on *The Nature of*

God. On the left is the section for the *reference*, and on the right is the section for your *observation*.

Each time you come in your reading to some information about your topic, you will list the reference along with the information you have found. (Leave space between items on this list for addition of later observations.) You may have found a direct reference to your topic (where the word or phrase you have chosen is actually used), or you may have found an indirect reference to your topic (where just the theme or general idea is given). Direct or indirect, you will *list in order of appearance all occurrences of the topic*.

Application

8 Copy in your notebook the italicized part of the last sentence of the preceding paragraph. (This is Step 1.)

If the information you find is a direct reference to your topic, you will simply write it opposite the Scripture reference. If what you find is an indirect reference, you will write it, followed by the question: “What does this imply concerning my *topic*?” Always remember that in Bible study, the Holy Spirit is ever present with you to reveal His truth to your mind. No matter what the *method* of Bible study, Scripture must always be approached with a prayerful attitude and an open, receptive mind. You never study God’s Word alone! *He* is with you.

Note: If you are not sure about information that you have read thus far, go back and work through this study textbook again.

Step 2. Classify into Categories

In Step 1, you were directed to list all the appearances of your topic *in the order of their occurrence*. That means that in your first list, the Scriptures are in order as they come in the text. Now your task will be to examine all the information you have discovered about your topic, noticing how the information can be fit together in a logical or reasonable way. The information itself will suggest *categories* to you as you

look at it. For example, if your topic were *Furniture In the Temple*, your information might be grouped according to areas within the temple; these areas would serve as *categories*. If your topic were from nature, your categories might be the different ways the topic is used in the Bible. What kinds of information are given about the topic? Is it used to illustrate some truth? Is it used as a symbol of something else? Historical topics would suggest categories of *time*: a beginning, a middle, and an end period of time. Each topic will probably have two or more *categories* which can be used to *organize* the information you find.

So, Step 2 can be stated this way: Classify each occurrence of the topic according to the way it is used. Use categories that grow naturally out of the material you have found. When you get into Ephesians in the application section, you will be looking for instances of the topic that concern words that are acceptable to God. You will discover that Paul often gives opposites in the same sentence: “Don’t say this . . . but do say that . . .” When you have noted several of these references, your mind will begin to think in terms of two main categories for that particular topic. Your categories might be: “Wrong Words” and “Right Words,” or “Words to Shun” and “Words That Please God”. The finished outline will break down into four or five categories, but they will be related to the two that immediately come to mind.

Application

9 Copy in your notebook the two sentences from the paragraph above which summarize Step 2.

10 The purpose of Step 2 of the procedure for the topical method of Bible study is to always

- a)** list each occurrence of your topic as you find it.
- b)** organize your information into logical categories.
- c)** organize your information into categories of time.



Step 3: Examine Context

Back in Lesson 1 you learned that *context* means “all the words that surround a particular word you are considering.” In this course you have also learned the importance of careful *observation* when studying God’s Word. Step 3 will put your powers of observation to the test. You will have listed all the occurrences of your topic (Step 1). You will have organized them into several categories, according to the ways they are used (Step 2). And now you will not only read the verse or sentence where your topic is mentioned, but you will read the verses which surround it in order to be sure to have the correct meaning intended by the Holy Spirit.

As you read the context (surrounding sentences) you may need to adjust, or add to, your original observations. *Step 3, then, is to examine carefully (analyze) the various usages of your topic, taking the context into account.* If you see changes or additions that should be made in your original observations, write them down on your *Step 1 outline*.

Application

11 What is the meaning of context?

.....

12 Write *Step 1, Step 2, or Step 3* after each of the following sentences:

a Where your topic is mentioned, read the verses that surround it, to arrive at the correct meaning

.....

b Make a list of all the occurrences of your topic

.....

c Organize your list by grouping related items together

.....



Step 4: Summarize Each Category

To *summarize* means to reduce information to a shorter, more concise way of saying it. It means to use fewer words while keeping the essence of the meaning.

In Step 4, you will read all the observations you have made for each grouping (or category) and summarize each one in as brief a way as possible. For example, let's suppose your topic was *sheep*. Your list of references would be long, for sheep are very prominent in Scripture. After making this list in your first step, your second step would have been to group the items you had found into categories according to *usage*. In other words, references that are related in some way would be grouped together. Some of the headings you might have chosen for references to sheep probably would have simply described them as animals. "Livestock" and "Habits and Characteristics of Sheep" are examples of such headings. You would also probably have found references where sheep are used as *sacrifices*, *symbols*, and *illustrations of God's people*. Jesus called Himself "the good Shepherd" (John 10:11). Your third step would have been to examine the context of each reference to get its complete, true meaning.

Your fourth step is summarizing each category. If your topic is *sheep*, you will state in condensed form all of your observations concerning sheep as animals. You will do the same for the references that discuss sheep as *sacrifices*. You will summarize all the information about sheep as they are used *symbolically*, and then summarize the ways sheep are used as *illustrations* of Bible truth. Step 4 is *to make for each category of your outline a summarized restatement of the observations you have made in previous steps*.

Application

- 13** To summarize means to
- a)** list according to time.
 - b)** explain meaning.
 - c)** state in condensed form.

- 14** In Step 4 of the topical method of study, you will
- a)** list all occurrences of the topic.
 - b)** examine usage, taking context into account.
 - c)** summarize each category of the topical outline.
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Step 5: Compare Summary Statements

Step 5 is not primarily a *writing* step, but a *looking* and *thinking* step. It is a time for considering what has emerged from your study. It is a time for meditating upon the truth you have seen in the Scriptures. It is a time when you prayerfully consider all the information you have gathered, allowing the Holy Spirit to help you to see all of the details and their relationship to the total impact of the verses.

In the *looking* and *thinking* you do in Step 5, you will decide on the best order in your topical study outline for your categories. In Step 1, you listed all the occurrences of the topic in the order in which they came in the passage you studied. Now when each category has been summarized, it may seem better to have one certain category come before or after another for reasons of time sequence, or because of relative importance. You may want to put the most important category at the end.

Application

15 Write **T** in the blanks before true statements and **F** before false statements.

- ... **a** In Step 1 you list the occurrences of your topic as you come to them.
- ... **b** In Step 4 you look and think, but do not write.
- ... **c** Step 5 is not primarily a writing step, but a prayerful looking and thinking step.
- ... **d** Step 2 involves a listing of occurrences in the order that they appear in the text.
- ... **e** In Step 2 all the references that are closely related are grouped together under a heading known as a category.
- ... **f** Step 3 is a step in which you study each category carefully by considering the context of each category.
- ... **g** In Step 4 you summarize each category.

16 In your notebook, list very briefly the first five steps used in making a topical study.

Step 6: Summarize Entire Outline

In Step 6 all findings are tied together. You draw conclusions in a master statement that includes the summaries you have made of each category. It is a master summary that is the outgrowth of your thinking and meditation in Step 5. In this final step you will synthesize, or put together, a master statement from your summary definitions.

There are two cautions to keep in mind, however. First, avoid overgeneralizations. A *generalization* is a broad, overall conclusion, rule, or statement that is not detailed but is made to apply generally. When summarizing Scripture, it is easy to be “carried away” by the wonderful insights that come, and make statements that go too far. Draw your conclusions only as broad

as Scripture permits. Try not to make them say more or less than Scripture says.

Second (and this is related to the first caution), keep in mind the limitations of Scripture. There are two kinds of limitations: *implicit* (something that is implied or understood, but not directly expressed), and *explicit* (something directly stated). Scripture limits us both ways. The Bible directly states many things. Direct statements limit us because we cannot change those things to suit ourselves. The Bible limits our conclusions by its implicit teaching also, ideas that are implied but not directly stated. When something is implied in Scripture, you can say that it is implied. But you must limit yourself to that, unless other references give direct teaching on the subject.

Application

17 Write very briefly in your notebook what is to be done in Step 6.

18 Write *implicit* or *explicit* in the blank after each item here.

a Ideas that are implied but not directly stated

b Ideas that are directly stated

19 What are the two cautions which must be observed when putting together your final summary statement? Write them in your notebook.

TOPICAL STUDY OF EPHESIANS

Objective 4. *Make a topical outline from Ephesians 4, 5, and 6, using the topic: "Acceptable Words."*

You will need your notebook and Bible for this section of the lesson. The learning activities presented here will help you to apply the six steps in the procedure for a topical study. You will be working in Ephesians 4-6.

Note: It is very important that you do the exercises independently before you look at the answers! Your findings

do not have to be exactly like the ones in the textbook to be correct. When you do finally compare your answers with the ones given, feel free to add to your information or adjust it in whatever way you desire, but try to retain your own words and your own insights as much as possible. Our aim is to help you have confidence in your own study of God’s Word. God speaks to us as individuals. He will speak to you just as surely as He has spoken to others. The more you study, the more insight you will receive. The key is to give time to methodical study.

The topic for this study is *Acceptable Words*. The theme is taken from Psalm 19:14, “May my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my refuge and my redeemer!” In the book of Ephesians, the Holy Spirit has used the apostle Paul to give us much detail about the kinds of words that *are* acceptable to God. (It also reveals some kinds that are *not* acceptable to Him.) If you wonder just how important this topic is to spiritual life, think about what James says: “The tongue is like a fire . . . spreading evil through our whole being. . . . it is . . . uncontrollable” (3:6, 8). For more about the tongue, read James’ entire passage (James 3:1- 12) on the subject. Of course in this passage, the tongue is used symbolically of the words we speak. It is evident that only when we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus (and follow Him in obedience) can the tongue begin to be pleasing to God.

Reference	Observation

Your first preparation for *Step 1* is to divide about three sheets of notebook paper into two columns each, the wider column on the right. Write REFERENCE at the top of the left column and OBSERVATION at the top of the right column. Now read Ephesians 4, 5 and 6 with pencil in hand. As you come to any reference to the topic *words*, you will write the *reference* in the left column and your *observation* about it in the right column. If the reference is a *direct* reference, just write your observation down and go on. If the reference is an *indirect* one, write your observation down, followed by the question,

“What does this imply concerning *words*?” Then try to answer your own question briefly. Some of the later steps will give you opportunity for reflection and meditation; so don’t spend too much time at this point, trying to extract every bit of meaning from the text. You can do that later.

Be sure to include instances of unacceptable words as well as acceptable words. They can teach what is acceptable through the literary device of *contrast*. If a verse has both positive and negative ideas in it, use “a” then “b” with the verse to distinguish between these ideas.

Application

20 Step 1. List all occurrences of your topic in Ephesians 4, 5, and 6 (as we have just explained).



When you have finished the reading and outlining necessary to complete the preceding exercise, compare your outline for Step 1 with the one that is given for this exercise in the answer section.

Now in *Step 2* you will arrange the items you have discovered into some meaningful organization based on “usage.” You will group related items together to form categories. In almost any body of information, there will be more than one logical way of grouping ideas together into categories so that the whole can be understood more clearly. You will be shown one suggested way to organize this material. Other ways might be different but are not necessarily wrong. If you like your heading better, use it! (Use a separate sheet of paper in your notebook for answers to the next six exercises of Step 2. Leave about 5 lines of blank space between answers.)

Application

21 Read Ephesians 4:14 and 5:6 carefully. What idea do these verses have in common? Write your answer.

22 Think of a short heading you could give these two references. Write it.

23 Read Ephesians 4:11-12. This passage is in a special category, because it speaks of people who speak words that are used by God to build up the body of Christ. Think of a short heading you could give these two verses. Write the heading.

24 Read and compare the following references in Ephesians 4:25a; 4:26; 4:29a; 4:30; 4:31; 5:3; 5:4a; 6:4a; 6:9. Decide how these verses seem to be related and write a heading that would be suitable for them.

25 Read Ephesians 4:2; 4:15; 4:25b; 4:29b; 4:32; 5:3; first part of 5:19; 5:33; 6:2; 6:4b; 6:7. Decide on and write a heading that would show how these verses are related to each other.

26 Read Ephesians 5:4b; last part of 5:19; 5:20; 6:18. Notice what kind of words these verses explain and toward whom these words are to be directed. Then write a suitable heading for them.



Upon completion of the preceding exercise, you should have a notebook page containing five headings or categories that are similar to these and in this order:

UNACCEPTABLE WORDS: DO NOT LISTEN

WORDS TO LISTEN TO

UNACCEPTABLE WORDS: DO NOT SPEAK

ACCEPTABLE WORDS TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

ACCEPTABLE WORDS TOWARD GOD

Now in *Step 3*, you will go back to your textual outline made in *Step 1*. Read each reference you have listed as well as its context (verses before and after it). Write down in the *observation section* of this outline any additional insights that come to you from the contexts of these references.

As you begin to work with the texts you have selected, it is very important to adhere (stick closely) to what the Scripture

actually says about the topic. If you go beyond what the text really says, you are being unfair. Furthermore, you must correctly interpret what it really does say! We have heard others voice opinions which are not really based on the Word of God. As you begin to interpret Scripture, it is vitally important never to bring preconceived ideas into your statements. If you find that the Bible does not agree with some of your previous ideas, you will have to search the Scriptures and find out where you are in error. Your task is to find out what the Bible says, and stick to that.

Application

27 Now read Ephesians 4:17-24, part of the context for 4:14. Do as you have learned to do in earlier lessons, *ask the Bible questions!* Here are some suggested questions. Write the answers to them in your notebook, or on your Step 1 outline if you have room.


- a) What are these *deceitful* men like?
- b) Why are their words like shifting winds and full of error?
- c) Why are they so dangerous to the child of God?
- d) What power will help you speak that which pleases the Lord?

Continue in this manner, examining each reference and extracting from the Word of God as much detail and meaning as you can. The more time you have to spend, the more complete your study will be.

Now in *Step 4*, you will prepare a *summary statement* for each the five categories you formed in Step 2. Keep in mind that a summary attempts to include all the important points, stating them in as brief a way as possible. Write your own summaries before looking at those listed in the answer section.

Application


28 Write the summary for each category, on the notebook page where you listed that category in answer to an exercise on Step 2. (Remember to work with your outline of Step 1 in order to refer to the *references* and *observations* for each category.)



Now in *Step 5*, you will compare your five summary statements. Remember that this is not primarily a writing step, although you may add to your notes if necessary. It is mainly a step of prayerful, careful meditation as you consider what has emerged from your study. Reread your original outline and each observation you have made. Note the categories you have chosen and the summary statements you have made. Notice how Paul's material builds toward his concluding remarks. Notice how he has used the contrast of *bad words* with *good words* to strengthen his teaching.

Application

29 Decide on the best order in your completed outline for your five categories, and write them accordingly in your notebook.



Now in *Step 6*, you are ready to synthesize a master statement from the five summaries you have written. Avoid overgeneralizations. Keep in mind the limitations, implicit or explicit, imposed by the context and by the text itself. Write your own master summary statement about *acceptable words*, as taught in Ephesians 4, 5, and 6. Keep in mind that yours does not have to be exactly like ours in order to be correct.

Application

30 Write a master summary statement based on the five summaries of categories you have made, arranging this statement according to the rearranged order of your summaries.

Then compare your master summary with the one given in the answer section.



self-test

Circle the letter in front of the item in each question which is the best answer.

- 1** God created visible things in such a way that
 - a)** His divine nature illustrates them.
 - b)** they illustrate His divine nature.
 - c)** they are unrelated to His divine nature.

- 2** Which one of the following items will NOT help to determine the length of a topical study?
 - a)** The amount of information to be found on the topic.
 - b)** The length of the book where the topic is mentioned.
 - c)** The amount of time the student studies the topic.

- 3** Topics that are *qualities* rather than *visible things* are
 - a)** not used in the Bible as illustrations or symbols.
 - b)** used in the Bible as illustrations rather than symbols.
 - c)** used in the Bible as symbols rather than illustrations.

- 4** In the procedure for topical Bible study, *examination of context* is done in
 - a)** Step 2.
 - b)** Step 5.
 - c)** Step 3.

- 5** The best order for the headings or categories in the completed outline of a topical Bible study is determined by
 - a)** classification of observations into categories.
 - b)** comparison of summary statements of categories.
 - c)** listing occurrences of the topic in a textual outline.

- 6** In later steps of your topical study, *observations* that you make in your outline of Step 1 will be
 - a)** increased but not rearranged.
 - b)** rearranged but not increased.
 - c)** both increased and rearranged.

answers to the study questions

- 1** **a** F
b F
c T
d F
e T
f T
- 2** **b)** the amount of information to be found on the topic.
c) the amount of time the student spends studying the topic.
- 16** 1. List occurrences
2. Classify into categories
3. Examine context
4. Summarize each category
5. Compare summary statements
- 3** **a** Indirect
b Direct
- 17** Draw conclusions in a master summary statement.
(Wording may vary, but the answer should be essentially same as this one.)
- 4** **b)** Reference books such as a Bible concordance or a Bible dictionary can be helpful when doing a topical Bible study but are not necessary.
d) In a topical Bible study, you will look for all the places where the topic is mentioned directly or indirectly.
- 18** **a** Implicit
b Explicit
- 5** **a** Illustration.
b Symbol.
c Illustration.
d Symbol.
- 19** First, avoid overgeneralization; second, keep in mind the implicit and explicit limitations of Scripture.

- 6 a) Topics taken from nature are often used in the Bible as illustrations or symbols.
 d) Bible topics for possible study are many and varied.

20 ACCEPTABLE WORDS

REFERENCE OBSERVATION

- 4:2 Be humble, gentle, patient, tolerant. What does this imply *concerning words*? That my words should be humble, gentle, patient, tolerant.
- 4:11-12 He gave gifts to mankind (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) to prepare God's people for Christian service and to build up the body of Christ. What does this imply *concerning words*? That words which teach the truth of Scriptures are God's gift to His people.
- 4:14 Do not be blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful men who lead others into error. What does this imply *concerning words*? That we should not allow the words of false teaching to lead us into error.
- 4:15 Speak the truth in a spirit of love.
- 4:25a No more lying!
- 4:25b Tell the truth!
- 4:26 If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin. What does this imply *concerning words*? To avoid angry words.
- 4:29a Do not use harmful words.
- 4:29b Use only helpful words that build up, that provide what is needed, that do good to those who hear you.
- 4:30 Do not make God's Holy Spirit sad. What does this imply *concerning words*? That harmful words sadden God's Holy Spirit.

REFERENCE OBSERVATION

- 4:31 No more shouting or insults.
- 4:32 Instead, be kind and tenderhearted to one another and speak forgiveness to one another.
- 5:2 Your life must be controlled by love just as Christ loved us and gave His life for us as a sweet smelling offering. What does this imply *concerning words*? That our words must be controlled by love just as Christ loved us.
- 5:3 The following should not be mentioned among you: sexual immorality, indecency, or greed.
- 5:4a It is not fitting for you to use language which is obscene, profane, or vulgar.
- 5:4b You should give thanks to God.
- 5:6 Do not let anyone deceive you with foolish words.
- 5:19 Speak to one another with the words of psalms, hymns, and sacred songs (words to one another). Sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your heart (words to the Lord).
- 5:20 Always give thanks for everything to God the Father.
- 5:33 Every husband must love his wife. Every wife must respect her husband. What does this imply *concerning words*? That words between husbands and wives must be those of love and respect.
- 6:2 Children must respect father and mother. What does this imply *concerning words*? That words of children to parents must be those of respect.

REFERENCE OBSERVATION

- 6:4a Parents do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. What does this imply *concerning words*? That parents must not speak to their children in a way that will make them angry.
- 6:4b Raise children with Christian discipline and instruction. What does this imply *concerning words*? That parents must speak words of Christian discipline and instruction to their children.
- 6:7 Slaves, do your work cheerfully as though you served the Lord. What does this imply concerning words? Cheerful words in your work.
- 6:9 Stop using threats.
- 6:18 Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion as the Spirit leads. Pray always for all God's people.

7 Your answer. (Suggestions: tents, flowers, idolatry, sheep, coins.)

21 Both of them indicate that we should not listen to unacceptable words.

8 List in order of appearance all occurrences of the topic.

22 Suggested heading: UNACCEPTABLE WORDS: DO NOT LISTEN

9 Classify each occurrence of the topic according to the way it is used. Use categories that grow naturally out of the material you have found.

23 Suggested heading: WORDS TO LISTEN TO

10 b) organize your information into logical categories.

24 Suggested heading: UNACCEPTABLE WORDS: DO NOT SPEAK

11 All the words that surround a particular word you are considering. (Answers may vary but should be similar to this one.)

25 Suggested heading: ACCEPTABLE WORDS TOWARD ONE ANOTHER

12 a Step 3.

b Step 1.

c Step 2.

26 Suggested heading: ACCEPTABLE WORDS TOWARD GOD

13 c) state in condensed form.

27 a) They are heathen (v. 17), completely ignorant and stubborn (v. 18), and have lost all feeling of shame (v. 19).

b) Because their thoughts are worthless and their minds are dark (vv. 17-18).

c) Because they have no part in the life that God gives (v. 18), give themselves over to vice, and do all sorts of indecent things without restraint (v. 19).

d) The power of your new life in God (vv. 23-24).

14 c) summarize each category of the topical outline.

28 Suggested summary statements for each category:

Unacceptable Words: Do Not Listen: Refuse to listen to the error of false teachers. The Christian no longer has any part of their darkened minds and worthless thoughts. Refuse to listen to foolish words. They are not acceptable to God.

Words to Listen To: Listen to those who faithfully teach the Scriptures. God uses those words to build up the body of Christ, and to prepare His people for Christian service.

Unacceptable Words: Do Not Speak: Do not use lying words, angry words, harmful words, words that sadden God's Holy Spirit, shouting insults, or hateful words of any sort; do not mention sexual immorality, indecency, or greed; use no obscene, profane, or vulgar words; make no threats.

Acceptable Words Toward One Another: Use words that are humble, gentle, patient, tolerant, truthful, and helpful; use words that build up and do good, that are forgiving and loving; use psalms, hymns, spiritual songs; use words of love and respect to spouse, respect to parents, discipline and instruction to children; express cheerful words to all.

Acceptable Words Toward God: Sing hymns and psalms to God with praise in your hearts, give thanks to God for everything, ask for God's help, and pray always for all God's people.

- 15 a** T
b F
c T
d F
e T
f T
g T

30 Christians must not listen to the erroneous, foolish words that are produced by the darkened minds of false teachers and are not acceptable to God. Furthermore, the Christian must not use any words that are harmful and degrading to other people because such words sadden the Holy Spirit and are unacceptable to God. Christians must listen to words that present the truth of Scripture because such words will prepare them for Christian service and are acceptable to God. Also, Christians of all categories—husbands, wives, parents, children, and all others—must speak helpful words to each other that will build up the body of Christ. These words must be inspirational as well as loving and forgiving. Finally, Christians must constantly speak to God words of praise to Him and prayer for His people.

29 Suggested order:
 Unacceptable Words: Do Not Listen
 Unacceptable Words: Do Not Speak
 Words to Listen To
 Acceptable Words toward One Another
 Acceptable Words toward God