

The Thematic Method

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Week 5
Bible Study Methods
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Introduction

Definition

This method involves approaching a Biblical theme with a set of not more than 5 pre-determined questions. You then trace the theme through the Bible (or a single Book) by asking only those questions, summarizing your conclusions, and writing out a personal application.

This is similar to a topical study (which we will not be doing), but different in two ways:

- A. It is shorter than a topical study because you study fewer verses (a thematic study is actually a limited topical study). A topic may have many themes running through it:
 - a. PRAYER as a topic has themes:
 - i. Prayers of Jesus
 - ii. Prayers of New Testament Writers
 - iii. Conditions for Answered Prayer
 - iv. Prayer Promises
 - v. Intercession for others

A Topical study would cover every verse concerning prayer, while a thematic study concentrates only on those passages that deal with your selected theme

- B. A thematic study entails fewer questions. In a topical study, you ask as many questions as you can because your goal is to discover “everything there is to know” about the topic. The thematic study has a limit of no more than 5 carefully chosen questions. You then ask those 5 questions about every verse related to the theme.

The reason for limiting the number of questions is that some themes may have 100 or 200 verses. If you set of questions gets too long, you will get bogged down and discouraged.

Why this method?

1. You don't need many reference tools. You only need a Study Bible and Topical Bible (an exhaustive concordance is good too).
2. You can use this method when you don't have time to do a full scale topical study because the subject is too broad or because of the large number of passage on the subject.

3. You may want to do a full topical study, and this is a good way to preview the high points before delving into it. Also, with this method, you can approach only the subject you are interested in.
4. It is very easy to turn this type of lesson into a Sunday school lesson or small group study. After complete your personal study, make each of your questions a major point in your talk and share the biblical answers.

Some Tips

Because of the simplicity of the study and the danger of getting carried away:

1. Don't use too many questions. Even a theme under a major topic may be so vast as to have hundred of references. If you list too many questions, you will not be able to effectively complete the study. On a major thematic study, you may limit yourself to more than three questions.
2. Sometimes you can do a thematic study with only one question.
3. Many times you not find the answer to every one of your question in the same verse. When that happens, just leave a blank space on your form and go to the next question.
4. If you are finding no answers to any of your questions...it probably means you are barking up the wrong tree. Go back and revise your questions. Possibly you are asking questions that god does not care to answer.
5. To find out *everything* God has said about a certain subject, you will need to use an exhaustive concordance and look up all the words related to your theme. This can become a massive project.

The Form

1. Choose a theme to study
Select a theme you are interested in. For your first few, start with themes that are small or short
2. List all the verses you intend to study
Using your three tools – the study Bible, the exhaustive concordance, and the topical Bible, make a list of all the Scripture verses that are related to your theme.

Remember to use synonyms and other similar words and concepts when using the concordance.

HOW TO CHOOSE/USE A TOPICAL BIBLE VIDEO

3. Decide on the Questions you will ask
Brainstorm lots of questions about the theme. Use our friends (Kipling's "Elephant's Child" men). Then, narrow your list down to no more than 5 questions. Remember sometimes one question is sufficient.
4. Ask your questions for each reference
Read through the references and ask your set of questions of each verse.

5. Draw some conclusions

After you have finished checking the references and writing your answers, go back and summarize the answer to your questions. You might see patterns developing and organize your study into an outline grouping similar verses together.

You might compare and contrast. PACE your STEPS.

6. Write out a Personal application

Application is always the goal. Personal, Practical, Possible, Provable still matter.

LET'S GO THROUGH AN EXAMPLE