

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>TOOL KIT FOR TEACHING THE GOSPELS</u>	2
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 11 - JOHN 5:30-47</u>	4
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 12 - JOHN 6:1-40</u>	7
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 13 - JOHN 6:41-71</u>	10
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 14 - JOHN 7:1-52</u>	13
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 15 - JOHN 8:12-30</u>	16
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 16 - JOHN 8:31-59</u>	19
<u>TOOL-KIT WORKSHEET: STUDY 17 - JOHN 9:1-41</u>	22

Tool Kit for Teaching the Gospels

Before you begin:

- First read the passage.
- Then pray, asking God to help you understand and obey what He is teaching you. Remember that this is His Word and He wants to speak to you through it.
- Next, refrain from looking at the footnotes in your Bible and consulting commentaries until you have done the complete toolkit. We want you to grow as a lover of God's word and these tools aim at helping you do just that.
- We want you to spend time with the passage before you make conclusions about what it means. Learning to slow down and read carefully is the **key** to the toolkit.
- If you get stuck, just move on to the next step. You can return to it later.

Step 1

Write out or copy the text, line by line. That is, allocate one line to a major period or comma so that you easily view one main idea at a time.

Step 2

Ask yourself: What kind of literature is this? Though mainly narrative and teaching, the Gospels are a mixture of literature. Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, a list, or apocalyptic? It is common sense that each kind of literature is to be read differently. (e.g: Parables and apocalyptic use more figurative language than historical narrative.)

In a *narrative* passage ask the following questions.

- Characters - Who are the main people? How do they relate to each other?
- Contrasts and parallels - in characters and actions and decisions.
- Timing – Note when something is happening and how time passes. Is the timing of an event significant?
- Geography - Where is the event happening? Note any significance of the setting.
- Plot - What is happening? What is the movement of activity or of the story?
- Dialogue - What is being said and by whom? Who is the audience? What does it accomplish in the passage?

In a *parable* ask the following questions, if applicable.

- To whom is Jesus speaking?
- In what context is he telling it? Where? When? Why? Is it in answer to someone's question?
- Using any clues given in the text or other biblical sources, assign the earthly elements/characters/objects to their spiritual counterparts. (e.g: What is the seed? What is the vineyard? What is the treasure?)

Step 3

Underline the words that are repeated, very important, or unclear. Note:

- any words that connect ideas, like “therefore” near the beginning of sentences.
- repetition of words, phrases, or themes (this is very important in a gospel)
- contrasts
- ‘Big Bible’ words (especially OT references or allusions – e.g: Passover, salvation, promise)
- surprises or things that don't make sense.

Step 4

Establish context:

1. *Immediate context:*

- What went immediately before?
- How does what comes before influence the meaning of this text?
- What comes directly after this text?
- Is this passage part of a larger section of teaching?

2. *Book context:*

- How does the main theme (or melodic line) of the entire book inform the meaning of your specific text?

Step 5

Work on the structure or shape of the passage. This skill can be hard at first but is very rewarding! Try breaking it into the smaller parts that belong together. Look for patterns and note them for emphasis and shape clues, and ask: are there words or phrases that act as *bookends* (i.e: words that begin and end a section)?

Ask what the shape tells you about the meaning of the passage. There are several ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage:

1. Dialogue - *For example:* if it's a dialogue such as the one in John 13:31-14:6 you might set it out as follows:

vv31-35	Jesus talks to the disciples
vv36-38	Peter talks to Jesus
vv1-4	Jesus talks to the disciples
v5	Thomas talks to Jesus
v6	Jesus talks to disciples.

This structure shows that Jesus has the first and last word in the passage, which is punctuated by questions from two disciples whose spiritual dullness emerges by contrast with Jesus as wise and all-knowing.

2. Scenes

Narrative can also be structured around scenes. Identify each scene in your passage, noting the verse and write down a description for each scene. Think of a story as a series of 'scenes'. Look for when the narrator 'steps aside' from the story to make a comment on what is happening. These comments are very important to note and provide strong indicators as to what he intends us to make of the events he is writing about.

For example: John 2:1-11

In this *Cana* incident we have:

vv1-2	The setting	the wedding
vv3-5	The crisis	the wine ran out
vv6-8	Jesus' action	provided the wine
vv9-10	The verdict	excellent wine
v11	John's comment	this Jesus' first 'sign'; disciples believed

3. Plot

Another way to structure narrative may be around the plot of what is happening in the passage. Often, three parts to the plot are:

- Problem and/or tension
- Turning Point
- Resolution

Step 6

What does it all mean? Ask the following questions.

- What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ?
- What do we learn about why Christ has come (his mission)?
- What do we learn about what it means to be his disciples?
- What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?
- What does it reveal about humanity and how we relate to God?
- What would be lost if this passage was missing from scripture?

Step 7

Clarify: Write down the main idea in the passage. Are there sub-themes?

Step 8

Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. Ask yourself:

- What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text?
- What can I praise God for? What can I ask him for?
- What challenges or disturbs me in this passage? What gives me encouragement?
- What is the "take home message" for me?
- Why does it matter for me and for others?

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 11 – John 5:30-47

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text?)

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 12 - John 6:1-40

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text?)

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 13 – John 6:41-71

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

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Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 14 – John 7:1-52

The Feast of Tabernacles dominates chapters 7-10. It was a joyful 8-day harvest festival, when all Israel came together in Jerusalem, camping in booths to remember Israel's time in the wilderness during God's rescue of them. During the festival the themes of water and light play an important role.

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

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Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 15 – John 8:12-30

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

Step 6: Contribution: What does it all mean? (i.e. What do we learn about the person and identity of Christ? What do we learn about Christ's mission, and what it means for his disciples and for us? What does it tell us about God and his purposes in the world?)

Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text?)

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 16 – John 8:31-59

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

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Step 7: Clarify: Main point – in one concise sentence state the 'big idea' of the passage.

Step 8: Application: What is the aim of the text? The aim is the author's intended application of the text—consider the relevant implication of this text for the lives of the readers. (Ask yourself: What does God want me to learn, to think, to believe, do, or not do from the text?)

Tool-Kit Worksheet: Study 17 – John 9:1-41

Step 1 and Step 3: Write out, or copy the text, line by line. Note words of interest. (e.g. repetitions, contrasts, connecting words, 'big Bible' words, surprises)

Step 2: Kind of literature: Is this passage narrative, teaching, parable, or apocalyptic? (Ask the questions of narrative concerning characters, timing, geography, action, and dialogue.)

Step 4: Establish Context.

Immediate context:

Book context:

Step 5: Structure or shape of the passage. Try breaking the passage into smaller parts that belong together. The structure often shapes the emphasis of the passage. (There are various ways of analyzing the structure of a narrative passage: e.g. break the text into scenes, or follow the plot line or the dialogue.)

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