How to do a book study
Shepherding A Childs Heart

1. A book study along with reading a book enhances the learning and application of its content. Often when we read a book, we lack recall and application because we did not study as we were reading. Highlighting may bring us back to good points within a book, but capturing the focus of a book and then create a plan to apply its contents is most important. When we do this, we then absorb the value of what the book is expressing, communicating, or teaching. Reading then is more than just gaining knowledge or information; it includes comprehension of facts and expands your understanding on how to apply what you have learned while reading the book. Even if it is a biography or something to do with history, if the book is well written you will find gems along the way to consider and then apply to life growth. A curious, inquisitive mind will search out these gems and be challenged on how to apply those gems they find to their lives.
2. The title of a book obviously addresses the subject matter, the author will eventually offer a sentence or a paragraph on the main purpose or why the book was written in the introduction.

In our book on Pg xix, the author states an important fact concerning the plan of his book. “This book, however, asserts hope for the situation.”…..” The only safe guide is the Bible.” And then gives what he calls, “….a biblical vision for the parenting task.” This is important because he wants us to know that his source of authority for such a book is the word of God.

1. The subject matter or main purpose should be reinforced throughout the book, that means that we should be looking for the subject or main purpose of, “Shepherding a Childs Heart”, as we read through the book.

For instance, how does information on the subject in the chapters, the subtitles in those chapters, each paragraph and sentence, support the idea of SHEPHERDING MY CHILD’S HEART? How does the author reinforce that main purpose with the Bible?

1. In any book study we are looking at the title and asking ourselves if the title of the book and its main purpose is being reinforced throughout the book.

Does the book have biblical warrant in its (subject matter or main purpose) and is the main purpose supported by Scripture?

Does the author define his (subject matter or main purpose) so that we can build upon its foundation as we read through the book?

Does the author illustrate for us what he means as he defines the subject matter to help me perhaps better understand what he is defining, and does he make application of the (subject matter or main purpose) easy to understand and apply?

1. Let’s look at this book from this perspective in the first chapter.

In the first chapter the author is going to define his main purpose (Shepherding a Child’s Heart), and reinforce his thoughts biblically by stating that *“the Scripture teaches that the heart is the control center for life. A person’s life is a reflection of his heart.” Pg 3*

He gives us a visual illustration of what he is saying by stating that, *“The word picture here is graphic. The heart is a well from which all the issues of life gush forth.” Pg 3*

Not every chapter of a book gives a vivid illustration of what an author means by his chapter heading, but most do, and in this case the author rightly uses Scriptural pictures to help us “see” what he means.

In chapter one of this book the author has given us a subject or main purpose to fix our thoughts on, and then he defines his main purpose in order to help us have orientation on the main purpose. Then he illustrates for us in order to give us clarity, and then reinforces the (subject matter or main purpose) again by adding more relevant definition to his (subject matter or main purpose).

*“This emphasis is the fundamental tenet of this book:* *The heart is the wellspring of life. Therefore, parenting is concerned with shepherding the heart.”* He further adds: “*This proposition will inform everything you do as parents………In all these topics the core issue will be shepherding the heart.” page 6*

1. Next, he will help us to apply this truth. Sometimes application is found throughout the chapters and sometimes at the end. Ours has a little of both because we have an application study guide at the end of each chapter.

Going back to chapter one we see how the author helps us to apply his teaching. For instance, on page 5, *“You must help your child ask the questions that will expose that attitude of the heart that has resulted in wrong behavior.”*

1. The author has thoroughly outlined his main purpose and defined how he is going to present the books main purpose, He has illustrated his main purpose for us, and then on page 7 he tells us that we need to*…”understand your child in relationship to the two broad sets of issues that affect him:”,* following up with two points of reference, he will define in order for us how to apply these truths in the next chapter.
2. To sum up how to do a book study and what we want to look for:
	* The (subject matter or main purpose) of the book should remain a theme throughout the book.
	* The (subject matter or main purpose) should be defined for clarification, usually in the chapters and subtitles within the chapters of the book.
	* The (subject matter or main purpose) should be illustrated for demonstration. Remember not every chapter of a book gives a vivid illustration, but there will be plenty illustrations throughout the book to help us better define the main purpose of the book.
	* The (subject matter or main purpose) should be practical or useful for application. Remember that application is sometimes found throughout the chapters and subtitles, and sometimes at the end of a chapter.
	* These points are always going to be reference points on how well the subject matter or main purpose is handled in any given book as you study. It will help you to understand and apply the truth in the book that you are reading. If you cannot discern these things in a book, it probably is not a very good book to read!
	* One last point to remember.

More general or broader information is presented at the beginning and end of books. Each chapter and each section within a chapter, as well as each paragraph, builds on the other information that you have read. Try to discern this pattern and move from the general ideas to more specific or narrow information marking and making notes as you go.

Marking up you’re reading by highlighting and underlining gives you quick reference. Making notes in the margins is a very important part of active book reading for you and for the class. Write words and phrases in the margins that tell you what paragraphs or sections are about. Use your own words to describe what you want to know and share with us in class. Do this from the very beginning for overview reading later and for information references later. If our class seems slow you can be the spark that ignites great conversation from your marks and notes.